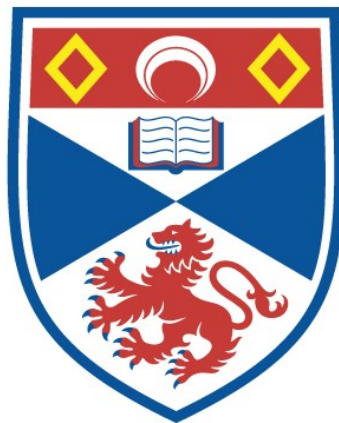# THE TWO KINDS OF ROMANCE, THE ANCIENT AND THE MODERN: A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MIDDLE ENGLISH ROMANCE AND GOTHIC LITERATURE

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The Two Kinds of Romance, the Ancient and the Modern: A Study of the Relationship between Middle English Romance and Gothic Literature

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Abstract

The Gothic genre developed alongside the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century antiquarian project to discover, collect and publish Middle English romances, but what exactly is the nature of the relationship between the Gothic novel and these medieval texts? This thesis identifies Gothic texts that respond to Middle English romance, demonstrating that this response is often characterised by concerns about the nature of history and the potential for that history to be appropriated to promote contemporary political, historical and antiquarian narratives. In these works, engagement with Middle English romance involves processes of rewriting, reinventing and refashioning to project contemporary discourses onto the medieval past. First examining the use of imagined manuscripts in Gothic literature to establish the relationship between Gothic literature and the contemporary antiquarian context, the thesis then looks at Clara Reeve's place in this context, demonstrating that her knowledge of Middle English romances was limited by a lack of access to manuscript sources at a time when few of these texts were in print. By contrast, James White had considerable knowledge of medieval literature and used this to challenge and mock contemporary approaches to the study of history in his parodic novel *Earl Strongbow* (1789). James Hogg similarly uses Middle English romance in his criticism of contemporary antiquarian practices in *The Three Perils of Man* (1822), subverting the romance of *The Marriage of Sir Gawain* to reject antiquarian attempts to stabilise the narrative as a relic of ancient history rather than a living, evolving part of folklore. Where Hogg stages a clash between oral and written narratives, the texts in the final chapter of this thesis respond to an existing conflict between werewolf narratives in folklore and romance, exhibiting an anxiety about the instability of a werewolf myth which would eventually crystallize into a distinctly Gothic form.

Contents

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Introduction

'I remember you buried in romances and novels; I really believe you could have said all the *Grand Cyrus*'s, the *Cleopatra*'s, and *Amadis*'s in the world by heart, nay, you carried your taste for it so far that not a fairy tale escaped you. *Quantum mutatus!* But one thing I comfort myself with, you have laid up a vast stock of romance, and one day or other, when you fall in love, it will all break out; and then Lord have mercy upon you!'
(Letter to Horace Walpole from Henry Seymour Conway, 18 April 1745).[1]

When Horace Walpole explains in the preface to the second edition of *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) that the novel is 'an attempt to blend the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern', what did he mean by "ancient" romance?.[2] In a thesis studying the relationship between Gothic literature and Middle English romance, it might be expected that I would begin by arguing for the inclusion of the latter in Walpole's ancient kind of romance, in an attempt to trace the origins of that relationship as early as possible in the development of the Gothic genre. However, Walpole does not mean Middle English romance here, and probably not even medieval romance more broadly: going on to explain the influence of Shakespeare on *Otranto*, Walpole roots his ancient romance firmly in the early modern period. Indeed, Dale Townshend demonstrates the influence of several important works of Renaissance romance on Walpole's novel, including Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (1516), Torquato Tasso's *La Gerusalemme liberata* (1581) and Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1596).[3] Walpole's love of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century romances is also demonstrated by a letter from his cousin, Henry Seymour Conway, in which he remembers the young Walpole 'buried in romances and novels' and gives three examples which can be identified as Madeleine de Scudéry's *Artamène ou le Grand Cyrus* (1649), Gauthier de Costes de la Calprenède's *Cléopâtre* (1648) and *Amadis de Gaule* (1508), first published by

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[1] Henry Seymour Conway, Letter to Horace Walpole, 18 April 1745, *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, Yale Edition, Vol. 37 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937-1983), p.189.
[2] Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto* in *The Old English Baron and Castle of Otranto*, ed. Laura L. Runge (Glen Allen, VA: College Publishing, 2002), p.170.
[3] Dale Townshend, *Gothic Antiquity: History, Romance, and the Architectural Imagination, 1760-1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo.[4] Conway lists each of these in the plural ('the *Grand Cyrus*'s, the *Cleopatra*'s, and *Amadis*'s') likely in acknowledgement of the tendency for romance to spawn multiple variations and translations: in the case of *Amadis*, for example, Walpole owned at least two translations, in French and in English, of the Spanish romance.[5] While Townshend suggests that this letter could be used as evidence that 'Walpole may well have been exposed to the capacious body of medieval romance as early as 1727, the year in which he went to Eton', the only romance on the list that could be argued to be medieval is *Amadis*, as the 1508 edition is based in earlier versions of the story.[6] The fact that Walpole engaged with this text through later translations of an early modern edition complicates the extent to which this can be seen as contact with medieval romance though: the presumed medieval origin of the story is filtered first through the production of the 1508 text and then by its reworking into French and English. This is not to say that Walpole did not engage with medieval literature at all, but it seems that, on the whole, his "ancient" romance is largely the romance of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Yet the Early Gothic shows a consistent interest in the concept of the medieval. Fred Botting claims that '[d]rawing on the myths, legends and folklore of medieval romances, Gothic conjured up magical worlds and tales of knights, monsters, ghosts and extravagant adventures and terrors'.[7] This statement, however, is a little vague: although Botting details developments in the growing field of antiquarianism in the eighteenth century to explain the context in which the Gothic might engage with the 'myths, legends and folklore of medieval romances', he does not examine further into this relationship between the Gothic novel and the medieval romance, either by identifying which romances might have been read by Gothic authors or showing how the romances can be seen to influence Gothic texts. This thesis, by contrast, is primarily concerned with the questions of how, when, and why Gothic authors engaged with Middle English romance, not only to offer more depth and detail about the development of Gothic literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries but also to consider the ways in which Gothic fiction responds to the literary heritage of medieval Britain. In identifying texts which respond to Middle English romance I have ventured to the peripheries of the Gothic canon, focussing on works which are less commonly studied or which do not conform to the normative standards of the Gothic genre. These texts, which

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[4] Conway, Letter to Walpole, 18 April 1745, *Correspondence*, p.189.
[5] Townshend, *Gothic Antiquity*, p.108.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London: Routledge, 1996), p.3.

often play with conventions of genre or, in the case of Clara Reeve, form part of the invention of a genre, offer complex and innovative engagements with medieval literature and a consistent awareness of the challenges of interpreting and accessing history in the present day. As some have been unfairly overlooked in Gothic scholarship, particularly the works of James White, I have chosen to shed some light on their interesting and imaginative approaches to Middle English romance.

While Walpole's ancient romance is not especially medieval, his novel was published at a pivotal moment in the development of medievalist scholarship, between Richard Hurd's *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762) and Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765). While Hurd's defence of "Gothic" romance against neoclassicist attacks was instrumental in legitimising the study of the medieval romances, he is careful to clarify that he has not 'perused these barbarous volumes' himself.[8] Percy's *Reliques* was therefore one of the earliest works of antiquarianism to engage directly with Middle English romance and while the first edition of *Otranto* predates Percy's *Reliques* by a year, the influence of Percy's work on subsequent authors of Gothic fiction is one of the key concerns of this thesis.

Indeed, the rise of the Gothic novel in the eighteenth century runs parallel to the revitalisation of interest in medieval texts, including Middle English romance. Arthur Johnston traces the development of the study of medieval romance through the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth, particularly in the works of Hurd, Percy, Thomas Warton, Joseph Ritson, George Ellis and Walter Scott, demonstrating that after around 1760 'the range of literary studies expanded steadily, taking in wider and wider areas' including the previously denigrated Middle English metrical romances.[9] This process of reviving interest in medieval literature formed part of a broader antiquarian project in the eighteenth century, which also encompassed a fascination with the relics of the medieval period in the form of antiques and architecture.[10] The rise of Gothic literature has often been viewed alongside this context, as a genre which is fascinated with the past and its relics and remnants. As Jonathan Dent puts it:

> Whether it is fragmented scripts, discarded documents, fractured histories, ancient
> artefacts, decaying architecture, confused ancestry, generational conflict, a

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[8] Richard Hurd, *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (London and Cambridge: printed for A. Millar, W. Thurlborn and J. Woodyer, 1762), p.24.
[9] Arthur Johnston, *Enchanted Ground: The Study of Medieval Romance in the Eighteenth Century* (London: The Athlone Press, University of London, 1964, repr. 1965), p.3. Other significant figures in the antiquarian movement include Susannah Dobson, James Beattie and Clara Reeve.
[10] Townshend studies the relationship between Gothic architecture and the Gothic novel in depth in *Gothic Antiquity*.

preoccupation with origins or the presence of history through supernatural occurrences, the Gothic is obsessed with the nature of the past and our relationship with it.[11]

While Dent's work explores the impact of Enlightenment historical texts on Gothic novels in the eighteenth century, demonstrating that the Gothic can be read as 'an imaginative protest against rational, reductive historiographical techniques', this thesis approaches similar questions about the Gothic's interest in the nature of the past through the study of its relationship with Middle English romance.[12] The depiction of these romances in Gothic novels is often a reflection of anxieties not only about the past itself but also about how that past can be accessed in the present, especially as, in the case of the medieval romances, that access was mediated through antiquarian scholarship: while, as Johnston notes, the stories of some of these romances circulated in prose chapbooks in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the medieval texts were 'still hidden in collections of manuscripts' and so the process of reviving this literature was one of discovering and editing these volumes.[13] It is this process which makes it impossible to separate any interest in Middle English romance in Gothic fiction in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries from the antiquarian context, as the romances were simultaneously a form of literary heritage and the artefacts and relics of a bygone age. For this reason, the first chapter of this thesis explores the relationship between contemporary antiquarianism and the evocation of imagined manuscript sources in Gothic literature, demonstrating that the invention of medieval manuscripts in the Early Gothic often involves both a response to and critique of this antiquarian context.

Johnston claims that in the eighteenth century, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century prose versions of romances such as *Guy of Warwick* and *Bevis of Hampton* would not necessarily be distinguished from texts such as *Amadis*, *Don Bellianis*, and the works of Ariosto, Tasso and Spenser.[14] It may seem anachronistic, then, to enforce a distinction between medieval and Renaissance romance onto the responses to such texts in the eighteenth century, but my decision to do so specifically in relation to insular romance makes more sense if it is explained rather as a distinction between pre- and post-Reformation literature. The idea that eighteenth-century Gothic authors would not make this distinction is undermined by their fascination with the early modern period, which Robert Miles attributes

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[11] Dent, *Sinister Histories*, p.2.
[12] Dent, *Sinister Histories*, p.60.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Johnston, *Enchanted Ground*, p.5.

to it being 'a period when the feudal and modern eras were understood to overlap' which therefore 'allows an apposition between the Gothic and modern selves, the playing of one against the other'.[15] Miles refers to this overlapping period between the "Gothic", or medieval, and the modern as the "Gothic cusp", a phrase which has been taken up by many subsequent scholars.[16] The crucial feature of this cusp is, according to Robert Mighall, that it allows for modernity to 'be achieved in one generation, with domestic and generational conflict providing a micronarrative of progressive history'.[17] Miles places the 'shifting date for the end of the Gothic period in English literature' in the seventeenth century, but it seems fair to say that this shifting idea of a Gothic cusp could locate its beginnings in the Reformation period, with the conflict between modernity and history represented by the move from Catholicism to Protestantism.[18] As Diane Long Hoeveler demonstrates, early Gothic literature is rooted in the desire of contemporary British Protestantism to produce 'an 'other' against which it could define itself as a culture and a nation with distinct boundaries': 'In Gothic literature, a reactionary, demonized and feudal Catholicism is created in order to stand in opposition to the modern Protestant individual, who then alternately combats and flirts with this uncanny double in a series of cultural productions that we recognize as Gothic novels'.[19] While the Gothic often achieves the creation of this "other" through reference to European Catholicism, Gothic works which respond to medieval English history construct the Protestant individual against a problematic Catholic cultural heritage.

It is in order to explore the response of early British Gothic to this problematic history that I have chosen to focus on medieval romances written in English, as these could be perceived as the most direct literary and cultural heritage of those "romances" of the eighteenth century.[20] As Sean Silver notes, Percy traces a distinctly British origin of romance through 'the Gothic line of descent' and as such claims not only the works of Spenser and Milton but also 'the songs and romances unearthed and recirculated by eighteenth-century

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[15] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p.200.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Mighall, *Geography of Gothic Fiction*, p.12.

[18] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p.29.

[19] Diane Long Hoeveler, *The Gothic Ideology: Religious Hysteria and Anti-Catholicism in British Popular Fiction, 1780–1880* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014), p.3.

[20] A note on terminology is necessary here: this is the only instance in this thesis in which I use the term "romance" to refer to eighteenth or nineteenth century prose. This is for the sake of clarity as the term has a specific meaning in the context of studies of medieval literature. For similar reasons of consistency with medievalist scholarship, I use the term "medieval" to refer to the pre-modern period and literature, despite the fact that, as Townshend points out, it was not used until the nineteenth century and so its application to a context of eighteenth-century scholarship risks anachronism: Townshend, *Gothic Antiquity*, p.39. I do, however, avoid anachronism as far as possible by referring to the study of medieval literature in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries as "antiquarianism" rather than "medievalism".

antiquarians' as a 'cultural inheritance marking England as the contemporary bastion of Gothic liberty'.[21] The reproduction of medieval romance in eighteenth-century England therefore served a political purpose as well as a literary one, involved in an ongoing construction of a national identity. As this construction was based in a myth that British legal and political systems could trace their origin to an ancient, "Gothic" constitution and therefore that 'a better future [was] to be found by recovering the past', Maggie Kilgour argues that '[t]he gothic is […] haunted by a reading of history as a dialectical process of alienation and restoration, dismembering and remembering'.[22] This is very much reflected in the use of medieval romance in the Gothic: as this thesis will show, the Gothic engagement with Middle English romance is characterised by just such 'alienation and restoration', in which the romances are continually recovered from the past and reconstructed in the present in a process which both collapses and reconstitutes the distance between history and modernity. Indeed, the Middle English romances were as much dismembered as remembered in the eighteenth century, with the chapbook and ballad market producing versions of the stories that were so heavily abridged as to be barely recognisable, while antiquarians like Percy produced texts that were amended and corrected with reckless abandon.[23] In the Gothic, the romances are rewritten and reinvented, evoked where they suit the author's narrative of history and set aside where they contradict that narrative. The Gothic is not so much influenced by Middle English romance as engaged in a conversation about it, with depictions of the romances in Gothic novels often centring around an anxiety about the processes by which historical texts are reproduced, disseminated, and appropriated in contemporary society.

This first chapter of the thesis therefore involves a consideration of depictions of antiquarianism in Gothic literature as a means of establishing the literary, historical and critical context in which authors of the Gothic might engage with Middle English romance. The second chapter then concerns Clara Reeve's place in this antiquarian context, demonstrating that her ability to study and engage with Middle English romance in her *Progress of Romance* (1785) was limited by her lack of access to manuscript sources at a time when few of these texts were in print. The rest of this chapter explores the merits of a comparative approach to Reeve's *The Old English Baron* (1778) and Middle English

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[21] Sean Silver, 'The Politics of Gothic Historiography, 1660-1800' in *The Gothic World*, eds. Glennis Byron and Dale Townshend (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2014), pp.3-14, p.8.
[22] Kilgour, *Rise of the Gothic Novel*, p.15.
[23] See Nick Groom, *The Making of Percy's Reliques* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, repr. 2009).

romance to suggest that, even without direct influence, the genres of Gothic and medieval romance may share similar values and respond to similar concerns. The third chapter looks at James White's use of parody and humour in his depiction of *Bevis of Hampton* in *Earl Strongbow* (1789) to show that his attitude towards the Middle English romance reflects concerns about the ways in which medieval literature and history are interpreted, or misinterpreted, in the present day. Similar concerns about the interpretations of historical texts in contemporary society are evident in James Hogg's engagement with medieval literature in some of his works, in which he stages conflicts between oral and written traditions as a means of challenging the antiquarian project to collect, collate and display the cultural heritage of his local Border communities. The fourth chapter of this thesis demonstrates that in *The Three Perils of Man* (1822), Hogg rewrites the romance of *The Marriage of Sir Gawain* in a subversive rejection of antiquarian attempts to stabilise the narrative as a relic of ancient history rather than a living, evolving part of folklore. Where Hogg stages a clash between oral and written forms which he refuses to reconcile, the texts in the final chapter of this thesis exhibit a consistent anxiety about a similar conflict between different versions of the werewolf in folklore and romance. Works such as George W.M. Reynolds' *Wagner, the Wehr-Wolf* (1846-1847) attempt to blend the sympathetic werewolf of medieval romance with a folkloric concept of a vicious, bloodthirsty werewolf in a process which would eventually stabilise a distinctly Gothic variation of the werewolf myth.

Several of the texts studied in this thesis might be seen to fall outside the normative canon of Gothic literature, including the parodic works of James White and James Hogg's generically complex historical novel, *The Three Perils of Man* (1822). While these works may not sit comfortably in a homogenous, stable canon of Gothic literature, they play with Gothic conventions and themes as a means of exploring the ways in which medieval romance can be co-opted by contemporary movements to serve a political or historiographical narrative. Both White and Hogg produce texts that shift through categories of genre and tone to challenge contemporary assumptions about literature, history and antiquarianism, and while this does mean that they cannot be described straightforwardly as "Gothic", it also means that to exclude them from this thesis on the grounds of this generic complexity would be to ignore the ways in which they utilise the Gothic mode in their critique of contemporary approaches to medieval romance. Besides this, if the criteria for studying such works was conformity to a stable, normative genre then they would never be studied at all.

In determining a methodology for the analysis of the relationship between Middle English romance and Gothic fiction, I have considered two different models for approaching

such a study. The first can be exemplified by Jerome Mitchell's *Scott, Chaucer, and Medieval Romance: A Study in Sir Walter Scott's Indebtedness to the Literature of the Middle Ages* (1987), in which Mitchell provides a comprehensive list of the romances known to Walter Scott before exhaustively identifying examples of both direct and indirect references to medieval romance throughout his canon. While Mitchell's work is an invaluable resource, it also demonstrates the potential pitfalls of such an approach. For example, Mitchell compares a scene in *The Heart of Mid-Lothian* (1818), in which a jailor is affected by the emotional meeting of two sisters in prison and closes a shutter over them to afford them some privacy, to an episode in the Middle English *Sir Tristrem* in which King Mark discovers Tristrem and Ysonde sleeping in the forest and places a glove in an opening to screen Ysonde's face from the sun. Mitchell argues that 'it is virtually certain' that Scott had *Sir Tristrem* in mind while writing the prison scene, and while there are similarities between the two texts this level of certainly seems like a stretch: as Mitchell himself notes, '[a]lmost all attendant circumstances are different'.[24] An approach which focusses so closely on identifying evidence of direct influence of medieval romance on later texts evidently runs the risk of seeing connections where there may be coincidence. A model of an entirely different approach can be found in Amy Burge's work *Representing Difference in the Medieval and Modern Orientalist Romance* (2016), in which she takes a comparative approach to the depictions of the East in Middle English romance and twentieth-century Mills & Boon novels.[25] Burge is clear that there is no direct relationship between these two bodies of literature, but explores how viewing them in relation to one another can shed light on the construction of a fantasy of the East across different periods in British literary history, as well as demonstrating the ways in which the texts respond to similar concerns about masculinity and femininity, and ethnic and religious identity. I have chosen to follow a methodology which takes elements from each of these models of the study of two distinct genres of literature, exploring tangible connections between the publication of Middle English romances in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the development of Gothic literature, and then using these points of contact between the two genres as a springboard to explore where Gothic literature overlaps with or departs from the concerns and themes of Middle English romance. However, the relationship between these two genres must be established

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[24] Jerome Mitchell, *Scott, Chaucer, and Medieval Romance: A Study in Sir Walter Scott's Indebtedness to the Literature of the Middle Ages* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1987), pp.113, 114.
[25] Amy Burge, *Representing Difference in the Medieval and Modern Orientalist Romance* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

first and foremost in the context of the antiquarian project to collect, edit and publish the Middle English romances in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth century and the response to this project in contemporary Gothic literature. I begin, then, by looking at the Gothic habit of inventing medieval manuscripts and how two authors, William Henry Ireland and Francis Lathom, use this trope to criticise the literary and antiquarian cultures of contemporary society.

Chapter 1: Medieval Manuscripts in Gothic Fiction

Manuscripts in the Paratexts of Gothic Fiction

When Horace Walpole claimed in the preface to the 1764 first edition of *The Castle of Otranto* that he had discovered the text in 'the library of an ancient catholic family in the north of England', many of his readers believed him.[1] One such reader was Rev. William Mason, a poet and satirist who was the friend and biographer of Thomas Gray: he wrote to Walpole on 6 January 1765 admitting that he had believed the story to be a genuine translation of a medieval text, despite a friend pointing out that the language was too modern (he attributed this to the work being a translation).[2] His belief is not entirely surprising: despite the increased interest in medieval culture and literature in the latter half of the eighteenth century, few of Walpole's readers would have direct knowledge of much medieval literature. Additionally, Walpole's dating of his imagined source for *Otranto* does more to shroud the text in mystery than illuminate its imagined origins: as Dale Townshend, Angela Wright and Catherine Spooner have demonstrated, the assertion that the text was 'printed at Naples, in the black letter, in the year 1529' is followed immediately by 'vagueness and ambiguity' about when the text was actually written.[3] Walpole's claim to be editing a text from a medieval source became the inspiration for a trend in later Gothic novels of depicting the discovery of manuscripts or documents both as a paratextual device and as a device within the plots of the novels – the "found manuscript trope". Interestingly, it is indeed usually a found *manuscript* trope that exists in subsequent Gothic works, despite that in the preface to *Otranto* Walpole claims to be working from an early modern printed edition. Evidently, later Gothic works were more inspired by the idea of mysterious handwritten documents than the print history of medieval texts and the concept of the found manuscript did not stay entirely rooted in an interest in historical sources: as both a paratextual device

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[1] Crystal B. Lake, 'Bloody Records: Manuscripts and Politics in *The Castle of Otranto*', *Modern Philology: Critical and Historical Studies in Literature, Medieval Through Contemporary*, 110(4) (2013), 489-512, p.492n.
[2] Rev. William Mason, letter to Horace Walpole, 6 January 1765, *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, Yale Edition, 48 Vols, Vol. 28 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937-1983), pp.5-6.
[3] Dale Townshend, Angela Wright and Catherine Spooner, 'Introduction: The Gothic in/and History' in *The Cambridge History of the Gothic: Volume 1: Gothic in the Long Eighteenth Century*, eds. Angela Wright and Dale Townshend (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp.1-21, p.1. See also Lake, 'Bloody Records', pp.492-493.

and a plot device, the found manuscript trope makes use of handwritten sources from any era, from discovering dusty medieval scrolls to reading the recently written diaries or letters of a character. Naturally, this chapter largely focuses on those uses of the found manuscript trope that reflect an interest in the medieval period. With a false claim of medieval origins forming such a significant aspect of the genesis of Gothic fiction in the eighteenth century and continuing to influence subsequent Gothic literature for decades afterwards, it is crucial to an understanding of the relationship between medieval sources and Gothic literature to analyse this trope in more detail than is often given to a device which is seen as conventional and perfunctory.

Townshend, Wright and Spooner discuss the implications of Walpole's vagueness in his preface to the first edition of *Otranto* not only in the dating of the text, but also in its alleged origins in 'the library of an ancient catholic family in the north of England', noting that the family 'cannot be named, since to do so would be to risk displaying too great an intimacy and familiarity with the reviled Catholic faith'.[4] These ambiguities, they argue, demonstrate a concern with the modes through which the past is accessed in the present, and particularly with the limitations of these modes: by 'boldly yok[ing] historical precision to obscurity, hesitation and uncertainty', Walpole introduces a critique of historiography into the one of the foundational texts in the Gothic genre.[5] In addition to this, Crystal B. Lake demonstrates that Walpole's description of the imagined manuscript of *Otranto* is influenced by his derision for his contemporary antiquarians, whom he frequently disparaged in his letters.[6] Lake demonstrates that Walpole's preface to the first edition of *Otranto* is specifically designed 'to make it impossible to feel confident about the antiquarian editor's interpretations and, inevitably, the validity and relevance of his archival find', and in doing so to call into question not only 'the reliability of historical texts and the individuals like Marshal who would rescue them' but also the ways in which such texts are used by contemporary eighteenth-century society.[7] She discusses references to medieval legal documents, especially the Magna Carta, in the John Wilkes controversy of 1763-64, which Walpole followed closely, to demonstrate that *Otranto* can be read as a reflection of Walpole's anxieties about the political manipulation of medieval history in the eighteenth

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[4] Townshend, Wright and Spooner, 'Introduction', p.2.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Lake, 'Bloody Records', p.494n.
[7] Lake, 'Bloody Records', p.494. 'Marshal' refers to William Marshal, the fictional editor and transcriber invented by Walpole.

century.[8] Dent also identifies Walpole's use of the manuscript framing device as evidence of a critique of contemporary historiography, arguing that the description of *Otranto* as a translated work in the preface to the first edition takes aim at David Hume by undermining the idea that historical writing can be objective:

> Walpole's 'translator' is a stark reminder that, despite Hume's longing for a certain amount of objectivity in historical writing, all historians can be compared to translators in the sense that they can only ever generate linguistic *representations* (or approximations) of the past. By revealing that historical knowledge is as much *engineered* by language and narrative structures as it is *discovered* in archives, *Otranto* significantly undermines Hume's historiography. From its very inception, the Gothic draws attention to history not as the past, but as a *substitute* for the past [original emphasis].[9]

Evidently, the trope of the found manuscript has been concerned with questions of how medieval texts are accessed, interpreted, and presented to the public from its earliest outset and, as this chapter will show, these questions continued to interest Gothic authors who engaged with the trope throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. While a consistent vein of scepticism about the reliability and veracity of manuscript sources in the use of the found manuscript trope in Gothic texts could be interpreted as a holdover from the origins of the trope in Walpole's criticism of antiquarianism, there are other factors influencing the depiction of medieval manuscripts in these novels, not least of which is the context of several high-profile controversies surrounding forgeries of historical sources in the late eighteenth century. This chapter will consider first the relationship between real found manuscripts such as the Percy Folio and the depiction of manuscripts in the paratexts of Gothic fiction, before looking at William Henry Ireland's *Gondez, the Monk* (1805) to examine how a notorious forger of historical documents dealt with the idea of a found manuscript in a Gothic novel, and finally identifying connections between real manuscript sources and a fictional manuscript in Francis Lathom's *The Unknown: or, The Northern Gallery* (1808), to show that the found manuscript in Gothic literature was not always entirely imagined.

It is impossible to separate the interest in medieval manuscripts in Gothic fiction from the context of medieval scholarship in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. While it is

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[8] Ibid.
[9] Dent, *Sinister Histories*, p.41.

easy to imagine that the concept of the found manuscript may have been intended to lend a sense of authenticity to the medieval setting of Gothic novels, as indeed Markman Ellis suggests, the reality of medieval scholarship at the time involved a great deal of uncertainty when it came to dating and authenticating medieval texts.[10] Percy, Warton and Ritson frequently disagreed on the dating of medieval sources, in part because many of these texts survived in later manuscript copies such as BL Additional MS. 27879 or, as it is more commonly known, the Percy Folio. Percy's discovery of his Folio is described by Nick Groom in *The Making of Percy's Reliques*:

> In about 1753, Percy had paid a visit to Humphrey Pitt, an old Salopian friend. While there, he noticed that the maids in the parlour were lighting the fire with a bundle of paper that had been lying under a bureau. It was a poetry miscellany, transcribed by hand into a folio book, and Percy, enthralled, asked if he might have the curiosity before it was entirely consumed.[11]

This Folio, which Percy found to be a seventeenth-century collection of romances and ballads, was a remarkable discovery, with many of the texts contained in it surviving in no other copy: 'It was a fairy-tale foundling, the last of its race, in which Percy perceived noble lineaments and a stately gravity: a last, remarkable example of the art of the ancient English minstrels'.[12]

It was, in fact, so remarkable that Ritson did not believe it. Johnston details the controversy that arose from Ritson's repeated suggestions both in letters and in his published works that Percy's Folio may not even exist, forcing Percy to prove the existence of the manuscript, though he was reluctant to show it to Ritson himself and instead appealed to several other scholars for corroboration.[13] Ritson was satisfied that Percy did indeed have a manuscript, but was still suspicious: 'It had never been shown to a scholar conversant with old manuscripts […] and might prove to be a forgery'.[14] Although Ritson's contempt for Percy may be excessive, his questions around the processes involved in the production of Percy's *Reliques* are justified. As Margaret Russett demonstrates, stories of manuscript discoveries were already cliché by the time Percy claimed to have found his Folio, such that '[b]y the mid-eighteenth century, any claim to have found an unknown masterpiece lying

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[10] Markman Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000, repr. 2003, digital print 2007), p.28.

[11] Groom, *Making of Percy's Reliques*, p.6.

[12] Groom, *Percy's Reliques*, p.6.

[13] Johnston, *Enchanted Ground*, pp.125-126.

[14] Johnston, *Enchanted Ground*, p.125.

around gathering dust should have elicited suspicion rather than belief – this was a story so overdetermined that it automatically looked *like* a story, like fiction'.[15] Without any evidence beyond Percy's word that his manuscript existed, Ritson's suggestion that it was a fabrication is entirely reasonable – almost exactly as reasonable as refusing to believe that someone might have found a 1529 black-letter edition of a medieval text in 'the library of an ancient catholic family in the north of England' and translated it out of Italian. Essentially, if we are to lay the charge of credulity to those who fell for Walpole's preface to the first edition of *Otranto*, we would likely also have to question the judgement of those who believed unfailingly in the existence of the Percy Folio.

As Russett points out, Percy is, in fact, frequently associated with forgery as a result of his many and significant alterations to the ballads and romances in the *Reliques*.[16] In producing his collection, Percy was caught in a constant struggle between the desire to replicate the texts he used as source material with accuracy and the need to produce a marketable work – 'between editing and authorship'.[17] The result of this struggle was a text which presented itself as a collection of "ancient" songs and ballads but with the unmistakable hallmarks of an eighteenth-century hand. Indeed, Groom remarks that Percy was a notoriously unreliable editor, who 'compiled single texts of ballads from a variety of unacknowledged versions, and liberally rewrote these collages to suit the taste of a late eighteenth-century readership'.[18] Percy's editorial practices were consistently criticised by Ritson, who saw his alterations to the texts as indicative of dishonesty and inauthenticity.[19] In one passage in *Scotish Songs* (1794), he accuses Percy of a "Chattertonian manoeuvre", referring to the infamous Thomas Chatterton forgeries:

> Dr Percy, in his "Essay on the ancient English minstrels," p.xxxvii., observes, that "in the old song of 'Maggy Lawder,' a piper is asked, by way of distinction, 'come ze frae the Border?'" Now, without meaning to dispute the antiquity of the song, though it cannot surely be very great, it may be fairly assumed that the learned essayist never met with a copy, either printed or manuscript, so antiquated as to have the *z* substituted for the *y*. Any modern ballad, though but written yesterday, might, by this

[15] Margaret Russett, *Fictions and Fakes: Forging Romantic Authenticity, 1760-1845* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.24.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Groom, *Percy's Reliques*, p.9.
[18] Groom, *Percy's Reliques*, pp.8-9.
[19] Johnston, *Enchanted Ground*, pp.124-126.

curious Chattertonian manoeuvre, (in the use or abuse of which Dr. P. is supposed not to have been very sparing,) pass for one of two or three hundred years old.[20]

As this passage suggests and as Johnston has noted, Ritson's suspicion of Percy's alterations to the ballads can be interpreted as a justifiable caution in 'an age which had seen many forgeries of literary documents'.[21]

Given the level of scepticism which existed around Percy's real manuscript, it is perhaps not surprising to find that the use of the found manuscript trope in Gothic novels rapidly became the subject of parody and ridicule. Describing Adeline's discovery of an old manuscript in Ann Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), Hoeveler notes that:

> This device, the partial, fragmented manuscript, became after Radcliffe a stock gothic topos. In fact, the unearthed manuscript was such a tired convention that it was both ridiculed and valorized in several later gothic (or antigothic) novels.[22]

She gives the discovery of the laundry list in Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1817) as one example of this.[23] While Hoeveler is writing specifically about characters discovering manuscripts within the plot of Gothic novels, her observation about the stock trope becoming a source of ridicule in later texts is also true of the trope of claiming that the novel itself is based on a found manuscript. Indeed, if anything the move from sincerity to satire in the use of the found manuscript as a paratextual device seems to have occurred even earlier than in the case of the found manuscript as a plot device. When Clara Reeve first published her novel *The Old English Baron* (1778) under the title *The Champion of Virtue* in 1777, she made the claim that the text was a transcription from 'a manuscript in the old English language' belonging to a friend.[24] I will not discuss Reeve's novel in detail in this chapter, as she is the subject of the next chapter in this thesis, but it is worth noting that in Reeve's imitation of Walpole's found-manuscript claim, she seems to show little serious interest in convincing her readers that the manuscript is genuine. Indeed, E.J. Clery refers to Reeve's claim that the text is modernised from an Old English source as 'a transparent fiction'.[25] This could suggest that even as early as the 1770s, Walpole's claim to be transcribing a manuscript was so notorious

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[20] Joseph Ritson, *Scotish Songs*, 2nd edn., Vol. 1, ed. J. Alexander (Glasgow: Hugh Hopkins, 1869; 1st edn. 1794), p.105n.
[21] Johnston, *Enchanted Ground*, p.124.
[22] Diane Long Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism: the Professionalization of Gender from Charlotte Smith to the Brontës*, (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988), p.80.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Clara Reeve, *The Old English Baron*, ed. James Trainer, with an Introduction and Notes by James Watt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, repr. 2008), p.139.
[25] E.J. Clery, *Women's Gothic: From Clara Reeve to Mary Shelley*, 2nd edn. (Tavistock: Northcote House Publishers Ltd., 2000, 2nd edn. 2004), p.29.

that few readers would be likely to take a similar claim seriously. By 1786 it seems it had already become tired, as Clery notes in relation to the critical response to the publication of William Beckford's *Vathek* (1786), 'The convention of the ancient manuscript discovered and translated, employed again here, was by this stage so familiar that the critics simply ignored it'.[26] By the 1790s, it had become a source of ridicule, with Elizabeth Bonhôte, in her preface to *Bungay Castle* (1796) mocking the convention:

> [The Author] might, indeed, to evade the danger of having her work condemned, pretend to have found it in some recess of her favourite ruins, or to have discovered it artfully concealed in the bottom of an old chest, in so defaced and mutilated a condition, as to have rendered it a very difficult and laborious task to collect the fragments and modernize the language: but the writer of these pages has not been so fortunate; and, had she attempted to assert so marvellous a circumstance, she could not have expected any miss of fifteen would have been credulous enough to believe her.[27]

Bonhôte's certainty that it would be foolish to believe that a valuable manuscript might be discovered by accident, in a mutilated condition, and then modernised and reproduced for a contemporary readership demonstrates the close relationship between the found manuscript trope in Gothic literature and the antiquarian context of the late eighteenth century: her description could apply to the prefaces of a number of novels, but it could also apply to Percy's Folio.

Evidently, in the literary and antiquarian context of the eighteenth century, the question of the authenticity of any document claiming to be a found manuscript is not entirely straightforward. On the one hand, it would take the credulity of a 'miss of fifteen' to fall for the prefaces to contemporary novels. On the other hand, miraculous discoveries of manuscripts really did happen and were not entirely rare. Indeed, Groom demonstrates that Percy's discovery of his manuscript was not an isolated incident and in fact such discoveries were frequently taking place in the eighteenth century:

> Stories of textual transmission are seldom straightforward. Manuscripts, documents, and books are rescued from fires, pie dishes, tailors, bookbinders, and urns in Dead Sea caves; they are plucked from chests in church muniment rooms, or, like Boswell's

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[26] E.J. Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction, 1762-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, repr. 1999), p.89.
[27] Elizabeth Bonhôte, *Bungay Castle: A Novel*, Vol.1 (London: printed for William Lane at the Minerva Press, 1796), pp.viii-ix.

Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides, discovered lining a croquet box. Libraries burn and manuscripts rot, but somehow stories get by and are repeated to the next generation. Stories are framed by the stories of their own transmission, and these narratives act as guarantors of authenticity.[28]

These 'guarantors of authenticity' are not always effective though: Percy's story was not enough to convince Ritson, and the stories of manuscript discoveries that framed Gothic novels were (rightly) treated with suspicion and were often the subject of parody and ridicule. Given this context, it seems difficult to argue that the use of the found manuscript trope in Gothic fiction was purely a means of lending a sense of authenticity to the text: if anything, it seems inevitable that claims of manuscript discoveries would be subject to criticism and scrutiny, even while potentially being met with belief by some. While Lake reads Walpole's vague and ambiguous description of his source in the first edition of *Otranto* as a reflection of his criticism of contemporary antiquarian practices, later literature which uses similar devices may not be engaged in a process of criticism so much as leaning into a culture of scepticism and suspicion in the reception of real-life discovered manuscripts. As the rest of this chapter will show, this context allowed some authors to reflect on the process of reading itself as well as contemporary concerns about the interpretation and influence of literary and historical texts. The culture of scepticism and suspicion which allowed this kind of reflection was heightened by high-profile, controversial forgeries such as the Chatterton case, and few Gothic authors would be more aware of this context than William Henry Ireland.

'a new chimera of the brain, originating in the poet's fancy': Fake Shakespeare and Unreliable Manuscripts in William Henry Ireland's *Gondez, the Monk*

From 1794 to 1796, William Henry Ireland forged a host of documents purporting to belong to or be connected to Shakespeare, including letters allegedly bearing Shakespeare's signature.[29] Ireland's father, Samuel Ireland, presented these documents to many of the most influential historians and antiquarians of the era and several believed them to be genuine, treating them with a reverence which Jeffrey Kahan describes as 'tinged with religiosity': James Boswell even 'fell to his knees' and cried out that he could die in peace having

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[28] Groom, *Percy's Reliques*, p.19.
[29] For a detailed account of the Ireland forgeries, see Nick Groom, *The Forger's Shadow: How Forgery Changed the Course of Literature* (London: Picador, 2002), pp.217-255.

witnessed the discovery of such a treasure.[30] Michael Gamer and Robert Miles also describe the belief in the authenticity of the documents of Poet Laureate Henry James Pye and 'Doctors Wharton and Parr', the latter of whom would later be described as a "Booby" by Samuel Taylor Coleridge in a letter quoted by Russett.[31] Unsurprisingly, Ritson was not among those convinced of the authenticity of the documents, and Kahan describes how he 'inspected the papers, asked a few quiet, purposeful questions and left without saying good-bye' before later describing the documents as a "parcel of forgeries" in a letter to a friend.[32] Despite Ritson's scepticism, Ireland was undeterred and next claimed to have discovered two previously unknown plays by Shakespeare, *Vortigern and Rowena* and *Henry II*, and arranged for the former to be performed in at the Drury Lane Theatre on 2nd April 1796.[33] Unfortunately for Ireland, just two days before the performance Edmond Malone, a respected scholar and editor of Shakespeare's work, published an extensive and convincing piece arguing that the documents were forgeries.[34] Groom describes the effects of this as 'utterly devastating':

> The performance of *Vortigern* was packed with [Malone's] rowdy supporters and although there were many others opposing the contention that the play was a forgery, things disintegrated into bedlam when it became clear that even John Kemble, the actor playing Vortigern, thought the production laughable. The play collapsed and did not return to the stage for over two centuries; the Irelands were ridiculed.[35]

Ireland admitted that the works were forgeries, though some (including his father Samuel Ireland) refused to believe it even then.[36] Several studies have detailed the political implications of the *Vortigern* controversy in terms of how it relates to eighteenth-century 'bardolatry', which sought to reinvent Shakespeare as a national symbol in the wake of political instability in Europe.[37] Other works have considered Ireland's forgeries through a biographical lens, examining his tense relationship with Samuel Ireland (who may not have

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[30] Jeffrey Kahan, 'Vortigern in and Out of the Closet', *Borrowers and Lenders: The Journal of Shakespeare and Appropriation*, 11(2) (2018), 1-16, p.2. See also Jack Lynch, 'William Henry Ireland's Authentic Forgeries', *The Princeton University Library Chronicle*, 66(1) (2004), 79-96, pp.82-83.

[31] Michael Gamer and Robert Miles, 'Gothic Shakespeare on the Romantic Stage' in *Gothic Shakespeares*, eds. John Drakakis and Dale Townshend (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), pp.131-152, p.132; Russett, *Fictions and Fakes*, p.3.

[32] Kahan, 'Vortigern', p.2.

[33] Groom, *Forger's Shadow*, p.218.

[34] Groom, *Forger's Shadow*, p.219.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Gamer and Miles, 'Gothic Shakespeare', pp.131-152; Jack Lynch, 'England's Ireland, Ireland's England: William Henry Ireland's National Offense' in *Literary Forgery in Early Modern Europe, 1450-1800*, eds. Walter Stephens and Earle A. Havens (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018), pp.255-273.

been his biological father) to attempt to understand Ireland's choices on a personal and emotional level: Jeffrey Kahan, for example, interprets *Vortigern* as a "closet play" aimed specifically at his father.[38] David Worrall examines the *Vortigern* controversy in the context of the eighteenth-century stage, noting that 'literary authenticity in contemporary drama was virtually non-existent' and '[t]he boundaries between originality and stealing, borrowing or adapting were decidedly blurred' to suggest that Ireland's misappropriation of Shakespeare's name was not entirely out of place in the contemporary theatre scene.[39] This chapter is not focussed on Ireland's Shakespeare forgeries as such, though, but rather on how Ireland's background as a forger of historical documents impacts on his depiction of manuscript sources in his Gothic novel, *Gondez, the Monk* (1805).

Indeed, Ireland continued to write for most of his life after the *Vortigern* controversy, under a variety of pseudonyms.[40] His novels, including *The Abbess* (1799) and *Gondez*, have been largely overlooked in Gothic scholarship, which Hoeveler attributes to the extent of their 'propagandistic' anti-Catholic content.[41] In the case of *Gondez*, it is also possible that it has been overlooked because its four-volume myriad of subplots and detours just barely tie together, and the most exciting parts tend to have no connection to the overarching story. I will not, therefore, attempt to summarise the entire plot of the novel, especially as most of it is not relevant to the present discussion. In brief terms, then, it is set in medieval Scotland and begins with Robert the Bruce and several of his men taking shelter in a monastery named St. Columba after a defeat in a battle against the English. At the monastery they meet the mysterious, evil and demonic monk, Gondez, and from thence the main character, Huberto Avinzo, finds himself caught up in a series of adventures involving ghosts, demons, kidnappings, shipwrecks, torture, and all manner of similarly Gothic devices. The novel, as the title suggests, draws much inspiration from Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796) and, perhaps unsurprisingly, is not entirely original.

Each chapter of *Gondez* begins with an epigraph, and most of these are attributed to Shakespeare (correctly, as it may worth noting in this particular author's case) or to "W.H.I.",

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[38] Kahan, 'Vortigern', pp.1-16.

[39] David Worrall, *The Politics of Romantic Theatricality, 1787–1832: The Road to the Stage* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p.119.

[40] Groom has detailed the significance of Ireland's use of pseudonyms and how this relates to his approach towards authorship and authenticity: Groom, *Forger's Shadow*, p.251.

