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**Bleeding Bodies Behind Curtains:  
Pre-Gothic Ideas in Early Modern Drama**

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## **Abstract**

William Shakespeare has long been linked to the development of British Gothic literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and recent scholarship has analysed both Shakespeare's legacy in early Gothic literature and the potentially 'Gothic' aspects of early modern literature, often focusing on the works of Shakespeare.

The primary aim of this thesis is to determine whether there is a pre-history of Gothic themes, ideas, and aesthetics in early modern drama, potentially allowing for aspects of these plays to be considered "pre-Gothic". By opening up a two-way dialogue between early modern drama and Gothic literature, this thesis suggests that understanding how early modern drama may have influenced Gothic literature allows us to analyse early modern drama through a Gothic lens while also demonstrating that even plays with no tangible influence on Gothic literature can be read as "pre-Gothic". To achieve this, this thesis examines both the legacy of early modern drama in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and analyses the representation of Gothic themes, ideas, and aesthetics in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama.

By examining a range of canonical and less canonical primary texts, this thesis will argue for a notion of the pre-Gothic that was situated in the Gothic mode of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries more firmly than we have allowed to date.

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## **Declaration of Originality**

I, the author, confirm that the Thesis is my own work. I am aware of the University's Guidance on the Use of Unfair Means ([www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/unfair-means](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/unfair-means)). This work has not been previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, university.

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## Introduction

By the pricking of my thumbs,  
Something wicked this way comes  
— William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*

In his preface to the second edition of *The Castle of Otranto* in 1765, Horace Walpole declared that the ‘great master of nature, Shakespeare, was the model [he] copied’ when writing his Gothic novella, stating that he was ruled by ‘nature’ rather than art just as Shakespeare was.<sup>1</sup> Gothic literature was indebted to early modern literature, especially the works of Shakespeare, and, in 1769, Elizabeth Montagu referred to Shakespeare as ‘our Gothic Bard’ in *An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespear*, which doubled as a defence against the ‘misrepresentations of Mons. de Voltaire’ and an exploration of Shakespeare’s work.<sup>2</sup> Montagu draws attention to the ‘barbarity’ of Shakespeare’s own age, drawing upon the language that Voltaire used to describe Shakespeare, but, for critics like Montagu, it is this ‘barbarity’ of the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras that marks Shakespeare, and perhaps his contemporaries, as potentially ‘Gothic’.<sup>3</sup> Montagu appears to exaggerate the ‘barbarity’ of Shakespeare’s time, claiming that ‘Shakespear's plays were to be acted in a paltry tavern, to an unlettered audience’, but she goes on to state that Shakespeare’s ‘genius produced works that time could not destroy’ and what had been rendered ‘illegible’ by time had been ‘restored by critics whose learning and penetration traced back the vestiges of

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<sup>1</sup> Horace Walpole, ‘Preface to the Second Edition’, in *The Castle of Otranto*, ed. by Nick Groom (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 9-14 (p. 10).

<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Robinson Montagu, *An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespear, compared with the Greek and French Dramatic Poets. With Some Remarks upon the Misrepresentations of Mons. de Voltaire* (London: printed for J. Dodsley, Pall-Mall and others, 1769), p. 147.

<sup>3</sup> Montagu, p. 147.

superannuated opinions and customs.’<sup>4</sup> For Montagu, Shakespeare lived ‘in the dark shades of Gothic barbarism’ and the constant association between Shakespeare and the ‘Gothic’ in the eighteenth century, whether that is an era or a genre of literature, reinforces the links between Gothic literature and early modern literature.<sup>5</sup>

Examining early modern literature, particularly early modern drama, through a Gothic lens allows us to read these well-known and well-loved plays in a new way and in this project, I aim to suggest that some themes, aesthetics, and ideas that are present in early modern drama can be considered pre-Gothic. I will define the term “pre-Gothic” in more detail later in this introduction but, by building upon the work of various scholars, I intend to analyse how the representation of Gothic ideas in early modern drama contributes to the notion of a pre-history of Gothic ideas in early modern literature.

Some elements of new historicism, as employed by critics such as Stephen Greenblatt and Catherine Gallagher, play a prominent role within this thesis as, in order to examine the representation of Gothic ideas within early modern drama, I will seek to understand Gothic literature and early modern literature through their historical contexts. New historicism often takes a synchronic approach to literary analysis, examining a piece of literature within the context of its own time due to the theory that culture is a text, as outlined in *Practicing New Historicism*, and the idea of culture-as-text allows ‘all the textual traces of an era [to] “count” as both representation and event’, tying a piece of literature into its own historical context as culture and literary text become one in the same.<sup>6</sup> However, I will also employ a diachronic approach by examining the development of themes and ideas through time as well as exploring how early modern drama was understood in the context of the eighteenth and

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<sup>4</sup> Montagu, pp. 14-15.

<sup>5</sup> Montagu, p. 150.

<sup>6</sup> Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2000), pp. 15-16.

nineteenth centuries. Therefore, although the practices of new historicism will inform my approach to the texts examined in this thesis, I intend to move beyond the limitations of new historicism in order to analyse how early modern drama presents audiences with identifiably Gothic ideas.

Similarly, I will touch on psychoanalytical theory in several chapters of this thesis as critical discussion of the Gothic is often underpinned by a strong, if implicit, use of psychoanalytical language. However, it should be noted that I will not be explicitly engaging with psychoanalytical theory, such as the works of Sigmund Freud or Jacques Lacan, in this thesis and, instead, discussions of doubling and the abject in early modern literature will be informed by literary criticism of the Gothic.

Three texts that were vital in the formation of this thesis were *Gothic Shakespeares* (2008), *Shakespearean Gothic* (2009), and *Gothic Renaissance* (2016) as these edited collections represent almost the entire body of work published on the relationship between Gothic literature and early modern literature.<sup>7</sup> *Gothic Shakespeares* and *Shakespearean Gothic* focus solely on the works of Shakespeare, with the former focusing on Shakespeare's influence on Gothic writers and the latter examining both Shakespeare's legacy and, in some chapters, the Gothic potential of Shakespeare's work. In the introduction to *Gothic Shakespeares*, John Drakakis notes that the collection 'pursues the practical and theoretical consequences of recognizing [the] particular species of heteroglossia' that is 'Gothic Shakespeares' and that the essays range in topic 'from historical beginnings in the early eighteenth century through to current manifestations' in order to locate Shakespeare within a variety of Gothic texts.<sup>8</sup> This is a collection that, ultimately, focuses on exploring

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<sup>7</sup> *Gothic Shakespeares*, ed. by John Drakakis and Dale Townshend (London: Routledge, 2008); *Shakespearean Gothic*, ed. by Christy Desmet and Anne Williams (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009); *Gothic Renaissance*, ed. by Elisabeth Bronfen and Beate Neumeier (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).

<sup>8</sup> John Drakakis, 'Introduction', in *Gothic Shakespeares*, ed. by John Drakakis and Dale Townshend (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 1-20 (p. 18).



Shakespeare's legacy within Gothic literature. Christy Desmet and Anne Williams, in the introduction to *Shakespearean Gothic*, explain that the essays in that collection aim to 'uncover the secret relation' between Shakespeare and the Gothic, referring to them as an 'unlikely pair'.<sup>9</sup> Desmet and Williams admit that the collection is as 'tangled' as the relationship between Shakespeare and the Gothic but note that by exploring 'Shakespeare and the Gothic from various critical perspectives', the collection seeks 'at least to begin the process of sketching out a genealogy' for a notion of the Shakespearean Gothic.<sup>10</sup> *Gothic Renaissance* branches out to explore the works of various writers, including Ben Jonson and John Donne, and other forms of literature, such as masques and pamphlets. In the introduction to the collection, Elisabeth Bronfen and Beate Neumeier explain that the collection aimed 'to expand the existing discussion by focusing on the lines of connection between a Gothic sensibility and the Renaissance period' but the collection is still limited by its nature as an edited collection as each critic approaches the topic in their own way.<sup>11</sup> As with *Shakespearean Gothic*, *Gothic Renaissance* is a collection that brings together a variety of different theoretical approaches, with essays that offer 'psychoanalytic, feminist and post-structural readings', but, rather than focusing 'on the Bard's Gothic afterlife', this collection intends to track 'the lines of connection between Gothic sensibilities and the discursive network of the Renaissance'.<sup>12</sup> *Gothic Renaissance* approaches this topic by 'looking back at dramatic and non-dramatic texts of the English Renaissance through the lens of the Gothic culture that emerged in the late eighteenth century' and my own research will reflect the aims of the essays collected in *Gothic Renaissance* as I will explore the Gothic potential of early

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<sup>9</sup> Christy Desmet and Anne Williams, 'Introduction', in *Shakespearean Gothic*, ed. by Christy Desmet and Anne Williams (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009), pp. 1-12 (p. 2).

<sup>10</sup> Desmet and Williams, pp. 8-10.

<sup>11</sup> Elisabeth Bronfen and Beate Neumeier, 'Introduction', in *Gothic Renaissance*, ed. by Elisabeth Bronfen and Beate Neumeier (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pp. 1-14 (p. 1).

<sup>12</sup> Bronfen and Neumeier, p. 5, p. 1, p. 6.

modern drama by looking back at early modern dramatic texts through a Gothic lens.<sup>13</sup>

However, I also intend to combine this method with the approaches taken in *Gothic Shakespeares* and *Shakespearean Gothic* by exploring the afterlives of early modern dramatic texts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. By combining these methods, I aim for this thesis to offer a more comprehensive examination of the relationship between early modern and Gothic literature, looking back at how some early modern plays may have offered audiences a recognisably Gothic experience and looking ahead to how early modern drama was read, disassembled, and reassembled by Gothic writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Later in this introduction, I will explore how individual essays in these three edited collections approach this research in order to more thoroughly explain how I will attempt to combine these styles to offer a fuller analysis of the topic.

As the existing literature available on this topic is limited to essays in edited collections and articles in scholarly journals, this thesis is intended to be the first sustained analysis of the representation of Gothic ideas, themes, and aesthetics in early modern drama. By producing a long-form piece of writing on this topic, I aim to offer a more comprehensive examination of how Gothic ideas function in early modern drama than has previously been presented.

Due to the nature of this project, this thesis is aimed at both Gothic scholars and early modern scholars. For early modern scholars, this thesis will further demonstrate how we can read early modern drama as pre-Gothic by exploring the intersections between Gothic literature, early modern drama, and their historical contexts. It will also offer an exploration of how early modern drama was read, reproduced, and distributed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, developing our understanding of how aspects of early modern dramatic

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<sup>13</sup> Bronfen and Neumeier, p. 6.

texts were presented to new audiences, separate from their original contexts and, perhaps, removed from their original plays. For Gothic scholars, this thesis will offer an exploration into the history of Gothic ideas in literature, expanding the Gothic mode beyond the ‘canon’ of Gothic literature and beyond the influence of Shakespeare.

Although not a recent critical text, Charles Lamb’s *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare* (1808) is another text that will be frequently cited in this thesis as Lamb’s approach to early modern literature is both reflective of and reflected by the selective way in which Gothic writers engaged with early modern drama. Lamb and writers of the Gothic extracted the scenes and ideas from early modern drama that were particularly relevant or appealing to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century readers and this will be, in some regards, a thesis that reflects upon the ways in which early modern drama was read in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as well as a thesis that attempts to determine how we can now read early modern drama through a Gothic lens. Lamb’s collection also mirrors Walpole’s ambitions in *The Castle of Otranto* as Walpole intended to reintroduce aspects of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* to British literature.

It is clear from the text of *The Castle of Otranto* that several moments in the novel are borrowed or, perhaps, appropriated from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* (c.1600), tying Shakespeare to the origins of Gothic literature. One scene in particular captured Walpole’s imagination and, in fact, the same scene captured the attention of eighteenth-century theatre-goers, scholars, and critics as Hamlet’s first meeting with the ghost of his father in Act one, scene four was considered to be, to quote Robert B. Hamm, ‘the public stage’s purest and most gripping instance of the passion’, the ‘passion’ here being terror.<sup>14</sup> As Hamm states, during the Restoration era and into the eighteenth century, audiences were said to fall silent at the

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<sup>14</sup> Robert B. Hamm Jr., ‘Hamlet and Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*’, *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 49.3 (2009), 667-692 (668).

first sight of the ghost only to break into great applause once the scene had played out.<sup>15</sup> It is this awe inspiring scene, in which the ghost of Hamlet's father beckons to him for the first time, that is echoed in the first chapter of *The Castle of Otranto*:

"Do I dream?" cried Manfred, returning; "or are the devils themselves in league against me? Speak, internal spectre! Or, 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 sighed again, and made a sign to Manfred to follow him.<sup>16</sup>

Although Walpole does not directly quote Shakespeare in this section of his novel, the similarities between this scene and Hamlet's speech are clear:

Angels and ministers of grace defend us!  
Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damned,  
Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell,  
Be thy intents 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. O, answer me!<sup>17</sup>

Hamlet's comment about the spirit's intentions, 'Be thy intents wicked or charitable', is echoed by Manfred's demand to know why the spirit of his 'grandsire' conspires 'against [his] wretched descendant' and the despair that Hamlet experiences upon his first encounter with the ghost, prompting him to almost beg to know why the ghost has appeared before him

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<sup>15</sup> Hamm, 673.

<sup>16</sup> Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, ed. by Nick Groom (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 25.

<sup>17</sup> William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. by G. R. Hibbard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 1.4.18-24.

– ‘Say, why is this? wherefore? what should we do?’ – is reflected in Manfred’s frantic speech.<sup>18</sup> Walpole’s reliance on Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* in this moment of the novel is undeniable.

The ghost was terrifying to Hamlet in that first meeting and on the eighteenth-century stage the actor in the role of Hamlet was required to convey that sense of terror to the audience in order for the entire play to be successful. If this scene failed to capture an audience’s attention in the eighteenth century, the whole play could be considered a failure. Walpole, along with many other Gothic writers, sought to replicate the experience of watching Act one, scene four of *Hamlet* in their novels, using ghosts and other supernatural beings as a vehicle for terror. By appropriating scenes from *Hamlet*, Walpole bridged the gap between the stage and the page, borrowing theatrical conventions to induce terror in his reader just as the theatre induced terror within an audience. Walpole continues to deliberately mirror *Hamlet* throughout *The Castle of Otranto*, including in chapter five when Frederic encounters a skeleton whose spirit reminds him of his oath: ‘Hast thou forgotten the buried sabre, and the behest of Heaven engraven on it?’<sup>19</sup> This scene in the novel draws upon Act three, scene four of *Hamlet* where the ghost of Hamlet’s father appears to ‘whet [Hamlet’s] almost blunted purpose’ and remind him of his oath of revenge.<sup>20</sup> Frederic shares the same experience as Hamlet, although Frederic’s experience with the skeleton and spectre are arguably more terrifying than Hamlet’s due to shock of the skeleton’s appearance, and Walpole carefully weaves references to *Hamlet* into *The Castle of Otranto* to create a sense of terror within his new genre.

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<sup>18</sup> *Hamlet*, 1.4.18-24; Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, p. 25.

<sup>19</sup> Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, p. 98.

<sup>20</sup> *Hamlet*, 3.4.104.

In ‘Hamlet and Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*’, Hamm also points out several more moments of convergence between these two texts, further emphasising that the recognisably Gothic aspects of the novel, that is, the elements of the novel scholars consider particularly Gothic in their aesthetic, are borrowed from Shakespeare.<sup>21</sup> Dale Townshend, in a chapter on ‘Gothic and the Ghost of Hamlet’, suggests that Walpole, and other writers of the Gothic, extracted two ‘lessons in death’ from Shakespeare’s play, the first being that ‘death must be drawn into an intimate and enduring relation with truth’ and the second being that ‘the dead in the Gothic need to be adequately remembered, memorialised, and mourned’.<sup>22</sup> Townshend’s argument can be seen clearly in the text of Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* as Walpole borrowed scenes that focused on death and mourning, using Shakespearean ghosts to explore death in a way that was, perhaps, more suitable for audiences and readers of the eighteenth century than the bloody spectacle of on-stage death that frequently occurred in Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedies.<sup>23</sup>

Yael Shapira also argues that *The Castle of Otranto* is part of a ‘patriotic wish to embrace the spectacle of death as part of a native literary tradition, with which Shakespeare’s name is rapidly becoming synonymous’ in the eighteenth century and that Walpole ‘looks ahead to the later Gothic’s graphic excess by demonstrating, in hyperbolic terms, the dead body’s elimination from sight’ while looking back at the example that Shakespeare set through *Hamlet*.<sup>24</sup> Townshend and Shapira both emphasise that what Walpole gained from *Hamlet* was an understanding of death and mourning, despite *Hamlet*’s tendency to entertain what the eighteenth century may have deemed ‘traces of the culturally degenerated

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<sup>21</sup> Hamm.

<sup>22</sup> Dale Townshend, ‘Gothic and the Ghost of Hamlet’, in *Gothic Shakespeares*, ed. by John Drakakis and Dale Townshend (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 60-97 (p. 73).

<sup>23</sup> Townshend.

<sup>24</sup> Yael Shapira, ‘Shakespeare, *The Castle of Otranto*, and the Problem of the Corpse on the Eighteenth-Century Stage’, *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 36.1 (2012), 1-29 (4).

Catholicism', which he, and other Gothic writers, adapted to create a new genre which 'embodies, appropriately, a call to remember'.<sup>25</sup> There is no doubt that *The Castle of Otranto* can be read as a novelistic adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* but the genre that developed in the wake of Walpole's novella is just as entwined with early modern literature as *The Castle of Otranto* is.

Shapira and Townshend consider this area of research very differently to Hamm but it is clear that each approach brings forth fruitful discussions about the relationship between early modern literature and Gothic literature. Hamm focuses on the ways in which Horace Walpole utilised specific scenes from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in his Gothic novella *The Castle of Otranto*, offering a reading of Walpole's text in direct comparison to its Shakespearean source material, while Townshend and Shapira both write about the general legacy of Shakespeare and his work in Gothic literature and the wider literary culture of eighteenth-century Britain. Both of these approaches are valuable when attempting to determine the possibility of a pre-history of Gothic themes, ideas, and aesthetics in early modern literature, even though they both actually focus on the ways in which Gothic writers were inspired by Shakespeare, but these two methods of research offer us different levels of scrutiny and textual analysis.

While claiming that he modelled himself on the great Shakespeare, Walpole also used the preface to the second edition of *The Castle of Otranto* to defend Shakespeare against the likes of Voltaire, who Walpole admits 'is a genius' but 'not of Shakespeare's magnitude'.<sup>26</sup> Voltaire, despite translating soliloquys from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* into French and borrowing the ghost of Hamlet's father for his own work, *Ériphyle* (1732), derided

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<sup>25</sup> Townshend, p. 76; Shapira, 23.

<sup>26</sup> Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, p. 11.

Shakespeare in various letters.<sup>27</sup> Helen Phelps Bailey notes that Voltaire's 'self-assigned mission' was, at first, to be an 'interpreter of Shakespeare to the French' but he later became the 'defender of French tragedy against the English poet's growing influence', a role which can be seen in *A letter from M. Voltaire to the French Academy: Containing an appeal to that society on the merits of the English dramatic poet Shakespeare* (1777) as Voltaire implies that the English blindly adored Shakespeare while complaining that the English 'transported into [France] an image of the Divinity of Shakespeare'.<sup>28</sup> Voltaire frequently referred to *Hamlet* as a 'monstrosity' and he cited the gravediggers 'among the "absurdities" to be found' in the tragedies 'that the "divine" Shakespeare produced.'<sup>29</sup> Voltaire's distaste for the gravediggers was shared by other French critics and translators, including Pierre-Antoine de La Place who, in his translation of *Hamlet*, wrote a 'disclaimer' before the gravediggers are introduced.<sup>30</sup> Walpole, in the preface to the second edition of *The Castle of Otranto*, directly responds to Voltaire's comments about the gravediggers and other 'absurdities' within Shakespeare's plays:

Unhappy Shakespeare! hadst thou made Rosencrantz inform his compeer,  
Guildenstern, of the iconography of the palace of Copenhagen, instead of presenting  
us with a moral dialogue between the Prince of Denmark and the gravedigger, the  
illuminated pit of Paris would have been instructed *a second time* to adore thy  
talents.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Helen Phelps Bailey, *Hamlet in France: From Voltaire to LaForgue, with an Epilogue* (Geneva: Droz, 1964), p. 3.

<sup>28</sup> Bailey, p. 3; Voltaire, *A Letter from M. Voltaire to the French Academy: Containing an Appeal to that Society on the Merits of the English Dramatic Poet Shakespeare: Read Before the Academy on the Day of St. Louis, MDCCLXXVI. Translated from the Original Edition, Just Published at Paris. With a Dedication to the Marquis of Granby, and a Preface, by the Editor* (London: Printed for J. Bew, No. 28, Pater-noster-Row, 1777), p. 2.

<sup>29</sup> Bailey, p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> Bailey, p. 9.

<sup>31</sup> Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, p. 13.



Walpole appears to be mocking Voltaire's opinions of Shakespeare, suggesting that if only Shakespeare had changed one scene of the play, then, perhaps, the French would enjoy it. While Walpole does acknowledge that this scene in *Hamlet* does not align with French ideals, he taunts Voltaire by emphasising that Voltaire had already 'instructed' the 'illuminated pit of Paris' to 'adore' Shakespeare's 'talent' by translating parts of *Hamlet* and utilising aspects of Shakespeare's work in his own plays.<sup>32</sup> Throughout the preface, Walpole draws attention to Voltaire's relationship with Shakespeare, mentioning that 'the French critic has twice translated the same speech in *Hamlet*', once in 'admiration' and 'latterly in derision', and he makes use of Voltaire's 'own words' to highlight the hypocrisy of Voltaire's criticism of Shakespeare.<sup>33</sup> Walpole was not anti-French but, as Angela Wright argues in *Britain, France and the Gothic, 1764–1820: The Import of Terror*, he uses the popularity of anti-French sentiment to appeal to the 'national palate' in this preface, defending Shakespeare against French criticism in order to adhere to the 'cultural expectations of the time'.<sup>34</sup> It is not an altruistic mission on Walpole's part as, by defending Shakespeare's 'monstrosities', Walpole is also defending his own work against the same criticism that Shakespeare faced from French critics and potentially aligning his own novel with the works of the 'national bard'.

Although the preface was, as demonstrated, a direct response to Voltaire's criticism of Shakespeare, by addressing Shakespeare in the preface to his Gothic tale Walpole continued a ritual of invoking the ghost of Shakespeare, a convention which began in Restoration era adaptations of Shakespeare's plays such as John Dryden's *Troilus and Cressida: or, Truth Found Too Late* (1679) and Nahum Tate's *The Ingratitude of a Commonwealth* (1682).<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, p. 13.

<sup>33</sup> Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, p. 11.

<sup>34</sup> Angela Wright, *Britain, France and the Gothic, 1764–1820: The Import of Terror* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 30.

<sup>35</sup> John Dryden, *Troilus and Cressida: or, Truth Found Too Late. A Tragedy. By Mr. Dryden. To Which is Prefix'd, A Preface Containing the Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy* (London: Printed for Jacob Tonson ... and Abel Swall, 1679); Nahum Tate, *The Ingratitude of a Commonwealth, or, the Fall of Caius Martius Coriolanus as it is Acted at the Theatre-Royal / by N. Tate* (London: Printed by T.M. for Joseph Hindmarsh, 1682).

These prefaces or epilogues were used to praise and defend Shakespeare while simultaneously suggesting that Shakespeare would approve of their work, arguing that, due to the ‘barbarous Age’ in which he lived, Shakespeare’s work needed to be adapted.<sup>36</sup> Those who adapted Shakespeare’s work in the long eighteenth century often sought approval from the ghost of Shakespeare, who walked the stage to give speeches about the ‘barbaric’ nature of his own time, as they had to convince audiences that these adaptations were, in fact, better than Shakespeare’s original plays. The prologue to John Dryden’s 1679 adaptation of *Troilus and Cressida* fulfils a need to defend the figure of Shakespeare but the speech, spoken by Mr. Betterton as Shakespeare’s ghost, also defended Dryden’s own adaptation:

On foreign trade I needed not rely

Like fruitfull *Britain*, rich without supply.

In this my rough-drawn Play, you shall behold

Some Master-strokes, so manly and so bold

That he, who meant to alter, found 'em such

He shook; and thought it Sacrilege to touch.<sup>37</sup>

But I forget that still 'tis understood

Bad Plays are best decry'd by showing good:

Sit silent then, that my pleas'd Soul may see

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<sup>36</sup> Dryden, sig. B4r.

<sup>37</sup> Dryden, sig. B4r.

A Judging Audience once, and worthy me:

My faithfull Scene from true Records shall tell

How *Trojan* valour did the *Greek* excell;

Your great forefathers shall their fame regain,

And *Homers* angry Ghost repine in vain.<sup>38</sup>

The ghost's speech in this play urges writers of the long eighteenth century to alter his plays while still drawing attention to the 'Master-strokes' that Dryden retained from Shakespeare's original play, claiming that he thought it 'Sacrilege to touch' these aspects of the play.<sup>39</sup>

Dryden is using the ghost of Shakespeare to justify his authorial choices both in regards to what he has changed and what remains from Shakespeare's play. The ghost goes on to complain about the quality of the poets who claim to be his successors:

Now, where are the Successours to my name?

What bring they to fill out a Poets fame?

Weak, short-liv'd issues of a feeble Age;

Scarce living to be Christen'd on the Stage!<sup>40</sup>

Dryden uses this speech to elevate his own adaptation of Shakespeare above not only the original but also the work of his own contemporaries. While Walpole does not necessarily use his preface to elevate his own work above others, he does use the same techniques as Dryden, and other Restoration playwrights, to both defend Shakespeare against French

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<sup>38</sup> Dryden, sig. B4r.

<sup>39</sup> Dryden, sig. B4r.

<sup>40</sup> Dryden, sig. B4r.

critics, like Voltaire, and to defend his own work against criticism. The lines ‘On foreign trade I needed not rely / Like fruitfull *Britain*, rich without supply’ from Dryden’s adaptation are also worth noting as they tie Shakespeare into a specific, nationalistic rendering of English identity, long before the advent of Bardolatry in the mid-eighteenth century, and while Shakespeare’s role as the national Bard will be analysed in the first chapter of this thesis, Dryden is alluding to this association between Shakespeare and England, emphasising that he must be both defended and updated so that he may more accurately embody English national identity during the Restoration era.<sup>41</sup>

Just as Shakespeare’s ghost was used to approve adaptations of his plays, Shakespeare was also resurrected to complain that the writers of the long eighteenth century ‘write dully’ and ‘write worse’ than Shakespeare did and to defend Shakespeare against those that criticised his work and the era in which he lived.<sup>42</sup> One example of this is the epilogue to Charles Gildon’s *Measure for Measure* (1700):

Enough your Cruelty Alive I knew;

And must I Dead be Persecuted too?

Injur'd so much of late upon the *Stage*,

My *Ghost* can bear no more; but comes to Rage.

My *Plays*, by *Scriblers*, Mangl'd I have seen;

By Lifeless *Actors* Murder'd on the *Scene*.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Dryden, sig. B4r.

<sup>42</sup> Charles Gildon, *Measure for Measure* (London: D. Brown & R. Parker, 1700), sig. B1v.

<sup>43</sup> Gildon, sig. B1v.

Gildon's ghost of Shakespeare attacked those who 'mangl'd' his plays beyond recognition, commenting on the adaptations of Shakespeare's work that barely resemble the original play and the 'lifeless' actors who star in them.<sup>44</sup> Once again, Gildon is using the ghost of Shakespeare to promote and justify his own adaptation but this speech does focus on the adaptations that render Shakespeare's plays unrecognisable.

Walpole continues this defence by speaking to Shakespeare rather than through him in the preface to the second edition of *The Castle of Otranto*. Shakespeare was a legitimising force for writers of the long eighteenth century but was also a figure in British history that needed to be fiercely defended from critics, an idea that will be considered further in the first chapter of this project. By tapping into this tradition, Walpole attempts to justify his own adaption of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Walpole states, at the very end of his new preface, that this preface is an attempt to 'shelter' his own 'daring under the canon of the brightest genius this country, at least, has produced', using Shakespeare as a shield against criticism.<sup>45</sup> Walpole claimed that while he 'might have pleaded that, having created a new species of romance, [he] was at liberty to lay down what rules [he] thought fit for the conduct of it' but, instead, chose to maintain that he had produced an imitation, however 'faintly' or 'weakly', of the work of Shakespeare.<sup>46</sup>

Walpole was not the only Gothic writer who used Shakespeare to defend their own work, or the Gothic genre in general; Ann Radcliffe's essay 'On the Supernatural in Poetry', published posthumously in 1826 in *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal*, is a prominent example of how Shakespeare was used to legitimise Gothic literature and Gothic ideas. Radcliffe's essay is framed as a discussion between two characters, Mr W and Mr S,

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<sup>44</sup> Gildon, sig. B1v.

<sup>45</sup> Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, p. 13.

<sup>46</sup> Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, pp. 13-14.

who explain the difference between the sensations of terror and horror. Although Radcliffe was, ultimately, attempting to describe the differences between her own work and the work of others, she does dwell upon the works of Shakespeare for a considerable time, reinforcing not only how important Shakespeare was as a figure of authority and legitimacy for Gothic literature but also the influence Shakespeare had on Gothic writers in regards to their actual work.

Radcliffe's Mr W explores how the very first scene in *Hamlet*, in which Horatio, Bernardo, and Marcellus first see the ghost of Hamlet's father, works to 'excite forlorn, melancholy, and solemn feelings' within the audience.<sup>47</sup> Although this is not the same scene that Walpole was so captivated by, the ghost of Hamlet's father is once again central to a discussion about the experience of terror in literature and, again, it is used as an example of how to properly instil terror within an audience. In this section of the essay, Radcliffe is presenting the reader with an example of the pre-history of Gothic ideas in early modern literature as she, through the voice of Mr W, argues that *Hamlet* produces the same 'solemn feelings' as Gothic literature as the play welcomes the audience 'to indulge in that strange mixture of horror, pity, and indignation'.<sup>48</sup> Radcliffe sees the ghost of Hamlet's father as an entity which 'takes such entire possession of the imagination'.<sup>49</sup>

In this essay Radcliffe uses two examples from Shakespeare's body of work to demonstrate the difference between horror and terror. For Radcliffe, horror can be found in *Macbeth* (1606), specifically the banquet scene, while the superior experience of terror is found in *Hamlet*. Radcliffe, through Mr W, claims that moments of Gothic horror, such as Act three, scene four of *Macbeth*, often strike us 'by the force of contrast', suggesting that it

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<sup>47</sup> Ann Radcliffe, 'On the Supernatural in Poetry', *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal*, Jan. 1821-Dec. 1836, 16.61 (1826), 145-152 (148).

<sup>48</sup> Radcliffe, 'On the Supernatural in Poetry', 148.

<sup>49</sup> Radcliffe, 'On the Supernatural in Poetry', 149.

is the transient nature of this effect, ‘the thrill of horror and surprise’, that is significant in scenes such as these.<sup>50</sup> On the other hand, Gothic terror is reliant upon ‘the deep and solemn feelings excited under more accordant circumstances, and left long upon the mind’, an experience that audiences find in *Hamlet*.<sup>51</sup> For Mr W, and for Radcliffe, this experience of ‘surprise and horror’ in *Macbeth* is ‘inferior’ to the ‘tranquillity tinged with terror’, that which causes the sublime, which can be found in *Hamlet*.<sup>52</sup> Radcliffe’s Gothic works seem to strive towards the ‘tranquillity tinged with terror’ that can be found in *Hamlet* while works on Gothic horror, such as Matthew Lewis’ *The Monk* (1796), explore the mixture of surprise and horror that is portrayed in plays such as *Macbeth*.<sup>53</sup> It must be noted that Lewis’ novel does take inspiration from both Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure* (c.1603) and *Romeo and Juliet* (c.1595) and the epigraph to the first chapter of the novel is a quote from *Measure for Measure*.<sup>54</sup> Lewis’ use of a Shakespearean comedy as inspiration for his novel reveals that Gothic horror explores more than just the mixture of surprise and horror that Radcliffe mentions but Radcliffe is attempting to argue that the experience of terror is superior to the experience of horror so her argument is skewed in favour of Gothic terror. By demonstrating that both horror and terror are experienced by audiences when watching the plays of William Shakespeare, Radcliffe ties Shakespeare firmly to the central experiences that are conveyed in the Gothic genre.

Throughout ‘On the Supernatural in Poetry’, Radcliffe determines the ways in which Shakespeare’s works evoke the same feelings as Gothic novels, which legitimises the Gothic genre through its association with Shakespeare. This association is strengthened by the

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<sup>50</sup> Radcliffe, ‘On the Supernatural in Poetry’, 149.

<sup>51</sup> Radcliffe, ‘On the Supernatural in Poetry’, 149.

<sup>52</sup> Radcliffe, ‘On the Supernatural in Poetry’, 149.

<sup>53</sup> Radcliffe, ‘On the Supernatural in Poetry’, 149.

<sup>54</sup> Matthew Lewis, *The Monk*, ed. by Howard Anderson and Emma McEvoy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) p. 7 – The epigraph is taken from 1.3.50-53 of William Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, ed. by N. W. Bawcutt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

knowledge that this conversation between Mr S. and Mr. W appears in one of Radcliffe's novels, *Gaston de Blondville* (1826), which places the discussion about Shakespeare's Gothic potential within a Gothic space, ensuring that a reader would understand that Shakespeare, as a 'Gothic Bard', was an authority through which the Gothic genre could be legitimised.<sup>55</sup> The preface of *Gaston de Blondville* is longer than 'On the Supernatural in Poetry' and Mr S and Mr W are given fuller names, Mr Simpson and Mr Willoughton respectively, and through this preface Shakespeare and the Gothic, at least in regards to Ann Radcliffe, are entwined forever.<sup>56</sup>

I would also argue that Radcliffe's essay begins the research into the possibility of a pre-history of Gothic ideas in early modern literature, which this thesis contributes to, as Radcliffe demonstrates the ways in which Shakespeare produced a sense of the Burkean sublime within his plays. In his 1757 treatise *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, Burke defined the sublime as:

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.<sup>57</sup>

The sublime experience set out by Burke was central to Gothic literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as Gothic novels sought to induce terror within their readers.

Radcliffe relied heavily upon the sublime in her own novels and one example of Radcliffe's

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<sup>55</sup> Montagu, p. 147; Ann Radcliffe, *Gaston de Blondville* (London: Henry Colburn, New Burlington Street, 1826).

<sup>56</sup> Radcliffe, *Gaston de Blondville*.

<sup>57</sup> Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (London: printed for R. and J. Dodsley, in Pall-Mall, 1757), p. 13.



use of the sublime can be found in volume two, chapter five of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794):

Emily gazed with melancholy awe upon the castle, which she understood to be Montoni's; for, though it was now lighted up by the setting sun, the gothic greatness of its features, and its mouldering walls of dark grey stone, rendered it a gloomy and sublime object. As she gazed, the light died away on its walls, leaving a melancholy purple tint, which spread deeper and deeper, as the thin vapour crept up the mountain, while the battlements above were still tipped with splendour. From those too, the rays soon faded, and the whole edifice was invested with the solemn duskiness of evening. Silent, lonely and sublime, it seemed to stand the sovereign of the scene, and to frown defiance on all, who dared to invade its solitary reign. As the twilight deepened, its features became more awful in obscurity, and Emily continued to gaze, till its clustering towers were alone seen, rising over the tops of the woods, beneath whose thick shade the carriages soon after began to ascend.<sup>58</sup>

Sublime experiences were a vital aspect of Gothic literature, creating feelings of terror and pleasure within the reader, and Radcliffe frames 'On the Supernatural in Poetry' as a debate about Shakespeare's use of 'terror and horror' with Mr S arguing that 'neither Shakspeare nor Milton by their fictions, nor Mr. Burke by his reasoning, anywhere looked to positive horror as a source of the sublime, though they all agree that terror is a very high one'.<sup>59</sup> Arguably, Shakespeare used both horror and terror within his plays, as did other early modern playwrights, but Radcliffe is expressing her own preference for terror through the works of Shakespeare and Milton. Radcliffe used this essay to tie Shakespeare more closely to the

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<sup>58</sup> Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, ed. by Bonamy Dobrée, and Terry Castle (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 226-227.

<sup>59</sup> Radcliffe, 'On the Supernatural in Poetry', 149-150.

Gothic, using Shakespeare's use of the sublime in *Hamlet* as evidence of a historical example of Gothic terror. By suggesting that Shakespeare made use of the Burkean sublime, even before Burke had set out his notion of the sublime, Radcliffe argues that there is a pre-history of this vital element of Gothic literature in the work of Shakespeare. Radcliffe's approach, although she was clearly concerned with legitimising the Gothic genre through Shakespeare, is not too different from my own or the ways in which other scholars have approached this relationship between early modern literature and Gothic literature.

In recent years, Shakespeare's Gothic potential, and the Gothic potential of early modern literature in general, has gained attention from the academic community, leading to several edited collections that not only emphasise Shakespeare's influence on the Gothic, such as *Gothic Shakespeares* (2008) and *Shakespearean Gothic* (2009), but also examine the possibility of a pre-history of Gothic ideas in early modern literature, as in *Gothic Renaissance* (2016).<sup>60</sup> Scholars have approached this research subject in a number of different ways and my own research combines all of the methods that I am about to discuss while focusing on how Gothic ideas are presented in early modern drama. Some scholars have explored Shakespeare's legitimising effect on Gothic literature and the influence that Shakespeare's work had in the eighteenth century, which was intensified by the rise of Bardolatry in the mid-eighteenth century, while others have examined the direct influence that Shakespeare had on specific Gothic writers and specific Gothic texts, including Hamm's essay which I mentioned earlier in this introduction. Various scholars have also analysed the representation of Gothic themes, ideas, and aesthetics in early modern literature.

Gothic scholars tend to examine Shakespeare's legitimising effect on Gothic literature and Dale Townshend is one of the most prominent Gothic scholars in this area of research. In

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<sup>60</sup> *Gothic Shakespeares*, ed. by John Drakakis and Dale Townshend (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008); *Shakespearean Gothic*, ed. by Christy Desmet and Anne Williams (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009).

2008, Townshend, alongside John Drakakis, co-edited *Gothic Shakespeares*, a collection of essays which mostly explore Shakespeare's legacy in Gothic literature. Townshend's own essay in this collection – 'Gothic and the Ghost of Hamlet' – explores how Gothic writers, and writers of the eighteenth century in general, were haunted by Shakespeare and *Hamlet*.<sup>61</sup> As stated earlier in this introduction, Townshend suggests that Gothic writers learnt valuable lessons about the representation of death in literature from Shakespeare which resulted in a genre that was obsessed with death, decay, and remembrance.

In an essay featured in *Gothic Renaissance*, Townshend explores the construction of a Gothic Shakespeare in the eighteenth century and analyses the relationship between the terms 'Scottish' and 'Gothic'. In this chapter, entitled 'Shakespeare, Ossian and the problem of "Scottish Gothic"', Townshend discusses how the 'othering of Scotland' in the late eighteenth century was realised through Shakespeare's role as the British 'Gothic Bard', a role which was used to counteract the threat of Scottish nationalism which was embodied by Ossian, the Scottish Bard. Townshend's essay reads Gothicism as political rather than aesthetical, although Townshend clearly understands that Gothicism is both, and this chapter works to understand how Shakespeare's legacy as the British Gothic Bard impacted Scottish Gothic.<sup>62</sup>

Most recently, in the 2020 *Cambridge History of the Gothic*, which Townshend edited with Angela Wright, Townshend suggests that not only Shakespeare but playwrights such as Ben Jonson, Francis Beaumont, and John Fletcher can be read as proto-Gothic through their influence on the Gothic literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>63</sup> While I do not

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<sup>61</sup> Townshend, 'Gothic and the Ghost of Hamlet'.

<sup>62</sup> Dale Townshend, 'Shakespeare, Ossian and the Problem of "Scottish Gothic"', in *Gothic Renaissance*, ed. by Elisabeth Bronfen and Beate Neumeier (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pp. 218-243.

<sup>63</sup> Dale Townshend, 'The Literary Gothic Before Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*', in *The Cambridge History of the Gothic*, ed. by Angela Wright and Dale Townshend (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 67-95.

necessarily disagree with Townshend's observations in this chapter, there are perhaps more obvious playwrights to focus on than those who were praised for their 'art', rather than 'nature', and were praised by eighteenth-century critics for their adherence to the unities. However, Townshend is, again, examining the legacy of these playwrights in eighteenth-century Britain to argue that their works can be read as proto-Gothic, rather than examining the pre-Gothic potential of any particular aesthetics, themes, or ideas in their work. Townshend argues that the legacy of these playwrights in the eighteenth century allows their work to be read through a Gothic lens.

Other scholars have also examined Shakespeare's legacy in Walpole's work and they offer us an insight into how Shakespeare influenced Horace Walpole and, in turn, the wider Gothic genre. Sue Chaplin's chapter in *Gothic Shakespeares*, 'Fictions of Authority in Walpole's Gothic Shakespeare', examines Gothicism as both a literary and judicial category. Chaplin explores how Gothicism needed to be authenticated and modernised for the eighteenth century and how eighteenth-century writers used Shakespeare as a legitimising force to authenticate the genre. Using *Hamlet* and Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, Chaplin suggests that the reconstruction of Shakespeare in Gothic literature was 'simultaneously an authenticating and de-authenticating gesture.'<sup>64</sup>

Anne Williams' 'Reading Walpole Reading Shakespeare' also contributes to the scholarship about Shakespeare's legacy in Gothic literature. Williams' chapter in *Shakespearean Gothic* examines the close relationship between Horace Walpole's writing and the works of Shakespeare, stating that Walpole pieced together the Gothic genre from 'patches of history, folk tales, kidnapped romance, medieval superstition and Shakespearean

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<sup>64</sup> Sue Chaplin, 'The Scene of a Crime: Fictions of Authority in Walpole's "Gothic Shakespeare"', in *Gothic Shakespeares*, ed. by John Drakakis and Dale Townshend (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), pp. 98-110.

allusions.<sup>65</sup> Williams, in part, does examine the direct influence that Shakespeare had on Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* and *The Mysterious Mother* (1791) but the essay focuses on the legacy that Shakespeare had in the works of Walpole, rather than identifying specific scenes or moments in the play that Walpole appropriated. Yael Shapira's essay 'Shakespeare, *The Castle of Otranto*, and the Problem of the Corpse on the Eighteenth-Century Stage' examines how Walpole considered it of 'patriotic import' to reintroduce 'ghosts into British literature' through works such as *The Castle of Otranto*.<sup>66</sup> Shapira's reading of Walpole's work as a form of patriotic duty reflects Shakespeare's status in eighteenth-century Britain but it also reveals how Shakespeare's work had been altered and, perhaps, sanitised before the advent of the Gothic genre. Shapira's essay does demonstrate how specific aspects of Shakespeare's work influenced Walpole but, similarly to Williams' essay, the main focus of Shapira's criticism is Shakespeare's legacy in Gothic literature rather than the specific scenes that Walpole borrowed from Shakespeare.

Angela Wright, Rictor Norton, and David Salter have all examined Shakespeare's legacy in regards to another Gothic writer, Ann Radcliffe. Radcliffe was referred to as the 'Shakespeare of Romance writers' during her own time and I have discussed Radcliffe's own approach to this topic earlier in this introduction.<sup>67</sup> Angela Wright's chapter 'In Search of Arden: Ann Radcliffe's William Shakespeare' traces Radcliffe's allusions to Shakespeare throughout her body of work, suggesting that Radcliffe's relationship with Shakespeare was more 'dynamic' than previous assessment has recognised.<sup>68</sup> Wright also notes Radcliffe's paratextual and intertextual references to Shakespeare, arguing that Radcliffe's use of *As You*

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<sup>65</sup> Anne Williams, 'Reading Walpole Reading Shakespeare', in *Shakespearean Gothic*, ed. by Christy Desmet and Anne Williams (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009), pp. 13-36 (p. 13).

<sup>66</sup> Shapira, 14.

<sup>67</sup> Nathan Drake, *Literary Hours, or Sketches Critical and Narrative* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1798), p. 249.

<sup>68</sup> Angela Wright, 'In Search of Arden: Ann Radcliffe's William Shakespeare', in *Gothic Shakespeares*, ed. by John Drakakis and Dale Townshend (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), pp. 111-130.

*Like It* (c.1599) in *Gaston de Blondville* and the Shakespearean epigraphs of Radcliffe's later romances suggest that 'What is important for Radcliffe is the constant *recollection and evocation* of Shakespeare prompted by what she visits, rather than the precise detail from his plays.'<sup>69</sup> In a chapter featured in *Shakespearean Gothic*, Rictor Norton offers a similar exploration of Radcliffe's relationship with Shakespeare, detailing Radcliffe's attendance of Shakespearean productions and noting the areas where her novels seem to echo scenes in Shakespeare's plays.<sup>70</sup> Norton, like Wright, suggests that Radcliffe's relationship with Shakespeare relied more on what she experienced from reading and watching the works of Shakespeare rather than specific details of Shakespeare's plays. David Salter, in "'This Demon in the Garb of a Monk": Shakespeare, the Gothic and the Discourse of Anti-Catholicism', focuses on Radcliffe's paratextual references to Shakespeare in *The Italian* (1797), exploring the various quotations that Radcliffe used in her epigraphs.<sup>71</sup> Unlike Wright and Norton, Salter does not offer an analysis of how scenes in Radcliffe's novels seem to echo scenes from Shakespeare.

Various other subjects, including Shakespeare's cultural haunting of the eighteenth century and the influence that Shakespeare has had on horror films, have also been examined by scholars. Each of these essays contributes to the understanding of Shakespeare's legacy in Gothic literature and the role that Shakespeare played in legitimising the Gothic genre. Shakespeare's cultural haunting of the eighteenth century has been examined by Michael Gamer and Robert Miles in 'Gothic Shakespeare on the Romantic Stage' while Shakespeare's influence on later Gothic media has been explored by Peter Hutchings in regards to horror

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<sup>69</sup> Wright, p. 122.

<sup>70</sup> Rictor Norton, 'Ann Radcliffe: "The Shakespeare of Romance Writers"', in *Shakespearean Gothic*, ed. by Christy Desmet and Anne Williams (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009), pp. 37-59.

<sup>71</sup> David Salter, "'This Demon in the Garb of a Monk": Shakespeare, the Gothic and the Discourse of Anti-Catholicism', *Shakespeare*, 5 (2009), 52-67.

films in ‘Theatres of Blood: Shakespeare and the Horror Film’.<sup>72</sup> Fred Botting and Scott Wilson have also examined Shakespeare’s influence on the wider cultural phenomenon of the Gothic, from Romanticism to cybergothic in their chapter on ‘Gothspear and the origins of cultural studies’.<sup>73</sup>

Gothic scholars have also examined the direct influence that Shakespeare had on specific Gothic writers and specific Gothic texts. Robert Hamm’s article is perhaps the best example of this research as Hamm analyses Walpole’s direct use of *Hamlet* in *The Castle of Otranto* but several chapters from *Shakespearean Gothic*, a collection edited by Christy Desmet and Anne Williams, as well as some other articles and book chapters, follow the same approach.<sup>74</sup>

I have already briefly discussed David Salter’s “‘This Demon in the Garb of a Monk’”: Shakespeare, the Gothic and the Discourse of Anti-Catholicism’ in regards to his examination of Ann Radcliffe’s paratextual references to Shakespeare in *The Italian* but Salter also explores how two of Shakespeare’s plays, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Measure for Measure*, were employed by Matthew Lewis in his Gothic novel *The Monk*.<sup>75</sup> Salter identifies key themes, ideas, character archetypes, and plot points that Lewis borrowed from these two plays in his Gothic representation of anti-Catholicism. Although Salter is identifying themes and ideas that tie early modern and Gothic literature together, he is doing so by examining how Gothic writers co-opted particular aspects of specific early modern plays. One chapter from *Gothic Shakespeares* – Glennis Byron’s “‘As One Dead’”: *Romeo and Juliet* in the “‘Twilight’” Zone’

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<sup>72</sup> Michael Gamer and Robert Miles, ‘Gothic Shakespeare on the Romantic Stage’, in *Gothic Shakespeares*, ed. by John Drakakis and Dale Townshend (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), pp. 131-152; Peter Hutchings, ‘Theatres of Blood: Shakespeare and the Horror Film’, in *Gothic Shakespeares*, ed. by John Drakakis and Dale Townshend (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), pp. 153-166.

<sup>73</sup> Fred Botting and Scott Wilson, ‘Gothsphere and the Origins of Cultural Studies’, in *Gothic Shakespeares*, ed. by John Drakakis and Dale Townshend (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), pp. 186-200.

<sup>74</sup> Hamm.

<sup>75</sup> Salter.

– also approaches this topic in this way.<sup>76</sup> Byron’s chapter explores how *Romeo and Juliet* was rewritten as a teen paranormal romance in Stephanie Meyer’s *Twilight* (2008), and although Byron does note Meyer’s textual and paratextual references to Shakespeare’s play, Byron’s examination of how Meyer co-opts the plot and characters of *Romeo and Juliet* for her own work allows for a closer comparison between *Twilight* and Shakespeare’s tragedy. Byron’s work on *Twilight* is significantly different to the research topic of this thesis but Byron also demonstrates how a research project such as this could focus on much more recent Gothic and Gothic-adjacent literature.

In *Shakespearean Gothic*, Marjean D. Purinton and Marliss C. Desens examine Shakespeare’s parodic haunting of Thomas Love Peacock’s *Nightmare Abbey* (1818) and Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* (1817), by exploring how their familiarity with Shakespeare’s plays, especially *Hamlet*, allowed Gothic writers to parody the works of Shakespeare within their own. Purinton and Desens combine an exploration of Shakespeare’s general legacy in the eighteenth century with an analysis of how two texts, *Nightmare Abbey* and *Northanger Abbey*, parodied specific elements of plays such as *Hamlet*.<sup>77</sup> In the same edited collection, Carolyn A. Weber draws comparisons between Shakespeare’s *King Lear* (1606) and Mary Shelley’s incestuous Gothic novella *Matilda* (1820).<sup>78</sup> Weber notes that Shelley’s ‘careful rereading of *King Lear*’ influenced her writing of *Matilda* and that ‘Shelley’s appropriation [...] of Shakespeare follows three tracks’ – *Matilda* mirroring Cordelia as the good daughter ‘who suffers at the hands of an irrational patriarch’, the

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<sup>76</sup> Glennis Byron, “‘As One Dead’: *Romeo and Juliet* in the “Twilight” Zone”, in *Gothic Shakespeares*, ed. by John Drakakis and Dale Townshend (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), pp. 167-185.

<sup>77</sup> Marjean D. Purinton and Marliss C. Desens, ‘Shakespearean Shadows’ Parodic Haunting of Thomas Love Peacock’s *Nightmare Abbey* and Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey*’, in *Shakespearean Gothic*, ed. by Christy Desmet and Anne Williams (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009), pp. 87-110.

<sup>78</sup> Carolyn A. Weber, ‘Fatherly and Daughterly Pursuits: Mary Shelley’s *Matilda* and Shakespeare’s *King Lear*’, *Shakespearean Gothic*, ed. by Christy Desmet and Anne Williams (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009), pp. 111-132.



question of forgiveness in father-daughter conflicts, and ‘the interrelations between, and necessary interdependence, of victims and aggressors in power politics’.<sup>79</sup>

Jeffrey Kahan, in an essay on ‘The Curse of Shakespeare’ in *Shakespearean Gothic*, explores how W. H. Ireland turned from forging Shakespeare to writing Gothic literature in 1799. Kahan states that writers of eighteenth-century Gothic, including Ireland, either borrowed from Milton, who borrowed from Shakespeare, or borrowed directly from Shakespeare.<sup>80</sup> Kahan traces Shakespeare’s convoluted and complicated legacy, arguing that Gothic literature, and the work of writers such as Ireland, ‘consisted in reforging the ideas and even the phrases of others’, most often the ideas and phrases of Shakespeare.<sup>81</sup>

Yael Shapira’s contribution to *Shakespearean Gothic*, ‘Into the Madman’s Dream: the Gothic Abduction of *Romeo and Juliet*’, is an examination of how Gothic literature ‘abducted’ or appropriated *Romeo and Juliet* and Shapira’s essay works alongside the research of Salter and Byron by exploring how ‘[s]hards of William Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* are scattered throughout’ Matthew Lewis’ *The Monk*.<sup>82</sup> Unlike Salter who focuses upon Lewis’ anti-Catholic inversion of Shakespeare’s play, Shapira acknowledges that *Romeo and Juliet* informed far more than just Lewis’ depiction of Catholicism and Catholic characters. Shapira’s approach in this essay differs from her approach in ‘Shakespeare, *The Castle of Otranto*, and the Problem of the Corpse on the Eighteenth-Century Stage’ as she analyses how *Romeo and Juliet* directly influenced Lewis’ *The Monk* rather than examining Shakespeare’s general legacy in eighteenth-century Gothic literature.

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<sup>79</sup> Weber, p. 113.

<sup>80</sup> Jeffrey Kahan, ‘The Curse of Shakespeare’, in *Shakespearean Gothic*, ed. by Christy Desmet and Anne Williams (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009), pp. 60-83.

<sup>81</sup> Kahan, p. 80.

<sup>82</sup> Yael Shapira, ‘Into the Madman’s Dream: the Gothic Abduction of *Romeo and Juliet*’, in *Shakespearean Gothic*, ed. by Christy Desmet and Anne Williams (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009), pp. 133-154.

Finally, Christy Desmet's essay on 'the Shakespearizing of Dracula' examines how Bram Stoker drew upon several of Shakespeare's plays in the creation of his characters. Desmet acknowledges that Stoker's novel is 'a tribute to Ellen Terry', a renowned Shakespearean actress, but Desmet also draws comparisons between Stoker's actual text and the works of Shakespeare.<sup>83</sup> This act of comparison allows for the relationship between early modern and Gothic literature to be discussed beyond one actress' interpretation of characters such as Lady Macbeth and Ophelia. For example, Desmet states that Lucy, as the vampiric anti-mother who feeds on children, is like 'Lady Macbeth, who would dash out her nursing babe's brains'.<sup>84</sup> This statement reflects the two-way relationship between early modern literature and Gothic literature as Lucy is based upon Lady Macbeth and through Lucy, Lady Macbeth can be read as a vampiric anti-mother. Desmet's work begins to combine the exploration of Shakespeare's legacy in Gothic literature with the examination of the Gothic potential of Shakespeare's own work. In this thesis, I aim to emphasise the two-way relationship that Desmet touches upon in this moment of analysis by combining research into the afterlives of early modern plays in Gothic literature with the approach taken by scholars who work on early modern and Renaissance literature who often examine the Gothic potential of early modern drama.

In comparison to Gothic scholars, scholars who work upon early modern and Renaissance literature tend to focus on how early modern literature can be read as 'proto-Gothic', which is the term usually used in this research, by examining how Gothic themes, ideas, and aesthetics are depicted in early modern literature. In this approach, there is a shift towards a focus on the analysis of early modern texts themselves rather than the Gothic texts that they may have informed. This is the approach I have taken for most of this thesis as I

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<sup>83</sup> Christy Desmet, 'Remembering Ophelia: Ellen Terry and the Shakespearizing of *Dracula*', in *Shakespearean Gothic*, ed. by Christy Desmet and Anne Williams (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009), pp. 198-216.

<sup>84</sup> Desmet, p. 207.

focus mainly on the representation of Gothic themes, ideas, and aesthetics in early modern drama but I have also combined this style of research with elements that address the general and direct influence that early modern texts may have had on Gothic literature to open up a two-way conversation between these two areas of literature.

Various chapters in *Gothic Renaissance* analyse the themes and aesthetics of early modern literature to discuss their proto-Gothic, or pre-Gothic, potential, exploring a range of ideas from scopophobia to Caliban's Gothic body.<sup>85</sup> Although each chapter approaches the topic in a slightly different way, by focusing upon themes, ideas, and aesthetics in early modern literature, *Gothic Renaissance* shifts our attention towards the pre-Gothic potential of early modern literature rather than focusing on the role of Shakespeare in Gothic literature.

John Drakakis' chapter on 'Yorick's Skull' focuses on Gregory Doran's 2008 production at the RSC, which featured a real skull in the role of Yorick, as a starting point for rereading early modern literature through a Gothic lens of death, decay, and reality.<sup>86</sup> Drakakis draws upon a range of early modern literature, from John Donne to John Webster, and discusses their possible connections to Gothic novels. In comparison to the scholarship I have discussed previously in this introduction, Drakakis is concerned with the themes and aesthetics that can be found in both early modern and Gothic literature rather than pinpointing specific sections of Gothic novels that are derived from the work of Shakespeare.

Catherine Belsey explores Shakespeare's introduction of the uncanny to the Renaissance stage in 'Beyond Reason: Hamlet and Early Modern Stage Ghosts.'<sup>87</sup> While the

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<sup>85</sup> *Gothic Renaissance*, ed. by Elisabeth Bronfen and Beate Neumeier (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).

<sup>86</sup> John Drakakis, 'Yorick's Skull', in *Gothic Renaissance*, ed. by Elisabeth Bronfen and Beate Neumeier (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pp. 17-31.

<sup>87</sup> Catherine Belsey, 'Beyond Reason: *Hamlet* and Early Modern Stage Ghosts', in *Gothic Renaissance*, ed. by Elisabeth Bronfen and Beate Neumeier (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pp. 32-54.

‘uncanny’ is a theoretical term to describe a psychological experience which has been retroactively applied to Gothic literature, Belsey is still engaging with a similar idea to Drakakis by determining how Shakespearean ghosts differed from earlier stage ghosts and the ways in which Shakespearean ghosts evoked terror both in the onstage characters and the audience in a way that is particularly Gothic.

Ulrike Zimmermann’s essay on ‘Bright Hair and Brittle Bones – Gothic Affinities in Metaphysical Poetry’ reads John Donne’s poetry as foregrounding the proto-Gothic mode.<sup>88</sup> Zimmerman’s essay is one of the few pieces of criticism in this area that does not focus on drama and, instead, Zimmermann marks the link between death and desire, both religious and sexual, as one of the ‘Gothic affinities’ in metaphysical poetry.<sup>89</sup> Another chapter in *Gothic Renaissance* that explores proto-Gothic poetry is Garrett Sullivan’s essay ‘Vampirism in the Bower of Bliss’.<sup>90</sup> Sullivan explores Gothic readings of Spenser’s Acrasia as a vampire or something ‘undead’ and Sullivan states that Spenser’s *The Faerie Queen* (1596) ‘offers an example of Julia Kristeva’s concept of abjection’ through Acrasia as she is ‘not only vampire and predatory mother but also cannibal, addict, succubus, lover and enchantress’.<sup>91</sup> Sullivan’s chapter, like Zimmermann’s, reveals how other forms of literature produced in early modern England can be discussed as potentially pre-Gothic.

Chapters in this collection by Per Sivefors, Elisabeth Bronfen, Beate Neumeier, Lynn Meskill, Duncan Salkeld, Andrea Brady, Richard Wilson, and Andreas Höfele also approach the topic by examining thematic or aesthetic interactions between early modern and Gothic

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<sup>88</sup> Ulrike Zimmermann, ‘Bright Hair and Brittle Bones – Gothic Affinities in Metaphysical Poetry’, in *Gothic Renaissance*, ed. by Elisabeth Bronfen and Beate Neumeier (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pp. 152-166.

<sup>89</sup> Zimmerman, p. 163.

<sup>90</sup> Garrett Sullivan, ‘Vampirism in the Bower of Bliss’, in *Gothic Renaissance*, ed. by Elisabeth Bronfen and Beate Neumeier (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pp. 167-179.

<sup>91</sup> Sullivan, p. 168.

literature.<sup>92</sup> Each scholar approaches the topic in their own style but their focus on the exploration of Gothic themes and/or aesthetics in early modern literature creates a coherent collection which examines the proto-Gothic potential of early modern literature.

Two chapters in *Gothic Shakespeares* also follow this approach: Elisabeth Bronfen's 'Shakespeare's Nocturnal World' and Steven Craig's 'Shakespeare among the Goths'.<sup>93</sup> Elisabeth Bronfen's chapter in *Gothic Shakespeares* investigates the Gothic potential of *The Merchant of Venice* (c.1598), *Romeo and Juliet*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (c.1595). By examining a particular theme or aesthetic within these plays, specifically their nocturnal scenes, Bronfen contributes to the idea of a pre-history of Gothic themes and ideas in early modern literature by drawing attention to the shared traits between early modern literature and Gothic literature. Craig's approach is different to Bronfen's as he examines the history of the Goths and their place within Shakespeare's world but Craig is still engaging with the same method of examining the relationship between early modern and Gothic literature as this essay suggests that Shakespeare's attempts to disrupt the binary view of Goths and Romans destabilised how the Elizabethans understood the Goths and related to the Romans. In the first chapter of this thesis, I will build on Craig's analysis of the binary view of Goths

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<sup>92</sup> Per Sivefors, "'What do I fear? Myself?': Nightmares, Conscience and the 'Gothic' Self in *Richard III*", in *Gothic Renaissance*, ed. by Elisabeth Bronfen and Beate Neumeier (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pp. 55-74; Elisabeth Bronfen, 'Queen Margaret's Haunting Revenge: The Gothic Legacy of Shakespeare's War of the Roses', in *Gothic Renaissance*, ed. by Elisabeth Bronfen and Beate Neumeier (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pp. 75-92; Beate Neumeier, 'Vision and Desire: Fantastic Renaissance Spectacles', in *Gothic Renaissance*, ed. by Elisabeth Bronfen and Beate Neumeier (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pp. 95-112; Lynn Meskill, 'From Grotesque to Gothic: Ben Jonson's *Masque of Queenes*', in *Gothic Renaissance*, ed. by Elisabeth Bronfen and Beate Neumeier (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pp. 113-136; Duncan Salkeld, 'Exhumations: Scopophobia in Renaissance Texts', in *Gothic Renaissance*, ed. by Elisabeth Bronfen and Beate Neumeier (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pp. 139-151; Andrea Brady, 'Ghostly Authorities and the British Popular Press', in *Gothic Renaissance*, ed. by Elisabeth Bronfen and Beate Neumeier (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pp. 180-196; Richard Wilson, 'Monstrous to Our Human Reason: Minding the Gap in *The Winter's Tale*', in *Gothic Renaissance*, ed. by Elisabeth Bronfen and Beate Neumeier (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pp. 199-217; Andreas Höfele, 'The Rage of Caliban: Dorian Gray and the Gothic Body', in *Gothic Renaissance*, ed. by Elisabeth Bronfen and Beate Neumeier (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pp. 244-264.

<sup>93</sup> Elisabeth Bronfen, 'Shakespeare's Nocturnal World', in *Gothic Shakespeares*, ed. by John Drakakis and Dale Townshend (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), pp. 20-41; Steven Craig, 'Shakespeare Among the Goths', in *Gothic Shakespeares*, ed. by John Drakakis and Dale Townshend (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), pp. 42-59.

and Romans to suggest that Shakespeare's deliberate attempts to destabilise this boundary in *Titus Andronicus* (c.1593) lead to a hybrid national identity which can be read as pre-Gothic. Craig also explores the general legacy of Shakespeare in Gothic literature in the latter sections of this chapter.

Jessica Walker's chapter on 'History, Fear, and the Gothic in *Richard III*', published in *Shakespearean Gothic*, briefly reviews the 'myth of Gothic ancestry', which I will discuss in regards to *Titus Andronicus* in the first chapter of this thesis, before analysing Shakespeare's use of ghosts and liminal spaces in *Richard III* (c.1593).<sup>94</sup> By focusing on an examination of Shakespeare's pre-Gothic ideas, alongside a very short analysis of the parallels between Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* and Shakespeare's *Richard III*, Walker contributes to an understanding of how Gothic themes and ideas were depicted in early modern literature. Walker's main aim is not to determine moments where Walpole deliberately mirrors Shakespeare's play in his own novel but, instead, this essay examines the thematic links between *Richard III* and *The Castle of Otranto* to suggest a pre-history of Gothic ideas in Shakespeare's work.

Adriana Raducanu's 2013 essay 'Reading Like the Japanese: the Gothic Aesthetics of Horror in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*' offers an exploration of the bloody aesthetic of *Titus Andronicus*.<sup>95</sup> Raducanu focuses on the aesthetic of horror, an aesthetic which is so prominent in *Titus Andronicus*, to argue that the gory horror of Shakespeare's earliest revenge tragedy allows it to be read as a proto-Gothic play. Raducanu's essay seems to somewhat contradict Shapira's exploration of how Walpole navigated the restrictions of the eighteenth-century stage in regards to the representation of death in early Gothic literature

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<sup>94</sup> Jessica Walker, "'We are not safe': History, Fear and the Gothic in *Richard III*", in *Shakespearean Gothic*, ed. by Christy Desmet and Anne Williams (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009), pp. 181-197.

<sup>95</sup> Adriana Raducanu, 'Reading Like the Japanese: The Gothic Aesthetics of Horror in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*', *Gender Studies*, 12 (2013), 144-163.

but, as Raducanu is reading the play from a ‘Japanese perspective’, rather than in comparison to eighteenth-century British Gothic, the comparison that Raducanu makes is still viable. Raducanu reads violence in *Titus Andronicus* as ‘a conscious *erasure of empathy* and an implementation of the *alienation effect*’ which are ‘processes that can also be discerned in Japanese culture at large’ and, through this aesthetic, Raducanu argues that the play can be read as potentially proto-Gothic.<sup>96</sup>

Finally, I want to discuss Gary Taylor’s essay, ‘Shakespeare’s Early Gothic *Hamlet*’, which argues that the first quarto of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* is more ‘Gothic’ than later versions of the play and is best understood as an early Gothic tragedy.<sup>97</sup> Taylor analyses the language of scene fourteen of Q1, which is not present in Q2 or the Folio version of *Hamlet*, to suggest that not only is Q1 indisputably Shakespeare’s work but also that Q1 reveals a preoccupation with the Goths of Europe.<sup>98</sup> Taylor approaches the ghost of Hamlet’s father as a ‘Gothic ghost’ and combines an aesthetical and thematic analysis of *Hamlet* with a lexical investigation of scene fourteen to argue that Q1 of *Hamlet* is an early example of a Gothic text. Taylor’s approach is somewhat similar to my own, especially in regards to how I will analyse the pre-Gothic elements of *Titus Andronicus* in chapter one of this thesis, but Taylor’s analysis of the pre-Gothic aspects of *Hamlet* is limited to the presence of the ghost, which has been frequently analysed by early modern scholars and Gothic scholars in regards to *Hamlet*’s proto-Gothic or pre-Gothic potential, and to the possible links between Danes and Goths. Although arguing that Q1 should be read as an early Gothic tale, Taylor, like the various Gothic writers and scholars that have come before him, attempts to legitimise Gothic aspects of *Hamlet* by proving that they belong to Shakespeare.

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<sup>96</sup> Raducanu, 146.

<sup>97</sup> Gary Taylor, ‘Shakespeare’s Early Gothic *Hamlet*’, *Critical Survey*, 31 (2019), 4-25.

<sup>98</sup> Taylor.

Out of the three edited collections that have been published on this subject, *Gothic Shakespeares* and *Shakespearean Gothic* focus exclusively on the works of Shakespeare while *Gothic Renaissance* examines a variety of early modern writers and a variety of literary forms, including poetry and pamphlets. In this thesis, I will attempt to find a middle-ground between these two approaches by only examining early modern drama, as this was the form of literature which influenced many Gothic writers, and exploring the works Shakespeare and various other early modern playwrights, including Christopher Marlowe and Henry Chettle. I intend for this project to be a sustained analysis of the representation of Gothic themes, ideas, and aesthetics in early modern drama by combining the approaches taken by the scholars who have previously worked on this topic.

This thesis seeks to determine whether there is a pre-history of Gothic ideas in the shared themes and concerns of early modern drama. I aim to address this topic, as stated earlier, by examining how the themes, ideas, and aesthetics we may consider ‘Gothic’ are depicted in early modern drama, combining an analysis of early modern drama with an exploration of the afterlives of these early modern texts in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. I also intend to offer a new term which can be used when discussing these texts, addressing the need for an expression that acknowledges the existence of the two-way relationship between early modern drama and Gothic literature that I am proposing in this thesis.