[41] Diane Long Hoeveler, 'William-Henry Ireland, T. I. Horsley Curties, and the Anti-Catholic Gothic Novel', *European Romantic Review*, 24(1) (2013), 43-65, p.53. Having said that *Gondez* has been largely ignored in scholarship, it is necessary to mention that some discussion of the novel can be found in Robert Miles, *Gothic Writing, 1750-1820: A Genealogy*, 2nd edn. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002; 1st edn. 1993), pp.55-56.

his own initials.[42] Only the very first epigraph is accompanied by the title of the work from which it is taken: "Henry II".[43] This is, of course, the *Henry II* that Ireland had falsely claimed in 1796 was a newly discovered work by Shakespeare, along with *Vortigern*. A second, two-line epigraph from *Henry IV* follows, with the attribution "Shakespeare" therefore appearing two lines below the title of Ireland's own play.[44] Even nine years after the *Vortigern* debacle, Ireland appears to be attempting to create some confusion over which lines are attributed to Shakespeare, although it is possible that the decision to give the title "Henry II" rather than his initials may have been motivated purely by a desire to avoid drawing attention to his authorship of the play. However, the interspersion of quotations from Shakespeare and from his own dramatic works throughout the text does seem to suggest an attempt to set up his own writing as a counterpart to Shakespeare's plays. This forms part of a pattern in Ireland's later life and writing in which he continues to reference the Shakespeare controversy in order to profit from it: Jack Lynch details how Ireland turned to reproducing and selling forgeries of his "authentic", original forgeries to stave off debt, such that even now there are multiple copies of manuscripts purporting to be Ireland's Shakespeare manuscripts in libraries around the world.[45] Worrall also discusses how Ireland used his 'specialist knowledge' in his anonymous *Chalcographimania; or, The Portrait-Collector and Printseller's Chronicle* (1814) to expose 'the dubious practices of auctioneers such as Sotheby, Christie and Colnaghi', including the misattribution of items to increase the price.[46] Worrall characterises Ireland as 'a resourceful artisan negotiating his way through Grub Street and its Bond Street art-market equivalents and, during that progress, being only slightly less scrupulous than some of his more commercially successful and respectable colleagues'.[47] Ireland's willingness to continue to profit from his forgeries later in life may have been based, then, in an awareness of the hypocrisy of contemporary London society, which condemned him while countless others continued to make money through similar practices. It is therefore not surprising to find Ireland playfully aligning his own words with Shakespeare in his novel in 1805. As well as giving some insight into Ireland's attitude towards the controversy, the epigraphs also serve to bring the context of forgery and fraud into focus from the outset of the text, suggesting that it ought to inform the reader's response

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[42] There are also epigraphs from Milton and Dante, and some which are unattributed.

[43] William Henry Ireland, *Gondez, the Monk: A Romance, of the Thirteenth Century*, Vol.1 (London: printed for W. Earle, Albemarle-Street and J.W. Hucklebridge, 1805), p.1. All page references are to this edition.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Lynch, 'Ireland's Authentic Forgeries', pp.87, 89. See also Gamer and Miles, 'Gothic Shakespeare', p.133.

[46] Worrall, *Romantic Theatricality*, p.122.

[47] Worrall, *Romantic Theatricality*, pp.122-123.

to the novel throughout. Themes of originality, authenticity and interpretation in the novel should therefore be viewed through the lens of Ireland's role as a forger.

It seems Ireland was unable to escape the impulse to invent Shakespearian texts even after the forgery debacle. The hero of *Gondez*, Huberto, frequently finds himself conversing with a group of strange old women whose resemblance to the witches of *Macbeth* is frankly uncanny. After an initial meeting with such creatures in which they stir cauldrons and make vague predictions, Huberto comes across them again after being washed ashore on the island of Jura in a storm. The "hags" perform a ritual that involves them each speaking in verse in turn, and then their function in the story becomes somewhat unclear as one of them instructs Huberto to offer his crucifix to a mysterious spectral horseman who appears. He later learns that this is Laird Guy, who fell prey to a giant demonic figure known as the Tall White Man as a punishment for spending too much time hunting rather than praying and caring for his family. The Laird has been doomed to ride with the ghostly horsemen who follow the Tall White Man, until he kisses Huberto's crucifix and his soul is freed. The Tall White Man himself appears to Huberto at this point, but the hag explains that it cannot 'touch the holy' nor 'trespass on [the] mystic line' that the witches have created with their ritual.[48] Huberto then travels to a castle where an ancient minstrel sings 'The Legend of Finlagan' to him, detailing the tragic fate of Laird Guy's two children, and gives Huberto a manuscript containing 'The Legend of the Tall White Man'. Both stories are written in the form of a ballad and are said to have been composed by the minstrel, who has lived at Finlagan for his whole life. When Huberto reads the manuscript containing 'The Legend of the Tall White Man', he finds it explains some of his supernatural experiences:

At the conclusion of this horrible narrative Huberto was fully convinced that the spectre he had witnessed, in the cavern of the mountain of Jura, was the tortured spirit of the Laird Guy, whose soul was at length relieved by his kissing the crucifix which he had tendered him; and it was also evident, that the horrid and gigantic appearance which followed, was the white fiend alluded to in the minstrel's poem.[49]

The minstrel's poetry thus retroactively clarifies the nature of the supernatural events of the previous chapters, while also providing an atmospheric account of the ghostly local legends which form the context of those events.

[48] *Gondez*, Vol.2, p.225.
[49] *Gondez*, Vol.3, p.36.

These are not the only examples of a narrative within the overarching narrative of *Gondez*: at the sinister monastery of St Columba, Huberto stumbles across a room filled with manuscripts and is drawn to a vellum roll covered in dust with an illustration of a woman struggling with a demon. Here he discovers the 'Legend of the Little Red Woman, written by the Monk Ingulphus' at the instigation of the abbot, 'Wherein was displayed this Bloody Tragedy, in the Year of Grace 1152'.[50] Given Ireland's track record with convincing historical pastiche, it probably goes without saying that the poem does not resemble twelfth-century literature but rather eighteenth-century ballads. The tale describes a monstrous old woman who has made a deal with the devil and spent many years kidnapping and eating children. When she approaches the age of one hundred, when her deal expires, she becomes fearful and repentant, and so she seeks the advice of the monks of the Monastery of St Columba. Unfortunately, the devil has anticipated her plans, put all the monks into a deep sleep and disguised himself as the abbot. He tries to prevent her from praying, and though she does manage to call out to God before her deal expires, he drags her to hell where she is consumed by demons. The tale ends with an address to the reader: 'Know, pious reader, that once in every year the tortured spirit of the Little Red Woman revisits Oronza's monastery, at the hour of midnight; and, yelling, flies around the cloisters from the pursuit of the fiend'.[51] After a brief interruption by one of the monks, Huberto finds himself at leisure to reflect on the manuscript and concludes that the address to the reader is not part of the original tale:

> […] from the neglectful manner in which the Legend was obviously preserved, Huberto rather conjectured that the information conveyed in the sequel of the poem, was but a new chimera of the brain, originating in the poet's fancy; who, to add more horror to the relation, had consequently concluded it with the assertion alluded to; as, from the date of the performance, upwards of a century had transpired, for the greater part of which, it appeared very probable, that the Legend had remained altogether unnoticed; which, Avinzo conceived, would not have been the case, had the spirit regularly revisited the cloisters annually, according to the poet's assertion.[52]

Setting aside Huberto's calm in the face of ghosts, demons and cannibalism, the passage raises some questions about how Ireland conceives of the relationship between authorship and authenticity. Here, the fictional monk Ingulphus has composed a poem based on accounts of a terrifying event at the monastery, and in this sense he is preserving history in the same

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[50] *Gondez*, Vol.1, p.173.
[51] *Gondez*, Vol.1, p.183.
[52] *Gondez*, Vol.1, p.191.

manner as the minstrel who informs Huberto of the history of Finlagan. He has also, however, embellished the story from his own imagination to add greater horror to the tale, and Huberto must employ a rational, critical process to the manuscript to distinguish the "true" history from the poet's fancy. The manuscript, it seems, cannot be trusted, which creates an interesting comparison to the ballads composed by the minstrel at Finlagan, which Huberto believes without question and uses as an explanation for his own experiences. Given Hoeveler's discussion of the demonisation of Catholicism in Ireland's novel, it would make sense to read this as an attack on the perceived superstition and irrationality of the Catholic institution of the monastery.[53]

However, the manuscript turns out to be accurate: later in the novel, the spirit of the Little Red Woman appears with a hideous demon to claim the soul of the damned monk, Gondez. Perhaps inconsistency in Ireland's anti-Catholicism is not surprising, as Hoeveler speculates that his political ideology in his Gothic novels may have been motivated as much by an awareness that such content would sell well as by genuine belief.[54] What is particularly interesting here, however, is not so much the question of whether the manuscript Huberto finds can be trusted, but that Ireland structures the narrative in such a way that Huberto is not *inclined* to trust it. In the Tall White Man sequence Huberto's experiences follow a familiar Gothic pattern in which the supernatural is experienced before later being explained, while in the plot involving the Little Red Woman Huberto is sceptical of the manuscript in the monastery because he has not yet experienced sufficient strange and unusual events to require an explanation. By having Huberto witness evidence for the most fantastical elements of the ballads before he ever comes across the minstrel, Ireland allows for him to treat a manuscript source as credible and reliable when it has been written by a contemporary, whereas in the case of the twelfth-century scroll Ireland introduces scepticism and doubt into the origins of a narrative when it is received from an older manuscript source. Or, to put it another way, when Huberto acts as a critic of poetry written by his contemporaries, he is able to be trusting and uncynical; when he acts as an antiquarian interpreting a medieval source, he is sceptical and critical. A man all too familiar with the possibility of deception and forgery, Ireland writes a character whose instinct on contact with a medieval manuscript is to scrutinise its contents for signs of tampering. From the very first epigraph in *Gondez*, Ireland seems to challenge the

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[53] Hoeveler, 'Anti-Catholic Gothic Novel', pp.53-56.
[54] Hoeveler, 'Anti-Catholic Gothic Novel', pp.55-56.

reader to think about the processes through which texts are produced, reproduced, attributed and authenticated.

'we shall transcribe a scroll': Reading History in Francis Lathom's *The Unknown*

Most modern criticism on Francis Lathom has focussed on a combination of the mysterious circumstances of his life and his 1798 novel *The Midnight Bell*, as this is one of the 'horrid' novels that Isabella recommends to Catherine in Austen's *Northanger Abbey*.[55] It is no surprise that the details of Lathom's life have attracted curiosity: born in 1777, he grew up in Norwich and continued to live there up until roughly 1810, when some unknown event caused him to leave his wife and children and quit Norwich, never to return.[56] He subsequently lived in Scotland, in the village of Fyvie and later Monquhitter, where he died in 1832 and was buried under a different name.[57] Lathom's sudden departure from Norwich has been the source of much speculation but is not of much concern for this chapter, which focusses on Lathom's approach to the relationship between history and fiction, and explores how a reference to a medieval manuscript in one of his novels destabilises this relationship.

As with Ireland's *Gondez*, Lathom's 1808 novel *The Unknown: or, The Northern Gallery* features the discovery of a medieval text within the narrative. *The Unknown* is loosely based around the history of Bishop Latimer: Eleanora, the heroine, is Latimer's daughter and the main concern of the plot is her fate after he is taken to the Tower of London. A great deal of the story is set at Framlingham Castle in Suffolk, which Lathom raves about in the preface:

> It has been the scene of many great events in the history of our country, and its present decayed state is one of the most splendid monuments of ancient grandeur remaining in this kingdom. I recommend a visit to its ivy-mantled towers, as one of the highest treats which a mind that loves to feast upon the gloomily-enchanting recollections of times past, can enjoy; nor must the visitor to Framlingham forget the parish church, which contains many splendid and beautiful monuments of the Dukes

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[55] Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, ed. Susan Fraiman (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004), pp.24-25.
[56] David Punter and Alan Bissett, 'Francis Lathom in the Eighteenth Century', *Gothic Studies*, 5(1) (May 2003), 55-70, p.55.
[57] Ibid.

> of Norfolk, and likewise a tomb of most curious workmanship, which encloses the
> dust of Lord Henry Fitzroy.[58]

Lord Henry Fitzroy, the illegitimate son of Henry VIII, is a principal character of the novel
and is involved in an episode in which Lathom invokes the idea of a medieval scroll held in
the library at Framlingham as a way of bringing the history of the castle into the narrative.
Lord Fitzroy is bemused one evening when his servant, Gilbert, informs him that a ghost
named Berick will appear and haunt the castle that night, but he dismisses the superstition
without much thought, and it falls to the narrator to describe the full story:

> Gilbert was now directed to retire; and the thoughts of Lord Fitzroy were, during the
> remainder of the evening, directed to subjects of much greater importance, in his
> estimation, than the spectre of Berick; but as the history of that wandering spirit,
> "doomed for a certain time to walk the night," is connected with events contained in
> these pages, we shall transcribe a scroll of the tradition, which, at that period, held a
> place in the library of Framlingham Castle.[59]

As I will discuss later, Lathom is careful in his preface to outline exactly which parts of his
work are based in real history and which are his own inventions in an attempt to pre-empt
criticism of the novel on the grounds of historical inaccuracy, and so it is curious that this
passage seems to blur those lines. The discussion of Framlingham Castle in the Preface,
which reads as much as an advertisement of a tourist destination as an introduction to a novel,
makes clear that Lathom has first-hand knowledge of the location, so the claim that he is
transcribing a scroll held at the library there seems within the bounds of reason. The supposed
transcription of the scroll concludes with a note about its origins:

> This scroll was edited by a man of divine profession, immediately after the first
> appearance of the tortured spirit of Berick; and it is recommended to be for ever
> preserved in the library of Framlingham Castle, as a true and faithful memorial of
> God's judgment upon sinful men.[60]

Lathom continues: 'Such were the contents of the scroll, which still held possession of the
spot where its divine writer had requested it ever to be retained'.[61] He does not say whether
this imagined scroll might still hold its place in the library, but the repetition of the holy
man's instruction for it to be retained always in the castle seems designed to give that

[58] Francis Lathom, *The Unknown, A Romance* (London: printed at the Minerva-Press for Lane, Newman, and Co., 1808), p.x-xi. All page references are to this edition.
[59] *Unknown*, Vol. 3, pp.77-78.
[60] *Unknown*, Vol.3, p.86.
[61] Ibid.

impression. The fact that it is not a character in the novel who finds and transcribes the text, but the narrator, muddles whatever distinction might exist between text and paratext, as it is unclear whether the description of the scroll is part of the fictional narrative, or whether it refers back to Lathom's visit to Framlingham Castle. Indeed, the 'we' in the phrase 'we shall transcribe a scroll' seems to blend together the narrator of the story, the fictional editor who first transcribed the manuscript and Latham himself into one act of textual reproduction. As Latham explained in his preface, 'The tales which are at the present day the most in request, are undoubtedly those which unite with a considerable degree of the marvellous, some portion of history; and it is not an author's business to enquire why such is the public taste, but to comply with it'.[62] In the case of the medieval scroll in *The Unknown*, it is not entirely clear where we are supposed to see the marvellous end and the history begin.

The scroll itself describes a version of the history of St. Edmund which contains several unusual and very specific details. In Lathom's version of the story, a Dane named Lothbrok lands on the English coast in around 870 after his one-man vessel is destroyed in a storm. Greeted by friendly locals, Lothbrok is led to the court of King Edmund, who asks about the falcon on Lothbrok's shoulder and learns that the Dane is a keen falconer. As King Edmund also enjoys falconry, the two become friends and Lothbrok is favoured at court. Jealous of this, a man named Berick leads Lothbrok into the woods and kills him. When Edmund learns of this, he punishes Berick by setting him out to sea in a small boat during a storm, but Berick survives and lands on the Danish shore. There he meets Hunguar and Hubba, Lothbrok's sons, and tells them that Edmund was responsible for the death of their father. They set sail for England where they demand that Edmund submit to their rule or face defeat at the hands of their superior army; Edmund decides that he will agree to this proposal on the condition that they convert to Christianity. The brothers besiege the city and Edmund flees to Framlingham, where the Danes follow and continue their attack. Edmund is captured and, after refusing to renounce his faith, beaten with stakes then bound to a tree and shot with arrows. The Danes then depart and Edmund is buried, giving rise to the name of the town Bury St Edmunds. Here Lathom resumes the ghostly part of his tale, in which the spirit of Berick is doomed to appear on earth once every seven years until he has appeared as many times as Edmund was shot (six hundred).

It is impossible to overemphasise how far this version of events deviates from the usual descriptions of Edmund in both medieval and modern chronicles. As Lathom cites

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[62] *Unknown*, Vol.1, p.vii.

Richard Baker's *A Chronicle of the Kings of England* (1643) as one of his sources in the Preface to the novel, this seems the most appropriate example of a typical description of Edmund's demise:

> The fifteenth King was *Edmund*, who assaulted by the *Danes* for his Possessions, was more assaulted for his Profession: for continuing constant in his Christian Faith, those Pagans first beat him with Bats, then scourged him with Whips, and lastly bound him to a Stake, and with their Arrows shot him to death, whose Body was buried at the Town where *Sigebert* the East *Anglian* King, one of his Predecessors, had built a Church, and where afterward (in Honour of him) was built another most spacious, of a wonderful Frame of Timber, and the Name of the Town, upon the occasion of his Burial there, called to this Day St. *Edmundsbury*.[63]

Needless to say, Baker is not Lathom's source for his version of the Edmund story. In fact, Lathom's source is a text published in 1798 by Robert Loder entitled *The History of Framlingham, in the County of Suffolk*.[64] As Loder explains in his preface to this work, the text is based on a handwritten and hand-decorated manuscript by Robert Hawes:

> The following Work forming part of the History of the Hundred of LOES, is extracted from a very fair MS. comprising upwards of 700 folio pages closely written, adorned in the body of the history and in the margins, with drawings of Churches, Gentlemen's Seats, miniature Portraits, ancient Seals, and coats of Arms of the Nobility, Gentry, and Clergy blazoned in their proper colours, which was compiled by ROBERT HAWES, Gent. Steward of the Manors of Framlingham and Saxted, in the year 1712, and remains in the Collection of JOHN REVETT, of Brandeston-Hall, Esquire, who very generously permitted the editor to make a Transcript from it, for this occasion, to whom he begs leave to present his most grateful acknowledgements.[65]

He also mentions three other copies of the manuscript: one 'presented by Mr. Hawes, to the Master and Fellows of Pembroke-Hall', another 'said to be in the Publick Library at Cambridge' and the final one 'in the Collection of the Marquis of Hertford'.[66] One of these copies is listed in the *Catalogue of the Manuscripts preserved in the Library of the University*

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[63] Richard Baker, *A Chronicle of the Kings of England, from the time of the Romans Government, to the death of King James the First, with a continuation to the year 1660 by E. Philips* (London, 1733; 1st edn. 1643), p.7.
[64] Robert Loder, *The History of Framlingham, in the County of Suffolk* (Woodbridge: R. Loder, 1798).
[65] Loder, *Framlingham*, p.10.
[66] Ibid.

of Cambridge (1867).[67] All the unusual details in Lathom's version of the Edmund story are drawn from *The History of Framlingham*, including Lothbrok being shipwrecked alone on the English shore, befriending Edmund over their shared love of falconry, and being murdered by a man named Berick who was then put out to sea in a storm, survived and convinced Lothbrok's sons to invade.[68] There are some minor differences between the two texts, including a greater tendency to mention local placenames in *The History of Framlingham*, and the ghost-story element is Lathom's own invention, but the connection between them is beyond doubt.

It is worth noting that one source for the story as it appears in *The History of Framlingham* is the medieval prose chronicle, *Brut*, and as the text survives in so many manuscripts it would not be surprising for an antiquarian like Hawes to have access to it. It is, in fact, the setting at Framlingham Castle which links the *Brut* and *The History of Framlingham*, as this is not a feature always included in the tale : 'þis Seynt Edmunde þe kyng ordeynede as miche folc as he myȝt, & fauȝt wiþ þe Danois; but he and his folc were scomfitede [defeated], & þe kyng him-self dryuen vnto a castel of Framelyngham'.[69] The *Brut* also names Lothbrok's sons as 'Hubba and Hungar', which is likely to be the source for 'Hunguar and Hubba' in *The History of Framlingham*.[70] Loder's work is, in a sense, another example of a found manuscript: a text which presents itself as a transcription of a rare and remarkable document that the editor came across and recognised as special. Of course, that is not to say that Loder's story is false, or that it is identical to the use of manuscripts in Gothic fiction. What is interesting here is a sort of "Russian doll effect", in which Lathom invents a fictional medieval scroll to present a story he has drawn from a contemporary published work, which itself is based on a manuscript from the early eighteenth century, which shows signs of influence from an actual medieval manuscript – one of the surviving copies of the prose *Brut*. As is so often the case with Gothic engagement with the medieval, it is filtered through several layers of early-modern and eighteenth-century commentary and interpretation, so that by the time it reappears in the Gothic it is barely recognisable.

Turning to the rest of the novel, the subject of reading continues to be important. In one memorable passage, Eleanora reads from a book of twelfth-century romance and realises

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[67] *Catalogue of the Manuscripts preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge*, Vol. 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1867), pp.346-347.
[68] Loder, *Framlingham*, pp.10-11.
[69] *The Brut, or The Chronicles of England*, ed. Friedrich W. D. Brie (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co. Ltd. for the Early English Text Society, 1906-08), p.106.
[70] Loder, *Framlingham*, p.10.

that the situation of the heroine is remarkably like her own, which is alarming as the woman in the romance ends up being murdered. She turns to the end of the text to look for a moral and finds a note from the mysterious "Unknown", a man who has been appearing on occasion and sometimes leaving her messages (she earlier discovered a note from him stashed in her prayer book, from which she reads every day). This particular note appears to be written in blood and assures her that she will not meet the same fate as the woman in the romance. In the preface to this novel, Lathom makes an argument for the importance of novel writers to society:

> It is an acknowledged truth, that many will dwell with pleasure on grave reflections and moral admonitions in a novel, who would not read an essay containing the very same sentences; a novel-writer, therefore, cannot be a useless being, for as such is the contradictory character of readers, it must undoubtedly be more beneficial to society, that there should be writers who can induce its members to reading not wholly useless to their morals, than that there should be no writers who can tempt them to read at all.[71]

Eleanora here acts as a dramatization of the kind of reading that Lathom is hoping for from his own readers: she relates the circumstances of the romance to her own life and then searches for a moral that could be applicable to her. Finding instead the Unknown's mysterious note, she is uncertain whether to trust it or not. Ultimately, we learn that the Unknown is a criminal who poisoned his wife, and so it becomes clear that his note was misleading, and the implicit warning of the romance was correct. Having argued for the validity of novels as a means of communicating moral ideas to readers who might be bored by philosophical texts, Lathom enacts just such a process through Eleanora by demonstrating that she would learn the most valuable lesson from her reading by considering the events of the romance and how they relate to her own life, rather than trusting the commentary of the contemporary "unknown". Perhaps relevant is that in the preface to *The Mysterious Freebooter: Or, The Days of Queen Bess: A Romance* (1806), Lathom attacks his reviewers for their anonymity: 'To be sure, it is difficult to reconcile ourselves to the kind of rifle-fire, with which these literary gunners shoot at us, from behind trees and hedges, as it were, leaving us uncertain who it is that pops at us'.[72] As an anonymous figure who attempts to influence Eleanora's response to a text, the Unknown might bear some similarities to the

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[71] *Unknown*, Vol.1, p.vi-vii.

[72] Francis Lathom, *The Mysterious Freebooter: Or, The Days of Queen Bess: A Romance*, Vol.1 (London: printed at the Minerva-Press for Lane, Newman and Co., 1806), p.x.

critics for whom Lathom expresses so much disdain. Crucially, the Unknown's commentary on the romance exists to distance Eleanora from the true import of the story, to obscure her understanding of the moral of the text for nefarious purposes, and it is his anonymity that allows him to do this. Lathom therefore uses Eleanora's engagement with a medieval romance to demonstrate the importance of thoughtful, independent responses to literature that engage with the themes and morals of the work rather than relying on the influence of anonymous reviewers with their own, hidden agendas.

While Eleanora's ability to relate her romance reading to her own life and circumstances may seem to blur the boundaries between fiction and reality, Lathom is often anxious to reinforce these boundaries, especially in terms of the distinction between historical and fictional writing. He frequently insists on the fictionality of his writing and the impossibility of any reader confusing it for fact, even while his own descriptions of historical events and artefacts undermine the stability of these categories. In his novels, Lathom presents a mode of reading that prioritises morals and emotions over historical accuracy or realistic events. Indeed, in his preface to *The Mysterious Freebooter* he assures the critics that anyone who has taken the appropriate amount of time to learn history will not be fooled by his departures from facts in his novels:

> Those who have perused the history of their own country, with that laudable attention which the subject demands, will not, I am inclined to think, be displeased at meeting some of its features in the guise of Romance; and those who have never examined into the events which have preceded their entrance upon the stage of life, cannot, at least, complain of *their* ideas upon the subject being confused by such scraps of the history of their mother country, as a Romance furnishes them with.[73]

A large portion of the preface to this novel is dedicated to attacking reviewers, whom Lathom describes as 'like hornets, looking out for a hole in a man's jerkin, through which they may drive their stings'.[74] He suspects that 'probably, if I had not confessed myself conscious of some deviations from historical truth, in the matter contained in these pages, they might have placed them to the score of my ignorance, and have taken the pains of writing me a lecture on the subject: which trouble I now spare them'.[75] Lathom struggled with mixed reviews for most of his literary career, with one critic identifying the reason for this as a feature of the frequency with which he produced novels: 'instead of writing a foolish novel once a month, if

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[73] Lathom, *Mysterious Freebooter*, Vol. 1, pp.vii-viii.
[74] Lathom, *Mysterious Freebooter*, Vol. 1, p.ix.
[75] Ibid.

he studied character with attention, and gave himself time to mature his plans, rather than trust to his invention as he proceeds, we are inclined to believe that he might produce something which would do him credit'.[76] This was not an option for Lathom, however, who was a trade novelist from a merchant family background.[77] Given his fraught relationship with the critics, it is not surprising that Lathom felt the need to defend himself against the charge of historical inaccuracy, and to assure his readers that his intention was not to mislead or trick them. This is very evident in the preface to *The Unknown*, in which Lathom carefully lays out which details of the story are founded on fact, and which are his own invention.[78] Given that the passage featuring the fictional medieval scroll at Framlingham Castle does seem to complicate and destabilise the relationship between history and fiction in this novel, the preface acts as an attempt to close off any conjecture about the accuracy of this information. In a sense, then, Lathom's approach to how he presents his works to the public is the exact opposite of the found manuscript trope: he carefully delineates which aspects of his work have some historical basis and clearly identifies the rest of the text as fiction. His concern to pre-empt the charge of misleading the public feels like a reaction to a culture of scepticism around historical texts. Perhaps by the early nineteenth century, the forgeries, frauds and false found manuscript claims had become so commonplace that reviewers instinctively interrogated works like Lathom's, forcing him to defend himself repeatedly against a crime he never intended to commit.

The depiction of medieval manuscripts in Gothic literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth century is, then, continually linked to the context of contemporary antiquarianism, even where this link is not immediately apparent. Ireland's use of an imagined manuscript to prompt questions about the authenticity of historical artefacts is a reflection of his continued interest in the forgeries and abuses taking place in the antiquarian society of contemporary London, while Lathom's alternative history of Framlingham is based on a printed edition of a work that combines innovation with antiquarianism, even as Lathom frantically seeks to demarcate it as entirely fictional to fend off the critics. In the novels of both Ireland and Lathom, there is not only a suspicion of editorial tampering in the production of texts based on historical sources, but also an awareness that the critical response when evidence of tampering was discovered could be vicious, with both authors having experienced some

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[76] Anonymous review of *Very Strange but very True! or the History of an Old Man's Young Wife. A Novel* in *The Annual Review and History of Literature*, 2 (Jan 1803), 605.

[77] Franz J. Potter, *The History of Gothic Publishing, 1800–1835: Exhuming the Trade* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p.131.

[78] *Unknown*, Vol.1, pp.vii-x.

measure of the wrath of the critical establishment when a work purporting to be historical was discovered to be a modern invention. It is into this unforgiving and sceptical context that Clara Reeve, the subject of the next chapter of this thesis, published a history of the progress of prose fiction from antiquity into the present day and was met with derision and scorn. Where Ireland and Lathom evoke imagined medieval sources to reflect concerns about the production and reception of modern texts, Reeve shows a genuine interest in medieval literature, including Middle English romance, and uses her history of prose fiction as an attempt to establish herself among the ranks of contemporary antiquarians.

Chapter 2: Clara Reeve's Knowledge of Middle English Romance

Clara Reeve: The Amiable and Accomplished Authoress

Clara Reeve was born 1729 and lived most of her life in Ipswich, in what James Watt has described as 'apparent isolation from any larger network of learning and sociability'.[1] It is this apparent isolation in a 'mercantile, industrial and naval town' outside of the intellectual networks of London which leads Gary Kelly to identify Reeve as a "provincial Bluestocking", using the term in the sense of 'a literary or learned woman'.[2] He notes, however, that she did have a few 'tenuous connections with the metropolitan literary and intellectual world of [Elizabeth] Montagu's Portman Square and London's West End' and she corresponded frequently with other scholars, particularly Joseph Cooper Walker.[3] He also points out that Ipswich was 'no social backwater' and was described by Daniel Defoe as possessing a very good community of well-informed people.[4] Indeed, in her literary works, Reeve herself refers frequently to a community of educated friends who support and encourage her endeavours. For example, in the prologue to her *Progress of Romance, through Times, Countries, and Manners* (1785) she explains that she chose to write the work in the form of a dialogue as a reflection of its genesis in conversations she had with her friends: 'While I was collecting materials for this work, I held many conversations with some ingenious friends upon the various subjects, which it offered to be investigated and explained'.[5] The preface to the second edition of Reeve's Gothic novel, *The Old English Baron* (1778), contains several similar references to 'a circle of friends of approved judgment' who consistently encouraged her as she was writing the novel.[6] It was by their

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[1] James Watt, 'Introduction' in Clara Reeve, *The Old English Baron*, ed. James Trainer, with an Introduction and Notes by James Watt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, first published 2003, reissued 2008), pp.vi-xxiv, p.viii.

[2] Gary Kelly, 'Clara Reeve, Provincial Bluestocking: From the Old Whigs to the Modern Liberal State', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 65(1/2) (2002), 105-125, pp.111, 105.

[3] Kelly, 'Provincial Bluestocking', p.105.

[4] Kelly, 'Provincial Bluestocking', p.112.

[5] Clara Reeve, *The Progress of Romance and the History of Charoba, Queen of Aegypt*, Reproduced from the Colchester Edition of 1785, with a Bibliographical Note by Esther McGill (New York: The Facsimile Text Society, 1930), p.vi. For discussion of Reeve's use of the dialogue form, see: Gerd Karin Omdal, 'Clara Reeve's *Progress of Romance* and the Female Critic in the 18th Century', *Literature Compass*, 10(9) (2013), 688-695.

[6] Clara Reeve, *The Old English Baron*, ed. James Trainer, with an Introduction and Notes by James Watt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, first published 2003, reissued 2008), p.4. All page references are to this edition.

advice that she published the story, and by their 'earnest solicitation' that she chose to change the title from *The Champion of Virtue* (1777) to *The Old English Baron*.[7] She also published another edition of the novel in 1780 which she dedicated to Martha Bridgen, daughter of Samuel Richardson, thanking her for her 'patronage and protection' and more specifically for revising and editing the first version of the text.[8] Even in the preface to the first edition of 1777, then titled *The Champion of Virtue*, Reeve claimed to be modernising 'a manuscript in the old English language' but did not pretend to be the owner of the manuscript: she claims that she had recalled that 'a certain friend' was in possession of it and gave her permission to publish it.[9] So even when claiming to be working from a medieval manuscript, Reeve still finds space to make reference to her social connections.

The persistent idea of Reeve as isolated stems from a combination of factors: her position in Ipswich did prevent her from engaging more closely in the 'larger network of learning and sociability' that would have been available to her in London, while she also 'managed [her] extensive publishing career herself, at a time when sexist social conventions and the property laws made it advisable for a woman author to have a husband or male relative deal with publishers'.[10] Watt also discusses the role of Walpole's dismissive response to *The Old English Baron* in the perception of Reeve, arguing that as a result of his insistence that the novel was a dull imitation of *Otranto*, 'a conspicuously gendered reading has persisted of Reeve as a hesitant figure who awkwardly attempted to domesticate the boldness of Walpole's vision'.[11] This 'gendered reading' of Reeve also stems from Walter Scott's account of her, in which he claims that she 'led a retired life, admitting no materials for biography'.[12] Scott's description of Reeve is hardly favourable, despite his frequent insistence on her genius. Although his intention is not to 'impeach the talents of the amiable authoress', Scott does not consider Reeve to possess 'a rich or powerful imagination', speculates that she is not well-read enough to depict the medieval period accurately, and describes *The Old English Baron* (by his own account her best work) as 'sometimes tame and

[7] Ibid.
[8] *Old English Baron*, p.140. Suzy Halimi also discusses Reeve's friendship with Martha Brigden, as well as her circle of friends in Ipswich and her correspondence with eminent authors: Suzy Halimi, 'La Femme au foyer, vue par Clara Reeve', *Bulletin de la Societe d'Etudes Anglo-Americaines des XVIIe et XVIIIe Siecles*, 20 (1985), 153-166, p.154.
[9] *Old English Baron*, p.139.
[10] Kelly, 'Provincial Bluestocking', p.107.
[11] James Watt, 'Early British Gothic and the American Revolution' in *The Cambridge History of the Gothic: Volume 1: Gothic in the Long Eighteenth Century*, eds. Angela Wright and Dale Townshend (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp.243-261, p.243.
[12] Walter Scott, *Lives of the Novelists*, Vol.3 (Zwickau: printed for Brothers Schumann, 1826), p.98.

tedious, not to say mean and tiresome'.[13] He also grants himself the authority to speculate on Reeve's relationship with her father, in direct contradiction of her own account of his active role in her early education: 'The Reverend Mr. Reeves, himself one of a family of eight children, had the same numerous succession; and it is therefore likely, that it was rather Clara's strong natural turn for study, than any degree of exclusive care which his partiality bestowed, which enabled her to acquire such a stock of early information'.[14] Whether Scott believes this to be a compliment to Reeve is unclear and, furthermore, irrelevant: what it demonstrates is that his respect for 'the ingenious authoress of *The Old English Baron*' does not extend so far as believing her own description of her childhood.[15] This also shows Scott's willingness to ignore the evidence of the few 'materials for biography' which Reeve did provide, and as such calls into question the accuracy of his entire account. His second reference to her alleged isolated life summarises all that needs to be said of Scott's attitude towards Reeve, stemming out of a discussion of the 'taedium' of *The Old English Baron*:

> This is a general defect in the novels of the period, and it was scarce to be expected that the amiable and accomplished authoress, in her secluded situation, and with acquaintance of events and characters derived from books alone, should have rivalled those authors who gathered their knowledge of the human heart from having, like Fielding and Smollett, become acquainted, by sad experience, with each turn of "many-coloured life".[16]

In short, Scott's account of Reeve's life is patronising and misogynist, and it should not be taken seriously as a historical source. Her own descriptions of her life reflect an active, continuous engagement with a community of 'ingenious friends', rather than the retired, secluded picture that Scott paints.

Challenging the idea of the secluded, isolated Reeve is important for this chapter, as it involves a consideration of her knowledge of medieval literature and as such it is useful to identify possible sources of information for Reeve. Her position in Ipswich, as well as the social constraints placed on her as a woman who did not rely on a husband or male relative to advocate for her, makes it unlikely that she had direct access to medieval manuscripts, and so her sources would have been a combination of published works and word of mouth. Reeve's reliance on a circle of educated friends, as well as her correspondence with scholars in other

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[13] Scott, *Lives*, Vol.3, pp.108, 102, 105.
[14] Scott, *Lives*, Vol.3, p.96.
[15] Scott, *Lives*, Vol.3, p.95.
[16] Scott, *Lives*, Vol.3, p.106.

cities, makes it possible that she had anecdotal evidence of more texts than she would have been able to access directly. Of course, we do not need to guess too much at Reeve's contact with medieval literature, as she published her *Progress* in 1785, detailing her knowledge of texts from antiquity to the present day. This work sought to defend contemporary prose fiction by associating it with an impressive heritage of prose literature from the classical period, through medieval and early modern European romance and into the eighteenth century. As prose fiction was commonly associated with women, both in terms of authorship and readership, Kelly argues that Reeve's *Progress* can be 'considered feminist', both as it 'argues for a causal relationship between the progress of romances and […] the 'progress of civil society'' and because it 'uses both discursive and narrative elements to challenge gender inequality and injustice'.[17] Kelly argues that Reeve challenges the hierarchical literary order which devalues prose fiction, associated with women, as inferior to classical literature 'in its association with male, upper-class and European readers, writers, education, and culture', while also promoting the idea that 'feminine discourses' such as prose fiction could be valuable 'for moral and social improvement'.[18] Sue Chaplin argues that in her project to systematise, and thereby regulate and control, a 'potentially problematic, but nevertheless authoritative body of texts', Reeve 'establishes herself as the reader's guide through this literary maze' and presents herself as 'both critic *and* censor, morally regulating as well as generically systemising a somewhat chaotic and ever-increasing body of texts'.[19] While Reeve's project in establishing herself as a literary authority while also promoting the value and legitimacy of genres and discourses associated with women is often seen now as an impressive and potentially empowering act, at the time the work was largely dismissed by critics as inaccurate and poorly written: indeed, one critic claimed that of the romances described 'many were never read by the author, and many were evidently misunderstood'.[20]

Katie Garner defends Reeve against this charge, pointing out that '[t]wenty years earlier, Richard Hurd had freely admitted to not having read any of the 'barbarous volumes' of 'old romances' he cited in *Letters on Chivalry and Romance*, but only Reeve's supposed

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[17] Gary Kelly, *Varieties of Female Gothic: Volume 1: Enlightenment Gothic and Terror Gothic* (London: Pickering & Chatto Publishers Ltd., 2002; repr. Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), p.lxix.
[18] Kelly, *Varieties of Female Gothic*, pp.lxix, lxx.
[19] Sue Chaplin, *The Gothic and the Rule of the Law, 1764-1820* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp.71, 73.
[20] Anonymous review, 'The Progress of Romance, through Times, Countries, and Manners; with Remarks on the good and bad effects of it, on them respectively; in a Course of Evening Conversations', *English review, or, An abstract of English and foreign literature, 1783-1795*, 5 (June 1785), 448-451.

reading aroused the suspicions of the critical academy'.[21] Garner argues that part of Reeve's aim in the *Progress* was to 'expose this double-standard, whereby male antiquarians are credited with reading romances they have not and women denied knowledge of those they have'.[22] Unfortunately, even a cursory glance at Reeve's list of Middle English romances seems to support the idea that she had little first-hand knowledge of these texts, especially as most of the romances appear in a list with no description of their content and Reeve makes several errors in her assumptions about them. However, the criticism she faced is nonetheless unnecessarily harsh. As Garner notes, Hurd had not read any of the "old romances", and in addition to this Percy also lists romances he had not seen, for example those found in the Auchinleck manuscript (NLS Adv MS 19.2.1). It is clear from this that when access to manuscripts was challenging and very few medieval romances were circulating in print, it was both common and acceptable to refer to texts without necessarily having read them. Reeve makes no claim to have read all the romances she lists, but rather explains that she is giving their titles and any dates she can find in order to prove her assertion that many medieval romances were still extant in the eighteenth century. Those texts she has read, for example Chaucer's *Romaunt of the Rose*, she describes in more detail.

A lot of Reeve's information would have been derived from a handful of scholarly sources: she quotes extensively from Percy's *Reliques* and she mentions Susanna Dobson's translation of Sainte-Palaye's *Literary History of the Troubadours* (1779) and her *Memoirs of Ancient Chivalry* (1784). She also discusses Thomas Warton's *History of English Poetry* and James Beattie's *Dissertation on Fable and Romance* in the preface, but she explains that she had not read either work until the *Progress* was already completed. I do believe, however, that Reeve may have edited her work with some small additions from Warton before publication, especially due to the date of 1292 that she gives for '*Guy Earl of Warwick, prose*'.[23] The same date is given in Warton and attributed to another source: 'The romantic history of *Guy earl of Warwick*, is expressly said, on good authority, to have been written by Walter of Exeter, a Franciscan Friar of Carocus in Cornwall, about the year 1292'.[24] The 'good authority' in question is Richard Carew, whose *The Survey of Cornwall* (1603) provides no further information about this claim. Whilst it is certainly possible that Reeve

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[21] Katie Garner, *Romantic Women Writers and Arthurian Legend: The Quest for Knowledge* (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), p.37.

[22] Garner, *Romantic Women Writers*, p.38.

[23] *Progress*, p.43.

[24] Thomas Warton, *The History of English Poetry from the Close of the Eleventh to the Commencement of the Eighteenth Century*, Vol.1 (London and Oxford: printed for J. Dodsley, J. Walter, T. Becket, J. Robson, G. Robinson, J. Bew and Messrs. Fletcher, 1774), p.87.

had knowledge of Carew's work, it seems more reasonable to assume that she added the date from a text that it is certain she read before publishing the *Progress of Romance*, Warton's *History of English Poetry*, than that she had an additional source that she does not mention.[25] Reeve also finds references to medieval literature in some early modern works, including Cervantes, Spenser and Milton. It is worth examining some of Reeve's references here to Middle English romance, both as a means of understanding her *Progress* and as an attempt to gain insight into the availability of information about medieval literature to one of the earliest authors of Gothic literature.

In her dissertation, *Rhetoric and Romance: Tradition and Parody in the Work of Clara Reeve*, Ann Kasee Clifton Laster considers the possibility that Reeve was influenced by Middle English romance and argues that 'Reeve indicates in *The Progress of Romance* that she was familiar with at least some version of King Horn, remarking on its antiquity and metrical form'.[26] It is worth looking more closely at this suggestion, as it is unlikely Reeve had direct knowledge of any medieval text of the romance: the earliest edition of *King Horn* was not published until 1802, when Joseph Ritson included it in his *Ancient English Metrical Romances* (1802). Besides the issue of Reeve's lack of access to the romance, it is also unclear which romance she even has in mind, as there are two distinct variants of the *Horn* romances, *King Horn* and *Horn Childe and Maiden Rimnild*. Reeve does give two titles for the *Horn* romance in *Progress*, 'the Romance of *Hornechild* or King *Horne*', but she does not seem to be making any distinction between different versions of the romance.[27] The convention of treating the Auchinleck manuscript romance, *Horn Childe and Maiden Rimnild*, as distinct from the romance of *King Horn* found in Cambridge UL MS Gg.4.27, London BL MS Harley 2253 and Oxford Bodleian Library MS Laud Misc. 108 dates back as far as Percy himself though, who wrote of the Auchinleck text that it is a 'greatly altered and somewhat modernized' copy of the poem.[28] Percy gives the title of the Auchinleck romance as '*Horn-child and Maiden Rinivel*', while the romance he knew from London BL MS Harley

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[25] This suggests a slightly more tenuous explanation for another of Reeve's dates, as Warton immediately goes on from the dating of Guy to discuss a manuscript in the library of the abbey of Glastonbury: 'we find *Liber de Excidio Trojae*, *Gesta Ricardi Regis*, and *Gesta Alexandri Regis*, in the year 1247': Warton, *History of English Poetry*, Vol.1, p.88. If Reeve believed this *Gesta Ricardi Regis* and *Richard Coeur de Lion* to be the same text, that could explain her belief that the latter was written in 1247. However, this may be a bit of a stretch.

[26] Ann Kasee Clifton Laster, *Rhetoric and Romance: Tradition and Parody in the Work of Clara Reeve*, Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (1999), p.145.

[27] *Progress*, p.42.

[28] Thomas Percy, *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, 3rd edn., Vol.3 (London: printed for J. Dodsley, 1775), p.xxvii.

2253 he describes alternately as 'The Romance of *Horne-childe*' or 'þe ʒeste of king Horne'.[29] Percy's approach to naming these variants of the romance seems to suggest that if Reeve had any specific version of the medieval romance in mind it would have been *King Horn*, from London BL MS Harley 2253, and not the Auchinleck manuscript romance. However, it is highly unlikely that Reeve had any contact with this manuscript. More likely is that she knew of the romance from Percy's description, especially as Reeve gives no information about the text that was not present in editions of the *Reliques*: she would know of both the romance's antiquity and its metrical form from Percy's description, which also includes the opening four lines of the London BL MS Harley 2253 version of the romance and the opening two lines of the Auchinleck manuscript romance.

Laster also notes that 'versions of the insular romances were widely available, if only in such "degraded" popular forms as ballads, chapbooks, and nursery tales', including versions of *King Horn*, *Guy of Warwick* and *Bevis of Hampton*.[30] Indeed, Reeve may have known some fragmented part of a Horn romance from the ballad tradition, as a ballad of King Horn is included in Francis James Child's *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (1882), titled '*Hind Horn*'.[31] Child notes that a version of the ballad had been published in Robert Hartley Cromek's *Select Scottish Songs, Ancient and Modern* in 1810, and it also appeared in other ballad collections in the early nineteenth century.[32] The short ballad briefly describes the young Hind Horn falling in love with the King's daughter, Jean, giving her a silver wand and receiving a ring from her which will grow pale if her love fails. When it does grow pale, he returns from travels abroad and exchanges clothes with a beggar to enter the King's hall in disguise. When Jean offers him a glass of wine, he drops the ring into it and she recognises it. He removes his disguise and they are married.[33] While I will not summarise the plots of the Middle English romances of King Horn here, suffice it to say that the ballad is a very brief and much altered version of an episode from the medieval romance traditions.

In the next chapter in this thesis, I consider the place of *Bevis of Hampton* in the eighteenth-century chapbook to determine which version of the text could have been known to the Gothic parodist James White, and it is also possible that Reeve also knew of *Bevis* from the chapbooks. However, of the romances Reeve lists in 'Evening IV' of the *Progress*, the

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[29] Ibid.

[30] Laster, *Rhetoric and Romance*, p.146.

[31] *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, Vol.1, Part 1, ed. Francis James Child (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p.187.

[32] Ibid.

[33] This summary broadly covers the variants of the ballad as printed in Child's *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, with the exception that in one of the variants Hind Horn gives Jean a gown rather than a silver wand.

only one to which she confidently attaches the label "Prose" is *Guy of Warwick*.[34] The fact that she only explicitly identifies *Guy of Warwick* as a prose romance suggests that it is the only one she is certain that she has seen in prose form, which would make sense as it remained popular in the chapbook market throughout the eighteenth century.[35] It is important to make a distinction between Reeve reading an eighteenth-century chapbook version of *Guy of Warwick* and having knowledge of the medieval romance itself, though, just as engagement with the very brief and fragmented version of the King Horn narrative as it is found in the ballad tradition cannot be taken as equivalent to engagement with any of the Middle English *Horn*-romances. Overall, the details Reeve gives about the Middle English romances in *Progress* are insufficient evidence that she had direct knowledge of the medieval texts, especially as most of the information she provides had already been published in other works, particularly Percy's *Reliques*.

One of the strangest aspects of Reeve's list of romances is the inclusion of specific dates for several of the texts. Explanations for some of these present themselves rather readily: Reeve gives a date of 1409 for *Le Romaunt de la Rose* and then a little while later quotes from a Bookseller's Catalogue which gives the same date for a manuscript of the romance, suggesting that she has confused the date of the manuscript with the date of the poem itself.[36] Other details in Reeve's list of romances are less easily explained. Her date of 1380 for an English romance called *Destruction of Troy* is challenging and the title could refer to one of a handful of romances.[37] However, it seems likely that Reeve was assuming that many of the Trojan romances she had seen mentioned were the same text, especially given her statement on early printed editions of the romances:

> I shall only observe that when the art of printing became established in England, most of the old Romances were re-published that had slept many years. For instance, *Recuyel d'Histoire de Troy,* by *Caxton,* 1470, *Mort Arthure* by the same, and many others that I need not mention a second time.[38]

The best explanation for her mistaken belief that Caxton's *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye* was a revival of a much earlier work (rather than a translation of Raoul Lefevre's text of around 1464) is that she mistook it for one of the earlier Trojan romances. Reeve also demonstrates some confusion about the Arthurian romances here, evidently confusing

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[34] *Progress*, p.43.
[35] Siân Echard, *Printing the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), pp.60-96.
[36] *Progress*, pp.44, 46.
[37] *Progress*, p.43
[38] *Progress*, p.45.

Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* with an earlier text, presumably the *Stanzaic Morte Arthur* which Percy included in his list of romances. Although Percy notes an opinion that the romance is not older than the time of Henry VII, he casts doubt on this by pointing out that it seems to be quoted in *Bevis*, which would mean that it predated Chaucer.[39] Evidently, Reeve mistakenly believed that this earlier Arthurian romance was the source for Caxton's printed edition.

Whilst it seems that Reeve could have edited some details of *Progress* after reading Warton, she was not too concerned to change parts of her work which disagreed with his arguments: if she did add in his date for *Guy of Warwick*, she did not adjust her assumption that the romance was written in prose based on his account of it. Reeve also implies that three of the other romances on her list are in prose, *Richard Coeur de Lion*, *Historia Alexandria Regis* and *Destruction of Troy*.[40] Unfortunately for Reeve, there is little excuse for believing in the existence of a thirteenth-century English prose romance of Guy: Warton makes clear that 'we find no prose romances in our language, before Caxton translated from the French the History of Troy, the Life of Charlemagne, the Histories of Jason, Paris, and Vyenne, the Death of King Arthur, and other prose pieces of chivalry'.[41] As well as this, Percy notes that the 'first prose books of chivalry that appeared in our language were those printed by Caxton'.[42] In her determination to include Middle English romance in her history of prose fiction, Reeve ignores a host of evidence that no such medieval prose romance in English exists.

One detail to come back to, after taking so much time to dismantle Reeve's account of the Middle English romances, is the inclusion of the Bookseller's Catalogue. Reeve presents her quotation from this catalogue not to explain her dating of *Le Romaunt de la Rose*, but to demonstrate that many of the romances she has mentioned are still extant. Perhaps this is the image to take away from Reeve's ambitious history of romance: the image of the fictional Euphrasia brandishing her Bookseller's Catalogue to list out a couple of French romances that were sold recently, while in the real world Percy, Warton and their circle of London-based antiquarians were busy poring over the recently catalogued manuscript collections of the British Library. Evidently, the pressing question for any study of Reeve's *Progress* is not why the author was unaware of so many details and facts about Middle English literature, but why she chose to include it in her history at all. Reeve's aim in the *Progress*, as Kelly has

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[39] Percy, *Reliques*, Vol.3, p.xxxi.
[40] *Progress*, p.43.
[41] Warton, *History of English Poetry*, Vol.1, p.146.
[42] Percy, *Reliques*, Vol.3, p.xvii.

noted, is to defend prose fiction, which was 'conventionally associated with women and devalued accordingly'.[43] One might expect, therefore, that she would avoid the metrical romances of late medieval England, and yet she includes them, with vague assertions to a belief that some of them are extant in prose. The answer for her insistence on having a chapter on Middle English romance may lie at the close of the previous chapter, where Reeve establishes her aim for 'Evening IV': 'Dr. *Percy* has given us a list of the remains of the metrical Romances; at our next meeting I will give you mine of prose ones'.[44] Having read Percy's list of metrical romances, Reeve has incorrectly assumed that she could create a similar list of English prose romances and thereby create an original and valuable addition to eighteenth-century antiquarian scholarship. Her *Progress* is not an attempt to set herself against Percy, or any other contemporary antiquarian, but to find a space for herself amongst those ranks. Unfortunately for Reeve, the *Progress* was not taken seriously as an addition to the antiquarian scholarship being conducted by Percy and Warton, and she continues to be known best as the author of *The Old English Baron*.

Anachronism and the Business of Romance in Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron*

In the preface to the second edition of *The Old English Baron*, Reeve explains the motivation behind her decision to write the novel: it is 'the literary offspring' of Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* and as such 'it is distinguished by the appellation of a Gothic Story, being a picture of Gothic times and manners'.[45] She goes on to describe her disappointment when reading Walpole's text, as she felt that 'the machinery is so violent, that it destroys the effect that it is intended to excite'.[46] To Reeve, '[t]he business of Romance is, first, to excite the attention; and secondly, to direct it to some useful, or at least innocent, end'.[47] *Otranto*, she feels, fails to achieve this. Reeve identifies three ways in which a novel may attempt to 'unite the various merits and graces of the ancient Romance and modern Novel': 'To attain this end, there is required a sufficient degree of the marvellous, to excite the attention; enough of the manners of real life, to give an air of probability to the work; and enough of the pathetic, to

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[43] Kelly, 'Provincial Bluestocking', p.116.
[44] *Progress*, p.40.
[45] *Old English Baron*, p.2.
[46] *Old English Baron*, p.3.
[47] Ibid.

engage the heart in its behalf'.[48] In setting out to achieve these ends, Reeve managed to produce a work which has troubled the category of Gothic fiction to the extent that for a long time it was overlooked as a Gothic text: Watt, for example, argues that Reeve's 'work has been dismissed and virtually ignored because of its failure to live up to a normative critical standard of what a Gothic romance should look like'.[49] Watt defines Reeve's novel as an early example of the "Loyalist Gothic", a term he uses to describe a concern in historical Gothic literature of the late eighteenth century to refashion a patriotic vision of English history in the wake of political instability in the eighteenth century. He argues that Reeve was responding to the 'loss of American colonies and the protracted conflict with France' by taking an approach to Gothic fiction which 'purged [it] of its associations with either democracy or frivolity and defined [it] increasingly in terms of a proud military heritage'.[50] While Reeve's Loyalist Gothic work may not sit easily in the 'normative critical standard' of the Gothic genre, it is nonetheless a significant part of the Gothic canon.

Reeve's novel is set in the minority of Henry VI and begins when the knight, Sir Philip Harclay, returns from a long military career abroad to discover that his old friend, Lord Lovel, has since died and his castle is now owned by a Baron named Fitz-Owen, who purchased the estate from Lord Lovel's cousin, Sir Walter Lovel. Sir Philip meets Fitz-Owen's ward, Edmund Twyford, who is thought to be the son of a peasant but is, in fact, the orphaned son of the late Lord Lovel. After an interval of many years, during which time Edmund proves himself in battle in France despite the machinations of Fitz-Owen's jealous nephews, Wenlock and Markham, the discovery of Edmund's parentage is triggered when he is challenged to spend three nights in the haunted east wing of the castle and is confronted by the ghosts of his parents. The appearance of the ghosts prompts Edmund to investigate more into the history of the late Lord and Lady Lovel, and he eventually pieces together that his father was murdered by his cousin Sir Walter Lovel and his mother subsequently fled the castle and died in childbirth. Edmund requests assistance from Sir Philip, who challenges Walter Lovel to a dual and is successful. The novel ends with a series of negotiations over the transference of the Lovel estate into Edmund's hands.

Reeve's project in responding to Walpole's novel is reflected in her replication of the claim that the text is derived from a found manuscript. The relationship between Reeve's

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[48] Ibid.
[49] James Watt, *Contesting the Gothic: Fiction, Genre and Cultural Conflict, 1764-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, first published 1999), p.3.
[50] Watt, *Contesting the Gothic*, p.44.

interest in antiquarianism and her role as Gothic novelist is particularly evident in the way she adapts this idea, which includes details such as damage to the imagined manuscript which allows the story to jump forward at convenient moments and the notion that it is authored by multiple scribes:

> *Here follows an interval of four years, as by the manuscript; and this omission seems intended by the writer. What follows is in a different hand, and the character is more modern.*[51]

The identification of two different scribes as well as an awareness that the manuscript has been compiled by an editor suggests that Reeve's presentation of the text as a found manuscript is functioning as more than simply a narrative device. Jonathan Dent argues that Reeve's use of the manuscript introduces 'the notion of historical mutability' as the frequent gaps in the text highlight 'the fragile nature of the past and our convoluted access to it in the present': 'Reeve develops the Gothic's emphasis on the textual nature of history, our troubled access to it in the present and the complexity of historical transmission'.[52] As well as this, I would suggest that Reeve's evocation of a found manuscript is also a reflection of her interest in book history and antiquarianism, as evidenced in her later publication of her *Progress*. Compared to Walpole, Reeve shows a far greater interest in mimicking the real challenges that might be faced in producing a transcription of a manuscript source, especially if, like Percy's Folio, the manuscript was damaged. Despite her removal of the claim that the novel has a manuscript source in the second edition, Reeve continues to weave the concept throughout the novel so that the physicality of the imagined manuscript remains present in the text. Reeve is playing out a fantasy process of editorial scholarship, one which she was not able to perform in reality.

Criticism of Reeve's *The Old English Baron* often focusses on how her political values as an Old Whig are reflected in the novel and in her response to Walpole's novel: Kelly argues that *The Old English Baron* can be read as "anti-*Otranto*" and suggests that the extent of Reeve's rejection of Walpole's 'excesses and sensationalism' implies a political motivation.[53] Walpole's father, Sir Robert Walpole, was Prime Minister between 1721-1742 and was seen by Old Whigs like Reeve as emblematic of a corrupt political system which 'unit[ed] royal prerogative, government patronage, landed oligarchy, and City financial

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[51] *Old English Baron*, p.19.
[52] Jonathan Dent, *Sinister Histories: Gothic Novels and Representations of the Past, from Horace Walpole to Mary Wollstonecraft* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pp.101, 102.
[53] Kelly, 'Provincial Bluestocking', p.123.

interests to subvert the "constitution" in their own interests'.[54] Reeve may have associated Walpole with his father and subsequently seen him as corrupt and indulgent.[55] As Old Whigs traced a concept of an 'ancient free constitution' to a Gothic past, Reeve's novel emphasises continuity rather than disjunction with the medieval period.[56] Kelly suggests that in *The Old English Baron*, Reeve 'projects late eighteenth-century professional middle-class virtues back into the social and political conflicts of late-medieval England, showing their triumph over courtly intrigue and plebeian "superstition" and implying their suitability for a similar triumph in the present'.[57]

Dent also discusses Reeve's political project in *The Old English Baron* in his work demonstrating the influence of Paul M. Rapin de Thoyras's *History of England* (1732) on Reeve's depiction of the medieval past. Dent shows that Reeve's concern to introduce a didactic purpose in her Gothic novel is a reflection of her desire 'to defy Rapin's proto-Enlightenment work of historiography by making the past a teacher of key Christian values such as humility, endurance, modesty, compassion, justice, forgiveness, and reverence'.[58] Reeve therefore 'constructs a past that portrays England as a free and distinctive country; a nation which, strong in Christian faith, is able to keep alien and arbitrary rule at bay', as a means of '[b]olstering English national identity at a troubled time'.[59] Dent argues that Reeve 'maps the present onto the past and places a modern representative in an archaic context' in the character of Edmund, who is interpreted by Dent as 'the progressive force and hero of liberty in the novel' while Sir Walter represents 'an enemy of freedom and symbol of the old, elite, corrupt aristocracy' and as such, 'a symbol of the past and all its evils'.[60] Walter threatens 'to drag Edmund […] back into the corrupt, violent and unenlightened past' as a representative of 'the regressive and anachronistic forces' that threaten the progressive characters in the novel.[61] Reeve's novel therefore 'encapsulates the worst fears of Old Whigs by depicting the survival of corrupt, barbaric, anachronistic customs and attitudes in the Enlightened present'.[62]

Although Reeve situates her novel in a specific historical period and includes frequent references to medieval history, her use of the past to promote a political ideology has led to

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[54] Kelly, 'Provincial Bluestocking', p.124. See also Dent, *Sinister Histories*, p.86.
[55] Kelly, 'Provincial Bluestocking', p.123.
[56] Kelly, 'Provincial Bluestocking', p.114.
[57] Gary Kelly, *Women, Writing, and Revolution, 1790-1827* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp.187-188.
[58] Dent, *Sinister Histories*, pp.79-80.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Dent, *Sinister Histories*, p.88.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Dent, *Sinister Histories*, p.89.

frequent accusations of anachronism in critical responses to her work. Watt argues that Reeve's characters 'seem to belong, as is often noted, more to the middle classes of the eighteenth century than the aristocracy of the fifteenth century'.[63] Dent argues that Reeve's use of historical periods to reflect contemporary society means that in her novel 'the past and present become difficult to demarcate'.[64] Abby Coykendall similarly sees little commitment to historical accuracy in Reeve's writing, arguing that in *The Old English Baron* 'her fidelity is vested much more in capturing and conditioning the ideological sensibilities of her readers than in conveying the intricacy or nicety of those environs removed spatially and temporally from her own'.[65] Toni Wein discusses Reeve's anachronism in her depiction of the trial by combat between Sir Philip and Walter Lovel, detailing the development of the practice over the course of the medieval and early modern periods to demonstrate that Reeve blends a variety of historical models of duelling in her novel.[66] Wein notes that Reeve's suggestions of secrecy in the location and timing of the trial by combat reflect a concern in eighteenth-century duels with the legality of the event despite its setting in the medieval period and the formality of the trial, claiming that 'the participants in this fictional duel register appropriate eighteenth-century anxiety over their criminal liability'.[67] Wein's assessment of Reeve's depiction of the trial by combat includes the detail that the character of Lord Clifford, appointed as judge of the field, brings a surgeon to attend to any wounded and Wein describes this as 'a distinctly eighteenth-century touch'.[68] I would like to pause on that detail for a moment, as it seems to capture the potential for a slightly different approach to the idea of Reeve's engagement with the medieval period. It is certainly true that Reeve's depiction of the surgeon at the trial by combat is a reflection of her eighteenth-century values, but where there may be room for nuance here is in clarifying that this is not an *exclusively* 'eighteenth-century touch', or even an exclusively post-medieval touch. While Reeve's depiction of the trial by combat does not align with historical descriptions of medieval practices, there is no reason to assume that the concerns she evokes in her novel are not also present in literary depictions of duels or similar combats in medieval literature.

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[63] Watt, 'Introduction', p.xv.
[64] Dent, *Sinister Histories*, p.97.
[65] Abby Coykendall, 'Gothic Genealogies, the Family Romance, and Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron*', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 17(3) (2005), 443-480, p.467.
[66] Toni Wein, *British Identities, Heroic Nationalisms, and the Gothic Novel, 1764-1824* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), pp.89-91.
[67] Wein, *British Identities*, p.90.
[68] Ibid.

Indeed, in the fourteenth-century Middle English romance *Ywain and Gawain* the two titular characters almost battle to the death when they fail to recognise each other after both agree to act as champions to two sisters who are involved in a dispute over inheritance. Gawain fights for the elder sister, despite that Arthur and his court are all in agreement that her desire to keep the entire inheritance and deprive her younger sister of half is wrong. Christopher Jensen points out that Arthur is 'bound by the law' and powerless to reject the older sister's request for a trial by combat: 'Even as the king, he is unable, or at least unwilling, to impose his own will that justice may be served, and Gawain serves as an extension of this impotence'.[69] The combat is bloody and long, but after the two knights recognise each other, they agree to stop fighting and the dispute between the sisters is settled by King Arthur. Arthur then provides surgeons to heal the knights:

> When the knightes war broght to rest,
>
> The King gert* cum sone of the best [*made]
>
> Surgiens that ever war sene
>
> For-to hele tham both bidene* [*together][70]

The surgeons soon succeed in making the two knights 'hale and sownd' and Ywain is able to continue with the conclusion of his adventures.[71] The romance is a translation of Chrétien de Troyes' twelfth-century romance *Yvain*, though it is an abbreviated version of the French text. The passage with the surgeons is one example of the Middle English translator altering the source material, which is described slightly differently in Chrétien's text:

> Then King Arthur summoned a physician, who knew more than anyone about the art of healing, who ministered constantly to them until he had healed their wounds as well as he could.[72]

Where *Yvain* emphasises the difficulty of healing the two knights after the harsh battle, requiring a knowledgeable physician to minister constantly to them, the abridging of the passage in *Ywain and Gawain* removes any sense of the task being challenging or of much time passing during the healing process. The Middle English romance also abbreviates the combat itself and reduces several of the gorier details in Chrétien's description of the fight. In the French romance the knights strike each other 'on noseguards, necks, foreheads, and

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[69] Christopher Jensen, 'The Role of the Lion in the Middle English *Ywain and Gawain*', *Arthuriana*, 30(1) (Spring 2020), 104-124, p.120.
[70] *Ywain and Gawain* in *Middle English Romances*, ed. Stephen H.A. Shepherd (New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 1995), 3825-3828. All line references are to this edition.
[71] *Ywain and Gawain*, 3829.
[72] Chrétien de Troyes, *The Knight with the Lion (Yvain)* in *Arthurian Romances*, trans. William W. Kibler, *Erec et Enide* trans. Carleton W. Carroll (London: Penguin Books, 1991, repr. 2004), p.376.

cheeks, that they were all black and blue where the blood gathered beneath the skin', their brains are 'nearly beaten out' and their 'warm blood bubbled out from many wounds'.[73] By contrast, in *Ywain and Gawain* the battle is bloody but the description of it is brief:

> Thaire sheldes war shiferd* and helms riven – [*shattered]
>
> Ful stalworth* strakes war thare gifen; [*strong]
>
> Bath on bak and brestes thare
>
> War bath wounded wonder sare.
>
> In many stedes* might men ken [*places]
>
> The blode out of thaire bodies ren.[74]

In discussing how the Middle English romance *William of Palerne* sanitises the violence of its French source text, *Guillaume de Palerne*, Renée Ward notes that the Middle English poet 'displaces much of the physical violence' onto the armour of the characters rather than their bodies:

> Rather than emphasize severed limbs or eviscerated bodies, the poet draws the audience's attention instead to the shattered spears, shields, and helms of the warriors. His description of these fragmented objects evokes the fragmented bodies of the original, but in a far more conservative and certainly less bloody and less disturbing manner.[75]

A similar dynamic occurs in *Ywain and Gawain*, as the Middle English poet goes on to replicate descriptions of damage to armour from Chrétien's text while reducing or entirely omitting descriptions of the violence on the knights' bodies.

In translating an Arthurian story from French into English, David Matthews claims that the *Ywain*-poet 'effectively re-colonizes the narrative, given that Chretien's own use of Arthurian material was itself a colonizing of English material'.[76] Viewing the *Ywain*-poet's translation as an act of reclaiming English history suggests an interpretation for the reduction of the violence in the duel between Ywain and Gawain, as the poet may have aimed at producing a narrative with more straightforwardly exemplary heroes than in Chrétien's text and the depiction of the two knights brutally maiming each other over a misunderstanding brought about by the powerlessness of the King to intervene in a legal matter might not have

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[73] Chrétien, *Yvain*, pp.371, 372.
[74] *Ywain and Gawain*, 3541-3544.
[75] Renée Ward, 'The Politics of Translation: Sanitizing Violence in *William of Palerne*', *Studies in Philology*, 112(3) (Summer 2015), 469-489, p.474.
[76] David Matthews, 'Translation and Ideology: The Case of *Ywain and Gawain*', *Neophilologus*, 76(3) (July 1992), 452-63, p.456.

fit that narrative. Indeed, the *Ywain*-poet's insertion of a reference to legal practices seems to support the idea that the romance is an attempt at establishing a national history: when Arthur settles the dispute between the two sisters, he does so by dividing the land between them and the Middle English poets adds in the lines 'This land was first, I understand, / That ever was parted in Ingland'.[77] Stephen H.A. Shepherd explains that the reference here is to the practice of partitioning: 'feudal custom sanctioned the inheritance of estates in their entirety by the eldest son, but in cases where only female heirs survived the property was, in principle, divided ("parted") evenly'.[78] The mention of the establishment of a legal practice not only grounds that practice in a chivalric history of the nation, but also establishes a sense of continuity between this distant Arthurian past and contemporary society. In reframing the romance as a narrative of national history, the *Ywain*-poet was evidently more concerned to depict the knights as exemplary, reflecting their function in the formation of an idealised past. In the decision to reduce the descriptions of violence in the trial by combat, the *Ywain*-poet shifts the focus away from a potentially uncomfortable depiction of the two knights harming each other over an unfair dispute and towards the role of their combat in the development of the laws and customs of the nation.

Reeve also demonstrates a concern with the depiction of violence in her text. Coykendall shows how Reeve uses gaps in the narrative of *The Old English Baron* to skim over details of the military exploits of Sir Philip, avoiding discussion of the violence and trauma implied in the mentions of his career abroad.[79] In the trial by combat, Reeve dedicates several paragraphs to explaining the arrangements for the tournament, including obtaining 'leave of the warden of the Scottish marches to decide the quarrel in his jurisdiction', the appointment of Lord Clifford as 'judge of the field', the construction of the lists, the details of Sir Philip's will, the appointment of 'a marshal of the field, and other inferior officers' and the discussion between the combatants 'on many points of honour and ceremony'.[80] The battle itself, by contrast, is described only in broad strokes:

> The sweat ran off their bodies with the violence of the exercise. Sir Philip watched
> every motion of his enemy, and strove to weary him out, intending to wound, but not
> to kill him, unless obliged for his own safety. He thrust his sword through his left arm,
> and demanded, whether he would confess the fact? Lord Lovel enraged, answered, he

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[77] *Ywain and Gawain*, 3767-3768.
[78] *Ywain and Gawain*, p.167n.
[79] Coykendall, 'Gothic Genealogies', pp.460-461.
[80] *Old English Baron*, pp.81, 86.

would die sooner. Sir Philip then passed the sword through his body twice, and Lord Lovel fell, crying out that he was slain.[81]

Reeve's attempts to shift focus away from the violence of this passage, in her very brief description of the combat, becomes almost absurd when Sir Philip gestures for the surgeon to attend to his opponent: 'Sir Philip took away his sword, and then waved it over his head, and beckoned for assistance'.[82] The complete lack of any mention of blood as the knight waves around a sword that has just passed through a man's body twice is almost comical. However, elsewhere in the novel Reeve is not entirely unwilling to hint at horrific and violent events: indeed, the fate of both of Edmund's parents is rather disturbing, with his mother's corpse buried in the woods after being dragged from a river and his father's skeleton discovered with the neck and heels bound together, 'forced into [a] trunk'.[83] She shows a particular concern, though, about associating Sir Philip with violence, as he is her 'exemplary patriot', to use Dent's phrase, who 'always acts in the interest of the constitution, upholds its values and enforces justice' and so forms 'a model of how to act in times of national and constitutional crisis'.[84] It is not necessarily the idea of violence itself that concerns Reeve, then, but the idea of Sir Philip being implicated in such violence, hence the descriptions of his military career are elided from the narrative and when he runs a sword through a man's body, it comes out clean. Almost as soon as Reeve introduces the violence of the trial by combat, she brings out the surgeons to contain it once again. Thus, the use of surgeons in both *The Old English Baron* and *Ywain and Gawain* form part of a process of sanitizing violence from the narrative as a means of establishing an exemplary model of national history.

What this comparison demonstrates is that while Reeve's description of the trial by combat is certainly rooted in her contemporary values and politics, that does not necessarily mean that it does not share similar concerns as those found in Middle English romance, even where there is little possibility of direct influence. The rest of this chapter explores a comparative approach to Reeve's *The Old English Baron* and the Middle English romance, *Awntyrs off Arthure*, as a means of opening up a more expansive engagement with Reeve's relationship to the concept of medieval history and literature in her novel. Rather than focussing on anachronisms in *The Old English Baron*, placing the text into a comparative space alongside the Middle English romance tradition can create the opportunity for a more

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[81] *Old English Baron*, p.88.
[82] Ibid.
[83] *Old English Baron*, p.116.
[84] Dent, *Sinister Histories*, pp.98-99, 99.

nuanced exploration of where her novel overlaps with or departs from the values, concerns and themes of medieval literature, reflecting both on Reeve's aims in her approach to history in her work and also on the broader similarities and differences between two distinct, yet often similar, modes of writing, the Gothic novel and the medieval romance.

The Old English Baron and *Awntyrs off Arthure*: A Comparative Approach

One area of Reeve's work which invites comparison with medieval literature is in her use of the supernatural. Reeve's approach to this is informed by her response to *Otranto*, as she argues that the supernatural elements in Walpole's novel are so excessive as to be absurd.[85] Reeve's ghosts in *The Old English Baron* therefore present 'a sufficient degree of the marvellous, to excite the attention' without exceeding this sufficiency.[86] They are also incorporated into Reeve's didactic aims in her novel, functioning as 'a divine guarantee of correct succession' which therefore works to enforce the social hierarchies of class and patrilineal inheritance.[87] This is a common aspect of the Loyalist Gothic, according to Watt, in which 'supernatural agency is minimally presented and subordinated to the purpose of purging rogue family members and restoring legitimate rulers and/or property claims'.[88] While Clery argues that this minimally presented supernatural in *The Old English Baron* exists 'merely to dress and decorate this moral order, whetting the appetite of the reader for the edifying restoration of right', Kelly sees it as having a slightly more active role in 'mov[ing] human agents to right wrongs and ensure justice', while noting that this is still a less direct use of the supernatural to restore order than that found in *Otranto*.[89]

As well as this, the supernatural in *The Old English Baron* serves to articulate the Christian values of the novel: on encountering the ghosts, '[a]lmost immediately […] Edmund's fear is overridden by his Christian faith', and through prayer and a belief that his own virtue will shield him from harm, he gains the courage to speak to the spirits.[90] Wenlock and Markham, on the other hand, are overcome by fear when confronted with the supernatural, which Dent interprets as evidence that '[i]n the past constructed in *The Old*

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[85] *Old English Baron*, p.3.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Fiona Price, 'Ancient Liberties? Rewriting the Historical Novel: Thomas Leland, Horace Walpole and Clara Reeve', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 34(1) (2011), 19-38, p.33.
[88] Watt, *Contesting the Gothic*, p.59.
[89] Clery, *Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, p.86; Kelly, 'Provincial Bluestocking', p.123
[90] Watt, 'Introduction', p.xi.

English Baron, those who do not live good Christian lives are subject to the terror of the supernatural' as a punishment for their failure to 'live up to Christian values'.[91] Reeve's supernatural is therefore largely symbolic and reflective of her didactic aims, and where it does impact upon the plot of the novel it does so by prompting action from 'human agents' rather than by more direct intervention: once the ghosts have tipped off Edmund that something is amiss, most of the revelation of his parentage as well as the restoration of his inheritance is achieved through a combination of investigation and legal processes. This shift in focus from supernatural intervention to human agency results in some of the aspects of the novel which have been controversial in its reception: Clery argues that, after the duel, 'Reeve's management of the story from this point is especially mystifying for the modern reader' as she 'dismisses' her villain and turns the narrative to 'the arduous task of legal, social and economic reparations, in what might seem an over-extended coda'.[92] There are, then, three aspects of Reeve's novel and its reception that I would like to highlight: firstly, the supernatural serves a didactic purpose in the text; secondly, the supernatural is more present and active in the first part of the text and largely absent towards the end; thirdly, this shift away from a supernatural narrative to a story about 'legal, social and economic reparations' has not always been well received by readers. It is these three aspects of *The Old English Baron* that prompt a comparison of the novel with the Middle English romance, *The Awntyrs off Arthure*, though Reeve would not have known this text. Both *Awntyrs* and *The Old English Baron* depict a supernatural event in the first half of the text which serves a didactic and moral purpose, and then follow this with a plot hinging on concerns about land ownership which, certainly in the case of *Awntyrs*, has been described as boring.[93] It is perhaps a sad fate that these two texts share, in which significant proportions of the work are considered inferior or an 'over-extended coda', but in both *Awntyrs* and *The Old English Baron* the supernatural never, in fact, entirely leaves the narrative, and it is comparing this aspect of the two texts that can be particularly illuminating.

Awntyrs begins with the court of Arthur setting out on a hunting expedition in Inglewood Forest. Sir Gawain remains with Guenevere as she rests by a lake, when suddenly the day grows dark and a hideous ghost rises from the lake, covered in serpents and toads, wailing and bemoaning its fate:

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[91] Dent, *Sinister Histories*, p.80.
[92] Clery, *Women's Gothic*, p.36.
[93] Margaret Robson, 'From Beyond the Grave: Darkness at Noon in *The Awntyrs off Arthure*' in *The Spirit of Medieval English Popular Romance*, eds. Ad Putter and Jane Gilbert (London: Routledge, 2000), pp.219-236, p.221.

> Bare was the body and blak to the bone
>
> Al biclagged* in clay uncomly* cladde*. [*clotted/foully/covered]
>
> Hit waried,* hit wayment* as a woman, [*cursed/wailed]
>
> But on hide* ne on huwe* no heling* hit hadde. [*skin/face/covering]
>
> Hit stemered,* hit stonayde,* hit stode as a stone, [*stammered/was stunned]
>
> Hit marred,* hit memered, hit mused* for madde [*was troubled/muttered].[94]

While Guenevere is terrified of the apparition, Gawain approaches and demands to know why it has appeared. It turns out that it is the ghost of Guenevere's mother, who is suffering the torments of Purgatory in penance for her sins on earth and who functions as a reflection of Guenevere herself. She warns Guenevere of the dangers of a life of luxury, of pride and of lechery, and urges her to give money to the poor. Guenevere agrees to have masses said for her mother's soul and the ghost prophesies the destruction of the Round Table, the death of Arthur and Gawain's own death. The ghost then leaves, though not the same way she arrived. Having initially risen from the lake, the ghost of Guenevere's mother now disappears into the forest, with a statement suggesting that she will continue to haunt the living world:

> I mot* walke on my wey thorgh this wilde wode* [*must/wood]
>
> In my wonyngstid* in wo for to welle* [*dwelling place/seethe or dwell][95]

Once Gawain and Guenevere have re-joined the hunting party and related their marvellous adventure, the court sits down to a lavish feast, which is interrupted by an unexpected guest. A knight named Sir Galeron arrives demanding to fight with a knight of Arthur's court, as he claims that Arthur has unjustly taken possession of some of his lands and given them to Gawain. After some deliberation it is decided that Gawain will fight Galeron and the battle is set for the next day. It proves gruesome and vicious, with the knights almost equally matched. Ultimately, it looks as if Gawain might win the fight when Guenevere appeals to Arthur for the battle to be called off, and Gawain relents. Arthur offers to give Gawain several new lands if he will restore some of Galeron's lands and he agrees to do so. The poem ends with surgeons healing the two knights. Galeron becomes a knight of the Round Table and Guenevere keeps her promise to her mother to have masses said across the land.

The structure of *Awntyrs* has been a source of debate for some time, as the two halves of the poem seem to form two distinct narratives. A.C. Spearing compares the poem to a

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[94] *Awntyrs off Arthure* in *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales*, ed. Thomas Hahn (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), 84, 105-110. All line references are to this edition.
[95] *Awntyrs*, 315-316.

diptych, in which 'the medieval artist is in no way limited by his habit of composing a work in self-contained, discontinuous sections':

> It is precisely the discontinuity that makes possible a creative gesture in which the spectator or reader himself participates. Sparks leap across the gap between the two parts, and the onlooker's mind is set alight by them.[96]

Spearing's work is also a refutation of Ralph Hanna's suggestion that the two halves of the poem are written by two separate authors and compiled later, a view which Spearing demonstrates is not supported either by the evidence of the survival of the romance as a single text in four manuscripts or by a close reading of the romance itself.[97] Hanna is not alone in viewing the romance as two separate narratives: Margaret Robson argues that '[t]he contradictory and contrived positions which the critic who wishes to read this poem as a unified whole has to adopt are […] sufficient reason for reading it as two separate narratives'.[98] However, Spearing's evidence of a linguistic and structural cohesion in the romance is compelling, and most critics do adopt the view that the poem should be read as two parts of a single whole. Stephen H.A. Shepherd, for example, argues that 'the very fabric of the poem […] is associative, and one should be invited by that circumstance constantly to seek affinities on the larger scale', both in terms of how the different sections of the poem relate to one another and also in terms of how the readers/audience might relate the poem to the world around them.[99] Spearing's interpretation of the poem as a diptych continues to be influential, with Alexander J. Zawacki building on this to compare the poem more directly to a "double-decker" cadaver tomb (such as that of Henry Chichele, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1364-1443), demonstrating how the imagery of death intrudes into the second half of the poem as a continuation of the *memento mori* of the first half.[100] Indeed, the language used in the fight between Gawain and Galeron serves to emphasise their similarity to the ghost as they draw closer to death, for example when Galeron is described as standing 'stonstille [still as a stone]' as 'Though he were stonayed [stunned] that stonde' after he is knocked down, reminiscent of line 109.[101] Having suggested that she will continue to 'walke […] thorgh this wilde wode', then, the ghost does indeed continue to haunt the rest of the poem, albeit more

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[96] A.C. Spearing, *Medieval to Renaissance in English Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p.129.
[97] Spearing, *Medieval to Renaissance*, pp.124-127.
[98] Robson, 'From Beyond the Grave', p.221.
[99] Stephen H.A. Shepherd, 'The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne' in *Middle English Romances*, ed. Stephen H.A. Shepherd (New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 1995), pp.365-369, p.369.
[100] Alexander J. Zawacki, 'A Dark Mirror: Death and The Cadaver Tomb in "The Awntyrs off Arthure"', *Arthuriana*, 27(2) (2017), 87-101.
[101] *Awntyrs*, 580, 581.

linguistically than physically. Zawacki argues that 'unlike the diptych, there is no gap between the two segments' of the romance, so that rather than seeing sparks leaping across this gap, he imagines the relationship as like 'live circuits, carrying not sparks but a humming current, connecting the living death of the speaking ghost in the first episode to the death-in-life of ruin and violence in the second'.[102]

While Spearing views the poem as a diptych and Zawacki views it as a double-decker tomb, Thomas Hahn sees the structure as circular, arguing that the last lines of the poem 'In the tyme of Arthore / This anter [adventure/marvel] betide', recall the first line, 'In the tyme of Arthur an aunter bytydde', thereby 'imposing a circular, iterative structure on the entire poem'.[103] This circularity of the poem is also a reflection of its nature as a historical narrative. Spearing argues that the *Awntyrs*-poet seems able to assume that the audience of the poem are 'familiar with the Arthurian legend in general' and this allows the ghost to 'prophesy the future in a compressed and allusive way'.[104] This knowledge of Arthurian legend also, of course, means that the audience knows that the doom predicted by the ghost is inevitable: in fact, to the contemporary audience of the poem, it is already history. Spearing calls it a 'stroke of genius' to have the prophecy appear earlier in the poem than the depictions of the Arthurian court: 'The poet reverses the flow of time, and in the poem's second part we are made to feel intensely the poignancy of this moment of Arthurian civilization – courage, compassion, generosity – knowing as we do of the destiny that awaits it when the boy Mordred is a man'.[105] Guenevere's destiny is similarly bleak. Although she has masses said for her mother at the end of the romance, the audience would be aware that the ghost's warning against the sin of 'luf paramour' will go unheeded, 'though it is left to us to decide whether the poet is alluding to her notorious affair with Lancelot, to her seduction by Mordred as recounted in the *Morte Arthure* […], or simply to her predilection for being surrounded with glamorous knights'.[106] The first and last lines, then, enclose the narrative in a specific 'tyme of Arthore' in which stability appears to be restored through the settlement of the dispute with Galeron and the arrangement for masses to be said for Guenevere's mother, but in fact this stability is temporary and illusory. The *Awntyrs*-poet draws attention to the inevitability of the destruction of Arthur's court as an extension of the *memento mori*,

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[102] Zawacki, 'A Dark Mirror', p.95.

[103] *Awntyrs*, 714-715, 1; Thomas Hahn, 'The Awntyrs off Arthur: Introduction' in *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales*, ed. Thomas Hahn (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), pp.169-177, p.172.

[104] Spearing, *Medieval to Renaissance*, p.136.

[105] Spearing, *Medieval to Renaissance*, p.141.

[106] *Awntyrs*, 213; Spearing, *Medieval to Renaissance*, p.134.

implying that '[a]ll human achievement is only imperfect and provisional; individuals die and civilizations collapse'.[107] The circular structure of the poem can be seen to reflect the circularity of history itself, in which heroes and heroines, kings and courts all continue to rise and fall throughout time.

Insofar as the dual or circular structure of *Awntyrs* could be described as a supernatural narrative followed by a narrative concerned with a legal dispute over land, it could be argued that there is some similarity to the structure of *The Old English Baron*, in which the supernatural functions to drive the plot of the discovery of Edmund's identity in the first half but then is overtaken by a focus on the law in the second half of the novel. After the supernatural interventions followed by a trial by combat, the novel moves on to describe the negotiations between Walter Lovel, Fitz-Owen, Sir Philip and several other noblemen who take an interest in the case to determine how restitution will be made to Edmund. The considerations include arrangements for Fitz-Owen's family, a series of discussions around the possible betrothal of Edmund to Fitz-Owen's daughter Emma, the need to travel to the King and acquaint him with the situation, and a consideration of the costs of Edmund's education and expenses. When Fitz-Owen's son questions how his father will be repaid for the original purchase of the castle and estate, Sir Philip answers with another question: 'Who is to pay the arrears of my ward's estate, which he has unjustly been kept out of these one-and-twenty years?'.[108] He ultimately insists 'on the furniture and stock of the farm, in consideration of the arrears'.[109] Chaplin points out that these processes through which Edmund's inheritance is restored to him are based on 'empirical verification of Edmund's status' when his story is confirmed by proofs discovered in the Lovel castle, differing from the restoration of the heir in *Otranto* through the means of 'the final, supernatural pronouncement of Alfonso'.[110] Unlike Walpole, Reeve moves away from an emphasis on the supernatural as the arbiter of justice that she hints at in the first part of the novel and instead roots the restitution of Edmund's inheritance in the sphere of legal authority, thereby demonstrating 'a commitment to a principle of rational, juridical procedure that appears to uphold the ideal of law as *logos*'.[111] In *Awntyrs* the conclusion of the poem is uncomfortable, with the knowledge that Arthur, Guenevere and the knights will not heed the warnings of the ghost reflected in the imposition of a 'circular, iterative structure' on the poem. By contrast,

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[107] Spearing, *Medieval to Renaissance*, p.141.
[108] *Old English Baron*, p.108.
[109] *Old English Baron*, p.109.
[110] Chaplin, *Gothic and the Rule of the Law*, p.81.
[111] Ibid.

at a glance, Reeve's novel seems to end with a sense of closure and the restoration of order that reflects a desire to project a model of political stability and exemplary moral values onto a medieval past.

However, some aspects of Reeve's depiction of the supernatural undermine the sense of closure at the end of the novel. While Reeve's work is often in agreement with contemporary narratives which seek to associate the English law with an origin in an authenticating "Gothic" constitution, Chaplin argues that her 'willingness to evoke the spectral signs of an authentic, ancient, material power' in *The Old English Baron* works to 'both affirm and deeply problematise' this narrative, 'articulat[ing] an anxiety concerning the nature and function of authority'.[112] Chaplin notes that 'Gothic excesses' break into the text at 'those moments at which legal authority is most open to contestation' and therefore 'problematise seemingly legitimate ownership', with legal issues 'ultimately resolved by means of a combination of spectral interventions (which throw legitimacy into doubt), and quasi-juridical processes (which settle empirically the issue of rightful succession)'.[113] The need for 'spectral interventions' in the resolution of issues of lawful right therefore suggests that Reeve's model of legal authority may not be as stable as it might appear. Dent similarly identifies a consistent anxiety in Reeve's text with the possibility of the 'old, elite, corrupt aristocracy' defeating the progressive order that she hopes to promote, noting that Walter Lovel almost escapes justice on multiple occasions.[114] In Reeve's novel, Dent argues, 'the law – and, by implication, the English constitution – is constantly tested and under threat'.[115] Watt also sees a sense of uneasiness in Reeve's choice of historical setting for her novel: 'many of Reeve's first readers would have been aware that in 1453, shortly after the period in which the work is set (also the date of the fall of Constantinople), the end of the Hundred Years' War reduced the English presence in France to a foothold in Calais'.[116] Her readers would also know that 'after the final English defeat in Gascony in 1453, Henry VI suffered a mental breakdown that precipitated the dynastic conflict that would result in the Wars of the Roses (1455–85)' and that in the contemporary eighteenth century 'the problem of national security that Wales posed was still unresolved at this time, and the loyalty to the Crown of the Lords of Wales, Baron Fitz-Owen's historical contemporaries, would not have been

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[112] Chaplin, *Gothic and the Rule of the Law*, p.79.
[113] Chaplin, *Gothic and the Rule of the Law*, p.80.
[114] Dent, *Sinister Histories*, p.96.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Watt, 'Early British Gothic', p.256.

assured'.[117] Watt therefore reads Reeve's use of contextualising historical details as a means of destabilising a narrative of restoration, with the conclusion of the novel appearing as 'deceptive lull before the eruption of a bloody civil war between rival houses'.[118] A 'deceptive lull' is also how the audience might perceive the moment in time depicted in *Awntyrs*, in which the threat of future disruption hovers over the scenes of luxury and feasting in Arthur's court.

If Reeve's novel is characterised by destabilising effects which undermine any sense of a lasting restoration of order at the end of the novel, this might be reflected in the use of doubling in the plot. For example, when Walter Lovel confesses to the murder of Edmund's father, it transpires that the motive was jealousy:

> My kinsman excelled me in every kind of merit, in the graces of person and mind, in all his exercises, and in every accomplishment. I was totally eclipsed by him, and I hated to be in his company; but what finished my aversion, was his addressing the lady upon whom I had fixed my affections. I strove to rival him there, but she gave him the preference that, indeed, was only his due; but I could not bear to see, or acknowledge, it.[119]

This exact pattern is repeated in Edmund's own life, when Wenlock and Markham become jealous of him and attempt to undermine his relationship with Fitz-Owen, as well as trying to bring about his death during the wars in France. Wenlock's motivations in particular mirror Walter Lovel's:

> Mr. Richard Wenlock, and Mr. John Markham, were the sisters sons of the Lord Fitz-Owen; and there were several other more distant relations, who, with them, secretly envied Edmund's fine qualities, and strove to lessen him in the esteem of the Baron and his family. […] Young Wenlock's hatred was confirmed by an additional circumstance: He had a growing passion for the Lady Emma, the Baron's only daughter; and, as love is eagle-eyed, he saw, or fancied he saw her cast an eye of preference on Edmund.[120]

These patterns of jealously and subsequent violence are responsible for many of the disruptions of order in the novel and may suggest that such disruptions are bound to repeat across generations, much as the mirroring of Guenevere with the ghost of her mother in

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[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid.
[119] *Old English Baron*, pp.91-92.
[120] *Old English Baron*, p.19.