There are currently several terms used to refer to this area of research, including “proto-Gothic”, “early Gothic”, “early modern Gothic”, or “Renaissance Gothic”, most of which emphasise that early modern literature is not, in fact, “Gothic”. Liz Oakley-Brown refers to her own research into this area as “premodern Gothic” as she works with medieval literature alongside early modern literature but, for my own research, “pre-Gothic” is a more



appropriate term to use to describe the pre-history of Gothic ideas in early modern literature as this term suggests that although these texts present Gothic ideas, they are also separate from Gothic literature, tied to the context of their own time.<sup>99</sup> ‘Proto-Gothic’, while used by several of the researchers named above including Per Sivefors and Lynn Meskill, implies a much more formal relationship between early modern drama and Gothic literature.<sup>100</sup> ‘Proto-Gothic’ suggests that early modern drama is an earlier form of Gothic literature, which may not acknowledge the aspects of these plays that cannot be considered Gothic, while ‘early modern Gothic’ limits the scope of this research area to a specific era of literature. Although this project does focus on early modern drama, earlier texts could be analysed within the same parameters and they too could be referred to as “pre-Gothic”. “Early Gothic” could have been a useful term for this area of research, although it also implies that early modern literature is an earlier form of Gothic literature, but this term is already used by Gothic scholars such as Robert D. Hume and Robert Miles when discussing eighteenth-century Gothic literature, especially texts such as Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*, Clara Reeve’s *The Old English Baron* (1778), and *Vathek* (1787) by William Beckford.<sup>101</sup> I will refer to texts, ideas, and themes as “pre-Gothic” throughout this project in order to both recognise their Gothic potential and acknowledge that these texts are not, in fact, Gothic texts.

Despite the longstanding relationship between *Hamlet* and Gothic literature, this project will not include a detailed analysis of the play’s Gothic potential. *Hamlet* will be

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<sup>99</sup> Liz Oakley-Brown, ‘Premodern Gothic?’, unpublished paper delivered at the conference ‘Reimagining the Gothic: Returns, Revenge, Reckonings’ (University of Sheffield, 10-12 May 2019); Oakley-Brown also uses ‘Premodern Gothic’ to describe her interest in this area in her twitter bio: @earlymodatlancs.

<sup>100</sup> Sivefors; Meskill.

<sup>101</sup> Robert D. Hume, ‘Gothic versus Romantic: A Revaluation of the Gothic Novel’, *PLMA*, 84.2 (1969), 282-290; Robert Miles, ‘Europhobia: The Catholic Other in Horace Walpole and Charles Maturin’, in *European Gothic: A Spirited Exchange, 1760-1960*, ed. by Avril Horner (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 84–103; Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*; Clara Reeve, *The Old English Baron*, ed. by James Trainer and James Watt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); William Beckford, *Vathek*, ed. by Tom Keymer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

discussed briefly in the final chapter of the project, in regards to Shakespeare's depiction of *memento mori*, but as most of the research undertaken in this area focuses on *Hamlet* and Shakespeare's other works, as discussed earlier, this particular project aims to branch out to consider the works of other early modern playwrights alongside the works of Shakespeare. Similar to *Gothic Renaissance*, this project includes chapters that examine the works of various early modern playwrights, including Thomas Middleton, who is frequently mentioned in *Gothic Renaissance*, as well as Henry Chettle and Christopher Marlowe. Although Marlowe is mentioned very briefly in a few chapters of the collection, including Richard Wilson's chapter on 'Monstrous to Our Human Reason: Minding the Gap in *The Winter's Tale*', the plays of Marlowe and Chettle are not analysed in detail in *Gothic Renaissance*.<sup>102</sup> There will be points of convergence between *Gothic Renaissance* and this project, especially in regards to popular plays such as Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1606), but this project also attempts to expand this area of research by analysing the works of playwrights that do not feature in the collection or the other collections and journal articles mentioned in this introduction. Also, unlike *Gothic Renaissance* which includes chapters on poetry and pamphlets, this project will only analyse early modern drama, with a focus on early modern tragedies and tragicomedies. This thesis focuses on early modern drama because Gothic novels sought to replicate the experience of watching early modern tragedies, such as *Hamlet*. Gothic novels and plays have also been discussed in this thesis, usually to give context to the analysis of early modern literature, but, in some cases, a new way of reading Gothic texts has been offered.

This thesis is split into four chapters, each examining how a different 'Gothic' idea is presented in early modern drama. Chapters two to four compare specific early modern plays

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<sup>102</sup> Wilson, p. 207.

to specific Gothic texts while chapter one focuses almost completely on Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*. In some cases, particularly in regards to Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* (c.1592), I have made direct comparisons between early modern plays and Gothic texts to emphasise the legacy of these early modern texts but, in others, these 'comparisons' have been made with the understanding that specific early modern texts may not have informed specific Gothic texts but, instead, an early modern play, or a collection of early modern plays, displays a particularly 'Gothic' idea.

Ideas of Gothic ancestry and the Gothic constitution, both of which were based on pseudohistorical understandings of British history, were formalised in the early eighteenth century and this resulted in Shakespeare's new role as the 'Gothic Bard' and, eventually, led to the rise of Gothic literature.<sup>103</sup> 'Gothic ancestry' can also be read as a form of nationalism and Gothic literature is, sometimes, read as an expression of English Protestant nationalism.<sup>104</sup> In chapter one, I argue that, in *Titus Andronicus*, Shakespeare offers a sixteenth-century version of Gothic identity which is also based upon pseudohistorical ideas of England's past.<sup>105</sup> While 'Gothic ancestry' and 'Gothic nationalism' are underlying themes in Gothic literature, it is their role in the inception of Gothic literature which is the focus of this chapter and I argue that *Titus Andronicus* can be read as pre-Gothic as it engages with ideas that were both unusual for Shakespeare's own time and led to the rise of Gothic literature in the eighteenth century. Chapter one aims to build upon the work of various academics, including Steven Craig, Johnathan Bate, Francesca T. Royster, and Jane Grogan, to propose the possibility of a pre-history of the eighteenth-century notion of Britain's Gothic

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<sup>103</sup> Montagu, p. 147.

<sup>104</sup> For examples of English Protestant nationalism in Gothic literature see: Eliza Parsons, *The Mysterious Warning, a German Tale*, 4 vols (London: printed for William Lane, at the Minerva-Press, 1796) and Eliza Parsons, *Castle of Wolfenbach; A German Story*, 2 vols (London: printed for William Lane, at the Minerva Press, Leadenhall-Street, and sold by E. Harlow, Pall-Mall, 1793).

<sup>105</sup> William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, ed. by Eugene M. Waith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

ancestry in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*.<sup>106</sup> In order to determine if *Titus Andronicus* can be considered a pre-Gothic play, chapter one will examine the development of a 'Gothic' identity in eighteenth-century Britain, determine how Shakespeare's dual role as 'Gothic Bard' and the 'Father of the *British Stage*, who founded, rais'd, and modell'd it' contributed to the idea of a hybrid national identity, and seek to understand how and why Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* was Gothicised by critics in the eighteenth century.<sup>107</sup> It is only once an understanding of an eighteenth-century Gothic identity has been established that chapter one can move on to exploring what 'Gothic' meant in sixteenth-century England before analysing how Gothic, Roman, and hybrid identities are depicted in *Titus Andronicus* to determine if *Titus Andronicus* presents a pre-history of Gothic ideas surrounding Gothic identity. I also briefly evaluate how Shakespeare uses Ovid to create a common literary identity within the play and how Shakespeare's use of Ovid can be read as pre-Gothic as it reflects how Shakespeare himself was used in eighteenth-century Britain. The first chapter is the only chapter in this thesis that does not directly reference a specific Gothic text and, instead, focuses on a wider cultural understand of Gothic ancestry in eighteenth-century Britain which contributed to the rise of Gothic literature.

Chapter two will focus on the 'Gothic' trope of the Faustian pact to argue that aspects of Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* can be read as pre-Gothic both due to their prevalence in Gothic Faustian pacts and Marlowe's decision to shift away from the literary traditions of morality plays such as *The Castle of Perseverance* (c.1425) and

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<sup>106</sup> Craig; Jonathan Bate, 'Introduction', in *Titus Andronicus*, ed. by Jonathan Bate (London: Arden, 1995); Francesca T. Royster, 'White-Limed Walls: Whiteness and Gothic Extremism in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 51 (2000), 432-455; Jane Grogan, "'Headless Rome" and Hungry Goths: Herodotus and *Titus Andronicus*', *English Literary Renaissance*, 43 (2013), 30-61.

<sup>107</sup> Montagu, p. 147; Lewis Theobald quoted in Brian Vickers, *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, vol. 2 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), p. 354.

*Mankind* (c.1470).<sup>108</sup> Firstly, by focusing on two Gothic Faustian pacts, William Beckford's *Vathek* and Matthew Lewis' *The Monk*, chapter two aims to understand how Gothic Faustian pacts were characterised by feelings of terror and spiritual despair, illustrating what Julia Kristeva calls the 'abject'.<sup>109</sup> Once a 'Gothic' depiction of spiritual despair in the Faustian pact has been presented, this chapter will move on to, very briefly, delve into the Harlequin Faustian pacts of the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries to emphasise how later Gothic Faustian pacts shifted away from the slapstick humour and levity which characterised Faustian pacts of the Restoration era. Finally, I will analyse particular moments in Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, both the A text (1604) and the B text (1616), to consider the possibility of a pre-history of Gothic portrayals of spiritual despair and the abject in early modern Faustian pacts.<sup>110</sup> Building upon the work of Pompa Banerjee, Phoebe S. Spinrad, and Susan Snyder, I will suggest that Marlowe's decision to focus on God's abandonment of Faustus and Faustus' inability to repent allows the final scene of *Doctor Faustus* to be read as potentially pre-Gothic as Marlowe moved away from the optimistic explorations of redemption and salvation which are depicted in medieval morality plays towards a desolate, depressing suggestion that Faustus cannot be saved.<sup>111</sup> Throughout this chapter, I will draw attention to the structural, textual, and thematic similarities between Gothic Faustian pacts and Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* in order to emphasise that the relationship between Marlowe's text and the Gothic Faustian pact is a two-way connection.

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<sup>108</sup> *The Castle of Perseverance*, ed. by David N. Klausner (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2010); *Mankind*, ed. by Kathleen Ashley and Gerard NeCastro (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2010).

<sup>109</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*; Beckford, *Vathek*; Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

<sup>110</sup> Christopher Marlowe, 'Doctor Faustus, A-text', in *Doctor Faustus and Other Plays*, ed. by David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 137-183; Christopher Marlowe, 'Doctor Faustus, B-text', in *Doctor Faustus and Other Plays*, ed. by David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 185-246.

<sup>111</sup> Pompa Banerjee, 'I, Mephistophilis: Self, Other, and Demonic Parody in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*', *Christianity & Literature*, 42.2 (1993), 221-241; Phoebe S. Spinrad, *The Summons of Death on the Medieval and Renaissance English Stage* (Columbus: Ohio, 1987); Susan Snyder, 'Marlowe's "Doctor Faustus" as an Inverted Saint's Life', *Studies in Philology*, 63.4 (1966), 565-577.

The ‘Other’ is a significant element of Gothic literature and chapter three will explore Gothic representation of the ‘Other’ through witches and witchcraft in both early modern plays and Gothic novels. Firstly, in this chapter will I establish a conventional depiction of witchcraft, drawing upon the work of Keith Thomas, Gary K. Waite, and Diane Purkiss to understand the cultural implications of witchcraft in early modern England and eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain.<sup>112</sup> I will then demonstrate how Matthew Lewis’ *The Monk* engages with this long-standing representation of witchcraft which can also be seen in a variety of early modern witch plays. However, the main aim of this chapter is to understand how early modern witch plays presented their audiences with Gothic representations of witchcraft and I will suggest that Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* and Thomas Middleton’s *The Witch* (c.1613) present their audiences with a representation of the witch as the Other through the Gothic trope of doubling, a representation which can be most clearly seen in Charlotte Dacre’s *Zofloya: Or, The Moor* (1806).<sup>113</sup> Although witchcraft is not a common topic in Gothic literature nor Gothic criticism, this chapter will build upon the research of Adriana Craciun, Diane Long Hoeveler, Jennifer L. Airey and various other critics to suggest that Charlotte Dacre’s *Zofloya* can be reframed to discuss Dacre’s depiction of witchcraft, examining not only Dacre’s exploration of common notions of witchcraft, particularly female sexual desire and female violence, but also her doubling of witch and non-witch characters to create a Gothic representation of witchcraft which relies upon the Gothic trope of doubling.<sup>114</sup> In chapter three, I will also argue that *The Witch of Edmonton* by Thomas Dekker, John Ford,

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<sup>112</sup> Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London: Penguin, 2012); Gary K Waite, *Heresy, Magic, and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History* (London: Routledge, 1997).

<sup>113</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Macbeth*, ed. by Nicholas Brooke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Thomas Middleton, *The Witch*, ed. by Elizabeth Schafer (London: A & C Black Ltd., 1994); Charlotte Dacre, *Zofloya: or, the Moor*, ed. by Adriana Craciun (Peterborough ON: Broadview Press, 2006).

<sup>114</sup> Adriana Craciun, *Fatal Women of Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Diane Long Hoeveler, ‘Charlotte Dacre’s *Zofloya*: A Case Study in Miscegenation as Sexual and Racial Nausea’, *European Romantic Review*, 8.2 (1997), 185-199; Jennifer L. Airey, ‘“He Bears No Rival Near the Throne”: Male Narcissism and Early Feminism in the Works of Charlotte Dacre’, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 30 (2018), 223-241.

and William Rowley (1621) presents us with a sociological reading of witchcraft that resembles Mary Shelley's Gothic inversion of eighteenth-century notions of witchcraft in *Valperga* (1823), noting that *The Witch of Edmonton* does so within its own historical context.<sup>115</sup> I will suggest that *The Witch of Edmonton*, like Shelley's *Valperga*, focuses on the societal position of the Other, in this case the witch, to offer an opportunity for marginalised members of society to gain some form of power through witchcraft.

Aesthetics of death, decay, and the macabre were vital to creating an atmosphere of horror and terror in Gothic literature and chapter four will suggest that Gothic literature's appropriation of the aesthetic of *memento mori*, a symbolic reminder of death, can be seen, to some extent, in a variety of early modern revenge tragedies. In order to establish how early modern revenge tragedies present us with a similar appropriation and commodification the aesthetic of *memento mori*, this chapter will firstly recognise how the aesthetic of *memento mori* was appropriated in eighteenth-century art and architecture through the Gothic Revival before demonstrating how a similar shift towards an appropriation of the aesthetic of *memento mori*, alongside an appreciation of its original purpose, can be seen in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. After establishing a wider cultural appropriation and commodification of *memento mori* in both early modern England and eighteenth-century Britain, I will analyse the ways in which Gothic literature appropriated the aesthetic of traditional, religious images of *memento mori*, focusing on Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, Matthew Lewis' *The Castle Spectre* (1797), and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), before considering how early modern revenge tragedies, specifically Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Henry Chettle's *The Tragedy of Hoffman* (c.1602), and Thomas Middleton's *The*

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<sup>115</sup> Thomas Dekker, John Ford and William Rowley, 'The Witch of Edmonton', in *A Woman Killed with Kindness and Other Domestic Plays*, ed. by Martin Wiggins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 129-197; Mary Shelley, *Valperga: Or the Life and Adventures of Castruccio, Prince of Lucca. By the Author of "Frankenstein."* in *Three Volumes* (London: Printed for G. and W. B. Whittaker, 1823).

*Revenger's Tragedy*, anticipated this Gothic appropriation of *memento mori* by appropriating and commodifying the imagery of *memento mori* to create a similar aesthetic of death to that which can be seen in Gothic literature.<sup>116</sup> Finally, building upon the work of Sharon Ruston, David S. Hogsette, and Duke Pesta, this chapter will examine Mary Shelley's anatomical version of *memento mori* in *Frankenstein* to argue that a pre-history of this form of appropriation, both of the aesthetic of *memento mori* and scientific language of the anatomical theatre, can be seen in Henry Chettle's *The Tragedy of Hoffman*.<sup>117</sup> Drawing upon their shared interpretations of the imagery and language of anatomical theatres, this final section of this chapter aims to demonstrate that, while Shelley's alternative appropriation of *memento mori* seems to be the beginning of the Gothic's obsession with combining science and *memento mori* to further the aesthetic of death and decay which characterises the Gothic, Chettle's *The Tragedy of Hoffman* is an early example of how the amalgamation of *memento mori* and anatomical science can be used to induce horror and terror within an audience.

Combining a range of canonical and less canonical primary texts, this thesis will argue strongly for a notion of the pre-Gothic that was situated in the Gothic mode of the eighteenth century and Romantic period more firmly than we have allowed to date.

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<sup>116</sup> Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*; Matthew Lewis, *The Castle Spectre: A Drama. In Five Acts* (London: printed for J. Bell, NO. 148, Oxford-Street, 1798); Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein, Or, the Modern Prometheus*, the 1818 text, ed. by Marilyn Butler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); *Hamlet*; Henry Chettle, 'The Tragedy of Hoffman', in *Five Revenge Tragedies*, ed. by Emma Smith (London: Penguin Classics, 2012), pp. 243-324; Thomas Middleton, 'The Revenger's Tragedy', in *Four Revenge Tragedies*, ed. by Katherine Eisaman Maus (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 93-173.

<sup>117</sup> Sharon Ruston, 'Chemistry and the Science of Transformation in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 41 (2019), 255-270; David S. Hogsette, 'Metaphysical Intersections in *Frankenstein*: Mary Shelley's Theistic Investigation of Scientific Materialism and Transgressive Autonomy', *Christianity & Literature*, 60.4 (2011), 531-559; Duke Pesta, 'Articulating Skeletons: Hamlet, Hoffman, and the Anatomical Graveyard', *Cahiers Élisabéthains: A Journal of English Renaissance Studies*, 69 (2006), 21-39.



## I – *Titus Andronicus* and Britain’s Gothic Identity

Then, madam, stand resolved, but hope withal  
The selfsame gods that armed the Queen of Troy  
With opportunity of sharp revenge  
Upon the Thracian tyrant in his tent  
May favour Tamora, the Queen of Goths  
(When Goths were Goths and Tamora was queen)  
To quit the bloody wrongs upon her foes.  
— William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*

Recent scholars have demonstrated the extent to which Gothic literature can be seen as a nationalist project with Yael Shapira noting the ‘patriotic’ duty of the depiction of death in Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* and Diane Long Hoeveler arguing that we can make some ‘assumptions about [Eliza] Parsons’s personal beliefs on the basis of her novel’, including her ‘blatantly nationalistic [...] celebration of British superiority’, in her introduction to an edition of Eliza Parsons’ *The Castle of Wolfenbach*.<sup>1</sup> As such, it is hardly surprising that Gothic literature made use of Shakespeare in his role of national Bard.

While Gothic literature did employ Shakespeare in his role of the national Bard, the genre was also influenced by the Gothic Revival, an architectural movement which sought to reintroduce elements of Gothic architecture into British homes, and the ‘Gothic’ politics of

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<sup>1</sup> Yael Shapira, ‘Shakespeare, *The Castle of Otranto*, and the Problem of the Corpse on the Eighteenth-Century Stage’, *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 36 (2012), 1-29 (4); Diane Long Hoeveler, ‘Introduction’, in *The Castle of Wolfenbach: A German Story*, ed. by Diane Long Hoeveler (Chicago: Valancourt Books, 2006), pp. vii-xv (p. ix).

the early eighteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Gothic politics, especially Whiggish Gothic politics, can be traced into early Gothic literature and in this chapter, I will suggest that early hints of ‘Gothic’ politics can, possibly, be seen in early modern drama.

During the early part of the eighteenth century, the idea of a British Gothic identity was introduced by scholars and politicians to promote the idea of a constitutional monarchy but, as I will demonstrate later in this chapter, ‘British Gothic’ was an identity which relied upon misconceptions about Britain’s Gothic ancestry and a historical ‘Gothic constitution’ upon which Britain was supposedly built.<sup>3</sup> Eventually, Britain embraced the Gothic Revival, an architectural movement which borrowed from medieval architecture, and, later in the eighteenth century, Gothic literature. The origins of Gothic literature can be seen as an attempt to combine the ‘old’, mainly medieval and early modern, and ‘new’ aspects of English literature to create a new genre that fitted into an English literary tradition that can be traced back to Shakespeare. Shakespeare was embraced as the ‘Gothic Bard’ during this time, as noted in the introduction to this thesis, a moniker which acknowledged and, perhaps, celebrated the ‘barbaric’ nature of Shakespeare’s plays while emphasising his role as the national bard. However, several of his plays, notably *Titus Andronicus* (c.1593), were Gothicised by eighteenth-century critics who regarded the plays as ‘rude’ or ‘base’.<sup>4</sup> While Shakespeare’s transformation into ‘our Gothic Bard’ is, generally, regarded as positive, the

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<sup>2</sup> In this chapter, I will be using ‘British’ in regards to the eighteenth century and ‘English’ when referring to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Even before the Union in 1707, there was a strong sense that ‘Gothic’ identity encompassed both English and Scottish people, as noted by Nick Groom in *Gothic: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), making ‘Gothic’ a ‘British’ identity even if England and Scotland were still often regarded as separate countries. Before the Union of 1707, English and Scottish national identities were clearly separate and as Shakespeare was an English writer, I will mainly be referring to English national identity and English literary heritage when discussing the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

<sup>3</sup> An early reference appears in Charles Davenant, *Essays Upon I. The Ballance of Power. II. The Right of Making War, Peace, and Alliances. III. Universal Monarchy* (London: J. Knapton, 1701), p. 223.

<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth Robinson Montagu, *An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespear, Compared with the Greek and French Dramatic Poets. With Some Remarks upon the Misrepresentations of Mons. de Voltaire* (London: printed for J. Dodsley, Pall-Mall; Mess. Baker and Leigh, York-Street, Covent-Garden; J. Walter, Charing-Cross; T. Cadell, in the Strand; and J. Wilkie, No 71. St. Paul's Church-Yard, 1769), p. 147.

Gothicisation of his plays, which involves the dismissal of these plays based on their ‘barbaric’ plots or ‘base’ language, reinforces that ‘Gothic’ was not always something to be celebrated in the eighteenth century. As a figure, Shakespeare was comfortably ‘Gothic’ because he could not control the age in which he lived and wrote but these plays were too ‘Gothic’ because they did not adhere to the standards that eighteenth-century critics and scholars expected from a play by Shakespeare.

Although *Titus Andronicus* was dismissed by eighteenth-century critics for being too ‘barbarous’, it may offer an insight into how Elizabethans viewed the Goths and how a Gothic, or Gothicised, English identity was possibly constructed in the sixteenth century. By complicating the presumed boundaries between Romans and Goths that were imposed by Renaissance scholars in sixteenth-century England and exploring the representation of brutality, barbarism, nationhood, and identity in *Titus Andronicus*, this chapter argues that the eighteenth-century ideas of Gothic identity and British Gothic ancestry, ideas which contributed to the creation of Gothic literature, are present in *Titus Andronicus*.

The first section of this chapter aims to understand what ‘Gothic’ meant in the eighteenth century, particularly in terms of national identity, and to understand the hybridity of national identity during this era by exploring how scholars and politicians sought to tether themselves to Britain’s Gothic past, a past based on pseudohistory and mythmaking, while still looking forward towards Britain’s enlightened future. In this section, I also examine Shakespeare’s role as the ‘Gothic Bard’, which was briefly discussed in the introduction to this thesis, before analysing how and why *Titus Andronicus* was Gothicised by eighteenth-century critics. *Titus Andronicus* was scrutinised heavily during the eighteenth century and this section will argue that *Titus Andronicus* became a ‘Gothic’ play in the eighteenth century through the constant questioning of its authorship. This section of the chapter will also

attempt to determine why eighteenth-century critics and scholars ignored the presence of the Goths in *Titus Andronicus* when they regularly referred to Britain's Gothic history and Shakespeare's role as the 'Gothic Bard'.<sup>5</sup>

In the second section of this chapter, I argue that *Titus Andronicus* can be read as a pre-Gothic play due to its representation of England's Gothic ancestry, hybrid identities, and shared literary histories. Adriana Raducanu has already suggested that *Titus Andronicus* could be read as a proto-Gothic play through its expression of horror in 'Reading Like the Japanese: the Gothic Aesthetics of Horror in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*' but I want to suggest that the play displays the eighteenth-century ideas of Gothic identity and Gothic ancestry, providing us with another way of reading the play as pre-Gothic that works alongside Raducanu's examination of the aesthetics of *Titus Andronicus*.<sup>6</sup> Several critics, including Jonathan Bate and Jane Grogan, have researched the ways in which Shakespeare encouraged his Elizabethan audiences to sympathise with the Goths and the ways in which early audiences potentially recognised themselves within Shakespeare's Goths, exploring the possibility of an Elizabethan Gothic identity but, instead of focusing only on Elizabethan Gothic and Roman identities as separate entities, I want to propose that Shakespeare presents a hybrid identity in *Titus Andronicus* that anticipates the identity of the eighteenth century which relied upon misconceptions about Britain's past and future.<sup>7</sup> The hybridity of Elizabethan identity and the ways in which *Titus Andronicus* reflected the hybridity of Elizabethan identity will be the main focus of this section to determine if there is a pre-history of Gothic identity presented in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*.

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<sup>5</sup> Montagu, p. 147.

<sup>6</sup> Adriana Raducanu, 'Reading Like the Japanese: The Gothic Aesthetics of Horror in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*', *Gender Studies*, 12 (2013), 144-163.

<sup>7</sup> Jonathan Bate, 'Introduction', in *Titus Andronicus*, ed. by Jonathan Bate (London: Arden, 1995); Jane Grogan, "'Headless Rome" and Hungry Goths: Herodotus and *Titus Andronicus*', *English Literary Renaissance*, 43 (2013), 30-61.

## I

For Fred Botting, the history of the Gothic is ‘a fabrication of the eighteenth century’ as eighteenth-century scholars and writers attempted to bridge the gap between feudalism and an ‘increasingly secularized and commercial political economy of liberalism’.<sup>8</sup> Botting’s explanation of the origins of the Gothic can be seen in the ways that writers, scholars, and politicians of the eighteenth century attempted to reclaim the Gothic heritage of Britain to construct a new British identity based on the freedoms that England was said to have experienced before being conquered by William I in 1066. Those who advocated for a stronger Parliament, mainly British Whigs, used the laws of their ‘Gothic’ ancestors (the Angles, the Saxons, the Danes, and the Goths), relying upon the idea of the ‘Gothic constitution’ or ‘Gothic government’, to emphasise the importance of the House of Commons in the governing of Britain.<sup>9</sup> The Gothic Constitution was part of the pseudohistory of pre-feudal Britain and Nick Groom notes that, initially, this idea of a British Gothic identity was presented as ‘English Teutonism’, an identity which was reinforced with ascension of the first Hanoverian King to the throne in 1714.<sup>10</sup> During the eighteenth century, a British Gothic identity was encouraged based on pseudohistorical notions of British Gothic ancestry and the Gothic Constitution. This identity took on multiple layers including the political, architectural, and literary but it can also be read as a form of nationalism. I will return to the notion of ‘Gothic nationalism’ later in this chapter but many scholars have noted the ‘patriotic’ or nationalistic undertones of Gothic literature.<sup>11</sup> The ‘patriotic’ nature of Gothic

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<sup>8</sup> Fred Botting, ‘Gothic Darkly: Heterotopia, History, Culture’, in *A New Companion to the Gothic*, ed. by David Punter (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2012), p. 15.

<sup>9</sup> Davenant, *Essays upon I. The Ballance of Power*, pp. 223-225.

<sup>10</sup> Nick Groom, *The Gothic: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); John Hare, *St. Edwards Ghost: Or, Anti-Normanisme* (London: printed for Richard Wodenoth at the Starre under Peters Church in Cornhill, 1647), p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> ‘Shakespeare, *The Castle of Otranto*, and the Problem of the Corpse on the Eighteenth-Century Stage’, 14; Ann Radcliffe’s writing has been described as nationalistic, or potentially nationalistic, by Katarina Gephardt in Katarina Gephardt, ‘Hybrid Gardens: Travel and the Nationalization of Taste in Ann Radcliffe’s Continental Landscapes’, *European Romantic Review*, 21.1 (2010), 3-28 and by Angela Wright in ‘In Search of Arden: Ann

literature may come from the genre's association with Shakespeare, which I briefly discussed in the introduction to this thesis and will expand upon through the course of this chapter, or it may, in part, be a reflection of the political origins of the pseudohistorical notion of 'Gothic ancestry'. The genre's association with Shakespeare may even be a consequence of the original political origins of the Gothic as Gothic writers attempted to establish a British literary identity based on the 'greatness' of the past.

In regards to political identity and political agendas, the Gothic Constitution was used by many, particularly British Whigs, to justify a constitutional monarchy and warn against the tyranny of absolute monarchs. Histories of England and Britain provided evidence for a historical constitutional monarchy, with the authors of these histories, including Walter Harris and William Blackstone, citing the Gothic constitution as an example of a government or a model which resembled the constitutional monarchy of the eighteenth century. In 1747, Andrew MacDowall made a strong statement regarding the Gothic constitution, arguing that 'It is to the Gothick constitution that we owe our Parliaments, which are the Guardians of our Rights and Liberties'.<sup>12</sup> In 1755, James Edward Oglethorpe stated that 'Kings in the Gothick Constitutions cannot raise Taxes' as 'all Taxes and Offices are in the Disposition of the executive Part of the Government' while in 1749, Walter Harris declared that the Gothic Constitution was a 'Government of Liberty' in which 'no Laws could be made, nor Money levied, without consent of the States'.<sup>13</sup> William Blackstone, in his *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765-1770), often referred to the 'Gothic Constitution' as an integral part

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Radcliffe's William Shakespeare', in *Gothic Shakespeares*, ed. by John Drakakis and Dale Townshend (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), pp. 111-130.

<sup>12</sup> Andrew MacDowall, *An Essay upon Feudal Holdings, Superiorities, and Hereditary Jurisdictions, in Scotland* (London: printed for R. Lee, at the Dove in Fleet-Street, 1747), p. 28.

<sup>13</sup> James Edward Oglethorpe, *The Naked Truth* (London: printed for A., 1755), p. 14; Walter Harris, *The History of the Life and Reign of William-Henry, Prince of Nassau and Orange, Stadtholder of the United Provinces, King of England, Scotland, France and Ireland, &c. In Which the affairs of Ireland are More Particularly Handled, than in Any Other History* (Dublin: printed by Edward Bate in George's-Lane, for the author, 1749), p. i.

of English history and Blackstone's *Commentaries* often sought to explain the relationship between the King, Parliament, and the people in pre-feudal England. In volume one, published in 1766, Blackstone explains that 'the judges of their county courts (which office is executed by our sheriff) were elected by the people, but confirmed by the king', and, later in volume one, Blackstone states that 'the king was bound by his coronation oath to conserve the peace' and, while this version of England's history is based on misconceptions and pseudohistorical evidence, it is easy to understand why British politicians in the eighteenth century, especially Whigs, advocated for a Gothic constitution which restricted the power of the King and relied upon a balance of power between monarchy and government.<sup>14</sup>

The Whigs' political stance was in opposition to absolute monarchy and they supported a parliamentary system which the 'Gothic Government' / 'Gothic constitution' / 'Gothic model' seemingly advocated for and their adoption of Gothicism allowed the Whigs to align their political views with those of a liberated past, basing their policies and ideas in Britain's history.<sup>15</sup> Certain aspects of the constitution, especially the use of a council or parliament, were considered to be essential by the Whigs in the eighteenth century as this aspect of the constitution emphasised their role in the management of the country while diminishing the role of the monarch which, by 1688, was a constitutional role rather than one of absolute power. Beyond the histories of England that I have mentioned, the idea of the 'Gothic Constitution' or the 'Gothic Government' was also frequently mentioned in eighteenth-century political pamphlets by those who agreed with or opposed the idea. Pamphleteers who discussed the notion of the Gothic constitution included the likes of

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<sup>14</sup> William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England. Book the First* (Dublin: printed for John Exshaw, Henry Saunders, Samuel Watson, and James Williams, 1766), p. 259, p. 329.

<sup>15</sup> Simon Clement, *Faults on Both Sides: Or, an Essay upon the Original Cause, Progress, and Mischievous Consequences of the Factions in this Nation* (London: 1710), p. 10; Davenant, *Essays Upon I. The Ballance of Power*, p. 223; A Doctor of Civil Laws, *A Compleat History of the Cevennees* (London: printed for Nich. Cox, at the Golden Bible the Corner of Pals-Grave-Court without Temple Bar, 1703), p. 187.

Charles Davenant, the son of playwright Sir William Davenant, and Daniel Defoe. Charles Davenant gained a reputation as a Tory MP for promoting ideas that benefited him personally rather than his political party, including the Gothic constitution, while Daniel Defoe, author of *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), often worked for the Whigs by writing "Tory" pamphlets that undermined the Tory point of view.<sup>16</sup> Defoe only mentions the Gothic Constitution once in his 1727 essay on *The history of the principal discoveries and improvements, in the several arts and sciences* but he does argue that it was the 'Gothic Governments' upon 'which the British Liberties [were] formed'.<sup>17</sup>

In many of these documents from the eighteenth century, the Gothic Constitution was said to have been used by all Gothic countries, including England and Scotland, and in 1706, as Nick Groom states, Britain's Gothic heritage was used by Unionists to argue in favour of the union between Scotland and England with one writer arguing that 'If the Goths, of whom, as it's said, the English are partly come, be Scythians, and that the Scythians are Scots, then in common consequence the Scots and English must have had the same Original, and been at first one People; and if so, it is no wonder, that after they were severed they should be so desirous now to unite'.<sup>18</sup> Britain's Gothic heritage was used for multiple political agendas and, eventually, the Gothic Constitution became so embedded in British political and legal history that the *Encyclopædia Britannica* referenced it in regards to a number of terms,

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<sup>16</sup> Davenant, *Essays upon I. The Ballance of Power*, pp. 223-225; Charles Davenant, *Essays upon Peace at Home, and War Abroad. In Two Parts. Part I* (London: printed for James Knapton, at the Crown in St. Paul's Church-Yard, 1704), p. 43; Daniel Defoe, *The History of the Principal Discoveries and Improvements, in the Several Arts and Sciences: Particularly the Great Branches of Commerce, Navigation, and Plantation, in All Parts of the Known World* (London: printed for W. Mears, at the Lamb, F. Clay, at the Bible, and D. Browne at the Black-Swan, without Temple Bar, 1727).

<sup>17</sup> Defoe, p. 186.

<sup>18</sup> Groom, p. 54; Anon, *A Perswasive to the Union Now on Foot, by Arguments from Nature, Reason, and Mutual Advantage. In Two Parts. With a Method Propos'd for the More Easy Effecting It, and Answering the Principal Objections Against It* (London: 1706), p. 26.



including ‘attorney’ (volume two), ‘parliament’ (volume eight) and ‘Sheriff’ (volume ten).<sup>19</sup> However, while the Gothic Constitution was a major aspect of British Gothic identity in the eighteenth century, the adoption of this identity was not limited to politics.

As various scholars, including Nick Groom and Matthew M. Reeve, have noted, British Whigs extended their Gothicism to architecture and landscaping with Gothic architecture being reduced to specific elements, including pointed or ogival arches, elaborate tracery, and stained glass windows, which were ‘reworked as an exterior décor that could be used to summon up the past’.<sup>20</sup> Examples of early Gothic Revival architecture include the Temple of Liberty in Stowe, Buckinghamshire, which is a Gothic garden building, and Strawberry Hill House in Twickenham, London. Just as with the Gothic Constitution, Gothic gardens and other forms of Gothic architecture were used to create a link between the past and the present but they also functioned as a rejection of neoclassicism which was, elsewhere, embraced. Eventually, British Tories followed suit which led to the construction of sites such as Wentworth Castle in South Yorkshire and Alfred’s Tower in Stourhead. I will explore the appropriation of Gothic architecture, particularly in regards to Horace Walpole’s Strawberry Hill House, further in the fourth chapter of this thesis but, by the end of the century, the British garden was said to be a ‘happy medium betwixt the liberty of savages, and the restraint of art; in the same manner as the English constitution [was] in the happy medium betwixt the wildness of nature and the stiffness of despotic government’.<sup>21</sup> Humphrey Repton, writing at the beginning of the nineteenth century, acknowledged not only the hybridity of the British garden but also the relationship between architecture, landscaping, politics, and identity during this era. The Whiggish Gothic garden and the Whiggish Gothic

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<sup>19</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: printed for J. Balfour and Co. W. Gordon, J. Bell, J. Dickson, C. Elliot, W. Creech, J. Mccliesh, A. Bell, J. Hutton, and C. Macfarquhar, 1778), p. 901; *Encyclopædia Britannica*, vol. 8, p. 5875; *Encyclopædia Britannica*, vol. 10, p. 8124.

<sup>20</sup> Groom, p. 59.

<sup>21</sup> Humphry Repton, *An Enquiry into the Changes of Taste in Landscape Gardening* (London, 1806), p. 28.

Constitution contributed to the hybridity of identity during the eighteenth century as they encouraged British people to embrace their alleged ancestry of Goths, Angles, and Saxons while acknowledging that they are more refined and educated than their ‘brutish’ ancestors.

It is clear that Britain embraced its Gothic ancestors in the eighteenth century but politicians, scholars, and writers also looked towards a more enlightened society based upon the improvement of individuals through science, education, and art. Roy Porter points out that, for decades, scholars such as Leonard Marsak and Henry Steele Commager have all but rejected the notion of an English or British Enlightenment.<sup>22</sup> Porter disagrees with this assessment and, instead, suggests that ‘British Enlightenment was distinctive from that typical on the Continent’ due to ‘its pervasive individualism’.<sup>23</sup> It must be noted that the Scottish Enlightenment was a distinct movement, separate from the English Enlightenment, with key figures such as David Hume, Adam Ferguson, James Hutton, and others ushering Scotland into a new age. Porter states that ‘To enlightened minds, the past was a nightmare of barbarism and Bigotry’, which is reflected in the way that Voltaire and Elizabeth Montagu discuss early modern England, so Britain’s attempts to reconcile their alleged ‘Gothic’ past with their enlightened future creates a ‘hybrid’ identity which reflects attempts made by scholars and politicians to emphasise Britain’s ‘Gothic’ roots while forging forward into a new future which abandoned the ‘base’ and ‘barbaric’ nature of the Goths.<sup>24</sup>

Gothic literature, a hybrid literary genre which combined ‘the ancient and the modern’, was, in part, born out of this ever-evolving British Gothic identity.<sup>25</sup> It, too, was a rejection of neoclassical ideas and an attempt to reconnect with a part of British history.

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<sup>22</sup> Roy Porter, *The Creation of the Modern World: The Untold Story of the British Enlightenment* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000), p. 4.

<sup>23</sup> Porter, p. 482.

<sup>24</sup> Porter, p. 21.

<sup>25</sup> Horace Walpole, ‘Preface to the Second Edition’, in *The Castle of Otranto*, ed. by Nick Groom (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 9-14 (p. 9).

Gothic literature was both a product of pseudohistory and, occasionally, a form of pseudohistory itself as texts such as Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, Clara Reeve's *The Champion of Virtue* (1777), which was later edited to remove this element and retitled *The Old English Baron* (1778), and Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1797) were presented as 'found texts', legitimate documents that were discovered in locked drawers or dusty attics and translated or transcribed by the author.<sup>26</sup> In the preface to the first edition of *The Castle of Otranto*, the 'translator' stated that 'the following work was found in the library of an ancient Catholic family in the north of England' and goes into detail about where the work was produced, claiming that it 'was printed at Naples, in the black letter, in the year 1529' which immediately suggests that *The Castle of Otranto* is a medieval story rather than one conceived in the eighteenth century.<sup>27</sup> As Annie Pécastaings notes, the so-called translator, William Marshal, shares his name with an engraver that Walpole knew but Pécastaings also suggests that the name may be a reference to William Marshal, first Earl of Pembroke, a knight who served five English kings and became regent of England and guardian of Henry III in 1216.<sup>28</sup> Pécastaings suggests that Walpole may not have known about the knight through his biography, which was held by the Saviles, but through Shakespeare's *King John* and Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*.<sup>29</sup> If the translator's name is a reference to this figure, Walpole is deliberately positioning the novel within England's medieval past, encouraging readers to associate the story with feudal England and, perhaps, the work of Shakespeare. This aligns with the translator's constant attempts to convince the reader that the work is older than it truly is as the translator suggests that 'if the

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<sup>26</sup> Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*; Anon [Clara Reeve], *The Champion of Virtue. A Gothic Story. By the Editor of The Phoenix. A Translation of Barclay's Argenis* (Colchester: printed for the author, by W. Kfymer [sic], and sold by him; sold also by G. Robinson, London, 1777); Ann Radcliffe, *The Italian*, ed. by Nick Groom (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

<sup>27</sup> Horace Walpole, 'Preface to the First Edition', in *The Castle of Otranto*, ed. by Nick Groom (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 5-7 (p. 5).

<sup>28</sup> Annie Pécastaings, 'William Marshal and the Origins of *The Castle of Otranto*', *English Studies*, 100.3 (2019), 291-300 (294).

<sup>29</sup> Pécastaings, 294.

story was written near the time when it is supposed to have happened, it must have been between 1095, the era of the first crusade, and 1243, the date of the last, or not long afterwards'.<sup>30</sup> Walpole's clear references to the crusades, alongside the chosen name of the translator, emphasises that this novel is a deliberate attempt to recall medieval England, something which Walpole would admit in the preface to the second edition of *The Castle of Otranto*.

Later, the translator admits that 'the beauty of the diction, and the zeal of the author [moderated, however by singular judgment], concur to make [them] think that the date of the composition was little antecedent to that of the impression' and this uncertainty surrounding the document adds a sense of ambiguity to the story which may seem to undermine the illusion presented to the reader but, in fact, plays upon the idea of pseudohistory and the way that history was constructed in the early modern era.<sup>31</sup> This performative speculation that the 'translator', or Horace Walpole, undertakes both relies upon and contributes to the pseudohistory of England and Europe as Walpole ties his novel to England's past by suggesting that the document was found in 'the library of an ancient Catholic family in the north of England' and, through this first preface, Walpole engages with prominent discourse around England's past, especially surrounding Catholicism.<sup>32</sup>

This preface is also used to legitimise the story as the 'translator' acknowledges that 'Miracles, visions, necromancies, dreams, and other preternatural events, are exploded' from eighteenth-century romances but argues that this 'was not the case when our author wrote; much less when the story itself is supposed to have happened', arguing that 'Belief in every kind of prodigy was so established in those dark ages, that an author would not be faithful to

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<sup>30</sup> Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, p. 5.

<sup>31</sup> Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, p. 5.

<sup>32</sup> Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, p. 5.

the manners of the times who should omit all mention of them'.<sup>33</sup> Until the very end of the preface, the 'translator' maintains that, although it may be fiction, he 'cannot but believe that the groundwork of the story is founded on truth' because 'the scene is undoubtedly laid in some real castle', arguing that the 'author's' description of 'particular parts', such as 'the distance from the chapel to Conrad's apartment' mean that 'the author had some certain building in his eye'.<sup>34</sup> These attempts to maintain the illusion that this work is an ancient story in order to legitimise *The Castle of Otranto* are reminiscent of the ways in which 'Gothic ancestry' was used to legitimise the government, the union between England and Scotland, and various other political agendas in the eighteenth century.

I have discussed how Walpole's references to Shakespeare in the preface to the second edition of *The Castle of Otranto* work to legitimise Walpole's novella and the Gothic genre in the introduction to this thesis but in this earlier preface Walpole uses knowledge of English (and European) history and pseudohistory to excuse certain aspects of his work. In the final section of the preface, the 'translator' admits that 'it is natural for a translator to be prejudiced in favour of his adopted work' but firmly states that he is 'not blind to [the] author's defects', acknowledging that he wishes the original author 'had grounded his plan on a more useful moral than this; that the sins of the fathers are visited on their children to the third and fourth generation'.<sup>35</sup> This is, perhaps, odd when considering that *The Castle of Otranto* is a tale thought up by Walpole himself and not actually a translation of an old Italian text found in an English library but, by engaging in this performance of pseudohistory, Walpole's first preface parallels the ways in which the Whigs attempted to legitimise the idea of a constitutional monarchy through pseudohistorical references to the 'Gothic constitution'.

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<sup>33</sup> Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, p. 6.

<sup>34</sup> Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, p. 7.

<sup>35</sup> Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, p. 6.

As I briefly mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, Gothic literature is sometimes considered patriotic or even nationalist with the works of Horace Walpole, Ann Radcliffe, and Eliza Parsons featuring nationalistic, often anti-European or anti-Catholic, undertones. British Gothicism is a brand of British nationalism based on pseudohistorical and, in some cases, ‘mythical’ versions of British history and this recalls the recent interrogation of the term ‘Anglo-Saxon’ which, like British Gothic, is an identity based upon pseudohistory and mythical versions of British history. Mary Rambaran-Olm and Erik Wade have interrogated how the term ‘Anglo-Saxon’ has been used and misused in medieval studies since the nineteenth century, demonstrating how ‘Anglo-Saxon’ has always acted as a racially-coded term which promotes ‘political messages of patriotism, imperialism, or racial superiority’.<sup>36</sup> Wade stated that nineteenth-century scholars, such as Jacob Abbott in *History of King Alfred of England* (1862), ‘used medieval studies to “prove” English racial superiority’, using the myth of ‘Anglo-Saxon’ heritage to promote British colonialism.<sup>37</sup> Rambaran-Olm states that ‘the Anglo-Saxon myth links white people with an imagined heritage based on indigeneity to Britain’ and ‘served as empirical ‘proof’ mandating racial superiority’, highlighting that the term has been co-opted by ‘far-right identarian groups seeking to prove their superior ancestry by portraying the ‘Anglo-Saxons’ in ways that both promote English identity and national sociopolitical progress’.<sup>38</sup> Scholars including Adam Miyashiro and Sierra Lomuto have also examined the racist connotations of ‘Anglo-Saxon’ and its links to white supremacist movements.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Mary Rambaran-Olm, ‘Misnaming the Medieval: Rejecting “Anglo-Saxon” Studies’, *History Workshop*, (2019) <<https://www.historyworkshop.org.uk/misnaming-the-medieval-rejecting-anglo-saxon-studies/>> [Accessed 11 May 2021].

<sup>37</sup> Erik Wade, ‘Medieval scholarship in the UK & US explicitly trafficked in racism. This is Jacob Abbott's 1862 History of King Alfred of England, which begins with a a [sic.] theory of race that places Anglo-Saxons at the top. Abbott uses medieval studies to "prove" English racial superiority.’ (tweet, @erik\_kaars, 11 September 2019).

<sup>38</sup> Rambaran-Olm.

<sup>39</sup> Adam Miyashiro, ‘Decolonizing Anglo-Saxon Studies: A Response to ISAS in Honolulu’, *In the Middle*, (2017) <<https://www.inthemedievalmiddle.com/2017/07/decolonizing-anglo-saxon-studies.html>> [Accessed 11

The similarities in the origins of ‘Anglo-Saxon’ and ‘Gothic ancestry’ are almost uncanny. Both terms, used as markers of national identity in Britain, although ‘Anglo-Saxon’ is also prevalent in the United States of America, stem from pseudohistorical and mythical accounts of Britain’s past and appear to promote some form of British superiority. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, scholars have identified elements of British patriotism and nationalism within eighteenth-century Gothic literature but it is unclear whether ‘Gothic’ as an identifier was racially-coded within the eighteenth century in a similar way to how ‘Anglo-Saxon’ so clearly was and still is. I will examine the possibility of ‘Gothic’ as a racially-coded term in sixteenth-century England by analysing depictions of race in Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus* later in this chapter but I must first establish whether ‘Gothic’ ancestry and the ‘Gothic constitution’ were used to promote British cultural and racial superiority in the eighteenth century.

Despite their surface-level similarities, there is no evidence that the term ‘Gothic’ has been used in the same way as the term ‘Anglo-Saxon’ has been used. Taking into account the books and pamphlets I discussed earlier in this chapter, it seems that ‘Gothic’ identity in eighteenth-century Britain promoted a fondness for a balanced form of government rather than racial or national superiority. It is true that eighteenth-century writers and politicians, such as Walter Moyle, used the idea of the Gothic constitution and Britain’s Gothic ancestry to separate Britain from France but it is also clear that notions of ‘Gothic ancestry’ and the ‘Gothic constitution’ were not restricted to Britain, with British politicians drawing attention

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May 2021]; Sierra Lomuto, ‘White Nationalism and the Ethics of Medieval Studies’, *In the Middle*, (2016) <<https://www.inthemedievalmiddle.com/2016/12/white-nationalism-and-ethics-of.html>> [Accessed 11 May 2021].

to the many European countries, especially Poland and Sweden, that enjoyed a ‘Gothic constitution’ in the past. It is the constitution that is being praised rather than Britain itself.<sup>40</sup>

However, it must be noted that the people of eighteenth-century Britain did not all share the same thoughts and opinions and some may have used the ‘Germanic’ and ‘Scandinavian’ roots of the Goths, Angles, and Saxons to promote the supremacy of whiteness or even ‘Germanic’ and ‘Gothic’ ancestry. Josiah Tucker, in *A second letter to a friend concerning naturalizations: wherein the reasons are given why the Jews were antiently considered as the immediate vassals and absolute property of the Crown; but are now in a State of Liberty and Freedom like other Subjects*, appears to have used the Gothic constitution to justify the historical enslavement of Jewish people by stating that ‘the Slavery of the Jews under our former Kings, was no other than a necessary Consequence of the Military Tenures and the Gothic Constitution of those Times’.<sup>41</sup> Tucker’s statement may indicate a much more sinister, and thoroughly anti-Semitic, version of ‘Gothic’ identity in the eighteenth century but Tucker may merely be an outlier, expressing a personal opinion and using the pseudohistorical notion of Britain’s Gothic ancestry to justify those ideas.

In the hands of Gothic writers, especially Eliza Parsons, the ‘Gothic’ became a mode of British Protestant nationalism. British Gothic literature shared anti-Catholic sentiment, as seen in the works of Parsons and Ann Radcliffe, so it may be appropriate to suggest that a

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<sup>40</sup> Walter Moyle, *The Works of Walter Moyle Esq; None of Which Were Ever Before Publish'd. In Two Volumes*, vol. 1 (London: printed for J. Darby, A. Bettesworth, F. Fayram, J. Osborn and T. Longman, J. Pemberton, J. Hooke, C. Rivington, F. Clay, J. Batley, and E. Symon, 1726) – ‘THUS you see that Religion, Liberty and Property, are the invaluable Blessings We are now contending for, which our Ancestors convey'd down to us; and 'tis our Duty to transmit them entire to our Posterity. 'Tis as clear as the Sun, that if France prevails in this War, all there are lost, and that we shall be dragoon'd into Idolatry, Slavery, and wooden Shoes’, p. 163.

<sup>41</sup> Josiah Tucker, *A Second Letter to A Friend Concerning Naturalizations: Wherein the Reasons Are Given Why the Jews Were Antiently Considered as The Immediate Vassals and Absolute Property of The Crown; But Are Now in A State of Liberty and Freedom Like Other Subjects. To Which Are Added, The Opinions of The Most Eminent Lawyers, Together with Proofs and Arguments Drawn from Divers Important Facts and Statutes of The Realm Relating to The Same Subject. By Josiah Tucker, A. M. Rector of St Stephen's in Bristol, And Chaplain to The Right Rev. The Lord Bishop of Bristol* (London: printed for Thomas Trye, near Gray's-Inn Gate. Holborn, 1753), p. 14.



British Gothic identity, at least in regards to eighteenth-century Gothic literature, was religiously-motivated. Angela Wright suggests that the Gothic presents as a patriotic mode to appease anti-Jacobite commentators and Wright's argument does address both the anti-French and anti-Catholic messages of Gothic literature but it must be acknowledged that there were writers of the Gothic who used the mode to promote Protestantism and, perhaps, suggest that Britain was superior to France.<sup>42</sup>

Gothic literature also fed into another form of British 'nationalism', the myth of a shared national literary heritage. For many writers, this British literary identity centred around the work of William Shakespeare. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* was tangentially linked with the Gothic constitution, quoted and misquoted on the title page of *Northern revolutions: or, the principal causes of the declension and dissolution of several once flourishing Gothic constitutions in Europe. In a series of letters from the ghost of Trenchard, once a free Briton* (1757), but Shakespeare's association with the 'Gothicness' of Britain lay within his role as the 'Gothic Bard' and 'Father of the British Stage'.<sup>43</sup> As I have discussed in the introduction to this thesis, Horace Walpole, in the preface to the second edition of *The Castle of Otranto*, stated that Shakespeare was the model he copied when writing *The Castle of Otranto* and Shakespeare's role in formation of Gothic literature has often been the focus of research on this topic. However, Shakespeare's vital role in the construction of British identity in the eighteenth century, as a figure who was increasingly associated with an English literary tradition but also as a representative of eighteenth-century taste and the talent that Britain

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<sup>42</sup> Angela Wright, *Britain, France and the Gothic, 1764-1820: The Import of Terror* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>43</sup> Ghost of Trenchard [pseud.], *Northern Revolutions: Or, the Principal Causes of the Declension and Dissolution of Several Once Flourishing Gothic Constitutions in Europe. In a Series of Letters from the Ghost of Trenchard, Once a Free Briton* (London: printed for M. Cooper, in Pater-Noster-Row, 1757) – The lines quoted from Hamlet are 'What would you, gracious figure?' (3.4.97-98), 'Something is rotten in the state of Denmark' (1.4.65) which is misquoted as 'There's something rotten in the state of Danemark', and 'I'll take the ghost's word for a / thousand pound' (3.2.270-271) which has been changed to, or misquoted as, 'I'd take the ghost's word for a thousand Ducats'.; Montagu, p.147; Lewis Theobald quoted in Brian Vickers, *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, vol. 2 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), p. 354.

offered, gives us an insight into how Gothic literature was born out of a need to reconnect with Britain's past but also to connect to Britain's present and future. The hybridity of Shakespeare's identity in the eighteenth century, which I will explore in detail in the next few paragraphs, offers an opportunity to understand how Gothic literature, at its core, is a product of not only eighteenth-century Gothic ancestry or a pre-Enlightenment literary tradition but also a shift towards Enlightenment ideas and ideals.

Shakespeare was clearly identified as a 'Gothic writer' by Horace Walpole, and was referred to as 'our Gothic Bard' by Elizabeth Montagu, but Shakespeare also occupied another role for eighteenth-century writers and scholars, that of the enlightened figure and the father of the English stage. Shakespeare, as I have already stated, had a hybrid identity in the eighteenth century as he was both a Gothic writer, for the likes of Richard Hurd who claimed that Shakespeare's 'genius kept no certain rout', and the writer who began the path towards the enlightenment of the English stage.<sup>44</sup> Shakespeare's own confused identity in the eighteenth century reflects the hybridity of British identity at this time as Shakespeare, who was representative of Britain and British taste at this point, occupied both Gothic and Neoclassical spheres as he utilised Senecan and Ovidian models while retaining the 'faults' of 'the Age in which he liv'd' and the 'wild and uncultivated' nature of his own 'genius'.<sup>45</sup> Although the British were considered to be the descendants of the Goths, they were said to have shed their 'Gothic Ignorance' and barbarity during the Age of Enlightenment and Shakespeare is credited by some with starting this movement towards an enlightened Britain by the likes of Lewis Theobald.<sup>46</sup> None of Shakespeare's plays fit neatly into the ideals of the

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<sup>44</sup> Richard Hurd, *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (London: printed for A. Millar, in the Strand, and W. Thurlbourn and J. Woodyer, 1762), p. 60.

<sup>45</sup> John Dennis, *Original Letters, Familiar, Moral and Critical. By Mr. Dennis. In Two Volumes*, vol. 1 (London: printed for W. Mears, 1721), p. 73; John Upton, *Critical observations on Shakespeare* (London: printed for G. Hawkins, in Fleet-street, 1748), p. 8.

<sup>46</sup> Anon, *Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark. With a Preface, Containing Some General Remarks on the Writings of Shakespeare* (London: printed for W. Clarke, and sold by W. Owen, and T. Jefferys, 1752), p. iii.

Age of Enlightenment, and Restoration and eighteenth-century adaptations of Shakespeare's plays by the likes of Thomas Otway, David Garrick, and Theophilus Cibber were often more popular in the eighteenth century than Shakespeare's original plays because they catered to the taste of a new audience. A few of Shakespeare's plays were spared this treatment, notably *Othello* (1603) and *Julius Caesar* (1599), but *Titus Andronicus* was perhaps the play that least appealed to the 'refined' taste of eighteenth-century audiences or, perhaps more accurately, critics and scholars of Shakespeare's works.<sup>47</sup> Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* was not staged between c.1667 and 1923. Shakespearean critics often had to defend the nation's unwavering admiration of Shakespeare by condemning any suggestion that *Titus Andronicus* may be a Shakespearean play and, thus, representative of English taste. William Guthrie commented in 1747 that the Abbe le Blanc used a sample of *Titus Andronicus* as a 'specimen of Shakespeare's genius' even though it was so 'justly condemned by all men of taste in England that it can be no specimen of English taste' and that all Englishmen knew it to be 'a play falsely attributed to Shakespeare'.<sup>48</sup> I will return to the question of authorship that haunts *Titus Andronicus* but Guthrie was clearly offended by the Abbe le Blanc's inclusion of *Titus Andronicus* in his comments on Shakespeare. His use of the phrase 'all men of taste' in his rebuttal is significant because it allows for people of 'no taste' to enjoy the play, which includes the people of Shakespeare's own era who were thought to be 'unlettered' and unrefined by eighteenth-century standards.<sup>49</sup> Guthrie emphasises that the popularity of the play is no indication of its cultural or literary value but the 'Gothic Ignorance' of Shakespeare's era allowed the play to be enjoyed to a great extent and, as English society became more 'civilised' the original play was rejected and more acceptable

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<sup>47</sup> William Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. by Michael Neill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, ed. by Arthur Humphreys (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>48</sup> William Guthrie, *An Essay upon English Tragedy. With Remarks upon the Abbe le Blanc's Observations on the English Stage* (London: Printed for T. Waller, at the Crown and Mitre, opposite Fetter-Lane, in Fleet-Street, 1747), p. 30.

<sup>49</sup> Guthrie, p. 30; Montagu, p. 14.

adaptations took its place on the stage.<sup>50</sup> Even the much-celebrated *Hamlet* was considered unrefined due to certain aspects of the plot and the irregularities of the language. A few of Shakespeare's other plays, such as *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* (c.1607), *The Taming of the Shrew*, (c.1591) and *Titus Andronicus*, had their authorship questioned and I will return to the authorship of *Titus Andronicus* later in this chapter to examine how the play was 'Gothicised' in the eighteenth century.<sup>51</sup> Shakespeare's entire era, including the work of his more 'correct' contemporary Ben Jonson, was written off as rough and unlearned by eighteenth-century writers and scholars due to their inferior language and behaviour. One of the reasons that Shakespeare's stage was considered to be so barbarous was due to the ignorance of the rules of drama, particularly the unities of Aristotle, which French writers held so dear in the eighteenth century. In his 1765 edition of Shakespeare's work, Samuel Johnson argued that Shakespeare 'found the English stage in a state of utmost rudeness' and the use of rudeness here can indicate the 'Gothic' or medieval roots of the English stage which writers such as Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and Christopher Marlowe built upon.<sup>52</sup>

In the same edition, Johnson claims that it would be 'useless' to speculate about Shakespeare's understanding or knowledge of 'the unities' as 'such violations of rules' suited Shakespeare's genius.<sup>53</sup> This became an important statement to eighteenth-century critics who sought to defend Shakespeare against the likes of Voltaire as they used Johnson's claim that poets of Shakespeare's genius did not need to consult or follow the rules to defend their

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<sup>50</sup> Anon, *Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of Hamlet*, p. iii.

<sup>51</sup> William Shakespeare, *Pericles*, ed. by Roger Warren (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, ed. by H. J. Oliver (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); *Titus Andronicus*; Edmond Malone omitted both *Titus Andronicus* and *Pericles* from his edition of *The Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare* in 1790. William Warburton divided Shakespeare's plays into four classes in *The Works of Shakespeare in Eight Volumes* (1747) and *The Taming of the Shrew* falls into 'class four' which are the plays which Warburton rejected as Shakespeare's work.

<sup>52</sup> Samuel Johnson, *The Plays of William Shakespeare, in Eight Volumes, with the Corrections and Illustrations of Various Commentators, to which are added Notes* (London: printed for J. and R. Tonson, H. Woodfall, J. Rivington, R. Baldwin, L. Hawes, Clark and Collins, T. Longman, W. Johnston, T. Caslon, C. Corbet, T. Lownds, and the Executors of B. Dodd, 1765), sig. C3v.

<sup>53</sup> Johnson, sig. B3.

loyalty to Shakespeare.<sup>54</sup> Despite Johnson's assertions of Shakespeare's genius and talent, Shakespeare's work was continuously deemed barbarous as it did not adhere to the rules glorified by some eighteenth-century critics. Elizabeth Montagu, writer and a leader of the Blue Stockings Society, also argued that Shakespeare's plays were originally acted to 'an unlettered audience just emerging from barbarity' in *An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare* (1769), which added to Samuel Johnson's statement that 'the English nation, in the time of Shakespeare, was yet struggling to emerge from barbarity', and Dale Townshend acknowledges that while Montagu is '[m]omentarily conceding along with Voltaire that there was, indeed, something barbaric about Shakespeare's theatre' she 'swiftly changed rhetorical direction in order to claim that, if these may be described as faults at all, they are more the product of a dark and unenlightened Gothic age in which Shakespeare lived and wrote than any sign of a lack of genius'.<sup>55</sup> From texts such as these, it can be concluded that eighteenth-century critics believed that Shakespeare lived in an uncivilised age where audiences favoured bloody scenes and unnecessary violence over Aristotle's unities of tragedy and other aspects of refined drama. Many argued that Shakespeare's works should not be dismissed due to the ideals of the age in which he lived and wrote. Shakespeare's plays, including *Titus Andronicus*, were very rarely performed on stage in their original form, as I have mentioned earlier in this chapter and in the introduction to this thesis, as 'modernized' versions of his plays existed.<sup>56</sup> These newer versions of Shakespeare's plays, which began with the restoration of the theatres in 1660, often claimed to have fixed the perceived problems or irregularities within the plays in such a manner that even 'the admirable Author, had he lived

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<sup>54</sup> Johnson, sig. B3.

<sup>55</sup> Montagu, p. 14; Johnson, sig. B7v; Dale Townshend, 'Gothic and the Ghost of Hamlet', in *Gothic Shakespeares*, ed. by John Drakakis and Dale Townshend (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), pp. 60-97 (p. 67).

<sup>56</sup> Eliza Haywood, *The Female Spectator, Volume 2* (London: printed and published by T. Gardner, at Cowley's Head, opposite St. Clement's Church, in the Strand, 1745), p. 91.

to see the Alteration, would have been highly thankful and satisfied with it'.<sup>57</sup> These 'corrected' versions of Shakespeare's plays were not always critically acclaimed, as shown by reactions to Nahum Tate's *The History of King Lear* (1681), but they do indicate that most of Shakespeare's plays had some distasteful aspects to them as they had to be altered for the more refined eighteenth-century stage.<sup>58</sup>

Despite critics such as Elizabeth Montagu and John Dryden describing Shakespeare's era as a 'barbarous Age', it is clear that eighteenth-century critics also believed that Shakespeare 'left [...] large Legacies to succeeding Poets' and that these poets were able to produce more 'correct' works due to Shakespeare's legacy.<sup>59</sup> John Upton, an early editor of Edmund Spenser's work, argued that Shakespeare 'modell'd' the English stage, moving it away from its Gothic roots and 'original barbarity' to enable a new era of correct drama to take its place.<sup>60</sup> This places Shakespeare at the heart of the English stage for eighteenth-century critics.<sup>61</sup> In an unsigned essay in 1752, a critic argued that Shakespeare 'dispell'd those condense Clouds of Gothic Ignorance which at that Time obscured us', confirming Shakespeare's status as both 'our Gothic Bard', to quote Elizabeth Montagu, and an enlightened writer.<sup>62</sup> However, while many of Shakespeare's successors of the English stage followed Aristotle's rules and were no longer considered base or unrefined, some English writers and critics maintained that Shakespeare's genius could not be have been restrained

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<sup>57</sup> Haywood, p. 92; It was common for those who altered Shakespeare's plays in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to justify their alterations with Shakespeare's imagined approval, occasionally bringing Shakespeare's ghost onto the stage to approve of the many changes. A notable example of this is in the epilogue to Charles Gildon's *Measure for Measure*.

<sup>58</sup> Nahum Tate, *The History of King Lear Acted at the Duke's Theatre / Reviv'd with Alterations by N. Tate* (London: Printed for E. Flesher, and are to be sold by R. Bentley, and M. Magnes, 1681); Richard Steele and Joseph Addison, *The Spectator* (London: Printed for W. Wilson, 1778), p. 162.

<sup>59</sup> John Dryden, *Troilus and Cressida: or, Truth Found Too Late. A Tragedy. By Mr. Dryden. To which is Prefix'd, a Preface Containing the Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy* (London: Printed for Able Swall and Jacob Tonson, 1679), sig. B4r; Lewis Theobald, *The Tragedy of King Richard the II, 1720: As It Is Acted at the Theatre in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields* (London: Cornmarket, 1969), sig. Aa2.

<sup>60</sup> Upton, p. 16.

<sup>61</sup> See: Arthur H. Scouten, 'The Increase in Popularity of Shakespeare's Plays in the Eighteenth Century: A Caveat for Interpreters of Stage History', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 7.2 (1956), 189-202.

<sup>62</sup> Anon, *Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, p. iii.

and was better for lacking the ‘cold regularity’ of French drama.<sup>63</sup> Horace Walpole aligned himself with Shakespeare by choosing nature over art or learning, as discussed by various scholars, thus associating himself with the most natural of British geniuses.<sup>64</sup> In 1717, Lewis Theobald argued that ‘it is not to be expected that a Genius like Shakespeare’s should be judg’d by the Laws of Aristotle and the other Prescribers of the Stage’ while in 1760 an anonymous commentator claimed that ‘Shakespeare seems to have been too great a genius to be methodical’.<sup>65</sup> For these critics, it was Shakespeare’s ‘irregular greatness, wildness, and enthusiasm for the imagination’ which made his work worthy of praise and they seem to celebrate the Gothic nature of Shakespeare’s work and the barbarity of his age.<sup>66</sup> Dale Townshend states that ‘Shakespeare’s superiority to his contemporaries Beaumont and Fletcher’, at least for eighteenth-century critics, ‘lay in the fact that, unlike them, his native Gothic superstitions had not been crushed by the weight of a classical education’ and Townshend explores how the ‘Gothic’ aspects of Shakespeare came to symbolise, for the likes of Montagu, ‘a native English literary tradition that, for all its residual traces of pre-enlightenment barbarity, is nonetheless worthy of protection, preservation, and celebration’.<sup>67</sup> This ‘native English literary tradition’ will be discussed further in relation to Shakespeare’s construction of a shared literary heritage or ‘literary tradition’ in *Titus Andronicus* but the notion that Shakespeare was symbolic of Britain’s literary heritage for eighteenth-century

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<sup>63</sup> Horace Walpole, *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed. by W. S. Lewis (London: Oxford University Press, 1955).

<sup>64</sup> See: Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto* (London: Printed for William Bathoe in the Strand, and Thomas Lownds in Fleet-Street, 1765).

<sup>65</sup> Lewis Theobald, *The Censor*, vol 3 (London: printed for Jonas Brown, at the Black-Swan without Temple-Bar, 1717) p.43; Anon, ‘On the Merits of *Shakespeare* and *Corneille*’, *The British Magazine, or, Monthly Repository for Gentlemen & Ladies*, 1760-1767, 1.6 (1760), p. 365.

<sup>66</sup> William Duff, *Critical Observations on the Writings of the Most Celebrated Original Geniuses in Poetry. Being a Sequel to the Essay on Original Genius* (London: printed for T. Becket, and P. A. de Hondt, 1770), p. 4.