Awntyrs draws attention to the inevitability of her fate. One further detail links the two texts: where the ghost continues linguistically to haunt the second half of *Awntyrs*, in *The Old English Baron* the supernatural also continues to intrude into the narrative even after its function in exposing injustice has been redirected onto legal and juridical processes, contrary to Patricia Meyer Spacks assertion that 'all ghosts lie quiet once order is restored'.[121] In what Clery describes as 'a fleeting return to unreason and a faint echo of the pleasure of terror which Reeve has so hesitantly indulged', when Edmund returns to the castle at the end of the novel, all the doors fly open at once.[122] The servants rush to the hall in fear, with only one remaining undaunted:

> These doors, said he, open of their own accord to receive their master! this is he indeed![123]

While the ghosts are still not threatening to Edmund and continue to recognise his lawful claim to his inheritance, their continuing presence after his rights have been restored is a little uncomfortable. If the ghosts exist in the narrative to signal disruption and injustice, the fact that they do not 'lie quiet once order is restored' suggests that this restoration may only be temporary. Like the historical context, that 'deceptive lull', the return of the ghosts undermines a sense of stability and closure at the end of the novel. If *The Old English Baron* is read through a comparison with *Awntyrs*, Reeve's approach to the depiction of historical England begins to look less optimistic than it might at first appear, with the use of doubling and the intrusion of the supernatural at the end of the novel suggesting an ominous sense that history is doomed to repeat itself.

This comparative approach is not intended to suggest that Reeve intentionally imitated the concerns or values of Middle English romance, as indeed it seems unlikely that she had much direct knowledge of the medieval texts of the romances. Rather, it is intended to demonstrate that an approach to the relationship between medieval texts and Gothic fiction that shuts down whenever direct evidence of influence is lacking risks missing the opportunity to explore the two genres in relation to one another and to find where moments of convergence and divergence can illuminate the study of both. Reeve is in many ways an unfortunate figure in the context of this thesis, demonstrating an interest in the idea of medieval literature in *Progress* but without having the access to resources that would allow

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[121] Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Novel Beginnings: Experiments in Eighteenth-Century English Fiction* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2006), p.200.
[122] Clery, *Women's Gothic*, p.36.
[123] *Old English Baron*, p.115.

her to successfully enter the ranks of the contemporary antiquarian movement. The next chapter looks at an author with a very different attitude towards the romances: as a gentleman and a scholar, James White had the kind of access to medieval literature that Reeve desired, but his approach to engaging with that material is marked by frivolity, flippancy and parody. Moving from an author with an earnest interest in the history of romance without access to medieval texts, to an author with every opportunity to access medieval materials who consistently mocked the antiquarian project, this study of the relationship between Middle English romance and the development of the Gothic genre in the eighteenth century demonstrates that there is no single model for viewing this relationship. Different writers not only had different access to information about medieval romance, but they often engaged with and responded to that information in radically different ways.

Chapter 3: Parodies of Antiquarianism in James White's *Earl Strongbow*

James White: A Forgotten Scholar

Little is now known about the life of James White beyond what was published in an obituary in *The European Magazine and London Review* in April 1799, which is mostly dedicated to an account of the manner of his death but also states that he was educated at the University of Dublin where he 'was esteemed an admirable scholar, and possessed of brilliant parts'.[1] J.M.S. Tompkins confirms White's attendance at Trinity College, Dublin, having identified him in the *Catalogue of Dublin Graduates* as obtaining a B.A. in 1780.[2] He wrote three novels, *Earl Strongbow, or The History of Richard de Clare and the Beautiful Geralda* (1789), *The Adventures of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster* (1790) and *The Adventures of King Richard, Couer de Lion* (1791) and each contains ample evidence of his detailed knowledge of history and literature.[3] The novels are difficult to pin down to any particular genre, containing passages of Gothic, historical fiction, and social and political satire. The texts are mostly humorous, but even comedy is occasionally abandoned for a moment of earnest, melancholy reflection which Tompkins refers to as 'White's curious touches of seriousness'.[4] White's work often plays with conventions of a variety of genres and weaves them into a text that can move from literary parody to political satire to contemplations of death and grief seamlessly and effectively.

Whether or not White can be described as a Gothic author is a complex question. In his 1905 *The Study of a Novel*, Selden Lincoln Whitcomb identifies White's *Earl Strongbow* as a '*Gothic historical romance*'.[5] Tompkins also reluctantly acknowledges White's debt to

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[1] 'James White, Esq.', *The European Magazine, and London Review*, 35 (Apr 1799), 223-224, p.223.

[2] J.M.S. Tompkins, 'James White, Esq.: A Forgotten Humourist', *The Review of English Studies*, 3(10) (April, 1927), pp. 146-156, p.146.

[3] This latter publication also included a poem 'On The Death of Lord Falkland' and his other forays into poetry include a small collection entitled *Conway Castle, a Poem* (1789). Diane Long Hoeveler notes that White's *King Richard* is partly based on an opera of *Richard coeur-de-lion*, staged in London in 1786 and in Boston in 1787: Diane Long Hoeveler, *Gothic Riffs: Secularizing the Uncanny in the European Imaginary, 1780–1820* (Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press, 2010), p.82. In addition to his novels, White also published three translations, *The Orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero against Caius Cornelius Verres* (1787), Jean-Paul Rabaut's *The History of the Revolution in France* (1792) and *The Speeches of M. de Mirabeau the Elder, Pronounced in the National Assembly of France* (1792), as well as a treatise entitled *Hints for a Specific Plan for an Abolition of the Slave Trade* (1788).

[4] Tompkins, 'James White', p.152.

[5] Selden Lincoln Whitcomb, *The Study of a Novel* (Boston, MA: D.C. Heath and Co., 1905), p.26.

the 'Gothic family' of literature, lamenting his connection to the 'vulgar and violent' novels of authors such as Sophia Lee and Ann Fuller.[6] Natalie Neill makes a similar connection in relation to *Earl Strongbow* in her overview of Gothic parody in *Romantic Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion*, arguing that White's satire takes aim at such texts as Thomas Leland's *Longsword, Earl of Salisbury* (1762), Sophia Lee's *The Recess; or, A Tale of Other Times* (1783–5) and Ann Fuller's *Alan Fitz-Osborn: An Historical Tale* (1787).[7] James Watt also includes a discussion of White in his *Contesting the Gothic: Fiction, Genre and Cultural Conflict, 1764-1832*, situating him as a midpoint between the Walpolean Gothic and the Loyalist Gothic.[8] As Watt's intention is to challenge the idea of the Gothic as a stable, continuous genre and also to draw attention to works which have been overlooked as a result of their nonconformity to that idea, his inclusion of White does not necessarily imply that his novels should be viewed as part of a normative, homogenous Gothic canon. Fiona Price also challenges the prejudices at play in the construction of literary genres in relation to eighteenth-century fiction, arguing that an insistence on the significance of Walter Scott's *Waverly* (1814) to the development of the British historical novel has resulted in earlier historical fiction being ignored, viewed as inferior, or recategorized.[9] She discusses White in terms of his relationship to Ireland, building on Watt's work to argue that White presents a critique of imperialism through his sceptical approach to historical writing and 'uses the gothic to generate a comic unease with history'.[10] Scholarship on White thus tends to place him within the context of the Gothic while acknowledging that his relationship to any notion of a cohesive Gothic genre is complex and subversive. White's work seems fundamentally resistant to being pigeon-holed, but to exclude him from this thesis on the grounds that his novels are not Gothic enough, or that they are also political, satirical, historical and parodic, would be to ignore the fact that White consistently, across all three of his novels (and some of his poetry), engages with Gothic forms and ideas. Whether or not his work is straightforwardly Gothic, White is undoubtedly responding to the emergence of the Gothic fiction in his novels and often in interesting and unusual ways.

Each one of his novels does include some element of Gothicism, often for the purpose of parodying it. *Earl Strongbow* contains many tropes common to Gothic fiction, with

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[6] Tompkins, 'James White', pp.148-149.

[7] Natalie Neill, 'Gothic Parody' in *Romantic Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion*, eds. Angela Wright and Dale Townshend (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), pp.185-204, p.188.

[8] Watt, *Contesting the Gothic*, pp.44-45.

[9] Fiona Price, *Reinventing Liberty: Nation, Commerce and the Historical Novel from Walpole to Scott*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), p.1.

[10] Ibid., p.113.

features such as a ghost, an attempted kidnapping of a young lady and the dramatic reveal of the embalmed corpse of a murdered woman lending a distinctly Gothic atmosphere to the text. *Earl Strongbow* will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, but here an example in *John of Gaunt* can be particularly useful to highlight White's ability to parody Gothic fiction. In the novel, the titular character overhears two ushers comparing the histories of their misfortunes and learns that one of them was once employed in the household of a wealthy lady dowager to act as usher to her daughter (a chaperone, essentially). It is little surprise that the usher does not take this role seriously, as he has already admitted that he lied about his tendencies towards drinking, gambling and lechery in order to gain the position. Tempted by the promise of a large tip, the usher agrees to pass notes between the lady's daughter and a knight, despite the lady's disapproval of the match between the two young lovers. When the lady learns of this betrayal, she casts him into a dungeon and there he sits on something he assumes to a seat, until he inspects it a little further:

> Casually I laid my hand on it, when, to my infinite terror, I found that I was sitting on a human skeleton. I started up forthwith, and trod on several bones, some long, some short, some globular, which I concluded to be the skulls and other relicks of unhappy persons, who had perished in this horrid pit during the civil commotions between King Henry the Third and Simon de Mountfort earl of Leicester.[11]

The usher quickly recovers his shock at the discovery of the bones and writes a letter to the lady insisting that he must be released and suggesting that 'my life was in danger, from my apprehension of spirits and dismal goblins, for which, from my childhood upwards, I had been exceedingly remarkable'.[12] The lady, it transpires, can forgive anything but swearing and allows him to return to his role, where he immediately decides to betray her again. The usher's imprisonment could seem more horrifying than humorous, and indeed Natalie Neill has noted the difficulties in distinguishing between Gothic and parodies of Gothic:

> Parody can be hard to discern. We may laugh at an author's clumsy attempt to evoke horror or pathos when, in fact, laughter was the intended effect. Alternatively, when a Gothic text incites laughter, we may incorrectly assume that it is deliberately satirical.[13]

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[11] James White, *The Adventures of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster*, Vol.2 (London: John Crowder for G. G. J. and J. Robinson, 1790), pp.72-73.
[12] *John of Gaunt*, Vol.2, pp.74-75.
[13] Neill, 'Gothic Parody', p.189.

However, the context of the passage within White's novel makes it difficult to read as a serious example of the Gothic, particularly as the two ushers John of Gaunt overhears seem to be competing to determine who has suffered the most adversity in life. Having just listened to his fellow usher's tale of woe, the likelihood that this usher hopes to surpass his companion in misery makes him a rather unreliable narrator and, in this context, the violent excess of the skeleton-filled dungeon reads as an absurd exaggeration. The passage is likely a direct parody of Ann Radcliffe's *The Castles of Athlin and Dunblane* (1789), in which Alleyn and Edric stumble across a corpse while escaping the castle of the cruel Baron Malcolm:

> They were proceeding with slow and wary steps, when the foot of Alleyn stumbled upon something which clattered like broken armour, and endeavouring to throw it from him, he felt the weight resist his effort: he stooped to discover what it was, and found in his grasp the cold hand of a dead person. Every nerve thrilled with horror at the touch, and he started back in an agony of terror. They remained for some time in silent dismay, unable to return, yet fearful to proceed, when a faint light which seemed to issue from the bottom of the last descent, gleamed upon the walls, and discovered to them the second staircase, and at their feet the pale and disfigured corpse of a man in armour, while at a distance they could distinguish the figures of men.[14]

The two men continue to flee their pursuers but are beginning to give up hope of escape when they are rescued by several 'faithful friends and followers'.[15] At this point all terror seems to vanish, and they conclude 'that the body which they had passed in the avenue, was that of some person who had perished either by hunger or by the sword in those subterranean labyrinths'.[16] It is easy to appreciate why this passage would appeal to White's sense of humour: the introduction of a grotesque corpse which inspires such paralysing terror, only for it to be explained away and dismissed once the danger has passed, is a little absurd even in Radcliffe's novel. White exaggerates the idea by populating a dungeon with an excess of corpses which are instantly legible to the usher as the bodies of those who died during 'the civil commotions between King Henry the Third and Simon de Mountfort earl of Leicester'. By immediately identifying them as relics of a historical battle, White makes it clear that the corpses are irrelevant to the actual plot of the usher's story and so are, essentially, just historical texture which exists only to emphasise the misery of the usher's situation.

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[14] Ann Radcliffe, *The Castles of Athlin and Dunblane* (London: printed for T. Hookham, 1789), pp.64-65.
[15] Radcliffe, *Athlin and Dunblane*, p.68.
[16] Ibid.

In addition to this, the passage anticipates such later Gothic parodies as Eaton Stannard Barrett's *The Heroine* (1813), in which some humour is derived from depicting a character of unsuitable social status attempt to occupy the position of Gothic hero/heroine. The usher is certainly not an appropriate hero for such a Gothic turn of events: he is a lying, cheating, lecherous and avaricious character whose consistent attempts to present himself as the victim of multiple cruelties are undermined by his dishonesty and his inability to learn from his mistakes. Immediately after being released from the dungeon, for example, the usher is once again tempted by the promise of a large tip and agrees to deliver another letter from his lady's daughter to her lover, leading him into further misfortunes. This entertaining episode is characteristic of White's use of the Gothic, which takes the settings and props of Gothic literature and recasts them in his witty, humorous style to satirise contemporary society and values.

White's *John of Gaunt* is also a useful example of his interest in medieval history and literature. Tompkins praises his historical knowledge as unusual in an eighteenth-century novelist, though she does clarify that this is only within the context of 'an age when twelfth-century soldiers were represented discharging pistols', referring to Francis Lathom's *The Fatal Vow* (1807).[17] *John of Gaunt* opens with the claim that the novel is a transcription of a manuscript which the narrator found in a hidden compartment of a castle which belonged to the family of Chaucer:

> I found, upon examination, that sundry adventures of the great duke of Lancaster, and Edward the Black Prince were therein related in the Latin tongue. Some mouse had eaten many portions of the preface, and a few leaves of the history itself; which is the reason, worthy reader, why the first and second chapters, or visits, are wanting.[18]

He explains that the history was compiled by a Cisterian friar named Hildebrand, at the request of Chaucer himself, who also appears as a character in the novel. Throughout the text, White demonstrates his detailed knowledge of fourteenth-century history and of the life of Chaucer, as well as showing an interest in literary history. The novel includes a scene in which John of Gaunt, Edward, the Black Prince and Owen Glendower examine the books in Chaucer's library in a house in Woodstock in Oxfordshire:

> There lay invaluable copies of histories (transcribed with great art and beauty) which treated of the exploits of the ancient Greeks and Romans, many Saxon poems also,

[17] Tompkins, 'James White', p.150.
[18] *John of Gaunt*, Vol.1, pp.i-iii.

many ballad of the Troubadours; the novels of his contemporary Giovanni Bocaccio, and the incomparable sonnets of the celebrated Petrarch. These two writers were personally known to Geoffrey, who in his travels had met them at the courts of the Italian princes. Of books of chivalry he possessed a precious store.[19]

While most of the biographical knowledge about Chaucer which White includes in the novel, such as his connection to John of Gaunt, was well-established, his belief that Chaucer met Boccaccio and Petrarch in his travels in Italy suggests the direct influence of Warton, who had made this claim in his *History of English Poetry* a few years earlier.[20] White even includes some criticism of Chaucer's 'House of Fame' in the novel: after Chaucer recites the poem, the Black Prince commends it but 'he could not help observing that, in some parts, the lines were incorrect as to metre' and John of Gaunt, as narrator of the novel, notes that the fault was never corrected.[21] White's use of Chaucer as a character to introduce both a consideration of his sources and some brief analysis of his poetry demonstrates both an interest in antiquarianism and a willingness to use his fiction as a vehicle for historical and literary analysis.

White's knowledge of literature is significant and the sheer scale of his field of reference is demonstrated by the medieval and early modern texts and authors he mentions in his novels, which include: *Bevis of Southampton*, *Guy of Warwick*, a romance of Sir Tristram, Geoffrey Chaucer (who appears as a character in his *John of Gaunt*), Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Amadis of Gaul*, *Orlando Furioso*, Boccaccio, Petrarch, *Don Bellianis*, John Dryden, and the morality plays, which he seems to have learned about in commentaries on the works of Shakespeare.[22] His mentions of classical literature are also numerous. Evidently, then, Tompkins was correct to assert that White had 'read widely', though the mention of these texts does not necessarily imply that he had read them.[23] White himself strongly implies that

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[19] *John of Gaunt* , Vol.1, pp.36-37. Whilst Chaucer's connection to Woodstock lacks evidence, it was commonly believed in the eighteenth century that he spent at least some time there: cf. E.G. Stanley, 'Chaucer at Woodstock: A Theme in English Verse of the Eighteenth Century', *The Review of English Studies*, 48(190) (May, 1997), 157-167. The view seems to have appealed to a poetic vision of a pastoral idyllic life for the poet away from the city of London, which is evident in White's description of the cottage he envisions for Chaucer at Woodstock: 'Woodstock was now in sight; the smoke which curled from the sequestered roof of the learned and hospitable Geoffrey Chaucer assured us at once of a reception and repast. And now we enter through the neat white gate; we wind down a sloping alley, which, hedged on either side with the woodbine and wild rose, for a while conceals the mansion. At length it salutes our eyes from the midst of a modest eminence that gradually swelled above the level of the valley, and at the bottom of which ran a rivulet that maintained the adjacent fields in a vivid and perennial verdure. Here, in the cultivation of letters, did the independent and happy poet lay the ground-work of immortality': *John of Gaunt*, Vol. 1, pp.30-31.
[20] Warton, *History of English Poetry*, Vol.1, p.342.
[21] *John of Gaunt*, Vol.1, p.34.
[22] *John of Gaunt*, Vol.3, p.2n.
[23] Tompkins, 'James White', p.149.

he is familiar with some medieval texts though, insisting in the Preface to *King Richard* that 'I [have] addicted myself to Gothic romances; adhering (at least I believe so) right closely to the manners and customs of early times, when chivalry and the feudal system prevailed throughout all Europe'.[24] Assuming he has indeed read some of these works then, there are not too many surprises in the Middle English texts mentioned: Chaucer and Geoffrey of Monmouth were in print, while *Guy of Warwick* enjoyed popularity in prose chapbooks well into the eighteenth century.[25] *Bevis*, however, seems a more unusual reference for an author writing in 1789, as Jennifer Fellows has noted that by this time the popularity of the romance had significantly declined.[26] Of course, White could have read about *Bevis* in contemporary antiquarian works, particularly Percy's *Reliques*, but there is some reason to think that he had read a version of the romance, even if the evidence for this is more speculative than conclusive.

A large part of White's *John of Gaunt* takes place in a forest where the heroes have awoken after being drugged by a group of singing, dancing ladies. Here they discover a society led by a "patriarch", who kidnaps unsuspecting travellers then forces them to form part of his community of merrymaking robbers.[27] This patriarch spends time during a dance describing some of the cast of characters he has acquired, all of whom are caricatures of various follies and vices. One such character, a squire, is in the habit of claiming to know more than he does about a variety of subjects:

> He is perpetually reminding us of his affection for his books. *It is written in a blank leaf of my Amadis de Gaul – I have taken a memorandum of it in my Don Bellianis – Did you see my Sir Bevis of Southampton any where?* These, illustrious knights, are his never-neglected phrases. And from all this you might be led to imagine that he was a person deeply read. But, alas! the shallow squire is so innocent of real taste and sound judgement in these matters, that were you to require him to point out the

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[24] James White, *The Adventures of King Richard Couer-de-Lion, to which is added, The Death of Lord Falkland: A Poem*, Vol. 1 (Dublin: Zachariah Jackson for Arthur Grueber, 1791), p.xiii. All page references are to this edition.

[25] Cf. Siân Echard, *Printing the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), pp.60-96.

[26] Jennifer Fellows, 'The Middle English and Renaissance *Bevis*: A Textual Survey' in *Sir Bevis of Hampton in Literary Tradition*, eds. Jennifer Fellows and Ivana Djordjević (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2008), pp.80-113, p.101.

[27] Tales of Robin Hood were popular in the chapbook tradition in the eighteenth century, and likely formed some of the inspiration for this passage.

peculiar merits of any one of his beloved authors, you would puzzle and incommode him to the utmost degree. [original emphasis][28]

If White had not read any version of *Bevis*, it is odd that he would choose it as an example in a passage deriding people who reference books with which they are fairly unfamiliar. Of course, it is entirely possibly that there is some self-parody in this passage, or that in using a medieval setting to satirise contemporary society White has simply picked the names of a few works he thought would make sense in the historical context, despite that *Amadis* and *Don Belianis* were written much later. However, his mention of *Bevis* in *Earl Strongbow* similarly suggests that it is a text one could be expected to have read, as a character claims to have heard it so many times as to be bored of it. It is impossible to say conclusively which texts may have been read by an author about whom so little is now known, but there seems to be reason to believe that White did have some specific text in mind when referring to *Bevis*. To understand how White may have accessed a version of the *Bevis* story, then, it is necessary to consider the textual history of the romance.

Locating *Bevis* in the Eighteenth Century

Versions of *Bevis* are extant in several manuscripts, some of which were known to the antiquarians of the eighteenth century, including Percy, Warton, Ritson and later Ellis and Scott.[29] Percy was aware of three of the manuscripts, the Auchinleck MS, Caius College Cambridge MS 175 and Cambridge UL Ff. II. 38, and he took a particular interest in *Bevis* as it is one of the romances mentioned by Chaucer in *Sir Topas* and, more particularly, because he notes similarities between the text and a line in Shakespeare's *King Lear*.[30] Percy was also aware of the many early modern printed editions of the romance, noting that 'it ran thro' several editions; two of which are in black-letter, 4to, "imprinted by Wyllyam Copland" without date; containing great variations'.[31] Jennifer Fellows has detailed the print history of the metrical text of *Bevis*, demonstrating that it remained in publication from around 1500 to

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[28] *John of Gaunt*, Vol.1, pp.128-129.
[29] Johnston, *Enchanted Ground*, p.228.
[30] Ibid. The line from *King Lear* is from Act III Scene IV and Percy quotes it as 'Mice and Rats and Such Small Deere / Have been Tom's food for seven long yeare': Percy, *Reliques*, Vol.3, xiii. This corresponds with the lines 'Rattes and myse and such smal dere / Was his meate that seuen yere' in the early modern printed editions of *Bevis*, here quoted from an edition printed by William Copland in 1560: *Syr Beuys of Hampton* (London: William Copland, 1560).
[31] Percy, *Reliques*, Vol.3, p.188.

1711 with few variations in the text: 'No other Middle English romance remained in print in its late medieval form, substantially unchanged, as long as Bevis did'.[32] She also provides a list of extant manuscripts and printed editions of *Bevis* from the 1330s to 1711.[33] Fellows notes that it was around the latter half of the seventeenth century that chapbook versions of the romance began to appear, and she suggests that a prose edition of the romance first published in 1689 which makes significant changes to the text may have been written by John Shurley.[34] Therefore by the time White was writing about *Bevis* in 1789, there are four distinct traditions of the romance that he could have accessed: the medieval manuscripts, the early modern printed verse editions, the later-seventeenth- and eighteenth-century prose chapbook editions, and the 1689 prose edition. Whilst as a scholar White may have had some engagement with manuscripts, it seems unlikely that he had seen any of the *Bevis* manuscripts as he studied in Dublin, while the manuscripts that were known at the time were in London, Cambridge and Edinburgh. He could have seen an early modern printed verse edition of the romance, but there is some evidence to suggest that the version White read was written in prose, including his alignment of *Bevis* with other prose works (discussed below).

If White was familiar with a prose version of *Bevis*, it may have been one of the chapbook editions which began to appear around the end of the seventeenth century. One such text, *The gallant history of the life and death of that most noble knight, Sir Bevis of Southampton*, was printed in London in 1691 and then reprinted in 1700, and it is similar in content to a heavily abbreviated edition of the romance published around 1750 in London, *The history of the life and death of that most noble knight Sir Bevis, of Southampton*.[35] This edition was printed by the Diceys, William and his son Cluer, at their business in Aldermary Church-Yard. The Diceys were successful and well-known printers and editors of cheap books, closely linked with the chapbook market, who published a large catalogue of the books they had printed in 1764 which includes the *Bevis* volume and a chapbook version of *Guy of Warwick*.[36] It seems possible that the Diceys wrote the short prose history of *Bevis* themselves based on knowledge of late-seventeenth-century prose versions of the text. This is likely also the version of the text that was printed in Newcastle around 1780.[37]

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[32] Fellows, 'Middle English and Renaissance *Bevis*', p.101.
[33] Fellows, 'Middle English and Renaissance *Bevis*', pp.104-113.
[34] Fellows, 'Middle English and Renaissance *Bevis*', p.101.
[35] *The gallant history of the life and death of that most noble knight, Sir Bevis of Southampton* (London: printed by A.M. for J. Deacon at the Angel in Guilt-spur-street without Newgate, 1691; repr. 1700); *The history of the life and death of that most noble knight Sir Bevis, of Southampton* (London: Aldermary Church-Yard, 1750).
[36] *The Dicey and Marshall Catalogue*, ed. R.C. Simmons, Online Edition: diceyandmarshall.bodleian.ox.ac.uk, accessed 28 January 2023.
[37] Ibid.

It appears then that by around 1750 *Bevis* was firmly rooted in the cheap print and chapbook trade, heavily abbreviated and in prose. As the plot of *Bevis* found in the Dicey chapbook is a roughly faithful, though heavily abbreviated, version of the plot found in the early modern verse editions, it is worth summarising here (with the chapter divisions used by the chapbook):

Chapter One: Sir Guy, Earl of Hampton, marries the daughter of the King of Scotland and they have a son, Bevis. Bevis' mother is in love with Sir Murdure and plots with him to murder her husband, which they achieve by tricking him into riding alone in the woods and ambushing him.

Chapter Two: The young Bevis vows revenge for his father's death within earshot of his mother, who strikes him to the ground. Bevis' mother asks his uncle, Sir Sabre, to kill Bevis, but his uncle fakes Bevis' death by soaking his clothes in animal blood, then disguises Bevis as a shepherd and sends him to watch sheep. However, Bevis abandons his disguise, forces his way into the court and strikes Sir Murdure. He is captured and Sir Sabre is once again ordered to kill him.

Chapter Three: Sir Sabre sells Bevis to a merchant sailing for 'Armony' (Armenia). There, Bevis is presented to King Ermine who is struck by his beauty and offers him marriage to his daughter Josian if Bevis will renounce his faith. Bevis refuses but is allowed to stay on at the court. On Christmas Day, Bevis is taunted for his faith by a group of men and kills them. Josian persuades her father not to execute Bevis, and then calms Bevis down and dresses his wounds.

Chapter Four: Bevis kills a ferocious boar and cuts off its head to present to the King. When a group of twelve foresters try to steal the head, Bevis kills nine of them.

Chapter Five: Another King, Brandmond, demands Josian's hand in marriage. Ermine refuses and gives Bevis command of twenty thousand men. Bevis defeats Brandmond's army and captures him, but he is released after paying a ransom. Josian confesses her love to Bevis and they kiss. Ermine is furious when he learns of this and writes a letter to Brandmond asking him to execute Bevis. He gives the letter to Bevis to deliver himself.

Chapter Six: On his way to Brandmond's court, Bevis kills two hundred Saracens after insulting their faith. He is then captured by Brandmond, who reads the letter from Ermine and imprisons Bevis in a dungeon with two dragons, which he kills.

Chapter Seven: Ermine tells Josian that Bevis has abandoned her and returned to England. She is forced to marry Sir Jour, who is also given Bevis' horse Arundel and

his sword. Bevis escapes the dungeon, and kills a knight named Sir Grandere then kills that knight's brother, a giant. Bevis disguises himself as a palmer and enters Sir Jour's castle, where Josian does not recognise him until his horse hears his voice and breaks its restraints. Bevis tricks Sir Jour into leaving his castle, then takes Josian away with her servant Boniface. As they are pursued, Bevis, Josian and Boniface hide in a cave. While Bevis is out hunting, two lions kill Boniface but leave Josian alone. When he returns, Bevis takes this as proof that she has remained a virgin and then kills the lions. They meet the giant Ascapart who fights Bevis and loses. As Bevis spares his life, Ascapart agrees to serve him. They all sail to Cologne and Josian is baptised.

Chapter Eight: A venomous dragon attacks Cologne. Bevis fights the dragon and is infected with its venom but falls into a well of Holy Water which cures the poison. He kills the dragon.

Chapter Nine: Bevis sails to England, presents himself to Sir Murdure under a false name and then leaves for the Isle of Wight to find Sir Sabre.

Chapter Ten: In Cologne, an Earl named Miles falls in love with Josian and threatens to rape her if she will not marry him. She agrees, then murders him on their wedding night. When this is discovered, Josian is taken to be burned at the stake. Ascapart has warned Bevis, who arrives just in time to save her. They all go to the Isle of Wight.

Chapter Eleven: Bevis challenges Sir Murdure and there is a bloody battle on the Isle of Wight. Ascapart kills Sir Murdure by throwing him into a cauldron of boiling pitch and brimstone. Having witnessed this, Bevis' mother kills herself. Bevis marries Josian and is made Lord Marshal of England by King Edgar, but is banished after Arundel kicks the King's son, killing him.[38] Bevis leaves with Josian, Ascapart and Sir Sabre's son, Terry. On the way, Josian goes into labour and insists that the men leave her. She delivers twins and is then kidnapped by Ascapart. Terry overtakes and kills Ascapart, returning Josian to Bevis. Sir Jour and King Ermine are at war over Josian. Bevis defeats Sir Jour and takes him prisoner. Bevis' children are named Miles and Guy and grow up to be as valiant as their father. On King Edgar's death,

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[38] In fact, the chapbook names the King as Edward here and continues this until the end of the text, despite that it opens with the words 'In the reign of Edgar King of England' and the King is usually Edgar in other versions of the romance. This is likely an error rather than an intentional revision of the text, which is not surprising in a copy which also briefly names Bevis' father, Guy, as 'Sir George' and at one point substitutes the word "gone" for 'Bone': *The history of the life and death of that most noble knight Sir Bevis, of Southampton* (1750), pp.3, 13.

>Bevis and his family return to England and live in Southampton until Bevis and Josian
>die on the same day and are buried in the same grave.

There are some variations from the usual plot of *Bevis* here, which mostly reflect the challenges in condensing such a long and episodic romance into a short chapbook. For example, Terry is not mentioned until after Bevis is banished from England, whereas in most of the seventeenth-century versions of *Bevis* he meets the hero while he is travelling to Brandmond's court. Similarly, the chapbook removes many details about the passage of time, such as Bevis' age when his father is murdered (seven), how much time passes between his arrival at Ermine's court and his attack of the men who taunt him on Christmas Day (roughly eight years) and how long he spends in the dungeon (seven years). Broadly speaking though, up until the final chapter this is the essence of the plot of *Bevis* in most versions of the romance published in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. However, after the defeat of Sir Jour the chapbook diverges drastically from the plot of the early modern verse romances, which conclude with Bevis attacking London and can be summarised as:

>Bevis learns that King Edgar has disinherited Sir Sabre's son and takes a force to
>England to challenge him. Bevis rides into London alone to confront the King and Sir
>Brian of Cornwall demands he should be executed for defying his banishment. Bevis
>kills Sir Brian and many other men in the streets of London. To make peace, the King
>marries his daughter to Bevis' son Miles and gives him the Earldom of Cornwall.
>Bevis and Josian eventually die on the same day and are buried together.

The c.1750 chapbook is also distinct in this from the prose text first published in 1691, which keeps the attack on London (though dealt with very briefly). Thus, the removal of the attack on London from the c.1750 chapbook suggests the influence of another prose tradition of the romance, which began in the latter part of the seventeenth century.

This version of *Bevis* follows a 1689 edition of the romance, *The famous and renowned history of Sir Bevis of Southampton*.[39] This edition made multiple significant changes to the text of the early modern verse editions, largely grounding the romance in seventeenth-century values. Echard has discussed some of the changes this text makes to the romance, noting that it removes much of Bevis' association with England as well as adding in a romance between Miles, Bevis' son, and the sultan's daughter.[40] She notes that the removal of the battle in London from this version of *Bevis* is likely due to concerns about depicting 'a

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[39] *The famous and renowned history of Sir Bevis of Southampton* (London: Printed for W. Thackeray at the Angel in Duck-Lane, and J. Deacon at the Angel in Gilt-Spur-street, 1689).

[40] Echard, *Printing the Middle Ages*, pp.87-88.

British hero slaughtering his countrymen' in the wake of the English Civil War and identifies nationalistic concerns in the waning popularity of *Bevis* in the eighteenth century compared to the relative success of *Guy of Warwick*.[41] The decision to alter the text to make it more palatable to an audience in the wake of Civil War is reflective of a process in editions of *Bevis* in this period more broadly which seek to remove elements from the text that could be offensive to a contemporary readership. Even in the metrical printed editions, which are largely faithful to the late medieval text, Fellows has noted the introduction of more tenderness between Bevis and Josian, which could suggest that Bevis' 'harsh, discourteous and domineering' behaviour towards Josian in the medieval text was becoming increasingly unacceptable or unappealing to a later audience.[42] The 1689 prose version is extensive in its alterations to the text, including removing the scenes in which Bevis' mother strikes him to the ground and Sir Sabre soaks Bevis' clothes in pig's blood to fake his death. This concern to produce a safer, less violent text is reflective of an attempt to rewrite the romance to appeal to the ideals and values of seventeenth-century literature, exemplified by an added passage after Sir Sabre disguises Bevis as a shepherd. While in the printed metrical editions Bevis immediately decides to confront his mother and Sir Murdure rather than herding sheep, in the 1689 text he spends some time as a shepherd in a passage more reminiscent of seventeenth-century pastoral idylls than medieval romance:

> At this *Bevis* wept for anger, to be so used by his cruel Mother whilst his Fathers Murtherer revelled in his Palace, yet concealed it as well as he could, in hopes, one day to be revenged, condescending to have his rich Cloaths changed for those of a Shepherd, all tattered and ragged; and in that disguise drove forth Sir *Sabre*'s Sheep each morning, warily guarding them upon the flowry Plains, and chearing himself with his Pipe of Reeds, wearing a Shepherds Scrip, and carrying in his hand a Crook, and at Even he brought them home again, contenting himself with course Fare and a homely Lodging.[43]

It is perhaps ironic that a text which begins with an Epistle to the Reader lamenting the decline of chivalrous values and the 'effeminacy' of the contemporary age is so firmly rooted in the societal values and literary traditions of the seventeenth century. Across the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century versions of *Bevis*, there is consistent evidence of a process of rewriting the text to fit contemporary values.

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[41] Ibid.

[42] Fellows, 'Middle English and Renaissance *Bevis*', p.96.

[43] *The famous and renowned history of Sir Bevis of Southampton* (1689), p.10.

This version of the romance was published again in Southampton in 1775 as *The history of the famous and extraordinary Sir Bevis of Southampton. Together with some account of Ascapart*.[44] The text is consistent with the 1689 edition (though with modernised spelling and punctuation), but it also contains an Advertisement to the Reader which provides some insight into the context of *Bevis* in the eighteenth century:

> As the great Achievements and noble Actions of this famous Champion were equal, if not superior, to those of any Hero of Antiquity, *and very little known*, it is therefore presumed that this History will not be an unwelcome Offering to the Public, and particularly to the Inhabitants of the Town and Environs of his native Place, *Southampton* [original emphasis][45]

Fellows argues that the idea that the romance was '*very little known*' by the 1770s seems accurate.[46] This 1775 text is one of only two editions known to have been published in the later eighteenth century, the other being the Newcastle edition of around 1780, which indicates a considerable decline in popularity when compared with the numerous editions of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In Southampton, however, Fellows notes that the concept of Bevis as a romance hero was still extant, though without much detail from the story: from the seventeenth century until 1883 'the figures of Bevis and Ascopart were painted on wooden panels' on the Northgate, now called the Bargate.[47] Fellows also describes an account of Bevis Tower in Southampton by William Gilpin in 1804 which 'bears little relation to the Middle English romance' and conflates Bevis and Ascopart, describing Bevis as a giant.[48] The name and image of Bevis evidently survived as those of a local hero in Southampton into the eighteenth century, but without much tangible connection to the romance tradition.

In addition to this, there are some mentions of Bevis as an example of a romance hero in texts published in the eighteenth century. For example, a reference to *Bevis* is found in Richard Steele's *The Tatler* (1709-1711), which continued to be reprinted across the eighteenth century, suggesting a continued popularity certainly at least until 1786 when a new edition in six volumes with illustrations and notes was edited and published by J. Nichols in

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[44] *The history of the famous and extraordinary Sir Bevis of Southampton. Together with some account of Ascapart* (Southampton: Printed and sold by T. Baker, 1775).

[45] *The history of the famous and extraordinary Sir Bevis of Southampton. Together with some account of Ascapart* (1775), p.ii.

[46] Fellows, 'Middle English and Renaissance *Bevis*', p.101.

[47] Jennifer Fellows, 'Introduction' in *Sir Bevis of Hampton*, ed. Jennifer Fellows (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the Early English Text Society, 2017), pp.xv-xciii, p.xxxix.

[48] Fellows, 'Introduction', p.xl.

London.[49] In *The Lucubrations of Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq.*, the narrator's eight-year-old godson has decided to stop reading Aesop as he believes it to be lies and turned instead to such texts as 'the lives and adventures of *Don Bellianis of Greece*, *Guy of Warwick*, the *Seven Champions*, and other historians of that age'.[50] His mother is very proud of his achievements and boasts that: 'He would tell you the mismanagements of *John Hickerthrift*, find fault with the passionate temper in *Bevis of Southampton*, and loved *Sir George* for being the champion of England'.[51] She goes on to say that his sister is an even more accomplished scholar, as she 'deals chiefly in fairies and sprights'.[52] The fact that *Bevis* is referenced in an early-eighteenth century text which continued to be popular into the 1780s does not exactly dispute the claim made by the Advertisement to the Reader in the 1775 edition that the romance was '*very little known*', but it does suggest that the name of Bevis as a romance hero was still being passed around into the latter half of the century as earlier texts continued to circulate.

The reference to the romance in *Isaac Bickerstaff* is also a good example of the association between *Bevis* and legends of St George. This association is largely a result of the popularity of Richard Johnson's *The Seven Champions of Christendom* (c.1597), in which the story of St George drew significant inspiration from the romance of *Bevis*. This text spawned a popular broadsheet ballad around the time of the Restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660. The ballad, commonly titled 'St George and the King of Aegypt's Daughter', was evidently popular in the sixteenth century as it was printed multiple times and continued to be reproduced in the seventeenth century. *The Dicey and Marshall Catalogue* also lists several texts describing St George, including two ballads and one history. Percy then reproduced this ballad in his *Reliques*, noting the similarities in the text to *Bevis* and the likelihood that it was based on Johnson's *Seven Champions*:

> The Seven Champions, tho' written in a wild inflated style, contains some strong
> Gothic painting; which seems, for the most part, copied from the metrical romances of
> former ages. At least the story of St. George and the fair Sabra, is taken almost
> verbatim from the old poetical legend of "Syr Bevis of Hampton"'[53]

The ballad was printed again in around 1790, in a chapbook which also included another popular ballad of St. George and a prose history, *The life and death of St. George. To which is*

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[49] Richard Steele, *The Lucubrations of Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq.*, in *The Tatler: A New Edition, With Illustrations and Notes, Historical, Biographical, and Critical, in Six Volumes*, Vol.3 (London, 1786).
[50] *Isaac Bickerstaff*, p.211.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Percy, *Reliques*, Vol.3, p.188.

added, The song of St. George and the dragon.[54] The popularity of these ballads may in part explain the decline in the popularity of *Bevis*: benefitting from the broader, national appeal of the patron saint of England, the ballads of St. George may have overtaken *Bevis* and rendered it obsolete due to their similarities. Echard argues that concerns about national identity are a factor in the relative popularity of *Guy of Warwick* in the eighteenth century compared to *Bevis*, noting that 'the extra stamp of Englishness continues to attach particularly to Guy' while Bevis is more associated with foreign lands.[55]

Percy's reproduction of the St George ballad edits the text slightly, and for good reason: the process of condensing Johnson's long romance into a brief broadsheet ballad had produced a text which was at times incomprehensible without knowledge of the source material. For example, Johnson follows the plot of *Bevis* in having Sabra be married against her will while George is imprisoned and, in his text, she preserves her virginity during this marriage through the use of a magic chain which she wears around her neck. Later, her virginity is confirmed to George when two lions kill and eat the eunuch who is travelling with them but instead of attacking Sabra, they lay their heads on her lap and fall asleep. The ballad, on the other hand, makes no mention of Sabra marrying while George is imprisoned, so that he returns from his adventures, marries her and then the lines which refer to her remaining a virgin through the use of a chain are essentially nonsense and the virginity test episode with the lions is unnecessary and disconnected from the rest of the narrative. Percy makes some attempt to correct this, altering the lines following George and Sabra's marriage to: 'But meant to try if she were true / Ere with her he would lead his life: / And, tho' he had her in his train, / She did a virgin pure remain'.[56] The confusion in the plot of the ballad is emblematic of the ways in which engagement with Middle English romances in ballad and chapbook editions in the eighteenth century is not equivalent to engagement with the medieval text: by the time the story of Bevis reaches Percy in the ballad tradition, it has become the story of St George, it is abbreviated so heavily that it is almost unrecognisable, and it has become muddled and mangled to the point of being incomprehensible. *Bevis* does, in some senses, survive into the eighteenth century, but only in fragmented and partial forms. The name was still known, both as a local hero in Southampton and from earlier texts which

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[54] The second ballad included in this edition compares George to a list of other heroes, which includes Sir Bevis, and was evidently popular as it was printed multiple times across the eighteenth century (Aldermary Church-Yard, London, c.1710 and c.1750; Newcastle, c.1750; London, c.1760; London, c.1790). Percy reproduces this ballad in the *Reliques*, claiming to be working from an edition 'imprinted at London in 1612', but he omits the reference to Bevis: Percy, *Reliques*, Vol.3, p.264.
[55] Echard, *Printing the Middle Ages*, p.88.
[56] Percy, *Reliques*, Vol.3, p.219.

were still being reprinted and circulated, while parts of the plot were still extant in ballads and chapbooks as the story of St George. Thus, the name survives, detached from the story, and in a separate tradition, the story survives, attached to the name of St George. The 1775 edition is a rarity, as a text which produced a full-length version of *Bevis* in the latter half of the eighteenth century, but even this version of the romance is a reflection of seventeenth-century values and sentiments, inserted into the romance to make it more appealing to a contemporary readership. Whilst it will never be possible to conclusively determine which, if any, version of *Bevis* White has read, the long and varied print history of the romance demonstrates that any contemporary printed text he did engage with would be a modified form of the medieval romance.

Bevis and Parodies of Antiquarianism in James White's *Earl Strongbow*

White mentions *Bevis* in *Earl Strongbow* during a conversation between two characters about obtaining and reading medieval romances, and this forms part of an interrogation of the processes involved in the production of historical narratives which White continues across his work. The novel opens with a narrator in 1740 deciding to take lodgings for a time in Chepstow Castle, which he is visiting in order to take in the picturesque scenery around the banks of the river Wye. After he and his hostess discuss their mutual love of romances, she produces a manuscript presumed to be written by a prisoner in the castle around the time of Charles II, no more than eighty years before the narrator's visit to Chepstow. The prisoner describes a series of meetings with the ghost of Earl Strongbow, in which the ghost explains his entire life history, and this narration becomes the main text of the novel. White's description of the life of Earl Strongbow is largely fictitious, though it does include some of the core facts as related in eighteenth-century historical accounts. These facts include: that he was part of the Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland led by Dermot Macmorrogh, deposed King of Leinster, in the late twelfth century; that the invasion began in the south-east of Ireland around Waterford or Wexford before moving north to successfully conquer Dublin; that Strongbow then married Dermot's daughter Eva and became Lord of Leinster; and that the campaign was sanctioned by King Henry II of England and was an attempt to subjugate Ireland under English rule. These details can be found in many historical and genealogical texts in the eighteenth century, for example John Lodge's *The Peerage of Ireland: Or, A Genealogical History of the Present Nobility of that Kingdom* (1754) and David Hume's *The*

History of England to the Revolution in 1688 (1754-1761). However, White also blends Strongbow's life with that of one of his descendants, Richard de Clare, Earl of Hertford and Gloucester (1222-1262). This Richard de Clare's father died when he was a child, and he was made ward of Hubert de Burgh (c.1170-1243), while White's Strongbow is orphaned at a young age and placed in the care of the Earl of Shrewsbury. Several histories and genealogies circulating in the eighteenth century mention Richard de Clare, including Sir Robert Atkyns *The Ancient and Present State of Glocestershire* [sic] (1712), Nathaniel Salmon's *The History of Hertfordshire; Describing the County, and its Antient Monuments, Particularly the Roman* (1728) and Samuel Rudder's *A New History of Gloucestershire* (1779). Thomas Carte's *A General History of England* (1747) deals with both Earl Strongbow's involvement in the invasion of Ireland and the life of his descendant, Richard de Clare, making it tempting to wonder if this is the source of White's knowledge about the Clare family. There is no reason to suppose that White has only one source, though, and the extent of his historical knowledge in his novels suggests he had dedicated considerable time to the study of English and Irish history.

Most of White's novel, however, is a complete departure from this history. The ghost of Earl Strongbow begins by describing his childhood and his education into the ways of chivalry, as well as his love for a woman named Geralda. He decides that he must prove himself as a knight before asking Geralda to marry him, and an opportunity quickly presents itself when he is insulted by the Earl of Hereford at a tournament. Although he has already decided that he will duel with Hereford, this is altered to a desire to fight him to the death after Hereford attempts to have Geralda kidnapped. Most of the plot of the first volume of the novel centres around Strongbow's journey to a tournament where he will challenge Hereford and the various adventures he encounters along the way. The second volume of the novel details Strongbow's campaign in Ireland and is a more overt political satire.

If there is any direct influence of the plot of *Bevis* on *Earl Strongbow*, it would be in the depictions of romantic relationships in the novel. White depicts Strongbow as a knight errant, largely motivated by his desire to prove himself worthy of Geralda's hand in marriage, and he is not the only character with such aims: the Spanish knight, Don Juan de Grijalva, who joins Strongbow on his various quests, is also attempting to make a name for himself as a knight in the hopes of winning the approval of a nobleman to marry his daughter. Don Juan is with Strongbow when they meet an old man named Sir Everard who shows them the embalmed corpse of his wife and explains that when he met her, he was unaware that she had been loved by a knight who left to fight in the crusades in the hope of proving his worth to

her. Realising that Everard is wealthier than the other knight, her father lies to her and claims that her former lover has betrayed her and married a widow. There is possibly some influence of *Bevis* here, as the passage seems very similar to Ermine lying to Josian about Bevis' return to England to persuade her to marry Sir Jour. Whilst in *Bevis* the situation is resolved when he returns, however, in *Earl Strongbow* the lady marries Everard only to be murdered by a ruffian, likely hired by the spurned knight. After telling his guests this, Everard attempts to cheer them up but to no avail, as they realise that they are in a similar situation to the spurned knight: '*We* were also absent from our loves, in quest of greatness' [original emphasis].[57] Strongbow worries about the possibility that 'avarice and falsehood' might steal Geralda from him while he is away from home and eventually this is exactly what happens: while Strongbow is in Ireland, Geralda is told that he has married Princess Eva and, in her despair, she enters a convent.[58] Again, if this episode is inspired by *Bevis*, then White subverts the romance plot by refusing to allow it to end happily. Strongbow does manage to release Geralda from the convent and marry her, but on the way back to Chepstow she falls into the Severn and drowns. Don Juan does not fare much better in love: he never does return to claim his lady's hand, as he dies fighting in Ireland and is buried there. Strongbow marries the Princess Eva as the match is politically advantageous but tells the prisoner that 'I esteemed, but loved her not'.[59]

It is a common feature of White's novels for a playful, satirical engagement with history to turn suddenly into a more historical mode of writing. His *King Richard*, for example, is a comical and absurd novel which sees the King involved in a series of escapades as he journeys from Europe to England, including an episode in which he must persuade a group of nuns who have escaped from their convent and are cavorting around a forest to return to the nunnery. The novel then suddenly pivots to depicting a twelfth-century parliamentary debate as well as describing in detail several of the real King Richard's achievements. White explains that he has rescued these important historical moments from oblivion for the benefit of society, 'So that this, benignant Reader, and other chronicles which I have written, may be looked upon as supplements to the history of the nation, and, as such, should be valued and applauded by the worthy'.[60] The shift to historical writing at the end of an otherwise frivolous novel is rather jarring, much like Geralda's sudden death at the end of

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[57] *Strongbow*, Vol.1, p.203.
[58] Ibid.
[59] *Strongbow*, Vol.1, p.188.
[60] *Richard*, Vol.2, p.262.

Earl Strongbow, and the example from *King Richard* offers an interpretation of the earlier novel. In *King Richard*, White's insistence on the historical value of his work should not be read as earnest, but rather as an ironic statement criticising self-important historians and calling into question the accuracy of their accounts. If the shift back to the historical account away from a romance narrative at the end of *Earl Strongbow* is read as a similar form of satire, it would seem to be intentionally drawing attention to the clash between two different modes of writing about the medieval period: romance and history. White weaves these two forms of narrative together throughout *Earl Strongbow*, recasting Strongbow as a romance hero while maintaining a general coherence with the historical facts of his life up until the point where the two can no longer coexist. Geralda's death represents the moment when romance gives way to history and seems to question the validity of romance as a historical mode of writing. White consistently engages in an interrogation of different forms of understanding and accessing history in his novels, and his depiction of romances in *Earl Strongbow* forms a crucial part of this interrogation.

The passage in which *Bevis* is mentioned takes place after Strongbow accidentally collides with the Earl of Northumberland and knocks him from his horse due to a misunderstanding at a tournament, causing Northumberland to leave the tournament early to recover from his injuries. Strongbow visits Northumberland the next day to apologise and finds him with his squire, who is reading *Amadis de Gaul* aloud.[61] As Northumberland laments that he is nearing the end of that romance and despairing of 'meeting with any other history which treated of deeds of arms, in a style at once so affecting and sublime', Strongbow offers a recommendation:

> I mentioned the romance of Sir Bevis of Southampton. Alas! replied he, I have heard it read so often, that it is now engraved too deeply on my memory, to afford any longer the delight of novelty. The achievements of Charlemagne and the twelve peers of France, would indeed be a delicious banquet to my soul; but unfortunately the manuscript is become so scarce, that it is exceedingly difficult to obtain a sight of it.[62]

Northumberland's desire to hear about Charlemagne is a little ironic, as his injuries prevented him from attending a feast the previous evening in which the minstrel Claribert performed a song 'rehearsing the deeds of the imperial Charlemagne, and of his twelve immortal

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[61] As the earliest extant version of *Amadis* dates from 1508, White's placement of the text in the twelfth century is entirely anachronistic.
[62] *Strongbow*, Vol.1, p.96.

Paladins'.[63] His suggestion that the romance would be a 'delicious banquet to my soul' seems to be a nod to this unfortunate coincidence. It seems unlikely, however, that the song performed by Claribert at the feast is the same text that Northumberland hopes to find, especially as a later mention of Charlemagne in the novel gives a better idea of which text White has in mind. When Strongbow declares that it would take a Turpin or a Geoffrey to describe the beauty of Ireland, a footnote gives further context: 'Archbishop Turpin, the supposed author of the romance of Charlemagne and the Paladins: Geoffrey of Monmouth wrote that of King Arthur'.[64] This implies that the discussions of a Charlemagne romance refer to the popular *Historia Caroli Magni*, commonly attributed to Turpin, a chronicle which was circulated continuously throughout the medieval and early modern periods and into the eighteenth century. By setting up a contrast between the song performed by Claribert at the feast and the Charlemagne romance in this rare manuscript, White seems to establish the texts discussed by Northumberland and Strongbow as distinct from the minstrel's ballads and lays. This is an interesting distinction, as it makes more sense for *Amadis* and *Historia Caroli Magni*, both prose texts, than for *Bevis*, a metrical romance. This is, then, further evidence that the *Bevis* imagined by White is a seventeenth- or eighteenth-century prose edition.

The passage continues as Strongbow explains that he has been able to obtain a copy of the romance of Charlemagne which Northumberland hopes to read and is willing to lend it to him:

> Scarce as that far-famed volume is, said I, it is yet not impossible to obtain a temporary possession of it. The late Abbot of Tintern procured a transcription of the Glastonbury copy, which, by a bribe of seven acres of fertile meadow on the borders of the Wye, he was induced to lend me for a year and a quarter.[65]

Alex Davis demonstrates that attitudes towards romances in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries often viewed them as frivolous, associating them with "wasted time" and suggesting that they 'were little more than a collection of lies'.[66] Given this, the idea of two knights so deeply invested in the pursuit of romance texts may be intended to be humorous: indeed, White may be presenting Strongbow and Northumberland as Quixotic figures here, being duped by wily monks into paying extortionate prices for volumes of literature as they place too high a value on chivalric romance. However, Davis also discusses the association of

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[63] *Strongbow*, Vol.1, pp.90-91.
[64] *Strongbow*, Vol.2, p.98.
[65] *Strongbow*, Vol.1, p.98.
[66] Alex Davis, *Chivalry and Romance in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003), pp.1-3, 14.

romance with a readership of women and the concern that women are 'particularly susceptible to the charms of romance narration', and it is this idea which seems to influence White's discussion of the romances in his novels more than any other.[67] In *John of Gaunt*, for example, the party of heroes comes across an old Baron being attacked by six men, and they learn that he is imprisoning his young ward Barbarina in his castle. He explains that such drastic action became necessary after she was beset by suitors and he discovered that the old woman he had hired to watch over her is smuggling books to the young lady under 'an immense petticoat':

> In this bundle were books of chivalry; such as Palmeria [sic] of England, the Knight of the Oracle, and he of the Silver Spurs, with others of the like nature; all which the perfidious beldame had borrowed from a Benedictine at a neighbouring monastery. For the lady Barbarina, instead of embroidering curtains, and composing tapestry of patch-work, after the manner of the discreet and virtuous maidens of past times, betook herself intensely to the perusal of these histories; insomuch, that she imagined that some Tristram, or Sir Launcelot, was to pass this way, was to hear her lamentations, was to storm my castle, and, in fine, carry her with him on the crupper of his steed, to the court of the kind and indulgent king, his father.[68]

If the episode ended here, it would be simple enough to argue that White associates romance reading with impressionable women who fail to distinguish fiction from reality. However, as is typical of White, he reproduces this view of romance reading only to quickly undermine it with a different perspective. The lady Barbarina manages to speak to the heroes through a keyhole and explains that the Baron has imprisoned her because she repeatedly refused to marry him and ridiculed his attempts to woo her with poetry, explaining that she would flee from him to hide in the gardens and read books of chivalry: 'He hated those tender volumes; he knew that they turned my attention towards objects of a gayer hue, than a covetous and ill-natured wooer in his grand climacteric'.[69] They learn that one of the six men who they discovered attacking the Baron is Lord Fitzwarrenne, who is in love with Barbarina and determined to rescue her, and so it seems her Tristram or Launcelot has indeed heard her lamentations and stormed the castle with the intention of carrying her away and marrying her.

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[67] Davis, *Chivalry and Romance*, p.25.
[68] *John of Gaunt*, Vol.1, pp.49-51. Several of the romances here referred to are early modern prose romances, including the sixteenth-century *Palmerin of England*, attributed to Francisco de Moraes, and Emanuel Ford's *The Famous History of Montelion, Knight of the Oracle* (1633), making their inclusion in the novel anachronistic.
[69] *John of Gaunt*, Vol.1, p.64.

White's engagement here with concerns about romance reading is more a reflection of his interest in challenging the processes of literary and historical criticism than a commentary on women's reading habits, using the two differing accounts of the Baron and Barbarina to demonstrate how the idea of chivalric romance can be appropriated by different authors for their own aims.

In the conversation between Strongbow and Northumberland in *Earl Strongbow*, White's engagement with the processes of literary and historical criticism is evident in the play on scarcity and abundance in the passage, exemplified by the description of the manuscript as simultaneously 'scarce' and 'far-famed'. Northumberland's insistence that the manuscript 'has become so scarce' is already slightly questionable in a novel which has featured a performance of a similar tale and is then entirely undermined when Strongbow explains that he is in possession of a transcription of that very manuscript. Strongbow and Northumberland seem to be engaging in a parody of antiquarianism here, and it is important to note that, while White was likely aware of the attitudes towards romance which became popular in the English Renaissance, by the time he was writing his novels the project of legitimising the study of medieval literature was already underway. Scholars such as Percy, Warton and Reeve were already beginning to recover the idea of medieval English literature from the implications of vulgarity and worthlessness which had attached themselves to the field in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As 'an admirable scholar' himself, White frequently engages in commentary on and criticism of contemporary historians and antiquarians in his work.

The fact that Northumberland has heard *Bevis* so many times as to become bored of it takes on a more satirical implication when considered in this context, as it seems to mock the assumption that medieval romances are rare or unique. This would be an especially interesting interpretation if White had read the 1775 edition of *Bevis*, with the Advertisement to the Reader noting that the text is now '*very little known*', as White may be mocking marketing ploys used by printers of "ancient" texts. He certainly shows an interest in mocking another common trope in romance literature which is present in these prose editions of *Bevis*: the lamentation in the decline of chivalric values, as demonstrated by the Epistle to the Reader from the 1689 edition which was reproduced in the 1775 edition. White places a similar speech in the mouth of the ghost of Earl Strongbow, who mocks the effeminacy and degeneracy of the modern age, much to the embarrassment of the prisoner who is listening to his oration. As Davis has noted, 'disparaging comments about the morals of the present day' are a common feature of romance texts and so White is not necessarily responding to any

particular text, but he certainly seems to be self-consciously mimicking a typical romance trope.[70] Watt sees Strongbow's speech as evidence that White uses 'an idealizing appeal' to a medieval chivalric past as a means of criticising the present day.[71] However, Price disagrees, arguing that Watt underestimates the power of White's humour to challenge national myths and interrogate chivalry.[72] I am inclined to agree with Price and rather than taking Strongbow's speech at face-value, to look at the use of multiple framing narratives to situate this passage within a distant historical context which calls into question the relevance of the critique to eighteenth-century society. White's focus on the prisoner's embarrassment at hearing Strongbow so rudely disparage his contemporary culture reminds the reader that this conversation is taking place during the reign of Charles II, already history to the audience of the novel. To read Strongbow's speech as an attack on eighteenth-century society is to acknowledge that such speeches can be lifted verbatim and applied to an entirely different era of history, implying that they are little more than set-pieces in romance with little direct relationship to the culture they denigrate. Whether directly or indirectly, White is parodying the very dynamic at play in the reprint of the 1689 Epistle to the Reader in the 1775 edition of *Bevis*, indicating that there is no real insight or value in an attack on the decline in the values of society which could be reproduced over a century later and still seem current.

Where White's use of framing narratives in his satire of this romance trope shows an interest in the processes through which historical narratives are edited into printed texts, he is also very interested in the physicality of the medieval manuscripts which he imagines in *Earl Strongbow*. White describes the manuscript which Northumberland hopes to obtain in some detail:

> There is but one, I believe, in all England, and that is at the abbey of Glastonbury. It is written in the fairest character, upon the finest vellum, and gloriously illuminated with pictures, in gold and azure, of the celebrated emperor, and the intrepid train which defended the Christian world against the fury of the Saracens. I once offered, continued he, to pledge the barony of the Warkworth to the monks of Glastonbury, for the loan of that splendid volume for one whole year; but so inestimable did they deem it, that my proposal was rejected.[73]

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[70] Davis, *Chivalry and Romance*, p.3.
[71] Watt, *Contesting the Gothic*, p.43.
[72] Price, *Reinventing Liberty*, p.112.
[73] *Strongbow*, Vol.1, pp.96-97.

White's detailed description of this manuscript is haunted by an awareness that few such books would survive into the eighteenth century. As Price has noted, White often returns to the idea of the 'physical traces' of the past being destroyed or lost over time in *Earl Strongbow*:

> in this narrative monuments are erected, only to vanish. The spectral Strongbow even pleads with the prisoner to erect a new monument to his corrupt squire Otho. The past can be manufactured at a later date.[74]

Price argues that this is evidence of White's attitude towards the construction of national myths for the means of reinforcing imperialist ideals, noting particularly that White uses an 'amused scepticism regarding antiquarian and historical researches' to challenge the fascination with medieval England and the ideals of chivalry in historical fiction.[75] She views the ghost of Earl Strongbow's admission that the hollow tones with which ghosts usually speak is an affectation and that ghosts are 'reliant on vulgar gossip' for their knowledge of all that passes after their own time on earth as a parody of the unreliability of historians, especially as the ghost's words are being mediated through the 'ponderous antiquary of the frame narrative'.[76] Indeed, *Earl Strongbow* is as much a novel about the process of recording history as it is about that history itself, and one way in which White achieves this commentary is by consistently drawing the reader's attention to the novel's artifice. The ghost's Anglo-Norman speech is not reaching the reader directly but is being translated into a 'language more adapted to modern ears' by the prisoner in the seventeenth century, and then published by an imaginary enthusiast of "gothic" history in the eighteenth century.[77] The prisoner frequently interrupts the narration with footnotes adding in additional information or explanatory notes. In one passage, the minstrel Claribert composes a lay after the death of the Countess of Shrewsbury, which the prisoner reproduces in his manuscript. A footnote, however, informs the reader that while he was at Chepstow his friend John Dryden visited him and, seeing the lay lying on his table, modernised it for him 'into that style of verse which he and Mr. Waller had of late brought into fashion'.[78] The novel is littered with reminders that the history being recorded is not a faithful copy of the original and is undergoing a continuous process of rewriting and revision to suit contemporary expectations.

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[74] Price, *Reinventing Liberty*, p.113.
[75] Price, *Reinventing Liberty*, p.112.
[76] Price, *Reinventing Liberty*, p.113.
[77] *Strongbow*, Vol.1, p.15.
[78] *Strongbow*, Vol.1, p.212.

White's commentary on antiquarians is not always vague and general: certainly, in his descriptions of Chepstow and the surrounding areas he is likely to be parodying Rev. William Gilpin's *Observations on the River Wye* (1782). In particular, White may be influenced by Gilpin's description of Tintern Abbey, in which he describes the poverty of the local people, including an old woman who promises to lead Gilpin and his companion to the monk's library but instead only shows him 'her own miserable habitation.[79] Gilpin comments that these people 'seem to have no employment, but begging: as if a place, once devoted to indolence, could never again become the seat of industry'.[80] By contrast, in his depictions of Glastonbury, Tintern and other unnamed abbeys in his novels, White seems determined to highlight and undermine the misconception that the monasteries were not an active part of medieval life, always presenting them as places of industry and important parts of the local communities, while avoiding romanticising their inhabitants. His description of the abbot of Tintern not only accepting a bribe, but specifically a bribe of 'seven acres of fertile meadow on the borders of the Wye', presents the abbey both as producing books as well as engaging in commerce and owning land. White's depiction of Tintern intentionally counters descriptions of the monasteries which prioritise eighteenth-century values over historical accuracy, and so reflects his concerns about the motivations involved in the reconstruction of a medieval past.

Given the eighteenth-century interest in medieval ruins, it is difficult to imagine that a contemporary readership would not have the destruction of the monasteries in mind when White mentions the abbeys of Tintern and Glastonbury in *Earl Strongbow*. There is perhaps even an element of cruelty in White's mockery of antiquarians here as he insists on the abundance of medieval copies of texts, only to place these fictional books into Glastonbury Abbey and Tintern Abbey, both of which were fated to fall into ruin. White does not allow the reader to forget the fate that awaits these buildings, as the ghost of Strongbow laments that his wife Geralda was buried at Tintern and that her tomb was subsequently destroyed during the Dissolution of the monasteries. White also makes direct reference to the 'deficiency of materials' available to historians when the ghost apologises for singing his own praises and the prisoner absolves him of any need for humility:

> You have no ambition to gratify by this self-applause, but are purely disclosing, with
> historical fidelity, what remoteness of time, and a deficiency of materials have

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[79] William Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye and Several Parts of South Wales*, 2nd edn. (London: printed for R. Blamire, 1789; 1st edn. 1782), p.51.
[80] Gilpin, *Observations*, p.50.

> prevented some able writer from recording with due splendor. A ghost is above the rules of earthly criticism.[81]

White's parody of self-important historians here is also underpinned by an awareness of the difficulties of accessing history when records and artefacts are inevitably lost to time. Even where White describes the survival of an historical relic, he depicts it being misinterpreted by contemporary scholars: after his death, Strongbow's sword Gridalbin is lost for several centuries in a bog until 'a strenuous antiquary of the sixteenth century' finds it while searching for Danish javelins.[82] The ghost notes that the sword now resides in the University of Dublin, but laments that its origin is unknown and therefore its importance to history is not appreciated. It is perhaps an awareness of the impossibility of accessing the past that drives White's levity and humour in his depictions of historical characters and events in his novels, which runs alongside his desire for historical accuracy and his interest in the realities of history. He may have 'addicted [him]self to Gothic romances', but White is so conscious of the limits of his knowledge of history that it is even tempting to wonder if his engagement with *Bevis* is based on an understanding of the fact that any text he has encountered is a later, edited version of the medieval romance.[83]

White's engagement with Middle English romance is characterised by a consistent awareness of the difficulties of accessing and interpretating historical texts in the present day. His scepticism about the uses of history in the formation of a national myth is reflected in his willingness to approach historical material in subversive, humorous and frivolous ways, stripping the past of its grandeur and gravity, but also of its authority, to undermine the ways in which it was used to serve the narratives of contemporary political interests. While White engages in parodies of antiquarianism to challenge and mock contemporary scholars and historians, James Hogg, the subject of the next chapter, approaches a comparable problem from a different angle. Similarly aiming to undermine the use of medieval literature in the construction of a national myth, Hogg seeks to resituate these narratives into an oral tradition, bringing them out of the stable, fixed sphere of antiquarian collections and into the dynamic, living realm of folklore.

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[81] *Strongbow*, Vol.1, pp.36-37.
[82] *Strongbow*, Vol.2, p.131.
[83] *Richard*, Vol.1, p.xiii.

Chapter 4: Orality, History and Romance in James Hogg's *The Three Perils of Man*

James Hogg: The Ettrick Shepherd in the Edinburgh Literary Culture

James Hogg was born in 1770 in Ettrickhall in Selkirkshire and spent much of his young life working as a shepherd, until he assisted with the production of Walter Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802), the beginning of a friendship with Scott which not only shaped Hogg's literary career but has also shaped the critical responses to Hogg from the contemporary nineteenth century into the present day.[1] Hogg's literary works include poetry, ballads, short stories, memoirs and several novels, the most famous of which is his Gothic novel *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of A Justified Sinner* (1824). This chapter, however, focusses on two of Hogg's lesser-known works, the short story 'The Hunt of Eildon' (1818) and the novel *The Three Perils of Man: or, War, Women, and Witchcraft. A Border Romance* (1822). While I am not arguing that 'The Hunt of Eildon' should be read as a Gothic text as such, Hogg's use of the supernatural in a medieval setting in this story provides important context for understanding his depiction of medieval magic in *Three Perils of Man*, a novel which has been variably defined as Gothic or not-Gothic by critics. Douglass H. Thomson includes it in a list of Hogg's Gothic works and discusses it as a Gothic text, arguing that more studies are needed of Hogg's work 'within and against the Gothic tradition'.[2] Scott Brewster similarly includes *Three Perils of Man* in his discussion of Hogg in *Scottish Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion*, noting that it exploits 'a range of Gothic scenarios and effects'.[3] On the other hand, Graham Tulloch claims that while it is '[w]ell stocked with castles and captive maidens, and thus potentially the most 'Gothic' of Hogg's

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[1] For accounts of Hogg's life and work, see: Edith C. Batho, *The Ettrick Shepherd* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927); Douglas Gifford, *James Hogg* (Edinburgh: The Ramsay Head Press, 1976); David Groves, *James Hogg: The Growth of a Writer* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1988); Gillian Hughes, *James Hogg: A Life* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007); Ian Duncan, 'Introduction: Hogg and his Worlds' in *The Edinburgh Companion to James Hogg*, eds. Ian Duncan and Douglas S. Mack (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp.1-8.

[2] Douglass H. Thomson, 'James Hogg' in *Gothic Writers: A Critical and Bibliographical Guide*, eds. Douglass H. Thomson, Jack G. Voller and Frederick S. Frank (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002), pp.185-194, p.185.

[3] Scott Brewster, 'Gothic Hogg' in *Scottish Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion*, eds. Carol Margaret Davison and Monica Germanà (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), pp.115-128, p.117.

novels, *The Three Perils of Man* is nevertheless not a Gothic romance'.[4] He cites the use of comedy in the novel as an example of where the text subverts the expectations of the Gothic and points to passages where a potentially Gothic subject is ignored or glossed over, while also arguing that the novel seems to 'far exceed the usual Gothic limits' in the depiction of the threat of rape, 'a commonplace peril in Gothic fiction', by making it a threat of public rape and humiliation.[5] Tulloch concludes that '[u]ltimately, although there are some horrific images in the novel, the sensations of terror, panic and claustrophobia that characterise Gothic fiction are absent or incidental'.[6] Perhaps ironically, as he does not seem to be attempting to wade into the debate on the Gothic-ness of *Three Perils of Man* as such, Mark Ittensohn specifically characterises Michael Scott's tower in the novel as 'a dark and claustrophobic place', despite Tulloch's assertion that the text lacks claustrophobia.[7] Evidently, different readers may experience different levels of claustrophobia in *Three Perils of Man*.

This difference in response from two readers may, in fact, be a reflection of a common feature in Hogg's works, identified by Meiko O'Halloran as a tendency to present unpredictable and sudden 'shifts of perspective, genre, tone and register' as a way to encourage 'each reader to exercise his or her mental capacities to interpret and evaluate those works independently'.[8] By continually shifting through genres and perspectives, 'Hogg repeatedly repositions readers in relation to the text and encourages us to engage in a different, more flexible approach to reading – involving instinct, choice, and an acceptance of colliding elements, accidents and creative friction – in order to negotiate his shape-shifting narratives'.[9] Hogg therefore 'frequently unsettles or removes the reader's sense of a single controlling narrative authority through his presentation of contending narrative voices'.[10] This is not just a stylistic choice on Hogg's part, but a potentially 'radical', experimental approach to writing in which readers are unable to fall back on the unifying effect of a didactic authorial voice but instead must direct themselves through the text.[11] O'Halloran

[4] Graham Tulloch, 'Hogg and the Novel' in *The Edinburgh Companion to James Hogg*, eds. Ian Duncan and Douglas S. Mack (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp.122-131, p.123.
[5] Tulloch, 'Hogg and the Novel', p.124, 192.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Mark Ittensohn, 'Fictionalising the Romantic Marketplace: Self-Reflexivity in the Early-Nineteenth-Century Frame Tale', *Victoriographies: A Journal of Nineteenth-Century Writing, 1790-1914*, 7(1) (2017), 25-41, p.38.
[8] Meiko O'Halloran, *James Hogg and British Romanticism: A Kaleidoscopic Art* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp.5, 56.
[9] O'Halloran, *James Hogg*, p.6.
[10] Ibid.
[11] O'Halloran, *James Hogg*, p.227.

argues that it is this refusal to adopt a didactic voice in his work, preferring to encourage imaginative engagement in his readers, that leads Hogg to create texts which continue to seem 'out of place' and tricky to define.[12] In response to this challenge of reading Hogg's work, O'Halloran suggests it be viewed as 'kaleidoscopic', taking a metaphor from the device invented by Hogg's friend David Brewster in 1816:

> Crucially, Brewster's kaleidoscope was not the simple toy we know today; viewers could assemble it in a variety of ways to view a plethora of objects and it was capable of generating an infinite number of images. Hogg's kaleidoscopic literary techniques likewise create a textual space in which readers can exercise choice, and play with their perceptions through the unpredictable range of views that emerge from the pages in front of them. Each of his works can be thought of as presenting readers with a microcosm of the literary marketplace – a kind of bookshop within a single book – in which they can browse and choose according to their tastes and interests.[13]

If a text like *Three Perils of Man* can be read as a 'bookshop within a single book' it is not surprising that it has presented a challenge to those who seek to categorise it as either Gothic or not: it might be easier to posit that the Gothic is one of the plethora of perspectives available through the kaleidoscope of generic multiplicity at play in *Three Perils of Man*. This is perhaps why even in attempting to deny that *Three Perils of Man* is a Gothic text, Tulloch must also, paradoxically, acknowledge that it is in some senses the most Gothic of Hogg's novels. Regardless of the exact position of *Three Perils of Man* in relation to the Gothic canon, there is certainly enough evidence that the novel responds to and reworks Gothic motifs, shifting through elements of the Gothic even as it unsettles and destabilises any attempt to categorise it as a Gothic novel, that its inclusion in this thesis needs no further justification. Besides this, as Hogg is principally read today as a Gothic author, a consideration of his approach to a medieval literature in any of his texts is valuable for an understanding of the relationship between Middle English romance and the Gothic canon.

Any study of Hogg's depiction of the medieval period in his work must necessarily consider his relationship with Walter Scott. Jerome Mitchell's exploration of the impact of Middle English romance on Scott's novels and poetry demonstrates that Scott's immersion in the study of medieval romance allowed its influence to permeate his novels and poetry across his whole canon, even where it is not possible to determine if any specific romance was a

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[12] O'Halloran, *James Hogg*, p.5.

[13] O'Halloran, *James Hogg*, p.6.

source of direct inspiration.[14] As Hogg's writing is often a response to Scott, even where Hogg was not directly engaging with medieval literature he could have been influenced by motifs and ideas derived from medieval romance in Scott's work. Therefore, while understanding Scott and Hogg's relationship is complicated by the biases involved in attempts to depict this relationship both at the time and in current criticism, the important point for this chapter is that Hogg's literary output is consistently influenced by and responding to Scott's work.[15] However, it is also worth considering the ways in which Scott and Hogg are often placed into a dichotomous relationship as the formally educated antiquarian versus the autodidact shepherd, as it directly impacts on the expectations readers and critics could have about the kind of literature Hogg might respond to in his work and how his version of the medieval period might differ from Scott's.

In the elite literary community of Edinburgh, the working-class Hogg was often viewed as an outsider, a view which was both reflected in and constructed by his fashioning as the "Ettrick Shepherd". While Douglas Gifford rather harshly claimed that Hogg entered the literary culture of Edinburgh 'like a bull into a china shop' and should be viewed as 'an anachronism in nineteenth-century Edinburgh', more recent studies have emphasised the complexity of Hogg's relationship to the Edinburgh *literati* due to his dual positioning as a successful author, poet and contributor to *Blackwood's Magazine* and as the Ettrick Shepherd, a "peasant poet" with no formal education.[16] The extent to which Hogg both participated in and was constrained by the Ettrick Shepherd persona is a complex matter. Penny Fielding, for example, discusses the difficulties Hogg faced in the literary community of Edinburgh, seeing him as 'an alien in the early nineteenth-century literary world', and considers how far he contributed to his own decentring within that community.[17] Valentina Bold has demonstrated how Hogg's positioning as an autodidact or "peasant poet" constrained him within a set of expectations from critics and readers which discouraged innovation, leading Hogg to resent his reputation at times, while also exploring and exploiting it.[18] Bold considers how Hogg's involvement in Scott's *Minstrelsy* shaped his

[14] Jerome Mitchell, *Scott, Chaucer, and Medieval Romance: A Study in Sir Walter Scott's Indebtedness to the Literature of the Middle Ages* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1987).
[15] Ian Duncan, *Scott's Shadow: The Novel in Romantic Edinburgh* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), pp.153-154. See also Peter Garside, 'Hogg and Scott's 'First Meeting' and the Politics of Literary Friendship' in *James Hogg and the Literary Marketplace: Scottish Romanticism and the Working-Class Author*, eds. Sharon Alker and Holly Faith Nelson (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Co., 2009), pp.21-41.
[16] Gifford, *James Hogg*, p.23.
[17] Penny Fielding, *Writing and Orality: Nationality, Culture, and Nineteenth-Century Scottish Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, repr. 2005), pp.74-75.
[18] Valentina Bold, *James Hogg: A Bard of Nature's Making* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007).

approach towards oral narratives and folklore, with the effort to collect and collate ballad material from the Borders and elsewhere in Scotland playing 'a dynamic role in the growth of Scottish literary identity, as collectors and poets sought to recreate a national "natural genius"'.[19] Hogg's own role within this creation of the national 'natural genius' involved the imposition of a Romantic ideal of the peasant poet whose inspiration lay largely in songs and folklore rather than textual sources.[20] The construction of Hogg as the Ettrick Shepherd is therefore deeply implicated in the expectations that readers and critics alike might have about the types of oral and literary sources he responds to in his work. As Bold shows, Hogg's engagement with different sources of inspiration in his poetry can reflect the tension between his affiliations to both literary and oral traditions.[21] O'Halloran also discusses the challenges Hogg faced in the literary culture of Edinburgh as well as his own conflicted feelings about his place in that culture: 'Hogg saw himself as an outsider, an adventurer and a contender, but he also wanted to be an insider and to have his fame validated by the literary establishment'.[22] O'Halloran argues that Hogg 'grappled with the need to demonstrate his individuality while also showing his credentials for becoming part of a literary community' and relates this to Hogg's perception of his Scottish national identity: 'his work is shaped by his Border heritage of an old world of folklore, oral ballads, storytelling and superstition, but also by the modernity, combativeness and shared theatrical role-playing of his Edinburgh milieu'[23]

It is not just, then, in terms of the perception of a distance between the working-class shepherd and the Edinburgh elite exemplified by Scott that Hogg is seen as torn between two worlds: this distance is also mapped onto the literary landscape of nineteenth-century Scotland, with folklore and oral narrative falling on Hogg's side and literature and textuality falling on Scott's. Suzanne Gilbert considers how Hogg situates himself in relation to this dichotomy as 'mediator between the oral culture of the Scottish Borders and the *literati* who had been seeking to collect, classify, and analyse fragments of 'ancient' tradition, as well as the poets who sought to emulate what they perceived as relics of popular poetry'.[24] Hogg's role as a mediator at times challenges the binary opposition that seems to exist between Scott

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[19] Bold, *James Hogg*, p.105.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Bold, *James Hogg*, p.88.
[22] O'Halloran, *James Hogg*, p.11.
[23] O'Halloran, *James Hogg*, p.47.
[24] Suzanne Gilbert, 'James Hogg and the Authority of Tradition' in *James Hogg and the Literary Marketplace: Scottish Romanticism and the Working-Class Author*, eds. Sharon Alker and Holly Faith Nelson (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Co., 2009), pp.93-109, p.94.

and Hogg, with Hogg using annotation or commentary on his works to adopt 'a clearly editorial voice to explain 'folk' traditions to an Edinburgh or London audience'.[25] Gilbert contextualises an approach to oral narratives in the early nineteenth century as 'a contested site in which writers engaged Enlightenment valuations of authenticity' by considering the changes in legal theory that took place across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, leading to the development of the modern trial with its focus 'on plausibility and probability, on evidentiary systems rather than eyewitness testimony'.[26] She demonstrates how Hogg uses authenticating details in his depiction of oral narratives such as specificity of names and locations to counter a belief system that devalues oral testimony.[27] In producing narratives centred around local communities and individuals, Hogg 'offered an alternative model to the antiquarian grand narrative'.[28] This antiquarian narrative was based in a view of tradition as 'a fixed set of practices which our ancestors understood but which has slipped away as later generations have devalued it', with folklore functioning as 'a collection of artifacts' from a cultural past that can be collected and studied.[29] Hogg's view of tradition, on the other hand, posited it as 'alive, atemporal and evolving, constantly being referred to, and altered, by changes in cultural practice'.[30] Hogg's insistence on foregrounding oral narrative in his work therefore pushed against the 'literary-historical conception of oral traditions as disembodied fragments of antiquity, as characterized by ballad-collectors such as Thomas Percy and Walter Scott'.[31]

In Scotland, the construction of this 'antiquarian grand narrative' was rooted in the broader project of the construction of a Scottish national identity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[32] Brewster writes that Hogg's interest in Scottish oral traditions can be read as a resistance to the 'Whig master-narrative of historical development' which presented the Act of Union of 1707 as a step in Scotland's progression from an uncivilised, unenlightened society towards high culture, enlightenment and civilised values.[33] Brewster demonstrates that Hogg's approach to oral and literary sources reflects his rejection of this

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[25] Gilbert, 'Authority of Tradition', p.104.
[26] Gilbert, 'Authority of Tradition', p.94, 96-97.
[27] Gilbert, 'Authority of Tradition', p.100.
[28] Gilbert, 'Authority of Tradition', p.94.
[29] Gilbert, 'Authority of Tradition', p.101.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Gilbert, 'Authority of Tradition', p.102.
[32] Cf. Carol Margaret Davison and Monica Germanà, 'Borderlands of Identity and the Aesthetics of Disjuncture: An Introduction to Scottish Gothic' in *Scottish Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion*, eds. Carol Margaret Davison and Monica Germanà (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), pp.1-13.
[33] Brewster, 'Gothic Hogg', p.116.

narrative: 'Hogg's interweaving of oral and literary forms can be seen as resisting the discourse of improvement and cultural Anglicisation, by counterposing the secular rationalism of Edinburgh with the popular folk culture of the Borders'.[34] Hogg's approach to supernatural elements in his writing is bound up in this relationship between 'secular rationalism' and 'popular folk culture', but Thomson warns against viewing this binary as fixed in Hogg's writing: while Hogg's construction as the Ettrick Shepherd might encourage interpretations of his work as that of 'a naïve, unlettered, most Romantically authentic voice, a mere custodian and transmitter of oral tales', he in fact 'works complexly within and against rustic and national stereotypes' and 'artfully exploits conventions of the folk treatment of things supernatural to prosecute its more literary and aristocratic versions'.[35] Brewster also considers the complexity of Hogg's approach to the supernatural, arguing that while most Early Gothic literature 'stages this confrontation between enlightenment and superstition' only to tame 'the primitive and the periphery', Hogg 'presents this clash as an unfinished process'.[36] This is one of the particular challenges of interpreting Hogg's work, especially where it relates to topics of orality and literacy or rationality and superstition: Hogg's "kaleidoscopic" technique involves a staging of the clash between these seemingly dichotomous concepts but rarely presents the reader with any satisfying reconciliation of the two or triumph of one over the other. As Gifford puts it, Hogg uses a 'clever sleight of hand evasion' to avoid having to invent a "solution" to the clash between the folk beliefs of the Borders and the 'rationalism' of Edinburgh by 'allowing both belief and scepticism to exist together, leaving the reader to choose between them'.[37] These clashes between orality and literacy, or belief and scepticism, are best summed up by Hogg's own account of a conversation he claims to have had with Scott, in which he pitches Scott's approach to history against his own and views their differences as a reflection of their different cultural backgrounds:

> Dear Sir Walter, ye can never suppose that I belang to your school o' chivalry? Ye are the king o' that school, but I'm the king o' the mountain and fairy school, which is a far higher ane nor yours.[38]

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[34] Ibid.
[35] Thomson, 'James Hogg', p.186, 187-188
[36] Brewster, 'Gothic Hogg', p.116.
[37] Gifford, *James Hogg*, p.20.
[38] James Hogg, *The Domestic Manners and Private Life of Sir Walter Scott* (Glasgow: John Reid & Co., 1834), p.107.

Tulloch notes the element of competition in this statement and considers it in relation to Hogg's approaches to both chivalry and the supernatural in *Three Perils of Man*: 'Whereas Scott with his aristocratic pretensions and connections had an advantage in the upper-class world of chivalry, Hogg's working-class background offered him grounds for believing he could outdo Scott in witchcraft and wizardry'.[39] Hogg therefore places this world of chivalry in opposition to a world of fairy and magic, using these concepts as an aspect of his response to his positioning as a working-class author.

The challenge here for a consideration of Hogg's approach to medieval literature is that his work is consistently responding to a series of clashes between different cultural and literary ideals, staging the tensions between them without ever resolving those tensions, but if we can view Hogg as responding to dichotomies of orality/literacy, Border/Edinburgh, belief/scepticism, the 'school o' chivalry'/the 'mountain and fairy school', where does romance fit into any of these dichotomies? Both rooted in oral traditions and passed down through manuscript sources, fixed in the antiquarian editorial techniques of Percy and Scott while also continuing to be adapted and altered in ballads and chapbooks, filled with tales of chivalry while also depicting the supernatural, magical and marvellous, the romances do not sit easily within the series of dichotomies that can, essentially, be summed up as Hogg/Scott. If, as O'Halloran suggests, Hogg's historical fiction should be viewed not as an attempt to emulate Scott but as 'an expression of his desire to compete with Scott' through his 'deliberately provocative handling of history and his use of unorthodox narrative techniques', then his approach to romance sources is likely to reflect a concern with how antiquarians like Scott responded to such material.[40] In the era in which the medieval romance was increasingly being moved out of a popular sphere of ballads and chapbooks and into antiquarian collections, Hogg responds by engaging with an idea of medieval romance which emphasises changeability and instability, particularly as it relates to the ways in which medieval romance is transmitted from its original context into the contemporary day. This chapter will therefore look at two of Hogg's works, both of which evoke the idea of medieval romance as part of a play on the authority of oral and literary sources in the construction of a historical past. Firstly, in 'The Hunt of Eildon', Hogg pitches an imaginary allegorical romance against written and oral forms of historical authority to challenge the ways in which

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[39] Graham Tulloch, 'The Perilous Castle(s) of *The Three Perils of Man*' in *James Hogg and the Literary Marketplace: Scottish Romanticism and the Working-Class Author*, eds. Sharon Alker and Holly Faith Nelson (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Co., 2009), pp.157-174, p.166.
[40] O'Halloran, *James Hogg*, p.231.

the Edinburgh literary culture responds to the history of the Borders. Then, in *Three Perils of Man*, Hogg subverts the story of Gawain and the Loathly Lady as a resistance to attempts to fix or stabilise the romance as a single text, rewriting it over and over in an effort to resurrect it as a living cultural tradition. *Three Perils of Man*, therefore, can be read as an attempt to reclaim romance from the 'antiquarian grand narrative' and resituate it as part of a folkloric tradition.

'a floating fragment of some ancient allegorical romance': Historical Authority in James Hogg's 'The Hunt of Eildon'

In 1818, Hogg published his novella-length story *The Brownie of Bodsbeck* alongside two short stories, 'The Wool-Gatherer' and 'The Hunt of Eildon'. This second story, bearing the subtitle "Ancient" and described by Hogg as a 'traditionary tale', is set in medieval Scotland and describes various adventures relating to two fairy-like women who serve the King in the form of white hunting dogs named Mooly and Scratch.[41] It transpires that they are two local women, Elen and Clara of Rosline, who recently disappeared and are presumed to have been "carried off by the fairies".[42] Their mission appears to be to serve the King in general terms (for example by warning him of an imminent attack by the Borderers determined to usurp him), but more specifically they are attempting to thwart the efforts of a demonic sorcerer. They succeed in their efforts and the story is overtaken by a subplot caused by their decision to transform a foolish shepherd, Croudy, into a boar. After he is almost butchered and eaten, the women take pity on him and transform him back into a human, but he, mistaking the source of the magic, accuses a local woman, Pery, of witchcraft. She is tried and found guilty, but before she can be executed the two magic women transform her and her lover Gale into moorfowl and set them free, explaining that after two hundred and fifty years they will return them to human form 'if that age shall prove / An age that virtue and truth can love'.[43] The narrator explains that although Pery was killed and eaten in Edinburgh in 1817, Gale is still free on the moor and will soon be turned back into a man to give his eyewitness account of 'the history of the hunting, the fowling, fishing, and pastoral employments of that district,

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[41] James Hogg, 'The Hunt of Eildon' in *The Brownie of Bodsbeck; and Other Tales*, Vol.2 (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and London: John Murray, 1818), pp.229, 299. All page references are to Volume 2 of this edition.
[42] 'Hunt of Eildon', p.245.
[43] 'Hunt of Eildon', p.337.

with all the changes that have taken place for the last two hundred and fifty years'.[44] Thomas C. Richardson has explained the significance of Pery being eaten by gentlemen in Edinburgh on 20th October 1817 as this is the day that *Blackwood's* first published the 'Translation from an Ancient Chaldee Manuscript', a satirical piece written by Hogg with John Wilson, John Gibson Lockhart and William Blackwood.[45] Richardson interprets Hogg's reference to the date of the publication of the 'Chaldee Manuscript' as a reflection of his concerns about a change in attitude towards him among his Edinburgh associates, with a piece in *Blackwood's* in February 1818 attacking him for 'his inadequate education, his social class, his slovenly dress, and his heavy drinking'.[46] In 'The Hunt of Eildon', the consumption of Pery has the effect of transforming the Edinburgh gentlemen and altering their behaviour: 'Thus, Hogg seems to excuse the unbelievable change of attitude of his friends by attributing it to a bit of bad bird'.[47]

Nonetheless, the detail with the moorfowl confuses the dating of the story. The setting is evidently medieval, signalled by the frequent references to Catholicism (for example, 'The king blessed himself in the name of the Holy Virgin, and all the chief saints in the calendar') as well as a mention of the *Chronicle of Melrose*.[48] Gifford identifies the King in the story as James IV while noting that the history of 'The Hunt of Eildon' is 'really folk-history, a welter of popular memories, often confused, and conflating deeds of different kings and heroes'.[49] This may explain why the dates do not line up: James IV died in 1513, but the suggestion in the moorfowl episode that fewer than two hundred and fifty years have passed between the events of the main narrative and the consumption of the bird in Edinburgh in 1817 imply that the tale could not be set earlier than the 1560s. This may be simply an error or there could be some deliberate muddling on Hogg's part, or the confused dating may suggest that the criticism of the *Blackwood's* editors was a late addition to the text. At any rate, Hogg's decision to use the magically transformed Pery as a means of executing this criticism has the effect of drawing the supernatural elements of the narrative not only into the present day but

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[44] 'Hunt of Eildon', p.339.
[45] Thomas C. Richardson, 'James Hogg and *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*: Buying and Selling the Etrrick Shepherd' in *James Hogg and the Literary Marketplace: Scottish Romanticism and the Working-Class Author*, eds. Sharon Alker and Holly Faith Nelson (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Co., 2009), pp.185-199, p.192.
[46] Richardson, 'James Hogg', p.191.
[47] Richardson, 'James Hogg', p.192.
[48] 'Hunt of Eildon', pp.249, 328. Hogg likely did not know much about the chronicle and was probably not aware that the latest additions to it were made in the thirteenth century, so its use in 'The Hunt of Eildon' is anachronistic if the story is intended to be set in the reign of James IV. He is, however, at the very least aware that the text is medieval as he depicts it being compiled by the monks of Melrose Abbey.
[49] Gifford, *James Hogg*, p.85.

specifically into the world of Hogg's associates in Edinburgh, collapsing any sense of distance between medieval superstitions and contemporary Edinburgh society. While Gillian Hughes and Meiko O'Halloran, completing the work begun by the late Jill Rubenstein, have noted Hogg's consistent use of the notion of the departure of the fairies in his *Midsummer Night Dreams* (1822), reading it as 'an elegy for the lost folklore of Scotland, and a search for a viable alternative', in 'The Hunt of Eildon' Hogg promotes a very different narrative, emphasising continuity between the fairy folklore of the medieval setting of the text and contemporary Edinburgh society.[50] In this sense, the depiction of fairy magic in 'The Hunt of Eildon' reflects Hogg's rejection of the 'antiquarian grand narrative' identified by Gilbert. This chapter is therefore concerned with how Hogg uses the concept of the fairy in the short story as an exploration of competing ideas about historical authority in folklore, antiquarian scholarship and literature.