<sup>67</sup> Townshend, ‘Gothic and the Ghost of Hamlet’, p. 68.

scholars and writers embodies the idea that Shakespeare had a hybrid identity in the eighteenth century as he was both part of the Gothic past and the enlightened future.<sup>68</sup>

As previously mentioned, one play that suffered greatly at the hands of eighteenth-century critics was *Titus Andronicus*. The legacy of *Titus Andronicus* in eighteenth-century Britain is one of disgust, alteration, and denial. In 1768, the play was condemned ‘as a very bundle of horrors, [which was] totally unfit for the stage’ by Shakespearean critic Edward Capell and the play was later described as ‘barbarous, in every sense of the word’ by Elizabeth Griffith, an eighteenth-century Irish dramatist and actress.<sup>69</sup> Perhaps the most damning assessment of *Titus Andronicus* came from John Pinkerton, an antiquarian, who, in 1785, advised readers of the play to ‘throw it into the fire’ as it was ‘nonsense that would disgrace a bedlamite to write or to read’.<sup>70</sup> Although the opinions cited here are a small sample of the discourse surrounding *Titus Andronicus*, these opinions do represent the most common judgement of *Titus Andronicus* in the eighteenth century. Critical thought concerning *Titus Andronicus* during this era often focused on the utter devastation that occurs on- and off-stage but the actual content of the play, including the plot and the characters, was rarely discussed by eighteenth-century scholars and critics. Two scenes that were focused on by eighteenth-century critics were Lavinia’s rape and mutilation in Act two, scene four and Tamora’s unknowing cannibalism at the end of the play, both of which are horrific scenes. The language of the play was also condemned by critics as ‘base’ and only a few sections are said to have Shakespeare’s ‘Master-touches’ while the rest of the play was thought to be

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<sup>68</sup> Townshend, ‘Gothic and the Ghost of Hamlet’, p. 68.

<sup>69</sup> Edward Capell, *Mr William Shakespeare his Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies, Set Out by Himself in Quarto, or by the Players his Fellows in Folio, and Now Faithfully Republish’d from those Editions in Ten Volumes Octavo with an Introduction; Whereunto will be Added, in Some Other Volumes, Notes, Critical and Explanatory, and a Body of Various Readings, Entire* (London: printed by Dryden Leach, for J. and R. Tonson in the Strand, 1768), p.41; Elizabeth Griffith, *The Morality of Shakespeare's Drama Illustrated* (London: Printed for T. Cadell, in the Strand, 1775), p. 403.

<sup>70</sup> John Pinkerton, *Letters of Literature. By Robert Heron, Esq.* (London: printed for G. G. J. and J. Robinson, in Pater-Noster Row, 1785), p. 302; Griffith, p. 403.



‘unlike [Shakespeare’s] manner and even the style of his other pieces’.<sup>71</sup> One example of Shakespeare’s pen, as identified by John Monck Mason in 1785, is Tamora’s speech from Act two, scene three which begins ‘My lovely Aaron, wherefore look'st thou sad, / When everything doth make a gleeful boast?’<sup>72</sup> Tamora’s speech is full of beautiful natural imagery as she describes how ‘green leaves quiver with the cooling wind’ and ‘the babbling echo mocks the hounds’ and compares herself and Aaron to ‘[t]he wandering prince and Dido’ who wretched in the other's arms, [...] possess a golden slumber’.<sup>73</sup>

Mason claimed that ‘there is much poetical beauty in this speech of Tamora’ but, while he argues that this section of the play is ‘the only one in the play that is in the style of Shakespeare’, Mason does not offer an explanation as to why this particular section is by Shakespeare’s hand when, for example, Marcus’ speech in Act two, scene four is not.<sup>74</sup> Perhaps the beauty of Tamora’s speech lies within the invocation of Greek mythology or the imagery contained within it but these elements are also present in several other scenes, including Marcus’ speech at the end of the second act. Mason merely claims that Tamora’s speech is one of ‘poetical beauty’ and glosses over the actual content of the speech to discuss his own distaste for the rest of the play instead.<sup>75</sup> The supposed beauty of Tamora’s speech was not enough to counteract the horrors of the play and the whole play was condemned as barbarous. *Titus Andronicus* clashed with the literary ideals of eighteenth-century Britain, especially those that concerned the correct use of the English language and what was considered proper for the English stage, and this led to the play being ‘Gothicised’ by eighteenth-century critics.

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<sup>71</sup> Edward Ravenscroft, *Titus Andronicus, or, the Rape of Lavinia Acted at the Theatre Royall: A Tragedy, Alter'd from Mr. Shakespears Works* (London: 1678), sig. A2; Capell, p. 41.

<sup>72</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, 2.3.10-11.

<sup>73</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, 2.3.14-26.

<sup>74</sup> John Monck Mason, *Comments on the Last Edition of Shakespeare's Plays* (Dublin: printed by P. Byrne, No. 35, College-Green, 1785), p. 306; *Titus Andronicus*, 2.4.11-58.

<sup>75</sup> John Monck Mason, p. 306-307.

The perceived brutality displayed in *Titus Andronicus* led to questions about its true authorship as, for many writers of the eighteenth century, it was thought to be simply too ‘barbarous’ to be by Shakespeare’s hand. *Titus Andronicus* was, in the eighteenth century, considered to be one of Shakespeare’s most distasteful plays, inferior to the work he produced later in his career, and it was often dismissed by scholars and critics of the eighteenth century as the work of another playwright altogether due to its disturbing subject matter and base language, both of which were considered to be unfitting of Shakespeare’s tone and style during this era. Much of the criticism about *Titus Andronicus* in the eighteenth century was either fully or partially concerned with the ‘true’ authorship of the play and during this era the content of the play itself became irrelevant, except for the notion that it is truly horrific, as critics continuously discussed the play in terms of its authorship. The authorship of *Titus Andronicus* has been questioned since 1678 when Edward Ravenscroft claimed that he had been ‘told by some anciently conversant with the Stage, that it was not Originally’ Shakespeare’s play and that Shakespeare ‘only gave some Master-touches to one or two of the Principal Parts or Characters’.<sup>76</sup> This claim seems to be unsubstantiated, perhaps merely a rumour created by Ravenscroft to entice people to see his version of the play and to excuse his changes to Shakespeare’s text which, as discussed in the introduction to this thesis, was a common practice amongst Restoration era writers, but it cast reasonable doubt over the play’s authorship and Shakespeare’s involvement in the play has been discussed by numerous critics ever since. While it is currently accepted that *Titus Andronicus* was co-authored, Ravenscroft’s attempts to diminish Shakespeare’s role within the play influenced how the play was read and understood in the eighteenth century. Ravenscroft’s edition of the play, which was ‘highly relished’ when it was performed in 1686, was, to borrow Ravenscroft’s own phrase regarding Shakespeare’s original play, perhaps an even more ‘incorrect and

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<sup>76</sup> Ravenscroft, sig. A2.

indigested piece' than Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*.<sup>77</sup> George Steevens acknowledged, in 1785, that '[i]nstead of diminishing any of its horrors [Ravenscroft] seized every opportunity of making large additions of them' and these violent additions included major revisions to the final act as Ravenscroft added in scenes of Tamora killing her new-born child and Aaron requesting to eat the dead child, followed by Aaron being tortured and burnt to death on stage.<sup>78</sup> The gratuitous violence of Ravenscroft's version of the play should have made it even more intolerable than the original, even if the language is perhaps somewhat more refined than Shakespeare's original due to its later composition, but this version of *Titus Andronicus* remained on stage until 1724 before the violent nature of the play was considered unsuitable for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century audiences. Changing taste in theatre and literature led to later adaptations dramatically altering Shakespeare's work to remove much of the violence and horror from the play.

Ravenscroft's preface to his version of *Titus Andronicus* drew attention to the irregularities and the level of violence present in the play which, at first glance, seems unlike Shakespeare's other works. Although *Titus Andronicus* is arguably Shakespeare's bloodiest play, the violence of plays such as *Othello* and *King Lear* (1606) received less critical attention and *Titus Andronicus* seems to have been singled out by eighteenth-century critics because it did not fit with their idealised version of Shakespeare. It is difficult to determine the reason behind the singular focus on *Titus Andronicus* but perhaps the play was seen as less a sophisticated foray into the representation of violence than either *King Lear* or *Othello* or perhaps the violence within the play was considered gratuitous rather than necessary.<sup>79</sup> The

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<sup>77</sup> George Steevens, *The Plays of William Shakspeare. In Ten Volumes. With the Corrections and Illustrations of Various Commentators; To which are Added Notes by Samuel Johnson and George Steevens. Volume 8* (London: 1773), p. 493.; Ravenscroft, sig. A2.

<sup>78</sup> Steevens, p. 493.

<sup>79</sup> As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, *Othello* was not adapted during the Restoration era or the eighteenth century even though it featured similar violent scenes. The play remained unchanged from Shakespeare's original.

authorship debate surrounding *Titus Andronicus* in the eighteenth century stemmed, in part, from the use of gratuitous violence in the play and Brian Vickers recognised in *Shakespeare: Co-Author* that the ‘doubts about Shakespeare’s authorship’ at this time ‘had no scholarly basis [...] but expressed an aesthetico-ethical dislike for the violence and corporeal mutilations that take place both on and off stage’.<sup>80</sup> However, the almost-universal dislike of the violent nature of *Titus Andronicus* in the eighteenth century led to a varied and lengthy discussion of the merits of the work in the eighteenth century. Elizabeth Griffith argued in 1775 that the play was so ‘very *barbarous*’ that Shakespeare must have written it, perhaps because no other playwright had the imagination to, but many did not agree with her.<sup>81</sup> She also remarked that Shakespeare ‘would never have strewed such sweet flowers upon a *caput mortuum* if some child of his own had not lain entombed underneath’ which indicates that Griffith believed that the work had some aspects of beauty to it despite its ‘barbarous’ nature and these beauties were of Shakespeare’s hand.<sup>82</sup>

Almost every critic of *Titus Andronicus* in the eighteenth century agreed that the play was terrible and unfit for viewing but critics occasionally argued that the early date, both in Shakespeare’s career and in English theatrical history, accounted for the flaws in the style and the substance of the play. As the play was performed in around 1594, with Edward Capell dating the composition of the play to c.1589, *Titus Andronicus* conformed with the aesthetics of the era in which it was written and performed. In the ten years between 1585 and 1595 popular tragedies were often extremely violent and notable examples of violent, gruesome plays from this decade include Thomas Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy* (c.1587) and

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<sup>80</sup> Brian Vickers, *Shakespeare, Co-author: A Historical Study of Five Collaborative Plays* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2002), p. 150. It should be noted that Vickers does not believe that *Titus Andronicus* is solely the work of Shakespeare but he does not subscribe to Ravenscroft’s version of events. Instead, he examines the use of language in specific scenes to determine which aspects of the play were written by George Peele.

<sup>81</sup> Griffith, p. 403.

<sup>82</sup> Griffith, p. 403.

Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great* (1590), both of which failed to make an impression on the eighteenth century stage.<sup>83</sup> *Titus Andronicus* was Shakespeare's earliest attempt at writing a revenge tragedy, with *Hamlet* being his most famous revenge tragedy, and *Titus Andronicus* falls in 'with that innate love of blood' that marked the years between 1585 and 1595 on the English stage and, therefore, the violence of the play can be excused by its date and the trends of the time.<sup>84</sup> However, it cannot be overlooked that several later Shakespearean tragedies also include excessively violent scenes, including *King Lear* in which Gloucester's eyes are gouged out on-stage, but, while these plays were altered by Restoration era playwrights and eighteenth-century writers, they never experienced the harsh treatment that *Titus Andronicus* suffered.<sup>85</sup>

Eighteenth-century critics focused on debating the authorship of *Titus Andronicus* but failed to actually offer a detailed analysis of the play, as they did with the likes of *Hamlet*, even though the writers of the eighteenth century were fascinated with the Romans and the Goths, with Edward Gibbon publishing the first volume of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* in 1776.<sup>86</sup> In all seven volumes, published between 1776 and 1789, Gibbon documents the origins of the Goths and their relationship with the Roman Empire. By refusing to consider Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* in any greater detail, eighteenth century critics and writers missed an opportunity to explore Shakespeare's representation of the

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<sup>83</sup> Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedie containing the Lamentable End of Don Horatio, and Bel-imperia: With the Pittifull Death of Olde Hieronimo* (London: Printed by Edward Allde, for Edward White, 1592); Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great Who, from a Scythian Shepheard, by His Rare and Woonderfull Conquests, Became a Most Puissant and Mightye Monarque. And (for His Tyranny, and Terrour in Warre) was Tearmed, the Scourge of God. Deuided into Two Tragicall Discourses, as They were Sundrie Times Shewed vpon Stages in the Citie of London. By the Right Honorable the Lord Admyrall, His Seruauntes* (London: Printed by Richard Ihones: at the signe of the Rose and Crowne neere Holborne Bridge, 1590).

<sup>84</sup> Capell, p. 43.

<sup>85</sup> William Shakespeare, *The History of King Lear*, ed. by Stanley Wells (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>86</sup> Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. 1 (London: printed for W. Strahan; and T. Cadell, 1776).

Goths in *Titus Andronicus* which, as I will discuss later in this chapter, may have provided evidence for their understanding of the ‘barbarity’ of Shakespeare’s own era.

Shakespeare’s hybrid identity and the criticism of *Titus Andronicus* in the eighteenth century also offers us an opportunity to explore how this hybridity, and the need to connect to the past, can perhaps be seen in Shakespeare’s own work. Shakespeare’s representation of Roman and Gothic identities in *Titus Andronicus* may not have been the focus of eighteenth-century criticism of the play, despite certain aspects of British national identity relying upon a pseudohistorical Gothic ancestry, but examining the ways in which Gothic and Roman identities were understood in Elizabethan England, and presented in *Titus Andronicus*, allows us to explore Elizabethan national identity, and *Titus Andronicus*, as potentially pre-Gothic. By examining the criticism of *Titus Andronicus* and the complicated understanding of Shakespeare’s genius from seventeenth- and eighteenth-century perspectives, it is evident that Shakespeare was considered to be a Gothic writer and yet he was also the reason that the nation abandoned its Gothic nature and moved forward into the Enlightenment. Shakespeare’s dual role as the Gothic Bard and figure of Enlightenment, and *Titus Andronicus*’ Gothicisation by eighteenth-century critics reveals a complex British identity which simultaneously embraces its Gothic past and moves towards an enlightened future. This hybridity can be studied both in Elizabethan culture and, more specifically, *Titus Andronicus* to discover a pre-history of the eighteenth-century pseudohistorical notion of Britain’s Gothic ancestry in early modern England.

## II

Elizabethan England had a complex understanding of ‘Gothic’ and ‘Roman’ identities and similar to the scholars, politicians, and writers of the eighteenth-century Britain, Elizabethan writers and historians sometimes struggled to balance their Gothic past and imperial future.

Elizabethan England also accepted the clear distinctions between Romans and Goths that were set out by Renaissance scholars in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and, in sixteenth-century England, Romans were associated with the ancient, classical world while the Goths were usually associated with the literary and artistic forms of the European Middle Ages. The art and architecture of the Middle Ages was often dismissed by Renaissance scholars as merely a crude prelude to Renaissance architecture and art as it was in the ‘manner of the Goths’ and ‘made by the Goths’ rather than adhering to classical styles and ideals.<sup>87</sup> Goths were labelled as barbarians because they were not Roman or Greek and their association with rudeness and brutality meant that they were seen as the opposite of the civilised Roman Empire.<sup>88</sup> In the mid-sixteenth century, the phrases ‘Gothic’ and ‘Germanic’ were used interchangeably by Renaissance scholars in Italy and other parts of Europe to describe the style of cathedrals and churches that were built during the Middle Ages. We know today that Gothic architecture was distinct from Anglo-Saxon architecture, a period in the history of architecture in England and Wales which dates from around the mid-fifth century until 1066, the Norman architecture of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and the Renaissance architecture that, by 1560, was beginning to appear in England as Elizabethan architecture but Gothic architecture was attributed to the Goths by scholars such as Giorgio Vasari, despite its origins in Normandy, France, in the mid-twelfth century. Unlike Classical architecture which evoked the ‘civilised’ and powerful nature of the Roman Empire, Gothic architecture recalled the ‘baseness’ of groups like the Goths. Renaissance scholars in Europe set up an opposition not just between the Gothic and the Classical but also the Gothic and the Renaissance, but this opposition was complicated and almost dismantled in Elizabethan England.

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<sup>87</sup> Giorgio Vasari, *Le Vite De' Piu Eccellenti Pittori, Scultori, E Architettori*, vol. 3 (Florence: Giunti, 1568), p. 366 – Vasari’s original text reads ‘maniera dei Gotti’ and ‘fatta da i Gotti’.

<sup>88</sup> Groom, p. 1.

Gothic architecture remained the predominant style in England during the first few years of Elizabeth I's reign and England's 'Gothic' heritage was visible in many of its buildings. In around 1560, English Gothic architecture began to be mixed with newly emerging Renaissance style, usually based on Classical motifs, and additions in the Renaissance style were often made to Gothic buildings, creating a hybrid architectural style made up of both Gothic and Classical styles, now known as Elizabethan.<sup>89</sup> The Elizabethan style was said to have produced monstrosities but it also 'allowed for unrestrained play for the fancies, and [produced] the best mansions and manors of the time'.<sup>90</sup> The hybridity of Elizabethan architecture mirrored the hybridity of English national identity at this time as, although Elizabethans would not have referred to themselves 'Gothic' - this label did not appear until the early eighteenth century, as explained earlier in this chapter - Elizabethan England did acknowledge its 'Gothic' ancestry of Angles, Saxons, Jutes, and other 'barbarians'.

In this chapter, I have discussed the Goths as ancestors that were embraced by Britain in the eighteenth century but Francesca T. Royster suggests that 'in Shakespeare's time the more compelling image of the Goth was that of an embarrassing distant cousin' as 'the English showed the same ambivalence to the Goths that they showed to their own ancient past'.<sup>91</sup> However, England and, later, Britain, as stated above, regularly engaged in myth making to create a sense of national identity, incorporating aspects of their pseudo-history into their identity and the Goths seem to have been embraced as ancestors by Elizabethans just as they were in the eighteenth century. Early modern chroniclers and historians could not agree on the role that the Goths had in the formation of pre-feudal England as some framed

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<sup>89</sup> T. Roger Smith, *Architecture: Gothic and Renaissance* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington Ltd, 1888), p. 155.

<sup>90</sup> Smith, p. 155.

<sup>91</sup> Francesca T. Royster, 'White-Limed Walls: Whiteness and Gothic Extremism in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 51 (2000), 432-455 (437).



the Goths as merely barbarians that invaded and destroyed Rome, although this triumph was simultaneously regarded as the destruction of a noble civilisation and as a punishment for Roman decadence, whereas others, including Raphael Holinshed, whose chronicles are widely regarded as a source for Shakespeare's plays, claimed that the Goths invaded England in 791 AD along with the 'Danes, [...] Vandales, Norwegians, &c', thus making England's pre-Norman history at last partially Gothic. Elizabethan England's confusion surrounding the Goths was not restricted merely to their role in the formation of pre-Norman England. This confusion extended to their monarchs, their homeland, their relationship with other groups such as the Angles and the Saxons, the religion of the Goths and how Gothic religion related to England's own historical religion.<sup>92</sup> Goths and other barbarian groups that supposedly invaded England were often associated with pre-Christian England as they followed their own branches of paganism. While this is true of the Angles, Saxons, and Vikings, all of whom did practice non-Christian religions during their occupations of Britain, the Goths had been converted to Arianism by the fourth century AD with Wulfia translating the Bible into the Gothic tongue sometime between 348 AD and 383 AD.<sup>93</sup> This occurred long before Holinshed claimed that the Gothic armies invaded England and the Gothic conversion to Christianity was even mentioned in the texts of the sixteenth century.

Despite their Christianity being well reported, the Goths were also associated with pagan gods by the Elizabethans, marking them as concurrently Christian and pagan, while

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<sup>92</sup> Raphael Holinshed, *The Firste [Laste] Volume of the Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande Conteyning the Description and Chronicles of England, from the First Inhabiting vnto the Conquest: The Description and Chronicles of Scotland, from the First Original of the Scottes Nation till the Yeare of our Lorde 1571: The Description and Chronicles of Yrelande, Likewise from the First Originall of that Nation untill the Yeare 1571* (London: Iohn Hunne, 1577), p. 3.

<sup>93</sup> See: Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, trans. by Bertram Colgrave, Judith McClure and Roger Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Catholic Church, *The Martiloge in Englysshe After the Vse of the Chirche of Salisbury [and] as it is Redde in Syon, with Addicyons* (London: In Fletestrete at the sygne of the sonne, by Wynkyn de worde, 1526), p. xlii: 'The feest also of saynt Gulphyle the fyrst bysshop & apostle of the people called gothes'; Thomas Harding, *An Ansvvere to Maister Iuelles Chalenge* (London: By Iohn Bogard at the Golden Bible, 1564), p. 160.

Romans were also presented simultaneously as Christian and pagan. Gothic paganism is prominent in *Titus Andronicus* but the play has often been read as characterising Goths as Christians due to Tamora's cry of 'irreligious piety' during the sacrifice of her eldest son.<sup>94</sup> As Nicholas R. Moschovakis states, Lucius' sacrifice of Alarbus is a form of 'pagan obligation' which 'inaugurates a cycle of revenge in the manner of the ancient tragic myths'.<sup>95</sup> Goths have also been read as representative of Protestant reformers, while Andronici stand in the place of Catholics, but Paulina Kewes writes that 'we should avoid misleading dichotomies pervasive in modern discussions of Titus which blithely equate the Romans, notably the Andronici, with Catholics and the Goths with reformers'.<sup>96</sup> While Kewes acknowledges that this 'misleading' dichotomy should be avoided, it should also be acknowledged that both Romans and Gothic had, at least in the eyes of Elizabethan England, hybrid religious identities and this hybridity is present in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* and, while this does not impact Kewes' assertion that Goths should not necessarily be equated to reformers, they can be read as, at least partially, Christian, as well as pagan, which allowed Elizabethan audiences an opportunity to connect to the Goths as possibly persecuted religious others as they fought against the superstitions of another religion.<sup>97</sup> In Act two, scene one, Aaron evokes 'the gods that warlike Goths adore' and the use of 'gods', instead of God, and drawing attention to the Goth's warlike nature, an attribute which is usually associated with specific gods such as the Roman Mars or Germanic Tiwaz, indicates that the Goths worship some pagan gods in the play.<sup>98</sup> This depiction of Gothic paganism in *Titus Andronicus* complies with very early accounts of the Goths as Jordanes, a sixth-century

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<sup>94</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, 1.1.130.

<sup>95</sup> Nicholas Rand Moschovakis, "'Irreligious Piety' and Christian History: Persecution as Pagan Anachronism in *Titus Andronicus*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 53 (2002), 460-486 (463).

<sup>96</sup> Paulina Kewes, "'I Ask Your Voices and Your Suffrages": The Bogus Rome of Peele and Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*", *The Review of Politics*, 78 (2016), 551-570 (562).

<sup>97</sup> Kewes, 562.

<sup>98</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, 2.1.61.

historian of Gothic heritage, claimed that ‘Mars [had] always been worshipped by the Goths’ in the *Getica*.<sup>99</sup> As a result of the false connections between the Goths and pre-Christian England, English Gothic architecture was also, occasionally, thought to be pre-Christian despite being introduced to England by the Normans after 1066. Although Gothic architecture was a Catholic French style, Gothic architecture was spared direct association with England’s enemies due to the misconceptions that the Elizabethans believed about the Goths. However, Elizabethan understanding of the origins of Gothic architecture, and their understanding of the Goths themselves, was fraught with contradictory information and misconceptions so it is difficult to know for certain how the Elizabethans reacted to Gothic architecture and what it meant for them in terms of their own identity and their understanding of England’s past.

Despite this, the prominent presence of Gothic architecture in England and the acceptance of ‘Gothic’ ancestry, whether that included the Goths or was just an acceptance of the various ‘Germanic’ ‘barbarian’ groups that had invaded England, meant that English national identity was at least partially ‘Gothic’ or ‘Germanic’ in the late sixteenth century and Gothic English identity was fuelled by misconceptions, a lack of knowledge and understanding about England’s past, and deliberate mythmaking. It should be noted that although ‘Gothic’ and ‘Germanic’ ancestry was an aspect of Elizabethan national identity it was, unlike in eighteenth-century Britain, not a vital aspect of Elizabethan national identity or Elizabethan literature, nor was the idea of a historically-grounded ‘Gothic constitution’ central to the politics of Elizabethan England. ‘Gothic ancestry’ did play a role in Elizabethan national identity, linking Elizabethan England to a history of ‘warriors’, but it did not have the same overt nationalistic and patriotic connotations in Elizabethan England as it did in

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<sup>99</sup> Charles Christopher Mierow, *The Gothic History of Jordanes in English Version* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1915), p. 61.

eighteenth-century Britain. This does not mean that ‘Gothic’ or ‘Germanic’ ancestry was never used in regards to notions of English racial or religious supremacy but, to again quote Royster, ‘in Shakespeare's time the more compelling image of the Goth was that of an embarrassing distant cousin’.<sup>100</sup> Elizabethan England was less enamoured with its ancient past than eighteenth-century Britain.

Although ‘Gothicness’ made up some part of Elizabethan England’s sense of national identity, ‘Roman’ influences were also incorporated into English national identity through literature, art, and architecture. Royster states that ‘humanism had taught England to worship the works and ways of ancient Rome and to regard with shame the barbarity of their own ancestors’, leading Elizabethan England away from their Gothic past and towards a more Rome-like, imperial future.<sup>101</sup> Rome, for the Elizabethans, was seen as a parent or predecessor as they sought to create their own empire. ‘Rome’ and ‘Roman’ had specific connotations to Elizabethan England as ‘Rome’ evoked images of an empire, once great and vast but corrupted by the Goths, greed, and ambition while ‘Roman’, particularly an ‘antique Roman’ rather than a modern Roman, suggested civility, honour, and discipline.<sup>102</sup> From the time of Henry VIII, many years before the establishment of the first British Empire, the idea of empire was prominent in England’s identity as the Act in Restraint of Appeals of 1532 ‘declared and expressed that this realm of England is an empire’, clearly stating England’s independence from Rome.<sup>103</sup> ‘Empire’ as we understand it today, as a collection of states ruled by one monarch or leader, was an idea that was established in the reign of Elizabeth I as she issued both Humphrey Gilbert and Sir Walter Raleigh with patents for overseas

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<sup>100</sup> Royster, 437.

<sup>101</sup> Royster, 437.

<sup>102</sup> William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. by G. R. Hibbard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 5.2.294; Warren Chernaik, *The Myth of Rome in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 1.

<sup>103</sup> G. R. Elton, *The Tudor Constitution: Documents and Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 535.

exploration in the New World, although neither produced successful colonies in the lands that they found.<sup>104</sup> ‘Empire’ was not an abstract concept to the Elizabethans but it was something that they had not achieved on the scale that they aspired to and so they still sought to follow the model of Rome in their attempts. The Roman Empire was thought to be civilised, unlike the ‘barbarous’ Goths, but writers such as Shakespeare, Jonson, and Massinger often portrayed a much darker version of the Roman Empire on stage. This darker Rome can be seen in plays such as *Titus Andronicus*, where the brutality of the Roman Empire is revealed in alarming detail, and these plays complicate the idea of the civilised and just Rome which the Elizabethans admired and aspired to emulate. The rebirth of Roman ideals in Europe led to the Renaissance style being incorporated into the art, architecture, and literature of Elizabethan England. However, Renaissance art and architecture were also closely associated with Catholic Europe and so the Renaissance style was partially rejected due to being favoured by the enemies of Elizabethan England. Aspects of both the Gothic and the Renaissance were denied by the Elizabethans as they sought to escape the allegedly barbaric, crude nature of their Gothic ancestors and the Catholicism of Renaissance Europe but the Elizabethans accepted their past as ‘barbaric’ warriors and incorporated it into their future as the successors of the Roman Empire. This led to a hybridity in both Elizabethan style and Elizabethan national identity.

Elizabethan drama often offered a ‘straightforward romanticisation of the principals’ of the Roman Empire, as seen in John Fletcher’s and Philip Massinger’s co-authored play *The False One* (c.1619), and the early modern romanticisation of Rome was one aspect of

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<sup>104</sup> Benjamin Perley Poore, *Federal and State Constitutions, Colonial Charters, and Other Organic Laws of the United States* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1877), pp. 1379-1382; Carlos Slafter, *Sir Humfrey Gylberte and His Enterprise of Colonization in America: Including His Discourse to Prove a Northwest Passage to Cataia, His Letters Patent from Queen Elizabeth, Captain Edward Haies' Narrative, and Other Important Papers and Letters* (Boston: Publications of the Prince Society, 1903), pp. 95-102.

early modern England incorporating Roman ideals into their own national identity.<sup>105</sup> *Titus Andronicus* is one of the few surviving early modern plays that focuses on the Goths as well as the Romans and Shakespeare only mentions the Goths once more, in Act three, scene three of *As You Like It* (1599): ‘I am here with thee and thy goats, as the most capricious poet, honest Ovid, was among the Goths’.<sup>106</sup> *Titus Andronicus* can be used to examine the hybrid nature of English national identity during the Elizabethan era as the same hybridity is reflected in the identities of the characters, especially Tamora and Lucius, and in the complicated ideas of Roman ‘civility’ and Gothic ‘barbarism’.

Initially, the play seems to adhere to the clear boundaries set out between Goths and Romans by sixteenth-century scholars as the first moments of the play describe the honourable Titus’ victory over the Goths. Initially, the play presents the Goths, particularly Tamora, as prisoners of a long and arduous war and Shakespeare appears to reinforce their limited identity as ‘barbarians’ with Marcus’ speech about Titus’ ‘weary wars against the barbarous Goths’.<sup>107</sup> As Royster states, ‘for many in Shakespeare’s original audience the image of the Goths oscillated between one of bold warriors and one of “wanton wast[ers] of a noble civilization”’ but their overarching identity marks them as ‘barbaric’ and ‘uncivilised’ in contrast to ‘civilized Rome’.<sup>108</sup> However, the play quickly blurs these boundaries by examining the violent nature of the Roman Empire, indicating that there is little difference between the ‘civilised’ Romans and the ‘barbarous’ Goths within the space of the play.

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<sup>105</sup> John E. Curran, ‘Fletcher, Massinger, and Roman Imperial Character’, *Comparative Drama*, 43 (2009), 317-354 (321).

<sup>106</sup> William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, ed. by Alan Brissenden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 3.3.5-6.

<sup>107</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, 1.1.28.

<sup>108</sup> Royster, 436; Royster quoting Ronald Broude, ‘Roman and Goth in *Titus Andronicus*’, *Shakespeare Studies*, 6 (1970), 27-34; Coppelia Kahn, *Roman Shakespeare: Warriors, Wounds, and Women* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 47.

Joan Fitzpatrick acknowledges that ‘Shakespeare's problematizing of distinctions between the Romans and the Goths begins [...] in Titus's refusal to show mercy by sparing Tamora's son’, as Titus orders Lucius to sacrifice Alarbus to appease the ‘groaning shadows’ of his own dead sons.<sup>109</sup> Tamora, the captive Queen of the Goths, begs for Alarbus’ life in a short but sympathetic speech:

Stay, Roman brethren! Gracious conqueror,  
Victorious Titus, rue the tears I shed,  
A mother's tears in passion for her son:  
And if thy sons were ever dear to thee,  
O, think my son to be as dear to me!<sup>110</sup>

Tamora uses this speech to appeal to Titus’ Roman civility, referring to him as ‘Thrice Noble Titus’ at the end of her speech, and emphasising that she, like Titus, would experience overwhelming grief if Titus refused to spare her eldest son.<sup>111</sup> Tamora’s language intensifies the cruelty of Titus’ actions as he is no longer gracious in his victory but sadistic and merciless, he lacks the assumed civility of the Roman Empire and, instead, becomes ‘barbarous’ like the Goths. Tamora emphasises that they are ‘captive’, prisoners of war ‘brought to Rome / to beautify [his] triumphs and return’, disputing early modern ideas of Roman honour and Titus’ hypocrisy allows Shakespeare to encourage his audience to sympathise with Tamora as a grieving mother and powerless woman as she begs for ‘sweet mercy’, claiming that Titus’ mercy would be ‘nobility's true badge’.<sup>112</sup> She is not denied sympathy due to her Gothic identity, as one may expect, and, as stated by Jane Grogan,

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<sup>109</sup> Joan Fitzpatrick, ‘Foreign Appetites and Alterity: Is There an Irish Context for *Titus Andronicus*?’, *Connotations*, 11.2-3 (2001), 127-145 (137); *Titus Andronicus*, 1.1.126.

<sup>110</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, 1.1.103-107.

<sup>111</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, 1.1.120.

<sup>112</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, 1.1.110-119.

‘Shakespeare opens a space for a more sympathetic view of Tamora and the Goths as “barbarians” to prevail, one otherwise inaccessible through the Roman values that have dominated scholarship of *Titus Andronicus*’.<sup>113</sup> Shakespeare gives Tamora time and space to question the civility of the Roman Empire, painting her as the honourable party in this exchange although, as Grogan later acknowledges, this ‘proves to be no more than a set-up, once we perceive its dramatic relation to subsequent events’.<sup>114</sup> Alarbus’ death occurs off-stage, likely due to the logistics of his death, but Lucius’ report of the event is horrifyingly vivid even though it is but a few lines long. Lucius casually describes how Alarbus was dismembered and mutilated before informing Titus that Alarbus’ ‘entrails feed the sacrificing fire’ with a disturbing sense of satisfaction.<sup>115</sup> Lucius relishes the scent of Alarbus’ burning flesh, likening it to ‘incense’ that ‘doth perfume the sky’.<sup>116</sup> In this short section Lucius, a noble Roman warrior, is presented as a cruel and bloodthirsty man who delights in the torture and murder of his helpless prisoners.

The sacrifice of Alarbus proves that Rome is cruel and vicious and this is confirmed by Chiron when he compares it to Scythia, the land of the Goths in *Titus Andronicus*: ‘Was ever Scythia half so barbarous?’<sup>117</sup> Grogan argues that Chiron’s quip is ‘hardly an expression of homesickness’ as he reveals the barbarity of the Gothic homeland but, in turn, this comparison also reveals the unexpected barbarity of Rome as Chiron acknowledges that there is little difference between Scythia and Rome.<sup>118</sup> Demetrius urges Chiron to ‘oppose not Scythia to ambitious Rome’, suggesting that Rome is, in fact, more barbarous than Scythia due to its relentless ambition.<sup>119</sup> Shakespeare’s opening scene invites the audience to

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<sup>113</sup> Jane Grogan, “Headless Rome” and Hungry Goths: Herodotus and *Titus Andronicus*, *English Literary Renaissance*, 43 (2013), 30-61 (48).

<sup>114</sup> Moschovakis, 465.

<sup>115</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, 1.1.144.

<sup>116</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, 1.1.145.

<sup>117</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, 1.1.131.

<sup>118</sup> Grogan, 37.

<sup>119</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, 1.1.132.



interrogate the roles of Romans and Goths within the play, complicating the distinct boundaries between the two groups that were common not only in sixteenth century but also in the eighteenth century, as noted earlier in this chapter, and Shakespeare's complication of Roman civility and Gothic barbarism encourages audiences to embrace their Gothic ancestors. If this scene can be read as an encouragement to embrace England's Gothic ancestry, as Jonathan Bate has suggested, then it can also be read as pre-Gothic as it presents an Elizabethan audience with an idea which was vital to not only eighteenth-century politics but also the Gothic Revival movement and the advent of Gothic literature.<sup>120</sup> It could be argued that by encouraging his audience to identify, at least in part, with the Goths in *Titus Andronicus*, Shakespeare transforms the notion of English 'Gothic' or 'Germanic' ancestry into something more tangibly nationalistic but, throughout *Titus Andronicus*, Shakespeare attempts to destabilise how his audience understands both Gothic and Roman identities rather than merely present Goth or Roman as a preferable identity and this undermines a nationalistic reading of Shakespeare's Goths.

Shakespeare's attempts to dismantle pre-conceived ideas of Gothic barbarism and Roman civility continue in Act five, scene one as Titus brutally murders Chiron and Demetrius before baking them into pies. Arguably, this scene is framed as a moment of justified revenge against Chiron and Demetrius for the rape and mutilation of Lavinia, Titus' daughter, but the entire scene is full of disturbing language and violent imagery unfitting of a civil Roman warrior. Titus' long speech relies upon repetition to reinforce his intentions to 'grind' Chiron and Demetrius' 'bones to dust' and use their blood, which he forces Lavinia collect with 'basin' held 'tween her stumps', into a 'paste'.<sup>121</sup> The repetition in this section underpins Titus' supposed "madness" but Titus' capability for violence is not fuelled by

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<sup>120</sup> Bate.

<sup>121</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, 5.2.182-187.

“madness”, as illustrated during the first act of the play, and this speech merely reinforces the depiction of a ‘barbarous’ Rome as Titus use his monologue to relay his plans to bake Chiron and Demetrius into ‘pasties’ or pies and feed them to Tamora at a feast later in the play.<sup>122</sup> Cannibalism was not practiced by either Romans or Goths but, while Titus seems to be unhinged at this point in the play, he is obviously inspired by the myth of Philomel which influenced his daughter’s rape and mutilation. Titus draws attention to the myth in this scene by claiming that ‘worse than Procne [he] will be revenged’.<sup>123</sup> David B. Goldstein argues that the cannibalism in *Titus Andronicus* could have been influenced by the cannibalism reportedly witnessed during expeditions to the New World but Titus’ clear reference to Ovid’s myth situates his actions firmly within the setting of the play.<sup>124</sup> Titus takes on the role of Procne but his revenge is greater than hers, as he claimed it would be, as he is able to kill Tamora rather than fleeing after revealing his horrible deed. Perhaps the most absurdly grotesque image in this scene, and later in scene three of the same act, is Titus’ intention to ‘play the cook’ when he serves Tamora the ‘pasties’ made out the blood, bones, and flesh of her sons.<sup>125</sup> Titus’ change of clothes into a cook’s outfit, indicated by both the text and the stage directions, makes the banquet farcical as he gains pleasure from his macabre role as the cook and the ignorance of his guests.<sup>126</sup> The mixture of the carnivalesque and the grotesque in this scene speaks to the Gothic mode of the eighteenth century as Gothic writers began introducing elements of the carnivalesque and the grotesque into their works. Although this chapter focuses primarily on how *Titus Andronicus* represents a similar hybrid identity to what was created in eighteenth-century Britain, it must be acknowledged that *Titus Andronicus* is a play that presents its audience with elements of the Gothic in other ways.

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<sup>122</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, 5.2.189.

<sup>123</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, 5.2.195.

<sup>124</sup> David B. Goldstein, *Eating and Ethics in Shakespeare's England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) p. 33.

<sup>125</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, 5.2.189-204.

<sup>126</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, 5.3 ‘enter Titus like a cook’.

Raducanu has examined the staging of horror within the play as proto-Gothic but the grotesque farce that plays across Act five, scene two and Act five, scene three can also be read as pre-Gothic as it anticipates the Gothic literature's fascination with the grotesque and the carnivalesque. Titus' playful change of clothes in Act five, scene three is haunted by the knowledge that he has, in fact, played the cook for this banquet and Titus' descent into 'barbarity' dismantles the boundaries between Goth and Roman, preventing these identities to be based on unreasonable markers such as 'civility' and 'barbarism'.

Titus' most brutal act in the play is the murder of his own daughter in Act five, scene three. Deborah Willis argues that through killing Lavinia, Titus 'submits to classical precedent, removes the "stain" from family honour, and ends his own "sorrow"' and Lavinia's death is framed as an honour killing through its relation to the Greco-Roman myth of Virginia from book three of Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita Libri*.<sup>127</sup> This locates her death within the realm of the classical, once again highlighting the possible barbarities of civilised nations. Throughout the course of the play Lavinia has been subjected to numerous abhorrent acts including public humiliation, rape, and gruesome mutilation but her death by her own father's hand is the most monstrous act committed towards her character in *Titus Andronicus*. Willis states that 'Lavinia indeed is treated as an object here, a mere prop in Titus's final show' but goes on to argue that 'Titus's performance contains its own self-critique: he knows his killing of Lavinia is horrible, yet he does it anyway, in a context that guarantees his own death.' Even if, as Willis writes, Titus' performance is a form of self-critique, Roman culture encourages Lavinia's death. Saturninus is clearly shocked by Titus' actions but Rome's mythological heritage and the cultural shame it directed at women who had been 'stained, and deflowered' by rapists creates a model for Lavinia's death.<sup>128</sup> Titus once again uses a

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<sup>127</sup> Livy, *History of Rome, Volume II*, trans. by B. O. Foster (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), pp. 143-199.

<sup>128</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, 5.3.38.

Roman myth to justify his actions as he asks Saturninus if it was ‘well done of rash Virginius, / To slay his daughter with his own right hand’.<sup>129</sup> Saturninus’ reply that ‘it was’ because ‘the girl should not survive her shame’ spurs Titus on to take the opportunity to slay Lavinia with his own right hand, the only hand he has remaining, thus inserting himself into another mythological role, occupying the role of Virginius just as he previously occupied the role of Procne.<sup>130</sup> Titus’ constant use of Roman mythology to justify his barbaric actions further problematises the boundaries between Goths and Romans as Roman barbarity is sanctioned by their own history. It is unclear if Lavinia knew that her death was imminent in this scene but she is not able to cry out at the moment of her death, either to plead with her father or to say any final words to him, as she was thoroughly silenced by Chiron and Demetrius earlier in the play. In this scene, Rome is vicious and the dark, brutal Rome of *Titus Andronicus* conflicted with the glorified image of Rome that was prominent in the Elizabethan period. This is not the Rome that Elizabethan England admired and so England’s clear identification with Rome and Roman ideals is marred by the representation of Rome in *Titus Andronicus*.

For Eugene Giddens, ‘Shakespeare represents the other who is not other, as the Goths, barbarians from the Roman perspective, resemble Elizabethans’.<sup>131</sup> Giddens argues that Elizabethan constructions of masculinity align with Shakespeare’s representation of Gothic masculinity within the play. I will return to this idea later in this chapter but Giddens’ argument emphasises that Shakespeare was deliberately encouraging audiences to identify with Goths by aligning Gothic ideals with Elizabethan ideals. However, while many of the atrocities in *Titus Andronicus* are carried out by Roman characters, which allows Elizabethan audiences to initially identify more comfortably with the Goths than Royster suggests in

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<sup>129</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, 5.3.36-37

<sup>130</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, . 5.3.39-40

<sup>131</sup> Eugene Giddens, ‘Masculinity and Barbarism in *Titus Andronicus*’, *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 15.2 (2010), 1-20 (8).

‘White-limed Walls: Whiteness and Gothic Extremism in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*’, the Goths are also characterised as ‘barbarous’ within the play which, once again, suggests that Shakespeare is complicating Elizabethan identity and revealing a hybrid Elizabethan identity based on a Gothic past and a Roman future which anticipates how national identity was constructed in eighteenth-century Britain.

Goths do commit vicious and horrifying acts throughout the play, complicating any positive connotations that the Gothic characters may have had for the audience that were created during Tamora’s woeful speech at the beginning of the play. Tamora and her sons, Chiron and Demetrius, conspire to carry out the cruellest act in the play, the rape and mutilation of Lavinia between scene three and scene four of Act two. Chiron and Demetrius are led by Aaron, an Othered character who Shakespeare’s Elizabethan audience are never invited to identify with, who turns their lust for Lavinia into something more violent than was originally intended. Aaron may transform their lust into violence but these Gothic princes agree to carry the act out with fervour, fulfilling their roles as ‘barbarous Goths’.<sup>132</sup> Tamora is perhaps more cruel and wicked than her sons or Aaron as she encourages violence against another woman, clearly ignoring Lavinia’s attempts to create a sisterhood between them as she pleads for Tamora to be a ‘charitable murderer’ and kill her rather than subjecting her to Chiron and Demetrius’ ‘worse-than-killing lust’.<sup>133</sup> Lavinia brands Tamora a ‘beastly creature’ with ‘no womanhood’ once she realises that Tamora has no sympathy for her plight, despite their shared experience of womanhood, stripping her of the identity of a sympathetic woman that she had gained earlier in the play when she ‘poured forth tears in vain’ for the life of her son.<sup>134</sup> Tamora is no ‘gentle Queen’ as she allows her sons to ‘satisfy their lust’ for

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<sup>132</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, 1.1.28.

<sup>133</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, 2.3.175-178.

<sup>134</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, 2.3.182, 2.3.163.

her own pleasure and revenge.<sup>135</sup> In this moment, Shakespeare encourages his audience to sympathise with the Roman Lavinia, opposing the earlier suggestion that his audience can, and should, associate themselves with the Goths. Molly Easo Smith argues that ‘Shakespeare’s vividly brutal exposition of Roman and Goth practices as intrinsically violent and horrible thus exploits his audience’s interest in the excess associated with Otherness [...] even as it forces a recognition of the spectacles of punitive excess that audiences relied upon for entertainment’ but this exposition also forces Elizabethan audiences to recognise two aspects of their national identity, Roman and Gothic, as violent and horrifying.<sup>136</sup> Elizabethan England’s hybrid national identity is exposed as violent and brutal but it is both Gothic and Roman and, in this way, Shakespeare’s exploration of Roman and Gothic identities in *Titus Andronicus* supports the eighteenth-century idea of a British, or English, Gothic national identity.

If Gothic and Roman identities cannot be split into clear categories of ‘civilised’ and ‘barbarous’ then what truly separates them from one another? Francesca T. Royster argues that this difference is ‘located in the flesh’ while Nicholas R. Moschovakis states that they are defined, at least initially, by their differing approach to religion.<sup>137</sup> However, these categories of Roman and Goth were based on unsustainable and inflexible distinctions, creating an unstable binary, and Shakespeare deconstructs these identities further in the play as Roman characters become associated with the Goths and Goths become subjects of the Roman Empire. Steve Craig spends much of his essay on ‘Shakespeare among the goths’ dismantling Jonathan Bate’s reading of the Goths in *Titus Andronicus* but he does acknowledge the ‘shared desire[s]’ between the Romans and Goths in the play in which ‘Roman justice and

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<sup>135</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, 2.3.168, 2.3.180.

<sup>136</sup> Molly Easo Smith, ‘Spectacles of Torment in *Titus Andronicus*’, *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 36.2 (1996), 315-331 (316).

<sup>137</sup> Royster, 433; Moschovakis.

Gothic violence unwitting coalesce'.<sup>138</sup> As I demonstrated earlier in this chapter, Shakespeare's conscious disruption of the boundaries between Goths and Romans through violent acts proves that this is more than merely an 'unwitting' union between Romans and Goths but Craig does acknowledge that 'Romans [...] and Goths share a propensity to inhabit the language of their respective Other', thus creating a hybrid identity that falls somewhere between Gothic and Roman through an appropriation of language.<sup>139</sup> Craig briefly examines the characters of Chiron and Demetrius and their ability to 'goad Titus with Latinate quotations' but this shared identity can also be examined in Tamora, Lucius, and Titus as they begin to cross the boundaries of their own distinct national identities.<sup>140</sup>

*Titus Andronicus* truly complicates the concepts of distinct Roman and Gothic identities when Tamora becomes the Empress of Rome after her marriage to Saturninus in the first act of the play as she takes on a new role but also remains the Queen of the Goths. Royster suggests that 'the play makes us aware that Tamora is always a Goth' as 'her difference from the Romans is located in the flesh', through her 'Germanic paleness'.<sup>141</sup> Here, it is necessary to return to the discussion of 'Gothic' and 'Germanic' as racially-coded terms which may, or may not, function in a similar way to the myth of the 'Anglo-Saxon' race. Tamora's 'hue', her noted paleness, separates her from Roman society but Saturninus states that Tamora is 'of the hue / That [he] would choose, were [he] to choose anew.'<sup>142</sup> Whether this is flattery or a true expression of preference for a paler skin tone, Saturninus' lines emphasise the whiteness of Shakespeare's Goths and, thus, the Goths within the play become racial Others when compared to the Romans. Tamora is visibly different to the

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<sup>138</sup> Steven Craig, 'Shakespeare Among the Goths', in *Gothic Shakespeares*, ed. by John Drakakis and Dale Townshend (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), pp. 42-59 (p. 54).

<sup>139</sup> Craig, p. 54.

<sup>140</sup> Craig, p. 54

<sup>141</sup> Royster, 433.

<sup>142</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, 1.1.261-262.

Romans, no matter how much she attempts to fit into their society. Quoting Dympna Callaghan, Royster maintains that Tamora's racial difference, her 'racially marked' whiteness, marks her as an Other but Tamora's acknowledgement that she has been 'adopted' by Rome, rather than considering herself truly Roman, contributes to her hybrid identity as she attempts to take on a new identity as a Roman.<sup>143</sup> She never directly renounces her identity as a Goth and, if Royster is correct, she cannot due to her 'hue' but, through Tamora, Shakespeare presents his audience with their own hybrid national identity of conqueror and conquered, barbaric and civilised, Roman and Goth.<sup>144</sup> Mythmaking, a practice which is vital to England's Gothic pseudohistory, plays a clear role within the play as Jane Grogan suggests that 'Tamora's Goths are [...] the historical conquerors of Rome' which may allow 'audiences to defy the weighty and unflattering writings of Caesar, Tacitus, and others, and to contemplate a new English barbarian identity less beholden to Rome and their own embarrassing history under Rome'.<sup>145</sup> Grogan argues that through the Goths England can create an identity that is no longer tied to their own failure to suppress the advances of Rome and Grogan's suggestion may, when read alongside Tamora's notable whiteness and Saturninus' preference for Tamora's skin tone, lead to the conclusion that whiteness is favourable within the play but, as I have noted previously, Shakespeare is clearly marking Tamora as an 'Other' through her 'whiteness' and there are no immediately positive connotations about 'whiteness' beyond Saturninus' own preferences.

Shakespeare also presents Tamora and the other Goths as the conquered party which, again, complicates any interpretation that suggests that Elizabethan England could easily associate themselves with either Goths or Romans. Ancient Britons had been conquered by

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<sup>143</sup> Royster quoting Dympna Callaghan, 433; Dympna Callaghan, 'Re-Reading Elizabeth Cary's the *Tragedie of Mariam, Faire Queene of Jewry*', in *Ashgate Critical Essays on Women Writers in England, 1550–1700: Volume 6*, ed. by Karen Raber (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 173-194.

<sup>144</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, 1.1.261.

<sup>145</sup> Grogan, 48.



Rome and the Goths in *Titus Andronicus* may have reminded an audience of England's own past as a conquered nation. All of this feeds into the complicated nature of 'Gothic' national identity in Elizabethan England, as Goths are simultaneously a part of England's history that should be acknowledged but also shameful reminders of England's past, but it does emphasise the hybridity of English identity at this time as Elizabethans are forced to reconcile their past and their hopes for the future through Tamora and the Goths.

Tamora is first conquered as a Gothic queen, brought to Rome as a prisoner in the first act of the play after Titus defeated her armies, but she is further conquered through her marriage to Saturninus. It is her marriage which bestows the title of the Empress of Rome upon her and 'advance[s]' her status in the Roman Empire but it also allows her to, to quote Joan Fitzpatrick, mask 'her savagery under the veil of Roman respectability'.<sup>146</sup> Tamora simultaneously inhabits the identities of the Empress of Rome and the Queen of the Goths, despite no longer leading a Gothic army, but Saturninus is never named as the King of the Goths after their marriage. Gothic identity is of no interest to Roman Saturninus and Shakespeare suggests that Tamora is still 'othered' as she is distinct from Romans, illustrated through the use of her original title which explicitly ties her to the Goths. Other Goths, including Chiron and Demetrius, are also frequently othered by the Roman characters of the play. Marcus' use of the phrase 'traitorous Goths' in Act four, scene one is but one example of this within the play.<sup>147</sup> In this line, Marcus is specifically referring to Tamora, who is both Goth and Roman, and her sons and Marcus' refusal to acknowledge their place within the Roman Empire, especially Tamora's role as Empress, suggests that Tamora and the Goths will never truly be 'incorporate[d]' into Rome because they do not belong. Catherine Winiarski writes that 'as survivors, the Goths see their national identity as Goths to have been

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<sup>146</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, 1.1.330; Fitzpatrick, 136.

<sup>147</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, 4.1.92.

shattered and now placed in the past tense' but Marcus' attempts to present Goths as 'Other', alongside Tamora's retention of her title as the Queen of the Goths, despite claiming that she has been 'incorporate[d]' into the Roman Empire, establishes the Goths as separate from Rome even though they have been conquered.<sup>148</sup> Gothic national identity is retained by other Gothic characters even though Tamora's identity is both Gothic and Roman. This does somewhat correlate with Rome's actual treatment of conquered nations as Rome's conquests often retained some aspects of their own languages and religions but this is complicated by the Goths' proximity to Rome in the play as they either reside within the city of Rome or just outside of the city. They are neither citizens of Rome nor an annexed nation under Rome's control so it is unclear as to whether Goths such as Chiron and Demetrius, who clearly reside within Rome with their mother who is now the Empress of Rome, would have been expected to assimilate into Roman culture. It is perhaps the case that the Goths who reside in Rome have been conquered more thoroughly than the Gothic army who remains outside of Rome's walls but Chiron and Demetrius are never referred to as Romans, merely as 'Lords' and Princes of the Goths.<sup>149</sup>

Unlike her sons, who retain one identity, Tamora is simultaneously Gothic and not Gothic in *Titus Andronicus*. Her loss of Gothic identity is indicated through Demetrius' wistful reminiscence about when 'Goths were Goths and Tamora was queen' and confirmed later in the play when the Gothic army marches 'like stinging bees in hottest summer's day / led by their master to the flowered fields' to be 'avenged on cursed Tamora'.<sup>150</sup> This is a reoccurring issue within the play as Tamora is othered by both Goths and Romans, never truly fitting in to either category but concurrently occupying both. Tamora's identity is

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<sup>148</sup> Catherine Winiarski, 'Remnants of Virgil, Ovid, and Paul in *Titus Andronicus*', in *Ovid and Adaptation in Early Modern English Theatre*, ed. by Lisa Starks (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), pp. 129-144; *Titus Andronicus*, 1.1.462.

<sup>149</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, 2.1.63.

<sup>150</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, 1.1.140, 5.1.14-16.

complicated precisely because she remains a Goth rather than being completely conquered by Rome but the other Goths, except her sons, forsake her, proving that Tamora truly belongs to neither the Romans or the Goths in *Titus Andronicus*. Ultimately, Tamora allows herself to be conquered by Rome through her marriage to Saturninus so that she can continue her war against the Romans and she in a position of power over Rome as its ‘new made Empress’ but this leaves her with an unrecognised hybrid identity consisting of both Roman and Gothic titles, thus isolating her from both groups as she complies with neither ideal.<sup>151</sup> Tamora’s hybrid identity resembles Elizabethan England’s and, perhaps, eighteenth-century Britain’s reluctance to accept either Gothic or Roman identities, forcing the creation of a hybrid identity which does not truly reflect the nation and leaving England and, later, Britain without a clear identity based upon their past or their future.

Tamora’s hybrid identity at the beginning of the play encouraged Elizabethan audiences to reconcile with their ‘Gothic’ past but as the play progresses, identity becomes more complicated. Faced with Tamora’s brutal actions towards Lavinia, audiences may have found themselves looking towards the Roman characters in an attempt to find a suitable identity that matched with the future that Elizabethan England envisioned for itself. That is, a future that mirrored the supposed glory of the Roman Empire. As I have explored within this chapter, Titus cannot be read or seen as a suitable ‘Roman’ role model for Elizabethan England due to his own horrific actions that span the entirety of the play. Lucius, although blood-thirsty at the beginning of the play, represents a new generation of Romans that Elizabethan audiences may have sought to identify with. However, Shakespeare also complicates Lucius’ identity as he takes on a Gothic identity towards the end of the play and thus, *Titus Andronicus* reinforces the notion of a hybrid identity in Elizabethan England that

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<sup>151</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, 2.1.20.

struggles to reconcile England's past with England's possible future. This construction of identity anticipates the reconciliation between Britain's Gothic past and enlightened future in the eighteenth century.

Lucius, a Roman warrior and the last living son of Titus, becomes the 'general of the Goths' in Act four, scene four.<sup>152</sup> Lucius never refers to himself as a Goth, unlike Tamora when she declares herself a Roman in the first act of the play, but he is often referred to in Gothic terms such as 'warlike' and he becomes the leader of the Gothic army which aligns him with the Goths rather than his Roman brethren.<sup>153</sup> Lucius leads the Gothic army in the destruction of Rome at the end of *Titus Andronicus*, destroying his own Roman identity in the process as he acknowledges that Rome must be restructured to ensure that it will never be ruined by 'like euent's' again.<sup>154</sup> Grogan acknowledges 'Lucius' astonishing ability to occupy the moral high ground as he leads an army of Goths against his fellow Romans' but Lucius understands that he must destroy Rome and his own Roman identity in order to create a new Rome.<sup>155</sup> Despite his new role as the general to the Gothic army, Lucius is clearly still a Roman as the citizens of Rome are said to 'favour Lucius' and Saturninus states that the citizens 'wish'd that Lucius were their emperor' even before his invasion of Rome but his popularity may, partially, be attributed to his adoption of a semi-Gothic identity.<sup>156</sup>

Eugene Giddens argues that Gothic masculinity is more recognisable to Elizabethan England than Roman masculinity and that 'the first independently Goth moments seem to involve a cultural shift' as 'the play conspicuously attaches early modern male honour to

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<sup>152</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, 4.4.68.

<sup>153</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, 4.4.68.

<sup>154</sup> William Shakespeare, 'The Lamentable Tragedy of Titus Andronicus', in *Mr. VVilliam Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies Published According to the True Originall Copies* (London: Printed by Isaac Iaggard, and Ed. Blount at the charges of W. Iaggard, Ed. Blount, I. Smithweeke, and W. Aspley, 1623), pp. 31-52 (p. 52) Early English Books Online ebook – Note: this line is not included in the Oxford Shakespeare edited by Eugene M. Waith (2008) but is mentioned in the collations on p. 194.

<sup>155</sup> Grogan, 43.

<sup>156</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, 4.4.76.

Goths, bringing them closer to their Elizabethan audiences'.<sup>157</sup> Giddens goes on to claim that 'Lucius, who brings the Goth army to the gates of Rome, does not benefit' from a Gothic perspective of masculinity and honour as the 'younger Andronicus maintains his concern for honour, relying on it to secure the support of the Roman people' but Lucius must take on some form of Gothic masculinity and honour as that is, as Giddens acknowledges, a perspective that 'facilitates the union of Romans and Goths at the end of the play'.<sup>158</sup> Lucius' association with the Goths, his hybrid Gothic-Roman identity, gives him access to this 'more sophisticated, politicised (and in some respects more early modern) masculinity' even though Lucius still maintains his concern for Roman honour.<sup>159</sup> For Giddens, Lucius' Roman honour may 'disrupt his new union with the Goths' but, rather than disrupting his new alliance, Lucius' determination to retain his honour, a Roman idea rather than a Gothic one, allows him to be read as a hybrid between Roman and Gothic ideals, simultaneously occupying the role of a warlike Goth who embodies early modern ideas of masculinity and the honourable Roman, a figure who Elizabethans aspire to be.<sup>160</sup> Lucius' hybrid identity is less complicated than Tamora's as he is accepted by both groups, Romans and Goths, allowing him to comfortably occupy both identities without losing his status or place in society. Perhaps more so than Tamora, Lucius embodies Elizabethan national identity and the eighteenth-century acceptance of a Gothic identity as he willingly embraces his new role within the Gothic army while acknowledging that he is, in fact, different to the Goths. The Goths' willingness to take orders from the Roman Lucius proves that there is little distinction between Romans and Goths in *Titus Andronicus*. 'Barbarity' cannot be associated with race or nation but it is instead equated with villainous and cruel actions. At this point in the play Goths cease to be merely villains and the warriors, no longer associated with Tamora and her kin, become the

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<sup>157</sup> Giddens, 8.

<sup>158</sup> Giddens, 15.

<sup>159</sup> Giddens, 15.

<sup>160</sup> Giddens, 15.

‘faithful friends’ of the Roman Lucius.<sup>161</sup> Lucius’ friendly attitude towards the Goths is a far cry from his call to sacrifice a Goth, Tamora’s eldest son, to appease the ‘shadows’ of his fallen brothers in the first act of the play.<sup>162</sup>

It has been established that the clear distinctions between Romans and Goths identities can be read as an unstable binary, a binary based upon misconceptions, pseudohistory, and inflexible definitions and it can also be argued that Shakespeare uses the instability of these binary identities to suggest that one commonality, beyond their shared love of violence and war, is in their shared literary heritage. English and, later, British identity were partially based upon a shared history of Roman and ‘Gothic’ ancestry and Shakespeare’s suggestion that Romans and Goths share parts of their national identity, even if based on misconceptions about Romans and Goths, offers his audience an opportunity to identify with both Goths and Romans within the play. Several critics, including Stephanie M. Bahr and Catherine Winiarski, have also suggested that Shakespeare presents the Romans and Goths as sharing ‘the same textual heritage’ and their shared heritage of Ovid, Seneca, and Virgil not only ‘directly inform[s] their mutual violence’ but also contributes to a sense of hybridity within the play.<sup>163</sup> Winiarski states that ‘*Titus Andronicus* shows its Roman and Gothic war survivors divided by their concepts of the remnant, which they adapt from competing Virgilian and Ovidian ancestor texts’ as ‘Shakespeare adapts Ovidian narratives to break down the binary opposition of Roman and Goth, civilized and barbarian’.<sup>164</sup> Shakespeare’s use of the myth of Philomel, which is understood and co-opted by both Romans and Goths within the play, is an example of this shared textual history, a textual history that early modern audiences would also recognise and understand, and through this

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<sup>161</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, 5.1.1.

<sup>162</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, 1.1.100.

<sup>163</sup> Stephanie M. Bahr, ‘*Titus Andronicus* and the Interpretive Violence of the Reformation’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 68.3 (2017), 241-270 (247).

<sup>164</sup> Winiarski, p. 141.

shared myth Shakespeare disrupts the boundaries between Romans and Goths, once again allowing his audience to identify with both groups through their shared knowledge of Ovid. Bahr argues that the 'Goths' adaptation of Philomela deprives Lavinia of standard modes of communication and thus makes her status as object of interpretation even clearer' and, for Stephanie L. Pope, through 'their assault on Lavinia, Chiron and Demetrius use their knowledge of Ovid to become "craftier Tereus[es]" as they 'deploy the *Metamorphoses* "as a kind of rapists' instruction manual"' .<sup>165</sup> Titus clearly casts himself in the role of Procne, as mentioned earlier, but the Goth's appropriation of the myth of Philomel temporarily disrupts the Andronici's knowledge of the myth as '[a]lthough the Goths' literalizing of Philomela was clearly legible to her family at first, by Act 4 the Andronici seem to have forgotten this reading entirely.'<sup>166</sup> Eventually, Titus takes control of his own role within the myth and transforms the myth of Philomel into a shared textual history between Goths and Romans and Lavinia, in the role of Philomel, becomes the intersection between the Romans and the Goths. Through Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, and particularly the myth of Philomel, Romans and Goths share one identity based on violence and horror. Bahr argues that Titus' decision to adopt the 'Goths' text and their typological means for an Ovidian revenge that affirms Lavinia's identity as Philomela' but the play ends with 'Lavinia made into Livy's Virginia, not Ovid's Philomel' which disrupts their textual cohesion by switching from a shared Ovidian textual heritage to a Livian myth that the Goths had no access to or interaction with in the play.<sup>167</sup> Through the myth of Philomel, Shakespeare creates a shared identity for the Goths and Romans of his

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<sup>165</sup> Bahr, 260; Stephanie L. Pope, 'Gestures and the Classical Past in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*', *Shakespeare*, 15.4 (2019), 326-334 (329); Pope quoting R. W. Maslen, 329; R. W. Maslen, 'Myths Exploited: The *Metamorphoses* of Ovid in Early Elizabethan England', in *Shakespeare's Ovid: The *Metamorphoses* in the Plays and Poems*, ed. by A.B. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 15-30.

<sup>166</sup> Bahr, 261.

<sup>167</sup> Bahr, 262.

play, connecting them to his Elizabethan audience as the story of Philomel, which was so important to the story of *Titus Andronicus*.

Shakespeare's decision to create a pseudo-history in which Goths and Romans could co-exist through the shared myth of Philomel reflected not only the use of pseudo-history and mythmaking in English and British national identity, both in the Elizabethan era and in the eighteenth century, but Shakespeare also anticipates how writers of the Gothic in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain used his own work to create a shared textual history between themselves and England's 'Gothic' past. Shakespeare's use of Ovid reflects how Gothic writers used Shakespeare as a legitimising force, allowing him to become symbolic of their own hybrid national identity just as Ovid becomes a symbol of the shared identity between Goths and Romans within the play.

## **Conclusion**

In *Titus Andronicus*, Shakespeare creates a hybrid identity in which his audience can connect with their Gothic ancestors, using pseudo-history and a shared literary heritage to bond Elizabethan to the Goths. While Shakespeare does not necessarily do this to celebrate the freedom of England's 'Gothic' ancestors nor to reject classical, or Renaissance, ideals as politicians and writers did in the eighteenth century, he does urge his audience to recognise themselves within the Goths, either through representations of masculinity or by dismantling the distinctions between Goths and Romans, which creates a sense of nostalgia for Elizabethan audiences when viewing the Goths on stage.

As Grogan suggests, only in 'Shakespeare's hands such nostalgia could smooth the sharp edges of the Goths' notorious barbarity' and through an examination of 'barbarous' Romans, Goths that resemble Elizabethans, and a shared literary heritage that centres around Ovid, Shakespeare transformed the Goths into an acceptable ancestor for the audiences of



early modern England, providing a clear example of a pre-history of the eighteenth-century notion of Britain's Gothic ancestry which contributed to the rise of Gothic literature in the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>168</sup> *Titus Andronicus* may have been Gothicised by eighteenth-century critics who questioned the authorship of the play and endlessly criticised its preoccupation with blood and gore but the play can also be read as pre-Gothic, not only due to its representation of horror, as suggested by Adriana Raducanu, but through its examination of a hybrid identity which combined Elizabethan misconceptions about their Gothic ancestry with their possible imperial future.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Grogan, 6.

<sup>169</sup> Raducanu.

## II – Spiritual Despair and Abject Terror in Faustian Pacts

O, mercy, heaven, look not so fierce on me!

– Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus* (1616)

Although the notion of ‘Gothic ancestry’ was vital to the development of Gothic literature in the eighteenth century, we now understand the Gothic through its themes, ideas, and aesthetics. Exploring the representation of these themes, ideas, and aesthetics in early modern literature allows us to see the connections between early modern drama and Gothic literature.

The Faustian pact was one of the most popular tropes in early Gothic literature, taking centre stage in novels such as William Beckford’s *Vathek, an Arabian Tale* (1786), Matthew Lewis’ *The Monk: A Romance* (1796), Charlotte Dacre’s *Zofloya: or, The Moor* (1806), and Charles Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820). Faustian pacts depict an actual or metaphorical deal with the devil in which the Faust figure exchanges their soul for knowledge and power. Not all of the Gothic novels I mentioned depict a literal deal with the devil with a contract signed in blood, and some of these texts present an accidental deal with the devil rather than a deliberate pact, but the Faustian pact is often recognised as a Gothic trope, even though it first appeared in English literature in c.1592, due to its popularity with Gothic writers during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>1</sup> In *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick names the Faustian pact as a Gothic convention alongside other tropes such ‘an oppressive ruin, a wild landscape, [or] a Catholic or feudal society’ and a heroine, her lover and ‘the tyrannical older man with the piercing glance who

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<sup>1</sup> P. F., *The Historie of the Damnable life, and Deserued Death of Doctor Iohn Faustus Newly Imprinted, and in Conuenient Places Imperfect Matter Amended* (London, By Thomas Orwin, and are to be solde by Edward White, dwelling at the little north doore of Paules at the signe of the Gun, 1592).

is going to imprison and try to rape or murder them'.<sup>2</sup> Focusing on the conventions of Gothic literature can prove to be a limiting exercise and the Faustian pact is much more than just a Gothic trope but Sedgwick's inclusion of the Faustian pact in this 'formula' of the Gothic highlights how the Faustian pact has been transformed into something recognisably Gothic by Gothic writers. This chapter argues that aspects of Christopher Marlowe's c.1592 play *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* can be considered as pre-Gothic because the play offered audiences the same experiences of spiritual despair, abject terror, and abject horror that Gothic Faustian pacts offered their readers. Julia Kristeva defined abjection as that which 'does not respect borders, positions, rules' the 'in-between, the ambiguous, the composite' and abject terror is said to occur when one falls outside of the norm, an idea which lends itself to discussions of Faustian pacts both in Gothic literature and early modern drama.<sup>3</sup> This chapter also suggests that the pre-Gothic aspects of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* can be found specifically in scenes in which he rejected the conventions of the medieval morality plays that preceded *Doctor Faustus*, especially in the final moments of Faustus' life and, although several aspects of Marlowe's play could be examined through a Gothic lens, including his interpretation of anti-Catholicism, this chapter will focus on how the final scenes of both the A text and B text of *Doctor Faustus* may be considered pre-Gothic.

Within the Faustian pact, there is a set of conventions that I will refer to throughout this chapter in regards to both early modern Faustian pacts and Gothic Faustian tales. These conventions include a pact with the Devil or a demon in exchange for knowledge and power,

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<sup>2</sup> Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (New York: Methuen, 1986), p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 4.

the figures of the Good Angel and the Bad Angel, supernatural elements such as magic and demons, and an ending in which the Faust figure is punished for their sins.

This chapter is split into two main sections. In the first section, I will summarise how eighteenth-century Gothic novels emphasised the theme of spiritual despair in Faustian pacts by examining William Beckford's *Vathek* and Matthew Lewis' *The Monk*. Throughout this section, I will refer to the conventions mentioned above and make necessary links to Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* in order to demonstrate that Gothic Faustian pacts developed aspects of Marlowe's play. The second section of this chapter will then examine how spiritual despair and abject terror are presented in Marlowe's play to argue for a pre-Gothic reading of *Doctor Faustus*. I will explore Marlowe's departure from the conventions of medieval morality plays and his shift towards examining the idea of God abandoning humanity and humanity's unwillingness or inability to repent to demonstrate that Marlowe's nihilistic final act can be read as pre-Gothic. I will also briefly discuss the Harlequin Faustian pacts of the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries to highlight how they differed from Gothic Faustian pacts and to suggest that Marlowe's play is closely aligned with Gothic Faustian pacts rather than all later Faustian pacts.

Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* presents a variety of challenges to those who work with the various iterations of the play. One of the main textual problems faced by scholars today is determining which version of Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, if any, is the more 'authoritative' version of the play. David Lawton states that both versions 'are important records of the play's unfolding performance history' as 'each can be used to make small corrections to the other, and neither is authoritative in establishing the play Marlowe originally wrote' while Andrew Duxfield acknowledged that with the 'rise of post-structuralist theory in scholarly editing' the debate has shifted away from a 'discussion over

which text is superior, or more Marlovian, and towards a discussion of what each text means on its own, and what the differences between the two signify'.<sup>4</sup> Despite the shift in editing practices, and these recent assertions that the superiority of either text is less relevant than what each version offers audiences and readers, the critical reception of *Doctor Faustus* has often been concerned with the differences between the two versions of the play. As critics of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries were concerned with the authorial authenticity of Shakespeare's work, as stated in the first chapter of this project, it could be assumed these critics would have brought similar preoccupations to their reading of Marlowe's play. However, that was not the case. As the B text was reprinted in 1663, albeit with some major alterations including the insertion of scenes from *The Jew of Malta*, most Restoration era critics and writers used the B text when reproducing or discussing Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries critics and writers had a choice between the A text and the B text, although neither text was commercially reproduced, thanks to the generosity of those that owned copies of the texts. The only known surviving copy of the 1604 edition of *Doctor Faustus* belonged to Edmond Malone in the eighteenth century and was bequeathed to the Bodleian Library upon his death in 1812. Despite this, Malone presumably lent his copy of the 1604 text to Samuel Johnson and George Steevens sometime before 1773 to aid them in their commentary on Shakespeare's work in *The Dramatic Writings of Will. Shakespeare*. Steevens uses a line in *Doctor Faustus* to explain Shakespeare's use of the word 'topless' in *Troilus and Cressida* and Steevens noted that he used 'Doctor Faustus, 1604' rather than any of the later editions of the play.<sup>5</sup> Johnson and

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<sup>4</sup> David Lawton, 'Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*', *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama*, ed. by Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 161-176 (p. 163); Andrew Duxfield, 'Modern Problems of Editing: The Two Texts of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*', *Literature Compass*, 2.1 (2005), 1-12 (11).

<sup>5</sup> *The Dramatic Writings of Will. Shakspeare, with the Notes of all the Various Commentators; Printed Complete from the Best Editions of Sam. Johnson and Geo. Steevens*, Uolume the Eleventh. Containing King Richard the Second. King Henry IV. Part 1, ed. by Samuel Johnson and George Steevens (London: printed for, and under the direction of, John Bell, British Library, Strand, Bookseller to His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, 1785), p. 23.

Steevens also referenced the 1616 edition and the 1631 printing of the play which were both more readily available than the 1604 text. Malone made references to several of Marlowe's works in his 1780 *Supplement to Johnson and Steevens's edition of Shakespeare's Plays* but did not make any further references to *Doctor Faustus*.<sup>6</sup>

In *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare* (1808), a publication about the works of Shakespeare's contemporaries, Charles Lamb partially reprinted Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, alongside several of Marlowe's other works, and Lamb noted that the play was old and that the author was reported to be an atheist during his own time.<sup>7</sup> In the preface to *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare*, Lamb states that he created the collection to showcase the work of playwrights that had been 'slighted' by eighteenth-century critics and to bring attention to the works of Shakespeare's contemporaries that had not been given the same recognition as the works of Shakespeare.<sup>8</sup> Lamb wanted to use the collection to highlight what he considered to be 'the more impressive scenes of old Marlowe, Heywood, Tourneur, Webster, Ford, and others' as he felt that the works of these playwrights had been neglected by the writers and scholars of the late-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>9</sup> Lamb was almost certainly using a version of the B text of *Doctor Faustus* as his source for *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare* as it had been bequeathed to the British Museum in 1780 after the death of actor and playwright David Garrick. In the preface to his work, Lamb claimed that all of his sources, with the exception

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<sup>6</sup> Edmond Malone, *Supplement to the Edition of Shakspeare's Plays Published in 1778 by Samuel Johnson and George Steevens. In Two Volumes. Containing Additional Observations ... to which are Subjoined the Genuine Poems of the Same Author, and Seven Plays that have been Ascribed to Him; With Notes by the Editor and Others* (London: printed for C. Bathurst, W. Strahan, J. F. and C. Rivington, J. Hinton, L. Davis [and 25 others in London], 1780).

<sup>7</sup> Charles Lamb, *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare* (London: Edward Moxon, 1849), pp. 37-38.

<sup>8</sup> Lamb, p. vii.

<sup>9</sup> Lamb, p. vii.

of those available from ‘Dodsley’s and Hawkin’s collections’ along with ‘the works of Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Massinger’, were ‘found only in the British Museum’.<sup>10</sup> Garrick owned copies of the B text from 1616 and 1631 and a copy of the 1663 edition of *Doctor Faustus*, all of which were held by the British Museum at the time Lamb published *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare*. The 1663 edition of Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* was based upon the B text of 1616 but it was also greatly altered from the original printing as scenes considered to be potentially anti-Catholic, including any scenes involving the Pope, were removed and replaced with new scenes and characters that appear to reference Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta*.<sup>11</sup> As the scenes that Lamb chose to reproduce are identical in the 1616 and 1663 editions it is impossible to know which edition Lamb actually used. Lamb’s use of the B text, either in the form of the 1616 edition or the 1663 reproduction, proves that neither the A text nor the B text was considered more ‘authentic’ by seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century critics since both the 1604 and 1616 versions were variously used by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century scholars, thus eliminating any need for one version to be held above the other in a discussion of Marlowe’s possible influence on the Gothic or the potentially pre-Gothic aspects of the play. Therefore, both versions of the play will be referenced in this chapter but, while both texts will be referred to as the works of Christopher Marlowe, for the sake of simplicity, it must be acknowledged that as both editions were printed after Marlowe’s death in 1593, it is possible that neither edition resembles Marlowe’s original play. However, since these were the texts available to seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century writers, the A text and the B

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<sup>10</sup> Lamb, p. vii.

<sup>11</sup> Christopher Marlowe, *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus. Printed with New Additions as it is Now Acted. With Several New Scenes, Together with the Actors Names. Written by Ch. Mar* (London: Printed for W. Gilbertson at the [sic] Bible without Newgate, 1663) – In this version of the play, Act three takes place in Babylon and features three brand new characters: Solomaine, Mustapher and Caleph. These new characters discuss a ‘siege in Malta’ in which they found a ‘Jew o’th town, who / To revenge some wrongs done to him by / The Christians, would show [them] how to / Enter to the town’ and this is a clear reference to the plot of Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta*.

text can both be examined as potentially pre-Gothic. Most quotations used in this chapter have been taken from the B text as this was the text that was more readily available in the late-seventeenth, eighteenth, and early-nineteenth centuries, and any direct references to the A text will be clearly marked.

## I

The trope of the Faustian pact was a staple among writers of Gothic literature, as previously stated, and William Beckford's 1786 novel *Vathek* was one of the first Gothic Faustian pacts to be published in Britain.<sup>12</sup> Beckford took inspiration from 'Arabian' tales, perhaps Antoine Galland's translation of *The Arabian Nights* (1704), as the novel chronicles the life of Caliph Vathek, who renounces Islam and is urged to gain supernatural powers by his ambitious mother. *Vathek*'s subtitle is 'An Arabian Tale', further emphasising that Beckford's work is a novel influenced by an eighteenth-century obsession with 'Orientalism'. Various critics, including Eliza Bourque Dandridge, Muna Al-Alwan, and Diego Saglia, who have written on *Vathek* focus on Beckford's representation of 'Orientalism', although this section will rely upon other research by critics including George E. Haggerty and Kwinten Van De Walle, but Beckford's version of the Faustian pact is rarely discussed as the novel is considered an 'Arabian Tale' rather than one influenced by European literary traditions.<sup>13</sup> It is true that Beckford was influenced by French translations of the *Arabian Nights*, including Antonie Galland's, and that he originally composed his own tale in French, which aligns his

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<sup>12</sup> William Beckford, *Vathek*, ed. by Tom Keymer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>13</sup> See: Eliza Bourque Dandridge, 'William Beckford's Comic Book, or Visualizing Orientalism with *Vathek*', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 29.3 (2017), 427-454; See: Muna Al-Alwan, 'The Orient "Made Oriental": A Study of William Beckford's *Vathek*', *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 30.4 (2008), 43-52; See: Diego Saglia, 'William Beckford's "Sparks of orientalism" and Thematerial-discursive Orient of British Romanticism', *Textual Practice*, 16.1 (2002), 75-92; George E. Haggerty, 'Literature and Homosexuality in the Late Eighteenth Century: Walpole, Beckford, and Lewis', *Studies in the Novel*, 18.4 (1986), 341-352; Kwinten Van De Walle, 'The Architectural Theatricalization of Power in William Beckford's *Vathek*', *ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes and Reviews*, 26.3 (2013), 163-168.



novel with this tradition, but the influence of the German and English traditions of the Faustian pact can also be seen in *Vathek*.

Simon During states that *Vathek* belongs to the genre of the ‘demonic horror story’ which was ‘inaugurated’ by Jacques Cazotte in *Le Diable Amoureux* (1772) but the Faustian pact that Beckford writes had its origins in a much earlier texts, notably the German *Historia von D. Johann Fausten* (1587), *The History of the Damnable Life, and Deserved Death of Doctor Iohn Faustus* (c.1592) and Christopher Marlowe’s *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* (c.1592).<sup>14</sup> These are all, despite their differences, ‘demonic horror stories’ just as *Vathek* is and George E. Haggerty acknowledges that *Vathek* is an ‘eastern Faust’.<sup>15</sup>

Beckford cited the tale of Doctor Faustus in *Dreams, Waking Thoughts, and Incidents; In a Series of Letters, from Various Parts of Europe* (1783), published around the time in which *Vathek* was written in its original French, indicating that Beckford had some familiarity with the Renaissance tale, although whether that was through a copy of Marlowe’s play, a version of the *History*, a Restoration era Harlequin play - a version of the Faustian pact which will be briefly examined later in this chapter - or another, non-English, version of Doctor Faustus is unknown.<sup>16</sup>

*Vathek* follows the common path of the Faustian pact as *Vathek* sells his soul in exchange for access to great power. *Vathek* hears the voice of the Giaour, whose name is a derogatory term used by Ottomans in reference to non-Muslims, telling him that he will bring *Vathek* to ‘the Palace of Subterranean Fire’ if *Vathek* promises to worship the Giaour and the jinns, renouncing the teachings of Islam and defying Mahomet (Muhammed).<sup>17</sup> Clearly, the

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<sup>14</sup> Simon During, ‘Beckford in Hell: An Episode in the History of Secular Enchantment’, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 70.2 (2007), 269-288 (278).

<sup>15</sup> During, 278; Haggerty, 346.

<sup>16</sup> William Beckford, *Dreams, Waking Thoughts, and Incidents; In a series of Letters, from Various Parts of Europe* (London, printed for J. Johnson, St. Paul’s Church Yard; and P. Elmsly, in the Strand, 1783).

<sup>17</sup> Beckford, *Vathek*, p. 19.

Giaour is offering to take Vathek to a version of hell but Vathek agrees and proceeds with the ritual that the Giaour demands of him, which is to sacrifice fifty of the children who live in the city. Unlike early modern Faustian pacts, which often involved blood pacts and questionable Latin phrases, Vathek sacrifices the lives of children in order to gain access to the great power he is promised. This moment in the novel does resemble Faustus' exclamation that he would offer Beelzebub 'lukewarm blood of new-born babes' but this is not a requirement of Faustus' pact and there is no clear suggestion that he ever makes good on his promise, unlike Vathek who must sacrifice the lives of children to enter a pact with the Giaour.<sup>18</sup> Beckford relies upon a similar concept to earlier Faustian pacts by initiating some form of sacrifice for the pact to be sealed but his depiction is significantly more horrific than early modern Faustian pacts and it does not involve personal sacrifice but, rather, the sacrifice of others. Vathek also proves himself to be a slave to the whims of Giaour as, at the behest of the Giaour, to quote Van De Walle, 'he abandons all decorum by prostrating himself on the ground to lap the water from the mountain's stream' after being 'afflicted with an insatiable thirst'.<sup>19</sup> In 'The Architectural Theatricalization of Power in William Beckford's *Vathek*', Van De Walle states that at this moment 'Vathek's unstable identity is revealed as, under the Giaour's hypnotic influence, he degrades himself from a rational being to an animalistic slave' but this is also the first moment of despair within the novel as Vathek degrades himself to please the Giaour rather than retaining his dignity, grace, and self-respect, and this second act of loyalty towards the Giaour, more humiliating than the first, leads to an inevitable, hopeless ending.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Christopher Marlowe, 'Doctor Faustus, B-text', in *Doctor Faustus and Other Plays*, ed. by David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 2.1.13.

<sup>19</sup> Van de Walle, 166.

<sup>20</sup> Van de Walle, 166.

Beckford's Faustian pact does depict moments in which Vathek could turn away from the jinn and towards God but Vathek often rejects salvation in favour of power. One example, which I will explore in further detail later in this chapter, is the moment in which a genie assumes the form of a shepherd and urges Vathek to repent:

This moment is the last of grace allowed thee: abandon thy atrocious purpose: return: give back Nouronihar to her father, who still retains a few sparks of life: destroy thy tower, with all its abominations: drive Carathis from thy councils: be just to thy subjects: respect the ministers of the Prophet; compensate for thy impieties, by an exemplary life: and, instead of squandering thy days in voluptuous indulgence, lament thy crimes on the sepulchres of thy ancestors. Thou beholdest the clouds that obscure the sun: at the instant he recovers his splendour, if thy heart be not changed, the time of mercy assigned thee will be past for ever.<sup>21</sup>

Vathek dismisses the Genie's words, considering them 'useless admonitions' that aim to 'delude' him, and he refuses to 'relinquish' what he has gained.<sup>22</sup> Once again, Beckford presents a classic trope of the Faustian pact in which the Faust figure rejects redemption in favour of pursuing their personal pleasure. Even Mahomet knows that Vathek is unable to be saved, stating that 'he hath too well deserved to be resigned to himself' when a genie requests permission to save Vathek from eternal damnation but he grants the genie 'one effort more' to 'divert him from pursuing his ruin'.<sup>23</sup> Mahomet's physical presence within the novel is odd for Faustian pacts as, unlike morality plays of the Middle Ages, they are often devoid of a godly presence. However, Mahomet is not truly a god and, although Beckford plays with the formula of the Faustian pact, the book is still, essentially, godless. This is the only moment in

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<sup>21</sup> Beckford, *Vathek*, pp. 82-83.

<sup>22</sup> Beckford, *Vathek*, p. 83.

<sup>23</sup> Beckford, *Vathek*, p. 81.

the novel in which Vathek is offered the mercy of the Prophet but Vathek refuses to 'relinquish her [Nouronihar] who is dearer to' Vathek than his own life or the Prophet's 'mercy'.<sup>24</sup>

Vathek's final descent into depravity is driven by lust, an idea that is carried through to Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* and later Faustian pacts and is also present in Marlowe's much earlier play, and it is his lust for Nouronihar that ultimately causes his eternal damnation, even though he sold his soul to the jinn earlier in the novel. Lust is often a very powerful emotion in Gothic Faustian pacts, driving the plot forward as devout men and women are tested and tempted by forbidden lust and love and several critics have examined *Vathek* as an exploration of homosexuality or bisexuality, linking Vathek's forbidden desire to Beckford's own bisexuality. Read in this way, Beckford's novel becomes a futile expression of his own desire, written during a period of self-exile, and the Gothic Faustian pact becomes an expression of the desire which is forbidden by society. George E. Haggerty argues that 'Love, which seems to offer him [Vathek] freedom from the confines of morality, also traps him in a position of concupiscence and shame' as 'Nouronihar brings him [...] both pain and pleasure from the first moment that she enthrals his soul'.<sup>25</sup> Vathek, although deeply in love with Nouronihar, is also doomed by his love for her as he refuses to repent. Haggerty goes on to argue that 'Their natural attraction [...] can never be free of the unnatural bond which obsesses them' as they are both attracted to not only each other but to the infernal.<sup>26</sup> Their attraction to the infernal, to the unnatural, damns them and ultimately makes any efforts to redeem Vathek and Beckford, through Vathek and Nouronihar's relationship and the theme of Faustian pact, criticises the failure of a society which forces one to repress one's desires as Vathek and Nouronihar 'fully expressed' the 'pleasure they take in one another' but their

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<sup>24</sup> Beckford, *Vathek*, p. 83.

<sup>25</sup> Haggerty, 347.

<sup>26</sup> Haggerty, 347.

relationship ‘may indeed have produced a more sustained intimacy were they not goaded on to their nefarious purpose’ by others.<sup>27</sup>

All of this builds to the final moments of the novel, in which Vathek and Nouronihar are led to ‘the Palace of Subterranean Fire’ where they await punishment for their ‘atrocious deeds’.<sup>28</sup> The Giaour guides Vathek and Nouronihar into the palace where ‘the fleshless forms of the pre-Adamite kings’ lie recumbent and Beckford describes the palace as being covered with a ‘funereal gloom’ as the kings ‘retained a melancholy motion’ and ‘regarded one another with looks of deepest dejection’.<sup>29</sup> Beckford utilises a sense of dramatic irony in this section of the novel as the reader understands that the kings symbolise the fate of Vathek. The corpse-like kings are used to create an atmosphere of despair and paranoia as they silently regard one another with solemn gloom. Van De Walle states that Vathek enters the palace ‘expecting to obtain the supreme power of the pre-Adamite kings on what he believes to be the ultimate stage of his monumentalization’ but, instead, ‘is confronted with a disorienting world of limitless magnitude far exceeding his imagination’.<sup>30</sup> Arguably, as Vathek’s dreams are torn away from him in a room of ‘rows of columns and arcades, which gradually diminished, till they terminated in a point, radiant as the sun, when he darts his last beams athwart the ocean’.<sup>31</sup> This is the moment in which hopelessness sets in for the reader as Vathek still fails to recognise his own insignificance. Soliman Ben Daoud explains his own fate to Vathek, telling him that he had once been a great king but was seduced by a Jinn. Soliman is destined to suffer for a finite but extensive period of time, until the waterfall he is sitting beside ‘shall forever cease to flow’, exclaiming that until then he is ‘in torments,

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<sup>27</sup> Haggerty, 347.

<sup>28</sup> Beckford, *Vathek*, p. 19, p. 94.

<sup>29</sup> Beckford, *Vathek*, p. 88.

<sup>30</sup> Van de Walle, 163, 167.

<sup>31</sup> Beckford, *Vathek*, p. 86.

ineffable torments' 'as an unrelenting fire preys on' his 'heart'.<sup>32</sup> His tale could be a source of hope for the reader and, perhaps, for Vathek but Soliman Ben Daoud's more lenient punishment hinges on his earlier piety while the others who inhabit the hall, including Vathek, must suffer for eternity.<sup>33</sup> Soliman Ben Daoud reveals his actual heart to Vathek and Nouronihar, 'which was as transparent as crystal' and 'enveloped in flames', a physical representation of his suffering and this image, so 'full of horror', petrifies both Vathek and Nouronihar.<sup>34</sup> This moment in the novel marks a significant shift in Vathek's attitude as he begs the Giaour to release him, offering to relinquish everything he has gained, but, as Mahomet stated earlier, the genie's interference was his final chance to 'divert him from pursuing his ruin.'<sup>35</sup> The Giaour, with glee, tells that caliph that he currently resides in 'the abode of vengeance and despair' and that his 'heart, also, will be kindled' in a few days.<sup>36</sup> A similar scene is featured in the B text of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, in which he is shown the torments that await him in hell, and I will explore how this scene create a sense of spiritual despair in *Doctor Faustus* in the second section of this chapter. After this exchange, Beckford describes Vathek and Nouronihar as 'in the most abject affliction', scarcely able to support themselves before they take 'each other despondingly by the hand' and stumble away from the 'fatal hall'.<sup>37</sup> Beckford uses an abundance of gloomy adjectives to emphasise the tone of the scene, never allowing Vathek, Nouronihar, nor the reader any hope that their fate can be altered. Vathek and Nouronihar wander aimlessly 'from chamber to chamber, hall to hall, and gallery to gallery', lacking any sense of direction or purpose.<sup>38</sup> They 'withdraw' from the other 'sufferers' who have 'shunned' them 'to wait, in direful suspense, the moment which

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<sup>32</sup> Beckford, *Vathek*, p. 89.

<sup>33</sup> Beckford, *Vathek*, p. 89.

<sup>34</sup> Beckford, *Vathek*, p. 90.

<sup>35</sup> Beckford, *Vathek*, p. 81.

<sup>36</sup> Beckford, *Vathek*, p. 90.

<sup>37</sup> Beckford, *Vathek*, p. 90.

<sup>38</sup> Beckford, *Vathek*, p. 90.

should render them to each other the like objects of terror'.<sup>39</sup> In this section of the novel, Vathek and Nouronihar are awaiting the moment that their desire for one another and their desire for the infernal turns against them, forcing them to suffer eternally. Once again, Beckford relies on a sense of hopelessness, created through spiritual despair, to create horror and terror within his novel, and spiritual despair becomes a key element of the Gothic Faustian pact as it plunges the reader into a constant state of paranoia and abject terror. Vathek is told by another sufferer that they are 'not permitted to repent' but they can 'trace back' their 'crimes to their source', which acts as a form of confession, and Vathek immediately begins 'a sincere recital of every circumstance that had passed', a recital that is laden with 'tears and lamentations'.<sup>40</sup> Beckford's decision to remove the option of repentance from this scene adds to the sense of futility that he created earlier. If Vathek cannot repent, cannot beg for forgiveness, then he is doomed to suffer eternally for his sins with no hope of reprieve.

The novel ends with Carathis, Vathek, Nouronihar, and the other denizens of hell wandering 'in an eternity of unabating anguish'.<sup>41</sup> Ultimately, Vathek is punished for his 'unrestrained passion and atrocious deeds', for transgressing 'those bounds the wisdom the Creator [...] prescribed to human knowledge', and for his decision to 'for the sake of empty pomp and forbidden power had sullied himself with a thousand crimes'.<sup>42</sup> Vathek is punished for his thirst for knowledge of the universe and of magic and, therefore, his abandonment of his god and religion which echoes the ending of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. The novel ends with the advice that 'the condition of man upon earth is to be - humble and ignorant' by explaining that while Vathek was subject to eternal anguish, 'the despised Gulchenrouz

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<sup>39</sup> Beckford, *Vathek*, p. 90.

<sup>40</sup> Beckford, *Vathek*, p. 91.

<sup>41</sup> Beckford, *Vathek*, p. 94.

<sup>42</sup> Beckford, *Vathek*, p. 94.

passed whole ages in undisturbed tranquillity and in the pure happiness of childhood' for remaining within the bounds of humanity.<sup>43</sup> The statement that 'the condition of man upon earth is be - humble and ignorant' echoes Marlowe's Chorus who states that Faustus is damned because he practices 'more than heavenly power permits'.<sup>44</sup> I will discuss Marlowe's play in more detail later in this chapter but it is clear that, at this moment in the novel, Beckford is echoing the message that Marlowe's Chorus delivers at the very end of the play, relaying his 'moral' in the same way as Marlowe and offering similar advice to his reader who may want to avoid Vathek's fate. Despite the moral, this ending is one characterised by feelings of desolation and desperation. It offers no true hope to the reader as a godly figure does not intervene and even Mahomet does not care about Vathek's fate. There is no chance of redemption and, as Eblis states, all 'hope' is lost.<sup>45</sup> Spiritual despair characterises the final moments of Gothic Faustian pacts as hope is ripped away from the characters as the figure of God abandons them to their fate.

It can be suggested that Beckford provides his reader with a Marlovian experience of the Faustian pact, as so many aspects of the novel can be related back to Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* as well as Beckford's other sources, but Beckford's expression of spiritual despair and abject terror in his Faustian novel is typical of Gothic Faustian pacts. Although later texts, such as Matthew Lewis' *The Monk*, Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya*, and Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, differ in the representation of the pact itself, all of these Gothic texts explore the same experience of spiritual despair and abject terror that is so prominent in *Vathek*.

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<sup>43</sup> Beckford, *Vathek*, p. 94.

<sup>44</sup> Beckford, *Vathek*, p. 94; *Doctor Faustus*, B-text, Epilogue.8.

<sup>45</sup> Beckford, *Vathek*, p. 94.



Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* further emphasises the vital role that spiritual despair plays in Gothic Faustian pacts. Lewis' novel depicts a Faustian pact and yet, just as with Beckford's *Vathek*, Lewis' interpretation of the Faust myth has not been extensively explored by critics as academics tend to focus on Lewis' use of parody, his exploration of religion, and the Gothic excess of the novel. Lewis directly references 'Doctor Faustus, whom the Devil had sent back to Germany' in the subplot of his novel which recounts the myth of the Wandering Jew but the main plot, which follows Ambrosio on his path to damnation, is also a form of Faustian pact.<sup>46</sup> Lewis does not credit *The Historie of the Damnable Life, and Deserved Death of Doctor Iohn Faustus*, Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, nor any of the other interpretations of the tale in the advertisement to *The Monk* where he aims to make 'a full avowal of all the plagiarisms' of which he is guilty but the reference to Doctor Faustus in the text, along with the line 'whom the devil had sent back to Germany', implies that Lewis had at least an understanding of the myth.<sup>47</sup> Of course, it is possible that Lewis knew of Goethe's *Faust, a Fragment* which has been published in German in 1790, six years before Lewis wrote *The Monk*, and Lewis later demonstrated his knowledge of Goethe's *Faust* by translating parts of *Faust, Part One* into English for Lord Byron at the Villa Diodati in 1816.<sup>48</sup> Goethe did not complete what is now called *Part One* of his play until 1806 but, considering Lewis' advertisement at the beginning of the novel, it is likely that he used a variety of sources for his novel, perhaps including both Marlowe's play and Goethe's *Fragment*, but it is certain that he knew of the tale of Doctor Faustus.

Lewis' depiction of the Faustian pact also resembles Barnabe Barnes' c.1607 play, *The Devil's Charter*, which depicts the life of Pope Alexander VI, as it focuses on a corrupt

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<sup>46</sup> Matthew Lewis, *The Monk*, ed. by Howard Anderson and Emma McEvoy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) p. 167.

<sup>47</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 6, p. 167.

<sup>48</sup> Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Faust. Jery und Bätely. Scherz, List und Rache* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2019).

member of the Catholic Church who enlists the help of the devil to satisfy his immoral desires but Lewis' anti-Catholic interpretation of the Faustian pact is not the main focus of this chapter.<sup>49</sup> Lewis acknowledges many German sources for his novel, including the tale of the Bleeding Nun, but he does not acknowledge any of the sources he presumably used to inform his interpretation of the Faustian pact in *The Monk*. These presumed sources, which may or not include Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, may fall under the plagiarisms of which Lewis claims to be 'totally unconscious' of but it seems unlikely that Lewis would simply forget to credit any of the versions of the Faust tale available to him when he mentions the figure later in the novel.<sup>50</sup>

Unlike many other Faustian pacts, Ambrosio's pact with Lucifer does not actually occur until towards the end of the novel. In fact, all of his actions in the novel lead to his deal with the devil, rather than the inverse. In 'Convention, Repetition and Abjection: The Way of the Gothic', Agnieszka Łowczanin suggests that 'Ambrosio does not hesitate to commune with everything abjection stands for' as 'he slides into incoherence and away from his monastic vows'.<sup>51</sup> His slow descent into 'the territory of defilement, transgression and hypocrisy, [and] the realm of the abject', urges him to satisfy his desire for his sister, leading him, ultimately, to his impending destruction and his desperate deal with the Devil.<sup>52</sup> Despite this, Ambrosio does accept the help of Matilda, a character who claims to have used 'mystic rites' to summon 'a fallen Angel' to her aid, in the fourth chapter of the novel but, at this point in the novel, Ambrosio has not yet entered his own Faustian pact.<sup>53</sup> Although it is not a

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<sup>49</sup> Barnabe Barnes, *The Devils Charter: A Tragaedie, Containing the Life and Death of Pope Alexander the Sixt: As it was Plaide before the Kings Maiestie vpon Candlemasse Night Last by His Maiesties Seruants: But More Exactly Reuewed, Corrected, and Augmented Since by the Author, for the More Pleasure and Profit of the Reader* (London: Printed by G[eorge]. E[ld]. for Iohn Wright, and are to be sold at his shop in New-gate market, neere Christ church gate, 1607); *The Monk*, p. 6.

<sup>50</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 6.

<sup>51</sup> Agnieszka Łowczanin, 'Convention, Repetition and Abjection: The Way of the Gothic', *Text Matters*, 4 (2014), 184-193 (191).

<sup>52</sup> Łowczanin, 191.

<sup>53</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 267.

true Faustian pact, Ambrosio's association with Matilda, which he believes is safe because he has 'employed HER assistance, not that of the Daemons' and so 'the crime of Sorcery could not be laid to his charge', acts as one as she is truly a demon in disguise and he seeks her aid to commit atrocious acts.<sup>54</sup> Matilda's role of witch, as she appears to be a witch before Lucifer reveals her demonic nature at the end of the novel, will be analysed in the third chapter of this project. However, Matilda also takes on the role of Mephostophilis within the novel, just as the Giaour does in Beckford's *Vathek*, as she acts as a figure of temptation for Ambrosio, constantly attempting to lure him into a Faustian pact. Matilda contributes to Ambrosio's downfall by allowing him access to forbidden pleasure, aiding him in his darkest misdeeds, and she, eventually, persuades Ambrosio to finally summon Lucifer himself.

In the final chapter of the novel, which will be the main focus of this section, Ambrosio and Matilda are brought before the Inquisition and, in the time before his trial, Ambrosio cannot find the strength to read the Bible nor pray for repentance. He claims that 'If He read the Books of morality which were put into his hands, He saw in them nothing but the enormity of his offences' and his attempts to pray revealed 'that He deserved not heaven's protection' as his crimes were 'so monstrous as to baffle even God's infinite goodness'.<sup>55</sup> Both Ambrosio and Matilda are tortured by the Inquisition, who are 'determined to make him [Ambrosio] confess not only the crimes which He had committed, but those also of which He was innocent' and Matilda is told that she must 'expiate her crime in fire on the approaching Auto da Fe'.<sup>56</sup> Matilda is sentenced to be burnt to death in a public execution, the most extreme form of execution carried out by the Inquisition, but Ambrosio's torture continues. Lewis details Ambrosio's injuries rather graphically, drawing attention to his 'dislocated' limbs and how his nails were 'torn from his hands and feet, and his fingers mashed and

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<sup>54</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 273.

<sup>55</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 422.

<sup>56</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, pp. 424-425.

broken by the pressure of screws' but the scenes of his torture are never shown, just their aftermath, and it is 'Heaven's vengeance' which Ambrosio dreads most.<sup>57</sup> He feels, in these moments of despair, 'the existence of a God' which once was a source of comfort to him but now 'only served to drive him to distraction' as thoughts of God 'destroyed his ill-grounded hopes of escaping punishment'.<sup>58</sup> Ambrosio understands that even if he escapes the auto-da-fé, which is unlikely, he will still be punished for his sins by God. 'Reason' forces Ambrosio 'to acknowledge God's existence' but 'Conscience' makes 'him doubt the infinity of his goodness' as he hopelessly acknowledges that a sinner like him will not find mercy in God.<sup>59</sup> This revelation leads Ambrosio to spend his 'few remaining hours in deprecating Heaven's wrath' rather than 'humbling himself in penitence'.<sup>60</sup> While waiting for his second day of torture to begin, Ambrosio dreams of those he murdered. The 'Ghosts of Elvira and her Daughter' reproach Ambrosio during his dream, recounting 'his crimes to the Daemons, and [urging] them to inflict torments of cruelty yet more refined' than Ambrosio has experienced in his trial and this incident leaves Ambrosio 'wild and phrenzied', desolate at the thought of being tortured in both wakefulness and sleep, in life and death.<sup>61</sup>

Before the sentence is carried out, Matilda visits Ambrosio to urge him to sell his soul to the devil for freedom. Ambrosio, just as in the fourth chapter of the novel, initially resists Matilda, stating that he 'will not sell [his] soul to perdition', but Matilda, who is free to experience 'joy and liberty', leaves him with a book that will summon a spirit to his aid.<sup>62</sup> As Peter Brooks argues in 'Virtue and Terror: *The Monk*', 'Ambrosio's refusal is motivated not by virtue but by fear; he no longer respects God, he is in terror of his vengeance' but, later in

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<sup>57</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 425.

<sup>58</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, pp. 425-426.

<sup>59</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 426.

<sup>60</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 426.

<sup>61</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 427.

<sup>62</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 430.

the novel, his fear of torture outweighs his fear of God and this shift in Ambrosio's mindset, as will be explored later in this section, characterises his desperate indecisiveness and, ultimately, his hopelessness.<sup>63</sup> Fear, as I will discuss later in this chapter, is also a motivator in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* but while Lewis dwells upon Ambrosio's fear of God, Marlowe simultaneously depicts the combination of both a fear of God and a fear of the Devil. Even in this final chapter of the novel, Matilda continues to tempt Ambrosio who desperately attempts to cling onto the last remnants of his soul. Her slow but sure corruption of Ambrosio serves to reinforce the idea of spiritual despair as Ambrosio cannot escape demonic influence.

Ambrosio eventually gives into temptation and 'with a voice unassured and frequent interruptions, He contrived to finish the four first lines of the page' of the book that Matilda left him, summoning the Devil into his cell.<sup>64</sup> Lucifer's image inspires terror in Ambrosio as his 'limbs still bore marks of the Almighty's thunder' and 'His hands and feet were armed with long Talons'.<sup>65</sup> Standing before Ambrosio, Lucifer holds 'a roll of parchment' and 'an iron pen', waiting for Ambrosio to finally sign away his eternal soul.<sup>66</sup> As the 'lightning flashed around him', Ambrosio's fate seems to be finally sealed and all hope is lost as Lucifer urges Ambrosio to sign the parchment.<sup>67</sup> In a desperate attempt to save the fate of his eternal soul, Ambrosio attempts to bargain with Lucifer, stating that he will be his servant 'for a thousand years' in exchange for just one hour of servitude.<sup>68</sup> Bargaining of this kind – for time rather than salvation – is also present in Marlowe's play as Faustus attempts to delay his inevitable punishment. Lewis' entire final sequence is very reminiscent of earlier Faustian pacts, including Marlowe's. Ambrosio still refuses to 'give up [his] hopes of being one day

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<sup>63</sup> Peter Brooks, 'Virtue and Terror: *The Monk*', *ELH*, 40.2 (1973), 249-263 (251).

<sup>64</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 432.

<sup>65</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 433.

<sup>66</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 432.

<sup>67</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 433.

<sup>68</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 434.

pardoned' but Lucifer dashes his hopes, stating that 'the Eternal has abandoned' Ambrosio and he is 'doomed to flames'.<sup>69</sup> Lucifer's statement echoes that of the Good Angel in Act five, scene one of Marlowe's play as Faustus too is rejected by God and doomed to Hell. I will return to this scene in Marlowe's play later in the chapter to emphasise how this scene contributes to the pre-Gothic potential of Marlowe's play but it is clear that there are many similarities to be drawn between *Vathek*, *The Monk*, and *Doctor Faustus*.

Lucifer constantly crushes Ambrosio's belief in the mercy of God, emphasising the feelings of spiritual despair and abject terror that overshadow this entire chapter as there is no hope left for Ambrosio. He believes that he must sign the contract or suffer death at the auto-da-fé. As Ambrosio's will weakens, Lucifer strikes the 'iron pen' 'into a vein of the Monk's left hand' filling it with 'blood' in preparation for the contract to be signed.<sup>70</sup> Ambrosio, constantly indecisive and weak-willed, attempts to sign the contract several times and yet hesitates upon reflection, desperately attempting to resist the temptation that lay before him. Finally, Ambrosio is spurred into action as the 'Archers were on the point of entering' his cell and Lewis, in this moment, finally depicts a true Faustian pact as Ambrosio signs 'the fatal contract' with his own blood and gives 'it hastily into the evil Spirit's hands' exclaiming 'Take it!'<sup>71</sup> In 'Matthew Lewis's Black Mass: Sexual, Religious Inversion in "The Monk"', Steven Blakemore suggests that 'Ambrosio's pledge [...] functions as a diabolical wedding ceremony', as Ambrosio exclaims 'I do' several times, and as a 'blasphemous allusion and inversion of [...] another sacrament – the sacrament of baptism' and argues that this is a moment of homoeroticism within the novel as Lucifer pierces Ambrosio with the pen, a phallic symbol, and claims his right to possess Ambrosio.<sup>72</sup> Once again, the Faustian pact is

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<sup>69</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, pp. 434-435.

<sup>70</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 435.

<sup>71</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 437.

<sup>72</sup> Steven Blakemore, 'Matthew Lewis's Black Mass: Sexual, Religious Inversion in "The Monk"', *Studies in the Novel*, 30.4 (1998), 521-539 (534).

linked to homosexuality, expressing not only a diabolical road to power but a sexuality that, during the eighteenth century, was considered transgressive and, ultimately, was forbidden. In Gothic literature, the Faustian pact becomes an expression of desire forbidden by an unyielding society but, in its simplest form, Ambrosio's pact with the devil is one of desperation and despair.

Whether or not Ambrosio's pact can be considered a homosexual marriage with the devil, there is a growing sense of despair as the Monk becomes irredeemably entwined with Lucifer for eternity and, as Lucifer states, his soul is now the rightful possession of the devil. Ambrosio ultimately signs his pact out of pure desperation, imprisoned and waiting to be executed for his crimes, and this reinforces a sense of futility as he cannot escape the torture which awaits him. Lewis, and also Lucifer, refers to Ambrosio as 'the God-abandoned' after he signs the contract, reiterating that God, who is not shown at any point in the novel, will not attempt to intervene in Ambrosio's fate and, clearly, there is no hope left for Ambrosio.<sup>73</sup>

Lucifer transports Ambrosio away to his cell, as promised, and yet the 'damning contract' still 'weighed heavy upon' Ambrosio's mind.<sup>74</sup> Ambrosio is both a willing and unwilling Faust figure, constantly conflicted about his course of action but always willing to do anything necessary to fulfil his needs and desires. Ambrosio takes in the scene around him, one of 'wildness', 'gloomy Caverns and steep rocks', and experiences a moment of 'terror'.<sup>75</sup> His surroundings offer him no comfort, no source of salvation, as he stands atop a mountain with Lucifer who eyes him 'with a look of mingled malice, exultation, and contempt'.<sup>76</sup> Just as Beckford did in *Vathek*, Lewis transports Ambrosio to a 'melancholy

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<sup>73</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 437.

<sup>74</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 438.

<sup>75</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, pp. 438-439.

<sup>76</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 439.

scene' beyond his wildest imagination to await his death.<sup>77</sup> Lewis' sublime landscape and Ambrosio's isolation atop a mountain, which he cannot escape without aid, once again reinforces a sense of spiritual despair as there is no way for Ambrosio to be saved from his fate. Ambrosio, similar to Vathek, does not yet understand that he will perish and suffer eternally in hell but Lucifer strips away his misbeliefs and delusions, leaving him with only a feeling of terror. Lucifer reveals, in the middle of a grand speech which details Ambrosio's crimes, that had Ambrosio resisted him 'one minute longer' he would have 'saved [his] body and soul' as 'the guards whom [he] heard at [his] prison door came to signify [his] pardon'.<sup>78</sup> Lucifer, in this moment, taunts Ambrosio with a missed opportunity of redemption. It is unclear whether this is true as there is no mention of Ambrosio's pardon when the 'Gaoler' entered his cell, 'thrown into the utmost surprize by the disappearance of his Prisoner', but Lucifer's claim that Ambrosio was offered one last possibility of salvation, at least from his death at the auto-da-fe, contributes to an overwhelming sense of futility<sup>79</sup>. Ambrosio, finally attempting to pray for redemption, 'sank upon his knees, and raised his hands towards heaven' only to be prevented by Lucifer who cries:

'What?' He cried, darting at him a look of fury: 'Dare you still implore the Eternal's mercy? Would you feign penitence, and again act an Hypocrite's part? Villain, resign your hopes of pardon. Thus I secure my prey!'<sup>80</sup>

Ambrosio is labelled a 'hypocrite', a villain, and is accused of feigning 'penitence' by Lucifer.<sup>81</sup> Lucifer's accusations are yet another attempt to convince Ambrosio that he is beyond saving to ensure that he does not attempt to repent for his sins. There is no clear

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<sup>77</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 439.

<sup>78</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 440.

<sup>79</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 437.

<sup>80</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 441.

<sup>81</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 441.



indication that Ambrosio is actually beyond redemption except, perhaps, in his own mind but there is also no indication that God, if God actually exists within the novel, is willing to help Ambrosio as there are no attempts to intervene on Ambrosio's behalf, as there are in both *Vathek* and *Doctor Faustus*.

Ambrosio's death is a rather gruesome final scene as Lucifer darts 'his talons into the Monk's shaven crown', carries him into the air, 'reaching a dreadful height', before releasing him into the valley below. David Salter argues that Ambrosio's 'grisly fate' satisfies 'the demand for a moral conclusion to the novel', which echoes the ending of Marlowe's play which also required a grisly ending for the moral to be complete.<sup>82</sup> It is a much more vivid scene than other moments in the novel, including Ambrosio's torture at the hands of the Inquisition, which, perhaps, brings the reader some form of sadomasochistic pleasure as they revel in his in well deserved 'grisly fate'.<sup>83</sup> Burke, in his treatise *On the Beautiful and the Sublime*, stated that 'no passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as *fear*. For fear being an apprehension of pain or death, it operates in a manner that resembles actual pain', exploring the pleasure that one feels when experiencing the terror of fear but, as Lewis' description continues, fear morphs into horror and repulsion, bringing with it more negative emotions than pleasure, eventually rendering the reader hopeless.<sup>84</sup> Lewis' focus on Ambrosio's final hours can also be read as particularly Marlovian as the final section of *The Monk* mirrors Act five, scene two of *Doctor Faustus*, which I will discuss in detail later in this chapter, as both lengthen and compound time, drawing attention to the drawn out torture of their Faust figures.

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<sup>82</sup> David Salter, "'This Demon in the Garb of a Monk": Shakespeare, the Gothic and the Discourse of Anti-Catholicism', *Shakespeare*, 5 (2009), 52-67 (58).

<sup>83</sup> Salter, 58.

<sup>84</sup> Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (London: printed for R. and J. Dodsley, in Pall-Mall, 1757), p. 42.

As Ambrosio falls, ‘the sharp point of a rock received him; and He rolled from precipice to precipice, till bruised and mangled’ and yet ‘life still existed in his miserable frame’.<sup>85</sup> This is the beginning of not only a fairly lengthy description of Ambrosio’s suffering but also a week of torture before he finally dies. Ambrosio is truly punished for his sins but Lewis’ description is almost excessive as he drives home a sense of hopelessness. Both Ambrosio and the reader know that he will not be saved from his torture nor will he ever be able to repent for his sins. He is, at every stage in this final chapter, denied an opportunity to beg for redemption and mercy. Even before he signed his soul over to the devil, God had abandoned Ambrosio to his fate, never attempting to intervene. Ambrosio’s limbs are, once again ‘broken and dislocated’ and, as he lies unable to move, ‘myriads of insects were called forth by the warmth’ of the rising sun’ and ‘they drank the blood which trickled from Ambrosio's wounds’.<sup>86</sup> He is, essentially, left to slowly bleed to death at the bottom of the ravine but his torture worsens even further. One particularly vivid image within this section is that of ‘the Eagles of the rock’ that ‘tore his flesh piecemeal, and dug out his eyeballs with their crooked beaks’.<sup>87</sup> This image is disgustingly fascinating as it feeds into the morbid curiosity of humanity, simultaneously repulsing a reader but ensuring that they wish to read on.<sup>88</sup> It also recalls the punishment of Prometheus, who stole fire from Zeus to give to humanity. As punishment for allowing humans to possess a power that only a god may wield, Prometheus was bound to a rock and was forced to endure the torture of an eagle eating his liver daily. Lewis is drawing upon various tales which punish those who seek godly power and this also echoes the epilogue of Marlowe’s play as the Chorus reveals that Faustus is damned for practicing ‘more than heavenly power permits.’<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 442.

<sup>86</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 442.

<sup>87</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 442.

<sup>88</sup> Salter, 58.

<sup>89</sup> *Doctor Faustus*, B-text, Epilogue.8.

Ambrosio is left 'blind, maimed, helpless, and despairing' by his ordeal, still alive but facing 'six miserable days' of torment before his death.<sup>90</sup> Lewis' use of the word 'miserable', both to describe Ambrosio's broken body and the upcoming days of Ambrosio's torture, truly encapsulates the tone of this section as the entire scene is fraught with misery and terror as both Ambrosio and the reader exist in a state of despair. Even nature tortures Ambrosio as, on the seventh day, 'a violent storm arose' and 'the winds in fury rent up rocks and forests', the sky was 'black' and 'sheeted with fire', and the 'rain fell in torrents' until it 'swelled the stream' and the 'waves overflowed their banks' and 'carried with them into the river the Corse of the despairing Monk'.<sup>91</sup> Perhaps this is the wrath of God that Ambrosio feared earlier in the novel, a final rejection, or maybe it is the work of the Devil. Ambrosio's death is humiliating, miserable, and laced with desperation as he is not 'able to quit the spot where He had first fallen' and must simply wait for his inevitable death.<sup>92</sup> Even death offers no relief for Ambrosio as he knows that 'the arrival of death destined to yield him up to greater torments.'<sup>93</sup> Ambrosio's final moments are an inversion of creation myth provided in Genesis as Ambrosio suffers for six days and dies on the seventh and Lewis' inversion of the creation myth contributes to the experience of spiritual despair as Ambrosio is being punished in a way that resembles the teachings of the Bible.

Lewis' *The Monk* offers readers an even more desperate ending to the Faustian pact than Beckford's *Vathek* as, not only will Ambrosio suffer in hell for eternity as Vathek does, he must also suffer excruciating torture whilst being mocked by Lucifer, nature, and, perhaps, even God. Other Gothic Faustian pacts, including Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya*, present readers with similarly desolate endings. Although Dacre's novelistic response to *The Monk* could be

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<sup>90</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 442.

<sup>91</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 442.

<sup>92</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 442.

<sup>93</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 442.

mentioned in this chapter, Victoria's death closely resembles that of Ambrosio and, to avoid repetition, *Zofloya* will be examined more thoroughly later in this thesis in regards to Dacre's depiction of witchcraft.<sup>94</sup>

## II

Faustian pacts did not suddenly reappear in Gothic literature after a long absence from the stage and the page as Harlequin plays and farces of the Faustian pact were popular in the Restoration era and the early eighteenth century. These plays used the frame of the Faustian pact, and usually the figure of Doctor Faustus, as a form of slapstick humour and examining them, albeit briefly, in this chapter allows us to understand how Christopher Marlowe's play is more closely aligned with Gothic representations of Faustian pacts rather than all later Faustian pacts. Printed in 1697, the earliest known Faustian Harlequin play was the work of William Mountfort but Mountfort actually borrowed around two thirds of his script from Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*.<sup>95</sup> The new play, *The life and death of Doctor Faustus made into a farce by Mr. Mountford; with the humours of Harlequin and Scaramouche*, changes the comic scenes and removes any reference to anti-Popery or anti-Catholicism and this reflects the 1663 edition of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* which was altered to suit the new era.<sup>96</sup> It does, however, retain the ending but, as the overall tone is one of mockery and slapstick humour, it does not necessarily carry the same weight as either Marlowe's original play, which will be discussed later, or the later Gothic novels which have already been examined. It is presumed that Mountfort's play was written during, or perhaps in response to, the reign of James II, England's last Catholic king, as it is seemingly critical towards James' reign

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<sup>94</sup> Charlotte Dacre, *Zofloya; Or, the Moor*, ed. by Adriana Craciun (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2006).

<sup>95</sup> William Mountfort, *The Life and Death of Doctor Faustus Made into a Farce by Mr. Mountford; with the Humours of Harlequin and Scaramouche, as they were Several Times Acted ... at the Queens Theatre in Dorset Garden* (London: Printed and sold by E. Whitlock, 1697).

<sup>96</sup> *Doctor Faustus* (1663).

while remaining free of any obviously anti-Catholic material. Robert Sawyer analyses the political and religious allusions made in Mountfort's version of *Faustus*, arguing that he used the play to comment on James II's Catholic sympathies despite his inability to replicate Marlowe's explicit ridicule of the Catholic Church and the Pope on the Restoration stage.<sup>97</sup> Mountfort's use of Marlowe's script to comment on his own society highlights the flexibility and universality of Marlowe's play as it was easily altered and adapted to reflect the issues of different eras and Mountfort's play is perhaps the first, and most obvious, example of the legacy of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. The title page of Mountfort's *Doctor Faustus* states that the play had been 'newly revived' by 1697, implying some level of popularity or interest in the play or the subject matter at this time.<sup>98</sup> *The Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* was a new interpretation of the Faust myth and Mountfort drastically altered certain aspects of the story, adding new characters and new situations to the tale, often for comedic effect. Mountfort's play provided Marlowe's text with a new legacy which was separate from but still connected to Marlowe's original concept and it allowed Marlowe's play to remain in print, albeit in a 'mutilated' form, until 1735. Mountfort's use of Marlowe's script passed seemingly undetected, indicating that a Restoration audience may not have been as familiar with Marlowe's play, an idea that does not impact an analysis of Marlowe's play as pre-Gothic, but the obscurity of the play during the Restoration era allowed it to be, in a sense, 'mutilated'. While being one of the earliest examples of Marlowe's influence on British Faustian pacts, Mountfort's *The Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* is perhaps the last time that Marlowe's script is so directly used in the Faust myth. Mountfort's Harlequin play also marks a departure, at least for a short time, from a serious interpretation of the Faustian pact. The legacy of Marlowe's play and the Faust myth in the early part of the eighteenth century

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<sup>97</sup> Robert Sawyer, *Marlowe and Shakespeare: The Critical Rivalry* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

<sup>98</sup> Mountfort.

is one which mixed religious transgression with slapstick comedy and, while the plays that were influenced by Marlowe and earlier renditions of the Faust myth still examined damnation, they were no longer truly concerned with presenting their audience with a terrifying image of the devil or the dangers of demonic pacts.

John Rich, an actor who specialised in Harlequin roles in the early eighteenth century, further altered the tale of Faust to enhance the comedic aspects of the tale in his 1723 farce *The Necromancer, or Harlequin Dr. Faustus*. Rich took the play in a new direction, removing many of the characters and scenes from earlier plays, but his play still retained some Marlovian aspects, such as the inclusion of the Good Angel and the Bad Angel which relate to the themes of religious transgressions, blasphemy, and punishment. Rich's dialogue is generally different to Marlowe's but certain lines of Rich's play resemble lines in Marlowe's play. For example, 'Think, what Renown, what Treasures wait' and 'Think, vengeance is offended Heav'n's' in Rich's play echo an exchange between the Good Angel and Bad Angel in Act two of Marlowe's play: 'Sweet Faustus think of heaven and heavenly things / No Faustus, think of honour and of wealth.'<sup>99</sup> This exchange also occurs, slightly altered, in Mountfort's play so the argument between the Good Angel and the Bad Angel, both of whom are imploring Faustus to 'think' on what is important to him, proved to be a lasting image of the Faust myth that Marlowe created and added to the original tale.

Rich published a script of his play entitled *The vocal parts of an entertainment, called the Necromancer or Harlequin Doctor Faustus* (1723) which was prefaced by a short description of the history of Doctor Faustus entitled 'A Short Account of Doctor Faustus,

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<sup>99</sup> John Rich, *A Dramatick Entertainment, Call'd the Necromancer: Or, Harlequin, Doctor Faustus. As Perform'd at The Theatre Royal in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields. The Third Edition. To Which is Prefix'd a Short Account of Doctor Faustus; And How He Came to Be Reputed a Magician* (London: Printed, and sold by T. Wood, in Little Britain, and at the Theatre Royal in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields, 1724), p. 5; *Doctor Faustus*, B-text, 2.1.20-21.

&c.’<sup>100</sup> This preface bears no resemblance to *The Historie of the Damnable Life, and Deserved Death of Doctor Iohn Faustus* but, instead, Rich cited several German sources, including one from 1683 by Johann Georg Neumann which Rich admittedly never read, to concoct a rather strange version of the history of Faust. At the end of this preface, Rich concluded that Doctor Faustus was actually the assistant of Laurens Coster who, along with Johannes Gutenberg, is credited with inventing the printing press, conflating the historical figure of Johann Fust with the legendary figure of Faust.<sup>101</sup> Rich claimed that Faust/Fust was suspected of magic due to his association with the new and bizarre technology of the printing press which, a common misconception of the time, was a far cry from what the Faustian pact began as and, later in the eighteenth century, what it became. During the mid-seventeenth century, the legendary figure of Johann Georg Faust was merged with Johann Fust, a real person, and thus Doctor Faustus’ association with the printing press was added to his ever-expanding mythology. This association was dropped from the myth by the time that Gothic writers took up the Faustian pact and in a 1785 pamphlet entitled *An address to the public, on the origin of the art of printing*, John Walter explains that there was no connection between the sorcery of Doctor Faustus and the technology of the printing press.<sup>102</sup> It is true that some of these details about Fust remain in much later versions of the Faust myth which are inspired by *The History of the damnable life, and deserved death of Doctor Iohn Faustus*, including the 1793 *History*, which indicates that many of these different renditions of the Faust myth fed into the ever-evolving Faust myth but, in Gothic literature at least, the Faust figure was so removed from his Renaissance origins, to the point where the Faust figure is no longer called

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<sup>100</sup> John Rich, *The Vocal Parts of an Entertainment, Called The Necromancer or Harlequin Doctor Faustus. As Perform'd at the Theatre Royal in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields. To which is Prefix'd, a Short Account of Doctor Faustus; And How He Came to be Reputed a Magician* (London: printed and sold at the Book-Seller's Shop, at the Corner of Searle-Street, Lincoln's-Inn-Fields and by A. Dodd at the Peacock, without Temple-Bar, 1723).

<sup>101</sup> Rich, *Vocal Parts*.

<sup>102</sup> John Walter, *An Address to the Public, on the Origin of the Art of Printing, with a Description of the Logographic Invention; Being an Introduction to the Publication of the Works of Some of the Most Eminent Authors, Executed by the New Method of Printing with Words Instead of Single Letters* (London: 1785).

Faust or Faustus, that not even this misconception remained. The final statement of John Rich's preface is that theatres revived the memory of Faust and drew him 'into their Grotesqueness', ultimately changing his story into one of sorcery and diabolical pacts for the purpose of entertainment.<sup>103</sup> Rich's explanation that Faust was merely a printer is an example of the eighteenth century attempting to rationalise early modern irrationality and superstition.

As with almost all aspects of history and belief, early modern depictions of themes such as the Faustian pact and anti-Catholicism had to be rationalised in the eighteenth century to fit with contemporary views and beliefs. As Andrew C. Thompson states in 'Popery, Politics, and Private Judgement in Early Hanoverian Britain', the eighteenth century often 'extracted the essence' of historical events, such as the Reformation, to rationalise these ideas and events and incorporate them seamlessly into the enlightened eighteenth century.<sup>104</sup> There were several other farce versions of the myth of Faust printed in the 1720s, including *The dancing devils: or, the roaring dragon* by Edward Ward (1724) and *Harlequin Doctor Faustus: with the masque of the deities* by John Thurmond (1724).<sup>105</sup> Rich's play was also reprinted in 1727, alongside the *Historie of the Damnable Life, and Deserved Death of Doctor Iohn Faustus* and *The Whole Life of Fryar Bacon*.<sup>106</sup> These later plays barely resemble either the *Historie of the Damnable Life, and Deserved Death of Doctor Iohn Faustus* or Marlowe's play, except for a few scenes and, while they do examine blasphemy

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<sup>103</sup> Rich, *A Dramatick Entertainment, Call'd The Necromancer: or, Harlequin, Doctor Faustus*, p. viii.

<sup>104</sup> Andrew C. Thompson, 'Popery, Politics, and Private Judgement in Early Hanoverian Britain', *The Historical Journal*, 45.2 (2002), 333-356 (348).

<sup>105</sup> Edward Ward, *The Dancing Devils: Or, the Roaring Dragon. A Dumb Farce. As it was Lately Acted at Both Houses, but Particularly at One, with Unaccountable Success* (London: printed; and sold by A. Bettesworth at the Red-Lion, J. Bately at the Dove, in Pater-Noster-Row; and J. Brotherton at the Bible in Corhil, 1724); John Thurmond, *Harlequin Doctor Faustus: With the Masque of the Deities* (London: printed for W. Chetwood, at the Cato's Head, in the Passage to the Theatre-Royal in Drury-Lane, 1724).

<sup>106</sup> John Rich, *The Surprizing Life and Death of Doctor John Faustus. To Which is Now Added, The Necromancer: Or, Harlequin, Doctor Faustus. To Which is Now Added, The Necromancer: Or, Harlequin, Doctor Faustus. As Perform'd at The Theatre Royal, in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields. Likewise, The Whole Life of Fryar Bacon, The Whole Life of Fryar Bacon, The Famous Magician of England: And the Merry Waggeries of His Man Miles. Truly Translated from the Original Copies* (London: 1727).



and religious transgressions, none of them really depict the spiritual despair or abject terror of the Faustian pact.

The tale of Faust was even used to give context to an entirely new play written in 1750; *The witch of the woodlands; or the cobbler's new translation. Here Robin the cobbler for his former evils is punish'd bad as Faustus with his devils.*<sup>107</sup> This play, unlike some of the other Harlequin plays, is a moral tale warning against the dangers of witchcraft and diabolical pacts and it expresses some of the same despair that characterises both Marlowe's play and later Gothic Faustian pacts but, as a comedy, it lacks a deep exploration of the terror, futility, and spiritual despair that are present in tragic renderings of the tale.

### III

It is clear that Gothic writers interpreted the Faust myth differently to their Restoration counterparts, focusing on feelings of spiritual despair, dejection, and abject terror rather than slapstick humour. In this section, I will explore how Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* offers audiences a similar experience of spiritual despair and abject terror that is so characteristic of Gothic Faustian pacts.

As I briefly alluded to earlier, Marlowe's play was available during the eighteenth century, in a limited capacity, but was not reprinted until Lamb's *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare* in 1808. Lamb, as with all of the other plays he reproduced in the collection, merely chose the aspects of *Doctor Faustus* that he found profound in some way. Lamb sought to focus on 'serious' matters and eschewed any comedic scenes in *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time*

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<sup>107</sup> Laurence Price, *The Witch of the Woodlands; Or the Cobbler's New Translation. Here Robin the Cobbler for His Former Evils is Punish'd Bad as Faustus with His Devils* (London: Printed and sold in Aldermay Church Yard, Bow Lane, 1750).

of *Shakespeare*, never hesitating to remove a 'superfluous character' or 'line or passage', thus presenting a version of the play which is devoid of some of its possible pre-Gothic aspects and merely representing Lamb's own ideal version of the play.<sup>108</sup> Lamb's reprinting of the first and last scenes of *Doctor Faustus* took up almost 10 pages of the collection, more than most other plays but less than *The Revenger's Tragedy*, attributed at this time to Cyril Tourner rather than Thomas Middleton, and John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*. Lamb's decision to include so much of *Doctor Faustus* indicates that, despite the play being considered old and controversial, it still could be made to hold some interest in the early part of the nineteenth century. Lamb's *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare* was the first time that Marlowe's play had been printed under Marlowe's name since 1663 even though the play had been mentioned in several accounts of old English plays, cited in commentaries on the works of Shakespeare, and brought up in biographies of Shakespeare's contemporaries. Lamb also included a note on Marlowe's supposed atheism after his section on *Doctor Faustus* in *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare*. Lamb evidently thought that the biographical note on Marlowe's religious beliefs would be particularly useful to readers after the scenes from *Doctor Faustus* as he stated at the beginning of the collection that only relevant biographical information would be included in the collection if they were 'found to be chiefly critical' and somehow enhanced a reader's understanding of the plays themselves.<sup>109</sup> Lamb's decision that Marlowe's biographical information was relevant to *Doctor Faustus* gives us some indication to how Marlowe's religion, or lack of, was the defining feature of his character and, therefore, his work during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Marlowe was often described as a man of 'bad Morals' in his eighteenth-century

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<sup>108</sup> Lamb, p. vi.

<sup>109</sup> Lamb, p. vii.

biographies, initially due to the circumstance of his death which were almost always reported in the same way: ‘Having intrigue with a loose woman, he came unexpectedly into her Chamber, and caught her in the Embraces of another Gallant. This so much enraged him, that he drew his Dagger, and attempted to stab him’.<sup>110</sup> The circumstance surrounding Marlowe’s actual death are still somewhat shrouded in mystery but even the ‘official’ inquest into his death, discovered by Leslie Hotson in 1925, removed the heterosexual love triangle from the story. Scholars and biographers have come up with a long list of possible theories but in the eighteenth century the common version of events surrounding Marlowe’s death seems to be, at least in part, derived from what was stated in Francis Meres’ *Palladis Tamia* (1598) which states that ‘Christopher Marlow was stabd to death by a bawdy Seruingman, a riuall of his in his lewde loue’.<sup>111</sup>

Later, Marlowe’s other crimes were incorporated into his biographies, including his reported atheism, which influenced how Marlowe’s work was read and received in the eighteenth century. The links drawn between Marlowe’s death and his (lack of) religion can also be traced back to the publication of *Palladis Tamia* in 1589: ‘our tragicall poet Marlowe for his Epicurisme and Atheisme had a tragicall death’.<sup>112</sup> *Palladis Tamia* was still influential in the eighteenth century as it was used by critics to argue in favour of the authorial authenticity of Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus*, as stated in the previous chapter of this thesis. Although Marlowe’s religion, or lack of, did not alter how the figure of Doctor Faustus was received or portrayed in the eighteenth century, the subject matter of the play did seem to indicate to biographers that Marlowe had abandoned God as only a man who did not

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<sup>110</sup> William Rufus Chetwood, *The British Theatre. Containing the Lives of the English Dramatic Poets; With an Account of all Their Plays. Together with the Lives of Most of the Principal Actors, as well as Poets. To which is Prefixed, a Short View of the Rise and Progress of the English Stage* (Dublin: printed for Peter Wilson, in Dame-Street, 1750); Francis Meres, *Palladis Tamia. VVits Treasury Being the Second Part of Wits Common Wealth. / by Francis Meres Maister of Artes of Both Vniuersities* (London: Printed by P. Short, for Cuthbert Burbie, and are to be solde at his shop at the Royall Exchange, 1598), p. 286-287.

<sup>111</sup> Leslie Hotson, *The Death of Christopher Marlowe* (London: The Nonesuch Press, 1925).

<sup>112</sup> Francis Meres, p. 286.

fear God could write such a play. Thus, the play shifted from expressing the horrors of damnation to one which directly reflects the author's relationship with God and religion. Marlowe's religion was doubted in his own lifetime and he was arrested in 1593 after Richard Baines, an Elizabethan informer, sent a note to the Privy Council accusing Marlowe of atheism. Baines set out his evidence within the note which stated that Marlowe claimed '[t]hat Christ was a bastard and his mother dishonest' and that 'the beginning of religion was only to keep men in awe'.<sup>113</sup> Accusations of atheism haunted Marlowe even in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and Lamb insisted that Marlowe's play was a direct result of his relationship with God.

Marlowe's name was not always associated with the trope of the Faustian pact and, at times, Gothic Faustian pacts seem to exist separately from their predecessors but one text in which Marlowe is mentioned is Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1823), another Gothic Faustian pact, where Marlowe is directly cited alongside 'Massinger, and Shirley, and Ford' as an example of a writer that 'illuminated the drama in the latter end of the reign of Elizabeth, and the commencement of that of James'.<sup>114</sup> This comment is made by a character describing a seventeenth-century library, not Maturin himself, but Maturin's decision to include Marlowe in this list of dramatists indicates that he knew of Marlowe.

Marlowe's reputation may have had some influence on Gothic Faustian pacts but it is difficult to know for certain that Gothic writers knew Marlowe's play and Marlowe's reputation when none of them, except Maturin, mentioned Marlowe in their novels. What is more certain is that Marlowe's play was, at least partially, responsible for the introduction of the Faustian pact into public consciousness in England and it is the first known example of

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<sup>113</sup> Richard Baines, *A Folio Containing Papers Chiefly Relating to Ecclesiastical Affairs*, 1593, Manuscript, British Library, London, Harley MS 6848.

<sup>114</sup> Charles Maturin, *Melmoth the Wanderer* (London: Penguin English Library, 2018), p. 567.

the Faust myth on the English stage. Although I have recognised structural, textual, and thematic similarities between Marlowe's play and Gothic Faustian pacts in the first section of this chapter, the main focus of this chapter is to argue that Marlowe's depiction of the Faustian pact, especially the final act of the play, offered its audiences a 'pre-Gothic experience' by shifting away from ideas of redemption and salvation towards a focus on spiritual despair, hopelessness, and abject terror, thus changing how morality plays functioned on the English stage.