That 'The Hunt of Eildon' has received relatively little critical attention is not surprising, as the story is disjointed and at times muddled. Indeed, many readers might share Scott's opinion that the tale is a 'ridiculous story'.[51] Certainly A. Norman Jeffares and R.L.C. Lorimer dismissed it as 'so confused and unmotivated as to be nearly incomprehensible'.[52] Edith C. Batho is only slightly less scathing in her assessment of it: '*The Hunt of Eildon* has very little history; it is confused magic, mostly voluntary or involuntary skin-changing, and there seems to be no particular reason why it should either begin or end where it does'.[53] Gifford, on the other hand, defends the story and laments that Hogg seemed to lose confidence in it later in life.[54] He reads the tale as a necessary stage in Hogg's development of his approach to writing supernatural fiction, particularly in 'the use of humour as a means of resolving the two worlds of the medieval and the modern' which would be further developed in *Three Perils of Man*.[55] This humour, he argues, allows for 'the improbable and fantastic' to be 'softened and humanised', presumably making it more palatable to a contemporary audience.[56]

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[50] Gillian Hughes, Meiko O'Halloran and Jill Rubenstein, 'Introduction' in James Hogg, *Midsummer Night Dreams and Related Poems*, ed. by the late Jill Rubenstein and completed by Gillian Hughes with Meiko O'Halloran (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), pp.xliv-lxxvi, p.lx.

[51] Hogg, *Domestic Manners*, p.89.

[52] A. Norman Jeffares and R.L.C. Lorimer, *James Hogg: A Critical Study* (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd Ltd., 1962), p.116.

[53] Batho, *Ettrick Shepherd*, p.118.

[54] Gifford, *James Hogg*, p.88.

[55] Gifford, *James Hogg*, p.87.

[56] Ibid.

Despite its largely poor critical reception, 'The Hunt of Eildon' is of particular interest to this thesis as Hogg refers twice in the tale to medieval writing traditions. When a woman is accused of witchcraft and sentenced to death by the King, Hogg claims that an account of the events appears in the *Chronicle of Melrose*: 'ere he went, he presided at the trial of the maiden Pery, who stood indicted, as the *Choronikkle of Mailros* bears, for being "Ane ranke wytche and enchaunteresse, and leigged hand and kneife with the devil"'.[57] Hogg evidently does not know the chronicle, which is written in Latin, but it is interesting that he chooses the witch trial as the moment to appeal to the authority of a medieval chronicle. It is a moment in the story in which Hogg's representation of the supernatural would appeal to what Brewster calls 'the secular rationalism of Edinburgh': Scott, for example, is consistently damning of the superstition which led to the execution of presumed witches, including as early in his writing career as 1802 when he included an account of the death of Alison Pearson in *Minstrelsy*.[58] The depiction of the trial and sentencing of Pery in Hogg's story would align with Scott's attitude towards the witch trials as it is explicit that Pery is an innocent woman who has 'fallen a victim to the superstition of the times', despite the fact that the supernatural is presented as very real and potentially dangerous in the rest of the story.[59] Hogg is aware that this part of his story might appeal to a particular narrative of history: a view of history which would prioritise a chronicle held in a monastery as a more legitimate source than oral tradition is also a view of history that would emphasise the distance between the past and the present. The chronicle is the embodiment of the idea of tradition as a fixed, stable historical artifact, providing a window into an age of superstition that is long past. It therefore fits the narrative of history and tradition promoted by antiquarians such as Scott and Percy, recording the events of the witch trial as an injustice of the past which would not be repeated in the more enlightened present day. Hogg therefore appeals to this 'secular rationalism of Edinburgh' by reflecting their own disgust with the historical witch trials back to them and locating this within a formal, stabilised tradition of historical writing in the form of the *Chronicle of Melrose*, within a story which also describes strange and mysterious events and associates these more with oral narratives and with romance.

Hogg also draws on a concept of the medieval romance tradition in 'The Hunt of Eildon': in a footnote commenting on the possible origins of the tale, he claims that 'From

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[57] 'Hunt of Eildon', p.328.
[58] Walter Scott, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border, in Three Parts*, 2nd edn., Vol.2 (Edinburgh: James Ballantyne, 1803; 1st edn. 1802).
[59] 'Hunt of Eildon', p.334.

several parts of this traditionary tale it would appear, that it is a floating fragment of some ancient allegorical romance, the drift of which it is not easy to comprehend'.[60] This footnote may be largely an attempt to excuse some of the inconsistencies within the story, especially as these relate to Hogg's efforts to enforce a theological framework over the tale, but it is also an appeal to a form of authority, though in this case it is more literary than historical authority. The fact that this literary tradition reaches the contemporary present day as a 'floating fragment' which 'is not easy to comprehend' might suggest that Hogg presents the chronicle as a more legitimate and accurate source of knowledge than the traditionary tales which might be found in the romances. However, the chronicle may be a stable and fixed historical artifact, but it is not an accurate source of knowledge about the events of the narrative, especially as it records Pery as a witch in league with the devil. While the allegorical romance is incomplete and fragmentary, therefore, it still seems as valid a source as the chronicle, which, though intact, is also inaccurate. Hogg presents multiple forms of historical knowledge in this story, only to emphasise that none is entirely satisfactory or complete.

Hogg's claims about the origin of the story in an allegorical romance is not necessarily entirely a literary device, or at least he certainly claims to have been drawing on some traditionary material when he recounts Scott's reaction to the story, in which he claims that Scott recognised the tale: 'I think it must have been when I was on the nurse's knee, or lying in the cradle, yet I was sure I had heard it'.[61] While it is very possible that Hogg was drawing on folklore that Scott might have heard as a child, it is also possible that Scott recognised some aspects of the story from his own research into fairy traditions for *Minstrelsy*. In particular, Hogg includes a rewriting of the ballad of Thomas the Rhymer, or 'Young Tamlane' as it appears in *Minstrelsy*. In 'The Hunt of Eildon', the poem is titled as 'The Keylan Rowe' and is notably different to Scott's ballad but is evidently drawn from the same tradition. In Hogg's ballad a woman sits underneath the Eildon Tree as a fairy hunt chases down a hare, which she eventually catches and wraps in her cloak, singing hymns to it as the fairies transform it into various animals and objects in an attempt to make her let go:

> They turn'd the hare within her arms
>
> A cockatrice and adder sterne;
>
> They turn'd the hare within her arms

[60] 'Hunt of Eildon', p.299.
[61] Hogg, *Domestic Manners*, p.90.

A flittering reide het gaud o' ern.[62]

When the hunt has ridden around the Eildon Tree seven times the hare is turned back into the woman's child. In Scott's 'Young Tamlane', Tamlane instructs his pregnant lover Janet on how to rescue him from the Queen of Fairies by grabbing him from his horse when the fairy hunt rides past her on Halloween and keeping hold of him while the fairies transfigure him:

> They'll turn me in your arms, Janet,
>
> An adder and an ask;
>
> They'll turn me in your arms, Janet,
>
> A bale that burns fast.
>
> They'll turn me in your arms, Janet,
>
> A red-hot gad o' airn;
>
> But had me fast, let me not pass.
>
> For I'll do you no harm.[63]

She must then dip him in a pail of milk and then a pail of water, and he will finally be human again and able to raise his child with her.[64] Robert Burns contributed a version of the ballad to James Johnson's *The Scots Musical Museum* (1787-1803), in which Tam will be turned into 'an esk and adder', a bear, then a lion, before 'red het gaud of airn' and finally burning lead.[65] At this point Janet must throw him in the stream and he will be transformed into 'a naked knight' so she must cover him with her green mantle.[66] Matthew Lewis also published a similar version of the ballad in *Tales of Wonder* (1801), titled 'Tam Lin'.[67] The fact that Hogg preserved the description of the transformations of a human into animals and objects while altering many other details of the ballad suggests a particular interest in the idea of the power of fairies to metamorphose human bodies, which is also evident in the main plot of 'The Hunt of Eildon'.

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[62] 'Hunt of Eildon', p.326.
[63] Scott, *Minstrelsy*, p.254.
[64] Scott, *Minstrelsy*, p.255.
[65] Robert Burns, *The Songs of Robert Burns*, ed. Donald A. Low (Abingdon: Routledge, 1993), pp.791-792. Kirsteen McCue has written about the influence of Burns' songs on Hogg, including those collected in *The Scots Musical Museum*: Kirsteen McCue, 'Singing 'more old songs than ever ploughman could': The Songs of James Hogg and Robert Burns in the Musical Marketplace' in *James Hogg and the Literary Marketplace: Scottish Romanticism and the Working-Class Author*, eds. Sharon Alker and Holly Faith Nelson (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Co., 2009), pp.123-177.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Matthew G. Lewis, *Tales of Wonder*, Vol. 2 (Dublin: William Porter, 1801), pp.203-211.

These texts also have a particularly strong connection to Middle English romance as the ballad tradition traces its origins to the fifteenth-century romance *Thomas off Ersseldoune*. Scott does not mention the romance in his essay 'On The Fairies of Popular Superstition' which precedes his edition of the ballad in *Minstrelsy*, and it is unlikely that Hogg had any knowledge of it, but his depiction of fairies in 'The Hunt of Eildon' is nonetheless consistent with some aspects of their depiction in medieval romance. James Wade, for example, notes that in *Thomas off Ersseldoune* the concepts of the fairy and the fairy otherworld are ambiguous, and variously associated with both heaven and hell.[68] Erin Madeleine Sebo writes about the transformations which took place in the concept of the fairy from the lady of *Thomas off Ersseldoune* to the Queen of the Fairies in the 'Thomas Rhymer' ballads, noting the associations of the Queen of the Fairies with 'Eve, Mary and, most iconoclastically, to Jesus' while she nonetheless retains an enigmatic and ambiguous status.[69] Hogg's depiction of the fairy women in 'The Hunt of Eildon' is similarly ambiguous, both in terms of the associations of the otherworld with the afterlife and the moral complexity of the fairy characters. The similarities between Hogg's approach to the concept of the fairy and that of Middle English romance therefore warrants further consideration.

'the beautiful fairy-dame, or guardian spirit, or whatever she was': The Ambiguous Supernatural in *Sir Orfeo* and 'The Hunt of Eildon'

Gifford's comments on some of Hogg's supernatural stories provide an interesting starting point for the discussion of Hogg's relationship with Middle English romance:

> […] could these tales, different from Ballads, not be part of that common heritage which produced medieval romances like *King Horn*, *Havelok the Dane*, *Gawayne and the Green Knight* and *Sir Orfeo*? From this background Hogg gained his sense of Good and Bad as profoundly real, concrete forces, his sense of animal nature, human nature and "the other world" being an organic whole, his "reductive idiom" which so often mocks the courtly tradition of chivalry and juxtaposes it with an earthly realism devoid of false sentiment. The world of *Sir Orfeo is* related to the world of *The Hunt*

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[68] James Wade, *Fairies in Medieval Romance* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p.85.

[69] Erin Madeleine Sebo, 'Sex, Politics and Religion: The Transformation of the Figure of the Fairy Queen from *Thomas off Ersseldoune* to "Thomas Rymer"', *English Studies*, 94(1) (2013), 11-26, p.12.

of Eildon, and "Ewan McGabhar" bears striking resemblance to *King Horn* or *Havelok*. In many ways the creators of all these had more in common than Hogg had with John Wilson or John Gibson Lockhart, the Edinburgh culture of his day or British Romantic poetry.[70]

In the notion of a "common heritage" of certain kinds of literature, Gifford conflates Middle English romance with the contemporary stories and ballads that Hogg would have heard growing up, allowing him to sidestep the question of how or in what manner Hogg might have come across any of these romances. While Gifford is therefore specifically *not* claiming that Hogg knew these romances directly, it is worth noting that his inclusion of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is likely more a reflection of twentieth-century scholarly interest in the poem than any real notion that it had a cultural impact in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-centuries. The romance survives in only one manuscript, British Library Cotton MS Nero A X, which was not discovered until Richard Price came across it in 1824, and it remained unpublished until Frederic Madden's edition in 1839.[71] Similarly, *Havelok the Dane* was first published by Madden for the Roxburghe Club in 1828, though the existence of the romance was known beforehand.[72] *King Horn* was more well-known and did indeed inspire a popular ballad, suggesting that it might belong to that "common heritage" that Gifford evokes. It is *Sir Orfeo*, however, that Gifford more particularly relates to 'The Hunt of Eildon' and this is not entirely surprising, as several of the features of the depiction of fairies in Hogg's story do share similarities with the depiction of fairies in *Sir Orfeo*, particularly their moral ambiguity and their association with the afterlife.

Sir Orfeo is a late-thirteenth or early-fourteenth century Middle English romance based on the Orpheus myth. Scott included a discussion of this romance in his essay 'On The Fairies of Popular Superstition' in *Minstrelsy*, summarising the plot and quoting passages from the text at length, and so Hogg certainly would have known of it.[73] It was also printed in Ritson's *Ancient English Metrical Romances* (1802) and a ballad version of *Sir Orfeo* is included in the Child's *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, which states that it was obtained from the memory of Biot Edmondston, who recalled hearing an old man sing it in Unst, Shetland, and that it had also been published in the periodical *The Leisure Hour* in

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[70] Gifford, *James Hogg*, pp.15-16.

[71] Johnston, *Enchanted Ground*, p.114; *Syr Gawayne: A Collection of Ancient Romance-Poems*, ed. Sir Frederic Madden (London: Richard and John E. Taylor, 1839).

[72] *Havelok the Dane*, ed. Sir Frederic Madden (London: W. Nicol, Shakespeare Press, 1828); Johnston, *Enchanted Ground*, pp.88-89.

[73] Scott, *Minstrelsy*, pp.202-209.

February 1880.[74] It seems the romance existed both in the antiquarian tradition and in the "common heritage" which Gifford envisions, then. In the romance, King Orfeo's wife Heurodis is kidnapped by the King of the fairies and taken to the fairy otherworld. Orfeo decides to leave his kingdom in the charge of his steward and set off on a journey to attempt to recover Heurodis, dressed as a pilgrim. He wanders for many years, charming animals with his harp, before he sees a host of fairy ladies riding in the forest with Heurodis. He follows them to the fairy otherworld and manages to enter the court of the fairy King, whom he charms with his music. The fairy King offers him any reward of his choice and naturally he chooses Heurodis. The fairy King reluctantly keeps his word and Orfeo returns with Heurodis to his kingdom, which he enters in disguise to test the loyalty of his steward by pretending that King Orfeo has died. When the steward faints in grief rather than celebrating that he may now take over the rulership of the kingdom permanently, Orfeo is satisfied and reveals his identity, returning to his role as King with Heurodis as his Queen. However, the episode that has captured the most critical attention in response to *Sir Orfeo* takes place when Orfeo initially enters the court of the fairy King. Here, he sees a disturbing gallery of human bodies in various states of suffering, with Heurodis among them:

> Sum stode withouten hade,
>
> And sum non armes nade,* [*did not have]
>
> And sum thurth the bodi hadde wounde,
>
> And sum lay wode,* y-bounde, [*mad]
>
> And sum armed on hors sete,
>
> And sum astrangled as thai ete;
>
> And sum were in water adreynt,* [*drowned]
>
> And sum with fire al forschreynt* [*destroyed].
>
> Wives ther lay on childe bedde,
>
> Sum ded and sum awedde,* [*insane]
>
> And wonder fele* ther lay besides [*many]
>
> Right as thai slepe her undertides;* [*midday/noon]
>
> Eche was thus in this warld y-nome,* [*taken]
>
> With fairi thider y-come.[75]

[74] *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, Vol.1, Part 1, ed. Francis James Child (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p.217.

[75] *Sir Orfeo* in *The Middle English Breton Lays*, eds. Anne Laskaya and Eve Salisbury (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), 391-404. All line references are to this edition.

This is one of the passages of *Sir Orfeo* that Scott published in *Minstrelsy*, and it evidently interested him more than the conclusion of the poem which he summarises very briefly and without mention of the testing of the steward.[76]

The gallery in *Sir Orfeo* has often been the source of fascination and debate in critical responses to the poem. Helen Cooper notes the lack of a 'precise definition for the state of the corpses' in the fairy court, which seems to double 'as a land of the dead, or of the living dead', and argues that the gallery serves to emphasise the 'alienness of the whole strange experience'.[77] Corinne Saunders considers how the violence of the gallery can be viewed as a literalisation of the violence of enchantment, with the disturbing mutilations of the bodies reminiscent of 'the bodily sufferings of hell'.[78] She associates the 'vivid evocation of this world of the un-dead' to 'deep human fears of death, which may be so sudden, unpredictable, inexplicable, and violent that it seems a 'taking' from the world'.[79] At the same time, however, the fairy otherworld in *Sir Orfeo* is also a reflection of the human world: 'The world of faery figures in *Sir Orfeo* both as infernal, connected with violence, suffering and death, and as a brighter, more powerful reflection of the human world, a rival kingdom that threatens the human world: it is part of the outside landscape but it is also glittering, sophisticated, full of artifice'.[80] It is therefore a site of ambiguities, characterised both by marvel and wish-fulfilment and by 'ambiguity, force, treachery and transgression'.[81] The fairy enchantment in romance is always unknowable to some extent: it 'shapes, mis-shapes and transforms human lives' while resisting attempts 'to be explained, excused or enacted through studied practices'.[82]

Wade similarly reflects on the ambiguities inherent in the depictions of fairies in romances, noting their tendencies 'to behave arbitrarily or illogically' and the difficulties in understanding their motivations in the narrative:

A fairy's motivations, however, are more difficult to pin down, and this points to another essential quality fairies commonly possess: their tendency to show up unexpectedly and behave in ways that are neither logical nor predictable. The actions of fairies in romance […] frequently carry with them a certain arbitrariness, a certain

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[76] Scott, *Minstrelsy*, pp.208-209.

[77] Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p.209.

[78] Corinne Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval English Romance* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2010), p.203.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, p.204.

[81] Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, p.180.

[82] Ibid.

lack of logical motivation – tendencies that make conjectural ventures into the interiority of such fairies, for both the romance hero or heroine and the audience, all the more impossible.[83]

Wade uses Giorgio Agamben's work on states of exception to argue that in romance the fairies 'existed outside the established order of traditional customs, practices, and power relations, and therefore stood in a position to be used to reflect and question those establishments, but they did so without contradicting, or even directly opposing, such orthodoxies: they were *adoxic*'.[84] Wade therefore views the Fairy King in *Sir Orfeo* as existing in a state of exception, with terrifying power to suspend the rules of the human world.[85] Wade views the 'terrifying illogicality' of the gallery through Agamben's terms, seeing the people in the gallery as representing "limit-figures of life" which have entered into a symbiosis with death while nonetheless remaining alive, and through Kristevan terms, in which the gallery functions as an abjection that 'traumatically shows us our own death'.[86] What he considers to be the most unnerving aspect of the gallery, however, is 'the inexplicability of the Fairy King's motivations and intentions for keeping such abjections', and the sense that these things 'are in fact inexplicable' and potentially arbitrary.

Tara Williams focusses on the idea of the gallery in *Sir Orfeo* as a display in her work on Middle English marvels, which explores the role of wonder in interpretations of *Sir Orfeo*, noting that the gallery 'functions as an artistic collection: the fairies have not simply assembled but actively created a museum of human suffering'.[87] She views the fairies as both artists and curators and argues that they have determined the states in which the bodies in the gallery are displayed, preserving some in states of pain.[88] Rather than freezing the bodies as they were at the time of their kidnapping, the fairies have transformed them, in line with folk beliefs about the ability of fairies to transform humans into animals, as a reflection of their fascination with human suffering.[89] The gallery therefore 'reflects how the fairies value humans and why humans interest them' and as such provides the only access the reader or human characters have to the values and morals of the fairies, though this will inevitably be an incomplete picture as it relies on inference.[90] In causing the reader/audience to reflect on

[83] Wade, *Fairies in Medieval Romance*, pp.4, 16.
[84] Wade, *Fairies in Medieval Romance*, p.15.
[85] Wade, *Fairies in Medieval Romance*, p.77.
[86] Wade, *Fairies in Medieval Romance*, pp.79, 80.
[87] Tara Williams, *Middle English Marvels: Magic, Spectacle, and Morality in the Fourteenth Century* (The Pennsylvania State University Press: University Park, PA, 2018), p.22.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Williams, *Middle English Marvels*, p.19.
[90] Williams, *Middle English Marvels*, p.22.

the moral code of the fairies, Williams' argues that the poet encourages reflection on how far that code resembles or differs from human ethics and on what this might imply about 'the values of chivalry itself'.[91] The gallery therefore 'functions like a mirror', but one which does not simply reflect chivalric ethics so much as distort them to extremes and thereby allow the audience to consider the 'limits and pitfalls' of the system of chivalry.[92] The poem therefore encourages its audience to consider the parallels between the fairy and the human world as a way of provoking questions about 'human virtues and the value and power we assign to them'.[93]

The gallery in *Sir Orfeo* has inspired so much critical interest because it captures a series of ambiguities and complexities in the depictions of fairy in medieval romance and encapsulates them in a single, disturbing tableau: the gallery exists at a boundaries between the living and the dead, the human world and the otherworld, while also highlighting the fact that the fairies operate outside of the realm of human systems of logic, ethics and morality while simultaneously working to provoke a critical engagement with the rules of these systems. Ultimately, the fact that the gallery seems inexplicable and arbitrary is one of its most important features, representative of the existence of the supernatural outside of human understanding. These features of depictions of fairy in the romances, captured in the gallery in *Sir Orfeo*, are surprisingly similar to the depiction of the fairy women in Hogg's 'The Hunt of Eildon'. In Hogg's story, the otherworld of the fairy is linked with the afterlife through frequent suggestions that the two women are representative of a divine power, sent to combat the work of the devil in the form of an old warlock. At the end of the story, the two women attempt to return to their lives and visit their mother, 'their earthly parent', but are disappointed to find that she is in a relationship with 'a rude and imperious pirate'.[94] Unwilling to be treating as stepdaughters 'in the halls that of right belonged to them', they walk out 'to the fairy ring in the verge of the wood' and vanish 'from the world for ever'.[95] The fairy otherworld here seems to function similarly to its use in medieval romance as representative of neither life nor death, occupying a space adjacent to the afterlife but not representative of it. Where Hogg's depiction of the fairies in 'The Hunt of Eildon' most particularly overlaps with that of medieval romance is in its ambiguity, both in terms of the nature of the two women and their morality. In fact, Saunders' summary of the nature of the

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[91] Williams, *Middle English Marvels*, p.27.
[92] Williams, *Middle English Marvels*, p.28.
[93] Williams, *Middle English Marvels*, p.35.
[94] 'Hunt of Eildon', p.343.
[95] 'Hunt of Eildon', pp.343, 344.

inhabitants of the otherworld in medieval romance could just as easily be applied to the two women in Hogg's text:

> Its inhabitants are often shape-shifters, their status unexplained, their magic transformative and treacherous: they move incalculably between the registers of human, divine and demonic, beautiful and horrific, beneficent and maleficent, and are most frequently presented as amoral, evoking fascination and horror. […] Romances repeatedly raise questions of intention and morality in relation to otherworldly encounters, and draw attention to the difficulties of distinguishing different aspects of the supernatural – divine, demonic and faery.[96]

The two women are literally shape-shifters, often appearing as hunting dogs, but they also seem to defy categorisation and so shift through associations with various magical creatures, being variably described as fairies, witches, nymphs, changed folk and guardian spirits. As well as this, their actions are often confusing, inscrutable and morally questionable: while their transformations of various women into deer is described as part of a divine mission to overcome devilry in the local area, it also results in the implication that most of the characters, including the King, are guilty of cannibalism. The ending of the text suggests that they are morally superior to their mortal mother, and yet their use of magic to disrupt the natural order, transforming humans into animals at will through the use of a golden rod and magic words, is threatening and transgressive. They are associated both with divinity and with the cruel fairy hunt of the 'The Keylan Rowe'. They are beautiful, yet also strange and uncanny. Hogg does not offer the reader a solution to any of the puzzles presented by the ambiguous nature of these two women and even the narrator seems confused about their status, describing one of them as a 'beautiful fairy-dame, or guardian spirit, or whatever she was'.[97] I said that it is surprising to find such similarities between Hogg's depiction of fairies and the depiction in medieval romances such as *Sir Orfeo* and it is indeed surprising because, despite what Gifford believes, Hogg was not an "anachronism" and did not have more "in common" with medieval writers than the Edinburgh society of his day. In fact, as I will show in the next section of this chapter, Hogg's depiction of fairy magic is woven into a critique of that very Edinburgh society and its relationship to the culture and traditions of the Borders.

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[96] Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, p.180.
[97] 'Hunt of Eildon', p.327.

'That tale winna tell in English': The Limits of Narration in 'The Hunt of Eildon'

Scott's belief that he had heard some parts of the story of 'The Hunt of Eildon' before may be explained by some of the other details on fairy belief that he published in his essay 'On The Fairies of Popular Superstition' in *Minstrelsy*. In particular, Scott notes the belief that fairies would steal unbaptised children, a belief which Hogg draws on in his short story when he has a host of women accuse the King's dogs, Mooly and Scratch, of stealing and devouring their children.[98] These women are supported in their accusations by a mysterious old man who previously interrogated the King about his hunting dogs. One woman suggests that the dogs transformed her daughter into a deer, which she saw leap from the window and disappear. As the reader is already aware that the dogs have the power to transform humans into animals, the accusations seem plausible. It is also later discovered that these women's children were unbaptised. Based on Scott's discussion of fairies stealing unbaptised children in *Minstrelsy*, it is evident that Hogg is drawing on folk beliefs in his depiction of the two magical women in 'The Hunt of Eildon'. This part of the story is also broadly consistent with the narrative presented in the ballad of 'The Keylan Rowe', though the ballad presents an allegorised version of the prose text. However, it is not entirely clear that the two magical women are guilty of the crimes of which they are accused: the women accusing them of stealing children turn out to be untrustworthy sources of information. Furthermore, the two women are often described as virtuous and on more than one occasion they save the life of the King.

Indeed, it is not surprising after one of the dogs just saved him from poisoning that the King does not trust the accounts of the women who accuse them, especially as one "wrinkled beldame" is alleged to be 'a noted witch' who does indeed have a daughter, but one 'who was an impious and malevolent minx, devoted to every species of wickedness', and the old man who supports them is suspected of being "some warlock or wizard".[99] The King sends for a friar named Rubely, who interrogates the women and discovers that they are not baptised, and neither are their children. The truth of the matter becomes apparent when Rubely throws holy water on the old man while speaking the words of the baptism rite: 'The whole form and visage of the creature was changed in a moment to that of a furious fiend: He uttered a yell that made all the Abbey shake to its foundations, and forthwith darted away into the air, wrapt in flame'.[100] The 'withered beldame' giggles hysterically while the King kisses his

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[98] Scott, *Minstrelsy*, p.218.
[99] 'Hunt of Eildon', pp.289, 293.
[100] 'Hunt of Eildon', p.297.

crucifix and Rubely counts his beads, but when they attempt to baptise her as well she refuses and they have her 'burnt at St Miles's Cross before the going down of the sun'.[101]

Based on this, Mooly and Scratch appear to have been innocent. Several of the women consent to be baptised and explain their relationship with the fiend in more detail, admitting 'at first they took him for a venerable apostle, but at length discovered that he was a powerful sorcerer, and could turn people into the shapes of such beasts as he pleased'.[102] Nonetheless, they claim they 'never knew he was the devil till then'.[103] The women cannot entirely be blamed for this confusion: the two fairy-like women also have the power to transform people into animals and are seemingly presented at this point in the text as benevolent. Indeed, the women seem aware of the role of the hounds in combating their demonic master:

> The women added, that the stranger had of late complained grievously of two mongrel spirits, who had opposed and counteracted him in every movement; and that they had done it so effectually, that, for every weak Christian that he had overcome and devoured, they had found means to destroy one of his servants, or emissaries, so that his power in the land remained much upon a par as in former times, although his means and exertions had both been increased sevenfold.[104]

It is at this point that Hogg includes the footnote claiming that the story is the remnant of an allegorical romance. That the footnote appears here suggests it is perhaps partly Hogg's attempt to wash his own hands of this slightly confused allegory about the balance of good and evil, by claiming that it has become muddled in the process of being passed down through an oral tradition. However, Hogg's claim that the drift of this ancient story is 'not easy to comprehend' may be more than simply an attempt to shrug off the inconsistencies in his depiction of the two magical women; in fact it may be a signal to the reader to pay attention to those inconsistencies. Hogg's depiction of the concept of fairies in this story is deliberately rooted in moral and spiritual ambiguity, yet at this moment one of the characters seems to be offering a single explanation for all of the events, an explanation which figures the two women as divine beings in a battle against demonic forces. By pointing out that the story is fragmentary, allegorical and at times difficult to comprehend Hogg undermines this

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[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid.
[103] 'Hunt of Eildon', p.298.
[104] 'Hunt of Eildon', pp.298-299.

explanation, reminding the reader that his story will not allow for closure in its representation of the supernatural. To use O'Halloran's metaphor, Hogg's footnote shifts the kaleidoscope.

The ambiguity with which Hogg depicts these two fairy-like women is especially evident in these passages, in which the old women explain their relationship to the demonic sorcerer. The reference to the overcoming and *devouring* of Christians links back to an earlier implication during Rubely's interrogation that the fiend has been transforming humans into animals and then supplying them as meat to a monastery. Pressed to explain where he sourced the meat, the old man is deliberately vague:

> "I brought them from among the poor and the indigent," said the old man, "on whom kings and priests for ever feed. For Christian carrion, I provide food from among themselves"[105]

The suggestion of cannibalism makes it particularly disturbing that the court had previously commented on the excellence of the meat, remarking that 'the venison of the roe-deer of Eildon exceeded in quality that of any other part of the kingdom'.[106] Hogg's use of cannibalism as a political metaphor has been the subject of significant critical attention in relation to *The Three Perils of Man*, which I discuss below. Here, I am less concerned with the political connotations of the old man's statement and more with the mirroring of the accusations against him and those against Mooly and Scratch. Earlier in the story, a local shepherd named Croudy tells a spectacular tale to another shepherd, Gale, about witnessing the King's two prize hunting dogs chase down and kill a young woman while he was sitting in the Eildon Tree:

> Ye see, yesterday at morn, when the hunt began, I clamb up into the Eildon tree, an' haid mysel' amang the very thickest o' its leaves, where I could see every thing, but naething could see me. I saw the twa white hounds a' the gate, but nae appearance of a deer; an' aye they came nearer an' nearer to me, till at last I saw a bonny, braw, young lady, a' clad i' white, about a hunder paces frae me, an' she was aye looking back an' rinning as gin she wantit to be at the Eildon tree. When she saw the hounds comin on hard behind her, she cried out; but they soon o'ertook her, threw her down, an' tore her, an' worried her; an' I heard her makin' a noise as gin she had been laughin' ae while an' singin' another, an' O I thought her sang was sweet; it was something about the fairies.[107]

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[105] 'Hunt of Eildon', p.295.
[106] 'Hunt of Eildon', p.274.
[107] 'Hunt of Eildon', pp.253-254.

He overhears the dogs speaking, naming their victim as 'Lady Marrion of Coomsley' and ominously noting that 'she is the twenty-third, and our task will soon be dune'.[108] They go on to transform the body into a deer:

> An wi' that, they rowed themsels on the bonny corpse; and when I lookit again, there was a fine, plump, bausined roe-deer lying, an' the blude streamin' frae her side; an' down comes the king an' his men, an' took her away hame to their supper.[109]

Gale is deeply disturbed by the possibility that 'the king and his nobles have been feasting upon changed human creatures all this while' and determines to tell Pery, 'a young volatile maiden at Eildon Hall' as she will be able to tell the abbot and have the two dogs burned at the stake.[110] Croudy, however, objects to Gale telling his story as Gale does not speak Scots:

> You tell Pery? No; that will never do; for you will speak English - That tale winna tell in English; for the twa witches, or fairies, or changed fock, or whatever they may be, didna speak that language themsels - sin' the thing is to be tauld, I'll rather tell Pery mysel, if it is the same thing to you.[111]

Croudy never does manage to raise the alarm, as he is transformed into a boar. After he is returned to human form, he suspects Pery of witchcraft and she is almost executed as a result.

There are, then, multiple forms of knowledge competing as the reader attempts to work out the nature of these two magical women and none of them are entirely convincing. Croudy's eyewitness account might seem reliable, but he can still make no guess as to what the dogs are, whether witches, fairies, changed folk or something else. He also later mistakes the source of the magic he has witnessed to potentially deadly effect. Perhaps most crucially, the utility of his account is limited by the fact that it cannot be told in English. Croudy's account is the section of Hogg's short story which aligns most closely with his 'Keylan Rowe', including presenting the fairy folk as dangerous and malicious and associating them with hunting down human prey, as well as the connection to the Eildon Tree. The fact that the hunted woman appears to be attempting to reach the tree suggests she is aware of the belief evident in the ballad that it could provide protection from the fairy hunt. Croudy's account, then, is representative of folkloric knowledge and the fact that it 'winna tell in English' roots it in the local, oral tradition and implies that it cannot move beyond those boundaries. Hogg does not necessarily present this knowledge as more reliable than any other form of historical

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[108] 'Hunt of Eildon', p.254.
[109] 'Hunt of Eildon', p.255.
[110] 'Hunt of Eildon', pp.256, 258.
[111] 'Hunt of Eildon', p.258.

knowledge in the text. Croudy's account overlaps with the 'Keylan Rowe' but it also shares details with the *Chronicle of Melrose*, which mistakes the source of the magic as witchcraft perpetrated by Pery. Even the narrator is not a reliable source of information. The narrator's knowledge of the nature of the two women seems as vague as Croudy's and even mimics his wording, though neatly demonstrating that the act of translating Croudy's story into English would indeed alter it: the speculative suggestion that one of the women is a 'beautiful fairy-dame, or guardian spirit, or whatever she was' is characterised by more romantic language than Croudy's speculation that the hunting dogs are "twa witches, or fairies, or changed fock, or whatever they may be".[112]

'The Hunt of Eildon' thus presents a cacophony of competing accounts of the events, both within the narrative of the story and in Hogg's mimicry of editorial practices. The inclusion of the 'Keylan Rowe' is particularly destabilising, as it represents an alternative version of the story which bears little relation to the tale Hogg is telling. The 'allegorical romance' and the *Chronicle of Melrose* are also at odds, with the former being referenced in relation to diabolism and sorcery in the text while the latter represents an historical account of a witch trial. Within the text, Croudy's knowledge of the fairy women cannot be translated to the other characters. It must become a story about witchcraft, an accusation against an innocent woman and an opportunity to burn a witch, before it can be transferred over into the world of the King and his court. It is telling that the King has sworn to rid the country of witches, and though he believes Pery is innocent he does not extend this benefit of the doubt to all accused of such crimes:

> The king returned towards Edinburgh on the 14th of September, and on his way had twelve witches condemned and burnt at the Cross of Leader, after which act of duty his conscience became a good deal lightened, and his heart cheered in the ways of goodness.[113]

He may not agree with Croudy's accusation against Pery, then, but it is a tale he can understand, whereas his consistent failure to see anything suspicious or mysterious about his magical white hunting dogs, who appeared out of nowhere one day with an almost mystical ability to find and kill deer and a tendency to behave in unusual, un-canine ways, suggests an inability to connect to the local folklore. Gale, on the other hand, is ready with his local knowledge the moment Croudy tells him about the strange events he witnessed beneath the

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[112] 'Hunt of Eildon', pp.327, 258.
[113] 'Hunt of Eildon', pp.339-340.

Eildon Tree: "The fairies have again been seen at the Eildon Tree, that is certain; and it is said some more young people are missing".[114] Gale, in fact, may be the only character to consistently demonstrate an ability to correctly interpret events, insofar as any correct interpretation is possible in Hogg's story: he believes Croudy's tale and immediately relates it to the missing women and he also knows that Pery is innocent. Evidently representing Hogg, Gale both understands Croudy and can 'speak English' to the abbot at Melrose, allowing him to move between the two literary worlds of oral and written narrative represented by Croudy's account and the *Chronicle of Melrose*. It is not enough, however. Gale can understand the local folklore himself, but any attempt to translate it necessarily alters it. It simply won't tell in English.

Gale's transformation into a bird allows this character to transition into the present day, where he can be representative of Hogg's attempts to translate the oral Border narratives to the Edinburgh literary culture. Gale may yet be able to transform back into a human and tell the true story of the history of the Borders:

> As the five times fifty years are very nearly expired, it is hoped no gentleman will be so thoughtless as wantonly to destroy this wonderful and mysterious bird, and we may then live to have the history of the hunting, the fowling, fishing, and pastoral employments of that district, with all the changes that have taken place for the last two hundred and fifty years, by an eye-witness of them.[115]

That time, however, has not yet come, suggesting that Hogg is still unable to accurately 'tell in English' the folklore of his local community and thereby to act as mediator between the oral narrative of the Borders and the literary marketplace of Edinburgh. The metaphorical implications of Pery's death therefore extend beyond the change in attitude towards Hogg in *Blackwood's* that Richardson identifies: she, along with Gale, come to embody the oral traditions of the Borders. In this sense, they represent what Gilbert refers to as the 'alternative to the antiquarian grand narrative', an embodiment of the idea of an alive, atemporal oral tradition stretching back through time rather than an artifact or relic of a long-dead past. They cannot tell their story, however, and just as the oral traditions of the Borders are mined by the antiquarian impulse to collect and collate, Pery is taken from her home and sent off to Edinburgh to be served up to an elite community who cannot understand the significance of their actions. It is no coincidence that Hogg describes the King executing twelve "witches"

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[114] 'Hunt of Eildon', p.256.
[115] 'Hunt of Eildon', p.339.

on his way back to Edinburgh immediately after the description of Pery being eaten there, conflating an ancient brutality against innocent women with a contemporary metaphorical violence against local culture.

That Pery is eaten by this community is a detail which resonates with scholarship on cannibalism in Hogg's *Three Perils of Man*. In the novel, the threat of cannibalism constantly hangs over many of the characters, including the soldiers trapped in the besieged Roxburgh Castle and also a group of characters who, when locked on the roof of a tower, hold a storytelling contest to decide who will be eaten first. Several critics have pointed out the significance of continued references to eating and cannibalism in the novel, particularly in terms of the political function of such imagery as a literalisation of Hogg's rejection of war and chivalric ideals as systems which destroy and consume the bodies of ordinary men.[116] Ian Duncan develops the relationship between storytelling and cannibalism that is suggested in the storytelling contest in *Three Perils of Man*, relating 'narrative orality' to the orality of the 'cannibal rite':

> Storytelling is the opposite or alternative to cannibalism—its substitute, its sublimation: while we are telling each other tales we are not devouring each other. Yet storytelling is also continuous with cannibalism: it produces the identity of the victim. With this ambivalent structural relation to the practice that constitutes its outside or other, storytelling becomes a figure for culture itself, an apparatus of sublimation and regulation that binds men together in sociable amusement even as it selects who gets the girl and who will get eaten.[117]

He argues that 'Hogg situates narrative […] within a perilous political economy of competition, dominance, and devouring'.[118] Similarly, Mark Ittensohn considers the relationship between imagery of eating and literary reception, arguing that in the competitive literary marketplace of the early nineteenth century Hogg's presentation of a narrative device in which some characters will be able to eat by successfully telling stories while others may fail and be consumed would be particularly poignant:

> If telling stories is a gruesome pastime, one that isolates the individual teller in an effort to stay alive, then what Hogg thereby allegorises is the cannibalistic dynamics

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[116] See Barbara Leonardi, 'Hunger and Cannibalism: James Hogg's Deconstruction of Scottish Military Masculinities in *The Three Perils of Man or War, Women, and Witchcraft!*' in *Martial Masculinities: Experiencing and Imagining the Military in the Long Nineteenth Century*, eds. Michael Brown, Anna Maria Barry, Joanne Begiato and Isaac Land (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), pp. 139-160.
[117] Duncan, *Scott's Shadow*, p.197.
[118] Duncan, *Scott's Shadow*, pp.206-207.

of the period's professionalisation of authorship. While the economic workings of the modern fiction market enabled some authors to write imaginative works to make a living, in other words, to eat by telling stories, this process also involved a somewhat cruel reciprocity whereby the sustenance of one writer was contingent upon the failure of others.[119]

These interpretations of the threat of cannibalism in the storytelling contest in *Three Perils of Man* seem relevant to the fate of Pery in 'The Hunt of Eildon'. Here, Hogg literalises the 'cannibalistic dynamics' of the literary marketplace, with the additional connotation that it is not just Hogg's work which is placed into this brutal culture of competition and devouring but also the folklore of the Borders – tradition itself. The antiquarian desire to gather, collate and, metaphorically, consume the oral culture of Hogg's local community is presented in 'The Hunt of Eildon' as an act of destruction. In his short story, then, Hogg uses folkloric notions of fairy magic as a means of criticising and condemning the exploitation of the culture and traditions of the Borders by the Edinburgh elite. While in this text Hogg presents a bleak view of the fate of oral tradition in contemporary Scotland, in his novel *Three Perils of Man* he takes a different approach, attempting to resurrect tradition from the stasis imposed on it by the antiquarian project.

'I acknowledge it to be ingenious; still it is nothing': Illusions and Magic in Hogg's *The Three Perils of Man* and Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale*

Hogg's *Three Perils of Man* is, in some senses, a novel of two parts. The first plot of the narrative depicts the Siege of Roxburgh and has been the object of many interesting studies into Hogg's attitudes towards the ideals of chivalry and the role of historical narratives in the production of a Scottish national identity in the nineteenth century.[120] This chapter, however, will focus on the secondary narratives in *Three Perils of Man*, specifically those involving the depiction of the wizard Michael Scott. These supernatural departures from the historical plot of the siege were not well received by contemporary critics, including Scott, whose response to the novel is recorded by Hogg: 'he read me a long lecture on my extravagance in

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[119] Ittensohn, 'Fictionalising the Romantic Marketplace', p.37.

[120] See, for example: Caroline McCracken-Flesher, ''Perfectly Ludicrous': The Game of National Meaning in *The Three Perils of Man*' in *James Hogg and the Literary Marketplace: Scottish Romanticism and the Working-Class Author*, eds. Sharon Alker and Holly Faith Nelson (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Co., 2009), pp. 175-184; Tulloch, 'The Perilous Castle(s)', pp.157-174.

Demonology, and assured me I had ruined one of the best tales in the world'.[121] Scott's objection to Hogg's "Demonology" in *Three Perils of Man* is not surprising: Hogg's novel is such a direct response to Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel* that Duncan has described it as 'what Hollywood would call a "prequel" to the romance', but it handles the topic of the supernatural entirely differently.[122] Michael Scott's magic book may be an important element in Scott's poem, but the wizard himself is already 'dead and buried' at the opening of the text.[123] Hogg not only resurrects Michael Scott in *Three Perils of Man*, he also revels in extended and elaborate depictions of his magical feats, in the process destabilising and disrupting the historical narrative.