The ending of the play presents a solution that is arguably more Gothic, or pre-Gothic, than those of the morality plays that *Doctor Faustus* seems to emulate. Scholars, such as Karol Cooper and John Parker, have compared Marlowe's play to Medieval morality plays, examining the ways in which Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* diverts from earlier plays and presents a new form of morality play on the early modern stage.<sup>115</sup> Morality plays usually ended with forgiveness and repentance whereas Marlowe's play ends in death and despair, featuring a stark warning for the audience rather than reassurance that God and Christ will forgive those who repent. I will examine these differences in further detail later in this chapter but I will briefly summarise the endings of three well-known morality plays – *The Castle of Perseverance* (c.1425), *Wisdom* (c.1460), and *Mankind* (c.1470) – to emphasise the differences between the ending of Marlowe's play and the customary ending of medieval morality plays.<sup>116</sup>

All three plays follow a similar formula in which a representative figure of mankind is tempted into sin and must eventually repent to receive God's forgiveness but while they all

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<sup>115</sup> See: Karol Cooper, 'The Modernisation of the Medieval Staging of Soul in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*', *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 23 (2014), 1-17; John Parker, 'Faustus, Confession, and the Sins of Omission', *ELH*, 80 (2013), 29-59.

<sup>116</sup> *The Castle of Perseverance*, ed. by David N. Klausner (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2010); *Two Moral Interludes: The Pride of Life and Wisdom*, ed. by David N. Klausner (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2009); *Mankind*, ed. by Kathleen Ashley and Gerard NeCastro (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2010).

preach a similar message to their audiences, there are slight differences in the way that salvation is earned by humans. *The Castle of Perseverance* follows *Humanum Genus*, or Mankind, throughout his life as he attempts to avoid temptation. Mankind is unable to resist the temptations of the seven deadly sins despite being protected by the seven moral virtues and falls into sin but, as he dies, he prays to God: ‘A word may I speke, no more. / I putte me in Goddys mercy.’ God and his four daughters, Misericordia (Mercy), Justicia (Justice), Veritas (Truth), and Pax (Peace), debate Mankind’s fate. Mercy argues that ‘the leste drope of blode’ that Christ bled on ‘Good Fryday’ ensured that ‘no man’ would be refused mercy from God but Justice wants Mankind to pay for his ‘mysdede[s]’ and ‘lye in Hell’ where ‘The Devyl schal quyte hym hys mede’.<sup>117</sup> Eventually, Mankind is offered redemption with God telling Mercy and Peace to ‘brynge hym to my blysse ful clere / In Hevene to dwelle endelesly’.<sup>118</sup> At the end of the play the actor playing God urges the audience to constantly contemplate their deaths and afterlives throughout their lives: ‘Thus endythoure gamys. / To save you fro synnyng / Evyr at the begynnyng / Thynke on youre last endyng!’.<sup>119</sup> Mankind’s treacherous journey towards salvation is a warning to the audience and *The Castle of Perseverance* ends with a moment that almost resembles the connotations of *memento mori*, an idea and Gothic trope that will be discussed in the final chapter of this thesis, but, ultimately, God is reminding the audience about the proper way to live a Christian life.

*Wisdom* also enacts the struggle between good and evil and the play depicts Christ, who is personified in the character of Wisdom, and Lucifer battling over the soul of man. Christ, as expected, prevails over Lucifer’s attempts to corrupt Anima but, as with *The Castle of Perseverance*, the play depicts humanity falling into the temptation of sin. In the final section of the play, Wisdom reprimands Will, Mind, and Understanding – the three faculties

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<sup>117</sup> *The Castle of Perseverance*, 22.3137, 22.3147, 22.3140, 22.3160, 22.3163.

<sup>118</sup> *The Castle of Perseverance*, 23.3567-3568.

<sup>119</sup> *The Castle of Perseverance*, 23.3645-3648.

of Anima, the representation of mankind - for falling into temptation. Anima and each individual faculty repent for their sins with Mind ending their own section by claiming that ‘Ye that were dammyde by synn endelesly, / Mercy hathe reformyde you ande crownyde as a kynge’.<sup>120</sup> *Wisdom*, as a play, emphasises that repentance requires more than just remorse and Anima actively asks for God’s mercy and grace to facilitate ‘peas and acorde betwyx Gode and’ Anima.<sup>121</sup>

*Mankind* was also intended to instruct its audience in the proper way to live a Christian life as it follows the same overarching plot as both *The Castle of Perseverance* and *Wisdom*. The play, like many other medieval morality plays, depicts Mankind's fall into sin and his eventual redemption. In this play, Mankind struggles to accept that salvation only requires asking God for forgiveness as it seems too simple. He questions Mercy’s insistence that he ‘aske [for] mercy yet onys agayn’ as he believes that ‘God wyll not permytte such a synfull wrech / To be revyvyd and restoryd ageyn’.<sup>122</sup> This is just the beginning of a long discussion about redemption between Mercy and Mankind, in which Mercy continually insists that Mankind need only ask for forgiveness to receive it. This section of the play is instructional and it attempts to assure the audience that, although ‘Justyce and Equité shall be fortyfyd’, God will forgive their sins if they ask for mercy.<sup>123</sup> The play ends with Mercy addressing the audience, in a speech that resembles those of both *The Castle of Perseverance* and *Wisdom*, to encourage the audience members to repent for their sins. The play, again, suggests that Christians should continuously ask God for mercy throughout their lives, constantly contemplating their sins, the state of their souls, and their afterlives.

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<sup>120</sup> *Wisdom*, 1124-1125.

<sup>121</sup> *Wisdom*, 1152.

<sup>122</sup> *Mankind*, 819, 831-832.

<sup>123</sup> *Mankind*, 840.

All three of these morality plays end with their representation of humanity asking for forgiveness and receiving forgiveness whereas Marlowe's Faustus, who is not necessarily a representation of humanity in the same way that *Humanum Genus*, *Anima*, and *Mankind* are, does ask for forgiveness, eventually, but does not receive forgiveness. Many scholars, including Karol Cooper, have suggested that Marlowe's ending is a marked departure from the endings of these medieval morality plays and scholars who examine the play often analyse the despair and terror that characterises Marlowe's final scenes and the futility of Faustus' desperation during his damnation scene.<sup>124</sup> In 'I, Mephistophilis: Self, Other, and Demonic Parody in Marlowe's "Doctor Faustus"', Pompa Banerjee suggests that 'in a singular departure from the tradition framework, Doctor Faustus appears to reinforce the idea that Faustus' sin bars him from grace' despite Christian doctrine emphasising salvation while Snyder argues that 'in the final soliloquy, morality play, tragedy, and demonic saint's legend fuse in a terrible conclusion', creating a final soliloquy that both acts as a morality play but also looks forward beyond the genre.<sup>125</sup> It is this departure from the literary traditions of his own time, Marlowe's decision to focus on the inevitable nature of Faustus' damnation in contrast to the way 'earlier medieval moralities had emphasized forgiveness and ended hopefully', that allows this act of the play to be read as pre-Gothic.<sup>126</sup>

I want to examine several aspects of Marlowe's play as potentially pre-Gothic, including the representation of repentance, despair, and God's abandonment, but I also want to acknowledge aspects of the play, such as the Good Angel and Bad Angel, that are decidedly more in keeping with medieval morality plays as they are not only borrowed from morality plays but also offer hope of salvation. Firstly, I will examine Marlowe's exploration

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<sup>124</sup> Cooper.

<sup>125</sup> Pompa Banerjee, 'I, Mephistophilis: Self, Other, and Demonic Parody in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*', *Christianity & Literature*, 42.2 (1993), 221-241 (231); Susan Snyder, 'Marlowe's "Doctor Faustus" as an Inverted Saint's Life', *Studies in Philology*, 63.4 (1966), 565-577 (576).

<sup>126</sup> Maggie Vinter, 'Doctor Faustus and the Art of Dying Badly', *Renaissance Drama*, 45.1 (2017), 1-23 (10).



of redemption within the play, focusing on Faustus' pride, or his unwillingness to repent, his fear to repent, and his inability to repent.

In the final act of the play, just before his death, Faustus acknowledges his religious transgressions and states that he has 'blasphemed' throughout the play: 'God forbade it, indeed: but Faustus hath done it'.<sup>127</sup> Marlowe, in this moment of the play, presents the audience with a Faustus who readily acknowledges that he has been fully aware of his actions against God throughout the entire play. Faustus has blasphemed and sinned willingly throughout the play and, at this point, he is unwilling, or perhaps too unconcerned about the reality of his fate, to atone for his sins. Wagner reveals that Faustus has acknowledged his imminent end, relinquishing his possessions to Wagner in preparation for his demise, and yet he spend his final day of life at a 'supper with the scholars' rather than reflecting upon his life and death, like morality plays encourage.<sup>128</sup> Hattaway states that Faustus continues to 'blindly [ignore] Christ' even at this moment at the play and he 'loses his freedom to change as he hardens into the constricting mould of proud despair'.<sup>129</sup> Pride and despair are often linked by scholars in regards to *Doctor Faustus* and I will return to the theme of despair in this chapter but before Faustus' desperation and despair take control of the play, it is suggested that Faustus is too fearful to repent.

Faustus encounters the Old Man in the first scene of Act five, after his supper with the scholars, and during this encounter the Old Man encourages Faustus to leave his 'damned art / This magic, that will charm [his] soul to hell, / And quite bereave [him] of salvation'.<sup>130</sup> Faustus is inspired to contemplate redemption after his conversation with the Old Man,

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<sup>127</sup> *Doctor Faustus*, B-text, 5.2.56-64.

<sup>128</sup> *Doctor Faustus*, B-text, 5.1.6-7.

<sup>129</sup> Michael Hattaway, 'The Theology of Marlowe's "Doctor Faustus"', *Renaissance Drama*, 3 (1970), 51-78 (76-77); Snyder, 'Marlowe's "Doctor Faustus" as an Inverted Saint's Life', 567.

<sup>130</sup> *Doctor Faustus*, B-text, 5.1.34-36.

prompting him to exclaim that ‘Hell strives with grace for conquest within [his] breast’.<sup>131</sup>

Although it can be argued that Faustus is only considering redemption to ‘shun the snares of death’, an argument that I will return to later, his sudden change of heart is met with violent threats from Mephostophilis who frightens Faustus with promises to ‘tear’ his ‘flesh’ into ‘piecemeal’ for ‘disobedience’ against Lucifer.<sup>132</sup> Orgel states in *Tobacco and Boys* that this moment of the play does not suggest that Faustus cannot repent but that ‘he is *afraid* to repent, afraid that the devils will tear him to pieces if he does’ and it is this fear that prompts Faustus to reinforce his pact to Lucifer by once again spilling his blood to confirm his ‘former vow’.<sup>133</sup> Faustus’ fear is echoed by Ambrosio’s in *The Monk* as Ambrosio is prompted to sign his Faustian pact in a moment of intense fear. Ambrosio does not attempt to repent because he is embarrassed to but it is fear that drives his pact with the devil and both Faustus and Ambrosio are driven to their damned end by the fear of death, the fear of torture, and, perhaps, the fear of God’s rejection.

In Act five, scene two, Faustus’ pride and fear combine which results in his inability to repent. Repentance is no longer an option for Faustus, at least in his own mind at this point in the play, and act five, scene two sees Faustus desperately claim that he ‘would lift up’ his ‘hands’ towards God if not for Lucifer and Mephostophilis who ‘hold them’ down.<sup>134</sup> As Orgel suggests, ‘Faustus is convinced that he will not be *allowed* to repent’, stopped either by God or the devils that he has associated himself with.<sup>135</sup> Lucifer and Mephostophilis’ presence on stage during this scene may suggest that Faustus is actually unable to repent, his hands held down by the fear of their presence and their constant surveillance rather than

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<sup>131</sup> *Doctor Faustus*, B-text, 5.1.66.

<sup>132</sup> *Doctor Faustus*, B-text, 5.1.67-70.

<sup>133</sup> Stephen Orgel, ‘Tobacco and Boys: How Queer Was Marlowe?’, *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 6.4 (2000), 555-576 (574); Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, B-text, 5.1.75.

<sup>134</sup> *Doctor Faustus*, B-text, 5.2.59-60.

<sup>135</sup> Orgel, 570.

physically, but it also draws attention to Faustus' relationship with them, reminding the audience that, as Banerjee suggests, '[h]aving chosen to be allied with the demonic, like Lucifer and Mephistophilis, Faustus cannot be redeemed' as 'like the fallen Archangel, Faustus also can never hope for absolution'.<sup>136</sup> This scene is replicated in Lewis' *The Monk*, as discussed earlier, when Lucifer physically stops Ambrosio from praying during the final moments of his mortal existence. While Marlowe's Faustus claims that Lucifer and Beelzebub are restraining him, preventing him from begging for salvation either physically or due to Faustus' fear of them, Lucifer in *The Monk* is shown to have 'read his [Ambrosio's] intention and prevented it', and so Lewis displays what the B text implies.<sup>137</sup> It is important to note that while Lucifer takes a role in the play, confirming that he is real, God does not and God's absence is mirrored in Gothic Faustian pacts such as Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* and Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya* and, to some extent, Beckford's *Vathek*. In a similar way to these Gothic texts, the B text of *Doctor Faustus* offers no hope of salvation to the reader or audience, nor does it offer any true indication that God exists beyond the presence of the Good Angel and the brief incident in Act two, scene where Faustus' blood congeals. If only devils appear to watch his slow descent into 'desperate lunacy' towards the end of the play, then it must be concluded that God has truly abandoned Faustus.<sup>138</sup> Although the scholars attempt to help Faustus, they too, eventually, abandon him, fearing the wrath of God and the first scholar warns the third scholar to not 'tempt' God by staying with Faustus during his dying hour, implying that God will not spare even the most devout in his punishment of Faustus and other sinners.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Banerjee, 234.

<sup>137</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*; Dacre.

<sup>138</sup> *Doctor Faustus*, B-text, 5.2.11.

<sup>139</sup> *Doctor Faustus*, B-text, 5.2.78.

Faustus' conversation with the scholars could also be read as a confession of his sins but by claiming that he is unable to repent, this moment in the play cannot be read as an attempt to appeal to God's mercy and gain salvation. Instead, it is a grim confession of his crimes against God which will do nothing to save his soul from eternal torture in hell.

Returning to Faustus' conversation with the Old Man in Act five, scene one, Marlowe's interaction with the notion of predestination reveals another layer of spiritual despair within the play. Faustus argues that 'Hell calls' for him 'with a roaring voice' which emphasises that Faustus believes that his damnation is inevitable.<sup>140</sup> However, Faustus' damnation is not necessarily predestined and there are several moments within the play in which Faustus is offered an opportunity to redeem himself. Michael Hattaway states that 'the mere presence of the Old Man and Good Angel would be ridiculous if Faustus had been damned from the beginning or if there were no possibility of his repentance' and I will explore the role of these two figures within the play in regards to ideas of predestination and redemption.<sup>141</sup>

God intervenes at several points in the play, especially before Faustus signs his first pact, which proves that, unlike Ambrosio in *The Monk*, Faustus is not predestined to perdition. Act two, scene one features a moment where Faustus' blood 'congeals' as he attempts to sign his pact and there is an implication that this is divine intervention as only God could perform such an act.<sup>142</sup> Susan Snyder argues that 'the congealing of Faustus' blood and the mysterious "Homo fuge" represent his second temptation by grace' and, although 'he wavers again', ultimately, he 'stays in despair'.<sup>143</sup> Snyder goes on to acknowledge that 'congealed blood' comes 'from God' but Faustus interprets this moment as his own body

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<sup>140</sup> *Doctor Faustus*, B-text, 5.1.52.

<sup>141</sup> Hattaway, 76.

<sup>142</sup> *Doctor Faustus*, B-text, 2.1.62.

<sup>143</sup> Snyder, 'Marlowe's "Doctor Faustus" as an Inverted Saint's Life', 572.

rejecting his decision to sign the pact and he elects to ignore not only God but his own instincts.<sup>144</sup> As demonstrated earlier in this chapter, Ambrosio in Lewis' *The Monk* goes through a similar moment of indecision when signing the pact although, for Ambrosio, it is not his body that rejects the pact but his own fear of God that stays his hand. Both of these characters hold an innate fear in the wrath of God but their fear of other things, whether that is the threat of dismemberment or death by burning, is what prompts them towards the infernal.

The presence of the Good Angel is also a form of divine intervention as they attempt to sway Faustus towards God and, as Hattaway argues, 'the mere presence of the Old Man and Good Angel would be ridiculous if Faustus had been damned from the beginning or if there were no possibility of his repentance' and so, although Faustus claims he cannot repent, repentance is an option for Faustus throughout the play.<sup>145</sup> In Act two, scene three, the Good Angel urges Faustus to repent, with the Bad Angel stating that it is 'too late', and this line in the play highlights some of the differences between the A text and the B text. The Good Angel's line that asserts it is 'Never too late, if Faustus can repent' in the A text changes to 'Never too late, if Faustus will repent' in the B text. This change, as suggested by various scholars, may alter the way we look at Faustus' hope for repentance but both lines instil a sense of despair within the audience or the reader. For Lawton, these 'attempts to argue for ideological and theological differences between the two versions are similarly overstated' and Lawton argues that 'if 'can' here means 'knows how to', and 'will' means 'wills to', there may be no significant difference' and a 'variation of modal auxiliary does nothing to boost or diminish Faustus' prospects of salvation'.<sup>146</sup> Ideological and theological differences between the plays would offer more scope to assess each play's representation of repentance and, in

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<sup>144</sup> Snyder, 'Marlowe's "Doctor Faustus" as an Inverted Saint's Life', 572.

<sup>145</sup> Hattaway, 76.

<sup>146</sup> Lawton, p. 164.

turn, despair but whether Faustus does not know how to repent, is not able to repent, or is just unwilling to repent, a sense of despair and futility is created by Faustus' constant dismissal of the Good Angel's attempts to save him. Although the Good Angel represents hope for Faustus, the character is also a source of despair for the audience as salvation is shunned at every opportunity.

The roles of the Good Angel and the Old Man are mirrored in *Vathek* by the Genie who takes the form of a shepherd to try to save Vathek from his eternal damnation. As stated earlier in this chapter, Beckford's Genie appears to be a combination of the Good Angel and the Old Man as he acts as a representative of a divine figure, Mohammed rather than God/Allah, but he also physically intervenes in Vathek's life and urges him to repent. Since Marlowe introduced the Good Angel and the Bad Angel to the Faustian pact, it could be argued that this is another example of a pre-Gothic idea in *Doctor Faustus*. However, the figures of the Good Angel and the Bad Angel are a longstanding feature in non-canonical Christian books and the Islamic concept of the Qareen.<sup>147</sup> These figures also appear in *The Castle of Perseverance*, one of the morality plays that I discussed earlier in this chapter.<sup>148</sup> Marlowe incorporates Medieval literary tradition into his new Renaissance play, which could be considered pre-Gothic by Horace Walpole's assertion that Gothic is a genre that blends 'the ancient and the modern', but both Marlowe and Beckford are merely engaging with the well-known figures of the Good Angel and the Bad Angel, figures which are present in both religion and literature, and Marlowe is not introducing a pre-Gothic or Gothic idea to the Faustian pact.<sup>149</sup> After Faustus signs the pact, God's attempts to save Faustus decline and the

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<sup>147</sup> An early reference to shoulder angels appears in *The Shepherd of Hermas*, a non-canonical Christian text dated to c.140; For the Islamic concept of the Qareen, see Kelly Bulkeley, Kate Adams and Patricia M. Davis, *Dreaming in Christianity and Islam* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2009) p. 144.

<sup>148</sup> *The Castle of Perseverance*.

<sup>149</sup> Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, ed. by Nick Groom (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 9.

Good Angel appears infrequently, demonstrating very little power over Faustus' actions and opinions. Faustus has completely given himself over to the devil.

Although the presence of the Old Man and the Good Angel prove that Faustus was able to repent, it can be concluded that by the fifth act Faustus has been abandoned by God. The Good Angel only appears in Act five, scene two to lament Faustus' choice, acknowledging that he could have been saved if he had 'affected sweet divinity' rather than choosing to become allied with the demonic.<sup>150</sup> In 'Calvinist Theology and "Country Divinity" in Marlowe's "Doctor Faustus"', James Ross Macdonald questions whether 'the last appearance of the Good Angel [signifies] that Faustus has passed beyond redemption' and, in this final appearance, even the Good Angel offers Faustus no salvation, stating that he has 'lost celestial happiness' and revealing that the 'jaws of hell are open to receive' Faustus.<sup>151</sup> This is a bleak offering for Marlowe's audience as the Good Angel condemns Faustus, who has yet to attempt his final plea for salvation, to the depths of hell.

Immediately after the Good Angel abandons Faustus, signalling that God too has abandoned Faustus, Faustus begins his final plea. Faustus' speech in Act five, scene two is a much more sustained and desperate effort than the previous moments in Act two, scene three and Act five, scene one where he begins to ask for repentance. In this moment of the play, Faustus seems to follow the pattern set out by Humanum Genus, Anima, and Mankind by asking for forgiveness from God at the end of his life but Faustus' journey in Marlowe's play is not necessarily a struggle against evil, although there are moments in Act one, scene one and Act two, scene one where Marlowe touches upon this idea through the figures of the

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<sup>150</sup> *Doctor Faustus*, B-text, 5.2.107.

<sup>151</sup> James Ross Macdonald, 'Calvinist Theology and "Country Divinity" in Marlowe's "Doctor Faustus"', *Studies in Philology*, 11.4 (2014) 821-844 (843); *Doctor Faustus*, B-text, 5.2.105-114.

Good Angel and Bad Angel, and, instead, Faustus indulges in sin and evil, welcoming it into his life until the very last moments of his life.

Instead of truly asking for forgiveness, as is common in morality plays, Faustus actually begs for an opportunity to avoid his fate. Heather Ann Hirschfeld notes that ‘Faustus here comes close to transforming hell into purgatory’ by begging for a chance to repent, even if he has to live in hell for ‘a hundred thousand’ years.<sup>152</sup> This sentiment is echoed by Ambrosio in *The Monk*, although Lewis changes it slightly as Ambrosio begs Lucifer, not God, for a reduced sentence but futile attempts at bargaining are a key element in creating a sense of spiritual despair in both of these Faustian pacts. His increasing desperation turns his pleas for salvation into an attempt to bargain for time and his fantasies become increasingly depressing. Faustus begs the ‘ever-moving spheres of heaven’ to ‘stand still’ so that ‘time may cease, and midnight never come’ and he wishes desperately for ‘this hour’ that remains to be ‘a year, a month, a week, [or] a natural day’.<sup>153</sup> His bargaining continues as he realises that even nature has forsaken him, with the earth refusing to harbour him and yet he still begs the ‘stars’ to ‘draw up’ ‘like a foggy mist’ around him so that his ‘limbs may issue from [their] smoky mouths’ and his ‘soul may but ascend to heaven’.<sup>154</sup> At this point, Faustus wishes for his soul to ‘ascend to heaven’, a striking contrast to how he has considered his soul for the majority of the play, but this soon changes as the striking of the clock compresses the final hour while Faustus seeks to extend it.<sup>155</sup> As his time of death draws closer, Faustus’ requests grow increasingly frantic and desperate as he begs to ‘be chang’d / Unto some brutish beast!’ as ‘all beasts are happy’.<sup>156</sup> Although Faustus is rapidly becoming more and

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<sup>152</sup> Heather Ann Hirschfeld, “‘The verie paines of hell’”: *Doctor Faustus* and the Controversy Over Christ’s Descent’, *Shakespeare Studies*, 36 (2008), 166-181 (179); *Doctor Faustus*, B-text, 5.2.165.

<sup>153</sup> *Doctor Faustus*, B-text, 5.2.135-139.

<sup>154</sup> *Doctor Faustus*, B-text, 5.2.154-160.

<sup>155</sup> *Doctor Faustus*, B-text, 5.2.160.

<sup>156</sup> *Doctor Faustus*, B-text, 5.2.170-172.



more desperate, almost as rapidly as his final hour passes, he also understands that he has deprived himself of the 'joys of heaven'.<sup>157</sup> Macdonald argues that 'as his life wanes, Faustus accuses Mephistopheles of working his damnation' and 'Mephistopheles proudly acknowledges his own instrumental, even physical, role in Faustus' destruction' but, ultimately, Faustus recognises his own part in his damnation, which was only expedited by Mephostophilis and Lucifer tempting him into sin.<sup>158</sup> Faustus has finally become self-aware, recognising that the choices he made at the beginning of the play have resulted in his damnation. His final plea is short, begging for his soul to 'be chang'd into little water-drops, / And fall into the ocean, ne'er be found!' and, in 'The Modernisation of the Medieval Staging of the Soul in Marlowe's Doctor Faustus', Karol Cooper suggests that Faustus' 'last alternative soul he imagines through poetry is a soul without eternal subjectivity, and therefore without identity itself, either from the inside, or the outside', implying that his soul would both cease to be identified by the Devil, as an escape from his eternal torture, but also God whose wrath Faustus fears.<sup>159</sup> In particular, this moment of the play encapsulates Faustus' desperation as he attempts to eschew his eternal soul in a moment of terrifying despair. Faustus' speech also depicts his descent into what Mephostophilis refers to as 'desperate lunacy' and his pleas weaken from his soul being accepted into heaven by way of the stars to fading into nothing as a small drop of water in a vast ocean.<sup>160</sup>

Many scholars point out that this soliloquy is spoken above the sound of a striking clock, which not only implies that each of Faustus' 'twenty-four years, one by one, literally evaporates into empty sound with each striking of the clock' but the constant reminder of Faustus' remaining time also adds a sense of desperation to Faustus' speech as 'Faustus, with

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<sup>157</sup> *Doctor Faustus*, B-text, 5.2.177.

<sup>158</sup> Macdonald, 839.

<sup>159</sup> 'Doctor Faustus', B-text, 5.2.180-181; Cooper, 4.

<sup>160</sup> *Doctor Faustus*, B-text, 5.2.11, 5.2.154-181.

pathetic urgency, seeks to make short time long' and prolong his life.<sup>161</sup> In 'Doctor Faustus and the Art of Dying Badly', Maggie Vinter argues that 'while Faustus wants time to slow, his words formally enact compression, substituting increasingly short time periods for perpetuity', and Vinter suggests that midnight 'marks the end of the period Faustus hopes to extend', thus marking not only Faustus' death but also the end of his hopeless search for redemption.<sup>162</sup> God does not intervene at any point during this speech, leaving Faustus with nothing except a hopeless wish of obscurity but, as Mephostophilis and the devils arrive, Faustus exclaims that he will 'burn' his books in one final attempt to appeal to God's mercy.<sup>163</sup> Rinku Chatterjee focuses on Faustus' final statement, suggesting that in 'an effort to forestall his eternal doom, therefore, he renounces not just magic, but scholarship itself, mastery of the very books over which he professes command in his initial soliloquy' and so 'Faustus, in the ultimate moment of desperation, finally renounces the indispensable accoutrements of the scholar, though in vain'.<sup>164</sup> Faustus' desperation drives him to renounce everything that he has gained from his pact, just as Vathek does in Beckford's novel, but, just as for Vathek, it is too late for Faustus and his final plea is little more than a futile act of desperation. It is clear that no one, except the audience, is listening to Faustus' frantic pleas and this contributes to an atmosphere of desolate horror as Faustus and the audience wait for his inevitable demise, knowing that God will not intervene and he will, undoubtably, be dragged to hell to suffer for eternity. This particular scene anticipates Ambrosio's short but desperate pleas in *The Monk* and Marlowe creates a similar experience of Gothic horror, a feeling which is characterised by a distinct lack of hope, in this scene to later Gothic Faustian

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<sup>161</sup> Joseph Candido, 'Marking Time in "Doctor Faustus 5.2"', *Early Theatre*, 12.1 (2009), 137-140 (139).

<sup>162</sup> Vinter, 21.

<sup>163</sup> *Doctor Faustus*, B-text, 5.2.185.

<sup>164</sup> Rinku Chatterjee, "'I'll Burn My Books": Doctor Faustus as Renaissance Magus', *Marlowe Studies*, 3 (2013), 97-110 (109-110).

pacts and it is this final, desperate plea which truly characterises Marlowe's play as pre-Gothic as it allows Faustus and the audience to experience true despair.

Faustus' desperate ending results in spiritual despair and abject terror for the audience. Act five, scene three is a graphic revelation of Faustus' demise as the three scholars discover what remains of Faustus' body. Marlowe's audience is faced with a grim scene that leaves no doubt the Faustus has been punished for his transgressions against God. The first scholar tells the audience of Faustus' 'fearful shrieks and cries' while the second scholar draws attention to 'Faustus' limbs, / All torn asunder by the hand of death!' which are strewn over the stage.<sup>165</sup> The third scholar claims that he heard Faustus 'shriek and call aloud for help' for an entire hour while 'the devils whom Faustus served' 'torn him thus'.<sup>166</sup> As I discussed earlier in regards to Lewis' *The Monk*, the scholars' recollection of Faustus' ending is almost disgustingly thrilling as it taps into an almost sadomasochistic pleasure as the audience are able revel in Faustus' well-deserved death. None of the scholars attempted to help Faustus, fearing the wrath of God themselves, and the visual confirmation of Faustus' horrific death anticipated the deaths of Vathek, Ambrosio, and other Gothic Faust figures, including Charlotte Dacre's Victoria, as they are condemned to the most painful deaths imaginable.<sup>167</sup> Although Marlowe avoids the disturbing detail of Lewis, the implications of the scholars' words indicate a gruesome scene, with body parts strewn over the stage. Marlowe's play is c.1592 and falls in with the 'innate love of blood' that I examined in regards to *Titus Andronicus* in the first chapter of this thesis but Faustus' death is not shown on stage, only reported by the scholars, and only what remains of his body is shown to the

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<sup>165</sup> *Doctor Faustus*, B-text, 5.3.4, 5.3.6-7.

<sup>166</sup> *Doctor Faustus*, B-text, 5.3.8-10.

<sup>167</sup> Beckford, *Vathek*; Lewis, *The Monk*; Dacre.

audience in the B text. The final scene is bleak and horrifying, compounded by the stark moral that is delivered by Marlowe's Chorus in the epilogue to the play.

Marlowe's Chorus concludes the play in a short speech that anticipates the final paragraphs of *Vathek*:

Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight,

And burned is Apollo's laurel bough,

That sometime grew within this learned man.

Faustus is gone. Regard his hellish fall,

Whose fiendful fortune may exhort the wise

Only to wonder at unlawful things,

Whose deepness doth entice such forward wits

To practise more than heavenly power permits.<sup>168</sup>

Just as Faustus' 'damnation scene is, of course, a foregone conclusion' so is the message of the Chorus as they urge the audience to learn from Faustus' mistakes.<sup>169</sup> Finally, in the final lines of the play, the nature of Faustus' sin is partially revealed as the Chorus states that Faustus' 'hellish fall' is due to his attempts to 'practice more than heavenly power permits'.<sup>170</sup> All of Faustus' sins, including his pact, his demonic relationship with Helen, and his despair, are encapsulated within just one line which, in reality, does nothing to dispel the dissatisfaction of the audience. It could be argued that the Chorus acts to restore hope for the

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<sup>168</sup> *Doctor Faustus*, B-text, Epilogue.1-8.

<sup>169</sup> Orgel, 574.

<sup>170</sup> *Doctor Faustus*, B-text, Epilogue.4-8.

audience, guiding them towards salvation, but the play as a whole works against this reading as, although the Chorus appears to reveal Faustus' ultimate sin, there is no clarification about which sins cannot be forgiven by God and will lead to Faustus' fate of eternal despair, abject terror, and anguish. Without this guidance, just as in *Vathek* and *The Monk*, audiences and readers 'all participate, like Faustus, in a hopeless search for a satisfactory understanding of the end' and so despair prevails even at the conclusion of the play as Faustus' misery is transferred to the audience.<sup>171</sup>

I have already drawn attention to the similarities between the final moral of *Vathek* and Marlowe's epilogue, emphasising that Beckford's echoing, or perhaps, borrowing of the Chorus' final speech. I now want to return to discussing Marlowe's ending in comparison to the three morality plays I summarised earlier in the chapter. Each morality play offers a moral at the end, just as Marlowe's play does, but the tone of these speeches, and the atmosphere against which they are given, differ greatly. For example, *Mankind* ends with a speech from Mercy that suggests that God's mercy and love will redeem humanity if they but ask for forgiveness:

Wyrschepyll sofereyns, I have do my propirté:  
Mankynd ys deliveryd by my faverall patrocynye.  
God preserve hym fro all wyckyd captivité  
And send hym grace hys sensuall condicions to mortifye!

Now for Hys love that for us receyvdyd hys humanité,  
Serge your condicyons wyth dew examinacion.  
Thynke and remembyr the world ys but a vanité,

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<sup>171</sup> Vinter, 23.

As yt ys provyd daly by diverse transmutacyon.

Mankend ys wrechyd, he hath sufficyent prove.

Therefore God grant yow all per suam misericordiam

That ye may be pleyferys wyth the angellys above

And have to your porcyon *vitam eternam. Amen!*<sup>172</sup>

If we compare this speech to the speech given by the Chorus in the epilogue to *Doctor Faustus*, it is clear that Marlowe's ending differs greatly from that of *Mankind* as Mercy offers hope to the audience and gives them clear instructions about how to live a good life which will, ultimately, lead to salvation whereas Marlowe's Chorus merely offer an ominous warning about dabbling in matters which God does not permit. Gothic Faustian pacts follow the same route and the abject horror of the 'moral' in Marlowe's play can be read as pre-Gothic because it does not provide hope nor instructions which the audience can follow to ensure their own happiness in heaven.

Marlowe's epilogue leaves an audience with a distinct sense of despair as, unlike the morality plays that came before it, salvation has not been achieved. However, the ending of the play leaves the audience with questions that have only been partially addressed by the epilogue as Marlowe does not address the nature of Faustus' sin. It is clear that Faustus has given his soul over to the devil twice, blasphemed throughout the play, and practiced 'more than heavenly power permits' but Marlowe never truly explains to his audience why Faustus is abandoned by God and which sin, if one in particular, makes Faustus irredeemable.<sup>173</sup>

Although referring to the A text of *Doctor Faustus*, Macdonald states that Marlowe's failure to 'clarify the nature of Faustus's fatal error' leaves the 'audience to wonder what lesson to

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<sup>172</sup> *Mankind*, 903-914.

<sup>173</sup> *Doctor Faustus*, B-text, Epilogue.8.

take from his downfall' as it is not known 'which actions are truly unforgivable and which can be expiated'.<sup>174</sup> Orgel also states that the final moments of Faustus' life may result in 'one more temptation for the audience' as Marlowe not only fails to explain the nature of Faustus' sin but 'in its evasions and ambivalences' it also fails to show the audience the consequences of Faustus' sin.<sup>175</sup>

As Banerjee acknowledges, many scholars have debated 'the nature of Faustus' sin and why it becomes such an insurmountable barrier to grace'.<sup>176</sup> Although Banerjee states that their reading of the play 'connects the fervid intensity of Faustus' inner conviction of damnation to his selfhood' by suggesting that 'Faustus despairs because he perceives that his unlikeness to God reflects far more than the taint of ordinary sin', it is perhaps Susan Snyder's earlier assertion that 'Pride and despair are linked in the refusal to acknowledge insufficiency of self and ask for God's help' that is particularly useful to this chapter as Faustus' unceasing despair becomes his ultimate sin which causes it to characterise the final act of Marlowe's play.<sup>177</sup>

Hattaway, Snyder, and Phoebe S. Spinrad suggest that Faustus' sin is prideful despair but W.W. Greg proposed that Faustus' main sin is making Helen his 'paramour' as 'Faustus commits the sin of demoniality, that is, bodily intercourse with demons' during his relationship with Helen, and it was this sin that ultimately led to his damnation, and this forbidden, demonic relationship is, again, echoed in both *Vathek* and *The Monk*.<sup>178</sup> The forbidden relationships in these Gothic texts have been discussed as indications of homoeroticism, transforming Gothic Faustian pacts into opportunities to criticise society and

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<sup>174</sup> Macdonald, 843.

<sup>175</sup> Orgel, 574.

<sup>176</sup> Banerjee, 234.

<sup>177</sup> Banerjee, 234; Susan Snyder, 'The Left Hand of God: Despair in Medieval and Renaissance Tradition', *Studies in the Renaissance*, 12 (1965), 18-59 (32).

<sup>178</sup> W. W. Greg, 'The Damnation of Faustus', *The Modern Language Review*, 41.2 (1946), 97-107 (106).

explore forbidden desire. This idea is also present in *Doctor Faustus*, both through Faustus' relationship with Helen and his relationship with Mephostophilis, both demonic and one possibly homoerotic or, if not, certainly homosocial. David Clarke questions whether a 'contemporary audience would read the love Doctor Faustus expresses for Mephistopheles as suitably affectionate or unsuitably sodomitical because of the diabolical nature of his companion'.<sup>179</sup> Clarke's emphasis that it is the 'diabolical nature' of Mephostophilis that makes their relationship 'sodomitical', rather than Mephostophilis' perceived gender, allows not only Faustus' relationship with Helen but also Ambrosio's relationship with Matilda in *The Monk* to be read as 'sodomitical'.<sup>180</sup> If we read these relationships, in both *Doctor Faustus* and Gothic Faustian pacts, as expressions of unfulfilled forbidden desire, it can be argued that they work to reinforce the reading that Faustian pacts rely on creating an atmosphere of desolation and despair to instil a sense of horror within the audience or reader. These 'forbidden' relationships are also seen in other Gothic Faustian pacts such as Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya*. Marlowe, like Beckford and Lewis after him, 'forces us to confront the pain and death that result from resisting the status quo or failing to conform' through *Doctor Faustus*, using the Faustian pact to explore the despair felt by those constricted by an intolerant society.<sup>181</sup>

The epilogue presents audiences with another potentially damning sin, although the epilogue is also somewhat vague. I have already discussed the epilogue in detail, both the ways it resembles Gothic Faustian pacts and the ways it differs from the final speeches of medieval morality plays, but it suggests, vaguely, that Faustus' sin is practicing 'more than

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<sup>179</sup> David Clark, 'Marlowe and Queer Theory', *Christopher Marlowe in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 232-241 (p. 234).

<sup>180</sup> Clark, p. 234.

<sup>181</sup> Clark, p. 240.



heavenly power permits' and this can be read as his quest for knowledge, power, and magical abilities.<sup>182</sup>

Although the A text of *Doctor Faustus* shares many of the scenes and ideas I have discussed within this chapter, making it possible to read the A text as pre-Gothic through its exploration of spiritual despair and abject terror, some of the differences between the A and B texts can be analysed to suggest that the bleaker B text is more recognisably Gothic, or pre-Gothic, than the A text. It must be first acknowledged that the A text does not include Act five, scene three of the B text, where Faustus' mutilated body is revealed to the audience, but it could be argued that the uncertainty of the A text, in which Faustus is led to Hell to await eternal torture, leaves the audience with the same feelings of spiritual despair and abject terror that the B text provides. The ending of the A text provides a different experience to that of the B text, which relies upon the visceral horror that can also be seen in Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* to reinforce its message, but the ambiguity of the A text's final scene still contributes to the pre-Gothic nature of the text as it plays upon the uncertainty of the unknown and offers the audience no glimpse of what awaits them if they follow Faustus' path.

However, if we compare a few particular scenes from earlier in the play, the prevalence of abject terror, which is centred around Godly abandonment, of the B text becomes clear. One example is the Old Man's speech from Act five, scene one. I have already discussed this scene in regards to the B text, which offers little hope of actual salvation to Faustus even if it does prompt him to consider begging for mercy, but the speech in the A text is somewhat more positive, with the Old Man offering some tangible hope to Faustus and the audience by detailing Faustus' path to redemption:

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<sup>182</sup> *Doctor Faustus*, B-text, Epilogue.8.

Ah, Doctor Faustus, that I might prevail  
To guide thy steps unto the way of life,  
By which sweet path thou mayst attain the goal  
That shall conduct thee to celestial rest!  
Break heart, drop blood, and mingle it with tears,  
Tears falling from repentant heaviness  
Of thy most vile and loathsome filthiness,  
The stench whereof corrupts the inward soul  
With such flagitious crimes of heinous sin  
As no commiseration may expel,  
But mercy, Faustus, of thy Saviour sweet,  
Whose blood alone must wash away thy guilt.<sup>183</sup>

Rather than stating that Faustus is 'banish'd from the sight of heaven', as in the B text, the Old Man states that he can 'guide [Faustus'] steps unto the way of life, / By which sweet path [he] mayst attain the goal / That shall conduct [him] to celestial rest!'.<sup>184</sup> It could be argued that the A text presents small moments of hope to the audience only to rip them away a few

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<sup>183</sup> Christopher Marlowe, 'Doctor Faustus, A-text', in *Doctor Faustus and Other Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 5.1.35-46.

<sup>184</sup> *Doctor Faustus*, A-text, 5.1.36-38.

lines later, which adds to the sense of futility within the play, but the B text's complete lack of optimism in this section helps to create an overwhelming sense of despair and abject terror.

The A text also offers hope in the form of the Old Man's faith in God at the end of Act five scene one. In the B text, Mephostophilis states that he cannot touch the Old Man because his faith is too strong, implying that Faustus' own faith in God was always weak, but the A text shows the audience the Old Man's faith in practice. As the Old Man is being tormented by demons, he gives a very short speech:

Satan begins to sift me with his pride:

As in this furnace God shall try my faith,

My faith, vile hell, shall triumph over thee.

Ambitious fiends, see how the heavens smile

At your repulse, and laugh your state to scorn!

Hence, hell! for hence I fly unto my God.<sup>185</sup>

This speech offers salvation through faith in God as the Old Man states that his torments are a test from God, an allusion to the typical format of a medieval morality play where the representation of mankind and their faith in God is tested through the play. In this moment of the A text, there is a clear message that the devils are repulsed by his faith in God which offers hope of redemption and salvation to the audience who, by watching the Old Man, can realise their own path to heaven.

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<sup>185</sup> *Doctor Faustus*, A-text, 5.1.110-118.

Although short, these two examples of how the A text offers a tangible sense of hope to the audience amplifies the desperation and terror of the B text in comparison. The audience is also abandoned in the B text, left to ponder Faustus' sin and, as Orgel stated, open to temptation. In this way, it can be argued that the B text is a more noticeably pre-Gothic play as it works to emphasise feelings of spiritual despair, dejection, and abject terror until this atmosphere crushes any sliver of hope remaining for the audience.

## **Conclusion**

Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* provided a possible framework of hopelessness, despair, and abject terror in which eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writers could create Gothic depictions of the Faustian pact. By shifting away from the morals of the medieval morality play and focusing on Faustus' damning despair, Marlowe offered his audience a similar experience of spiritual despair and abject terror to that which characterised Gothic Faustian pacts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Although Marlowe's play is not necessarily a 'Gothic' play, due to its incorporation of earlier ideas, such as the Good Angel and Bad Angel, and the play's fascination with early modern science which by the eighteenth century would have been considered 'Gothic', mainly due to the fact that it was out of date, the final act of the play and several earlier scenes in which Marlowe's Faustus declares his inability and/or unwillingness to repent can be comfortably discussed as pre-Gothic elements as they offer audiences a potentially Gothic experience in which they are forced to question Faustus, themselves, and God.

### III – Female Sexuality, Doubling, and Sociological Approaches to Witchcraft

'Tis all one

To be a witch as to be counted one

— Thomas Dekker, John Ford, and William Rowley, *The Witch of Edmonton*

Gothic literature often explores representations of the Other, those marginalised by society, and, although the figure of the witch is somewhat absent in Gothic literature, Gothic representations of witchcraft often feed into the Gothic mode's fascination with the 'Other'. Witchcraft is often tied to Faustian pacts through their similar relationship with the devil but in this chapter, I will focus on witches and witchcraft as a representation of the Other.

Witchcraft is a phenomenon that almost resists definition as its meaning shifts continuously throughout time. Although witchcraft is often associated with magic, Jeffrey Burton Russell states that 'witchcraft goes beyond magic' as it is also a form of heresy, a devil-worshipping cult, and even an accusation resulting from petty conflicts between members of the general public.<sup>1</sup> Diane Purkiss states that, although some modern 'witches' have attempted to transform witchcraft into a 'female fantasy' in which women can gain 'creativity' and 'control', 'witchcraft remains, on the whole, tied to an historical narrative which is well-nigh inescapable as a male fantasy about what femininity should be.'<sup>2</sup> Historians and anthropologists see European witchcraft as an ideology for explaining hardship rather than a practice of using supernatural means to communicate with spirits,

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<sup>1</sup> Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 39-40.

deities, or one's ancestors even though 'witches tended to rely upon the help of spirits' in early modern witchcraft narratives.<sup>3</sup> European witchcraft in the Middle Ages and Renaissance era has been extensively surveyed in works by Keith Thomas, Gary K Waite, Diane Purkiss, and many more historians and literary critics but examining the ways in which witchcraft is constructed in later texts, especially eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Gothic literature, can not only offer an insight into the development of witchcraft narratives in a time when, to quote Ian Bostridge, 'the ideology of witchcraft [had] lost credibility and usefulness' but these Gothic witchcraft narratives allow us to examine early modern witchcraft in a new way as they highlight parts of early modern witch plays which may not have been fully developed in their own time but were adopted by Gothic writers to explore their own society.<sup>4</sup>

Witchcraft is not usually the main focus of Gothic novels and if magic or sorcery is a major theme of a Gothic text then it is usually presented in the form of the Faust myth, as previously discussed. However, witchcraft is featured in major Gothic novels as a subsidiary theme, including Matthew Lewis' *The Monk*, and, while it seems to rely upon aspects of early modern witchcraft, Gothic witchcraft also incorporates eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ideals alongside early modern superstitions.

This first section of this chapter aims to establish how the role of the witch in society has developed through time, exploring the various Witchcraft Acts that have been enforced in England and Britain and examining what a 'conventional' understanding of witchcraft was in early modern England. The chapter will then be split into three main sections, each establishing how aspects of early modern witch plays anticipated the depiction of witchcraft in Gothic novels. In the second section of this chapter, Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* will be used to examine an established representation of witchcraft, arguing that it continues a legacy

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<sup>3</sup> Russell, p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Ian Bostridge, 'Witchcraft Repealed', *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Studies in Culture and Belief* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 309-334 (p. 318).

of witchcraft narratives that stretches back beyond the early modern era. In the third section, Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya: Or, the Moor* (1806) will be examined alongside Thomas Middleton's *The Witch* (c.1613) and William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (1606) to explore how the witch-like, or 'bewitching', women of these two plays can be considered pre-Gothic due to their embodiment of the notion of the bewitching woman and their role in the empowerment of women through witchcraft. Finally, Mary Shelley's sociological examination of witchcraft in *Valperga* (1823) will be examined against *The Witch of Edmonton* (1621) to determine how women may have deliberately embraced the role of the witch within society.

## I

The history of English witchcraft is long and complicated, and it has been thoroughly examined by scholars from a variety of fields including history, literary studies, sociology, gender studies, and anthropology. The English word 'witch', meaning a person thought 'to have dealings with the devil or evil spirits' and who is 'able by their co-operation to perform supernatural acts', derives from the Old English 'wicca' and 'wicce', both of which are thought to be derivatives of 'wiccan', but any earlier etymology is difficult to determine.<sup>5</sup> Although 'witch' is a particularly gendered word in English today, the word was, originally, not used in a gender specific manner. The earliest known example of the word 'wiccan' appears in Ælfred's *Dōmbōc* (c.893) and Ælfred's statement on witches or 'wiccan' could also be considered the first law against witchcraft in England: 'Ða fæmnan þe gewuniað onfon gealdorcraeftigan 7 scinlæcan 7 wiccan, ne læt þu ða libban (The women who are wont to receive wizards and magicians and witches, do not let them live)'.<sup>6</sup> 'Witchcraft' does not

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<sup>5</sup> OED, 'witch', n., 2., 1a [www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com) [accessed 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021].

<sup>6</sup> Todd Preston, *King Alfred's Book of Laws: A Study of the Domboc and Its Influence on English Identity, with a Complete Translation* (Jefferson (N.C.): McFarland, 2012), p. 114 – Note: '7' was used as an abbreviation for 'and' in Old English.

appear in English until Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* (c.1000): ‘Animað animað hraðe . þa reðan wiccan . seo þe ðus awent þurh wiccecræft manna mod’ (‘Away, away quickly with the cruel witch, her who thus by her witchcraft perverts men's minds’).<sup>7</sup> Ælfric generally uses ‘wiccecræft’ to refer to the acts of women in league with the devil or evil spirits but, in general, the word was not gender-specific at this time.<sup>8</sup> ‘Wicche’ in Middle English did not initially distinguish between gender but, by the fifteenth century, the phrase ‘olde wiche’ was used to describe ‘a malevolent or repulsive-looking old woman’, who may be classed as a ‘crone’ or ‘hag’ today, clearly gendering the word for the first time.<sup>9</sup> Even in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries not all witches were women, and Lara Apps and Andrew Gow have researched male witches in Europe but, in England, witchcraft became increasingly associated with ‘sinful’ women during this time.<sup>10</sup>

European ideas of witchcraft were closely tied to the teachings of the Old Testament and scholars such as Gary K. Waite have stated that magic and religion were completely interwoven in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as early modern England understood witchcraft through Bible verses such as Micah 5:12 and Exodus 22:18.<sup>11</sup> Exodus 22:18 is translated to ‘Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live’ by both the Geneva Bible (c.1560) and the King James Bible (1611), which may be one of the motivations behind the witch trials that

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<sup>7</sup> Ælfric, *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, trans. by Walter William Skeat, vol. 1 (London: N. Trübner & co, 1881), pp. 182-183.

<sup>8</sup> Ælfric.

<sup>9</sup> OED, ‘witch’, n., 2., 3b (b), www.oed.com [accessed 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021].

<sup>10</sup> Lara Apps and Andrew Gow, *Male Witches in Early Modern Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

<sup>11</sup> Gary K. Waite, *Heresy, Magic, and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); *The Bible and Holy Scriptures Conteyned in the Olde and Newe Testament. Translated According to the Ebrue and Greke, and Conferred with the Best Translations in Diuers Languges. With Moste Profitable Annotations vpon All the Hard Places, and Other Things of Great Importance as May Appeare in the Epistle to the Reader* (Geneva: Printed by Rouland Hall, 1560); *The Holy Bible, Conteyning the Old Testament, AND THE NEW: Newly Translated Out of the Originall Tongues: & with the Former Translations Diligently Compared and Reuised by His Maesties Speciall Comandement Appointed to be Read in Churches* (London: Imprinted ... by Robert Barker [etc.], 1611); The *Geneva Bible* translates Micah 5:12 as ‘And I will cut off thine enchanters out of thine hande: and thou shalt haue no more southsayers’ but the *King James Bible* translates this verse as ‘And I will cut off witchcrafts out of thine hand, and thou shalt haue no more Southsayers’ which demonstrates a change in language.



took place in the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries.<sup>12</sup> Stories such as *The Witch of Endor* (1 Samuel 28) posed theological problems for early Christians as the story seemed to suggest that witchcraft and magic allowed humans to defy the laws of God without consequence but many other Bible verses condemn those who use witchcraft.

Despite the Bible's condemnation of witchcraft, the first Witchcraft Act in England was not passed until 1542. Ælfred's law on witchcraft in the late ninth century may have outlawed witches, stating that they should 'be driven from the country' or 'perish', but Henry VIII's Act of 1542 (33 Hen. VIII c. 8) was the first to define witchcraft as a felony which could be punished by death.<sup>13</sup> Henry VIII's Witchcraft Act not only protected the livelihoods of English people from the 'enchantementes' of witchcraft but also clearly aligned it with acts of heresy.<sup>14</sup> Love spells are placed alongside the act of pulling down crosses and, although Henry VIII's witchcraft law seemingly appears from nowhere, it was, in some ways, an extension of the English Reformation as it protected England's new Protestant, or Anglo-Catholic, religion from outside malevolent forces. The Act does not explicitly link witchcraft to the Devil, although this association becomes common later in the sixteenth century, but it is still positioning acts of witchcraft in opposition to Christian belief. Scholars, including Russell, Waite, and Thomas, have explained the ways in which witchcraft had become a 'renunciation of God and [a] deliberate adherence to his greatest enemy' by the late sixteenth century, shifting away from Medieval notions of the 'wise man' or 'wise woman' who helped the community.<sup>15</sup> Thomas acknowledges that, in Europe, it was the Roman Catholic Church

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<sup>12</sup> *Geneva Bible*, Exodus 22:18; *King James Bible*, Exodus 22:18.

<sup>13</sup> 'Witchcraft Act 1542 (33 Hen. VIII c. 8)', in *The Statutes of the Realm: Printed by Command of His Majesty King George the Third, in Pursuance of an Address of the House of Commons of Great Britain. From Original Records and Authentic Manuscripts*, vol. 3, ed. by Alexander Luders and others (London: Dawsons of Pall Mall, 1963), p. 837.

<sup>14</sup> 33 Hen. VIII c. 8.

<sup>15</sup> Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London: Penguin, 2012), p. 521.

that introduced this concept, first in a Papal Bull in 1484 and then in *Malleus Maleficarum* in 1486, but Henry VIII cemented this belief in English law under a new religion.<sup>16</sup>

England, under Elizabeth I and James I, and Scotland, under the reign of James VI, saw several well documented witch trials during the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries, including the North Berwick witch trials in 1590 and the Pendle witch trials of 1612. Feminist scholars in particular have explored the phenomenon of the witch trials as ‘about 80 per cent of trial defendants were women, though the ratio of women to men charged with the offence varied from place to place, and often, too, in one place over time’.<sup>17</sup> Despite most actual accusations of witchcraft in early modern Europe rising out of conflicts between women, as determined by scholars such as Peter Rushton, witchcraft in early modern England became increasingly associated with a woman’s susceptibility to sin and, while acknowledging the work Diane Purkiss’ *The History of Witches* has done to dispel the mythology surrounding early feminist interpretations of the witch trials, this chapter will examine how witchcraft in Gothic and early modern literature was used to depict the lives of isolated and marginalised women, those shunned for refusing to conform to society’s unattainable standards.<sup>18</sup> This chapter is indebted to the work of Purkiss and other scholars who work on gendered aspects of witchcraft and witch trials. Witch trials revealed the ways in which early modern people thought about witchcraft, providing a framework in which early modern witch plays could function, and Julia M. Garrett states that ‘concerns about

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<sup>16</sup> Thomas, p. 521.

<sup>17</sup> Geoffrey Scarre and John Callow, *Witchcraft and Magic in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2001), p. 25; See: Robert W Thurston, *Witch, Wicce, Mother Goose: The Rise and Fall of the Witch Hunts in Europe and North America* (Harlow: Pearson, 2001) for more information.

<sup>18</sup> See Peter Rushton, ‘Women, Witchcraft, and Slander in Early Modern England: Cases from the Church Courts of Durham, 1560–1675’, *Northern History*, 18 (1982), 116-132; Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours* (Malden: Blackwell, 2006); Deborah Willis, *Malevolent Nurture: Witch-Hunting and Maternal Power in Early Modern England* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1995) for detailed studies about the history of witchcraft accusations; Purkiss; See: Anne Llewellyn Barstow, *Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts* (London: Pandora, 1995); Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, *Witches, Midwives & Nurses: A History of Women Healers* (New York: The Feminist Press, 2010) for more early feminist interpretations of witchcraft.

sexual crimes of witchcraft— from charms to induce impotence to the more outrageous perversions of the witches’ sabbath—were routinely invoked to justify more aggressive prosecution’ with the witch trials revealing ‘an important shift from a concern with the sexual temptations faced by “many persons of both sexes” to a heightened scrutiny of women’s sexuality’ which was often bound to demonic entities and the notion of sin.<sup>19</sup>

Witch plays were a natural extension of the witch trials, performing an already performative phenomenon on the early modern stage. Orna Alyagon Darr has examined how the ‘experiments’ used to determine a guilt of a suspected witch, both before and during a trial, were often ‘a carefully styled spectacle’ intended to ‘indicate the guilt of the suspect [...] as a logical conclusion stemming from reason and experience’.<sup>20</sup> Darr also acknowledges that these ‘experiments’ were ‘initiated and conducted by the alleged victims’ families at the pretrial stage’ which suggests that these experiments were, in part, performances staged by the alleged victims’ families to prove the guilt of the accused not only to the judge and jury of the trial but to the community in which both victim and accused resided.<sup>21</sup> Pamphlets and official publications about witch trials which contained the details of the ‘crime’ and the court proceedings, such as Thomas Potts’ *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Witches in the Countie of Lancaster* (1613), also added to the performative nature of witch trials as they allowed the trials to become spectacles for a wider audience.<sup>22</sup>

Witch plays, including Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, tended to re-enact the popular aspects of witchcraft, particularly the sexually insatiable nature of women and the outcast figure of the crone. Many of these witch plays relied heavily upon popular treatise such as King James’

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<sup>19</sup> Julia M. Garrett, ‘Witchcraft and Sexual Knowledge in Early Modern England’, *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 13.1 (2013), 32-72 (34).

<sup>20</sup> Orna Alyagon Darr, ‘Experiments in the Courtroom: Social Dynamics and Spectacles of Proof in Early Modern English Witch Trials’, *Law & Social Inquiry*, 39.1 (2014), 152-175 (154-155).

<sup>21</sup> Darr, 162.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Potts, *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Witches in the Countie of Lancaster* (London: Printed by W. Stansby for Iohn Barnes, and are to be sold at his shop neare Holborne Conduit, 1613).

*Daemonology* and Reginald Scot's *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, both of which have been thoroughly examined by scholars, but they also depicted real witch trials, particularly *The Witch of Edmonton* and *The Late Lancashire Witches*, and although these dramatic renderings of witchcraft were even more performative than actual witch trials, they give us an insight into how the general public viewed witchcraft and what witchcraft actually meant beyond the legal and religious systems.<sup>23</sup>

As Alan Macfarlane demonstrates in *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: A Regional and Comparative Study*, witch trials declined during the latter part of the seventeenth century with 'formal prosecutions' in places like Essex ending 'over fifty years before the Witchcraft Act was repealed in 1736'.<sup>24</sup> Macfarlane acknowledges that in some 'parts of England the prosecutions continued in force until the beginning of the eighteenth century' but, in general, 'witchcraft accusations lost something of their energy' towards the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>25</sup> Comedic witch plays were fairly popular during the Restoration and continued to be staged into the early part of the eighteenth century but superstitions surrounding witchcraft became less palatable in eighteenth-century Britain as King George II embraced new Enlightenment era ideas and ideals.

Ian Bostridge's chapter on 'Witchcraft Repealed' in *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* and Michael Hunter's recent work *The Decline of Magic: Britain in the Enlightenment* are two significant texts that work towards understanding how witchcraft was understood, exploited, and dismissed after George II repealed Britain's witchcraft laws in

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<sup>23</sup> James VI of Scotland, *Daemonologie in Forme of a Dialogue, Diuided into Three Bookes* (Edinburgh, Printed by Robert Walde-graue printer to the Kings Majestie, 1597); Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (London: by Henry Denham for William Brome, 1584).

<sup>24</sup> Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: A Regional and Comparative Study*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 200; See also: Brian P. Levack, 'The Decline and End of Witchcraft Prosecutions', in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe, Volume 5: The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (London: Athlone, 1999).

<sup>25</sup> Macfarlane, p. 206.

1735 and replaced them with a new law that explicitly stated that witchcraft was a form of fraud.<sup>26</sup> King George's 1735 Act was a distinct shift away from the 'superstitious witch-phobia' of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and towards a more enlightened view based upon the ideals of the time. Bostridge and Hunter rightly acknowledge that the new Witchcraft Act could not undo centuries of superstition that was embedded into British culture nor could it necessarily change the opinions those in Parliament and other positions of authority who believed in witchcraft. In the January 1745 edition of the *Universal Spectator* a writer under the name of 'Philodemos' argued that there was no evidence that 'the Repealing Act ha[d] any Effect upon the Common People', continuing on to say that there were many 'witches' living in Britain at the time of writing the letter.<sup>27</sup> Philodemos argues that ignorance drives superstition, even in an enlightened Britain, and the 'Common People' hold very different beliefs to those who consider themselves educated on such matters. Bostridge states that 'even after 1736, apologists for the old attitudes continued to speak out but their fate was increasingly to be marginalised and ridiculed' as both the ideological and legal foundations of witchcraft had been undermined.<sup>28</sup>

However, what did remain even after witchcraft was seemingly banished from Enlightened British society was a thirst for historical and foreign witchcraft narratives. Even those who considered themselves more enlightened redirected their interest towards historical

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<sup>26</sup> William Hawkins, *The Statutes at Large, Containing All the Publick Acts of Parliament from the Seventh Year of the Reign of His Present Majesty King George the Second, To the Fourteenth Year of His Present Majesty's Reign Inclusive. To Which is Prefixed, A Table of the Titles of All the Publick and Private Statutes During That Time. Volume The Seventh*, vol. 7 (London: printed by John Baskett, 1742), p. 52 – The Witchcraft Act of 1735 (9 Geo. 2 c. 5) stated that 'no Prosecution, Suit, or Proceeding, shall be commenced or carried on against any Person or Persons for Witchcraft, Sorcery, Inchantment, or Conjuraton, or for charging another with any such Offence, in any Court whatsoever in Great Britain' but, instead, 'if any Person shall [...] pretend to exercise or use any kind of Witchcraft, Sorcery, Inchantment, or Conjuraton, or undertake to tell Fortunes, or pretend, from his or her Skill or Knowledge in any occult or crafty Science, to discover where or in what manner any Goods or Chattels, supposed to have been stolen or lost [...] shall for every such Offence, suffer Imprisonment by the Space of one whole Year without Bail or Mainprize'.

<sup>27</sup> Philodemos [pseud.], 'Universal Spectator, Jan. 19. No 830', *London Magazine and Monthly Chronologer, 1736-1746*, 14 (1745), 35-37.

<sup>28</sup> Bostridge, p. 334.

and foreign examples of witchcraft as this was more palatable than suggesting that witchcraft truly existed in eighteenth-century Britain. Some examples of the essays featured in periodicals that explored foreign witchcraft include ‘The People of New England bewitch'd, an odd, but true Story’ (1750) and ‘A Relation of Witchcraft discovered in the Village of Mohra, in Sweden’ (1785) while pieces entitled ‘The True Cause of the Riot and Murder at Tring’ (1751) and the ‘Strange Effect of Witchcraft On King Duff Of Scotland’ (1793) explored historical examples of witchcraft in Britain.<sup>29</sup> Historical books and pamphlets from the early modern era, including King James’ *Daemonologie* and Scot’s *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, were constantly referenced and discussed alongside eighteenth-century pamphlets.<sup>30</sup> Historical accounts of witchcraft, both those that aimed to prove the existence of witchcraft and those that attempted to disprove it, were available to buy at auction or from booksellers and a few, including Scot’s *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, were available to borrow from circulating libraries.<sup>31</sup> Stories of witchcraft and magic were still just as popular in the eighteenth century as they were during the early modern era but this interest was usually framed by an argument that enlightened minds of the eighteenth century, those who did not believe in witchcraft, were superior to those who were frightened by such nonsense.

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<sup>29</sup> Anon, ‘The People of New England Bewitch'd, an Odd, but True Story’, *The Magazine of Magazines* (1750), 278-280; Anon, ‘A Relation of Witchcraft Discovered in the Village of Mohra, in Sweden’, *Arminian Magazine Consisting of Extracts and Original Treatises on Universal Redemption, Jan.1778-Dec.1797*, 8 (1785), 318-321; Anon, ‘The True Cause of the Riot and Murder at Tring. In a Letter to the Author of the Gentleman’s Magazine’, *British Magazine, 1746-1751* (London, 1751), 234-235; Anon, ‘Strange Effect of Witchcraft on King Duff of Scotland’, *The Wonderful Magazine, and Marvellous Chronicle; or, New Weekly Entertainer. A Work Recording Authentic Accounts of the Most Extraordinary Productions, Events, and Occurrences, in Providence, Nature, and Art* (London: printed for the proprietors, published by C. Johnson, no. 14, in Paternoster-Row: and may be had of all booksellers, stationers, and newscarrers in England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, 1793), p. 5061.

<sup>30</sup> James VI’s *Daemonologie* and Scot’s *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* are both mentioned in Johnson & Steevens’ *The Dramatic Writings of Will. Shakespeare*.

<sup>31</sup> A copy of Scot’s *A Discoverie of Witchcraft* from 1584 was available in Fletcher Gyles, *A Catalogue of the Libraries of the Rev. Mr. Batty, Rector of St. John’s Clerkenwell* (London: 1738); James’ *Daemonologie* was available in Thomas Osborne, *A Catalogue of the Library of Books, of the Late Learned Dr. Abraham Hall, Physician to the Charter-House* (London: 1752) and John Egerton, *A Catalogue of Books, for MDCCXCIII. Part the First* (London: 1793); John Bell, *A New Catalogue of Bell’s Circulating Library, Consisting of Above Fifty Thousand Volumes* (London: 1778) the cost of borrowing Scot’s *Discoverie* was 1L (£1).

By 1740, the word ‘witch’ had evolved again into ‘bewitch’, as in ‘a young woman or girl of bewitching aspect or manners’, a woman who enchanted and seduced men.<sup>32</sup> Sorcery and the Devil were not present in this new version of witchcraft but it still relied upon an understanding of what a ‘witch’ used to be. A ‘bewitching’ woman was seen as a seductress and, in this chapter, I will explore how the ‘witch’, both in early modern literature and Gothic literature, was represented as a sexually insatiable woman who seduced men into temptation. Despite this new form of ‘witchcraft’ emerging, some pre-eighteenth-century representations of witchcraft remained popular in eighteenth-century literature and Bostridge states that attempts to dismiss witchcraft ‘paradoxically [ensured] its survival and occasional reemergence at the fringes’.<sup>33</sup> One of the ‘fringes’ in which it does reappear is Gothic literature, a genre which sought to combine the ancient and the new and often relied upon the superstitions of the past to create an atmosphere of horror or terror. Joanne Watkiss states that ‘the Gothic repeatedly locates itself in its ability to disrupt, to challenge and to pervert’ and early Gothic novels began to reinstate the witch as a magical woman in league with the devil in order to challenge and disrupt gender roles.<sup>34</sup> Gothic writers simultaneously explored the new role of the bewitching young woman alongside a much older interpretation of witchcraft to create a depiction of witchcraft which spoke to both the past and the present, as the Gothic genre itself speaks to both past and present ideals.

## II

One conventional depiction of a ‘witch’, by early modern standards, was a sexually insatiable woman who had dealings with the devil, which isolated her from the society in which she

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<sup>32</sup> OED, ‘witch’, n., 2., 3b (a), [www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com) [accessed 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021].

<sup>33</sup> Bostridge, p. 311.

<sup>34</sup> Joanne Watkiss, ‘Violent Households: The Family Destabilised in *The Monk* (1796), *Zofloya, Or the Moor* (1818), and *Her Fearful Symmetry* (2009)’, in *Gothic Kinship*, ed. by Agnes Andeweg and Sue Zlosnik (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), pp. 157–173 (p. 157).

lived. An example of this representation of witchcraft is Hecate in Thomas Middleton's *The Witch*, a character I will return to later in this section, as Hecate lives on the outskirts of society and uses her supernatural abilities to satisfy her 'unnatural' sexual desires. Matthew Lewis' Gothic novel *The Monk* appears to depict this form of witchcraft through the character of Matilda. Lewis' novel may have been transgressive to an eighteenth-century reader but once placed into a long tradition of witchcraft narratives it can be argued that Lewis merely continues the tradition, relying upon well-established ideas to create his version of witchcraft. *The Monk* has already been discussed at length in this project regarding Lewis' portrayal of the Faustian pact but Lewis' version of witchcraft is a useful starting point for discussing the ways in which early modern witchcraft anticipated Gothic witchcraft as Lewis adheres to the early modern idea that female Faustian pacts led to witches who were slaves to the Devil rather than Faust figures who demanded knowledge in exchange for their souls.

Matilda's pact with the Devil has already been briefly discussed within this project but, unlike Ambrosio who is a Faust figure, albeit an odd one, Matilda is initially read as a witch. Ambrosio draws attention to her status as a witch at several points within the novel, accusing her of using 'witchcraft' to help him attain the woman he desires.<sup>35</sup> Matilda seems to embody Gareth Roberts' idea that witchcraft was a form of seduction as 'the devil seduced witches, witches seduced men, [and] witchcraft itself was a seduction to and of mankind' as she uses both her physical appearance and her magical abilities to tempt Ambrosio away from God and into sin.<sup>36</sup>

Matilda embodies various aspects of common depictions of witchcraft. Firstly, as stated above, she is a seductress who is in league with the devil. There is no suggestion in

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<sup>35</sup> Matthew Lewis, *The Monk*, ed. by Howard Anderson and Emma McEvoy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 268

<sup>36</sup> Gareth Roberts, 'The Descendants of Circe: Witches and Renaissance Fictions', *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Studies in Culture and Belief* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 183-206 (p. 200).



Lewis' novel that Matilda, nor the demon pretending to be Matilda, is involved in a sexual relationship with the Devil, a trope that occurs in early modern witchcraft narratives, but she is his servant and she seduces Ambrosio towards sin at his behest. Matilda is not overtly sexual at the beginning of the novel, although she does expose her breast to Ambrosio in an initial attempt to bend him towards her will, but she embraces the role of the sexually insatiable witch to entice Ambrosio later in the novel. It is upon her supposed death bed that Matilda truly begins to embody the idea of the sexually insatiable woman although this is, in some ways, an illusion she casts to seduce Ambrosio for the Devil. She seems to cast aside any notion of friendship between her and Ambrosio, stating clearly that she no longer prizes him 'for the virtues of [his] soul' and, instead, she 'lust[s] for the enjoyment of [his] person', which is ironic as it is his soul that she, and Lucifer, truly desire.<sup>37</sup> Matilda is rather forward in this powerful expression of sexual desire for Ambrosio but Lewis weaves in misogynistic language which replicates the early modern view that 'women were generally believed to be sexually more voracious than men' as she has 'become a prey to the wildest of passions' due to 'The Woman [that] reigns in [her] bosom'.<sup>38</sup> Keith Thomas notes that in 'the eighteenth century this view was gradually superseded among the middle classes by the notion [...] that women were sexually passive and utterly unascivious' but, through Matilda, Lewis is returning to the early modern idea of sexually insatiable women 'who satisfied their sexual appetites by congress with the Devil'.<sup>39</sup> Readers of *The Monk* know that Ambrosio lusts for Matilda, that he feels 'horrors of shame and disappointment' after he wakes from 'lust-exciting visions' and dreams about her, and yet it is because Matilda is a woman that she cannot control these wild 'passions'.<sup>40</sup> Ambrosio knows that he too should have no desire for Matilda due to his vows to the Church but Matilda's sexual desire is seemingly more

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<sup>37</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 89.

<sup>38</sup> Russell, p. 679; Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 89.

<sup>39</sup> Russell, p. 679.

<sup>40</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 84 p. 89.

destructive than Ambrosio's because she is a woman who has the audacity to act upon her desires. Matilda's overt expression of sexual desire seems to be a role that she has embraced, using the stereotypes surrounding both witchcraft and the new theory of nymphomania to seduce Ambrosio into embracing the Devil.

Her sexual seduction of Ambrosio is not the only act that marks her as a witch. Matilda claims to have performed 'mystic rites' to summon the Devil, or a 'Fallen Angel', in the graveyard of St. Clare's and admits to Ambrosio that she has sold her soul to him.<sup>41</sup> Matilda also uses magical objects and incantations within the novel to aid her use of 'those arts which relate to the world of Spirits'.<sup>42</sup> Matilda's clearest use of sorcery is via a scrying mirror which is 'polished steel' and 'marked with various strange and unknown characters', perhaps runes.<sup>43</sup> Scrying mirrors are an instrument used to detect significant messages or visions and scrying is often considered a form of clairvoyance. Scrying, although not always conducted using a mirror, is mentioned in the Bible and was practiced by Nostradamus, a French astrologer known for writing *Les Prophéties*, and John Dee, an astronomer in the court of Elizabeth I.<sup>44</sup> Scrying was also used in witchcraft and Matilda uses her mirror to spy on Ambrosio when not in his favour, telling him that although she was 'exiled' from his sight 'Ambrosio, [was] ever present to [hers]'.<sup>45</sup> Matilda demonstrates the mirror to Ambrosio in another act of seduction, using his lust for Antonia to seduce him towards witchcraft and the Devil. It is almost a parlour trick but the mirror does reveal 'Antonia's lovely form' 'in miniature', convincing Ambrosio to accept Matilda's help through witchcraft, despite his earlier reservations.<sup>46</sup> Although Ambrosio proceeds to '[dash] the mirror upon the ground',

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<sup>41</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 267.

<sup>42</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 267.

<sup>43</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 270.

<sup>44</sup> Rosemary Ellen Guiley, *Harper's Encyclopedia of Mystical & Paranormal Experience* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1991), p. 408; Deborah E Harkness, *John Dee's Conversations with Angels: Cabala, Alchemy, and the End of Nature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>45</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 270.

<sup>46</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 271.

destroying this clear symbol of witchcraft, he also acknowledges that he ‘yield[s]’ to Matilda’s power and cries for her to ‘Do with me what you will!’, allowing her to use witchcraft to fulfil his desires.<sup>47</sup> Once alone in the darkness of the labyrinth, doubts begin to creep into Ambrosio’s mind but he quashes thoughts of abandoning his course of action by reminding himself that ‘Antonia would be the reward of his daring’ and reasoning that as he had employed Matilda’s ‘assistance, not that of the Daemons, the crime of Sorcery could not be laid to his charge’, thus shifting the responsibility of his actions to another, one who is considered spiritually and morally weaker than himself due to her gender.<sup>48</sup> Lewis ultimately shows witchcraft as a manipulative art used by women, a view that was commonly held at the height of the witch trials in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Lewis’ witchcraft is tied to feminine, and therefore transgressive, forms of sexual desire and Lewis not only demonises these desires by revealing that Matilda is, in fact, a demon employed by Lucifer but he also portrays them as inherently violent and manipulative in a way that mirrors a tradition of witchcraft that stretches back to Medea and Circe.

Tracing Lewis’ representation of witchcraft to early modern, and earlier, depictions of witchcraft is relatively easy. Thomas Middleton’s *The Witch* (c.1612) is a clear example of Lewis’ depiction of witchcraft, that is to say a conventional portrayal of witchcraft, in early modern literature and Middleton’s version of witchcraft is indebted to depictions of witches stretching back to Seneca’s *Medea*. Middleton’s *The Witch* also anticipates other ideas of witchcraft that are displayed in Gothic literature which will be discussed later in this chapter but, at first glance, Middleton indulges in stereotypes and presents his audience with a popular understanding of witchcraft which they recognised and understood.

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<sup>47</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 271.

<sup>48</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 273.

*The Witch* only existed in manuscript until it was printed in 1778 which coincides with the rise of Gothic literature. Isaac Reed, the publisher of the first edition of *The Witch*, was also a well-known Shakespeare critic who re-edited Samuel Johnson and George Steevens' 1773 edition of Shakespeare's works. It is unclear why Reed published *The Witch* but the play's clear links to *Macbeth* and Reed's involvement with Robert Dodsley's *A select collection of old plays* may have prompted the publication of the play. Middleton's tragicomedy was almost always discussed in relation to *Macbeth*, except when it was featured in short biographies of Middleton's life, but there is evidence that Shakespeare critics of late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries believed that Middleton's play was the earlier of the two. Charles Lamb, in 1808, went to great lengths to ensure that the differences between the two plays, rather than the similarities, were highlighted and he claimed in *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare* that '[t]hough some resemblance may be traced between the Charms in *Macbeth* and the Incantations in this play, which is supposed to have preceded it, this coincidence will not detract much from the originality of Shakespeare'.<sup>49</sup> If Middleton's *The Witch* was thought to be the earlier play, perhaps it was considered of value due to its supposed role in the development of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. At the very least, Middleton's play had value because it helped Shakespearean critics understand *Macbeth* more thoroughly. Lewis would have had access to the play, not only due to the publication in 1778 but also because the book was donated, or 'presented', to the British Museum in 1790.<sup>50</sup> There is no evidence to suggest that Lewis read *The Witch* specifically, although he would have known about early modern ideas of

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<sup>49</sup> Charles Lamb, *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare* (London: Edward Moxon, 1849), p. 157.

<sup>50</sup> Thomas Middleton, *A Tragi-coomodie [sic] [in five acts and in verse] called The Witch* (London: J. Nicholls, 1778) via The British Library, G.18449.

witchcraft through *Macbeth*, but Lewis' more conventional representation of witchcraft can be seen most clearly by comparing it to Middleton's tragicomedy.

The main plot of *The Witch* revolves around Amoretta, Duchess of Ravenna, and her attempts to kill her husband, the Duke, and Almachildes, her accomplice. Hecate, an old witch, is employed to assist in her plot as Hecate and her witches provide services for the non-magical characters of the play. Julia M. Garrett states that Middleton's witches are 'not socially realistic but fantastical characters who embody a carnivalesque energy—provocative but ultimately not threatening'.<sup>51</sup> They are, ultimately, comical characters who 'exist at the periphery of the dramatic action, setting off the more central plots of disguise, romantic betrayal, and revenge'.<sup>52</sup> Witches in this play live on the outskirts of society, never fully accepted by the community but deemed useful for their supernatural abilities. Marion Gibson also argues that the witches of Middleton's play tread a fine line between 'lecherous, murderous and perverse in the traditional demonological way' and 'funny, vulnerable and uncomfortably necessary to the maintenance of state power and social position by those who resort to them'.<sup>53</sup>

Firstly, it must be acknowledged that Middleton relied upon classical images of witchcraft and sorcery as much as he demonstrated early modern attitudes towards witches. Hecate, the name of his main witch, is also the anglicised name of the Greek goddess associated with borders, crossroads and other liminal spaces, meaning that she was also often connected with the space between the worlds of the living and the dead. She eventually became linked with ghosts due to her status as a goddess of crossroads and by the first

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<sup>51</sup> Julia M. Garrett, 'Witchcraft and Sexual Knowledge in Early Modern England', *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 13.1 (2013), 32-72 (46).

<sup>52</sup> Garrett, 'Witchcraft and Sexual Knowledge', 46.

<sup>53</sup> Marion Gibson, *Witchcraft and Society in England and America, 1550-1750* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 97.

century CE Hecate was also heavily associated with magic and sorcery. Hecate's connection to witchcraft, or, more accurately, sorcery, was not invented by early modern writers but Hecate was sometimes present in early modern witch plays, either as a supporting role or, as in Middleton's *The Witch*, the main witch and she embodied the attributes of early modern witchcraft. Middleton also clearly drew ideas from Seneca's *Medea* and, perhaps, other versions of Medea's story, to create his version of witchcraft within the play. To briefly examine Seneca's *Medea* reveals just how long 'witchcraft' has been framed as a transgression against societal norms by women. Medea's story is not one of sexual freedom, or sexual insatiability, but one of pride and anger. The chorus describe the rage that Medea experiences as she plotted her revenge and Medea is painted as a villain by the Chorus who pray to the gods that Jason will be spared from her wrath.<sup>54</sup> While there seems to be little connecting Seneca's *Medea* to Middleton's Hecate, Medea's use of magic to curse the one who has betrayed her provides a link to early modern witches who use incantations and potions to curse others, often as a form of revenge. Medea's curse contains a variety of unsavoury ingredients, including snake blood, and the invocations to the underworld gods, a recipe which is mirrored in both *Macbeth* and *The Witch*, and although *Medea* is not necessarily a play which depicts female sexual desire as transgressive, it does suggest that women use magic in an attempt to subvert social order.<sup>55</sup>

In *The Witch*, Middleton presents witchcraft as almost vital to society or, at least, vital to the society that he creates within the space of the play. These witches are still Othered but Hecate and her witches are integral to the plot because their magic is useful to general society. Throughout the course of the play, the witches are seen to help Sebastian, Almachildes, and the Duchess with a variety of unpleasant requests. Almachildes even gifts a

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<sup>54</sup> Seneca, 'Medea', in *Six Tragedies*, trans. by Emily Wilson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 71-101.

<sup>55</sup> Seneca.

toad and spawn to Hecate and Firestone, stating that he comes ‘not empty-pocketed’ to Hecate’s abode.<sup>56</sup> Sebastian hesitates to visit Hecate, loudly professing that it is with ‘unwillingness and hate’ that he enters the ‘damned place’, but Sebastian understands that Hecate and her witches have the ability to help him achieve his goal and this suggests that the witches are known to the wider community as a group that can, and will, help those with unsavoury desires.<sup>57</sup> However, while their magic is helpful it is also destructive, manipulative, and tied to an unflattering depiction of female sexual desire. James R. Keller states that ‘often the witch was a woman who rebelled against the traditional role of wife and mother’ and Middleton’s witches represent the ‘most repugnant expression of female aggression and depravity’ by conforming ‘entirely to the seventeenth-century stereotype of the lustful and rebellious old hag’.<sup>58</sup> Hecate’s magic, which is much more graphic than Matilda’s, is one expression of ‘depravity’ as she commands Stadlin to ‘boil’ the dead body of an ‘unbaptised brat’ and ‘preserve the fat’ that is rendered from the process.<sup>59</sup> The body of the child is present on stage, with the stage directions stating that Hecate hands the body over to Stadlin in front of the audience, and although the boiling process does not take place in front of the audience, the implication that these witches use the flesh of human babies in their potions and incantations is rather gruesome.<sup>60</sup> In contrast to Hecate’s penchant for boiling the bodies of babes, Matilda only seems to use scrying mirrors and vague magical powers, like appearing out of thin air, but characters like Hecate are the ancestors of characters like Matilda, created in a time where superstition reigned and witchcraft was considered to be real by some. Just like Lewis’ Matilda, Hecate uses her magic to allow others to manipulate and

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<sup>56</sup> Thomas Middleton, *The Witch*, ed. by Elizabeth Schafer (London: A & C Black Limited, 1994), 1.2.216-218.

<sup>57</sup> *The Witch*, 1.2.107-108.

<sup>58</sup> James R. Keller, ‘Middleton’s *The Witch*: Witchcraft and the Domestic Female Hero’, *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, 4 (1991), 37-59 (42).

<sup>59</sup> *The Witch*, 1.2.18-19.

<sup>60</sup> *The Witch*, 1.2.

possess the object of their desires, providing her customers with objects, potions, and incantations that bend another's will to their own.

Middleton's play mostly showcases Hecate's magic in relation to the desires of others as she claims that 'Tis for the love of mischief', rather than her own power and lust, that she engages with the plots of others but Hecate's own sexual appetite is referenced at several points within the play<sup>61</sup>. As Marianne Hester states in a chapter on 'Patriarchal reconstruction and witch hunting', 'women were considered sexually insatiable and prone therefore to sinful and deviant behaviour, by contrast to the 'norm' which was construed as heterosexual, procreative sex under male control' and Hecate's unrestrained sexual desire for Almachildes and the 'Mayor of Whelpie's son' paints her as 'sexually insatiable' not only because she desires more than one man and is in control of her own sexual desire but also because her sexual relationships with these men are neither entirely 'heterosexual' nor are they necessarily 'procreative'.<sup>62</sup> Hecate is the perfect example of what Keller refers to as 'the lustful and rebellious old hag'.<sup>63</sup> She quenches her sexual desire through the use of incubi, demons which allow Hecate to indirectly have sex with un-consenting young men. Middleton's choice to include incubi in the play not only directly links witchcraft to female sexuality but it also subverts societal norms. Hecate uses an incubus, a male or masculine demon who lies upon sleeping women in order to engage in sexual activity with them, rather than a succubus, the female equivalent of this demon, to prey upon the men she desires which is in direct contrast to the 'norm' of male-controlled, heterosexual sex.<sup>64</sup> Jeffrey Burton Russell explained in *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages* that scholars in the Middle Ages thought that 'demons could act at will as either incubi or succubi' because 'Christian philosophy

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<sup>61</sup> *The Witch*, 1.2.180.

<sup>62</sup> Marianne Hester, 'Patriarchal Reconstructions and Witch Hunting', *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Studies in Culture and Belief* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 288-306 (p. 294).

<sup>63</sup> Keller, 42.

<sup>64</sup> Hester, p. 294.



considered demons, like angels, sexless’ and King James himself thought that ‘Succubae’ and ‘Incubi’ were the same demonic entity only to be described differently ‘according to the difference of the sexes that they conuersed with’ but Middleton’s deliberate use of the word ‘incubus’ throughout the play, rather than ‘succubus’ which was also available to him, highlights the subversive, transgressive nature of Hecate’s sexual desire.<sup>65</sup> It is both ‘unnatural’ because she is a witch using demons to engage in sexual activity but her sexual desire is also ‘unnatural’ because it is not undoubtedly heterosexual, despite Hecate being a woman, and it is not necessarily procreative as there is no suggestion that Hecate is using incubi to ‘steal human sperm’ to impregnate other women in a bizarre re-enactment of procreative sex.<sup>66</sup> Hecate merely uses these incubi to find her own pleasure.

Russell also goes on to explore the gendered understanding of incubi, explaining that ‘though demons could act at will as either incubi or succubi, ritual coupling was usually ascribed to women rather than men’ as ‘tradition judged the female sex to be weaker than the male physically, mentally, and morally’.<sup>67</sup> Hecate deliberately chooses ‘incubi’ to seduce men, subverting the traditional idea that women were weaker than men ‘physically, mentally, and morally’ as her power renders men just as vulnerable to this form of demonic attack as women.<sup>68</sup> Julia M. Garrett argues that ‘[u]nlike the male characters of the play who confront a series of obstacles in seeking to attain their desires, the witches have a kind of universal sexual access through the device of the incubus’ and the play simultaneously suggests that the witches use their ‘craft to create a spectral double of the chosen love object’ in order to engage in sexual activity with them while also using their incubus to prey upon these men in the flesh.<sup>69</sup> Garrett acknowledges that Middleton’s witches tend to favour virgin men, with

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<sup>65</sup> Russell, p. 145; James VI, *Daemonologie*, p. 66.

<sup>66</sup> Russell, p. 145.

<sup>67</sup> Russell, p. 145.

<sup>68</sup> Russell, p. 145.

<sup>69</sup> Garrett, 48.

Hecate stating that Stadlin ‘spoil’d the youth’ of the ‘Mayor of Whelpie’s’ ‘seventeen’ year old son the previous night, and, while male virginity is a topic less frequently alluded to than female chastity and virginity, Middleton once plays with social dynamics by placing mortal men in a role that women usually occupy and positioning the witches in a traditionally masculine role.<sup>70</sup> Of course, this also falls into a tradition of male characters blaming women ‘for leading them into ruin through carnal temptation’ as Russell briefly assesses in the stories of Adam and Abelard and Russell claims that this ‘tradition was responsible for placing the chief blame of witchcraft upon women’ as men were presented as the victims of female sexual desire.<sup>71</sup> If witchcraft is inherently tied to female sexual desire and the idea that ‘women had led’ men into temptation ‘since the beginning of the world’ then Middleton’s characterisation of female desire through Hecate reinforces the conventional ideas of witches that were common in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England.<sup>72</sup>

Middleton’s focus on Hecate’s transgressive sexual desire, alongside her excessively gruesome magical practices, reinforces Garrett’s argument that ‘witchcraft and demonology not only provide a convenient framework for understanding the mysteries of female sexuality but also legitimize the careful contemplation of sexual phenomena’ during the early modern period.<sup>73</sup> However, as witchcraft is almost always demonised, both in witch trials and witch plays, female sexuality is also demonised, as it is linked to the Devil or other demonic entities, and it is not until much later that a true shift in the way female sexuality and witchcraft are portrayed occurs.

### III

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<sup>70</sup> Garrett, 48; *The Witch*, 1.2.33-35.

<sup>71</sup> Russell, 145.

<sup>72</sup> Russell, 145.

<sup>73</sup> Garrett, 41.

If Lewis' *The Monk* depicts an established representation of witchcraft, one that is socially conservative and demonises female sexual desire, then Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya: or, The Moor* subverts this tradition to explore how witchcraft can, perhaps, be used to empower women. Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya*, published under the pseudonym Rosa Matilda in 1806, was a direct response to Matthew Lewis' *The Monk*. The relationship between *The Monk* and *Zofloya* tells us much about Dacre's influences and intentions but it also invites us to examine how Dacre's work mirrors and subverts aspects of Lewis' novel and much of the criticism written on *Zofloya* builds upon this intertextual relationship. However, just as Lewis' portrayal of witchcraft has been overlooked in favour of examining *The Monk* as a Faustian pact, Dacre's subversion of Lewis' interpretation of witchcraft is often overlooked by scholars.

Dacre's *Zofloya* has been thoroughly examined in regards to its proto-feminist or anti-feminist message. Critics including Adriana Craciun and Diane Long Hoeveler have often cited *Zofloya* as proof that Dacre rejected Mary Wollstonecraft's form of feminism, the most radical and vocal form of feminism at the time, although these critics take very different views on the message of Dacre's work as Craciun regards Dacre's work as proto-feminist while Hoeveler considers Dacre's work to be clearly anti-feminist.<sup>74</sup> Jennifer L. Airey points out that 'Dacre's relationship to early feminism is considerably more complex' as '[f]ar from a reactionary dismissal of early feminism, what Dacre offers is a bleak portrait of women's options at the beginning of the nineteenth century'.<sup>75</sup> Despite this wealth of criticism surrounding Dacre's position as a proto-feminist or anti-feminist, her representation of witchcraft, a phenomenon that has been thoroughly researched by feminist critics, has yet to

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<sup>74</sup> Adriana Craciun, 'Introduction', in *Zofloya: Or, the Moor*, ed. by Adriana Craciun (Peterborough ON: Broadview Press, 2006), pp. 9-32; Diane Long Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism: The Professionalization of Gender from Charlotte Smith to the Brontës* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, Year, 1998).

<sup>75</sup> Jennifer L. Airey, "'He Bears No Rival Near the Throne": Male Narcissism and Early Feminism in the Works of Charlotte Dacre', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 30 (2018), 223-241 (224-225).

be discussed in detail even though witchcraft presents an opportunity for writers to illustrate the lives of transgressive and marginalised women. Most of the criticism written on *Zofloya*, especially concerning Dacre's description of sexual and violent women and the misfortunes of women, can be reframed to examine Dacre's novel as an exploration of witchcraft, especially as Victoria does have a pact with the devil in the novel, and reframing previous criticism examining *Zofloya* can reveal how Dacre uses aspects of witchcraft to both condemn and empower her female characters.

In *Fatal Women of Romanticism*, Adriana Craciun states that '*Zofloya* celebrates Victoria's capacity for sexual desire and pleasure' and, for James A. Dunn and other scholars, Dacre 'explores through her heroines the violence of female sexual desire, and she articulates their full range of doubts, regrets, justifications, and indulgences, in a way that conforms neither to the usual masculine Romantic images of women (as evanescent temptresses or omnipresent mothers)' nor to Wollstonecraftian feminism.<sup>76</sup> Victoria's violent nature, and Megalena's too, is often the focus of criticism which examines *Zofloya*. Dacre's violent women are often presented as either anti-feminist abominations who prove their 'unnaturalness' through 'the violent murder' of other women or as proto-feminist icons who 'remain ferociously true to their desires, even as these desires sometimes fatally conflict with conscience'.<sup>77</sup> Both of these strong views focus on the potential empowerment that Dacre's female characters could gain through acts of violence, whether positively or negatively, but these violent and 'unnatural' acts, and their potential to empower women, can also be read as a representation of witchcraft within the novel. Beatriz González Moreno and Adriana Craciun refer to Victoria as a 'femme fatal' but her thirst for violence and her manipulative

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<sup>76</sup> Adriana Craciun, *Fatal Women of Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 148; James A. Dunn, 'Charlotte Dacre and the Feminization of Violence', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 53.3 (1998), 307-327 (307).

<sup>77</sup> Diane Long Hoeveler, 'Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya*: A Case Study in Miscegenation as Sexual and Racial Nausea', *European Romantic Review*, 8.2 (1997), 185-199 (195); Dunn, 318.

nature, coupled with her unwitting pact with the devil, harks back to early modern witchcraft narratives as she uses Zofloya's supernatural abilities to destroy those around her.<sup>78</sup> Dacre seems to have combined theories of masochism, sadism, and the 'bewitching' woman together with aspects of early modern witchcraft to create a complicated exploration of female violence. It is both empowering and condemning as Dacre uses some of the misogynistic ideas that come with witchcraft to reinforce this idea that women cannot survive in a patriarchal system where 'there is no way for women to rebel against patriarchal expectations or even successfully to conform to them'.<sup>79</sup>

As discussed in regards to *The Monk* and *The Witch*, female sexual desire is a key aspect of witchcraft narratives and *Zofloya* continues this pattern but, to quote James A. Dunn, Dacre 'declares her independence from him [Lewis]' by examining what sex and violence 'looks like beyond the stock feminine props of persecution and victimization' and making 'women the subject rather than the object of a toxic erotic agony'.<sup>80</sup> David Sigler reads Victoria's sexual desire as an expression of masochism, opposing some long held views of critics such as Adriana Craciun who claim that Dacre is alluding to Sade's ideas that are set out in works such as *Justine, or The Misfortunes of Virtue* (1791) and *The Crimes of Love* (1800), and Victoria has also been diagnosed with nymphomania due to her 'physiological transformation'.<sup>81</sup> However, alongside her association with the devil and her increasingly

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<sup>78</sup> Beatriz González Moreno, 'Gothic Excess and Aesthetic Ambiguity in Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya*', *Women's Writing*, 14.3 (2007), 419-434 (423); Craciun, p. 111.

<sup>79</sup> Airey, 224.

<sup>80</sup> Dunn, 308.

<sup>81</sup> David Sigler, *Sexual Enjoyment in British Romanticism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), pp. 151-180; Marquis de Sade, *Justine, or the Misfortunes of Virtue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Marquis de Sade, *The Crimes of Love: Heroic and Tragic Tales, Preceded by an Essay on Novels* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Craciun, p. 148; See: D. T. Bienville, *Nymphomania, or, a Dissertation Concerning the Furor Uterinus. Clearly and Methodically Explaining the Beginning, Progress, and Different Causes of that Horrible Distemper. To which are added, the Methods of Treating the Several Stages of It, and the Most Approved Remedies Written Originally in French by M. D. T. De Bienville, M.D. and Translated by Edward Sloane Wilmot, M.D.*, trans. by Edward Sloane Wilmot (London: printed for J. Bew, No. 28, in Pater-Noster Row, 1775).

violent nature, Victoria's sexual desire also closely resembles early modern witches, especially those in Thomas Middleton's *The Witch*. Victoria's 'unnatural' sexual desire, ferocious and quasi-incestuous, is just as transgressive as Hecate's sexual desire for virgin men. Both of these witches use magic, although Hecate controls her own magic while Victoria relies upon the supernatural abilities of Zofloya, to seduce unwilling men into their beds. Victoria may not be as witch-like as Hecate but they share characteristics which allow Victoria to be read as a witch. Victoria is a product of her time, of theories about nymphomania and sadomasochism, but she is also a continuation of a long-standing depiction of violent, sexual women who are labelled as 'witches'. There is also an implication within the novel that Victoria's relationship with Zofloya is sexual, if not sexually charged, and Victoria's attraction to his 'supernatural and infernal origins' aligns her closely with early modern ideas of witchcraft, if not witch plays themselves, as witches were often accused of, and sometimes confessed to, being sexually involved with the devil.<sup>82</sup>

Victoria has several dreams within the novel which document how her attraction to Zofloya grows. Her first and second dreams occur before she has met Zofloya and this suggests that, even before Victoria is aware of his power, he holds some form of power over her. Her first dream hints at her future attraction to Zofloya as she describes him as 'noble and majestic'.<sup>83</sup> Dacre's description focuses on Zofloya's clothes and jewellery in this section of the novel, with Victoria stating that, in her dream, Zofloya was 'clad in a habit of white and gold', wearing a 'white turban, which sparkled with emeralds, and was surmounted by a waving feather of green'.<sup>84</sup> She notes that his arms and legs are bared but 'encircled with the finest oriental pearl' and, around his throat, 'he wore a collar of gold'.<sup>85</sup> Victoria appears to

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<sup>82</sup> Craciun, p. 148.

<sup>83</sup> Charlotte Dacre, *Zofloya; Or, the Moor*, ed. by Adriana Craciun (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2006), p. 145.

<sup>84</sup> Dacre, p. 145.

<sup>85</sup> Dacre, p. 145.

be attracted to Zofloya's material presence but as her dreams about Zofloya continue, she becomes attracted to his power and his apparent devotion to her. Her second dream makes her attraction to Zofloya's power apparent as she agrees to be his if the dream-wedding between Lilla and Henriquez is stopped.

She reflects upon this dream with 'agitation and horror' but later admits that she was 'inexplicably interested' in Zofloya and could not 'for any length of time banish his idea from her mind.'<sup>86</sup> Some of Victoria's dreams about Zofloya appear somewhat romantic as 'sometimes she wandered with him over beds of flowers', 'over craggy rocks', or 'in fields of the brightest verdure' but many of her dreams are tinged with terror as she totters 'on the ridge of some huge precipice, while the angry waters waved in the abyss below'.<sup>87</sup> Her dreams mirror their relationship later in the novel, which is fuelled by Victoria's desire to be loved, Zofloya's deceptive loyalty towards Victoria, and the terror of his demonic powers. Victoria's final dream reflects her attraction to Zofloya's power as she dreams that he stands over her bed, holding Berenza, who 'convulsed in the agonies of death', in one hand and Lilla in the other.<sup>88</sup> Victoria dreams of Zofloya fulfilling her murderous desires and his devotion to her makes him more attractive to her. Eventually, Victoria allows herself to be attracted to Zofloya, both his power and his appearance, while she is awake. She observes that '[h]is eyes, brilliant and large, sparkled with inexpressible fire' while 'his nose and mouth were elegantly formed' and his smile 'displayed a beauty that delighted and surprised'.<sup>89</sup> She also notices the 'tender, serious interest' that Zofloya has taken in her and her own vanity increases the beauty that she sees in him.<sup>90</sup> Victoria's dreams, although influenced by Zofloya

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<sup>86</sup> Dacre, p. 146.

<sup>87</sup> Dacre, p. 151.

<sup>88</sup> Dacre, p. 146.

<sup>89</sup> Dacre, p. 153.

<sup>90</sup> Dacre, p. 153.

himself, allow her to be read as a witch as she embraces the demonic both physically and mentally, entering a relationship with Zofloya based upon multiple forms of desire.

I have discussed these demonic relationships in regards to Beckford's *Vathek*, Lewis' *The Monk*, and Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* in the second chapter of this project, suggesting that the demonic relationships depicted in Faustian pacts are an expression of forbidden desire within an oppressive society and this could certainly be linked to Victoria's relationship with Zofloya as their relationship is not only demonic but also interracial. The relationship between Zofloya and Victoria has also received polarising criticism but I would argue that Dacre is, in this aspect of the novel, engaging with long-standing ideas found in Faustian pacts. However, I would also argue that Victoria's relationship with Zofloya exemplifies Gareth Roberts' statement that witchcraft was a form of seduction as 'the devil seduced witches, witches seduced men, [and] witchcraft itself was a seduction to and of mankind' as she allows herself to be seduced by his otherworldly qualities and she uses her relationship with Zofloya to seduce the man that she desires.<sup>91</sup> Victoria's relationship with Zofloya marks her as a witch.

One aspect of *Zofloya* that requires further attention, particularly in regards to witchcraft, is Dacre's use of doubling. Doubling is a common trope in Gothic literature which manifests in a variety of ways, such as the doppelgänger, and doubling usually reveals deep set anxieties surrounding race, gender, sexuality, and social class. In regards to *Zofloya*, Adriana Craciun delves into the idea of 'dark doubles' while Carol Margaret Davison draws attention to '[t]he 'wily' Zofloya's role as the double to the 'wily' Victoria'.<sup>92</sup> Female characters like Victoria, who are wilfully violent and sexually free, are what Craciun calls

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<sup>91</sup> Roberts, p. 200.

<sup>92</sup> Craciun, p. 146; Carol Margaret Davison, 'Getting Their Knickers in a Twist: Contesting the 'Female Gothic' in Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya*', *Gothic Studies*, 11.1 (2009), 32-45 (42).



‘dark doubles’ in Gothic literature, often contrasted with a young girl who embodies ‘ideal’ femininity, but they also fit Gareth Roberts’ ‘Circean configuration of witchcraft and these ‘dark doubles’ often echo the characteristics of early modern witches.<sup>93</sup> Victoria, full of dark desires, is a direct contrast to ‘the professionally feminine girl-woman’ and the ‘asexual feminine ideal’ who, in this novel, is embodied by Lilla.<sup>94</sup> Gothic literature’s ‘dark doubles’ are often left on the edges of the novel before being expelled to ensure the heroine’s success, just as witches are pushed to the edges of society to ensure the success of the community, but Dacre’s choice to focus on Victoria rather than Lilla subverts societal norms by challenging notions of femininity.<sup>95</sup> However, the doubling that occurs between Victoria and Megalena, a witch and a witch-like woman, is rarely commented on. Craciun points out some similarities between the two characters, explaining that while ‘Megalena performs actions uncharacteristic of proper women (sexually initiating a man, plotting to murder, deriving pleasure from others’ pain)’ she is always ‘simultaneously and consciously acting the part of a “true” woman, feigning devotion and dependence in order to maintain her control’ whereas Victoria ‘violates the natural difference between the sexes’, but the direct comparison of these women, both of whom are violent and overtly sexual, stops here.<sup>96</sup> If we consider Victoria to be a witch and Megalena to be a non-magical but witch-like woman, or a ‘bewitching’ woman, then we can see how Victoria’s pact with the devil affects her as Victoria and Megalena share similar characteristics and the only thing that divides them is a pact with the Devil.

Both of these women are, or attempt to be, seductive in the novel. Victoria is initially described as having a ‘graceful elegant form’ and, although she does not possess the

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<sup>93</sup> Craciun, p. 146; Roberts, p. 192.

<sup>94</sup> Hoeveler, 148; Craciun, p. 135.

<sup>95</sup> Craciun, p. 146.

<sup>96</sup> Craciun, pp. 149-150.

‘countenance of a Madona’ and her face was not of ‘angelic mould’, Berenza claims that there was a ‘beautiful fierceness’ to her face, ‘dark, noble, [and] strongly expressive’.<sup>97</sup> Victoria’s appearance is fascinating and intriguing rather than classically beautiful and, coupled with her strong personality, this ensures that she is read as bewitching and seductive. Megalena is described as a ‘syren’ by Leonardo which plays on the idea that she is unnaturally beautiful and that her seductive charms are almost magical in nature.<sup>98</sup> Referring to her as a ‘syren’ also implies that Megalena is luring Leonardo to his doom like a supernatural creature from Greek mythology.<sup>99</sup> Dacre’s use of magical references frames Megalena very much as a bewitching woman, an idea that does rely upon an understanding of what a witch was, but there is nothing to suggest that, like Victoria, Megalena indulges in such practices.<sup>100</sup>

Victoria’s violent nature has been discussed but her violence is directly mirrored by Megalena. Megalena manipulates her current lover, Lorenzo, into attempting to murder Berenza, Victoria’s husband and Megalena’s ex-lover. Megalena uses her ‘syren’-like qualities and her dominance over Lorenzo to fulfil her violent desires and she demonstrates how violent, seductive women can manipulate those around them by consciously accepting their bewitching qualities. Megalena is not a witch but her similarities to Victoria allow her to be read as her double, a witch-like woman who deliberately embraces aspects of witchcraft, mainly the idea of seduction, to control those around her. Although these women are seductive, they are both masculinised in some way. Megalena is very much masculinised through her actions rather than her physical features, even though she shares the same hypersexual tendencies as Victoria, and though her masculinised actions and thoughts do

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<sup>97</sup> Dacre, p. 96.

<sup>98</sup> Dacre, p. 123.

<sup>99</sup> Dacre, p. 123.

<sup>100</sup> Dacre, p. 123 – Leonardo states that Megalena has ‘bewitched and enslaved his heard’.

transgress social norms for women during the early-nineteenth century, it is not enough to dehumanise her completely. Compared to Victoria ‘who violates the natural difference between the sexes to such an extent that her body itself is transformed [...] into a larger and decidedly masculine form’, Megalena retains her outward femininity and as witchcraft is so often linked to physical appearance, her witch-like characteristics and actions remain almost undetected.<sup>101</sup> Craciun argues that ‘Victoria’s increasingly physical masculinization reveals the anxiety (and hope) of Dacre’s age that perhaps the two sexes themselves (and not merely the gender identities they supposedly establish) are not fixed or natural’ but Megalena’s retained outward femininity reveals the hope that women can gain social and sexual independence, perhaps through deliberately embracing aspects of witchcraft while staying within the boundaries of humanity, and remain welcomed by society rather than facing ostracisation.<sup>102</sup>

Through Megalena, Dacre establishes how women could consciously take on the aspects of witchcraft that frightened men the most while, to borrow Craciun’s phrase, ‘consciously acting the part of a “true” woman’ to gain social and sexual independence.<sup>103</sup> It is true that Megalena also dies towards the end of the novel, but this is not because she is ‘deviant’ or witch-like. Donna Heiland states, ‘Dacre’s women have no future’ and Megalena’s suicide is an active decision to ‘escape an ignominious death’ in order to stay in control of her life until the very end whereas Victoria is thrown from a cliff by the devil himself.<sup>104</sup> Dacre’s doubling of these two characters, presenting one as a witch and one as a witch-like woman, explores the ways in which women can actively embrace aspects of witchcraft to gain freedom while not transgressing too far against societal norms. Dacre

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<sup>101</sup> Craciun, p. 150.

<sup>102</sup> Craciun, p. 150.

<sup>103</sup> Craciun, p. 150.

<sup>104</sup> Donna Heiland, *Gothic and Gender* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), p. 49; Airey, 224; Dacre, p. 254.

presents her reader with a boundary that should not be crossed by women, this boundary for Diane Long Hoeveler is the ‘violent murder of one woman by another’, but in the case of Gothic witchcraft this boundary is a pact with the devil.<sup>105</sup>

Although Dacre used the Gothic trope of doubling to break away from misogynistic representations of witchcraft, using the non-witch double as an example of how women could use aspects of witchcraft narratives to gain power in a society which renders them powerless, her use of doubling is also present in Thomas Middleton’s *The Witch* and William Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. Both of these texts display common ideas of witchcraft, like *The Monk*, but their use of doubling witches and witch-like women to depict powerful and independent women is a clear precursor to Dacre’s approach to witchcraft. Dacre’s novel may have had a different agenda when exploring this doubling of magical and non-magical women but there is a pre-history of this particular form of doubling, and there is also a pre-history of writers using the language of witchcraft to represent powerful women, in early modern literature.

Dacre’s witch-like women can be traced most easily to two popular early modern plays: Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* and Middleton’s *The Witch*. Although it has already been established that Middleton represented conventional aspects of witchcraft through Hecate, aspects of Dacre’s depiction of witchcraft can be seen in the character of the Duchess who employs Hecate in an attempt to poison Almachildes. Parallels can be seen between the Duchess and Victoria, with both characters seeking magical assistance to murder men, but there are also parallels between Megalena and the Duchess as they are both non-magical women who manipulate and seduce men into committing murder. As she is in the presence of an actual witch, it is difficult to claim that the Duchess is a witch, unlike Victoria who is

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<sup>105</sup> Hoeveler, 195.

more than merely witch-like due to her pact with the Devil, but the Duchess is a witch-like woman, like Megalena, and she is a conscious non-magical double of the witch character.

Like Victoria, the Duchess employs the help of a magical being, in the Duchess's case she employs the services of the witch Hecate rather than the devil, in order to murder a man who stands in her way. The Duchess does not have a pact with the Devil, nor does she actually use magic herself, but she has several characteristics that align her with the actual witches in the play. The Duchess has already proven herself to be a manipulative and seductive woman, seducing Almachildes into murdering her husband, but the similarities between the Duchess and Hecate becomes clear in Act five, scene two. At the end of Act four, scene one, when she has decided to 'take some witch's counsel' in her plan to murder Almachildes, and she claims that 'Mischief is mischief's friend'.<sup>106</sup> The Duchess directly compares her own actions to those of Hecate, drawing attention to their similarities and reinforcing the idea that she can be considered Hecate's non-magical double. The Duchess can be considered a witch-like woman because she is 'bewitching', seductive and manipulative, but her own acknowledgement of the affinity between herself and Hecate underpins this way of reading her character.

Hecate and the Duchess finally meet in Act five, scene two, although it is clear that the Duchess at least knows of Hecate from her comment at the end of Act four, scene one. This particular scene is very short but it reveals much about the relationship between magical and non-magical women in this play. James R. Keller has thoroughly examined this scene, and the similarities between the Duchess and the witches, acknowledging the possible relationship between the two characters and the idea that 'most of the female characters' in *The Witch* demonstrate a 'witchlike lasciviousness and vindictiveness and strive to

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<sup>106</sup> *The Witch*, 4.1.94-95.

manipulate and control others'.<sup>107</sup> At two points during their exchange, Hecate refers to the Duchess as 'daughter' and, although only once, the Duchess calls Hecate 'mother' in return and Keller argues that 'the prospect that the Duchess is actually Hecate's daughter strengthens the parallels between the two women, since the witch traditionally passed her art on to her daughters in an inversion of the customary primogeniture and the Duchess demonstrates that she is her mother's daughter in deed as well as in name'.<sup>108</sup> However, if they were truly related then the Duchess would have no need to question Hecate's powers, as she would know them intimately. Instead, it is more likely that these female characters are acknowledging the kinship between them and creating a bond based upon their similarities. Their use of these titles only occurs after the Duchess doubts Hecate's abilities, causing Hecate to '[spit] Latin' and list her great feats of magic<sup>109</sup>:

Can you doubt me then, daughter,  
That can make mountains tremble, miles of woods walk,  
Whole earth's foundation bellow, and the spirits  
Of the entomb'd to burst out from their marbles,  
Nay, draw yond moon to my involv'd designs?<sup>110</sup>

This is the first instance within their exchange of Hecate referring to the Duchess as 'daughter' and it prompts a placating response from the Duchess: 'I did not doubt you, mother'.<sup>111</sup> Middleton draws attention to the Duchess's witch-like characteristics through this exchange, emphasising her cunning and vengeful nature, but Hecate referring to her as 'daughter' is a demand for respect, which the Duchess concedes to.<sup>112</sup> Middleton creates a

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<sup>107</sup> Keller, 43.

<sup>108</sup> *The Witch*, 5.2.25-37; Keller, 43.

<sup>109</sup> *The Witch*, 5.2.32.

<sup>110</sup> *The Witch*, 5.2.25-29.

<sup>111</sup> *The Witch*, 5.2.25-33.

<sup>112</sup> *The Witch*, 5.2.25.

relationship between her and Hecate based upon their similarities but Hecate, as an actual witch who is skilled in her art rather than merely a witch-like non-magical woman, demands respect for her skill. Middleton engages with the idea of doubling that is seen so clearly in Dacre's *Zofloya* but he presents it as an attempt to 'escape victimization by men' rather than a deliberate form of self-empowerment.<sup>113</sup> The Duchess, although attempting to escape torment and 'psychological persecution', is a precursor for characters like Victoria and Megalena who strive to escape societal expectations by embodying aspects of witchcraft.<sup>114</sup> Hecate refers to the Duchess once more, at the end of the scene, as 'daughter', telling her 'Leave all to [her] and [her] five sisters', ending their exchange and solidifying their roles within their relationship.<sup>115</sup>

The Duchess' characterisation may not be considered pre-Gothic, even though she fits into the definition of the 'bewitching' woman, but Middleton's doubling of magical and non-magical women, and his exploration of the role each has in society, is potentially pre-Gothic. As I have stated, doubling is a particularly Gothic trope and Dacre's use of doubling in *Zofloya* transforms her exploration of witchcraft into something more recognisably Gothic.<sup>116</sup> Therefore, it can be concluded that Middleton's use of doubling in *The Witch*, which he uses to reveal how women could use witchcraft to escape the expectations of men, is a pre-Gothic element of the play.

Shakespeare's *Macbeth* also explores this idea through Lady Macbeth and Dacre's Megelana is, arguably, an updated version of Lady Macbeth. Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is perhaps the most famous witch play of the early modern era and, as with all of Shakespeare

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<sup>113</sup> Keller, 44.

<sup>114</sup> Keller, 43.

<sup>115</sup> *The Witch*, 5.2.37.

<sup>116</sup> See: *The Encyclopedia of the Gothic*, ed. by William Hughes, David Punter, and Andrew Smith (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2016), p. 189.

plays, it was highly influential and intensely scrutinised during the eighteenth century.

Horace Walpole parodied *Macbeth*, particularly the three witches, in *Old England: Or, the Constitutional Journal* in 1743 and throughout the eighteenth century, critics debated and criticised Shakespeare's portrayal of witchcraft within the play.<sup>117</sup>

Although much of the criticism on *Macbeth* in the eighteenth century focused on the actual witches of the play, Lady Macbeth occupies the role of the non-magical witch-like woman. Lady Macbeth and Megalena occupy the same role as they are non-magical women who mirror the witches in their own texts and, although both die, they are not dehumanised and defeminised in the same way that the actual witches are. Unlike the Duchess and Hecate of Middleton's *The Witch*, Lady Macbeth has no direct link to the witches of her play but she is still closely aligned with them and, similarly to the Duchess, Lady Macbeth makes many of these connections herself, deliberately aligning herself with witchcraft.

Several scholars, including Roy Booth, Peter Stallybrass, and Stephanie Irene Spoto have examined the parallels between Lady Macbeth and the weird sisters throughout the course of the play. Booth states that 'Lady Macbeth seems very close to pact-witchcraft', although there is no actual pact in the play, whereas both Spoto and Stallybrass examine Lady Macbeth and the witches as counterpoints to the 'implied norm of femininity'.<sup>118</sup> Lady Macbeth's first witch-like quality is her invocation of the 'spirits / That tend on mortal thoughts', a phrase that mirrors the incantations of the weird sisters in Act one, scene three, and Act four, scene one.<sup>119</sup> Oddly, the weird sisters never actually invoke spirits in the same

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<sup>117</sup> Horace Walpole, 'The DEAR WITCHES: An Interlude; Being a Parody on Some Scenes of Mackbeth', *Old England, or, The Constitutional Journal*, 20 (London: 1743); Johnson and Steevens.

<sup>118</sup> Roy Booth, 'Standing Within the Prospect of Belief: *Macbeth*, King James, and Witchcraft', in *Witchcraft and the Act of 1604*, ed. by John Newton and Jo Bath (Leiden: Brill, 2008), p. 47-67 (p. 55); Peter Stallybrass, 'Macbeth and Witchcraft', in *Focus on Macbeth*, ed. by John Russell Brown (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 189-209 (p. 196); Stephanie Irene Spoto, 'Jacobean Witchcraft and Feminine Power', *Pacific Coast Philology*, 45 (2010), 53-70.

<sup>119</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Macbeth*, ed. by Nicholas Brooke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 1.5.39-40.



way as Lady Macbeth, perhaps because they are not ‘mortal’, but Lady Macbeth’s call to the spirits aligns her with witchcraft and, just as witches did in the early modern era, she is relying upon the help of spirits.<sup>120</sup> If she was successful in luring these spirits to ‘unsex’ her and ‘fill [her] from the crown to the toe top-full / Of direst cruelty’ Lady Macbeth would easily be categorised as another witch within the play, but her lack of magical ability – and the fact that she has not made a pact with the Devil – complicates her role as a true witch, thus leaving her as merely a witch-like woman.<sup>121</sup> Spoto uses this moment in the play to examine how Lady Macbeth becomes a ‘Maternal Witch whose breasts give only sour or rancid blood, or [...] inconsumable gall’.<sup>122</sup> Her milk, a symbol of motherhood, ‘becomes the food of demons, forsaking the possibility of human offspring and reproduction as she has become ‘unsexed’ and her breasts become promised to the possessing spirits’.<sup>123</sup> Lady Macbeth is not a traditional witch, one who is anti-maternal and the opposite of what a woman was expected to be, but instead she is a demonic version of a ‘true woman’, to borrow Adriana Craciun’s phrase, and she distorts established notions of femininity by becoming witch-like.<sup>124</sup> Just like Megalena in *Zofloya*, Lady Macbeth distorts fixed ideas of femininity by turning femininity into a role to be played, a role which hides her true nature and she plays this role of the ‘true woman’ at several points in the play, including during the banquet scene of Act three, scene four.

There are other moments in the play where Lady Macbeth mirrors the weird sisters and other witches. Lady Macbeth mirrors the language of the second sister, who talks of ‘killing swine’, when she refers to the chamberlains who are guarding Duncan as in a

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<sup>120</sup> *Macbeth*, 1.5.40.

<sup>121</sup> *Macbeth*, 1.5.40-42.

<sup>122</sup> Spoto, 66.

<sup>123</sup> Spoto, 66.

<sup>124</sup> Craciun, p. 150.

‘swinish sleep’.<sup>125</sup> Detesting ‘swinish’ men could also associate Lady Macbeth with Circe, the enchantress who transforms members of Odysseus’ crew into swine and was, as Gareth Roberts claims in his contribution to *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, ‘the archetype in demonological discussions of transformation’ during this era.<sup>126</sup> Circe was reframed as a witch by early modern writers, from Arthur Golding’s translation of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (1567) to Shakespeare’s *Henry VI, Part One* (c.1597), due to her violent sexual appetite and her transgressions against the patriarchal system, traits that can also be seen in Lady Macbeth’s character.<sup>127</sup> Roberts states that ‘[a] Circean offer of perilous pleasures is one of the ways in which witchcraft and magic were seen by the treatise writers’ of the early modern period and Lady Macbeth’s appetite for violence and social disorder fits into Circe’s narrative.<sup>128</sup> Although Lady Macbeth does not transform Macbeth into an actual beast, as Circe does in the *Odyssey*, Lady Macbeth draws out the ‘bestly’ qualities of her husband by encouraging him to murder Duncan and seize power. Lady Macbeth uses her bewitching qualities to convince Macbeth to take the path that the weird sisters have set out for him. It could be said that Lady Macbeth is continuing their work, pushing Macbeth forward to fulfil the prophecy given to him. However, Lady Macbeth’s lack of magical ability, and the fact that she has no pact with the devil, limits her to the category of the witch-like woman.

Beyond her links to other witches in her own play, and Circe before her, Lady Macbeth displays the same masculine or androgynous qualities that Victoria and Megalena possess in *Zofloya*, perhaps marking her as a predecessor for these characters. Lady Macbeth seeks a more dominant role within her relationship with Macbeth and she does so through

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<sup>125</sup> *Macbeth*, 1.3.2, 1.7.68.

<sup>126</sup> *Macbeth*, 1.7.68; Homer, *Odyssey*, trans. by Emily Wilson (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2017); Roberts, p. 194.

<sup>127</sup> Ovid, *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, trans by Arthur Golding (London: Penguin, 2002); William Shakespeare, *Henry VI, Part One*, ed. by Michael Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>128</sup> Roberts, p. 200.

manipulation but her desire for more power strips away aspects of her 'ideal' femininity. As she questions Macbeth's masculinity in Act one, scene seven, 'When you durst do it, then you were a man / And to be more than what you were, you would be so much more the man', she also casts aside her femininity in this moment.<sup>129</sup> Lady Macbeth's action, compared to Macbeth's inaction, makes her 'more the man' than Macbeth himself and Lady Macbeth deliberately masculinises herself by taking on a role that should belong to her husband. Androgyny, or even masculinity, is a witch-like trait, as shown through both Megalena and Victoria, but Lady Macbeth's masculinity is made more witch-like by Banquo's observation that the weird sisters also have masculine appearances: 'You should be women / And yet your beards forbid me to interpret / That you are so'.<sup>130</sup> Lady Macbeth has no beard and she retains her outward femininity but her masculinised mindset, one which is overtly violent, aligns her with Charlotte Dacre's Megalena and thus positions Lady Macbeth as a witch-like woman through her dominant qualities and her direct threat to ideal femininity. Despite her masculinised mind, Lady Macbeth also embodies the idea of the 'bewitching' woman. If we were to consider Lady Macbeth within the terms of early modern drama, we may refer to her as a Vice, a character who tempts like Mephostophilis in *Doctor Faustus*, but Lady Macbeth exemplifies this notion of the bewitching woman as she 'bewitches' and seduces her husband into committing murder and, perhaps, she can be considered a prototype for characters such as Megalena who seduce and manipulate others to do their bidding. Lady Macbeth is just as much of a threat to male-dominated society as Victoria and Megalena and, due to this, Lady Macbeth could be read as a prototype for Dacre's more developed witch-like women. She, like Megalena, is a woman who embodies the transgressive aspects of the witch but is juxtaposed with an actual witch within the text.

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<sup>129</sup> *Macbeth*, 1.7.49-51.

<sup>130</sup> *Macbeth*, 1.3.45-47.

## IV

Most of this chapter has used the representation of female sexual desire to examine how Gothic and early modern writers contributed to and subverted expectations of witchcraft, examining how sexually active women have been labelled as witches and cast out from society for being ‘unnatural’, but both Gothic and early modern witchcraft also illustrate the archetype of the crone, or the hag, and the effect that age and appearance have on the way in which women are perceived by others within society. Today, the crone is a much more common example of how ‘witch’ is a label that has been forced upon ostracised women in society and the Gothic’s exploration of this figure is an example of the Gothic’s interest in the Other. In Gothic literature, the figure of the crone is usually marginalised, isolated from society either through location or due to an innate distrust from the community, and their categorisation as ‘witches’ often stems from their precarious place in society as post-menopausal women. Older women in Gothic literature were often presented as sexually promiscuous, violent, and cruel, an idea that Abigail Boucher has explored in relation to Lewis’ *The Monk*, and these are traits which were often aligned with witchcraft and other types of magical women.<sup>131</sup> Even if they are not the ‘lustful and rebellious old hag[s]’ of Middleton’s *The Witch*, age and appearance were enough for these women to be labelled as ‘witches’ by members of society who have no direct knowledge of them.<sup>132</sup> Old age is difficult to define, especially as expectant lifespan shifts through time, but many of the ‘crones’ in Gothic literature are said to have lived beyond a natural lifespan so they can be easily defined as ‘old’ without referring to biological, functional, or cultural definitions of old age. As Boucher states ‘[m]enopausal women are used as [...] further set-dressing, with

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<sup>131</sup> Abigail Boucher, ‘*The Monk* and Menopause: Gender, Medicine, and the Gothic in the Long Nineteenth Century’, *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies*, 13.2 (2017) <<http://www.ncgsjournal.com/issue132/boucher.html>>.

<sup>132</sup> Keller, 42.

female aging and a cis-gender woman's transition away from childbearing portrayed [...] to be a disturbing, shameful, and almost supernatural process.<sup>133</sup> Society's 'barely-concealed disgust and overt ribaldry at women who can no longer become pregnant illustrates a deep discomfort with the stage of life' and leads to menopausal and post-menopausal women being feared by those around them.<sup>134</sup> These women do not fit comfortably into society, either in the early modern era or during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and they are often reduced to the archetypes of 'crones' and 'hags'. Crones and hags are defined and othered by their age and appearance, leading to accusations of witchcraft and other sorcery merely due to their precarious place within the community and characters who encounter 'crones' often immediately, yet irrationally, distrust them.

The archetype of the crone is thoroughly developed in Mary Shelley's 1823 novel *Valperga*. *Valperga*, a novel which relates the adventures of the early fourteenth-century figure Castruccio Castracani, who became the lord of Lucca and conquered Florence, is usually categorised as a historical novel rather than a Gothic novel but Shelley's exploration of the Other, the supernatural, and her preoccupation with the sublime allow the novel to be read as a Gothic text. Angela Wright, in *Mary Shelley*, also presents a thoroughly Gothic reading of Shelley's *Valperga* which details Shelley's use and inversion of common Gothic tropes and her interaction with the Gothic romances that preceded *Valperga*.<sup>135</sup> My own reading of *Valperga* as a Gothic novel in this chapter builds upon the foundations of Wright's analysis.

Although it is not the only Gothic aspect of the novel, Shelley's novel features one of the most sustained and developed portrayals of witchcraft in Gothic literature as the entire

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<sup>133</sup> Boucher, para 2.

<sup>134</sup> Boucher, para 2.

<sup>135</sup> Angela Wright, *Mary Shelley* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2018).

subplot of the novel revolves around two witch-like characters. Unlike the other Gothic novels examined in this chapter, there is little research to build upon when examining Shelley's depiction of witchcraft in *Valperga*. Therefore, a brief exploration of Shelley's witch and witch-like characters is needed before the novel can be considered alongside established early modern witch plays.

Shelley links witchcraft to aging women at several points in the novel. Castruccio mistakes an elderly woman, who is described as a 'beldame', for a witch at the beginning of chapter nineteen and he asks her, laughing, 'whether she would tell him his fortune'.<sup>136</sup> Castruccio assumes that the woman he encounters is a witch due to her 'her leathern and dry, brown skin', her lonely presence at the bridge he sought, and her behaviour, which he considers odd.<sup>137</sup> Castruccio's reaction to this woman reveals much about his attitudes towards older, isolated women and although he does not fear this particular witch-like woman, her presence clearly makes him uncomfortable. Pepi, later in the chapter, refers to the same woman as his 'old witch' despite her insistence that she is 'no witch'.<sup>138</sup> Pepi and Castruccio both look upon this aging woman who is somewhat isolated from general society and label her as something 'other'. Her hag-like appearance which 'did not seem formed of the same frail materials as the lily cheek of a high-bred dame' is either an indicator of witchcraft and an association with the devil for these two characters or the term 'witch' is employed as a gendered insult aimed at old, 'ugly' women.<sup>139</sup>

Chapter twenty-seven marks the first appearance of a 'real' witch within the novel or, at least, a woman who claims to be a witch. We are told that 'she inhabited a cottage built

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<sup>136</sup> Mary Shelley, *Valperga: Or the Life and Adventures of Castruccio, Prince of Lucca. By the Author of "Frankenstein."* in *Three Volumes* (London: Printed for G. and W. B. Whittaker, 1823), vol. 2, n.p.

<sup>137</sup> Shelley, *Valperga*, vol. 2, n.p.

<sup>138</sup> Shelley, *Valperga*, vol. 2, n.p.

<sup>139</sup> Shelley, *Valperga*, vol. 2, n.p.

partly of the trunks of trees, partly of stones, and which partly was inclosed by the side of the mountain against which it leaned'.<sup>140</sup> This particular witch lives in a forest, truly isolated from society, and the 'hut' that she lives in is described as 'very old' and the 'part of it which was built of stone was covered with moss, lichens and wall-flowers, whose beauty and scent appeared alien to the gloom around'.<sup>141</sup> Shelley spends an unusual amount of time merely detailing the dwelling in which the witch lives, emphasising that it is isolated and hidden and yet does not blend with the 'desolation and horror' of the forest which surrounds it.<sup>142</sup> Shelley emphasises that this 'witch' lives outside of general society, just like Middleton's Hecate and the weird sisters of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. The cottage is, itself, almost unnaturally youthful but the witch herself is described as 'very old' with Shelley stressing that 'none knew how old' she truly was.<sup>143</sup> Shelley's witch is said to be unnaturally old, similar to Middleton's Hecate who is over 'six score' or one hundred and twenty years old, and it is explained that 'men, verging on decrepitude, remembered their childish fears of her; and they all agreed that formerly she appeared more aged and decrepit than now'.<sup>144</sup> This section implies that it is the childish fear of the crone that directs the characters' reactions to the witch but, as I will explore later, this intrinsic fear of the crone does not diminish with age. Her age is emphasised by the fact that '[s]he was bent nearly double' and that 'there was no flesh on her bones'.<sup>145</sup> Just like the first 'witch' of the novel, who was not a witch at all, this witch has 'brown and wrinkled skin' that 'hung loosely about her cheeks and arms', making this a common description of witches, or women perceived as witches, within the novel.<sup>146</sup> Shelley describes this witch as appearing upon the brink of death and yet her 'red eyes', glaring

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<sup>140</sup> Shelley, *Valperga*, vol. 3, n.p.

<sup>141</sup> Shelley, *Valperga*, vol. 3, n.p.

<sup>142</sup> Shelley, *Valperga*, vol. 3, n.p.

<sup>143</sup> Shelley, *Valperga*, vol. 3, n.p.

<sup>144</sup> *The Witch*, 1.2.72; Shelley, *Valperga*, vol. 3, n.p.

<sup>145</sup> Shelley, *Valperga*, vol. 3, n.p.

<sup>146</sup> Shelley, *Valperga*, vol. 3, n.p.

‘within their sunken sockets’, indicate the life within her.<sup>147</sup> Shelley’s vivid description of the witch evidently focuses on her age and her crone-like appearance, linking witchcraft to the isolated older woman, the woman who has no clear place in society. Shelley’s version of witchcraft is a result of the Gothic’s preoccupation with the Other.

Beyond her appearance and her voice, Shelley’s witch also appears to engage with actual witchcraft beyond even Lewis’ Matilda. This ‘crone’, at first glance, seems reminiscent of Middleton’s Hecate or Shakespeare’s weird sisters as she dabbles in prophecy, or ‘predictions’, and she even claims to have ‘sold [her] soul to the devil!’<sup>148</sup> In an echo of Matilda’s insistence that ‘The Enemy of Mankind is [her] Slave, not [her] Sovereign’, Shelley’s witch claims that she ‘rule[s] the spirits, and do[es] not serve them’ but she also claims to possess powers that extend beyond mere scrying mirrors<sup>149</sup>:

I can cover the sky with clouds; I can conjure rain and thunder from the blue  
empyrean; the Serchio will obey me; the winds from the north and the south know my  
call; the mines of the earth are subject to me; I can call the dead from their graves, and  
command the spirits of air to obey me.<sup>150</sup>

This particular quote resembles a passage from the seventh book of Arthur Golding’s 1567 translation of Ovid’s *Metamorphosis* in which Medea claims that with the help of Hecate she is able to ‘cover all the sky with clouds’ and ‘call up dead men from their graves’.<sup>151</sup> It also mirrors Hecate’s speech in *The Witch* which quotes Ovid’s Latin directly:

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<sup>147</sup> Shelley, *Valperga*, vol. 3, n.p.

<sup>148</sup> Shelley, *Valperga*, vol. 3, n.p.

<sup>149</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 268

<sup>150</sup> Shelley, *Valperga*, vol. 3, n.p.

<sup>151</sup> Ovid, p. 208.



*Cum volui, ripis ipsis mirantibus, amnes*  
*In fontes rediere suos; concussaue, sisto*  
*Stantia, concutio cantu freta; nubila pello*  
*Nubilaque induco; ventos abigoque vocoque;*  
*Vipereas rumpo verbis et carmine fauces;*  
*Et silvas moveo, jubeoque tremiscere montes,*  
*Et mugire solum, manesque exire sepulchris.*  
*Teque, luna, traho. Can you doubt me then, daughter?*  
 That can make mountains tremble, miles of woods walk,  
 Whole earth's foundation bellow and the spirits  
 Of the entombed to burst out from their marbles,  
 Nay, draw yond moon to my involved designs?<sup>152</sup>

In this section of the novel, where the witch is attempting to convince her companions of her authenticity, Shelley is clearly using Golding's translation of Ovid as a base for her own interpretation of witchcraft and, by doing so, Shelley mirrors early modern depictions of witchcraft, which also used Ovid. She may have found this translation in Warburton's edition of Shakespeare or, perhaps, in a circulating library. Later in the novel, the witch acknowledges that she is 'powerless' and her main aim in this speech is to 'impress upon Bindo some notion of the powers to which she pretended' but her short speech about the powers she supposedly possesses in chapter twenty-seven marks a return to pre-Enlightenment concepts of witchcraft, where witchcraft is regarded with fear and awe rather than viewed solely as a vehicle for the expression of female sexuality and female violence.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> *The Witch*, 5.2.18-29.

<sup>153</sup> Shelley, *Valperga*, vol. 3, n.p.

Shelley's witch, who remains unnamed for the majority of the novel but is later named as Mandragola, was never 'mild' in her youth and she gave herself over to 'evil' and 'petty mischief' but her witchcraft, which is revealed to be an act, was also a vehicle for empowerment in her youth as her 'nature [...] had been turned to ferocity by wrongs which had been received so long ago'.<sup>154</sup> She used the fear that is associated with witchcraft to exact revenge upon those that accused her of such things. Shelley presents us with a sociological approach to witchcraft as her witch character embraces the role which has been given to her by society, explaining that witchcraft is a result of a lack of social mobility and no access to wider society. Shelley transforms the Gothic preoccupation with the Other into a social commentary on the treatment of older women in society. Mandragola has been called a witch so often that, in order to exact revenge, she has become a witch, although her witchcraft is performative rather than real. Mandragola is clearly self-aware, internally mocking the idea that she 'loved evil as her daily bread, and that she had sold her soul to the devil to do ill alone', and she chooses to embody the role of the witch as 'she desired to fill in every part the character attributed to her'.<sup>155</sup> Although she is powerless, the role she plays in society, that of the evil witch, allows her an immense sense of freedom and so, once again, witchcraft is presented as a source of empowerment for marginalised women. Shelley's witch is, more so than perhaps any of the other witches or witch-like women I have discussed in this chapter, thoroughly Othered by the society in which she lives and Shelley presents witchcraft as an opportunity for women who have been labelled witches by society to seek revenge and power. As she ages, the 'witch' embodies the role further due to the cultural association between aging women and witchcraft and Beatrice, a young prophetess, easily believes that

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<sup>154</sup> Shelley, *Valperga*, vol. 3, n.p.

<sup>155</sup> Shelley, *Valperga*, vol. 3, n.p.

she is a witch due to her age and appearance. Beatrice describes her as something beyond human:

She was a strange being: her person was short, almost deformed, shrivelled and dried up, but agile and swift of motion; her brown and leathern face was drawn into a thousand lines; and the flesh of her cheeks, thus deformed, seemed hardly human; her hands were large, bony, and thin; she was unlike every other animal, but also she was unlike humanity, and seemed to form a species apart, which might well inspire the country people with awe.<sup>156</sup>

Once again, Mandragola is marked as a witch due to her age and appearance but Beatrice does become sceptical of her powers, claiming that she ‘utterly discredited the pretensions of Mandragola’, before convincing herself to let the crone prove her abilities.<sup>157</sup> Bindo, rather than Mandragola herself, tries to convince Beatrice of the magnitude of her powers as he ‘related the wonderful exploits of Mandragola; how he had seen her call lightning and cloud from the south, and how at her bidding the soft western wind would suddenly arise, and dispel the wondrous tempests she had brewed’ and Bindo’s efforts reflect how tales of witchcraft were exaggerated by those who claimed to know of witches in the early modern era.<sup>158</sup> Bindo embodies the naivety and superstitious nature of ordinary people, people who want to believe that something more powerful exists. Beatrice also demonstrates the instinctual mistrust that ‘normal’ people display when faced with a witch as she accuses the witch of poisoning her. Mandragola responds by drinking the water herself, shaming Beatrice for her ‘mistrust’ and revealing that it ‘was pure water from the spring’ which ‘does not differ from the waters of any other fountain’.<sup>159</sup> Witchcraft in *Valperga* is clearly related to age and

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<sup>156</sup> Shelley, *Valperga*, vol. 3, n.p.

<sup>157</sup> Shelley, *Valperga*, vol. 3, n.p.

<sup>158</sup> Shelley, *Valperga*, vol. 3, n.p.

<sup>159</sup> Shelley, *Valperga*, vol. 3, n.p.

appearance as older women suffer from unfounded accusations of witchcraft merely because they are pushed to the edges of society. However, Shelley also demonstrates, once again, that witchcraft can be an empowering tool against marginalisation and ostracization and Mandragola embraces her role of the witch to gain power in a society where she is powerless. Parallels of Shelley's exploration of the Other and empowerment of marginalised women through the acceptance of witchcraft, or the term 'witch', can be seen in Thomas Dekker, John Ford, and William Rowley's *The Witch of Edmonton*.

Although it is the least visually Gothic of the early modern witchcraft plays, *The Witch of Edmonton* is perhaps the play that can be most easily described as pre-Gothic as its legacy, in which the figure of the 'Other', in this case the witch, embraces their role within society as a form of power, can be seen in various Gothic texts including Shelley's *Valperga*. *The Witch of Edmonton*, written by Dekker, Ford, and Rowley in 1621, was known but not printed in full during the eighteenth century. The play was, however, available to buy from booksellers and auctioneers who sold book collections owned by wealthy or important figures. T. Osborne and J. Shipton listed an undated copy of the play for 1s 6d (one shilling and six old pence) in *A catalogue of the capital collection of prints, drawings and books of prints, of the late Right Honourable Henry, Lord Viscount Colerane* in 1756.<sup>160</sup> *The Witch of Edmonton* also featured in various 'histories' and catalogues of old English plays including *The Poetical Register* by Giles Jacob (1719), *The British theatre. Containing the lives of the English dramatic poets; with an account of all their plays* by W. R. Chetwood (1750), and Egerton's *Theatrical remembrancer, containing a complete list of all the dramatic performances in the English language* (1788).<sup>161</sup> It was also cited in various editions of

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<sup>160</sup> T. Osborne and J. Shipton, *A Catalogue of the Capital Collection of Prints, Drawings and Books of Prints, of the Late Right Honourable Henry, Lord Viscount Colerane* (London: 1756), p. 127.