The supernatural plot of the novel begins when Sir Ringan Redhough sends an envoy to the wizard Michael Scott to ask for a prophecy which will assist him in breaking the siege at Roxburgh.[124] The envoy is made up of a motley crew of characters whose adventures in reaching Michael Scott's castle are marked by comical misfortune and farce. When they arrive at the castle, Michael Scott challenges one of them, a friar with seemingly arcane knowledge who is based on Roger Bacon, to a competition of magic. While the friar uses technology to produce visual effects which pass for magic, Michael Scott uses a trio of infernal imps to recreate similar effects as literal magic. Ultimately, the competition is disrupted when the friar accidentally traps the party on the roof of the castle after an impressive and deadly display involving gunpowder and, assuming they are destined to starve, the group decides to hold a storytelling contest with disturbingly high stakes: the winner gets the beautiful young woman, Delany, who has been travelling with them, but the loser gets eaten. The contest ends when the group are rescued, without any need to resort to cannibalism. Michael Scott agrees to give them the prophecy and is then joined by the devil to play host to the group, entertaining them with food, alcohol and women before temporarily transforming everyone except the friar into oxen. After being successfully reverted to human form, the envoy return to Sir Ringan with the prophecy, which they struggle to interpret until it occurs to them to copy Michael Scott's trick of turning them into oxen by covering themselves with animal skins so that the starving residents in Roxburgh will mistake them for cattle and let them inside the gates. After success in battle, the characters eventually learn of

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[121] Hogg, *Domestic Manners*, p.90.

[122] Duncan, *Scott's Shadow*, p.194.

[123] Tulloch, 'Perilous Castle(s)', p.167.

[124] Judy King and Graham Tulloch choose to restore the name of the character, Sir Ringan Redhough, to Walter Scott in their edition of the novel, in line with Hogg's original intentions before he was dissuaded from using the name. I have chosen not to refer to the character as Walter Scott purely for the sake of clarity, as I refer frequently to the actual Walter Scott in this chapter.

Michael Scott's demise in a spectacular combat with the devil through a character named Gibbie Jordan, who had sold himself into service to the wizard and subsequently been tormented endlessly by the demonic imps. The novel ends with the burial of Michael Scott, with his book of magic still in his hands.

In *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, Tulloch points out that Scott works to create distance between the audience of the poem and the supernatural world of the medieval setting: 'the wizardry, the fantastic element, is removed behind a distancing narrator, the last minstrel'.[125] Hogg's novel also includes a framing narrative in the form of a found manuscript:

> Such was the spirit of the age, not only in Scotland, but over all the countries of southern Europe, when the romantic incidents occurred on which the following tale is founded. It was taken down from the manuscript of an old Curate, who had spent the latter part of his life in the village of Mireton, and was given to the present Editor by one of those tenants who now till the valley where stood the richest city of this realm.[126]

However, where Scott's presentation of the last minstrel to operate within a dying tradition of oral narrative serves to emphasise the distance between the modern and the medieval worlds, Tulloch argues that Hogg's use of an imagined manuscript serves instead to muddle the distinctions between different forms of historical authority:

> The provenance of the novel is ambiguous – is it based on an oral or a written record? […] The mention of a manuscript implies a written account but the use of the verbal phrase 'taken down', normally associated with recording what has been spoken, suggests it is an oral account. Even the date of the manuscript is unclear: that its writer was a 'curate' implies an earlier date, maybe even the Middle Ages, but this is not definite.[127]

Fielding has also noted the complexities in Hogg's use of the found manuscript trope in *Three Perils of Man*, as 'it is the story taken down *from* the manuscript and not the document itself which is here said to be passed on to the Editor': 'Thus, with one hand Hogg sets up a quasi-factual state of affairs while with the other he awards himself the freedom to make the whole thing up as the documentary evidence appears to be no longer available'.[128] Hogg

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[125] Tulloch, 'Perilous Castle(s)', p.170.

[126] James Hogg, *The Three Perils of Man: A Border Romance*, eds. Judy King and Graham Tulloch, With an Essay on the Manuscript by Gillian Hughes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), p.6. All page references are to this edition. The village of Mireton does not appear to exist in modern-day Scotland, but, given Hogg's frequent use of real placenames in his works, it is unlikely to be Hogg's invention.

[127] Tulloch, 'Perilous Castle(s)', p.169.

[128] Fielding, *Writing and Orality*, pp.93-94, 94.

therefore uses the framing device of the manuscript not to create a sense of distance between the past and present but to complicate the relationship between story and history, merging them so far that 'it is impossible for the reader to disentangle them'.[129]

Duncan relates Hogg's approach to history in *Three Perils of Man* with his depiction of Michael Scott who, unlike in Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, is 'formidably alive' until the final pages of the novel: 'Although the story closes with the interment of the undead wizard and his black book, its tendency is the opposite of elegiac: these wild old tales belong to here and now'.[130] Duncan argues that Hogg's framing narratives resist teleological interpretations of history:

> Set loosely in the fourteenth century, conflating different historical incidents and characters, Hogg's romance reinterprets "history" not as an objective chronology of modernization but as a subjective, legendary dimension, at once deep past and unsettlingly present. These events are ancient and modern, real and fantastic, all at once. In Hogg's most striking technique, analogous to twentieth-century magic realism, natural and supernatural effects occupy the same narrative dimension, the same ontological register—neither is more real than the other.[131]

The use of the manuscript in the framing device therefore serves rather to collapse or conflate historical boundaries than to enforce them: '*The Three Perils of Man* turns the apparatus of narrative framing to an opposite effect from Scott's in the *Lay*, using it to scramble the temporal distinctions between a narrative past and present, and to insist upon the interminably recurring liminality of the narrative act, in the doubled or divided "now" of telling and reading'.[132] In the 'fantastic cultural space' in which the novel is set, the two narratives of the historical Siege of Roxburgh and the magical plot involving Michael Scott 'occupy a nondialectical relation of contiguity rather than succession, encircling rather than superseding or contradicting one another'.[133] In both the framing manuscript device and in this nondialectical relationship between the two plots of *Three Perils of Man*, Hogg collapses the distinctions between history and storytelling, a collapse which is also evident in the storytelling contest on Michael Scott's tower. After the contest, it is revealed that the stories all concerned the characters themselves, though they did not know it: Tam Craik is Marion's Jock from Gibbie Jordan's story, the poet is the baby from Charlie Scott's tale and the friar's

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[129] Fielding, *Writing and Orality*, p.94.
[130] Duncan, *Scott's Shadow*, p.202.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Duncan, *Scott's Shadow*, p.206.
[133] Duncan, *Scott's Shadow*, pp.202, 203.

story is about Delany's parents. Thus, the boundaries between story and history, narration and reality, are broken down in the storytelling contest in a process which Duncan sees as 'benign magic' in which narration 'cancel[s] its own borders'.[134]

On numerous occasions, Hogg's use of the storytelling contest in *Three Perils of Man* and his similar device in his epic poem *The Queen's Wake* (1813) have been placed in a context of narratives which use similar framing devices, including Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.[135] Gifford explicitly compares the storytelling contest in *Three Perils of Man* with *Canterbury Tales* in terms of how the stories reveal information about the storytellers, while Groves hints at a comparison by referring to the envoy to Michael Scott as "pilgrims".[136] Ittensohn also contextualises Hogg's use of the frame tale narrative by noting that '[t]wo of the most famous examples of this genre in Western literary history are without a doubt Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* and Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron*'.[137] O'Halloran also quotes an anonymous review in the *Edinburgh Star* on 5th February 1813 of Hogg's *The Queen's Wake* which compared the use of the poetry competition to Chaucer and Boccaccio.[138] The association of Hogg's use of the framing narrative technique of the storytelling contest with Chaucer suggests a further potential for comparison between *Three Perils of Man* and *Canterbury Tales*, in terms of how the two texts work with ideas about the relationship between magic and technology. In Hogg's novel, the character of the friar is based on Roger Bacon and Lisa M.C. Weston has suggested that Bacon may also have provided a historical model for Chaucer's learned clerk in *The Franklin's Tale*.[139] Of course, Hogg's depiction of Bacon using eighteenth- and nineteenth-century technology to create his illusions is entirely anachronistic and his knowledge of Bacon is likely to be based in early modern reinterpretations of him as a magician, whereas Chaucer would associate Bacon more with philosophy and science. However, both Chaucer and Hogg are evidently interested in

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[134] Duncan, *Scott's Shadow*, p.205.
[135] While much of this thesis has discussed the challenges of accessing Middle English romance in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, comparing Hogg to Chaucer does not require a similar consideration of such challenges as the works of Chaucer were readily available throughout the period. As Johnston puts it, Chaucer 'had never ceased to find readers': Johnston, *Enchanted Ground*, p.5.
[136] Gifford, *James Hogg*, p.115; Groves, *James Hogg*, p.100.
[137] Ittensohn, 'Fictionalising the Romantic Marketplace', p.29.
[138] O'Halloran, *James Hogg*, p.73.
[139] Lisa M.C Weston, 'Curious Clerks: Image Magic and Chaucerian Poetics' in *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, Volume 20: The Occult in Pre-Modern Sciences, Medicine, Literature, Religion, and Astrology*, eds. Albrecht Classen and Marilyn Sandidge (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2017) pp.489-505, pp.489-490. It is perhaps ironic that Hogg uses Bacon as his model for a character who performs illusory magic, as Richard Kieckhefer notes that he was disparaging about 'sleight of hand, ventriloquism, and illusions of performative magicians': Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014; 1st edn. 1989), p.100.

the possibility of illusory magic and though they approach the topic in different ways and from different cultural and historical contexts, they use the concept to remarkably similar effect. A comparative approach to Hogg's *Three Perils of Man* through a consideration of Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale* reveals interesting aspects of the approach to illusion, magic and technology in Hogg's novel.

In Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale*, Dorigen, a married woman, swears to Arveragus, who is in love with her, that she will never consent to sleep with him unless he can cause all the rocks along the coast of Brittany to disappear, as she fears for the safety of her husband when his ship returns from his travels abroad. After praying to no avail, Arveragus meets a clerk in Orleans who demonstrates his abilities to produce illusions. The clerk agrees to make the rocks appear to have vanished in return for payment, and although he succeeds, the tale ends with a series of compromises in which every character chooses to forgive the others' debts. The nature of the magic in the *Franklin's Tale* has been the source of much critical debate, as it is unclear whether the effect of the disappearing rocks is achieved through natural or supernatural means. Several critics have considered the clerk's trick in relation to Chaucer's interest in astrology, especially as mentions of astrological books in the tale imply that the illusion might be achieved through astrological computations and knowledge of the tides.[140] As Cooper points out, however, the rocks disappear for two weeks and so 'merely natural processes, such as high tides, are out of the question'.[141] Cooper views the rocks themselves as 'remarkably unimportant in the story', with the emphasis being not on 'how or whether the magic has worked, but how this will make everyone behave'.[142] She argues that the important aspect of the illusion is that it *seems* that the rocks have disappeared.[143] The emphasis on sight in the *Franklin's Tale* is explored by Carolyn Collette, who considers the text in the context of medieval theories about sight and perception, arguing that the casualness with which the clerk is introduced, the frequent descriptions of magical displays as illusion and the

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[140] See Corinne Saunders, 'Subtle Crafts: Magic and Exploitation in Medieval English Romance' in *The Exploitations of Medieval Romance*, eds. Laura Ashe, Ivana Djordjević and Judith Weiss (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2010), pp.108-124, pp.111-112; Weston, 'Curious Clerks', pp.489-505; Daniel F. Pigg, 'Representing Magic and Science in *The Franklin's Tale* and *The Canon's Yeoman's Tale*: Chaucer's Exploration of Connected Topics' in *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, Volume 20: The Occult in Pre-Modern Sciences, Medicine, Literature, Religion, and Astrology*, eds. Albrecht Classen and Marilyn Sandidge (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2017), pp.507-522.
[141] Cooper, *English Romance in Time*, p.158.
[142] Cooper, *English Romance in Time*, pp.157, 158.
[143] Cooper, *English Romance in Time*, p.157.

'commerical nature' of Arveragus' deal with the clerk, 'all work to demystify the magic element' and so place the emphasis of the magic on 'the deception of sight'.[144]

Saunders notes the importance of the disappearance of the rocks being described as 'an apparence or jogelrye', as it defines the illusion as natural magic.[145] She emphasises, however, that this natural magic proves to be 'more dangerous than it might seem' as it has potentially disastrous consequences for Dorigen and 'seems to authorize her rape'.[146] Saunders therefore argues that Chaucer's tale 'points to the dangers of knowledge of the cosmos and of the art of illusion, and the possibilities the magical arts offer for control of a profound, affective kind over the minds and bodies of others'.[147] In *Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval Romance*, Saunders argues that interpretations of the *Franklin's Tale* as an example of Chaucer rejecting magic in favour of technological marvels ignore the extent to which his works 'engage in a conspicuously learned, realist manner with the concept of natural magic, and […] make clear distinctions between this and less acceptable practices'.[148] She uses details such as the books of natural magic which the clerk owns, the association of the clerk with occult sciences through his foreknowledge of details about Arveragus and his predicament, the 'spectacles that demonstrate the magic art of the clerk' and his 'complex astrological computations that make the rocks "seem" away' as evidence that Chaucer grounds the tale continuously in the realm of 'natural, learned magic'.[149]

Chaucer's depiction of the disappearance of the rocks in the *Franklin's Tale* can also be understood through the context of contemporary entertainments involving illusory spectacles. Anthony E. Luengo, for example, argues for viewing the magic in the tale as stage magic, similar to that performed in medieval pageants.[150] Williams notes that 'technological or mechanical wonders significantly increased in availability by the late thirteenth century and were popular throughout the fourteenth' and suggests such concepts may have inspired the clerk's display of illusory ability when Arveragus visits him in Orleans.[151] She notes that

[144] Carolyn Collette, 'Seeing and Believing in the "Franklin's Tale"', *The Chaucer Review*, 26(4) (Spring 1992), 395-410, p.408.
[145] Saunders, 'Subtle Crafts', p.112.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, p.146.
[149] Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, p.147.
[150] Anthony E. Luengo, 'Magic and Illusion in "The Franklin's Tale"', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 77(1) (Jan 1978), 1-16. For further discussion of the development of illusory magic in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, see: Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, pp.90-94; Williams, *Middle English Marvels*, p.104; Robert Goulding, 'Illusion' in *Routledge Histories: The Routledge History of Medieval Magic*, eds. Sophie Page and Catherine Rider (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019).
[151] Williams, *Middle English Marvels*, p.104.

Chaucer had experience with court spectacles and points to language in the tale which evokes the concept of courtly amusements, particularly the word "tregetour" which can 'carry the connotation of an entertainer or one who performs tricks'.[152] While Chaucer's depiction of magic in *The Franklin's Tale* is ambiguous and creates a space for multiple interpretations, the concept of illusory magic, or magic tricks, is of particular interest here, as this is the form of magic that Hogg depicts in *Three Perils of Man*.

The crucial difference between Hogg's depiction of the friar's "magic" and that of the clerk in the *Franklin's Tale* is that to Hogg's readers there is little mystery in the friar's tricks. Even where criticism of the *Franklin's Tale* has considered the possibility that the disappearance of the rocks could be a technological illusion, it is still with the awareness that such an illusion would *seem* magical both to the audience of the tales and to the characters within it. As Williams argues, Chaucer presents the disappearance of the rocks as 'within the realm of human understanding and therefore not entirely magical' even if he does not fully explain it: she therefore defines the event as an example of *mirabilia*, in which wonder is derived not from the supernatural but 'from the elusiveness of an explanation that the audience believes or knows to exist'.[153] While the audience of the *Franklin's Tale* might be impressed by the 'elusiveness' of the explanation for the illusion, the reader of *Three Perils of Man* experiences little sense of mystery in the description of the friar's tricks. Several characters in the novel do interpret the illusions as magical, however: during the friar's first trick, Charlie Scott hides his face in terror and begs him to stop, while the other members of the envoy to Michael Scott are less frightened but nonetheless unable to explain the illusion. Hogg therefore allows his readers to enjoy a sense of enlightened superiority to the medieval characters. In depicting a relationship between technology and magic, the *Franklin's Tale* and the *Three Perils of Man* locate the tension between these competing ideas in different places: while in Chaucer's tale the tension is between reality and illusion, in Hogg's novel the use of illusion highlights the distance between the response of the characters and that of the contemporary reader. In other words, the tension is between forms of knowledge, with an informed and enlightened readership marking their separation from a superstitious past through their different interpretations of the friar's performances. As always, though, Hogg complicates this simple separation through the characters of the friar and Michael Scott, whose scientific knowledge aligns them with the reader rather than the other characters in the

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[152] Williams, *Middle English Marvels*, pp.124, 108.
[153] Williams, *Middle English Marvels*, p.105.

medieval setting. Even this alignment is not stable: as the friar's tricks progress, Michael Scott's changing reactions allow him to move between the medieval and the modern worlds.

The friar performs three tricks after the wizard Michael Scott challenges him to prove which of them is superior in 'the sublime arts' of magic.[154] For his first trick, the friar performs a magic lantern show, described as a 'phantasmagoria':

> The room was darkened; the friar went into a small alcove, and, by the help of a magic lanthorn, a thing never before seen in Scotland, he raised up a tremendous and horrid figure on the wall. It was of gigantic size; its eyes, lips, and paws moved; and its body was thrown into various contortions.[155]

Afterwards, he removes the mechanism from the lantern so that when the other characters inspect it, they cannot understand how it produced the illusion. Michael Scott, however, has no need to even investigate the device as he is entirely unimpressed by the performance:

> 'I hope, right worshipful Primate, this is not the extent of your knowledge and power in the sublime art of divination? The whole is only a delusion, - a shadow, - a phantom, calculated to astonish women or children. I acknowledge it to be ingenious; still it is nothing.'[156]

Michael Scott then calls on his three demonic imps to take the form of three of the friar's companions, outdoing the friar's illusion as his magic has a solid, physical dimension.

The friar's trick would be easily recognisable to Hogg's contemporary readership. Phantasmagoria shows became popular in Europe in the eighteenth century and were well-known by the 1820s, particularly after the fame of Etienne Gaspar Robertson's performances in Paris in the 1790s.[157] E.J. Clery has discussed the 'point of intersection between literary culture and popular entertainment' that was evident in the use of images from Gothic novels such as *The Monk* in Robertson's performances, arguing that the phantasmagoria shows represented a similar approach to the supernatural as some forms of Gothic literature: 'The

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[154] *Perils*, p.174.

[155] *Perils*, p.176.

[156] *Perils*, p.177.

[157] For the history of phantasmagoria shows, see Mervyn Heard, *Phantasmagoria, The Secret Life of the Magic Lantern* (Hastings: The Projection Box, 2006). For discussions of the relationship between phantasmagoria shows and Gothic fiction, see: Clery, *Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, p.146; David Annwn, 'Dazzling Ghostland: Sheridan Le Fanu's Phantasmagoria', *The Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies*, 6 (July 2009), 2-16; Laurence Talairach-Vielmas, 'Modern Phantasmagorias and Visual Culture in Wilkie Collin's *Basil*' in *Monstrous Media/Spectral Subjects: Imaging Gothic from the Nineteenth Century to the Present*, eds. Fred Botting and Catherine Spooner (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), pp.56-69; Maria Vara, 'Amongst the Ruins of a European Gothic Phantasmagoria in Athens' in *Ruins in the Literary and Cultural Imagination*, eds. Efterpi Mitsi, Anna Despotopoulou, Stamatina Dimakopoulou and Emmanouil Aretoulakis (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp.23-46.

early magic-lantern shows shared with novels employing the 'explained supernatural' an ambivalence towards popular superstitions and the exploitation of terror, an essential 'bad faith' which marked them as products of the transition of the spectral from truth to spectacle'.[158] Hogg's use of the techniques of phantasmagoria might therefore seem out of place in a novel which also revels in depictions of magic rather than the 'explained supernatural'. As well as this, in discussing the history of illusion shows in relation to Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla*, David Annwn provides a useful overview of mentions of imagery based on phantasmagoria in Gothic literature from 1790-1820, including in Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1797), Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria: or, The Wrongs of Woman* (1798), Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* (1826) and Scott's *Guy Mannering* (1815), *The Antiquary* (1816) and *The Maid of Perth* (1823) amongst others.[159] In these examples, the phantasmagoria is used metaphorically to describe ghostliness or an illusory quality to something, making Hogg's decision to actually stage a phantasmagoria show within his novel an unusual choice and suggesting that it deserves more attention as an aspect of Hogg's approach to the supernatural in the text. The first of the friar's tricks is broadly consistent with descriptions of phantasmagoria shows, including his covering of the windows and use of a 'magic lanthorn'. Although Annwn has noted that the 'highly-polished form of magic-lantern show called the phantasmagoria was mainly an urban phenomenon' which was expensive and so 'attracted the more well-heeled customer', it was nonetheless sufficiently well known to have entered the cultural lexicon as a common literary shorthand for an illusion or vision.[160] Indeed, in John Feltham's *The Picture of London, for 1802*, a new phantasmagoria show is described as a 'new application of the common magic lanthorn': that such shows would be described as common as early as 1802 gives a good sense of how impressed the readers of the 1820s might have been with the Friar's conjuring of 'a tremendous and horrid figure on the wall'.[161] Whilst they may have sympathised with the other characters' shocked reactions, especially given Hogg's note that a magic lantern was 'a thing never before seen in Scotland' at this time, they would be very familiar with the concept and so would recognise the illusion for a simple trick as soon as the lantern is mentioned. The friar's first trick, then, could be seen to represent a version of the depiction of

[158] Clery, *Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, p.146.
[159] Annwn, 'Dazzling Ghostland', pp.7-8.
[160] Annwn, Dazzling Ghostland', p.10.
[161] John Feltham, *The Picture of London, for 1802: Being a Correct Guide to all the Curiosities, Amusements, Exhibitions, Public Establishments, and Remarkable Objects, in and Near London* (London: Lewis and Co., 1802), p.207.

magic which aligns more with Scott's approach to the supernatural in his works: it foregrounds the distance between the superstitious characters of the medieval setting of the novel who are fooled by a simple magic lantern trick and the enlightened nineteenth-century audience of the text, who have no need to look for supernatural explanations for a scientific phenomenon. Michael Scott and the friar, especially insofar as they represent Scott and Hogg, are out of their time, projections of modernity into the medieval past. The audience aligns themselves with these rational characters, to whom a magic lantern is simply a cheap trick.

For his next trick, the friar causes the Mountain of Cope-Law to appear as though it has been split in three. The trick can only be viewed through one specific window, which the friar has previously tampered with: 'the glass of the western one he either contrived to remove, substituting another in its place, or else he put another piece of magnifying glass over it'.[162] Thus, when Michael Scott looks out of that window he is fooled into believing that the mountain has been altered:

> Many a thousand times had the Master looked out at that circular window; every bush and grey stone on the hill were familiar to him; and, all unsuspicious of the simple deceit that had been practised on him, he went and looked forth from the window, when, in the place where one round peaked mountain was wont to be, he actually saw three, all of the same dimensions; and, as he weened, each of them more steep, tall, and romantic than the original one had been. He looked, and looked again—the optical delusion was complete.[163]

Not to be outdone, Michael Scott sends his imps out to twist Eildon Hill into three parts. Crucially, much like in the *Franklin's Tale*, nobody thinks to check that Cope-Law has really been changed or even considers viewing it from another window: 'They could not be seen from any other window, and no one thought of descending to the great balcony; so that in the eyes of all the friar remained triumphant'.[164] The similar detail in the *Franklin's Tale* has produced much speculation as to its significance, often forming part of an argument that it does not actually matter if the rocks have really disappeared as the power of the magic is in its social implications for Dorigen.[165] Fielding makes a similar argument in relation to the friar's trick in *Three Perils of Man*:

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[162] *Perils*, p.175.
[163] *Perils*, p.180.
[164] *Perils*, p.180.
[165] See Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, p.109; Cooper, *English Romance in Time*, pp.157-158; Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, p.150.

His effect is based not only on the properties of the refraction of light, but also on the fact that nobody thinks it necessary to inspect the mountain itself. His trick succeeds because the spectators believe it to have succeeded; the "natural" status of the mountain (whether or not it is "really" split) is not at issue here.[166]

Essentially, the significance of the friar's trick is not in its physical reality, but in its ability to trick Michael Scott. The competition is, at least in part, a display of knowledge and as such the friar has already won if Michael Scott cannot immediately understand the illusion.

The friar's second trick is more impressive than his first. Even the narrator is not entirely certain how the 'simple deceit' is achieved, noting that when the friar tampered with the window, he 'either contrived to remove' the glass and replace it, 'or else he put another piece of magnifying glass over it'.[167] The mountain illusion may be more suggestive of the kind of technology which led to the invention of the kaleidoscope, and indeed O'Halloran has discussed Hogg's friendship with David Brewster, the inventor of the device.[168] While the kaleidoscope was already a popular toy by the time Hogg published *Three Perils of Man*, it was a more recent and exciting development in illusory technology than the magic lantern.[169] The friar's second trick is therefore an advancement on his first, and though it is still explicable to the reader (particularly through the mentions of the Friar tampering with the windows) it is nonetheless an impressive feat. This is certainly evident in Michael Scott's reaction: he dismisses the first trick as 'a delusion, - a shadow, - a phantom' and though he acknowledges it is 'ingenious' he still considers it to be 'nothing'.[170] Hogg's readers may not have even considered the trick ingenious, but they would certainly agree that it was little more than illusory effects. Michael Scott is, however, fooled by the second trick and is 'all unsuspicious of the simple deceit that had been practised on him'.[171] The trick would seem 'simple' enough to a nineteenth-century audience who can purchase kaleidoscopes as a popular toy, but the projection of the illusion onto an entire mountain is nonetheless an impressive notion. What is interesting here, however, is that having created a sympathy between Michael Scott and the audience in their similar reactions to the first trick, Hogg immediately works to resituate the character within his medieval setting and re-establish the distance between character and reader.

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[166] Fielding, *Writing and Orality*, p.82.
[167] *Perils*, p.175.
[168] O'Halloran, *James Hogg*, p.6.
[169] Ibid.
[170] *Perils*, p.177.
[171] Ibid.

Given the escalation from the first trick to the second, the reader might expect something approaching magic for the friar's final trick. Hogg, however, is ever subversive. The group must wait for Michael Scott's imps to complete their task and while they do this the friar, 'in order to divert his host, and gratify his own vanity, proposed to show off some more wonders of his art'.[172] He entertains the group with 'many curious chemical devices' and Roman candles until Michael Scott's seneschal takes advantage of the darkness necessary for such illusions to kidnap one of the Friar's travelling companions, a beautiful young woman named Delany, and attempt to rape her.[173] His attempt is thwarted, but as Michael Scott refuses to punish his servant, the friar leads everyone to the roof and claims that his next magical feat will be to make an old tub fly around the castle. He challenges the seneschal to prevent this from happening and he confidently lies across the tub, which the friar has filled with gunpowder. Naturally, the explosion blasts both the tub and the seneschal into the sky, never to be seen again. The friar's three tricks now being complete, it becomes rather immaterial whether Michael Scott can perform a greater enchantment as it transpires that the friar has also blown up the keys to the roof and the entire party is now trapped. Hence the storytelling contest to decide who will be eaten first.

Where the reader might have expected some truly impressive feat of technological marvel for the friar's trick, Hogg instead presents what is essentially a practical joke, albeit a deadly one. If Hogg was drawing on the *Canterbury Tales* for inspiration in writing *Three Perils of Man*, there is even the possibility that he is reworking the ending of the *Miller's Tale* in the Friar's final trick: where John's credulity about Nicholas' apocalyptic predictions end with him crashing down to earth in a bathtub and breaking his arm, the seneschal's refusal to believe in the friar's powers result in him being blasted to the heavens in a tub, with nothing but a severed limb ever being found of his body. Hogg is characteristically anti-climactic here, refusing to continue the escalation of the sensational magical competition and instead ending it with all of the characters trapped on a roof, creating the circumstances which will lead to the decision to tell stories to determine who will be eaten. The conclusion of the competition is therefore the beginning of another competition: displays of magic give way to displays of storytelling.

In a parallel process, the seneschal's death rapidly becomes a local legend, moving from the realm of spectacle to story:

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[172] *Perils*, p.182.
[173] Ibid.

> No one ever knew to this day by what means the wicked seneschal was borne away
> among the clouds in a column of fire and smoke; and those who witnessed it spread
> the word over the country, that the devil took him away with a great roar amid fire
> and brimstone; and that, after having him up among the dark clouds, he tore him all to
> pieces. It was a fact that one of the steward's mangled limbs was found hanging on a
> tree, among some thick branches, in the wood of Sheil's Heuch, over against the
> castle, which gave some countenance to the report; and no farther remnants of him
> were ever discovered.[174]

While the *Franklin's Tale* emphasises the sight of the illusion and how this sight impacts on the characters, in Hogg's novel the friar's illusions are understood more as stories than spectacles: in the transference of the seneschal's death from a performance to a tale about the devil, the narrative emphasises that the power of the friar's tricks lies in the ways in which they are understood by the other characters and how they are told and retold as stories after the events have ended. The significance of the friar's second and third tricks is that Michael Scott cannot dismiss them as 'nothing' and therefore deny the narrative that the mountain has really been split into three or that the seneschal has really been torn apart by the devil, because he cannot explain how these things were actually accomplished. The competition is not just a competition of knowledge but a competition within a sphere of knowledge exchange: the friar and Michael Scott are competing over control of the narrative. In a sense, the friar's second trick is primarily effective not because it is any more visually impressive than his first, but because Michael Scott cannot *tell* how it is done, while his third trick is his most significant because in the telling of the story the trick becomes a tale of the supernatural.

"What book does he mean?": Hogg's Rewriting of Gawain and the Loathly Lady in *The Three Perils of Man*

Hogg's *Three Perils of Man* includes a direct reference to a Middle English romance, when the poet overhears the friar describing a "book of wonders" to the lady Delany and does not realise that he is describing the Gospels:

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[174] *Perils*, p.185.

"What book does he mean?" said the poet: "If it is not True Thomas's book, or the book of Sir Gawin, he must be speaking absolute nonsense. I could recite these to lovely Delany, word for word; and must this clumsy old friar wile her from me by any better book than these?"[175]

What book does Hogg mean when he refers to a "book of Sir Gawin"? While there are many romances concerning Gawain, the most likely answer here is *The Marriage of Sir Gawain*, one of the ballads preserved in Percy's Folio and published in his *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*. A variant of the romance was also included in Matthew Lewis' *Tales of Wonder*, and it was well known to Scott. Indeed, *The Marriage of Sir Gawain* is almost certainly the romance referred to in Scott's *The Antiquary* (1816), in which Oldbuck's apartment is decorated with a tapestry depicting Gawain:

The walls of the apartment were partly clothed with grim old tapestry, representing the memorable story of Sir Gawaine's wedding, in which full justice was done to the ugliness of the Lothely Lady; although, to judge from his own looks, the gentle knight had less reason to be disgusted with the match on account of disparity of outward favour, than the romancer has given us to understand.[176]

It is worth noting, to avoid confusion, that there are other Gawain romances which were known to Scott but do not depict the Loathly Lady plot and so are not relevant here, including *Gologras and Gawain*, *Awntyrs off Arthure* and *Ywain and Gawain*, while *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle* concerns the same plot but was not known to Scott.[177] Scott would also have known the plot of the romance from other sources, including Gower's 'Tale of Florent and the Loathly Hag' and Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Tale*, but these do not identify the knight as Gawain.[178] Hogg would also have known the *Wife of Bath's Tale*, and some evidence in his approach to the romance material suggests some influence of it on the plot of *Three Perils of Man*. For the most part, however, it is fair to assume that the "book of Sir Gawin" here refers to the romance of *The Marriage of Sir Gawain*.

Scott's reference to the romance in *The Antiquary* is brief and has little impact on the plot, and at first glance Hogg's reference to Gawain in *Three Perils of Man* may seem similarly offhand, designed only to demonstrate that the poet's knowledge of books is so confined to romance and ballads that he does not even consider that the friar may be referring

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[175] *Perils*, p.130.
[176] Sir Walter Scott, *The Antiquary* (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1862), p.19.
[177] Mitchell, *Scott, Chaucer, and Medieval Romance*, pp.12-39
[178] Ibid.

to the Bible. However, the choice of a Gawain romance seems significant as later in the novel Michael Scott and the devil, disguised as Abbot Lawrence, trick several drunken men at a feast into sleeping with beautiful women who transform into hideous old witches in the morning. This episode reads like an inversion of the plot of *The Marriage of Sir Gawain*, with a narrative of devilish trickery subverting the outcome of the romance. In the romance, Arthur is challenged by a knight to discover the answer to the question of what all women want, and Gawain undertakes to help him. After searching fruitlessly for an answer, Arthur comes across an old woman in the forest who agrees to help him in return for marriage to Gawain. Her answer to the riddle, that 'A woman will have her will', satisfies the knight and Arthur must keep his bargain to the Loathly Lady, so Gawain reluctantly marries her.[179] On their wedding knight, the lady transforms into a beautiful young woman and offers Gawain the choice to have her be beautiful during the day and hideous at night or vice versa. Gawain allows her to choose for herself, and the lady explains that he has broken a curse placed on her by her stepmother and she will now be beautiful all the time. This is, broadly speaking, the plot of several romances, including Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Tale*, though each iteration includes variations on the concept.

In Hogg's *Three Perils of Man*, Michael Scott and the devil ply a group of soldiers and other characters with alcohol in an attempt to degrade them, and as part of this process Michael Scott introduces them to a host of beautiful women who enter the feast to 'a chorus of sweet and melodious music'.[180] Hogg could have been thinking of *The Wife of Bath's Tale* here, in which the knight's initial meeting with the old woman is preceded by the appearance of twenty-four ladies dancing in the forest.[181] It is also possible, however, that Hogg's emphasis on the mirage-like quality of the entrance of the women in *Three Perils of Man* is more a reflection of the drunkenness of the men at the feast: Tam Craik, for example, thinks he sees 'his lovely Kell among them, blooming in tenfold loveliness', but he is 'so drunk that he could not articulate one syllable'.[182] The men, overcome with drink and possibly enchantment, fall asleep in various places around the hall and when they awake they discover that the beautiful women have transformed:

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[179] *The Marriage of Sir Gawain* in *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales*, ed. Thomas Hahn (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), 105. All line references are to this edition.
[180] *Perils*, p.330.
[181] Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Wife of Bath's Tale* in *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd edn., ed. Larry D. Benson with a New Foreword by Christopher Cannon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987; reissued 2008), 991-994.
[182] *Perils*, p.332.

Instead of the light-flowing and curled hair, there hung portions of grey dishevelled locks. Instead of the virgin bloom of the cheek, and the brilliant enamel of the eye, all was rheum, haggardness, and deformity. Some had two or three long pitted teeth, of the colour of amber; some had none. Their lovely mouths were adorned with curled and silvery mustachios; and their fair necks were shrivelled and seriated like the bark of a pine-tree. Instead of the rustling silks and dazzling jewels, they were all clothed in noisome rags; and, to crown the horror of our benumbed and degraded Bacchanalians, every one of the witches had her eyes fixed on her partner, gleaming with hellish delight at the state to which they had reduced themselves, and the horrors of their feelings.[183]

The 'Bacchanalians' are now sufficiently 'degraded' that Michael Scott is able to work his magic on them and transform them into oxen, which, it seems, was the purpose of the trick.

Hogg's description of the women is excessive and grotesque, and he not only explicitly associates them with the devil but also with witchcraft. This could be a response to Scott's depiction of *The Marriage of Sir Gawain* in *The Antiquary*: Scott seems to remove the supernatural elements from the story by implying that the woman's appearance is not unusually unattractive, to the extent that Gawain himself (presumably as a result of a lack of skill on the part of the artist) is not much better looking. In the medieval romance, by contrast, the description of the lady is so excessive as to be evocative of monstrosity:

Then there as shold have stood her mouth,

Then there was sett her eye;

The other was in her forhead fast,

The way that she might see.[184]

The woman later reveals that her unusual appearance is the result of a curse from her stepmother:

Shee witched me, being a faire young lady,

To the greene forrest to dwell,

And there I must walke in womans liknesse,

Most like a feeind of hell.[185]

In *The Marriage of Sir Gawain*, then, the woman's 'liknesse' is unnatural and the extent of her disfigurement is retroactively explained through an association with witchcraft and

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[183] *Perils*, pp.332-333.
[184] *Marriage of Sir Gawain*, 57-60.
[185] *Marriage of Sir Gawain*, 179-182.

devilry. Hogg also linguistically associates the appearance of the women the morning after the feast with devilry, describing their eyes 'gleaming with hellish delight'. Whether this is metaphorical or literal is ambiguous, and though the women are linked with both Michael Scott and the devil, their exact status is never fully revealed. Whether they are women who have been 'witched' like the lady in *The Marriage of Sir Gawain* or witches who are responsible for their own enchantment is never made clear, nor does Hogg explain which of their appearances, beautiful or hideous, is real. The text implies that their initial beauty is an enchantment through the mirage-like qualities as they appear at the feast, but their appearance as witches is also characterised by a sense of magical illusion, especially insofar as the excessive qualities of their deformity mirror the unnatural, 'witched' appearance of the lady in *The Marriage of Sir Gawain*. As always, Hogg does not provide the reader with an answer: the various forms of the women are just more shifting images in the kaleidoscope of the novel.

Ultimately, these women meet a gruesome end in a series of disturbing episodes that could be considered a horrifying parody of the marriage of the Loathly Lady. In a passage which Duncan describes as a 'misogynistic dismemberment', the women are tricked into marrying the devil in a variety of disguises only to be 'blasted, crushed, and torn to pieces in their diabolical intercourse' on their wedding nights.[186] Their deaths are described to the King and his retinue by Gibbie Jordan, who witnesses many strange and frightening events after entering into the service of Michael Scott in return for a constant supply of meat. Gibbie watches the death of the first woman after she is led to a superb bower which has appeared outside the castle:

> But at length the lusty bridegroom, as I supposed, began to weary of his mate, for I saw the form of the bower beginning to change, and fall flat on the top, and its hue also became of a lurid fiery colour. I cannot tell your Majesties what sort of sensations I felt when I saw the wedded couple sinking gradually down through a bed of red burning fire, and the poor old beldame writhing to death in the arms of a huge and terrible monster, that squeezed her in its embraces, and hugged her, and caressed her till the spark of wretched life was wholly extinguished.[187]

The fiend continues to 'caress and kiss his agonized mate to the last', until 'the distortions of the human countenance reached their acme—the shrivelled bosom forgot to throb, and, with

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[186] Duncan, *Scott's Shadow*, p.204.
[187] *Perils*, p.436.

the expiry of the mortal spark, the lurid flame that burnt around them also went out, and all was darkness'.[188] This account is only the first of a series of horrors, as Gibbie explains that 'we had a witch's wedding every night for nine nights running'.[189]

The story of the deaths of these women is not the only tale Gibbie has to tell: he also describes the manner of Michael Scott's death in a spectacular battle against the devil. Initially, Gibbie is unable to perceive the approaching army of the devil, seeing 'nothing save a phalanx of towering clouds, rolling up in wreaths from the dun horizon', until Michael Scott strikes him with his magic rod and the sight changes:

> I looked again, and though I was sensible it must be a delusion brought on by the stroke of his powerful rod, yet I did see the appearance of a glorious fleet of ships coming bounding along the surface of the firmament of air, while every mainsail was bosomed out like the side of a Highland mountain. I saw, besides, whole columns of what I supposed to be crocodiles, sharks, kelpies, and water-horses, with a thousand monsters never dreamed of by human being.[190]

With his eyesight now altered by the magic rod, Gibbie can also see 'marshalled hosts of the shades of gigantic warriors', 'mounted on the ghosts of crackens, whales, and walruses', as well as 'fiery serpents, with faces like men, and small flaming spears issuing from their mouths' led by 'the arch-fiend himself' riding a 'huge fiery dragon'.[191] He witnesses as Michael Scott battles against this formidable host and is overcome by the great dragon, which grabs him 'by the hair with one paw, and by the iron belt with the other' and flies up into the air, where Michael Scott strikes it with the result that it drops him from a great height, killing him.[192] Gibbie is careful to point out, however, that the account may not be entirely reliable:

> I have now described to your Majesties this scene exactly as I saw it; but I must also tell you, that when I came to the mill, both the miller and his man, neither of whom knew me, said it had been an awful storm of thunder and lightning. I asked if they perceived nothing about it but a common storm of thunder and lightning? And they said, nothing, save that it was exceedingly violent, and rather uncommon at such a season of the year. I have, therefore, some suspicions that there might be magical delusion operating on my sight; but of this I am certain, that the great enchanter was

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[188] *Perils*, p.437.
[189] *Perils*, p.436.
[190] *Perils*, p.443.
[191] *Perils*, pp.443, 444.
[192] *Perils*, p.445.

carried up into the middle space between heaven and earth, fell down, and was killed.[193]

Although the King dismisses Gibbie's concerns and feels certain that his story is 'the plain and unvarnished truth', Hogg invites the reader to question the reliability of the narrative, particularly by making it similar to the description of the death of Michael Scott's vicious seneschal as it enters into local legend.[194] In a novel which so frequently plays with ideas of illusion and features several displays of illusory magic, it seems reasonable to expect some scepticism about an event which was only witnessed by a character whose eyesight has been magically altered: tampered with, perhaps, in the same manner that the friar tampers with the windows before splitting Cope Law in three. Further to this, though, is the fact that the reader hears the narrative through an act of storytelling within the story and, more importantly, is made aware that other characters perceived the events entirely differently. The story of Michael Scott being carried up into the sky and dropped by a great dragon, in league with the devil, mirrors the story of the death of the seneschal by being carried into the sky by the devil and torn apart. As the reader knows that the story of the seneschal's death is an inaccurate attempt to explain a natural event through supernatural means, Gibbie's story of Michael Scott's death becomes questionable through its similarities with the earlier narrative. Despite this, the story is accepted by the King as the 'plain and unvarnished truth' and as such it becomes the official narrative of Michael Scott's death, whether it is accurate or not. Like the story of the seneschal's death at the hands of the devil, Gibbie's tale is immortalised as legend, shifting into the realm of local tradition. It is not arbitrary that both Gibbie's story and the tale of the seneschal's death are presented as oral narratives: they are representative of the process through which oral traditions are created, with roots in history while also presenting a counter-narrative to history in which allegory is as important as fact. Hence the linguistic play Hogg engages in when describing the seneschal's death: it may not be literally true that a cruel, violent, irredeemable character who attempts to rape a young woman is torn apart by demonic forces, but in every way that matters it is certainly true that the friar has indeed 'blown the brutal seneschal to the devil'.[195]

The fact that Gibbie's account of Michael Scott's death may not be trustworthy also calls into question his account of the deaths of the witches. Indeed, the story of the death of the second woman is associated with folklore by reference to specific locations as well as a

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[193] *Perils*, pp.445-446.
[194] *Perils*, p.446.
[195] *Perils*, p.186.

mention of local onlookers. Gibbie describes how the second woman marries the devil in the form of a merchant, who insists that they must ride away at an early hour as he has 'business of importance to transact on the morrow'.[196] They therefore set off at haste over the 'leas of Carterhaugh' until the woman is cast from the horse into a 'dreadful chasm' beneath 'the very highest rock of the Harehead linn':

> There were two fishermen spearing salmon in the bottom of the gulf, who saw the phenomenon pass over their heads, and the wife lose her hold and fall off; they heard her likewise saying, as she came adown the air, "Aih, what a fa' I will get!" And as she said, so it fell out; for she alighted on the rocks a short space from the place where they stood, and was literally dashed in pieces; but the steed ran away with the merchant over hill and dale like a thunderbolt, and neither the one nor the other ever looked over his shoulder to see what had befallen the bride.[197]

Gibbie does not mention what the two fishermen made of such a sight, but the local details and the introduction of other eyewitnesses shifts the focus in the story away from isolated incidents within the walls of Aikwood to suggestions that the events may form part of the local folklore and legend associated with geographical features such as 'the Harehead linn'. Hogg's descriptions of the deaths of these women are disturbing in their excess, but, without denying the misogyny inherent in these passages, I would argue that they are more a reflection of Hogg's approach to tradition than his approach to women.