<sup>161</sup> Giles Jacob, *The Poetical Register* (London: printed for E. Curll, in Fleetstreet, 1719); William Rufus Chetwood, *The British Theatre. Containing the Lives of the English Dramatic Poets; With an Account of all Their Plays* (Dublin: printed for Peter Wilson, in Dame-Street, 1750), p. 48; John Egerton, *Theatrical*

Shakespeare's works but usually in regards to the two parts of *Henry IV* rather than *Macbeth* as would be expected. Charles Lamb printed a very short section of the play in *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare* and offered an insight into how 'Mother Sawyer differs from the hags of Middleton or Shakespeare'.<sup>162</sup> Lamb's collection had been available for over a decade when Shelley began writing *Valperga* and the first section he printed from the play matches Shelley's own depiction of witchcraft:

And why on me? Why should the envious world  
Throw all their scandalous malice upon me?  
'Cause I am poor, deformed, and ignorant,  
And like a bow buckled and bent together  
By some more strong in mischiefs than myself,  
Must I for that be made a common sink  
For all the filth and rubbish of men's tongues  
To fall and run into? Some call me witch,  
And being ignorant of myself, they go  
About to teach me how to be one, urging  
That my bad tongue, by their bad usage made so,  
Forspeaks their cattle, doth bewitch their corn,  
Themselves, their servants, and their babes at nurse.  
This they enforce upon me, and in part  
Make me to credit it'<sup>163</sup>

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*Remembrancer, Containing a Complete List of all the Dramatic Performances in the English Language* (London: printed for T. and J. Egerton, at the Military Library, Whitehall, 1788), p. 52.

<sup>162</sup> Lamb, p. 161.

<sup>163</sup> *The Witch of Edmonton*, 2.1.1-15.

Lamb specifically states that this speech occurs ‘before she turns Witch’, emphasising Mother Sawyer’s choice to become what she has been labelled by society.<sup>164</sup> Lamb also points out that this section of the play ‘anticipates all that Addison has said in the conclusion of the 117<sup>th</sup> Spectator’, the issue where Addison examines witchcraft and states that ‘[w]hen an old woman begins to dote, and grow chargeable to a parish, she is generally turned into a witch’ and ‘[i]n the mean time, the poor wretch that is the innocent occasion of so many evils begins to be frightened at herself, and sometimes confesses secret commerce and familiarities that her imagination forms in a delirious old age’.<sup>165</sup> Lamb, in 1808, already drew attention to the ways in which *The Witch of Edmonton* anticipated a later understanding of witchcraft, although Addison is more closely aligned with the idea of witchcraft that Reginald Scot details in *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, and it is not difficult to see how *The Witch of Edmonton* anticipated Shelley’s representation of witchcraft in *Valperga*. Addison and Scot both consider witchcraft a ‘delusion’ but, as discussed, Shelley frames it as a deliberate choice, something which echoes Mother Sawyer’s soliloquy from Act two, scene one.<sup>166</sup>

Mother Sawyer, the ‘witch’ in *The Witch of Edmonton*, is a crone-like woman who is pushed to the margins of society by those who fear her and she plays the role of the witch because it is expected of her. Loosely based on the life of Elizabeth Sawyer, *The Witch of Edmonton* is a witchcraft play that engages with the idea that witchcraft is a form of deal with the Devil but, arguably, it is Mother Sawyer’s appearance and social status that marks her as a witch, rather than any association with the devil or the occult. Analysing the speech, beginning ‘And why on me?’, that Lamb drew attention to in 1808 reveals much about how the play approaches witchcraft.<sup>167</sup> At the beginning of Act two, Mother Sawyer laments her

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<sup>164</sup> Lamb, p. 158.

<sup>165</sup> Lamb, p. 158; Joseph Addison, *The Spectator* (London: printed for C. Bathurst and others, 1775), p. 199.

<sup>166</sup> Addison, p. 199.

<sup>167</sup> *The Witch of Edmonton*, 2.1.1

roles within society, crying ‘And why on me? why should the envious world / Throw all their scandalous malice upon me?’.<sup>168</sup> She immediately answers her own question, acknowledging that it is because she is ‘poor, deformed, and ignorant, / And like a bow buckled and bent together’.<sup>169</sup> Her ‘deformed’ appearance and ignorance are the traits used to isolate Mother Sawyer from her community and they mark her as an Other.<sup>170</sup> Shelley uses a similar description for Mandragola in *Valperga* and both women fit into Boucher’s description of menopausal women as the community expresses ‘a deep discomfort with the stage of life’.<sup>171</sup> Jeanne Addison Roberts states that ‘[o]ld women more than old men function as grim reminders of the grave and are therefore to be defeated, ridiculed, or simply ignored’.<sup>172</sup> It is this grim reminder of death, inspired by Mother Sawyer’s withered appearance, that cause the townsfolk to label her a witch.<sup>173</sup> Sawyer describes herself as ‘a common sink / For all the filth and rubbish of men's tongues / To fall and run into’ which David Stymeist states is a representation of ‘all that is dangerous and polluting’, a ‘malevolent source of inexplicable disease and death’.<sup>174</sup> Stymeist acknowledges that the play ‘demystifies and criticizes the early modern practice of scapegoating women accused of witchcraft’ while simultaneously participating ‘in the Jacobean fascination with and sensationalism surrounding witchcraft trials’ but Mother Sawyer’s speech draws attention to the ways in which older women, those who are dependent upon the help of others, are ostracised due to their unnerving role within society.<sup>175</sup> Sawyer goes on to claim that ‘Some call [her] witch’ and her ignorance of herself, an idea which is echoed by Addison in the eighteenth century, allows the community to

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<sup>168</sup> *The Witch of Edmonton*, 2.1.1-2.

<sup>169</sup> *The Witch of Edmonton*, 2.1.3-4.

<sup>170</sup> *The Witch of Edmonton*, 2.1.3.

<sup>171</sup> Boucher, para 2.

<sup>172</sup> Jeanne Addison Roberts, ‘The Crone in English Renaissance Drama’, *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England*, 15 (2003), 116-137 (116).

<sup>173</sup> *The Witch of Edmonton*, 2.1.3-4.

<sup>174</sup> *The Witch of Edmonton*, 2.1.6-8; David Stymeist, “Must I Be . . . Made A Common Sink?": Witchcraft and the Theatre in "The Witch of Edmonton", *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance Et Réforme*, 25 (2001), 33-53 (40).

<sup>175</sup> Stymeist, 34.

‘teach [her] how to be one’.<sup>176</sup> Sawyer knows that her ‘bad tongue’ is made so by ‘their bad usage’ but, instead of denying accusations that she ‘doth bewitch their corn, / Themselves, their servants, and their babes at nurse’, she embraces it and uses their fear against them.<sup>177</sup> Mother Sawyer knows that this role has been ‘enforce[d]’ upon her and the abuse she faces due to her witch-like appearance leaves her particularly susceptible to the influence of the devil, which reinforces the idea that witchcraft in early modern England was associated with a woman’s susceptibility to sin.<sup>178</sup> The devil, who appears to her in the form of a dog after she laments the way in which some of her neighbours treat her, uses Mother Sawyer’s insecurity to tempt her into a pact, thus aligning witchcraft with vulnerable women. Mother Sawyer endures the same accusations and torments as Mandragola two hundred years before the publication of *Valperga* and Mother Sawyer is so desperate for revenge upon those who have wronged her that she agrees to her pact with the devil. Both Mother Sawyer and Mandragola are motivated by revenge, a characterisation of witches that conforms ‘to seventeenth-century superstitions’, but it is their conscious decision to embrace the role of the witch within society which binds them together.<sup>179</sup>

In a striking similarity to Shelley’s Mandragola, Mother Sawyer’s witchcraft is a conscious choice on her behalf as she purposefully embraced the role given to her by society and engaged with the devil to gain power. Julia M. Garrett has explored the idea that this ‘seventeenth-century play might serve as an early manifestation of sociological discourse’.<sup>180</sup> Garrett focuses on the sociology of criminology and deviance to examine *The Witch of Edmonton* but the play can also be examined in regards to its examination of social mobility.

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<sup>176</sup> *The Witch of Edmonton*, 2.1.10.

<sup>177</sup> *The Witch of Edmonton*, 2.1.11-14.

<sup>178</sup> *The Witch of Edmonton*, 2.1.14.

<sup>179</sup> Keller, 43.

<sup>180</sup> Julia M. Garrett, ‘Dramatizing Deviance: Sociological Theory and *The Witch of Edmonton*’, *Criticism*, 49.3 (2007), 327-375 (328).



Mother Sawyer's lack of social mobility, due to her age, gender, and lack of education, results in her accepting the role of the witch that has been thrust upon her by her community. Just as with Shelley's *Mandragola*, Mother Sawyer's witchcraft, for the most part, is performative as she is embracing a role even though, unlike *Mandragola*, Mother Sawyer is actively engaged with the Devil. One performative sign of witchcraft in *The Witch of Edmonton*, apart from the talking dog who is actually the devil, is Mother Sawyer's continuous use of nonsensical Latin in front of the townsfolk. Sawyer lacks the education to actually speak Latin and Cuddy Banks, who witnesses Sawyer's incantations, is shocked by her sudden use of the language. He exclaims 'But did your goblin and you spout Latin together?' but it is unclear whether he is more shocked by Mother Sawyer's sudden knowledge of Latin, however flawed it may be, or the talking dog.<sup>181</sup> He demands to know how Mother Sawyer learnt these phrases, knowing that she is not educated, and Cuddy Banks automatically associates her sudden knowledge of Latin with the devil or a devilish character, asserting that it was a 'learned devil' that imparted this knowledge upon her rather than just a 'learned man'.<sup>182</sup> Mother Sawyer's confused use of Latin as a performative sign of her witchcraft is connected to her lack of social mobility as she attempts to embrace the role that is given to her by society, due to her age and gender, but she lacks the ability to do so convincingly.

Another marker of witchcraft in this play is Mother Sawyer's use of a familiar. Mother Sawyer longs for a familiar not only for the power it possesses but also to fulfil the role which she has been given within society as familiars are a visible, performative sign of witchcraft. She aims 'to be a witch' as she is already 'counted one' by her community and witchcraft would give her some form of actual power in a society which renders her

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<sup>181</sup> *The Witch of Edmonton*, 2.1.252-253.

<sup>182</sup> *The Witch of Edmonton*, 2.1.260.

powerless.<sup>183</sup> Mother Sawyer acknowledges that she is ‘ignorant’ about the means by which these ‘old beldams’ became ‘acquainted’ with their familiar, highlighting that she has no knowledge of witchcraft at all, but a black dog conveniently appears at the end of her speech to act as a familiar.<sup>184</sup> Mandragola showcases a much better understanding of witchcraft, as shown in her exploitation of Bindo, but *The Witch of Edmonton* is exploring the very beginning of Mother Sawyer’s journey into the realm of witchcraft whereas Shelley’s witch is established in her position. The power she seeks to exact revenge upon her tormentors can only be found through witchcraft and Mother Sawyer associates witchcraft with the performative use of a familiar and so, for Mother Sawyer, a familiar liberates her from her former role in society and instils a new confidence within her. Mother Sawyer uses her role as a witch to empower herself against the torment that she faces within the community, a decision which is clearly mirrored by Mandragola in *Valperga*, and, just as stated by Lamb in 1808, *The Witch of Edmonton* anticipates late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century ideas about early modern witchcraft. Both of these witchcraft narratives are sympathetic towards those who are cast out to the margins of society and both, although within their own historical context, suggest that the role of the witch, whether real or not, could be a viable form of empowerment for marginalised women. Dekker, Rowley, and Ford were writing in a time when witchcraft and the Devil were perceived as real, and Sawyer is punished for her association with the Devil at the end of the play, but they still acknowledged that the role of the witch was initially forced upon Mother Sawyer due to her age, gender, and economic status and through embracing her enforced label, she managed to gain some power over her tormentors.

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<sup>183</sup> *The Witch of Edmonton*, 2.1.117.

<sup>184</sup> *The Witch of Edmonton*, 2.1.100-101.

In contrast to the depiction of witchcraft in *The Witch of Edmonton*, Shakespeare's depiction of the isolated and marginalised crone in *The Tempest* (c.1611) is much more conventional and is told exclusively from male perspectives. Sycorax, whose death occurs before the events of the play, is demonised by Prospero even though they share characteristics. He describes her as a 'foul witch' 'who with age and envy / Was grown into a hoop' and her magic is 'terrible' and horrifying.<sup>185</sup> Sycorax, due to her age and her use of magic, is outcast from society even in death and she has no opportunity to defend herself from Prospero's damning description. Comparing *The Tempest* to *The Witch of Edmonton* emphasises the unusual nature of the latter play as it diverts from other early modern depictions of crones and presents the audience with a much more nuanced exploration of witchcraft, even if it does fall back on stereotypes and popular ideas of witchcraft towards the end of the play.

*The Witch of Edmonton*'s sociological approach to witchcraft mirrors not only Mary Shelley's approach to witchcraft in *Valperga* as a conscious decision made by older women to embrace how they are branded by society but also the Gothic's preoccupation with the figure of the Other as it gives a voice to those who are marginalised within society. The play also appears to anticipate the wider understanding of witchcraft that gained traction in the eighteenth century. Although eighteenth-century essayists such as Addison claimed that witchcraft was an affliction of the deluded and the elderly, the idea that the role of the witch is forced upon older women by society, due to their uncomfortable place in the community, is clearly present in *The Witch of Edmonton*, two hundred years before Addison published his observations.

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<sup>185</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. by Daniel Fischlin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 1.2.257-258, 1.2.264.

## Conclusion

Early modern witch plays were clearly a reaction to the beliefs of their own time, reflecting actual events and popular discourse about witchcraft, but some aspects of these plays could be considered pre-Gothic as they present their audiences with explorations of witchcraft through what we would now consider Gothic tropes and Gothic ideas. Also, just as I discussed in regards to Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, the ways in which these witch plays broke from the conventions of their own time can also be read as pre-Gothic. Both Middleton's *The Witch* and Shakespeare's *Macbeth* anticipate the Gothic idea of doubling and it is through this idea that these plays can be read as pre-Gothic. Unlike Dacre, Middleton and Shakespeare did not necessarily use witchcraft to examine proto-feminist themes and ideas but their deliberate doubling of magical and non-magical women to explore the boundaries of witchcraft and female violence anticipates Dacre's Gothic exploration of witchcraft. These two plays also intrinsically tie 'bewitching women' to actual witchcraft in the same way that Dacre does, using doubling to suggest that the traits of a witch can be embodied by non-magical women who have no association with the devil.

*The Witch of Edmonton*, although it is based upon a real witch trial, presents its audience with a version of witchcraft which is startlingly similar to eighteenth-century discourse about early modern witchcraft. This play could be considered one of Shelley's sources, alongside Arthur Golding's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and, perhaps, Middleton's *The Witch*, for her representation of witchcraft as both texts depict witchcraft as a viable choice for older women who are shunned by society. *The Witch of Edmonton* can be considered pre-Gothic through its sociological exploration of witchcraft as the play focuses on the marginalised figure of the Other, offering a much more sympathetic depiction of witchcraft and marginalised women than other early modern witch plays.

All of these witch plays are products of a society which believed in witchcraft, unlike the Gothic novels I have explored in this chapter, but their exploration of 'Gothic' conventions and ideas allows them to be read as pre-Gothic as well as products of their own time. Early modern England's belief in witchcraft set these plays apart from their Gothic ancestors, and this difference must be acknowledged, but early modern explorations of the Gothic idea of doubling and the Gothic reframing of witchcraft as an opportunity for women to gain power positions these plays as firmly pre-Gothic.

## IV – Appropriating *Memento Mori*

Thou sallow picture of my poisoned love

My study's ornament, thou shell of death

— Thomas Middleton, *The Revenger's Tragedy*

Gothic literature is often characterised by its aesthetic of death and its use of *memento mori*, a form of religious symbolism which simply translates into English as ‘remember death’ or ‘remember that you must die’.<sup>1</sup> The genre has been derided for its use of ‘fresh’ ‘murdered bodies’ and ‘skeletons’ hidden in ‘chests and presses’ but the aesthetic of the macabre is often a vital component of Gothic literature.<sup>2</sup> Despite Gothic literature’s indulgence in *memento mori*, the use of *memento mori* in Gothic literature can be described as an ‘appropriation’ of this imagery as Gothic literature transformed a form of religious symbolism into a macabre aesthetic which was used to create an atmosphere of horror within the genre.

Although *memento mori* had its roots in classical antiquity, particularly in Plato’s *Phaedo* and the later school of Stoicism, *memento mori* was a prominent feature in medieval Christianity. It was the eighteenth century’s fascination with medieval England which led to the appropriation of *memento mori* in early Gothic literature.<sup>3</sup> *Memento mori* was a reminder of the inevitability of death, said to be used as a salutation by the Hermits of St. Paul of France, also known as the Brothers of Death, in the 1620s and 1630s, and the symbolism of

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<sup>1</sup> OED, ‘memento mori’, n., [www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com) [accessed 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021].

<sup>2</sup> Anon, ‘Terrorist Novel Writing’, in *The Spirit of the Public Journals for 1797* (London: printed for R. Phillips. Published by Mess. Richardson, Royal Exchange; Mr. Symonds, Paternoster-Row; Mr. Clarke, New Bond-Street; Mr. Harding, ST. James's Street, 1798), pp. 223-225 (p. 225).

<sup>3</sup> Plato, *Phaedo*, ed. by David Gallop (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

*memento mori* was also present in artistic symbols of death, including the *danse macabre*, which were a vital aspect of medieval Catholicism and, eventually, English Protestantism. Images of *memento mori* are littered throughout Gothic literature, providing the genre with a gloomy, gruesome aesthetic, but it can be argued that all forms of eighteenth-century Gothic, from architecture to literature, appropriated and, occasionally, commodified aspects of *memento mori* by removing the concept from its historical and religious contexts and transforming its imagery and symbolism into an aesthetic. It could be assumed that the appropriation of *memento mori* is unique to the Gothic mode, both literature and Revival architecture, as the aesthetic of the macabre, often devoid of any religious meaning, is characteristic of the Gothic but this is far from the case. Early modern England and early modern Europe appropriated and commodified the aesthetic of *memento mori* in a variety of ways and the first section of this chapter will examine the relationship between depictions of *memento mori* in early modern literature and Gothic literature. It will draw upon the work of Michael Neill and Duke Pesta to explore the ways in which Elizabethan and Jacobean society appropriated *memento mori* in similar ways to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain, providing a possible pre-history of the Gothic's appropriation of *memento mori* in early modern drama.<sup>4</sup>

After establishing the historical use of *memento mori* in the eighteenth century and the early modern era, this chapter will be split into two further sections which will focus on the representation of *memento mori* in literature. The second section of this chapter will consider how William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (c.1600), Henry Chettle's *The Tragedy of Hoffman* (c.1602), and Thomas Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1606) celebrated and commodified common images of *memento mori*, such as the skull, the skeleton, and the

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<sup>4</sup> Michael Neill, *Issues of Death* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); Duke Pesta, 'Articulating Skeletons: Hamlet, Hoffman, and the Anatomical Graveyard', *Cahiers Élisabéthains: A Journal of English Renaissance Studies*, 69 (2006), 21-39.

cadaver monument, in a way which anticipated how Gothic literature, particularly Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), Matthew Lewis' Gothic drama *The Castle Spectre* (1797), and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) appropriated the imagery of *memento mori*. The third section of this chapter focuses on Henry Chettle's *The Tragedy of Hoffman* to explore how Chettle's play anticipates the ways in which Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* transformed *memento mori* into a scientific investigation of life and death rather than merely a religious practice. The afterlives of *The Tragedy of Hoffman* and *The Revenger's Tragedy* in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries will also be mentioned briefly, not to suggest that these plays directly influenced these particular Gothic texts but merely to understand how these plays were read and understood in a more general capacity during the rise of Gothic literature.

## I

The Gothic Revival, a movement which sought to reintroduce Gothic architecture to Britain, began to gain popularity in Britain during the mid-eighteenth century with Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill House, begun in 1749, being the most famous example of this style from the era.<sup>5</sup> The origins of the Gothic Revival were, at least partially, religiously motivated as antiquarians of the era 'elided the Gothic with Catholicism as aesthetic/religious emblems of a glorious phase of English art and spirituality' and sought to resurrect English Catholicism through a revival of a recognisably Catholic style of architecture.<sup>6</sup> However, despite its religiously motivated origins, the Gothic Revival quickly became associated with political and social movements towards the end of the eighteenth century which were reviewed in the first chapter of this thesis.<sup>7</sup> Gothic Revival architecture was connected with ideas of

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<sup>5</sup> Megan Aldrich, *Gothic Revival* (London: Phaidon Press, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> Matthew M. Reeve, 'Gothic Architecture, Sexuality, and License at Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill', *The Art Bulletin*, 95.3 (2013), 411-439 (416).

<sup>7</sup> Reeve, 416.



‘medievalism’, ‘conservatism’, and ‘monarchism’, opposing the supposed ‘liberalism’ of the Neoclassical movement which was popular in other parts of Europe and, as discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, an attempt to return Britain to its ‘Gothic’ roots. Gothic Revival architecture, like the Gothic constitution, was favoured by Whigs but, eventually, Tories also adopted the architectural style.

As well as being a religious and socio-political movement, the Gothic Revival was also an aesthetic movement where aspects of medieval cathedrals and castles were replicated in the homes of the wealthy with little consideration for their origins. It is, perhaps, ironic that the Gothic Revival sought to reintroduce ‘Catholic’ architecture while Gothic literature often, as stated in the first chapter of this thesis, carried anti-Catholic sentiment. Matthew M. Reeve aligns Walpole, the ‘father’ of Gothic literature, with those who were ‘sympathetic to the aesthetic and sensory character of Catholicism’ but Walpole also opposed Catholic accommodative measures which indicates that Walpole’s appreciation of ‘the aesthetic and sensory character of Catholicism’ did not mean that Walpole wanted to return Catholicism to Britain.<sup>8</sup> It was Walpole’s interest in the aesthetic of Catholicism, rather than Catholicism itself, which led to his appropriation of *memento mori* in the development of Strawberry Hill House as he was motivated by emphasising the ‘aesthetic dimension of medieval Catholicism and minimizing its dogmatic aspect’.<sup>9</sup> Walpole’s appropriation of the aesthetic of Catholicism can be seen in the ‘chimney-piece[s]’ (what we may call a chimney breast or fire surround today) at Strawberry Hill House and almost all of the ‘chimneys’ at Strawberry Hill, to borrow the phrase used in *The Description of the Villa of Mr Horace Walpole* printed by Thomas Kirgate in 1784, were modelled after medieval tombs, including those of Edward the

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<sup>8</sup> Reeve, 416.

<sup>9</sup> Reeve, 416.

Confessor and John of Eltham, which is a clear form of appropriation on Walpole's part.<sup>10</sup> These tombs, most of which lie in Westminster Abbey, once acted as objects of remembrance and worship but Walpole appropriated features of the tombs, reducing these important sites of remembrance to mere objects that could be used to create a specific aesthetic within his home. Walpole's appropriation of England's Gothic past in pursuit of 'gloomth' or a Gothic aesthetic bled into his literature, resulting in *The Castle of Otranto* (1764).<sup>11</sup> Although the Gothic Revival was mostly an architectural movement, Gothic buildings were also a source of inspiration for designers in a variety of fields. Peter Lindfield details how Gothic influences can be found in English furniture, including at Lady Pomfret's house in Arlington Street in the 1740s and in Thomas Chippendale's *The Gentleman and Cabinet Maker's Director* (1754), while the so-called Ladies of Llangollen, Eleanor Charlotte Butler and Sarah Ponsonby, redecorated their Welsh home in the Gothic style in the 1780s.<sup>12</sup> It is clear that the Gothic Revival became a form of appropriation, even if it did not start as one, and various aspects of Gothic architecture, from lancet windows to images of *memento mori*, were incorporated into eighteenth-century style.

Early modern Europe had a more complex relationship with objects of *memento mori* but they were, for the most part, used in a much more conventional way as they served to remind the living of their inevitable death by emphasising the transient nature of human life and earthly pleasures. These tangible objects also aided the remembrance of the dead.

*Memento mori* can also be found in various Books of Hours and Psalters, particularly on the

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<sup>10</sup> Horace Walpole, *A Description of the Villa of Horace Walpole, Youngest Son of Sir Robert Walpole Earl of Orford, at Strawberry-Hill, near Twickenham. With an Inventory of the Furniture, Pictures, Curiosities, &c.* (London: Strawberry-Hill: printed by Thomas Kirgate, 1774), p. 73, p. 43.

<sup>11</sup> All references to 'gloomth' in this chapter are derived from Walpole's assertion that one has the 'satisfaction of imprinting the gloomth of abbeys and cathedrals on one's house' in a letter to Horace Mann in 1753. See: Walpole to Horace Mann, April 27, 1753, *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, vol. 20 (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 372.

<sup>12</sup> Peter Lindfield, *Georgian Gothic: Medievalist Architecture, Furniture and Interiors, 1730-1840* (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2016); Fiona Brideoake, "'Extraordinary Female Affection': The Ladies of Llangollen and the Endurance of Queer Community', *Romanticism on the Net*, 36 (2005).

pages containing the Office of the Dead, which indicates that they had a role in private religious practice. This prayer cycle, mainly used to aid private remembrance of the dead, was also used as part of All Souls' Day celebrations, which were still observed during the Elizabethan era despite both the celebration and the notion of Purgatory being abolished during the Reformation. In the Catholic Church, the Office of the Dead can also be a votive office on other days. Although there are few surviving examples of Books of Hours from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and fewer that were intended for English families, many of those that do survive depict images of *memento mori*, including the *Spinola Book of Hours* (c.1510) which depicts a cadaver monument and the *Crohin-LaFontaine Hours* (c.1480) which is decorated with images of skulls.<sup>13</sup> Illustrations of skulls, skeletons, tombs, and personified Death in Books of Hours and Psalters fulfilled the dual role of *memento mori* as they aided the remembrance of the deceased while reminding the reader of their own inevitable death.

Perhaps the most prominent examples of *memento mori* in early modern England were cadaver monuments. Cadaver monuments, or *transi*, were tombs which depicted the transition between life and death, often featuring a sculpted effigy of a skeleton or an emaciated dead body, and they both reminded the viewer of their own death and functioned as memorials to the dead.<sup>14</sup> However, the connotations of cadaver monuments, and other objects of *memento mori*, changed with the establishment of the Church of England during the reign of Henry VIII. Kathleen Cohen explains that with 'the abolishment of chantry

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<sup>13</sup> Master of James IV of Scotland, 'Deathbed Scene', in *Spinola Hours*, c.1510-1520, Tempera colours, gold, and ink on parchment, 23.2 × 16.7 cm, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; Master of James IV of Scotland, 'Office of the Dead', in *Spinola Hours*, c.1510-1520, Tempera colours, gold, and ink on parchment, 23.2 × 16.7 cm, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; Master of the Dresden Prayer Book or workshop, 'The Three Living and the Three Dead', in *Crohin-LaFontaine Hours*, c.1480-85, Tempera colours and gold, 20.5 × 14.8 cm, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; Master of the Dresden Prayer Book or workshop, 'Decorated Initial D', in *Crohin-LaFontaine Hours*, c.1480-1485, Tempera colours and gold, 20.5 × 14.8 cm, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.

<sup>14</sup> Kathleen Cohen, *Metamorphosis of a Death Symbol: Transi Tomb in the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), pp. 1-2.

chapels in the 1530s, prayers offered on behalf of the dead were no longer encouraged', except perhaps on All Souls' Day, and 'the corpse figures that had so often in fifteenth-century England illustrated an almost frantic appeal for prayers [...] took on a new meaning in which death was considered to be a prelude to resurrection, rather than the punishment of sin.'<sup>15</sup> Despite their different meanings, cadaver monuments remained a popular form of *memento mori* which highlighted the transition between life and death and a late example of a more traditional rendering of the cadaver monument, rather than the shrouded figure which became popular in the mid-seventeenth century, is that of Henry Windsor, 5th Baron Windsor (1562–1605) which depicts the skeletal form of Henry Windsor below an effigy of his body.<sup>16</sup> Henry Windsor's cadaver monument, which was once located in St Bartholomew's Church, Tardebigge, Worcestershire, is now lost but an etching of the monument by Wenceslaus Hollar is held by the Wenceslaus Hollar Collection at the University of Toronto and the etching reveals that Henry Windsor's tomb was a traditional cadaver monument, even though these tombs were becoming less popular during the seventeenth century as the notion of death changed. Cadaver monuments are an example of the religious significance of *memento mori* as they illustrate the contemplation of the transition between life and death.

The use of *memento mori* in the early modern era was clearly more religiously motivated than that of the Gothic Revival but the appropriation and commodification of *memento mori* seems to begin in the sixteenth century, perhaps as a result of European religious reformations, and the trend of appropriating *memento mori* grows from there, as symbols of *memento mori* became markers of political views and social status within society as well as remaining a religious symbol. The death's head skull was featured on everything from rings to marriage portraits and it served as a constant reminder of death in early modern

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<sup>15</sup> Cohen, p. 132.

<sup>16</sup> Wenceslaus Hollar, *Henry Windsor (monument)*, Engraving, 29 x 17 cm, The Wenceslaus Hollar Collection, University of Toronto.

England, always lurking in the background.<sup>17</sup> Roland Mushat Frye points out that ‘there was even a vogue for skull-shaped watches in the sixteenth century’ and ‘Mary Queen of Scots and King Henry III of France are said to have used such watches’ and while Frye is clearly examining the social appropriation of *memento mori* in France, there is evidence of the same appropriation occurring in England at the same time.<sup>18</sup> Perhaps the most common form of social appropriation of *memento mori* in sixteenth-century England was the mourning ring. Simultaneously a religious and social object, mourning rings indicated the wealth and status of the deceased whilst allowing their family and close friends to mourn them in a specific, yet performative, way. Mourning jewellery was in no way a required aspect of the mourning process but it was a popular performative sign of mourning as it was visible rather than private. These rings often depicted skulls and other symbols of death, and occasionally images of the deceased. A will from 1589, for example, bequeathed ‘gold rings of 20s. value and 2s. 6d. for the making of them’ to eighteen people and specified there must be ‘a Deathes head upon every Ring’ and the phrase ‘Remembre me’ engraved onto them.<sup>19</sup> This was both a symbol of wealth and of grief as the deceased provided mourners with the money to mourn them publicly, perfectly encapsulating the dual role of *memento mori* in the early modern era. The death’s head, a skull depicted with its lower jaw absent, was a popular image of *memento mori* throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and references to them can be found in various wills from the era. Another prominent example of the use of mourning rings in early modern England is in the will of William Shakespeare. Shakespeare specifies that

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<sup>17</sup> Unknown, *Gold and enamel memento mori ring inscribed 'BE HOLD THE ENDE' and 'RATHER DEATH THAN FALS FAYTH'*, 1550-1600, Jewellery, Victoria and Albert Museum, London; Unknown, *Enamelled gold mourning ring, with openwork ornament underlaid with hair and skulls and two coats of arms, one for the Nicholets family of Herefordshire*, 1661, Jewellery, Victoria and Albert Museum, London; Unknown, *The Judde Memorial*, c.1560, Oil on oak panel, 80 x 102.2cm, Dulwich Picture Gallery, London.

<sup>18</sup> Roland Mushat Frye, ‘Ladies, Gentlemen, and Skulls: *Hamlet* and the Iconographic Traditions’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 30.1 (1979), 15-28 (20).

<sup>19</sup> The National Archives Website, Discovery, GLY/738 Original Will of John Trevor of Trevalyn, 1589 <<https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/5371ea1d-73d6-4542-bd61-2950c485d08d>> [Accessed 31<sup>st</sup> May 2021].

‘XXVIs [twenty-six shillings or one pound and six shillings] VIIIId [eight pre-decimal pence]’ each should be left to ‘John Hemynges, Richard Burbage & Heny Cundell’ ‘to buy them Ringes’.<sup>20</sup> Shakespeare did not specify the design of these rings, unlike others who mentioned mourning rings in their wills, but it is clear that these were intended to be mourning rings. Money for mourning rings continued to be left in wills throughout the seventeenth century. After the execution of Charles I, mourning rings and pendants also became political symbols, turning mourning not only into an opportunity to flaunt the wealth of the deceased but also into an opportunity to advertise the wearer’s political allegiances. Royalists commissioned mourning jewellery to show their support for the deceased king.<sup>21</sup> Horace Walpole kept several of these rings commemorating Charles I in his collection at Strawberry Hill, which adds another layer to Walpole’s appropriation of *memento mori*.<sup>22</sup>

As religious beliefs changed, rings depicting the death’s head skull even came to act as a ‘lucky charm’ which ‘would allow the wearer to forget about death’ and, ultimately, protect against it.<sup>23</sup> This is a complete reversal of the original meaning of the death’s head skull as it initially inspired those who gazed upon it to remember and contemplate death. The social appropriation of *memento mori* was mirrored on the early modern stage as skulls and skeletons often enacted the dual role of religious memento and fashionable accessory or prop and I will return to this form of appropriation later in this chapter.

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<sup>20</sup> The National Archives Website, Discovery, PROB 11/127/771 Will of William Shakespeare, Gentleman of Stratford upon Avon, Warwickshire, 1616 <<https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D898518>> [Accessed 31<sup>st</sup> May 2021].

<sup>21</sup> One example of a Charles I mourning pendant was sold at Christie’s in 2016. It depicted Charles I with a skull and crossed bones upon a plinth on the reverse: ‘Charles I (1600-1649) A Gold Mounted Mourning Pendant’, *Christies*, 2021 <<https://www.christies.com/lotfinder/Lot/charles-i-1600-1649-a-gold-mounted-mourning-6014836-details.aspx>>.

<sup>22</sup> Walpole, *A Description of the Villa of Horace Walpole*.

<sup>23</sup> Phoebe S. Spinrad, *The Summons of Death on the Medieval and Renaissance English Stage* (Columbus: Ohio, 1987).

Another form of *memento mori* that was both celebrated and commodified in Early Modern Europe was the *danse macabre*. The *danse macabre* is an artistic genre of allegory which depicts the universality of death. The *danse macabre* usually consists of a personification of death summoning people from all walks of life, from labourers to the Pope, to dance to the grave in a reminder that death comes to us all, no matter our perceived place in society. Hans Holbein's *Dance of Death* (c.1526) is one of the most well-known depictions of the *danse macabre*.<sup>24</sup> Presumably finished in 1526 before Hans Holbein arrived at Henry VIII's court in England, Holbein's woodcuts were used to both celebrate and commodify the imagery of the *danse macabre* and, in turn, the woodcuts were commodified themselves by Protestant and Catholic printers throughout Europe to whom 'Holbein's pictures signified different things' and 'therefore they gave them different frameworks'.<sup>25</sup> Each printed edition of *Danse of Death*, either Protestant or Catholic, 'had different impacts on the readers' as the teachings around death differed between the religious branches and, while religiously motivated, these printers appropriated Holbein's woodcuts to serve their own agendas.<sup>26</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis' examination of the ways in which Holbein's woodcuts were used by Protestants and Catholics during the Reformation at Lyon highlights the malleable nature of this imagery which allows it to be easily commodified and appropriated while still acting as a celebration of religious practices and encouraging a contemplation of life and death. Tracing the history of both the Catholic and Protestant editions of the woodcuts, Davis argues that the exchange of Holbein's woodcuts 'from Catholic to Protestant auspices may be fully accounted for by economic causes' rather than any anti-Catholic or anti-Protestant satire hidden within the images.<sup>27</sup> Holbein's designs were a commodity to the printers of the era as

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<sup>24</sup> Hans Holbein, *The Dance of Death*, ed. by Ulinka Rublack (London: Penguin, 2016).

<sup>25</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, 'Holbein's Pictures of Death and the Reformation at Lyons', *Studies in the Renaissance*, 3 (1956), 97-130 (130).

<sup>26</sup> Davis, 130.

<sup>27</sup> Davis, 117.

they were bought and used regardless of possibly underlying religious satire but these images still inspired contemplations of death as they were originally intended to, emphasising that *memento mori* was both a religious practice and commercial opportunity in early modern Europe. Davis also acknowledges that, perhaps, these woodcuts were purchased ‘because they were a splendid work of a fine artist and would make a handsome book some day’ which further emphasises the commodification of this form of *memento mori* as they were, perhaps, celebrated for their artistic value as much as their religious significance.<sup>28</sup> Davis does not suggest that these woodcuts were printed purely for commercial gain but, instead, emphasises the dual nature of the *danse macabre* during this era in Europe. Although the *danse macabre* has deeply religious connotations related to the notion of *memento mori*, Holbein’s woodcuts could be, if necessary, removed from their original meaning and context to create a particular aesthetic.

The institution of the theatre in early modern England also commodified, and celebrated, *memento mori* as the aesthetic and symbolism of *memento mori* was often used to create a macabre atmosphere within early modern tragedies. Stephen Greenblatt, in *Shakespearean Negotiations*, states that Shakespeare wrote ‘for the greater glory and the profit of the theatre’, appropriating and draining ‘rituals’ of their original meaning for profit.<sup>29</sup> Greenblatt analyses how ‘performance kills belief; or rather acknowledging theatricality kills the credibility of the supernatural’, focusing on demonic possession and exorcism in *King Lear*.<sup>30</sup> Greenblatt states that since there are no ‘ghosts [...], no witches [...] [or] ‘no mysterious music of departing daemons’ in *King Lear*, the play is ‘haunted by a sense of rituals and beliefs that are no longer efficacious’ and *King Lear* marks demonic possession as ‘theatrical fraud, designed to gull the unsuspecting’ unlike *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*

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<sup>28</sup> Davis, 107.

<sup>29</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 127.

<sup>30</sup> Greenblatt, p. 109.



and *Anthony and Cleopatra* which offer serious contemplations of the supernatural.<sup>31</sup> Greenblatt's analysis of demonic possession in *King Lear* can be adapted to examine *memento mori* in plays such as *Hamlet* as, although Greenblatt points out that the ghost of *Hamlet* is not revealed as 'theatrical fraud', *Hamlet*, and other early modern plays, acknowledge the theatricality of *memento mori* and transform these objects into sites of spectacle.<sup>32</sup> Greenblatt's idea will be expanded upon further later in this chapter but it must also be acknowledged that, especially when considering *memento mori*, early modern drama operated within a space which offered both representation and commodification and, even if theatre was a somewhat fraudulent experience due to its artificiality and performativity, its interpretation of *memento mori* still recalled and reinterpreted its original religious symbolism.<sup>33</sup> The institution of the theatre, while appropriating *memento mori*, also provided a space in which new interpretations of religious imagery could be explored safely and, while Thomas Rist argues that early modern depictions of *memento mori* on stage recall "popish excess" in Protestant England, displaying what could be considered a positive reconstruction of Catholic funerary and mourning practices in a time when they were considered highly heretical, early modern theatrical constructions of *memento mori* also reflected their complex role within post-Reformation England.<sup>34</sup> It is true that these 'tableaux of the living and the dead are derived, at least in part, from well-established medieval traditions', which also influenced Gothic literature, but, as discussed, *memento mori* had a place within Elizabethan religious traditions, particularly in All Souls' Day celebrations and in the mourning process despite the differences between Catholic and Protestant mourning practices.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Greenblatt, p. 119.

<sup>32</sup> Greenblatt, p. 119.

<sup>33</sup> Greenblatt, p. 119.

<sup>34</sup> Thomas Rist, *Revenge Tragedy and the Drama of Commemoration in Reforming England* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008).

<sup>35</sup> Henry E. Jacobs, 'Shakespeare, Revenge Tragedy, and the Ideology of Memento Mori', *Shakespeare Survey*, 21 (1993), 96-108 (96).

However, what must be noted is that the symbolic meaning of *memento mori* underwent a series of changes in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Not only did society and theatre appropriate the image of the skull as a prop, giving it a new purpose in society, the symbolic meaning of the skull also began to change as attitudes towards death itself evolved. Once a symbol of death and sin, *memento mori* eventually came to symbolise the resurrection of the soul, emphasising the distinct boundaries between the body and the soul. Symbols of *memento mori* retained their religious imagery on the early modern stage, representing both old and new religious interpretations of *memento mori* alongside less conventional images, all of which will be considered in this chapter. Sharon Emmerichs acknowledges that towards the end of Elizabeth's reign and the beginning of James' reign the 'connection between the physical and the spiritual has been demystified and boundaries erected to keep them separate and distinct' as a result of England's adoption of Protestant teachings.<sup>36</sup> As English religion became more recognisably Protestant, Catholic symbols, like *memento mori*, were refashioned into symbols that reflected Protestant ideas. Susan Zimmerman argues that Protestant reformers rejected Catholic attitudes towards the dead, believing that Catholic doctrine 'dangerously distorted the relationship between body and soul' due to their belief that the body and soul were intrinsically connected.<sup>37</sup> Zimmerman explains that Protestant anxieties around Catholic ideas of death, the body, and the soul 'prompted an effort to reformulate materiality as definitively dead', ensuring that the Catholic connection between the body and soul was severed.<sup>38</sup> In Protestantism, the soul and body were separate from one another and while the body died and decayed, the soul remain alive eternally. Emmerichs argues that 'in this context the Clowns' actions in digging up already

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<sup>36</sup> Sharon Emmerichs, 'Shakespeare and the Landscape of Death: Crossing the Boundaries of Life and the Afterlife', *Shakespeare*, 8.2 (2012), 171-194 (185).

<sup>37</sup> Susan Zimmerman, *The Early Modern Corpse and Shakespeare's Theatre* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 8.

<sup>38</sup> Zimmerman, p. 8.

inhabited graves, as well as Hamlet's treatment of poor Yorick's bones, make sense' as the corpse and the skeleton are devoid of the soul.<sup>39</sup> This change in meaning and the creation of distinct boundaries between the body and the soul of the dead, and between the living and the dead, allowed for the body to become a site of entertainment and, thus, consumption and commodification. Just as religious beliefs evolved, the role of the skull and the skeleton in society changed. These props were objects of commemoration but they were also part of the aesthetic of death and decay which was characteristic of revenge tragedies, creating a 'Gothic' atmosphere of decay and death, and I will expand on this idea in the second and third sections of this chapter. Using images of *memento mori* in entertainment perhaps trivialises their role in religious practices and the aesthetics of *memento mori* were just as, if not more, important to early modern literature as the religious connotations they held. In this way, representations of *memento mori* in early modern literature align with later depictions in Gothic literature which used the aesthetic of *memento mori* and the macabre while only superficially referencing their original occupation as symbols of mortality in medieval religion. However, while early modern constructions of *memento mori* can be considered pre-Gothic through their appropriation and commodification of an aesthetic, they also inspired 'the transcendence that such images are meant to invoke' in a way that Gothic literature does not aim to.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, early modern literature both celebrates and appropriated *memento mori* and, perhaps, creates a transition between medieval depictions of *memento mori* and the Gothic appropriation of the aesthetic.

## II

To establish how Gothic writers commodified traditional images of *memento mori* to create an aesthetic of death and decay, this section will briefly examine representations of *memento*

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<sup>39</sup> Emmerichs, 186.

<sup>40</sup> Pesta, 69.

*mori* in three Gothic texts: Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, Matthew Lewis' *The Castle Spectre*, and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. I will then analyse how three early modern tragedies – William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Henry Chettle's *The Tragedy of Hoffman*, and Thomas Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy* – anticipated the Gothic's appropriation of *memento mori*.

Although Gothic literature appropriated the aesthetic *memento mori* to create an aesthetic of death, Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* is much less concerned with religious forms of *memento mori*, such as skulls and skeletons, than one may expect considering its offspring revels in this imagery. *The Castle of Otranto* still utilises some aspects of *memento mori*, particularly the traditional symbolism of *memento mori*, to create a particular atmosphere and, perhaps, to 'embrace Shakespeare's bold displays of death'.<sup>41</sup> Walpole's novel relied heavily on *Hamlet* and yet, unlike Shakespeare and his contemporaries, Walpole was not as interested in the depiction of violent death or the image of the corpse. Yael Shapira argues that Walpole was navigating a difficult balance between showing death in Shakespeare's way, to honour this 'uniquely British dramatic trait', and adhering to his own society's ideals and enlightened taste.<sup>42</sup> This conflict in Walpole's work led to brief yet detailed encounters with the dead body and the skeleton before these images are ultimately overshadowed by the appearance of various ghosts, a figure which Walpole attempted to reintroduce into British literature. Walpole redirects the symbolism of *memento mori*, the remembrance of the dead and the contemplation of mortality, towards a less offensive, less gruesome, and less corporeal object. As explored briefly in the introduction to this project, Walpole's inaugural Gothic novel relies heavily on *Hamlet* with Walpole replicating several scenes from the play and, while *Hamlet's* version of *memento mori* will be

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<sup>41</sup> Yael Shapira, 'Shakespeare, *The Castle of Otranto*, and the Problem of the Corpse on the Eighteenth-Century Stage', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 36 (2012), 1-29 (14).

<sup>42</sup> Shapira, 13.

explored later in this chapter, it is almost impossible to remove *Hamlet* from a discussion about Walpole's appropriation and commodification of *memento mori* in *The Castle of Otranto* as Walpole replicated scenes from *Hamlet* when writing his Gothic novella. The aspect of *memento mori* that Walpole borrows from *Hamlet* is the ghost of Hamlet's father. The scenes which Walpole borrows are outlined in the introductory chapter to this thesis but the ghost of Hamlet's father served as inspiration for the spectres of *The Castle of Otranto* and, as the ghost's cry for remembrance in *Hamlet* may be considered a form of *memento mori*, as explained by Marjorie Garber in "'Remember Me': 'Memento Mori' Figures in Shakespeare's Plays", the messages of the spirits in *The Castle of Otranto* may also be read as Gothic examples of the appropriation *memento mori*.<sup>43</sup> The figure of the ghost does little to inspire the same feeling as the skull or the corpse but both Hamlet's father and the spectres of *The Castle of Otranto* carry messages of *memento mori* and Walpole's decision to focus this aspect of *Hamlet*, rather than Hamlet's conversation with Yorick's skull, implies that Walpole, while attempting to appropriate images of death to create an atmosphere of decay, did not truly intend to explore the gruesome nature of death in his novel.

Although the ghost is the most prominent form of *memento mori* in *The Castle of Otranto*, if it can truly be considered a form of *memento mori*, corpses and skeletons do briefly appear in small sections of the novel. Walpole's reluctance to engage with the image of the corpse, either recently dead or stripped of its flesh, marks it as different not only from *Hamlet* and other early modern plays, as I will explore later in this section, but also from later Gothic novels. In *The Castle of Otranto*, Walpole appears to have shied away from fully engaging with *memento mori* and death, even though he appropriated and commodified the aesthetic of death in the creation of the Gothic genre. As Manfred looks upon the newly

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<sup>43</sup> Marjorie Garber, "'Remember Me': 'Memento Mori' Figures in Shakespeare's Plays", *Renaissance Drama*, 12 (1981), 3-25.

deceased body of his only son and heir, he finds himself dwelling on the giant helmet that killed his son rather than the true symbol of grief and *memento mori* which he is confronted with in the form of his son's corpse. Walpole describes Conrad's death as a 'spectacle', and those who witnessed it as 'spectators', as if they are but watching a scene from a play, but although the 'bleeding mangled remains' of Conrad are visible, the corpse is not the true focus of the scene.<sup>44</sup> Instead, it is the helmet, which is said to be a 'hundred times more large than any casque ever made for human being', that is the object of 'curiosity' in the scene.<sup>45</sup> I will return to the representation of death and the dead body as a spectacle several times during this chapter but Walpole does not dwell on the death scene, despite describing it as a spectacle, so there is little to say in regards to the representation of death in *The Castle of Otranto*. Conrad's death does remind Manfred of an ancient prophecy, prompting him to examine his own mortality and consider the preservation of his bloodline, but Manfred's attention is solely focused on the giant helmet rather than the 'disfigured corpse' of his only son, so the object of remembrance is not the corpse.<sup>46</sup> Walpole shifts the purpose of *memento mori* away from the corpse and onto an ominous and potentially ridiculous inanimate object and, while Walpole's helmet serves the same purpose of Yorick's skull in *Hamlet* as it forces Manfred to contemplate death and his own mortality, the helmet lacks the religious symbolism of the corpse and thus, Walpole is appropriating the symbolic meaning of *memento mori* without fully committing to the aesthetic of death at this point in the novel.

There is only one other clear moment of *memento mori* which occurs in the fifth chapter of the novel when Frederic discovers 'the fleshless jaws and empty sockets of a skeleton, wrapt in a hermit's cowl'.<sup>47</sup> In this instance, the skeleton is merely used to shock

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<sup>44</sup> Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, ed. by Nick Groom (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 18, p. 20.

<sup>45</sup> Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, p. 18, p. 20.

<sup>46</sup> Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, p. 19.

<sup>47</sup> Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, p. 98.

and scare both Frederick and the reader as Walpole finally commits to the aesthetic of *memento mori* but, unlike the helmet which took on the symbolism of *memento mori* at the beginning of the novel, the skeleton is merely part of the aesthetic of the novel and does not inspire either remembrance nor a contemplation of human mortality and, instead, the aesthetic of *memento mori* is adopted to instil horror and terror within the reader. After Frederic's short encounter with the skeleton the novel swiftly moves away from *memento mori* and towards the supernatural as the 'spectre' of the hermit appears before Frederic.<sup>48</sup> Walpole's novel separates the image of *memento mori* from its symbolic meaning, appropriating both aspects to enhance the aesthetic and atmosphere of the novel, turning the dead body into a spectacle which creates a sense of horror and terror within the reader.

If Walpole's novel was unusually disinterested in the corpse and other traditional images of *memento mori* compared to its 'offspring' then perhaps exploring the representation of *memento mori* in later Gothic novels will reveal more about the Gothic's appropriation and commodification of the imagery and symbolism of *memento mori*.<sup>49</sup> Matthew Lewis' Gothic drama *The Castle Spectre* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* both explore common images of *memento mori*, such as the cadaver monument and the *danse macabre* but they too, like Walpole, transform the dead or decaying body into a spectacle for the audience or reader, using symbols of *memento mori* to create an atmosphere of horror and terror but, unlike Walpole, fully committing to the aesthetic of *memento mori* by focusing on the body.

Matthew Lewis' *The Castle Spectre*, first performed on the 14th of December 1797 at Drury Lane, dramatises the image of the cadaver monument which, as explained in the first section of this chapter, was a common form of *memento mori* which depicted the physical

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<sup>48</sup> Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, p. 98.

<sup>49</sup> Shapira, 2.

transition between life and death. Lewis' play was popular in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, and the script went through eleven printed editions from 1798 to 1803. Eight editions were printed in London in 1798 alone with other editions being printed in Dublin (1798), Cork (1799), and Boston, Massachusetts (c.1799).<sup>50</sup> Despite the play violating eighteenth-century conventions of taste by depicting death on stage, it was staged forty-seven times before the closure of the theatres in June 1798.<sup>51</sup> Contemporary theatre reviews often praised the actors but most drew attention to the distasteful nature of certain aspects of the play, particularly its preoccupation with death and the supernatural.<sup>52</sup> Dale Townshend acknowledges that the play is, like *The Castle of Otranto*, indebted to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Townshend states that Lewis rewrote 'Shakespeare in *The Castle Spectre*' but only replicated two aspects of Shakespeare's play: 'the tragic dimensions of the revenge motif and the lessons in ghostliness inscribed in Hamlet's observations concerning the unsettling presence'.<sup>53</sup> Lewis also replicated the figure of the ghost on stage, through the character of Evelina, but Townshend notes that it is the 'unsettling presence' of the spectre, the terror and fear felt by Hamlet during his encounters with the ghost of his father, that Lewis utilises within the play.<sup>54</sup> James Robert Allard offers a comprehensive examination of the spectacle of the spectre in *The Castle Spectre*, discussing how Lewis baited his audience 'without any spectacular theatrics, masking the lack of significant action with excessive hints, allusions, and discussion of violence' as he relied 'on the audience's knowledge of Gothic traditions

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<sup>50</sup> Matthew Lewis, *The Castle Spectre: A Drama. In Five Acts* (London: printed for J. Bell, NO. 148, Oxford-Street, 1798); Lewis, *The Castle Spectre: A Drama. In Five Acts* (Dublin: printed by G. Folingsby, 59, Dame-Street, 1798); Lewis, *The Castle Spectre: A Drama. In Five Acts* (Cork: printed by A. Edwards and J. Haly, Booksellers, 1799); Lewis, *The Castle Spectre: A Drama. In Five Acts* (Boston, Mass: Sold by David West at the bookstore, no. 56, Cornhill, c.1799).

<sup>51</sup> See: John Nichols, 'Theatrical Register', *The Gentleman's Magazine: And Historical Chronicle*, Jan. 1736-Dec. 1833, 68 (1798), p. 641.

<sup>52</sup> Tobias George Smollett, 'The Castle Spectre; a Drama', *The Critical Review, or, Annals of Literature* (1798), 476-478 (476).

<sup>53</sup> Dale Townshend, 'Gothic and the Ghost of Hamlet', in *Gothic Shakespeares*, ed. by John Drakakis and Dale Townshend (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 60-97 (p. 85).

<sup>54</sup> Townshend, 'Gothic and the Ghost of Hamlet', p. 85.



and [used] that knowledge to ensure that the audience [was] prepared for the appearance of Evelina', the actual spectre.<sup>55</sup> Townshend's observation about the 'lessons in ghostliness' that Lewis learnt from *Hamlet* are also transferred to the living in Lewis' play as he explores the 'unsettling nature' of those who are on the edge of death.<sup>56</sup>

Lewis' main spectacle may be the spectre of Evelina but alongside descriptions of the supernatural Lewis' play also depicts a man on the edge of death, emaciated and weak after being incarcerated in a dungeon for sixteen years. It is through the emaciated and decaying body of this man, who is still alive but appears dead, that Lewis commodifies the imagery of *memento mori* most clearly. Act five, scene three of *The Castle Spectre* begins with a detailed description of the scene setting, painting it as a 'gloomy subterraneous Dungeon' in which a man has been held captive and Reginald, the man imprisoned in the dungeon, is described in the stage directions as being 'pale and emaciated' with 'his hair hanging wildly about his face, and a chain bound round his body', resembling a corpse more than a living man.<sup>57</sup> Although *The Castle Spectre* was a staged play, theatricalising death for the eighteenth-century stage, the script that Lewis had published was just as popular as the theatre production, meaning that stage directions such as these were of benefit to the reader not just the cast of the production. Reginald is a visual representation of the transition between life and death as he is balanced on the edge of the divide, simultaneously alive and dead as he resembles a living corpse or a 'spectre'. Reginald claims to have been locked in the dungeon for 'sixteen years', leaving him 'emaciated and stiff from long disuse', like a corpse, and Angela believes that he is a 'ghost' or 'fearful vision' when she first encounters him, placing

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<sup>55</sup> James Robert Allard, 'Spectres, Spectators, Spectacles: Matthew Lewis's *The Castle Spectre*', *Gothic Studies*, 3.3 (2001), 246-261 (256).

<sup>56</sup> Townshend, 'Gothic and the Ghost of Hamlet', p. 85.

<sup>57</sup> Matthew Lewis, *The Castle Spectre: A Drama. In Five Acts. First Performed at the Theatre Royal, Drury-Lane, on Thursday, December 14, 1797. By M.G. Lewis, Esq. M. P. Author of The Monk, &c.* (London: Printed for J Bell, No. 148 Oxford-Street, 1798), p. 88.

him, at first, within a Walpolean image of *memento mori* which is much more focused on the ghost or the spectre than the physical body.<sup>58</sup> However, as she draws attention to his death-like features, the sunken eyes and ‘matted hair’, Angela realises that Reginald is alive but on the edge of death.<sup>59</sup> Reginald resides in the liminal space between life and death, not only because he is dying but due to his skeletal appearance. As a living embodiment of the liminal space between life and death, Reginald can be read as a symbol of *memento mori* which mirrors and commodifies the imagery of the early modern cadaver monument, using its gruesome aesthetic to create drama rather than exploring its traditional, religious use. Lewis turns Reginald’s body into a spectacle, using his decaying body and death-like appearance to frighten the audience or the reader, and it is through the spectacle of the dying body that Lewis truly commodifies *memento mori*.

Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, first published in 1818, explores various aspects of *memento mori*, from the corpse and the transition between life and death to the *danse macabre*. As the deteriorating corpse was a frequent image of *memento mori*, alongside the skeleton and the skull, Shelley’s creature can be read as an example of *memento mori* which reminds Victor of death throughout the novel. Shelley, like Walpole and Lewis, turns the dead or decaying body in a spectacle to shock or frighten her reader and, like many other Gothic writers, Shelley is appropriating the aesthetic of *memento mori*, to create an atmosphere of death and decay in *Frankenstein*. Like Lewis, Shelley explores the liminal space between life and death but, instead of transforming the dying body into a spectacle, Shelley explores and theatricalises the transition between life and death through a reanimated corpse. Victor’s creation was assembled from a collection of body-parts which Victor scavenged in an early example of bodysnatching. Victor details how he collected ‘bones from

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<sup>58</sup> Lewis, *The Castle Spectre*, pp. 88-92.

<sup>59</sup> Lewis, *The Castle Spectre*, p. 92.

charnel-houses and disturbed, with profane fingers, the tremendous secrets of the human frame', frequenting the 'dissecting room and the slaughter-house' for his search for 'materials'.<sup>60</sup> David S. Hogsette states that '[i]n order to understand the very nature and cause of life, Victor ironically concludes from the paradoxical logic of materialism that he must study death and natural decay, presenting life as 'nothing more than the epiphenomena of packets of energy in motion', and Victor spends a significant amount of time studying the transition between life and death to understand 'how the fine form of man was degraded and wasted' in death.<sup>61</sup> Victor 'beheld the corruption of death succeed to the blooming cheek of life' and 'saw how the worm inherited the wonders of the eye and brain', causing him to become fascinated by 'the change from life to death, and death to life' which culminated in his creation of the creature which embodies the transformation from life to death and death to life.<sup>62</sup> For Hogsette, it is ironic that Victor attempts to discover the secrets of life by studying death and decay' because, 'for all the attention to death in his attempt to understand life, he learns nothing of life and courts only death' and this leads to another reading in which Victor's creature can be read as a personification of Death.<sup>63</sup>

The personified figure of Death is another frequent image of *memento mori* and, just as Death does in Holbein's illustration of the Monk, the creature haunts and stalks Victor with 'one hand [...] stretched out, seemingly to detain' him.<sup>64</sup> Here, Shelley is drawing upon the imagery of *danse macabre* which demonstrates 'the inevitability of death and the unpredictability of its arrival' and, like Lewis, Shelley appropriates religious imagery without

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<sup>60</sup> Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein; Or, the Modern Prometheus*, the 1818 text, ed. by Marilyn Butler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 36-37.

<sup>61</sup> David S. Hogsette, 'Metaphysical Intersections in Frankenstein: Mary Shelley's Theistic Investigation of Scientific Materialism and Transgressive Autonomy', *Christianity & Literature*, 60.4 (2011), 531-559 (550); Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. 34.

<sup>62</sup> Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. 34.

<sup>63</sup> Hogsette, 551.

<sup>64</sup> Holbein; Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. 40.

committing to fully exploring the intentions behind the image.<sup>65</sup> Victor's creature, taking on the role of Death, reaches out his hand towards Victor, inviting him to participate in a Gothic dance of death which Victor avoids until Death inevitably catches him. The *danse macabre*, a popular image in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century religion, both in Catholicism and Protestantism, usually depicts the personification of Death summoning representatives from all walks of life to dance along to the grave and it is a form of *memento mori* which reminds people of the fragility of life and the inevitability of death.<sup>66</sup> Victor's creature pursues him as he flees from Geneva, demanding that Victor creates him a mate and threatening the lives of Victor's friends and loved-ones if he refuses. It is after Victor's refusal to create a mate for the creature that the creature takes on the role of Death, first murdering Clerval in England and leaving his body in Ireland for Victor to discover and then stalking Victor back to Geneva where the creature strangles Elizabeth, Victor's new wife. Although the creature never murders Victor, he is a harbinger of death that haunts Victor until he dies of hypothermia in the Arctic. Shelley recreates the *danse macabre* in a Gothic manner, reframing the allegory for a new audience, as Victor's creature reminds him of the fragility of life and emphasises the vanity of earthly possessions by destroying everything that Victor loves, including his dream to create beautiful life from death and decay. Just as Death does in the *danse macabre*, the creature leads Victor into the grave.

While creating her own version of the *danse macabre*, Shelley is also engaging with an established convention of appropriating and celebrating the *danse macabre*, one which began during the sixteenth century when the *danse* was most popular. The appropriation of the *danse macabre* can be seen most clearly in the woodcuts of Hans Holbein, as I discussed in the introduction to this chapter. Shelley, although perhaps not consciously, tapped into the

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<sup>65</sup> Davis, 97.

<sup>66</sup> See: Bernt Notke, *Danse Macabre*, late fifteenth century, Oil on Canvas, 157 x 750cm, St Nicholas' Church, Tallinn.

recognisable image of the *danse macabre* that both commemorates and commodifies the *danse* for a new audience but Shelley's interpretation of the *danse macabre* feeds into the 'Gothic' aesthetic of her novel, offering a contemplation of life and death which is motivated by scientific discovery rather than religion. Shelley's use of science to create an alternate form of *memento mori* will be examined later in this chapter but, first, I want to argue that a pre-history of Shelley's celebration and appropriation of *memento mori* can be found in early modern literature.

Gothic writers clearly appropriated the aesthetic of *memento mori* to create an atmosphere of horror and terror within their novels and play, transforming death into a spectacle which sought to entice and frighten their audiences and readers without, necessarily, celebrating origins of *memento mori*. I now want to suggest that there is a pre-history of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Gothic's appropriation of the aesthetic of *memento mori* in early modern drama as several plays transform objects of *memento mori*, particularly skulls and skeletons, into a spectacle of horror and terror. I also want to suggest that Lewis' and Shelley's use of the 'live' body as a site of *memento mori* which, again, is transformed into a spectacle, can also be found in early modern tragedies which explore the liminal space between life and death. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* will briefly be analysed due to its influence on two of the Gothic texts mentioned in this chapter but this section will focus mainly on two responses to *Hamlet*, Henry Chettle's *The Tragedy of Hoffman* and Thomas Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy*, both of which celebrate and appropriate *memento mori*, often removing *memento mori* from its religious context to transform it into an aesthetic of death and decay while still offering their audiences a transcendent experience.

As previously explored, Horace Walpole borrowed several scenes from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, utilising the figure of the ghost to create a form of *memento mori* that was more

appropriate for his own era, although not as effective as traditional forms of *memento mori*, and, as already stated, Marjorie Garber acknowledges that the ghost's parting cry of 'remember me' in Act one, scene five of *Hamlet* is 'not only an invitation for revenge but also a more generalised *memento mori* sentiment'.<sup>67</sup> However, *Hamlet* does offer us a far more established representation of *memento mori* through the skull of Yorick and this form of *memento mori* both celebrates the religious origins of *memento mori* and appropriates the aesthetic of *memento mori* to create an aesthetic of death and decay. *Hamlet*'s pre-Gothic potential is often centred around the skull of Yorick, with scholars including John Drakakis, Elizabeth Williamson, and Catherine Belsey all writing about the Gothic potential of Yorick's skull. I do not intend to offer a new reading of Shakespeare's pre-Gothic interpretation of *memento mori* and I will, instead, be focusing mainly on Chettle's *The Tragedy of Hoffman* and Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy*, but as many of the texts analysed in this chapter, both Gothic and early modern, are responses to *Hamlet* it is vital that the play's concept of *memento mori* is briefly outlined.

Act five, scene one of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is perhaps the most famous example of *memento mori* on the British stage as Hamlet holds the skull of Yorick and remembers Yorick's life:

Alas, poor Yorick. I knew him, Horatio, a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy. He hath borne me on his back a thousand times. And now how abhorred in my imagination it is! My gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft. Where be your gibes now, your gambols, your songs, your flashes of

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<sup>67</sup> William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. by G. R. Hibbard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 1.5.91; Garber, 4.

merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one now to mock your own grinning? Quite chop-fallen?<sup>68</sup>

Hamlet gives this short speech while holding the skull of Yorick, gazing into its eye sockets and displaying it for the audience to witness. However, it is only after Hamlet puts down the skull, which lurks on stage for the entire scene as a constant symbol of *memento mori*, that Hamlet begins to philosophise on the mortality of mankind:

As thus: Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth into dust. The dust is earth, of earth we make loam, and why of that loam whereto he was converted, might they not stop a beer-barrel?

Imperious Caesar, dead and turned to clay,

Might stop a hole to keep the wind away.

O, that that earth, which kept the world in awe,

Should patch a wall t' expel the winter's flaw.

But soft, but soft. Aside. Here comes the King.<sup>69</sup>

Shakespeare's representation of *memento mori* in this scene is rooted in the religious practice of mourning and the skull becomes an object through which Hamlet's grief, perhaps for his father rather than Yorick, can be expressed. Steven Mullaney states that 'the confrontation with Yorick's skull produces the one clear instance of successful mourning in the play' and Duke Pesta suggests 'as Hamlet cradles the skull of Yorick and begins to experience the physicality of death first hand, he still retains much of the ancient philosophical tradition' that *memento mori* is tied to, emphasising that *Hamlet* provides a somewhat accurate picture of

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<sup>68</sup> *Hamlet*, 5.1.175-183.

<sup>69</sup> *Hamlet*, 5.1.197-207.

what *memento mori* was intended to inspire.<sup>70</sup> For Mullaney, Yorick's skull 'recalls and makes present in [Hamlet's] mind the living figure, the vital memory from his childhood' even though 'what is alive in memory and imagination seems reduced to this, the decayed skull, in a moment of visceral revulsion'.<sup>71</sup> The intimate connection between Hamlet and Yorick that Mullaney is referring to allows Hamlet to move into the transcendent. However, both the distance from Yorick's death and, as Pesta acknowledges, the reality of the skull 'provides enough distance for Hamlet to retreat to the familiar and comfortable confines of the *memento mori*'.<sup>72</sup> Yorick's skull, although no longer held aloft for all to see, inspires Hamlet's contemplation of life and death even if Hamlet shifts the focus onto the historical figures of Alexander the Great and Caesar, both of whom are comfortably removed from Hamlet, rather than Yorick. Pesta states that 'Hamlet's physical encounter with the skull of Yorick and the corpse of Ophelia allows him, for the first time, to see beyond the macabre trappings of *memento mori*; he now sees the transcendence that such images are meant to invoke'.<sup>73</sup> When Hamlet first enters the scene, finding the gravediggers throwing skulls out of their graves, Hamlet focuses on the physical qualities of the bones, indulging in the 'macabre trappings of *memento mori*' that Pesta refers.<sup>74</sup> However, as Pesta states, after his encounters with the skull of Yorick and Ophelia's corpse, both personalised experiences of *memento mori*, Hamlet moves into a true contemplation of death and towards an understanding that death is universal.

While this is true, the macabre image of the skull is still present on stage during this speech, contributing to the aesthetic of death that characterises revenge tragedies, and

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<sup>70</sup> Steven Mullaney, 'Mourning and Misogyny: *Hamlet*, *The Revenger's Tragedy*, and the Final Progress of Elizabeth I, 1600-1607', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 45.2 (1994), 139-162 (156); Pesta, 33.

<sup>71</sup> Mullaney, 155.

<sup>72</sup> Mullaney, 155; Pesta, 33.

<sup>73</sup> Pesta, 36.

<sup>74</sup> Pesta, 36.



Hamlet's exploration of the macabre is intrinsically entwined with his contemplation of morality as he understands the skull as a symbol of death beneath life, thus representing the dual nature of *memento mori* in just one scene. *Hamlet* is perhaps the best example of how *memento mori* was both appropriated and celebrated on the early modern stage as Hamlet's encounter with the skull of Yorick both provides the audience with a religious experience, one which explores the transcendence that images of *memento mori* were intended to inspire, and it commodifies the macabre imagery of *memento mori* to create an atmosphere of horror and terror.

Although *Hamlet* commodifies the aesthetic of *memento mori*, it does so by appropriating the religious experience that *memento mori* offers as well as the image of the dead body but, as explored earlier, Gothic literature often commodified the aesthetic of *memento mori* by transforming the object of *memento mori*, usually a corpse or a decaying body, into a spectacle for the audience. *The Tragedy of Hoffman* and *The Revenger's Tragedy* can be analysed as potentially pre-Gothic through their theatricalisation of death and *memento mori*, which transforms *memento mori* into an aesthetic, and their removal of the religious contemplation that is experienced in *Hamlet*.

Unlike *Hamlet*, which was the inspiration for the Gothic genre, *The Tragedy of Hoffman* was considered a 'rare' or 'scarce' play during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries but it was available to buy at various points throughout the eighteenth century as private collections were sold on by booksellers. There are entries for the first quarto of *The Tragedy of Hoffman* in Thomas Payne's catalogues from 1739, 1761, 1771, 1772, 1775, and 1797 with prices varying between one shilling and six pence to five shillings while Leigh and Sotheby featured the quarto in *A catalogue of the very curious and valuable library of the late Mr. James William Dodd* in 1797 and, in the same year, *A catalogue of the curious and*

valuable library of George Smyth, Esq.<sup>75</sup> The first quarto of the play, printed in 1631, was anonymised and many eighteenth-century booksellers attributed the play to Hugh Perry, the original printer, rather than to Henry Chettle.<sup>76</sup> In 1796, Edmond Malone stated that the play was ‘the only one now extant’ and ‘entirely written by’ Henry Chettle, although he was the author of over thirty plays, and various Shakespearean scholars, including Johnson and Steevens, quoted the play in their observations on the works of Shakespeare.<sup>77</sup> Bell’s edition of Shakespeare’s works includes Johnson and Steevens’ references to the play which draw comparisons to *All’s Well That Ends Well*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Richard III*.<sup>78</sup> Charles Lamb did not include the play in his 1808 collection of *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets*. Despite Chettle’s play having such a small presence in the eighteenth century, it can still be examined as pre-Gothic through its appropriation of the aesthetic of *memento mori*.

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<sup>75</sup> Thomas Payne, *Thomas Payne, Bookseller in Bishopsgate-Street, His Catalogue of 400 Scarce Old Plays in 48 vols* (London: Thomas Payne, 1739); Payne, *A Catalogue of a Large Collection of the Best Books, in all Parts of Learning, in Greek, Latin, French, Italian and English, Containing Several Curious Libraries, Lately Purchased* (London: Thomas Payne, 1761); Payne, *A Catalogue of Upwards of Twenty Thousand Volumes, in which are a Great Number of Scarce and Curious Books and Prints, Being Several Libraries Lately Purchased* (London: Thomas Payne, 1771); Payne, *A Catalogue of a Very Large and Curious Collection of Books, in all Branches of Learning; In which are Included the Libraries of the Late Rev. Dr. Mason, ... the Rev. Mr. Ray* (London: Thomas Payne, 1772); Payne, *A Catalogue of a Very Fine Collection of Books, in all Branches of Learning; Containing Near Thirty Thousand Volumes* (London: Thomas Payne, 1775); Payne, *A New Catalogue, for the Year 1797, of a Valuable Collection of Books Ancient and Modern, in Various Languages, and in Every Branch of Literature* (London: Thomas Payne, 1797).

<sup>76</sup> See: Samuel Paterson, *Bibliotheca Anglica Curiosa. A Catalogue of Several Thousand Printed Books and Tracts, (chiefly English) in Every Branch of Knowledge; ... Part I. Which will be Sold by Auction, by Samuel Paterson, ... on Monday, March the 25th, 1771. ...* (London: 1771), p. 83.

<sup>77</sup> Edmond Malone, *An Inquiry into the Authenticity of Certain Miscellaneous Papers and Legal Instruments, published Dec. 24, MDCCXCV. And Attributed to Shakspeare, Queen Elizabeth, and Henry, Earl of Southampton: Illustrated by Fac-similes of the Genuine Hand-writing of that Nobleman, and of Her Majesty; A New Fac-simile of the Hand-writing of Shakspeare, Never Before Exhibited; And Other Authentick Documents: In a Letter Addressed to the Right Hon. James, Earl of Charlemont, By Edmond Malone, Esq* (London: printed by H. Baldwin: for T. Cadell, jun. and W. Davies, (successors to Mr. Cadell,) in the strand, 1796), p. 279; George Steevens uses several examples from *The Tragedy of Hoffman* to explain Shakespeare’s allusions to the ‘burning crown’ in *Richard III*. See: *The Plays of William Shakspeare. in Fifteen Volumes. with the Corrections and Illustrations of Various Commentators. To Which are Added, Notes by Samuel Johnson and George Steevens. The Fourth Edition. Revised and Augmented (with a Glossarial Index) by the Editor of Dodsley's Collection of Old Plays, ed. by Isaac Reed* (London: printed [by H. Baldwin], 1793), p. 609.

<sup>78</sup> Samuel Johnson and George Steevens, *The Dramatic Writings of Will. Shakspeare, with the Notes of All the Various Commentators; Printed Complete from the Best Editions of Sam. Johnson and Geo. Steevens*, vol. 8 (London: printed for, and under the direction of, John Bell, British Library, Strand, Bookseller to His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, 1885-1888), p. 66; *The Dramatic Writings of Will. Shakspeare*, vol. 16, p. 126; John Bell, *Bell's Edition of Shakspeare*, vol. 4 (London: 1788), p. 45.

*Memento mori*, as discussed in regards to *Hamlet*, *Frankenstein*, and *The Castle Spectre*, was both celebrated and appropriated by Chettle as the skeleton of Hoffman's father both inspires remembrance and acts as motivation for Hoffman's revenge. Hoffman's constant remembrance and mourning of his father drives the play forward and although Chettle removes many of the religious aspects of *memento mori*, the skeleton still acts as a site of remembrance, allowing Hoffman to grieve for his father's death. Despite Hoffman's grief and mourning, the dead body also becomes a site of spectacle in *The Tragedy of Hoffman*, devoid of its religious meaning and reduced to a mere object used to scare and shock the audience and to create a macabre atmosphere. From the very first scene, Chettle undermines any serious depiction of *memento mori* by using the skeleton as a prop intended to shock both the characters and the audience. Skeletons are dramatically revealed several times during the course of the play, most notably in the first scene of the play and in Act five, scene three.<sup>79</sup> At the beginning of the play, Hoffman is seemingly alone on stage, soliloquising to melancholy itself but he soon 'strikes open a curtain' to reveal a body concealed behind it.<sup>80</sup> Hoffman quickly establishes that this skeleton hanging on the stage belong to his deceased father, beginning the process of both remembrance and revenge and drawing the audience's attention to the constant presence of these bones on the stage.<sup>81</sup> As the play was not printed until 1631, long after Chettle's death, which is dated sometime between 1603 and 1607, it is unclear whether this is his stage direction. Despite being unable to determine whether Chettle wrote the stage direction in question, the printed version of 1631 would presumably have been based on the production of the play which the title page makes reference to, indicating that this dramatic striking open of the curtain did occur on stage at

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<sup>79</sup> Henry Chettle, 'The Tragedy of Hoffman', in *Five Revenge Tragedies*, ed. by Emma Smith (London: Penguin Classics, 2012), 1.1, 1.3, 5.1, 5.3.

<sup>80</sup> *The Tragedy of Hoffman*, 1.1.

<sup>81</sup> *The Tragedy of Hoffman*, 1.1.14.

some point before the play was printed in 1631.<sup>82</sup> Hoffman is talking to himself at this point of the play, with only his father's skeleton for company, so this dramatic unveiling of the skeleton is for the benefit of the audience rather than a character on stage. It is a moment of true spectacle, intended to elicit a reaction from the audience, perhaps a gasp of surprise or horror, and despite Hoffman using the skeleton to remember his father and to examine the boundaries between life and death, this moment of spectacle undermines Hoffman's soliloquy by revealing the theatrical commodification of *memento mori*. Chettle used the macabre image of the skeleton, along with the sudden theatrical reveal, to create an atmosphere of horror and terror which is echoed in chapter five of *The Castle of Otranto*. *The Tragedy of Hoffman's* dramatisation of *memento mori* in this scene can be read as pre-Gothic as it seems to have anticipated the ways in which *memento mori*, particularly the decaying body, was used by Gothic writers, such as Matthew Lewis in *The Castle Spectre*. Hoffman re-enacts his father's death by killing Otho, the son of one of the men involved in the execution of Hoffman's father, and he strips the flesh from Otho's corpse in a performative ceremony, as a form of remembrance of his father and an act of revenge. Hoffman continues to use the bones of his father and Otho as macabre decorations throughout the duration of the play, and they are also used as weapons against him, but in this scene, Hoffman transforms Otho's body into a spectacle of death, using the mutilated body to inspire horror and terror within the audience.

The dramatic uncovering of skeletons continues throughout the play. Act five, scene one reveals the bones of Hoffman's father and Otho to Saxony, Roderick, Mathias, and Lucibel.<sup>83</sup> Lucibel's near-death trauma causes her to assume that the skeletons are merely 'lean porters starved for lack of meat' but the rest of the company are shocked by the sudden

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<sup>82</sup> Henry Chettle, *The Tragedy of Hoffman or a Reuenge For a Father* (London: Printed by I. N. for Hugh Perry [etc.], 1631).

<sup>83</sup> Henry Chettle, 'The Tragedy of Hoffman', in *Five Revenge Tragedies*, ed. by Emma Smith (London: Penguin Classics, 2012), 5.1; Chettle uses Lucibel, Lucibell, and Lucibella interchangeably but the character's name will be standardised to 'Lucibel' for the purposes of this chapter.

appearance of the skeletons.<sup>84</sup> This revelation of the skeleton is much less melodramatic than Hoffman's initial drawing back of the curtain but their presence on stage, as objects to shock the characters, undermines their role as objects of *memento mori*. Towards the end of the play, Hoffman is shown the skeletons of Otho and his father and, although the appearance of these particular skeletons would have had little impact on Hoffman, the presence of the skeletons in this scene is used to imply that, soon, Hoffman's bones will hang alongside them. Here, as Pesta stated, Hoffman is forced to recognise the meaning behind the skeleton as he is about to become an example of *memento mori*. *Memento mori* was also intended to inspire those who gazed upon the object to contemplate their own deaths, as I have explored in *Frankenstein* and *Hamlet*, but Pesta argues that Hoffman cannot 'recognize the *memento mori* confronting him' as a reminder of his own death because it is also a symbol of revenge, driving him forward rather than urging him to pause and contemplate death.<sup>85</sup> Pesta goes on to claim that 'Hoffman becomes in death that which he could not recognise in life, a crowned exemplum of the *memento mori* tradition ready to take its place in the graveyard and the anatomical theatre' and, although the audience does not witness Hoffman's bones hanging alongside those of his father and Otho, Hoffman's captors make it clear that he will join them ensuring that, as Pesta acknowledges, Hoffman's own body will become a depiction of *memento mori*, simultaneously acting as a reminder those who look upon him that death comes to all and as a spectacle to shock spectators.<sup>86</sup> However, Hoffman's failure to recognise the symbolism of *memento mori* reduces the skeleton and the corpse to mere props which drive the play forward. Chettle acknowledges his commodification of *memento mori* through metatheatre as he, through Hoffman, draws attention to the artificiality of the play and to the spectacle of the body. *The Tragedy of Hoffman* often references the actual stage on

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<sup>84</sup> *The Tragedy of Hoffman*, 5.1.29.

<sup>85</sup> Pesta, 29.

<sup>86</sup> Pesta, 31.

which the play is performed, with Hoffman referring to the events of the play as a ‘tragedy’ twice within the play.<sup>87</sup> This meta-theatricality further emphasises the commodification of the *memento mori* as it makes clear that the aesthetic of death is used for entertainment and, ultimately, profit.

Chettle’s indulgence in meta-theatricality, especially in the first act of *The Tragedy of Hoffman*, highlights the spectacle of the macabre as Hoffman promises more death and blood to his audience, enticing them to remain in the theatre. Hoffman refers to Otho’s death as merely the ‘prologue to a tragedy’ as he guarantees that the next act will be ‘fuller’ with the bodies of those connected to the murder of his father.<sup>88</sup> In this moment of the play, the corpse loses all religious significance as the destruction of the body becomes a form of entertainment. In this way, *The Tragedy of Hoffman* reflects the theatrical nature of public executions, as the body is significantly reduced in social value, but it also emphasises the aesthetic value of the corpse on stage as it is the visual image of the body which becomes vital to the play’s aesthetic rather than its religious. By describing Otho’s extremely violent death, the subsequent stripping of his flesh, and the displaying of his skeleton alongside the bones of Hoffman’s father as ‘but the prologue to the ensuing play’, Hoffman promises the audience a visual spectacle.<sup>89</sup> Chettle deliberately draws attention to the artificial nature of what occurs on stage, emphasising that what the audience is witnessing is merely a spectacle and, in turn, providing his audience with an experience which echoes the Gothic’s appropriation and commodification of *memento mori* through the spectacle of death.

While Chettle does focus on the dual role of the skeleton, as spectacle and symbol, he also appropriates the imagery and symbolism of the cadaver monument which is brought to

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<sup>87</sup> *The Tragedy of Hoffman*, 1.3.18, 5.2.171.

<sup>88</sup> *The Tragedy of Hoffman*, 1.3.18, 1.3.24.

<sup>89</sup> *The Tragedy of Hoffman*, 1.1.229.

life by two characters, Lucibel and Martha. Chettle, in a way that anticipates the works of Lewis and Shelley, used the image of the live body as a symbol of *memento mori*, exploring and theatricalising the boundary between life and death to transform the body into a spectacle. Lucibel straddles the chasm between life and death, stabbed by Mathias and seemingly dying on stage but said to be breathing by Rodrick who carries her dead body to be embalmed: 'There's life in Lucibel, for I feel / A breath, more odoriferus than balm / Thirl through the coral portals of her lips'.<sup>90</sup> Lucibel is simultaneously alive and dead, symbolising the hybridisation frequently located in the actor's body as her actor is alive while she is supposedly a lifeless corpse on stage. Her corpse, in particular, lacks the 'stable meaning' so often sought by Protestant reformers as not only is her actor simultaneously alive and dead but so is the character as Rodorick insists that she is still alive.<sup>91</sup> To combat Rodorick's insistence that Lucibel is alive, Hoffman transforms Lucibel's lifeless body into a site of *memento mori*, recalling that 'death swallows all' in a clear reference to the religious symbolism of *memento mori*.<sup>92</sup> Lucibel does, in fact, recover from death in Act four of the play, leaving the liminal space between life and death which she previously occupied, but the short time in which she was between life and death echoes the role of the actor who, whilst alive, must act as a corpse and allow their living body to be used as a prop. Both the character's body and actor's body are commodified for on-stage remembrance and, thus, becoming a living representation of *memento mori*. Although Hoffman's attempts to turn Lucibel's living body into a site of *memento mori* can be read as a deeply religious rendering of *memento mori* as it signifies a connection between the corporeal and the spiritual, a moment in the play where the corpse becomes symbolic of the spirit it once held rather than merely a collection of organs and bones, Lucibel's recovery from death undermines this

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<sup>90</sup> *The Tragedy of Hoffman*, 3.1.228-230.

<sup>91</sup> Peter Stallybrass, 'Reading the Body: "The Revenger's Tragedy" and the Jacobean Theater of Consumption', *Renaissance Drama*, 18 (1987), 121-148 (127).

<sup>92</sup> *The Tragedy of Hoffman*, 3.1.246.

reading as her survival renders this moment of religious transcendence useless. Although Hoffman's attempts to transform Lucibel into a site of *memento mori* are thwarted, Chettle continues to transform the dying body into a spectacle and, to do so, he appropriates the language and imagery of *memento mori*.

Martha, although differently to Lucibel, also attempts to occupy the liminal space between life and death, intending to lock herself away in a cell, 'made like a tomb' until her death. Martha's lines are in response to the death of her son and so her decision to entomb herself can be read as a form of *memento mori* as it fulfils *memento mori*'s call to remember and reflect.<sup>93</sup> Martha is also creating an image of decay, one that echoes cadaver monuments of the Middle Ages, as she intends to slowly waste away in a self-made tomb. Therefore, Martha's plan to entomb herself as a form of mourning represents the original intent of *memento mori* while simultaneously appropriating the imagery of a specific form of *memento mori*. This scene resembles, in particular, Lewis' *The Castle Spectre* but unlike in Lewis' play Chettle never realises Martha's plan on stage as she swiftly accepts Hoffman as the new Otho. Despite Chettle's unrealised vision, the imagery created in this short moment of the play dramatises aspects of medieval *memento mori*, turning *memento mori* and the cadaver monument into a spectacle of entertainment rather than a performance of remembrance. Chettle continuously transforms symbols of *memento mori* into a spectacle, appropriating the imagery of *memento mori* to create a sense of horror and terror within the play which mirrors the Gothic appropriation of the aesthetic of *memento mori*.

Thomas Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy*, another response to *Hamlet*, can also be read as potentially pre-Gothic due to its combination of celebrating and appropriating *memento mori*. *The Revenger's Tragedy* had a more interesting afterlife in the eighteenth

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<sup>93</sup> *The Tragedy of Hoffman*, 4.2.198.



century than Chettle's *The Tragedy of Hoffman* as it was reprinted in its entirety in *A select collection of old plays* by Dodsley which went through at least two editions in 1744 and 1780.<sup>94</sup> Dodsley's *Collection of Old Plays*, which featured *The Revenger's Tragedy* in volume four, was also available in the circulating libraries of Lowndes in London (c.1761), James Sibbald in Edinburgh (c.1786), David Ogilvy & Son in London (1797), and Meylers in Bath (c.1797).<sup>95</sup> These circulating libraries also carried a variety of Gothic novels as they were popular with the target audience of most circulating libraries and this would have posed an opportunity for early modern plays such as *The Revenger's Tragedy* and Gothic works such as Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1797) to be read alongside each other or, at least, be read by the same readers.<sup>96</sup> While the catalogues of circulating libraries do 'offer one of the most revealing views available of book publishing and reading in eighteenth-century Britain' as they were put together by the publishers of the time, it cannot be established how popular Dodsley's *Collection* was with readers and it is impossible to know if *The Revenger's Tragedy* was widely read, if at all, during the eighteenth century.<sup>97</sup> However, *The Revenger's Tragedy*, which was attributed to Cyril Tourner at this time, was quoted by various Shakespearean scholars in their collections of Shakespeare's works, suggesting that scholars of the time were well versed in the play even if the public was not.<sup>98</sup> Charles Lamb did include *The Revenger's Tragedy* in *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare*, although the play was attributed to Tourner, and he reprinted

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<sup>94</sup> Robert Dodsley, *A Select Collection of Old Plays* (London: printed for R. Dodsley in Pall-Mall, 1744).

<sup>95</sup> Thomas Lowndes, *A New Catalogue of Lowndes's Circulating Library, Consisting of Above Ten Thousand* (London: 1761); James Sibbald, *A New Catalogue of the Edinburgh Circulating Library* (Edinburgh: c.1786); David Ogilvy & Son, *Catalogue of the London and Westminster Circulating Library* (London: 1797); Meyler's Circulating Library, *A Catalogue of Meyler's Circulating Library, in Orange-Grove, Bath* (Bath: Meyler, c.1797).

<sup>96</sup> Meyler's Circulating Library, p. 80, p. 93.

<sup>97</sup> Edward H. Jacobs, 'Eighteenth-Century British Circulating Libraries and Cultural Book History', *Book History*, 6.1 (2003), 1-22 (1).

<sup>98</sup> George Steevens used *The Revenger's Tragedy* as an example when explaining Shakespeare's use of the word 'clung' in *Macbeth* and to explain the use of 'apprehensive' in *Henry IV, Part II*. See: *Bell's Edition of Shakspeare*, vol. 10 (London: Printed for, and under the direction of, John Bell, 1788), p. 141 and *Bell's edition of Shakspeare*, vol. 12 (London: Printed for, and under the direction of, John Bell, 1788), p. 97.

excerpts from a number of scenes, including Vindice's opening speech, Act one, scene two, and Act three, scene five.<sup>99</sup> Lamb did not print these scenes in the order in which they originally appeared in the play and he even begins some 'scenes' in the middle of a line, creating a mutilated version of the play which does not accurately represent the plot.<sup>100</sup>

Although Lamb did, perhaps, mutilate *The Revenger's Tragedy*, he reprinted several scenes which can be used to explore Middleton's appropriation of *memento mori*. Vindice's opening speech in the first scene of the play, in which he is talking to the skull of his fiancée, features a conventional approach to *memento mori*:

Thou sallow picture of my poisoned love,  
My study's ornament, thou shell of death,  
Once the bright face of my betrothed lady,  
When life and beauty naturally filled out  
These ragged imperfections,  
When two heaven-pointed diamonds were set  
In those unsightly rings<sup>101</sup>

As Ashley Dehnem Busse states, Vindice's opening speech establishes 'the notion that flesh is impermanent, subject to decay' while Stallybrass acknowledges that Vindice's 'awareness that the gaping sockets are "unsightly" leads to a curious displacement in Vindice's lament' as he focuses on the 'corruption' of the body.<sup>102</sup> Vindice is, in this opening scene of the play, re-enacting the contemplation on the fragility of life that *memento mori* inspires as he

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<sup>99</sup> Lamb, pp. 164-177.

<sup>100</sup> See: Lamb, p. 165 for an example of Lamb's 'mutilation of the text'.

<sup>101</sup> Thomas Middleton, 'The Revenger's Tragedy', in *Four Revenge Tragedies*, ed. by Katherine Eisaman Maus (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 1.1.14-20.

<sup>102</sup> Ashley Denham Busse, "'Quod Me Nutrit Me Destruit': Discovering the Abject on the Early Modern Stage", *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 43.1 (2013), 71-98 (88); Stallybrass, 'Reading the Body', 132.

addresses the anonymous skull, which is the skull of his 'betrothed', and reminisces about life and death.<sup>103</sup> Middleton appears to be offering his audience an experience of *memento mori* which is rooted firmly in the original intent of *memento mori*, that is, the contemplation of death and an acknowledgment that death is inevitable, but this scene is clearly a parody of Act five, scene one of *Hamlet*, in which Hamlet addresses the skull of Yorick, and, by parodying this scene, Middleton undermines the traditionally religious representation of *memento mori* as he uses the skull as a vehicle to mock the trappings of early modern revenge tragedies. The emptiness of Middleton's *memento mori* is emphasised by Vindice referring to Gloriana's skull as 'shell of death'.<sup>104</sup> This line works on two levels as Gloriana's skull is shell-like in appearance, empty and made of bone, but it is also a shell of *memento mori*, an empty vessel devoid of substance or meaning. Vindice also calls the skull his 'study's ornament' and 'ornament' implies that the skull is an accessory, something functional to be used, and a decoration.<sup>105</sup> It may also be a reference to the original religious function of *memento mori* as ornaments were things to be used in religious worship. Again, in this line Middleton's *memento mori* has a dual meaning, with one meaning acknowledging the origins of *memento mori* while the other meaning implies that *memento mori* is empty of symbolism and merely decorative. Further to this, unlike Hamlet's soliloquy, Vindice's contemplation of life and death is not religiously motivated and, instead, Vindice is focused on revenge. Middleton, similarly to Chettle, transforms *memento mori* into a contemplation of revenge or, perhaps, a contemplation upon the forthcoming death of one's enemies. Gloriana's skull becomes part of the aesthetic of the revenge tragedy.

Middleton's attempts to transform *memento mori* into a spectacle continue in Act three, scene five as Gloriana's skull, a common form of *memento mori*, is transformed into a

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<sup>103</sup> *The Revenger's Tragedy*, 1.1.16.

<sup>104</sup> *The Revenger's Tragedy*, 1.1.15.

<sup>105</sup> *The Revenger's Tragedy*, 1.1.15.

spectacle of life and death. In this scene, the skull is dressed in women's clothing and paraded around the stage by Vindice. *The Revenger's Tragedy* is often discussed in regards to 'the play's erotics of death' as the skull of Gloriana symbolises both death and desire and, for Busse, '[d]ressing her skull in women's clothing — including a veil or mask — feminizes the death's head and theatricalizes death's connection to the feminine'.<sup>106</sup> However, while I do not intend to dismiss arguments that draw attention to the ways in which Gloriana's skull is sexualised, the act of costuming the skull also draws attention to the theatricality of the scene, and, just as in *The Tragedy of Hoffman* and the Gothic texts discussed earlier, in this scene of the play an object *memento mori* is commodified for entertainment, transformed into a spectacle to shock the audience rather than providing the audience with an opportunity to experience the religious transcendence that *memento mori* was intended to inspire. The dressing of the skull also recalls Holbein's woodcuts, especially his images of the Queen, where the representative of death is dressed as a jester, and the Empress, in which death is disguised as a lady-in-waiting.<sup>107</sup> Gloriana, similarly to Shelley's Creature, takes on the role of death in the *danse macabre* as her role within the play is to usher the Duke into the grave.

Vindice himself states that the skull is no longer 'only for show', even though *memento mori* was never intended to be 'only for show', as it is used by Vindice as a prop for his own revenge scheme.<sup>108</sup> Middleton's use of *memento mori* in this scene is inherently theatrical and, as Leslie Sanders states, the play is 'self-consciously and insistently theatrical' from the opening line.<sup>109</sup> Middleton's use of the skull throughout the play is littered with metatheatrical references. The act of dressing Gloriana's skull in tires is inherently theatrical as she is forced into a costume in order to play her new role as a prostitute. Vindice is also

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<sup>106</sup> Busse, 93.

<sup>107</sup> Holbein.

<sup>108</sup> 'The Revenger's Tragedy', 3.5.99.

<sup>109</sup> Leslie Sanders, 'The Revenger's Tragedy: A Play on the Revenge Play', *Renaissance and Reformation*, 10.1 (1969), 25-36 (25).

literalising Hamlet's words to Yorick's skull about painting a lady 'an inch thick'.<sup>110</sup> Her costume hides her (lack of) body and creates an illusion of life, just as costuming creates an illusion within the space of the theatre, and through the costume Vindice is undoing 'death's seeming essentialisms' so that she may play her part within the revenge plot.<sup>111</sup> Gloriana's skull takes on the role of the actor as it pretends to be something that it is not. The skull is playing the role of a living human being it is even though it is, in fact, dead. Vindice's use of costuming, low lighting, and humour to disguise the truth of the scene all expose the artificiality of the theatre as he is employing the same methods to trick the Duke as the theatre uses to entertain its audience. Later in this scene, Vindice employs meta-theatricality to indicate the success of the tragedy by claiming that 'when the bad bleeds, then the tragedy is good' after the Duke has finally died.<sup>112</sup> The Duke's death is an example of *memento mori* as he slowly decays on stage, embodying the sentiment of the cadaver monument as his is flesh eaten away by the poison applied to Gloriana's skull, but Vindice's comment unveils the artificiality of his death, drawing attention to the tragedy's status as a play.

If the play itself is artificial, its construction of *memento mori* is compromised and it becomes clear that Middleton is appropriating the imagery and symbolism of *memento mori* to create an aesthetic of death and decay. Middleton's attempts to undermine the integrity of the play through his use of metatheatre undermines any recognised representation of *memento mori*. Albeit briefly, Middleton does address the commodification of *memento mori* by directly using the skull of Gloriana as a prop and Middleton's self-conscious tragedy continuously reveals the artificiality of itself, revelling in what makes the genre popular. *The Tragedy of Hoffman* and *The Revenger's Tragedy* both uncover their commodification of

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<sup>110</sup> *Hamlet*, 5.1.84-85.

<sup>111</sup> Stallybrass, 'Reading the Body', 129.

<sup>112</sup> *The Revenger's Tragedy*, 3.5.199.

*memento mori* by exposing their own artificiality, revealing the skulls and skeletons to be mere props used for entertainment rather than objects to be used in religious practices.

Middleton, in a similar way to Chettle, also explores another form of *memento mori*: the cadaver monument. From the very beginning of the play, Vindice is preoccupied with the death that lurks beneath life, drawing attention to the age of the Duke, referring to him as ‘marrowless’ and ‘dry’.<sup>113</sup> In an explanatory note on the text, Brian Gibbons stated that at this point in the play a ‘spectator sees a proud courtly procession but Vindice sees instead that age withers the body’ as ‘the bone marrow no longer produces the healthy blood of youth’ which, while not directly referencing the imagery of the cadaver monument, does examine the liminal space between life and death and the physical transition from life to death.<sup>114</sup> Later in the play, Vindice experiences the transition between life and death as he watches the Duke’s flesh and tongue deteriorate from the effects of the poison and Busse argues that ‘the revelatory action here, like the act of revenge it accomplishes, is indicative of the horrors (this time for the Duke) that lie behind a beautiful exterior’, exposing the corrupting force of death that lurks beneath.<sup>115</sup> Middleton co-opts the transition between life and death to create an aesthetic of death that characterises revenge tragedies and resembles Gothic appropriations of *memento mori*.

By transforming the body into a spectacle through images of *memento mori*, particularly skulls, skeletons, and cadaver monuments, early modern writers offer a pre-history of the Gothic’s appropriation and commodification of *memento mori*, transforming the religious symbolism of *memento mori* into a spectacle which inspires horror and terror within their audiences.

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<sup>113</sup> *The Revenger’s Tragedy*, 1.1.5-8.

<sup>114</sup> Brian Gibbons in *The Revenger’s Tragedy*, ed. by Brian Gibbons (London: Methuen Drama, 2008).

<sup>115</sup> Busse, 92.

### III

One of the distinct features of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is the way it fuses *memento mori* and science. In this final section, I want to establish how aspects of Henry Chettle's *The Tragedy of Hoffman* anticipate Mary Shelley's fusion of science and *memento mori* in *Frankenstein* to suggest that Chettle's play can be read as an earlier exploration of Shelley's use of anatomical science to create an alternate form of *memento mori* which aided remembrance and inspired the contemplation of life and death without relying upon religious imagery and language.

Although *memento mori*, in both Gothic and early modern literature, often involves a depiction of the corpse or the skeleton which inspires a contemplation of death, the language and imagery of *memento mori* was also used to illustrate other themes and it was, as explored through the theatricalization of the body, frequently removed from its religious context. One example of this is what could be labelled 'medical *memento mori*' or 'anatomical *memento mori*', where the body and the skeleton, two common symbols of *memento mori*, are used in the process of scientific discovery and it is science, rather than religion, which inspires contemplations of mortality. These skeletons still act as reminders of mortality, thus retaining the traditional symbolism of *memento mori*, but they do so by assessing the functions of body rather than the idea of the eternal soul. Gothic writers, particularly Mary Shelley, used anatomical language to investigate mortality as anatomical science was popular at the turn of the nineteenth century. Shelley fused the language of anatomy with well-known and recognisable images of *memento mori* to create a scientific, rather than religious, contemplation of life and death. Shelley's use of chemistry has been examined by various scholars, including Sharon Ruston, but, rather than focusing on Shelley's interest in the new chemical sciences of her era to inspect the transition between life and death, I want to suggest

that Shelley utilises the language of anatomy to produce a different form of *memento mori*, one which still relies upon the image of the body rather than the scientific process of chemistry and inspires contemplations of life and death through scientific knowledge.<sup>116</sup> As mentioned earlier, Shelley does indulge in the medieval religious image of the *danse macabre* in *Frankenstein* but her use of anatomical *memento mori* is much more prominent.

Nineteenth-century Britain saw a surge in interest in anatomical science, which eventually led to the business of body-snatching before the Anatomy Act of 1832 was passed, and Shelley's *memento mori* is distinctly anatomical as she focuses on the structure and function of the body to serve as a reminder of death. Shelley's novel was written against a background of anatomical debate, in which notable surgeons of the era disputed the notions of materialism and vitalism.<sup>117</sup> Various scholars, including Marilyn Butler and Maurice Hindle, argue that Shelley's *Frankenstein* was directly influenced by the debate between John Abernethy and Sir William Lawrence about the function of the mind and the body, indicating that Shelley had knowledge of the scientific debates of her era.<sup>118</sup> Shelley does indulge in the idea of electricity being the "vital fluid" which animates all living things but it is her description of the creature's body which is vital when considering Gothic descriptions of *memento mori*. Sharon Ruston also acknowledges that '[i]mproved resuscitation techniques, such as those advocated by the Humane Society, made people reconsider the nature of the boundary between life and death' and Shelley experienced this transition from life to death,

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<sup>116</sup> Sharon Ruston, 'Chemistry and the Science of Transformation in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 41 (2019), 255-270.

<sup>117</sup> William Lawrence, *An Introduction to Comparative Anatomy and Physiology, Being the Two Introductory Lectures Delivered at the Royal College of Surgeons on the 21st and 25th of March 1816* (London: J. Callow, 1816); J Abernethy, *Physiological Lectures, Exhibiting a General View of Mr John Hunter's Physiology, and His Researches in Comparative Anatomy; Delivered Before the Royal College of Surgeons* (London: Longman, 1817).

<sup>118</sup> Marilyn Butler, 'Introduction', *Frankenstein, Or, the Modern Prometheus*, the 1818 text, ed. by Marilyn Butler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Maurice Hindle, 'Introduction', *Frankenstein; Or the Modern Prometheus*, ed. by Maurice Hindle (London: Penguin Books, 1994).



and back again, when her son William was resuscitated.<sup>119</sup> Ruston goes on to state that ‘the Shelleys also believed in the porous nature of the boundary between life and death and that it could be traversed in both directions’ and it is this belief that inspires Shelley’s examination of the body in a scientific manner rather than merely a religious one in *Frankenstein*.<sup>120</sup>

In Victor’s description of the creature, Shelley focuses on the anatomical structure of the body to draw attention to the ‘otherness’ of its form, inspiring horror within the reader but also forcing the reader to acknowledge the transition between life and death. Andrew Smith notes that the creature ‘is a form of death that also manifests the life that it has lost’, suggesting that the ‘dead are not quite dead and the living are not quite alive’ and Smith’s observations reinforce the notion that Shelley’s creature occupies a liminal space between life and death.<sup>121</sup> The horror of the creature’s sunken eyes, ‘yellow skin’, and ‘black lips’ remind Victor of the creature’s origins as a corpse, while the prominent muscles and arteries draw attention to the life that Victor has imbued within the creature.<sup>122</sup> David S. Hogsette argues that in his ‘attempts to discover the secrets of life by studying death and decay, and for all the attention to death in his attempt to understand life, [Victor] learns nothing of life and courts only death’ which is emphasised by Victor’s focus on the creature’s origins as body parts rather than his own miraculous achievements.<sup>123</sup> Kristen Lacefield argues that ‘the Creature exists on the metaphorical edge between antithetical categories, in an indeterminate zone somewhere between life and death’ and the creature’s presence in this liminal space has already been discussed in regards to the ways in which it echoes early modern cadaver monuments but, Lacefield goes on to state that ‘as the derivative product of lifeless corpses,

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<sup>119</sup> Ruston, 262.

<sup>120</sup> Ruston, 262.

<sup>121</sup> Andrew Smith, *Gothic Death 1740-1914: A Literary History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), p. 63.

<sup>122</sup> *Frankenstein*, p. 39.

<sup>123</sup> Hogsette, 551.

he is ontologically inauthentic' and Shelley's focus on the 'intricacies of [the] fibres, muscles, and veins' of the creature's body echoes the scientific process of dissection.<sup>124</sup> Victor is not a surgeon of the anatomical theatre as, unlike the surgeons who systematically strip the corpse of signs of life, he attempted to 'infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at [his] feet'.<sup>125</sup> However, Victor's scientific experiment, stitching the body back together to create life out of death, relies upon the teachings of the anatomical theatre and Shelley's attention to the details of the body, including the 'muscles and joints', emphasises the role of anatomical language within Shelley's representation of *memento mori*.<sup>126</sup> Through the language of anatomy, Shelley Gothicises the body, transforming it into a grotesque experiment of life and death.

Although Shelley's rendition of *memento mori* clearly draws upon the scientific practices of her own time, the science of anatomy has long been associated with *memento mori* and the act of remembrance. *Hamlet* may be the most famous example of *memento mori* in early modern literature but the plays that followed *Hamlet* did not necessarily utilise religious imagery in their depictions of *memento mori*. Although aspects of Henry Chettle's portrayal of *memento mori* in *The Tragedy of Hoffman* rely on conventional images of *memento mori*, particularly his depiction of the liminal space between life and death, the play is almost entirely devoid of religious symbolism, instead focusing primarily on the scientific and surgical aspects of the macabre, transforming *memento mori* into a scientific endeavour in which the skeleton is used for education rather than a religious practice. Chettle's play is deeply concerned with the anatomical structure and the workings of the human body, constantly referring to the 'blood', 'veins', 'tendons', and 'sinews' that make up the human

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<sup>124</sup> Kristen Lacefield, 'Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, the Guillotine, and Modern Ontological Anxiety', *Text Matters*, 6 (2016), 35-52 (43); Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. 35.

<sup>125</sup> Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. 38.

<sup>126</sup> Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. 40.

form.<sup>127</sup> Within the first few lines of the play, Hoffman refers to the ‘nerves and arteries’ of his father which ‘summon up revenge’.<sup>128</sup> These lines echo the sentiment of the ghost of Hamlet’s rather urging him to ‘remember me’ and both work simultaneously as calls for revenge and as reminders of the sentiment of *memento mori* as revenge becomes a form of remembrance in revenge tragedies.<sup>129</sup>

The play delves further into the world of anatomical studies in Act one, scene three as Hoffman even claims to have stripped flesh from a skeleton better than any surgeon, directly aligning the play with a more scientific concept of *memento mori* than one which speaks to medieval religious traditions.<sup>130</sup> Hoffman hangs the clean bones of Otho beside, but slightly behind, his father to display his meticulous work for all to see but the skeletons, particularly that of Hoffman’s father, are also used by Hoffman in the act of remembering his father. This dual purpose of the skeleton within the play echoes the purpose of the skeleton within the anatomical theatres of Renaissance Europe. To once again refer to the work of Pesta, the macabre and *memento mori* had a clear role within the anatomical theatre as skeletons were displayed in a similar manner to how Hoffman displays the skeletons of his father and Otho, as testaments of their work and skill but also as a moralising reminder of death. William S. Heckscher described anatomical theatres as ‘devotional and moralizing museums’ as they echoed the purpose of cathedrals and churches by providing a space in which the body is displayed and remembered but Michael Neill draws attention to their secondary purpose as theatres ‘where the anatomist acted a drama of the human encounter with death’.<sup>131</sup> It is clear that anatomical theatres of this era served a multitude of purposes as a space of scientific

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<sup>127</sup> *The Tragedy of Hoffman*, 1.1.223-234.

<sup>128</sup> *The Tragedy of Hoffman*, 1.1.3-4.

<sup>129</sup> *Hamlet*, 1.5.91.

<sup>130</sup> *The Tragedy of Hoffman*, 1.3.1-9.

<sup>131</sup> William Sebastian Heckscher, *Rembrandt's Anatomy of Dr. Nicolaas Tulp* (New York: New York University Press, 1958), p. 98; Neill, p. 117.

discovery, religious remembrance and public entertainment. Seventeenth-century artistic depictions of the *Theatrum Anatomicum* of Leiden University, a theatre built in 1596 of amphitheatrical shape where dissections of human and animal bodies would be performed at the centre, emphasised the moralising purpose of the anatomical by depicting human and animal skeletons holding banners with inscriptions such as ‘*Nosce Te Ipsum*’ (‘know thyself’) and ‘*memento mori*’ (‘remember death’), referencing the religious role of the skeleton in the contemplation of mortality while still focusing on the scientific significance of anatomy in Renaissance culture.<sup>132</sup> The dissection of the human body was a public spectacle in sixteenth-century Europe, particularly in Italy and the Netherlands, and English early modern plays such as *The Tragedy of Hoffman* alluded to the study of anatomy and the theatrical aspects of this scientific practice by appropriating both the aesthetic of *memento mori* and the language of anatomical science, combining them in a way that echoes the multiple purposes of the anatomical theatre. Despite the lack of public dissections occurring in England at the time, with the barber-surgeons of England’s Royal College of Physicians being limited to only four cadavers per year, early modern plays still drew upon the theatrical nature of Europe’s anatomical theatres.<sup>133</sup>

While these references may have been influenced by players travelling around Europe and witnessing first-hand the spectacle of the anatomical theatre or descriptions and depictions of Italian and Dutch anatomical theatres by artists, they may have also been influenced by Andreas Vesalius’ *De Humani Corporis Fabrica Libri Septem* (1543).<sup>134</sup> The *Fabrica*, a careful and detailed examination of the complete structure of the human body, inspired advances in both scientific and artistic illustrations of the body after its initial

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<sup>132</sup> Willem van Swanenburg after Jan Cornelis Woudanus, *Vera Anatomia*, 1610, etching, 32.6 x 39.5cm, British Museum, London.

<sup>133</sup> Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 56.

<sup>134</sup> Neill, p. 117; Andreas Vesalius, *De Humani Corporis Fabrica Libri Septem* (Basel: 1543).

publication. The first English translation of Vesalius' work was published by Thomas Geminus, a printer active in London, in 1553, a decade after the initial publication in Latin, but this translation was an odd mix of the modern and the medieval, with the images from the *Fabrica* sitting 'in stark contrast to its text: a salmagundi of earlier works, printed in antiquated mediaeval "black-letter" type'.<sup>135</sup> It is true that the *Fabrica* was not completely translated into English until 2009, much later than perhaps expected, but Geminus' translation provides evidence that early modern England was interested in the scientific form of the human body with the visual illustrations of the body provided through the copperplate images from the *Fabrica* proving more interesting, and perhaps more entertaining, than the text itself.<sup>136</sup> Geminus' English translation of Vesalius' text is one example of the commodification and commercialisation of the macabre and *memento mori* as the corpse and the skeleton are transformed into a visual spectacle for readers, removed from their religious roles as symbols of mortality and their role in the scientific study of the body. The text itself is of no value in Geminus' translation, it is not even the correct text, but the detailed images of the body provided by the *Fabrica* held much more commercial value in early modern England. Similar to the designs of Holbein's *Dance of Death*, the images of the *Fabrica* held an aesthetic value that overshadowed some of the other purposes that they had and it is the aesthetic value of the images that could be used for commercial gain. Early modern tragedies operate in a similar way, appropriating and commodifying the aesthetic of the corpse and the skeleton to sell plays to audiences. Of course, the intended readership of the translation must be examined to determine how the translation is commodifying the aesthetic of *memento mori*. Barber-surgeons of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and others who could read

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<sup>135</sup> Editions of the English translation are very rare now but Geminus' earlier Latin edition, which was still an abridged version of the *Fabrica* and *Epitome*, was printed in London in 1545; Brian Hurwitz and Ruth Richardson, 'The English Vesalius', *The Lancet*, 383.9925 (2014), 1285-1286 (1285).

<sup>136</sup> Andreas Vesalius, *On the Fabric of the Human Body*, trans. by W. F. Richardson and J. B. Carman (San Francisco and Novato: Norman Publishing, 2009).

Latin, would have presumably read Vesalius' original text or even the Geminus' abridged Latin version which was available at the time, meaning that the translation was not aimed at a highly educated audience, perhaps explaining why the text itself is removed but the images remain.<sup>137</sup> This particular form of appropriation of *memento mori*, which turned *memento mori* into a popular spectacle both on the stage and on the page, catered to the interests of the general public rather than medical professionals. It fed into a morbid fascination with death and the human body which was a normal aspect of early modern life, present in everything from jewellery and fashion to the performance of public executions.

Pesta looks into the relationship between Vesalius' *Fabrica* and early modern tragedies, particularly *Hamlet* and *The Tragedy of Hoffman*, and the ways in which early modern plays replicate the tableaux in the *Fabrica* but, while I acknowledge that particular scenes in *Hamlet* and *The Tragedy of Hoffman* replicate some of the '*Fabrica*'s most famous engravings', I want to suggest that it is Chettle's choice of language, not only the presence of the skeleton on stage, that reveals a preoccupation with the structure and functions of the body, especially with veins and blood, and transforms the anatomy of the human body into a form of *memento mori* through an obsession of that which gives life to the body.<sup>138</sup> Phrases such as 'bare bones' and 'bare anatomy' are repeated frequently throughout the play as Chettle focuses on the anatomical structure of the body as a symbol of the transition between life and death.<sup>139</sup> Chettle incorporates anatomical language from the first scene of the play, distinguishing the representation of *memento mori* in *The Tragedy of Hoffman* from that of *Hamlet* and other plays of the era. There are several detailed references to the structure of the body in the play, some of which reference the religious role of *memento mori* and others

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<sup>137</sup> Andreas Vesalius, *Compendiosa Totius Anatomie Delineatio, Ære Exarata: per Thomam Geminum* (London: Thomas Geminus, 1545).

<sup>138</sup> Pesta, 32.

<sup>139</sup> *The Tragedy of Hoffman*, 1.1.47, 1.1.167.

which modify *memento mori* to create an aesthetic of death and horror, similar to the ways in which anatomical *memento mori* works in Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Otho's description of his own death in the first scene of the play is graphic and violent, as expected from a revenge tragedy of the time, but it still reveals a preoccupation with the science of the body:

I feel an Etna burn  
Within my brains, and all my body else  
Is like a hall of ice; all these Belgic seas  
That now surround us cannot quench this flame.  
Death like a tyrant seizeth me unawares;  
My sinews shrink like leaves parched with the sun;  
My blood dissolves, veins and tendons fail;  
Each part's disjointed, and my breath expires!  
Mount soul to heaven, my body burns in fire.<sup>140</sup>

Even in the midst of his death, Otho takes the time to explain how the burning crown affects the different parts of his body. It is both poetic and scientific, drawing the audience's attention to the functions of the body and the effects that death has on the physical body. Victor's exploration of death and decay works in a similar way, as discussed earlier, and Otho's speech is almost a predecessor of Victor's thought process in *Frankenstein*. Otho's death is a spectacle but Chettle is drawing upon the theatricality of anatomy theatres and, although not directly replicating the procedures of the anatomical theatre, Otho's death and Hoffman's subsequent surgery on his corpse does recall the imagery of the anatomical theatre, ensuring that *memento mori* is associated with the science of the anatomy theatres rather than the religious transcendence that is alluded to in *Hamlet*.

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<sup>140</sup> *The Tragedy of Hoffman*, 1.1.218-226.

Once again, in Act four, scene one, Chettle combines the language of anatomy with the sentiment of *memento mori* to create horror within the play. As he is dying, in Act four, scene one, Ferdinand explains to Jerome and Stilt how the poison has altered the function of his organs, '[mingling] with [the] blood' to numb 'all the passages', arteries and veins, causing him a slow and painful death.<sup>141</sup> Ferdinand's detailed explanation of his death is a moment of horror within the play but it is his later request for Saxony to 'see / How vain our lives and all our glories be' that evokes the sentiment of *memento mori*.<sup>142</sup> Here, Ferdinand becomes an example of *memento mori*, reminding Saxon of the transient nature of life and earthly possessions and, while these two concepts are separated by other dialogue, Ferdinand's death combines the language of anatomy with *memento mori* to create a form of remembrance which is removed from its original religious context. Ferdinand's death can be read as a potentially pre-Gothic moment within the play as his death recalls the construction of Shelley's creature, a reminder of the inevitability of death which relies upon the scientific processes of the body to explain the process of death to the audience.

While it is true that several of the scenes in *The Tragedy of Hoffman* examine the notion of anatomical or scientific *memento mori* in a serious manner, other scenes are more concerned with appropriating the language of anatomy alongside the imagery of *memento mori* to create an aesthetic of death and decay, an aesthetic which will inspire horror and disgust within the audience. In Act one, scene one Hoffman lays out the details of his father's particularly gruesome death, describing how the 'flesh, mangled with many scars' was 'pared from the bones', leaving behind a 'bare anatomy' which was 'chained unto the common gallows'.<sup>143</sup> Although not entirely reminiscent of anatomical studies, which dissected human corpses with surgical accuracy to learn the functions of the organs, Hoffman's description of

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<sup>141</sup> *The Tragedy of Hoffman*, 4.1.161-162.

<sup>142</sup> *The Tragedy of Hoffman*, 4.1.199-200.

<sup>143</sup> *The Tragedy of Hoffman*, 1.1.165-168.



the paring of the flesh from his father's skeleton is of a surgical nature. Rather than using the skeleton to remember the life of his father, Hoffman systematically strips the skeleton of the flesh to reveal death below it and this scientific description of death is echoed in Act five, scene one. Unlike in Otho's own description of his death, which uses anatomical language to enact the transition between life and death in an impassioned, but scientific, speech, Lorrique's rendition of Otho's death, beginning 'Then thus: Prince Otho and I escaped the wreck' in Act five, scene one, uses the same language and imagery to create another moment of horror within the play rather than a serious contemplation of either the science of the body or the experience of death.<sup>144</sup> Lorrique employs the language of anatomy to add an extra layer of detail to his gruesome description, appropriating both the imagery of anatomical science and the imagery of *memento mori* and turning the corpse into a spectacle rather than a site of mourning and remembrance. The final few lines of Lorrique's speech are the most gruesome:

While with a burning crown he seared in twain  
The purple veins, strong sinews, arteries, nerves  
And every cartilage about the head;  
In which sad torment, the mild prince fell dead.<sup>145</sup>

Lorrique's speech lacks empathy or any true emotion and the rhyming couplet at the end of the speech seems to mock those who are mourning Otho. Lorrique's speech is perhaps the best example of the appropriation of both anatomical language and the imagery of *memento mori* within the play as both concepts are removed from their original contexts to create a sense of horror within the play, relying upon the aesthetics of death to horrify the audience.

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<sup>144</sup> *The Tragedy of Hoffman*, 5.1.180-197.

<sup>145</sup> *The Tragedy of Hoffman*, 5.1.194-197.

Chettle appropriated the language of anatomical science and the traditional symbols of *memento mori* to create a version of *memento mori* that is almost entirely removed from its religious context, allowing *memento mori* to be appropriated more easily, and perhaps less controversially, than in plays like Shakespeare's *Hamlet* which re-enact the religious intentions of *memento mori*. Chettle's interest in the anatomical structure of the body and the physical transition between life and death, rather than the spiritual transition, is echoed in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, which itself takes an unusual approach to the body in comparison to other Gothic novels. Shelley's novel relies upon the same ideas and scientific practices as Chettle's play and both *The Tragedy of Hoffman* and *Frankenstein* offer a similar experience of *memento mori* to their audience. Chettle's exploration of anatomical *memento mori* in *The Tragedy of Hoffman* provides evidence of a pre-history of the themes presented in Shelley's novel as they both rely upon the imagery of *memento mori* and the language of anatomical science to create a specific atmosphere within their works. If Shelley's novel Gothicised the body by examining its anatomical structure, transforming the body into a site of grotesque and unnatural experimentation and, thus, appropriating the imagery of *memento mori* to create a macabre aesthetic in her novel then, arguably, anatomical theatres and anatomy plays of the early modern era, such as *The Tragedy of Hoffman*, also Gothicise the body through the same techniques as they too transform the body into a spectacle of experimentation, playing upon well-established notions of *memento mori* to create an aesthetic of horror for a paying audience.

## **Conclusion**

Gothic literature, often mocked for its reliance on its appropriation of *memento mori*, or, to paraphrase an anonymous critic in the 1790s, its tendencies to hide skeletons in open chests and bleeding bodies behind curtains, merely drew upon an already established practise of

appropriating the aesthetic of *memento mori* which is present in early modern literature.<sup>146</sup>

Although early modern literature often retained some recognisably religious aspects of *memento mori*, especially its purpose as a reminder of the inevitability of death, early modern playwrights transform symbols of *memento mori* into a spectacle and an aesthetic, resembling the ways in which Gothic writers commodified and appropriated symbols of *memento mori*. Even the beginnings of Shelley's alternate reading of *memento mori*, one based on scientific discovery rather than religious contemplation, can be found in early modern plays such as Chettle's *The Tragedy of Hoffman*.

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<sup>146</sup> Anon, 'Terrorist Novel Writing', p. 224.

## Conclusion

Our revels now are ended.

— William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

Throughout this thesis, I have demonstrated that aspects of early modern drama, especially early modern tragedies, can be considered pre-Gothic as they present “Gothic” ideas to their audiences. In referring to these texts as “pre-Gothic” rather than “Gothic”, I have also acknowledged that they cannot be referred to as ‘Gothic’ because many aspects of these plays do not fit into the Gothic mode. While I have revealed that Gothic themes, aesthetics, and ideas were present in early modern drama, I have done so with the understanding that these ideas may have been presented in slightly different ways due to the cultural differences between early modern England and Britain of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries and the differing ideals of society between these two eras.

The Gothic genre is complicated and ever-evolving and is often reduced to its tropes to make it easier to categorise but in this thesis, I have explored a multitude of ideas, themes, and aesthetics that contributed to the development of the Gothic genre in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to establish that there is a pre-history of some Gothic themes, ideas, and aesthetics in early modern drama. Starting with the eighteenth-century political creation of British ‘Gothic ancestry’ and ending with an analysis of the Gothic aesthetic of the macabre, each chapter in this thesis examines a different theme, aesthetic, or idea that can be considered Gothic.

Chapter one explores the notion of ‘Gothic ancestry’ and the formation of a hybrid national identity based upon pseudohistory – ideas which were vital in the formation of

eighteenth-century Gothic literature – in William Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus*.<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, I argued that Shakespeare presented his sixteenth-century audience with a pre-Gothic version of eighteenth-century Gothic national identity based on notions of Gothic ancestry

Chapter two examines the Gothic trope of the Faustian pact to suggest that the A-text and B-text of Christopher Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* predate the shift towards spiritual despair and abject terror in Gothic Faustian pacts.<sup>2</sup> I also argue that the ending of Marlowe’s play can be considered pre-Gothic as it offers an audience an experience of hopelessness, despair, and abject terror which is present in Gothic Faustian pacts but absent from both medieval morality plays and the Harlequin Faust plays of the Restoration era and early eighteenth century. In this chapter, I have also argued that there are textual and structural similarities between Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* and two later Gothic Faust tales, William Beckford’s *Vathek* and Matthew Lewis’ *The Monk*, to demonstrate that these Gothic texts returned to a Marlovian form of the Faustian pact.<sup>3</sup>

Chapter three analyses Gothic representations of the ‘Other’ through the figure of the witch and the notion of witchcraft, suggesting that Gothic representations of witchcraft, an idea which is presented mainly through ideas of female empowerment, doubling, and sociology, are present in early modern literature. This chapter offers a new way to read two Gothic texts, Charlotte Dacre’s *Zofloya* and Mary Shelley’s *Valperga*, as Gothic explorations of witchcraft while suggesting that the Gothic doubling found in *Zofloya* and the sociological

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<sup>1</sup> William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, ed. by Eugene M. Waith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Christopher Marlowe, ‘Doctor Faustus, A-text’, in *Doctor Faustus and Other Plays*, ed. by David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 137-183; Christopher Marlowe, ‘Doctor Faustus, B-text’, in *Doctor Faustus and Other Plays*, ed. by David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 185-246.

<sup>3</sup> *Doctor Faustus, A-text; Doctor Faustus, B-text; William Beckford, Vathek*, ed. by Tom Keymer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Matthew Lewis, *The Monk*, ed. by Howard Anderson and Emma McEvoy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

approach to witchcraft found in *Valperga* can be seen in early modern texts.<sup>4</sup> In particular, in this chapter I have drawn attention to the cultural differences between early modern England and Britain in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries but I have argued that, despite how these cultural differences affect the outcome of these ideas, Gothic ideas concerning witches and witchcraft can still be observed in early modern witch plays. In this chapter, I also offer a new reading of Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya* which suggests that Dacre's novel can be read as a witchcraft narrative. By reframing the research of Adriana Craciun, Diane Long Hoeveler, and Jennifer L. Airey, I have demonstrated how Dacre's focus on violent and sexual women, alongside Victoria's pact with the Devil, can be read as a form of witchcraft.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, chapter four explores how the eighteenth-century appropriation of the aesthetic of *memento mori*, a prominent feature of Gothic literature, can be seen in early modern revenge tragedies and in a wider cultural setting in early modern England. By highlighting and examining the various ways that early modern revenge tragedies commodified and appropriated the imagery of *memento mori*, this chapter argues that Gothic literature was a more overt extension of this early modern practice even though we now consider the aesthetic of the macabre and *memento mori* to be particularly 'Gothic' aesthetic in regards to literature.

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<sup>4</sup> Charlotte Dacre, *Zofloya; Or, the Moor*, ed. by Adriana Craciun (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2006); Mary Shelley, *Valperga: Or the Life and Adventures of Castruccio, Prince of Lucca. By the Author of "Frankenstein."* in *Three Volumes* (London: Printed for G. and W. B. Whittaker, 1823).

<sup>5</sup> See: Adriana Craciun, *Fatal Women of Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Hoeveler, Diane Long, 'Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya*: A Case Study in Miscegenation as Sexual and Racial Nausea', *European Romantic Review*, 8 (1997), 185-199; Hoeveler, Diane Long, 'Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya*: A Case Study in Miscegenation as Sexual and Racial Nausea', *European Romantic Review*, 8 (1997), 185-199; Diane Long Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism: The Professionalization of Gender from Charlotte Smith to the Brontës* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998); Jennifer L. Airey, "'He Bears No Rival Near the Throne": Male Narcissism and Early Feminism in the Works of Charlotte Dacre', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 30 (2018), 223-241.

Through a thorough examination of how prominent Gothic ideas, themes, and tropes are presented in early modern drama, this thesis offers the first sustained analysis of the representation of the Gothic in early modern drama and, by producing a long-form piece of writing on this topic, I have offered a more comprehensive examination of how early modern drama presents its audiences with a recognisably ‘Gothic’ experience than has previously been presented in the available journal articles and edited collections. Sitting somewhere between the hyper-specific, Shakespeare-orientated edited collections of *Gothic Shakespeares* and *Shakespearean Gothic*, published in 2008 and 2009 respectively, and the much broader examination of this topic which is seen in *Gothic Renaissance* (2016), this thesis focuses on the representation of Gothic themes, ideas, and aesthetics in early modern drama.<sup>6</sup> In part, this thesis is a response to the idea that early Gothic literature was heavily influenced by plays such as *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* but, following the work of the scholars who contributed to *Gothic Renaissance*, I have continued to expand the idea of ‘pre-Gothic potential’ into the works of playwrights other than Shakespeare – providing analysis of plays by Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Middleton, Henry Chettle, Thomas Dekker, John Ford, and William Rowley.

In this thesis, I have also suggested that ‘pre-Gothic’ may be a more appropriate term for this area of research than ‘proto-Gothic’, a term which has been used by various scholars in regards to this subject. ‘Pre-Gothic’ does not suggest that early modern literature is simply an early form of Gothic literature. Instead, through this term I have acknowledged that some aspects of the early modern plays I have discussed cannot be considered ‘Gothic’ or ‘pre-Gothic’ at all. Using ‘pre-Gothic’ has also allowed me to acknowledge that although these

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<sup>6</sup> *Gothic Shakespeares*, ed. by John Drakakis and Dale Townshend (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008); *Shakespearean Gothic*, ed. by Christy Desmet and Anne Williams (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009); *Gothic Renaissance*, ed. by Elisabeth Bronfen and Beate Neumeier (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).

texts are ‘pre-Gothic’ or have ‘pre-Gothic’ elements, there are major differences between Gothic literature and early modern literature. Acknowledging these differences does not undermine the conclusion that the representation of certain themes, ideas, and aesthetics in early modern literature can be read as pre-Gothic and, instead, it allowed me to better illustrate why the ideas, themes, and aesthetics I have discussed in this thesis can be considered pre-Gothic. Describing these early modern plays, or aspects of the plays, as ‘pre-Gothic’ allows them to be read through a Gothic lens without suggesting that they are part of the Gothic mode. In this thesis, I have opened up a two-way discussion between early modern literature and Gothic literature by exploring the ways in which early modern texts may be considered ‘pre-Gothic’ due to the ways in which they depart from the literary traditions of their own time while suggesting that Gothic texts were inspired by early modern plays other than *Hamlet* or the works of Shakespeare.

Ultimately, this thesis reads several early modern tragedies through a Gothic lens to offer a new understanding of how these texts relate to their Gothic successors and their medieval and Classical predecessors. I have, at least in regards to the notion of English/British Gothic ancestry, representations of hopelessness and abject terror in Faustian pacts, elements of witchcraft narratives, and the appropriation and commodification of the aesthetic of *memento mori*, determined that a pre-history of Gothic themes, ideas, and aesthetics can be found in certain early modern tragedies. Reading these early modern plays through Gothic literature reveals how particular themes, ideas, and aesthetics were developed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries into something recognisably Gothic, or pre-Gothic, and it allows us to argue that the representation of these themes, ideas, and aesthetics in early modern drama often provided a framework upon which Gothic writers could build further.



The research presented in this thesis is aimed at both Gothic scholars and early modern scholars, reflecting the dual nature of the project itself. For early modern scholars, this thesis builds upon the essays collected in *Gothic Renaissance* and further demonstrates how we can read early modern drama as pre-Gothic by exploring the intersections between Gothic literature and early modern drama alongside their historical contexts. Throughout this thesis, I have also explored how early modern drama was read, reproduced, and distributed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, all of which develops our understanding of how aspects of early modern dramatic texts were presented to new audiences. For Gothic scholars, this thesis offers an exploration into the history of Gothic ideas in English literature and it expands the Gothic mode beyond the ‘canon’ of Gothic literature. This work also demonstrates the selective way in which writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, especially Gothic writers, engaged with early modern drama and this aspect of this project, in particular, will be useful to both Gothic scholars and early modern scholars as it reflects upon the scenes and ideas of early modern drama that were extracted by later writers and considers why these specific ideas may have been deemed appropriate, relevant, or appealing to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century readers.

I acknowledge that not every early modern play, or even every aspect of the early modern plays I have discussed in this project, can be considered ‘pre-Gothic’. Nonetheless, the prevalence of death, corpses, witches and terror, elements which disgusted Voltaire when he criticised Shakespeare in the eighteenth century, suggests a continuity of preoccupations from the early modern period to the inception of Gothic literature in the eighteenth century. Medieval, Renaissance, and pre-Gothic ideas exist alongside each other in many early modern plays, often informing and influencing each other in unexpected ways. Acknowledging this does not undermine the conclusion I have presented in this thesis and, in regards to some of the plays I have discussed, recognising these non-Gothic aspects

strengthens the suggestion that certain ideas can be considered pre-Gothic as it emphasises the differences between what is and what is not pre-Gothic. Comparing potentially pre-Gothic themes, aesthetics, and ideas to those that are firmly rooted within medieval and Renaissance ideals underlines the conclusion that a pre-history of Gothic themes, ideas, and aesthetics can be seen in early modern drama.

As I have already stated, I have only examined early modern plays produced between c.1592 and 1621 and Gothic texts written between 1764 and 1826 but, potentially, this research could be extended to earlier and later early modern literature and later Gothic texts. For example, a discussion of the pre-Gothic potential of William Heminges' *The Fatal Contract* (c.1638) may lead to a new understanding of how literature which was specifically influenced by Shakespeare produced more overtly Gothic stories, even before Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*.<sup>7</sup> The works of playwrights such as James Shirley (1596-1666) and William Heminges (1602-c.1653) present an opportunity for the research that I have presented in this thesis to be extended to the end of the Caroline era while Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (c.1587) offers an opportunity for an earlier revenge tragedy to be discussed as potentially pre-Gothic.<sup>8</sup> Although an analysis of these plays may present us with a different conclusion to the one that I have offered in my analysis of the pre-Gothic potential of early modern drama, or perhaps a different understanding of what can be considered pre-Gothic, these plays can still be read through a Gothic lens, as I have done with the various early modern plays I have examined, to determine whether or not they can be considered pre-Gothic.

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<sup>7</sup> William Hemings, *The Fatal Contract, a French Tragedy as it vvas Acted vwith Great Applause by Her Majesties Servants / written by William Hemings* (London: for J. M., 1653).

<sup>8</sup> For example: James Shirley, *The Cardinal, a Tragedie, as it was Acted at the Private House in Black Fryers, written by James Shirley. Not Printed Before* (London: printed for Humphrey Robinson at the Three Pigeons, and Humphrey Moseley at the Princes Arms in St. Paul's Church-yard, 1652); *The Fatal Contract*; Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedie containing the Lamentable End of Don Horatio, and Bel-imperia: With the Pittifull Death of Olde Hieronimo* (London: Printed by Edward Allde, for Edward White, 1592).

Some scholars, particularly James Uden, have already started reassessing the relationship between Gothic literature and Classical literature.<sup>9</sup> The research undertaken by these scholars proves that this area of study need not be limited to Shakespeare or even early modern literature. Tracing the sources of early modern literature and Gothic literature allows us to understand how these writers were influenced by their predecessors but it can also offer us an opportunity to examine earlier literature, from the works of Seneca to Chaucer to Dante, as potentially pre-Gothic. There is also the potential for non-English texts, both Gothic and earlier, to be introduced into this area of research. Although I did not examine German Faustian pacts in the second chapter of this thesis, the discussion that takes place in that chapter, regarding the pre-Gothic elements of early modern Faustian pacts, could easily be extended to include, or perhaps focus on, German Faustian pacts. Another text that could be examined as pre-Gothic is the thirty-second novella of Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptameron* which appears to play with Gothic aesthetics of the macabre.<sup>10</sup> There is no reason that this research area should be limited to English/British literature, or even English-language literature, in the future.

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<sup>9</sup> See: James Uden, 'Horace Walpole, Gothic Classicism, and the Aesthetics of Collection', *Gothic Studies*, 20.1 (2018), 44-58; James Uden, 'Reassessing the Gothic/Classical Relationship', in *The Cambridge History of the Gothic*, ed. by Angela Wright and Dale Townshend (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 161-179.

<sup>10</sup> Marguerite de Navarre, *Heptameron*, trans. by Paul Chilton (London: Penguin, 1984).

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## **Artefacts**

### **British Museum, London**

Swanenburg, Willem van after Jan Cornelis Woudanus, *Vera Anatomia*, 1610, etching, 32.6 x 39.5cm, British Museum, London

### **Dulwich Picture Gallery, London**

Unknown, *The Judde Memorial*, c.1560, Oil on oak panel, 80 x 102.2cm, Dulwich Picture Gallery, London

### **J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles**

Master of James IV of Scotland, 'Deathbed Scene', in *Spinola Hours*, c.1510-1520, Tempera colours, gold, and ink on parchment, 23.2 × 16.7 cm, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

—— ‘Office of the Dead’, in *Spinola Hours*, c.1510-1520, Tempera colours, gold, and ink on parchment, 23.2 × 16.7 cm, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

Master of the Dresden Prayer Book or workshop, ‘Decorated Initial D’, in *Crohin-LaFontaine Hours*, c.1480-1485, Tempera colours and gold, 20.5 × 14.8 cm, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.

—— ‘The Three Living and the Three Dead’, in *Crohin-LaFontaine Hours*, c.1480-85, Tempera colours and gold, 20.5 × 14.8 cm, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

### **Victoria and Albert Museum, London**

Unknown, *Enamelled gold mourning ring, with openwork ornament underlaid with hair and skulls and two coats of arms, one for the Nicholets family of Herefordshire*, 1661, Jewellery, Victoria and Albert Museum, London <<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O125926/mourning-ring-unknown/>>

Unknown, *Gold and enamel memento mori ring inscribed 'BE HOLD THE ENDE' and 'RATHER DEATH THAN FALS FAYTH'*, 1550-1600, Jewellery, Victoria and Albert Museum, London <<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O77393/ring-unknown/>>

### **The Wenceslaus Hollar Collection, University of Toronto**

Hollar, Wenceslaus, *Henry Windsor (monument)*, Engraving, 29 x 17 cm, The Wenceslaus Hollar Collection, University of Toronto, [Hollar\\_k\\_2207](#)