Hogg describes a conversation that he claims his mother had with Walter Scott on their first meeting, in which she berates him for printing the ballads: 'They were made for singing an' no for reading; but ye hae broken the charm now, an' they'll never be sung mair'.[198] Hogg claims that his mother was 'too true a prophetess, for from that day to this, these songs, which were the amusement of every winter evening, have never been sung more'.[199] The implication that bringing an oral narrative into the textual tradition destroys it might illuminate Hogg's attitude towards romance material in *Three Perils of Man* and how it contrasts Scott's use of the same romance in *The Antiquary*. Scott's approach to *The Marriage of Sir Gawain* as a relic or artifact from the past is literalised in his depiction of the romance as a tapestry hanging on the wall of an antiquarian's apartment: the story is not only frozen in the static image; it is also purely decorative, dressing Oldbuck's wall without

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[196] *Perils*, p.437.
[197] *Perils*, p.438.
[198] Hogg, *Domestic Manners*, p.61.
[199] Ibid.

materially effecting the plot. In Hogg's novel, on the other hand, the mention of the romance signals its inclusion in the interweaving of different forms of narrative and storytelling in *Three Perils of Man*. Where Hogg's poet imagines the romance as a "book", he also identifies himself as part of a system of oral narration as he notes that he can recite it 'word for word' and indeed Hogg's subversion of the romance plot is more suggestive of the kinds of narrative variations that take place in the process of the transmission of a narrative through a combination of oral and written traditions. Rather than being a single text in a single book, or indeed a static image, the "book of Sir Gawin" moves outside of the poet's reference to become part of the plot of the novel, much like the characters from the stories in the storytelling contest turn out to be the characters of the novel itself. Hogg continues to break down the distinctions between narrative and history, shifting the romance from a static sphere of reference as an antiquarian relic into an active process of retelling and revision, subversion and inversion. Hogg plays with the romance, where Scott merely displays it. In attempting to return a narrative from a textual to an oral form, to resurrect it out of the antiquarian impulse to collect and collate and return it to a sphere of living tradition, Hogg breaks the story out of its own bounds, multiplying it in a perverted superfluity of horror which repeats over and over without reaching a conclusion. In its proliferation as oral folklore, the story becomes excessive and exaggerated, unable to be contained or constrained. The violence enacted against the women in the story is an answer to the violence of attempts to freeze the traditions of the Borders. As with the death of Pery the moorfowl, Hogg associates the destruction of oral tradition with violence against women, while placing this violence at the doorstep of those who would pillage the Borders of their cultural heritage.

Where Hogg engages with medieval romance, either directly or as an imagined source, he does so with creativity, flexibility and innovation. In his rejection of the antiquarian narrative of tradition as fixed and stable, Hogg rewrites tradition, reproducing and reinventing narratives over and over in a sphere of orality and folklore that resists convention, containment or classification. Hogg reworked medieval romance to suit both his political and his literary agenda, contorting it to fit his folkloric and kaleidoscopic texts, much as the texts studied in the next chapter reinvent the concept of the medieval werewolf to fit the Gothic genre. While Hogg sought to break traditional narratives out of the confines of the antiquarian project, the process of recreating the werewolf for Gothic fiction was a process of stabilisation, in which the competing authorities of folklore, romance and scholarship were drawn into Gothic literature to crystallize a new narrative of the werewolf, a narrative which would persist in the horror fiction of the twentieth century and into the present day.

Chapter 5: The Sympathetic Werewolf in the Nineteenth-Century Gothic

'singularly barren of were-wolf stories': The Werewolf in the English Literary Tradition

Writing his *Book of Were-Wolves* in 1865, Sabine Baring-Gould finds little evidence of an English tradition of werewolf narratives, which he, along with most recent scholarship, attributes to the extinction of wolves in Britain:

> English folk-lore is singularly barren of were-wolf stories, the reason being that wolves had been extirpated from England under the Anglo-Saxon kings, and therefore ceased to be objects of dread to the people. The traditional belief in were-wolfism must, however, have remained long in the popular mind, though at present it has disappeared, for the word occurs in old ballads and romances.[1]

Baring-Gould's dating of the extirpation of wolves from England does not entirely align with more recent estimates, with Matthew Beresford arguing that '[t]he last wolves eventually died out around 1684 in Britain, and by around 1770 in Ireland'.[2] His point stands, however, that there was little need for myths about werewolves in a culture that did not face a threat from actual wolves. Baring-Gould was writing at the end of this dearth of werewolves in the literary culture of England, though, with his own interest in them reflecting a revival of the werewolf in English literature. As Chantal Bougault du Coudray puts it, 'the werewolf was re-created as a modern monster in nineteenth-century texts' and it is this recreation that forms the focus of this chapter.[3] While these texts drew on a variety of sources from European werewolf traditions, the revitalisation of interest in the werewolf in England in the nineteenth century runs parallel to an antiquarian resurrection of medieval werewolf narratives, both those translated from French medieval sources and those drawn from the Middle English romance tradition.

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[1] Sabine Baring-Gould, *The Book of Were-Wolves: Being an Account of a Terrible Superstition* (London: Smith Elder and Co., 1865), p.100.

[2] Matthew Beresford, *The White Devil: The Werewolf in European Culture* (London: Reaktion Books, 2013), p.13.

[3] Chantal Bourgault du Coudray, *The Curse of the Werewolf: Fantasy, Horror and the Beast Within* (New York, NY: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2006), p.14.

Several scholars have warned against the tendency to view werewolf literature as a homogenous genre. Willem de Blécourt, in particular, attacks popular werewolf histories by pointing out that they rely on 'extremely selective reading of the available historical material or on no material at all' and that they 'negate historical actors and contexts and fail to situate the snippets of information they have collected'.[4] Among those popular histories 'written by amateurs, aimed at a popular market and with the purpose of making some quick money', Blécourt includes such examples as Katie Boyd's *Werewolves: Myth, Mystery, and Magick*, Bob Curran's *Werewolves: A Field Guide to Shapeshifters, Lycanthropes, and Man-Beasts* and Zachary Graves' *Werewolves*.[5] These inaccurate and confused histories are a reflection of the fact that '[t]he concept of the timeless werewolf, defined by unchanging symptoms, is impossible to sustain'.[6] Elsewhere, De Blécourt argues that: 'There is no werewolf history. At the most there are histories of werewolves, but these are fragmented and discontinuous'.[7] He introduces the idea of reading werewolf narratives through a 'cluster methodology' which identifies bodies of werewolf texts which form part of distinct traditions, arguing for the importance of viewing these clusters in the context which produced them rather than trying to enforce the framework of a 'werewolf history' onto them.[8] Hannah Priest makes a similar argument, claiming that the belief in a werewolf myth dating back to the origins of time lacks evidence and that rather than viewing the werewolf as 'romantically […] belonging to prehistory', studies should focus on the concept as a product of 'human culture, invention and ritualised social practice' and therefore 'inextricably bound to historical circumstance, civilisation and literature'.[9] These are important points for a chapter which seeks to connect two differentiated werewolf traditions, the werewolf of medieval romance and the werewolf of nineteenth-century Gothic literature. While there are some tangible connections between the two genres, there is still a risk of enforcing a potentially ahistorical model of werewolf homogeny if texts are not sufficiently situated in the historical, literary and social contexts which produced them. This chapter is therefore particularly concerned with how werewolf

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[4] Willem de Blécourt, 'Monstrous Theories: Werewolves and the Abuse of History', *Preternature: Critical and Historical Studies on the Preternatural*, 2(2) (2013), 188-212, p.204.

[5] Blécourt, 'Monstrous Theories', pp.188, 207. See also Katie Boyd, *Werewolves: Myth, Mystery, and Magick* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 2011); Bob Curran, *Werewolves: A Field Guide to Shapeshifters, Lycanthropes, and Man-Beasts* (Franklin Lakes, NJ: The Career Press Inc., 2009); Zachary Graves, *Werewolves* (New York, NY: Chartwell Books, 2011).

[6] Ibid.

[7] Willem de Blécourt, 'The Differentiated Werewolf: An Introduction to Cluster Methodology' in *Werewolf Histories*, ed. Willem de Blécourt (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp.1-24, p.1.

[8] De Blécourt, 'Differentiated Werewolf', pp.1-2.

[9] Hannah Priest, 'Introduction' in *She-Wolf: A Cultural History of Female Werewolves*, ed. Hannah Priest (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), pp.2-20, p.2.

narratives respond to similar concerns in the depiction of werewolves but within very different contexts, looking particularly at how the attempt to blend the medieval werewolf into the Gothic genre produces texts which are characterised by tension and anxiety. In the period in which the werewolf was being 're-created as a modern monster', engagement with medieval narratives in these texts is marked by concerns about how to integrate these narratives with the generic conventions of the Gothic. Before turning to this period of recreation, however, I will first counter Baring-Gould's belief that English literature is 'singularly barren of were-wolf stories' with an introduction to a Middle English werewolf romance, *William of Palerne*.

This fourteenth-century alliterative romance is a Middle English translation of the thirteenth-century French *Guillaume de Palerne*, which was completed at the request of Humphrey de Bohun, sixth Earl of Hereford and eleventh Earl of Essex, to make the text available 'for hem [them] þat knowe no frensche'.[10] Baring-Gould dismisses this romance as evidence of an interest in werewolves in the English literary tradition because it 'professes to be a translation from the French'.[11] However, in producing the Middle English version of the text the *William*-poet altered and adapted the French narrative to fit the context for which it was being produced and so *William of Palerne* is rightly viewed in scholarship as an English text in its own right, distinct and separate from the French source text. One aspect of this alteration of the romance in the process of its translation into an English text is the removal of much of the violence from the source material. Renée Ward demonstrates that the Middle English romance significantly abbreviates several battle sequences from the French text and 'eliminates or reduces the gruesome details of battle found in his source'.[12] She relates this to biographical details about the life of Humphrey de Bohun, whose father was said to have been gruesomely executed when Humphrey was still a child.[13] Ward suggests that this traumatic childhood could explain why the translator of *William of Palerne* was disinclined to present his patron with a faithful rendering of 'the many instances of evisceration and dismemberment of *Guillaume de Palerne*'.[14] Ward therefore interprets *William of Palerne* as evidence of 'the subtle skill of a poet who had to rework a problematic narrative in a manner acceptable for his patron', a patron who 'experienced firsthand, during the formative years of

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[10] *The Romance of William of Palerne: (Otherwise Known as the Romance of "William and the Werwolf")*, ed. Rev. Walter M.A. Skeat (London: Early English Text Society, 1867; repr. 1898), 5533. All line references are to this edition.
[11] Baring-Gould, *Book of Were-Wolves*, p.101.
[12] Ward, 'Politics of Translation', p.489.
[13] Ward, 'Politics of Translation', pp.487-488.
[14] Ward, 'Politics of Translation', p.488.

his adolescence, the negative consequences of war' and would therefore find 'lengthy and brutal battle sequences' and the 'problematic representation of the protagonist as a knight who glories in violence and bloodshed' in the French text 'unappealing, offensive, or disturbing'.[15] Ward's analysis of *William of Palerne* suggests not only that Baring-Gould is wrong to dismiss the romance as merely a translation from the French, given that it is characterised so extensively by indications of the context of an English household, but also that the text engages in a consistent concern about depictions of violence and the connotations of violent acts. While Ward is focussed mainly on the elision of details from the battle sequences in the romance, she also demonstrates that the Middle English text is clearer than the French text in presenting the werewolf as under the control of the knight, William:

> The English poet, then, goes to great lengths not only to maintain a degree of separation between excessive violence and his knight, but also between the threat of violence and the wolf, to whom the knight is symbiotically bound. Because the knight controls his capacity for violence, the wolf can be more readily integrated into society despite his non-human form.[16]

It is this aspect of the reduction in violence in *William of Palerne* that is particularly interesting for this chapter, which goes on to look at anxieties about the depictions of werewolves as vicious and cannibalistic in two nineteenth-century texts, Richard Thomson's *Tales of an Antiquary* (1828) and George W.M. Reynolds' *Wagner, the Wehr-Wolf* (1846-1847). In both these texts, the authors present a werewolf derived to some extent from the noble or courtly werewolf of the medieval tradition, but they also demonstrate an anxiety about how to integrate this tradition with folkloric narratives about bloodthirsty beasts which prey on humanity. As *William of Palerne* has some similarities with Reynolds' *Wagner*, I will give an overview of it and consider some of the details of the depiction of the werewolf in the romance, before moving on to the discussion of the revival of interest in werewolf fiction in English in the nineteenth century.

In *William of Palerne*, the prince Alphonse is transformed into a wolf by his jealous stepmother, Braunde, who has studied witchcraft in her youth. Alphonse is typical of the "sympathetic" werewolf of medieval romance, who is usually cursed by a woman to be trapped in wolf form but keeps his reason.[17] This is the case with several other medieval werewolf texts, including Marie de France's twelfth-century *Lay of Bisclavret*, the Breton

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[15] Ward, 'Politics of Translation', pp.489, 485.
[16] Ward, 'Politics of Translation', p.484.
[17] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Metamorphoses and Identity* (New York, NY: Zone Books, 2001), p.108.

Lay *Melion* and the Latin romance of *Arthur and Gorlagon*. Unlike these romances, however, *Guillaume de Palerne* and *William of Palerne* also include a Fair Unknown plot involving the prince William, who is consistently aided in his heroic journey to return to his rightful place as the heir of Palerne (Palermo) by the witty werewolf, Alphonse. The werewolf is also the cause of William's status as a foundling, having snatched him from his mother when William was a child after learning of a plot to poison him. William is raised by peasants until he is spotted by the Emperor of Rome who, struck by his beauty, takes him into his household. There, the Emperor's daughter, Melior, falls in love with William, but as his station makes him an unsuitable match for her the two must flee the city. In this, they are assisted by Melior's clever maid Alisaundrine, who disguises herself as a page to steal two white bearskins from the kitchens. She helps William and Melior to sew themselves into the skins, thereby becoming indistinguishable from bears, so that they will not be stopped as they leave Rome. Once outside the city, they are joined by Alphonse the werewolf, who helps them by bringing them food and wine, and also by supplying two deerskins for them to change into once their disguise as bears is common knowledge. Now indistinguishable from deer, the two follow the werewolf to Palerne, where William's father has since died, and his mother's lands are besieged by the King of Spain. The Queen of Palerne spots the two disguised as deer from her window, able to see through the disguises because the skins are fraying and torn so much that William and Melior's clothes are visible underneath. She wears a deerskin herself to approach them and they initially fail to recognise that she is also human, but once all is explained William agrees to fight for her in her war against the King of Spain. He is successful and the war concludes fairly amicably. When Alphonse bows to the King of Spain, he recalls that his wife told him his son was transformed into a wolf and then drowned, and wonders if this werewolf could be that very son. Braunde is summoned and Alphonse almost attacks her, but William reasons with him and Alphonse allows Braunde to perform more magic to transform him back into a human. Alphonse is then able to reveal that William is the son of the Queen of Palerne, whom he rescued from poisoning when he was a child. The romance ends on a happy note, as William and Melior are married, Alphonse marries William's sister, and Braunde remains unpunished.

Evident even in this brief description of the romance is the fascination with clothing and disguise. The fact that William and Melior are able to take on the appearance of animals by wearing the skins has led to much speculation about what this implies about the nature of Alphonse's transformation into a werewolf. It is certainly an interesting dynamic in a text involving a human/animal hybrid to have characters successfully seem to transform into

animals through wearing their skins, and it has often been speculated that these disguise sequences may be part of an earlier folkloric version of the narrative in which the characters really do transform into animals.[18] Caroline Walker Bynum considers the fact that William and Melior wear clothes underneath their deerskins and suggests that 'the whole romance plays with the idea that an appearance is a skin put over, that bodies lurk under skins'.[19] Looking at the fact that Alphonse bathes and is given clothes as part of his restoration to human form, she argues that 'it's as if the human body were there under the wolf skin all along'.[20] Pax Gutierrez-Neal builds on this, emphasising that Alphonse's initial transformation into a wolf is brought about by the application of an ointment to his skin, suggesting that it is 'the change in his own skin that transforms him' rather than 'the donning of a wolf's pelt, the skin of a separate creature'.[21] When he bathes after his transformation back to human, therefore, 'this recurring need to cleanse the skin highlights the root of transformation as one of that very skin':

> Underneath the ointment, underneath his clothing of wolfish fur, Alphouns had always possessed human flesh. His shame at his nakedness, then, can be read not only as a mark of restored humanity, but also as a mark of his obscured humanity underneath the skin he had *worn as clothing*.[22]

Gutierrez-Neal also notes that Alphonse may look like a werewolf, but he only acts like one when it is explicitly a performance, most notably when he acquires food and drink for William and Melior by scaring unsuspecting travelers. In these episodes, Gutierrez-Neal argues that Alphonse 'puts on a melodramatic show to startle his victims' and is 'less a werewolf in these moments and more an actor in costume': 'His wolfen shape and bristling fur are superficial, only skin-deep so to speak, and do not affect his human mind'.[23] Alphonse's transformation into a werewolf therefore also involves a form of role-play.

Hannah Priest also considers the relationship between disguise and role-play in *William of Palerne*, particularly in how this relates to episodes in the text which allow

[18] Cf. Bynum, *Metamorphoses*, p.109.
[19] Bynum, *Metamorphoses*, p.109.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Pax Gutierrez-Neal, 'Like a Second Skin: Appropriation and (Mis)interpretation of Identities in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *William of Palerne*' in *Writing on Skin in the Age of Chaucer*, eds. Nicole Nyffenegger, Nicole, Katrin Rupp and Elizabeth Robertson (Berlin, Germany: Walter de Gruyter Inc., 2018), pp.169-194, p.179.
[22] Gutierrez-Neal, 'Like a Second Skin', p.182.
[23] Gutierrez-Neal, 'Like a Second Skin', p.179.

characters to play with categories of gender.[24] She notes that the Middle English romance has a more consistent interest in themes of disguise than the French source text and considerably expands the description of Alisaundrine's disguise as a male servant to steal the bearskins.[25] Priest argues that Alisaundrine's 'transvestite moment' should not 'be taken seriously' as it is 'presented as a comical necessity for the facilitation of the lovers' escape', and shows that a similar playful approach to gender roles is present in William and Melior's disguises: as bears, they are not gendered at all, whereas the donning of the skins of a male and female deer represents a move back towards the gender binary.[26] Priest argues that Alphonse's placement into this context of masks and disguises suggests that he does not undergo a 'total metamorphosis': 'It is as if Alphons has simply worn the skin of something else for a while, and is now dressed as himself'.[27] She notes that when Alphonse is returned to human form and 'the species-performance comes to an end', this also marks the moment in which 'the variable gender-performance' is concluded, with all characters 'stabilized within appropriate gender roles' by the series of marriages which end the text: 'At the end of the story, everyone can put on their own clothes again, and live happily – and correctly gendered – ever after'.[28]

Randy P. Schiff also considers the 'gender play' and the crossing of class boundaries in *William of Palerne*, arguing that Alisaundrine emerges as a kind of 'trickster figure' in her ability to destabilize categories of class and gender.[29] Schiff's analysis of the romance is based in a consideration of how the text works to uphold an aristocratic ideology, and he claims that the Middle English translator increases 'the intensity of the violence and humiliation that he inflicts on lower-class bystanders to aristocratic rites of passage', particularly in the scenes in which the werewolf steals food for William and Melior.[30] These scenes do offer a particular challenge to scholarship, as they reflect both the humour in the romance and an underlying sense of the potential threat of the werewolf. L.A.J.R. Houwen interprets many of the scenes in *William of Palerne* as evidence of a consistent interest in humour in the text, and similarly Norman A. Hinton discusses how Alphonse's actions can be read as those of a '*dolosus servus*, or tricky servant', using his animalistic appearance to

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[24] Hannah Priest, ''Bogeysliche as a boye': Performing Sexuality in *William of Palerne*' in *Sexual Culture in the Literature of Medieval Britain*, eds. Amanda Hopkins, Robert Allen Rouse and Cory James Rushton (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2014), pp.85-98.
[25] Priest, ''Bogeysliche as a boye'', p.92.
[26] Priest, ''Bogeysliche as a boye'', pp.92, 94.
[27] Priest, ''Bogeysliche as a boye'', p.97.
[28] Priest, ''Bogeysliche as a boye'', p.98.
[29] Randy P. Schiff, *Revivalist Fantasy: Alliterative Verse and Nationalist Literary History* (Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press, 2011), p.64.
[30] Schiff, *Revivalist Fantasy*, p.50.

enact a humorous and very human role in the text.[31] However, Schiff does not see the scenes as lightly, arguing that 'the three aristocrats [are] joined in an animalized circuit of predation on lower-classed individuals'.[32]

If the scenes in which Alphonse steals food are fairly ambiguous, a similar passage in which he uses his appearance as a werewolf to his advantage is even more so. When William and Melior are at risk of being discovered by a party hunting them down, Alphonse snatches a provost's young child and runs away with him, naturally leading the men to assume that the werewolf will kill the child. Alphonse, of course, leaves the child entirely unharmed:

> & þanne as bliue* þat barn þe best a-doun sette, [*happily]
>
> wiþ-oute eny maner wem* þe worse it to greue, [*wound]
>
> for non schold in þat barnes bodi o brusure [bruise] finde.[33]

On recovering his son and checking for injuries, the provost is overjoyed to find him unharmed, as are all the men present, who return home rejoicing and giving thanks to God:

> al þe puple* prestly* þat him porsewed* hadde, [*people/immediately/pursued]
>
> gretliche þonked god of þat grace bi-falle,
>
> & tiȝtli* al here* tene* was turned in-to ioye [*quickly/their/sorrow]
>
> & as bliue* wiþ blisse þei busked hem homward, [*happy]
>
> wiþ al þe murþe* vpon molde* þat men miȝt diuise. [*mirth/earth][34]

The danger to the child is arguably more evident in the French romance, in which he is described as crying and screaming in fear, a further suggestion that the Middle English text attempts to tone down the possibility of violence even more than in its source. Gutierrez-Neal notes that the idea of the werewolf as a murderous beast was known in the Middle Ages, but Alphonse only performs as one of these werewolves without ever truly becoming one. She argues that the only moment in which Alphonse 'seems to embody the vicious, murderous predator that the werewolf was known to be' is when he almost attacks Braunde.[35] However, to the other characters in the narrative, such as the provost and the men who help hunt the werewolf after it steals his child, Alphonse does embody this very concept. Hinton compares Alphonse to Gervase of Tilbury's description of murderous werewolves and notes that

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[31] L.A.J.R. Houwen, "Breme Beres' and 'Hende Hertes': Appearance and Reality in *William of Palerne*' in *Loyal Letters: Studies on Medieaval Alliterative Poetry & Prose*, eds. L.A.J.R. Houwen and A.A. MacDonald (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1994) pp.223-238; Norman Hinton, 'The Werewolf as *Eiron*: Freedom and Comedy in *William of Palerne*' in *Animals in the Middle Ages*, ed. Nona C. Flores (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 2000), pp.133-146, p.136.
[32] Schiff, *Revivalist Fantasy*, p.58.
[33] *William*, 2459-2461.
[34] *William*, 2474-2478.
[35] Gutierrez-Neal, 'Like a Second Skin', pp.179, 180.

'Alphouns also seizes children, not to devour them (though he probably hopes that the provost and his army will fear this) but to carry them off to a place of safety'.[36] Hinton uses this as further evidence of Alphonse's ability to utilise animal behaviour in the service of a human role in the text, but it is also interesting to note that what Alphonse relies on here is a belief in the minds of these characters in the idea of a monstrous werewolf.[37] This is a text which continually draws attention to how onlookers would perceive an event, for example when a boy witnesses a deer stand up on its hind legs to pick up its companion and carry her off a boat: Melior has hurt her leg, but William's chivalry appears comical and absurd when considered from the perspective of one who truly believes he is seeing animals. The shift in perspective is part of the humour of the text, but it also draws the reader's focus to the idea that most of the events of this narrative might appear very strange to an onlooker who did not know the story. Leslie A. Sconduto considers how these different perspectives influence the depiction of the werewolf as he snatches the young Guillaume in *Guillaume de Palerne*:

> To Guillaume's distraught mother, he is a ferocious animal, the monster with a gaping mouth that must be feared. Yet when the narrator reveals the creature's true nature and motives to his listeners, their view, and ours, of the werewolf and his role in the romance undergoes a metamorphosis. He is the hero that must be exalted and imitated.[38]

The text therefore stages a confrontation between two concepts of the werewolf: the werewolf of romance and the werewolf of common belief. In the scenes in which the werewolf acts out the role of the 'vicious, murderous predator', the text invites the reader to consider the perspective of characters whose understanding of the scene is based on an assumption that the werewolf is a dangerous monster, and in doing so it brings this version of the werewolf into the text, allowing it to rest beneath the surface as a hint of a threat, a suggestion of the possibility that the monster might still be present, waiting to pounce. This tension between the sympathetic werewolf and the beast of folklore had been a feature of werewolf narratives since at least as early as Marie de France's *Lay of Bisclavret*, and it seems to continue into the nineteenth-century texts which revived the werewolf as a feature of Gothic literature. Beginning with a short story which was directly influenced by Marie de France, and then moving on to discuss the first English Gothic novel which features a

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[36] Hinton, 'The Werewolf as *Eiron*', p.144.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Leslie A. Sconduto, *Metamorphoses of the Werewolf, A Literary Study from Antiquity through the Renaissance* (Jefferson, NC and London: McFarland & Company Inc. Publishers, 2008), pp.107-108.

werewolf as the main character, this chapter looks at how different texts respond to the challenge of balancing the violent and transgressive implications of the werewolf against a desire to present a sympathetic protagonist.

'[N]either strict historical truth, nor yet entirely romantic fable': The Competing Forces of Romance, History and Folklore in the Richard Thomson's 'The Wehr-Wolf'

In 1828, Richard Thomson published one of the earliest examples of a revival of interest in werewolf literature in England in the nineteenth century: a short story titled 'The Wehr-Wolf: A Legend of the Limousin' appeared in his collection *Tales of An Antiquary* (1828), which he dedicated to Walter Scott.[39] It was also published in a literary journal, *The Olio, or, Museum of Entertainment*, in 1828. The story has been discussed by several scholars, including E.F. Bleiler and Du Coudray, from an edition published anonymously in *The Story-Teller, or Journal of Fiction* in 1833.[40] Thomson was an antiquarian scholar with an interest in heraldry who became a librarian at the London Institution in Finsbury Circus in 1834 and assisted with the compilation of the library catalogue, while also publishing many works of historical scholarship.[41] It is difficult to say how influential his werewolf story might have been, but its inclusion in *The Story-Teller* in 1833 suggests it had at least some impact in contemporary London.[42] It is unlikely Thomson approved of this reprint of his tale, remarking in the Preface to *Tales of An Antiquary* that as several of the works had already appeared in another periodical, they had subsequently 'received the compliment of being reprinted and mutilated,

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[39] Richard Thomson, *Tales of An Antiquary: Chiefly Illustrative of the Manners, Traditions, and Remarkable Localities of Ancient London*, Vol. 1 (London: Henry Colburn, 1828). All page references for 'The Wehr-Wolf' are to this volume of this edition.

[40] E.F. Bleiler, 'Introduction to the Dover Edition' in G.W.M. Reynolds, *Wagner, The Wehr-Wolf: A Victorian Gothic Classic of the Supernatural*, ed. E.F. Bleiler (Toronto, ON, and London: Dover Publications, 1975), pp.vii-xviii, p.xiv; Du Coudray, *Curse of the Werewolf*, pp.17-18.

[41] William Prideaux Courtney, 'Thomson, Richard (1794-1865)', *Dictionary of National Biography, 1885-1900*, Vol. 56 (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1898), pp.267-268. Courtney lists Thomson's published works, which included: *A Faithful Account of Processions and Ceremonies observed in the Coronation of the Kings and Queens of England, exemplified in that of their Late Most Sacred Majesties King George the Third and Queen Charlotte* (1820), *Chronicles of London Bridge: By an Antiquary* (1827) and *An Historical Essay on the Magna Charta of King John* (1829).

[42] It could also have inspired J.G. Reynold's play *The Wehr-Wolf, or, The Hunter of Limousin*, which was performed at the Royal Pavilion on 30th June 1828. However, Frederick Burwick identifies this play as drawing from a French werewolf story, so it may be that the two share a common source rather than the short story inspiring the play: see Frederick Burwick, 'Six Characters in Search of their Lost Playwrights' in *The Lost Romantics: Forgotten Poets, Neglected Works and One-Hit Wonders*, ed. Norman Lennartz (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), pp.21-39, p.28.

in other works, without either the Author's consent or knowledge'.[43] That his werewolf story is usually referenced in relation to its anonymous inclusion in a journal of fiction several years after its original publication is therefore somewhat unfortunate, but it reflects the fact that even to this day interest in Thomson's story is almost entirely in relation to the sensationalist appeal of the werewolf. While Thomson might have hoped for engagement with his collection of short stories on the basis of their merit as part of an antiquarian project to collect and collate old literary and folk narratives, in reality it is only the werewolf which draws attention to the collection.

Although *Tales of an Antiquary* was published anonymously, there is little doubt that it is indeed the work of an antiquarian, especially as 'The Wehr-Wolf' is preceded by an English verse translation of several lines of Marie de France's twelfth-century *Lay of Bisclavret* as an epigraph:

> 'Twas soothly said, in olden hours,
>
> That men were oft with wondrous powers
>
> Endow'd their wonted forms to change,
>
> And Wehr-Wolves wild abroad to range!
>
> So Garwal roams in savage pride,
>
> And hunts for blood, and feeds on men,
>
> Spreads dire destruction far and wide,
>
> And makes the forests broad his den.[44]

This is rather a loose translation of the opening of Marie's lay, which is translated by Edward J. Gallagher as:

> In bygone days, people used to hear, and it often used to happen, that many men became werewolves and took shelter in the woods. Werewolves are wild beasts; so long as they are in this state, they wander about in vast forests, devouring men and doing great harm. I'll now let that matter drop; I want to tell you about Bisclavret.[45]

Where Thomson focusses on the wildness and savagery of the werewolf, Marie makes a clear distinction between the werewolf and the "Bisclavret" and goes on to tell a tale of a sympathetic, courtly werewolf. As her lay seems to have been a direct source of inspiration for Thomson's story, one of the earliest modern werewolf stories in English, I will give a

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[43] Thomson, *Tales of an Antiquary*, Vol. 1, p.v.

[44] 'The Wehr-Wolf', p.232.

[45] Marie de France, *The Lays of Marie de France*, trans. Edward J. Gallagher (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2010), p.29.

brief summary of it before continuing to discuss how Thomson attempts to amalgamate some of its elements into his text.

In Marie's *Bisclavret*, the hero is convinced by his wife to reveal the secret of where he goes when he vanishes for three days each week and admits that during this time he goes into the forest, removes his clothes and transforms into a beast. He confides in his wife that if his clothes were removed, he would be trapped in beast form and, repulsed by his story, she convinces a knight who loves her to take the clothes and then marries him once it is assumed that her husband is dead. Some time later, the king is hunting in the forest when Bisclavret approaches him and kisses his foot in an act of supplication. Astonished with the beast's gentleness and nobility, the king brings Bisclavret back to court to live with him. When the knight who has married Bisclavret's wife comes to the court, the beast immediately attacks him and, baffled by the sudden change in the beast's behaviour, the king quickly deduces that the knight must have done him some wrong. When the king and his court travel to the area where Bisclavret's wife lives she visits the court with gifts and is immediately attacked by the beast, who tears off her nose. One of the king's men makes the connection between the knight the beast attacked and the wife, and the king orders for the wife to be tortured until she confesses. When the beast's secret is known and the stolen clothing has been recovered, the beast is initially unwilling to transform until he is taken to a private chamber and left alone. He then transforms back into Bisclavret and the king restores his lands and exiles his wife and her new husband. She goes on to have many children who are born without noses.

Marie's lay is one of the earliest surviving examples of this story and was translated or reworked into several other works in the medieval period, including the Old French *Biclarel* and in the Old Norse *Strengleikar*. While Marie sets aside the werewolves of 'bygone days' to tell the tale of the noble Bisclavret instead, her introduction nonetheless introduces a tension between a belief in werewolves as monstrous and cannibalistic and the nature of the werewolf in her own narrative. Leslie A. Sconduto argues that Marie constructs her story 'against this tradition' of 'the popular image of the werewolf as a bloodthirsty beast'.[46] She notes that Marie establishes these bloodthirsty werewolves as 'legends of old' but then switches to the present tense and so implies that the legends may still continue into the present day: 'This ambiguity has the unsettling effect of making her listeners a bit anxious as to what might follow'.[47] While Bisclavret 'says nothing about killing or eating men', there

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[46] Sconduto, *Metamorphoses*, p.33.
[47] Sconduto, *Metamorphoses*, p.34.

always seems to be the possibility that he could.[48] This tension between the sympathetic and the bloodthirsty werewolf, which could also be described as a tension between the romantic and the folkloric werewolf, is repeated in Thomson's short story, which struggles to integrate the notion of a vicious beast with the noble werewolf inspired by Marie's lay. This may be a result of Thomson drawing his story from numerous sources, but it is also a concern which seems to repeat across many of the werewolf narratives discussed in this chapter. Many of these texts seem torn between alternate versions of the werewolf, but few struggle to balance these competing narrative traditions more than Thomson's short story, which ultimately fails to reconcile the noble, sympathetic werewolf with the werewolf of folklore.

As well as being inspired by *Bisclavret*, Thomson's story is also part of a tradition of comic werewolf tales which satirise irrational beliefs and superstitions, most notably Abbé Laurent Bordelon's *A History of the Ridiculous Extravagences of Monsieur Oufle* (1710).[49] In Bordelon's story, Monsieur Oufle becomes convinced he has been transformed into a wolf and runs through the streets of Paris howling.[50] This text inspires much of the comic subplot of 'The Wehr-Wolf', while *Bisclavret* inspires the courtly werewolf plot. Thomson's attempts to merge these two narratives often produces an uneasy and uncomfortable effect, which Du Coudray describes as an oscillation between 'rationalist and romantic values'.[51] Thomson opens his short story much as Marie opened her lay, with some contextual information about the werewolf legend. Thomson explains that 'The ancient Province of Poictou, in France, has long been celebrated in the annals of Romance, as one of the most famous haunts of those dreadful animals, whose species is between a phantom and a beast of prey; and which are called by the Germans, Wehr-Wolves, and by the French, Bisclavarets, or Loups Garoux'.[52] Evidently, any distinction between Bisclavret and the vicious werewolf is lost entirely here. Thomson goes on to add that 'To the English, these midnight terrors are yet unknown, and almost without a name; but when they are spoken of in this country, they are called by way of eminence, Wild Wolves!'.[53] Thomson's certainty that there is barely even a name for the werewolf in England seems to confirm the idea that in English literature and folklore the concept of the werewolf held little sway until it was revived in the nineteenth century by a combination of a renewed interest in medieval werewolf texts, as evidenced by his own

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[48] Ibid.
[49] Du Coudray, *Curse of the Werewolf*, pp.12-13, 17.
[50] Du Coudray, *Curse of the Werewolf*, p.13.
[51] Du Coudray, *Curse of the Werewolf*, p.18.
[52] 'The Wehr-Wolf', pp.232-233.
[53] 'The Wehr-Wolf', p.233.

interest in *Bisclavret*, and the growing fascination with the concept of the werewolf in Gothic fiction.

While Thomson may have read Marie's lays in French, possibly in the collection of her works published by B. De Roquefort in 1820, there was also a growing interest in translating her poems into English in the early nineteenth century.[54] Indeed, as early as 1805, George Ellis had published loose prose translations of some of Marie's lays in an Appendix to *Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances*.[55] Ellis provides a translation for *Bisclavret*, indicating that this is the earliest English translation of the text that he was aware of, as he skips those lays which had already appeared in translation in other works.[56] Thomson's invention of an English werewolf story inspired by a French text can perhaps be seen as a mirror of the process through which antiquarian scholarship was bringing medieval French romance into the English public imagination. In his short story, Thomson combines an interest in antiquarianism with a desire to produce a compelling narrative with Gothic elements, as I will discuss below, while also consistently showing an awareness of the existence of the werewolf as a folkloric tradition. In this sense, Thomson's story seems emblematic of a significant moment in the history of werewolf literature in England, capturing the competing interests of antiquarianism, folklore and the Gothic in the movement of the werewolf story in English from an all-but forgotten medieval idea to a popular horror story.

To return to 'The Wehr-Wolf', the story concerns a werewolf named Gaspar living with his daughter in the forest of Limousin. This narrative is a reworking of *Bisclavret*, with elements also drawn from *The Tempest*, in which the noble Gaspar is exiled from the court of Francis I after his former friend, the Count De Saintefleur, frames him for treason. Gaspar spends ten years living in the Harz Forest with his wife and daughter, unable to return to court and clear his name because of a vow he made to De Saintefleur that he would never tell the King of his treachery. After the death of his wife, Gaspar considers breaking his vow and travels back to France with his daughter, Adéle, but on seeing 'the afflicting changes which ten years of the severest labour, and the most heartfelt sorrow, had made upon his form' he changes his mind and remains in the forest in St. Yrieux 'under the guise of a hunter'.[57] At

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[54] B. de Roquefort, *Poésies de Marie de France: Poète anglo-normand du XIIIe siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris: Chasseriau Libraire, 1820).

[55] George Ellis, *Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme and Edinburgh: Constable, 1805, repr. 1811; revised edn. London: Bohn (Bohn's Antiquarian Library), 1848).

[56] Ellis, *Specimens*, pp.148-155.

[57] 'The Wehr-Wolf', p.243. Note this is Thomson's spelling of the name "Adéle".

some time after this, a werewolf begins terrorising the local residents of the area and it is later revealed that this werewolf is Gaspar. It is unclear, however, how or why he became a werewolf, but several passages seem to locate the source of his transformation in his ostracization from society. Indeed, Gaspar's transformation seems to be a direct result of his inability to either return to the court or integrate into the society of St. Yrieux, as he responds to Adéle's request that he seek a safer occupation than hunting with an angry outburst against the idea of becoming a labourer:

> "What wouldst have me to do, girl?" interrupted Gaspar impatiently; "would'st have me put this hand to the sickle, or the plough, which has so often grasped a sword in the battle, and a banner-lance in the tournament? or shall a companion of Le Saint-Esprit become a fellow-handworker with the low artizans of this miserable town? I tell thee Adéle, that but for thy sake I would never again quit the forest, but would remain there in a savage life, till I forgot my language and my species, and became a Wehr-wolf, or a wild buck!"[58]

It seems the decision to remain in the forest with Adéle rather than attempt to clear his name at court is enough to enact this loss of humanity, though, and werewolf attacks begin occurring in St. Yrieux not long after Gaspar's arrival there. At this point, the narrative shifts focus to the perspective of the townspeople who are discussing the nature of werewolves when a man bursts into the tavern clutching a wolf's paw and describes how he cut it off after being attacked by the werewolf. Thomson does not reveal until later in the text that this is De Saintefleur and so it is not until after the townspeople have mobilised against the brutal, monstrous werewolf that the idea of the sympathetic, noble werewolf returns to the narrative. This is again disrupted, however, when the werewolf kills De Saintefleur and is himself killed in turn.

Dolores Warwick Frese has discussed the importance of Bisclavret's inability to speak in relation to how Marie responds to the complexities of the relationship between oral and written narrative traditions, describing Bisclavret's "pantomime" of fealty to the King as 'a touching record of archaic performance undertaken by one whose voice has been silenced'.[59] Sconduto places similar emphasis on the importance of Bisclavret's silence, noting that he does not speak after returning to human form and so the audience is 'forced to

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[58] 'The Wehr-Wolf', p.238.
[59] Dolores Warwick Frese, 'The Marriage of Woman and Werewolf: Poetics of Estrangement in Marie de France's "Bisclavret"' in *Vox intexta: Orality and Textuality in the Middle Ages*, eds. A.N. Doane and Carol Braun Pasternack (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), pp.183-202, p.184.

interpret the text that Bisclavret creates' through his silent performances.[60] In Marie's lay, Bisclavret's inability to speak is not only a significant aspect of the plot, it also reflects an engagement with ideas about different forms of narratives and how readers or audiences interpret them. Thomson, on the other hand, hints at such ideas and then shifts away from them entirely. He refers to the concept of the mute werewolf when Gaspar associates becoming a werewolf with losing his language, but this loss does not occur: in wolf form, Gaspar cries out to De Saintefleur that the time of vengeance has come before killing him. Where Marie does not let Bisclavret speak even after he returns to human form, in 'The Wehr-Wolf' it seems that Gaspar could have explained his situation at any time. He always has the option to choose life over vengeance, just as he has the option to choose to return to court but decides to remain in the forest.

A significant portion of 'The Wehr-Wolf' is focussed on the reaction of the local people to the news that a werewolf has taken up residence in the forest: despite the rumour that the 'lacerated' and 'only half devoured' remains of several children have been discovered, the townspeople have no intention of attempting to fight the werewolf but rather decide on 'adding a more secure fastening to every window'.[61] When they meet up at the local inn to discuss the matter, pompous surgeon Dr Du Pilon discourses at length on the nature of werewolves, arguing with the others on such important matters as whether a werewolf would bark or howl and citing such reputable sources as 'Hornhoofius, in his Treatise de Diabolus, lib. xiv. cap.23'.[62] Du Pilon eventually becomes convinced that he has been infected with lycanthropy through a scratch from the severed paw of the werewolf, and all the various cures he has suggested ultimately amount to the other townspeople beating him with sticks until he is convinced that he is no longer a werewolf. The story is, therefore, as much a satire of antiquarian scholarship as it is a werewolf tale, with Du Pilon soundly punished for his unquestioning faith in his dubious historical sources.

It is also, to some extent, a Gothic story, insofar as it draws on elements of the Gothic to establish an ominous and frightening tone, particularly at the outset of the tale before it is overtaken by the comic subplot. In the opening of the story, Thomson evokes a distant, ancient province, 'celebrated in the annals of Romance', haunted by phantoms of legend which 'wander out by midnight, far from their own hills and mountains, and run howling through the silent streets of the nearest towns and villages, to the great terror of the

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[60] Sconduto, *Metamorphoses*, pp.46-47.
[61] 'The Wehr-Wolf', p.244, 245.
[62] 'The Wehr-Wolf', p.254.

inhabitants'.[63] It would be no surprise if this story struck the imagination of Gothic authors, and indeed Thomson's note that werewolves are often thought to be 'men in compact with the Arch Enemy, who have the power of assuming the form and nature of wolves at certain periods' is echoed, though probably coincidentally, in George W.M. Reynolds' use of a pact with a demon as the source of the werewolf's powers in *Wagner the Wehr-Wolf*.[64]

'The Wehr-Wolf' also shows a concern with the relationship between folklore and literature in the werewolf narrative. It is certainly no coincidence that Thomson chose Marie's mention of other werewolf traditions, including the reference to the belief that werewolves eat men, as his epigraph. The traditions of werewolf stories to which Marie is referring find their place in Thomson's story in the form of the local knowledge of the townspeople: Du Pilon repeatedly interrupts their discussion of the werewolf to lecture them with his superior knowledge of ancient sources, none of which prove useful when the learned doctor is confronted with an actual witness to the werewolf. The clash between Du Pilon's scholastic sources and the locals' knowledge is left somewhat unresolved though: whilst Du Pilon himself becomes an object of ridicule, some of his facts do seem to line up with the events of the narrative. In particular, Du Pilon's insistence that the werewolf must be struck on the forehead with a forked branch seems less absurd when the wounded man explains that he did exactly that and it had the effect of revealing Gaspar's human form to him, if only for a moment.

Thomson seems to be playing with the idea that not all knowledge can be gained from a thorough study of ancient texts, while at the same time legitimising some of that knowledge as accurate. He is therefore, in this story, enacting the concerns about the reader's interpretation of the texts that he discusses in the Preface to the collection. Thomson initially dismisses the supernatural stories of *Tales of an Antiquary* as 'unconsidered trifles' which should be overlooked by 'the dignity of an Annalist' as lacking either sufficient detail or verification to be useful, being only 'hints of strange events, blended with public history, of which nothing but a few words remain, and those, unsatisfactory, or of doubtful import'.[65] However, in noting that these fragments are a blend of both history and oral tradition, Thomson claims that they are 'neither strict historical truth, nor yet entirely romantic fable' and cautions the reader 'against being too incredulous of them, lest he reject the very words

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[63] 'The Wehr-Wolf', p.233.
[64] 'The Wehr-Wolf', p.233.
[65] Thomson, *Tales of an Antiquary*, Vol. 1, p.iii. I am grateful to Alex Davis for pointing out that "unconsidered trifles" is a quotation from *The Winter's Tale*, in which the thief and trickster Autolycus refers to himself as a 'snapper-up of unconsidered trifles' (IV.3.26).

and circumstances of truth'.[66] This potentially explains the positioning of different forms of literary and historical authority in 'The Wehr-Wolf': neither Du Pilon's antiquarian knowledge or the folk knowledge of the local people is entirely accurate, and neither is necessarily superior to the other. In fact, rather than being a tale of Gothic nightmarish qualities, the story may be an allegory of an antiquarian's nightmare: a jumble of contradictory sources, some written, some oral, some historical, some contemporary, all claiming to be accurate and valid, overwhelm the narrative and prevent a clear picture of the history from ever emerging. Romance is just one of these sources, driving the story of Gaspar as the wronged, noble hero familiar in medieval romance, even as the folkloric narrative of the savage werewolf intrudes into this tale to undermine it. Indeed, Thomson never comments on the fact that his hero appears to have killed and partially devoured several local children. While Marie carefully distinguishes between Bisclavret and the vicious werewolves of folklore, Thomson's story pits three different forms of werewolf narrative against one another: the werewolf in romance, the werewolf in folklore and the werewolf in scholarship all struggle for dominance in this tale, with none ultimately winning out. In the debate between the scholar, the locals and the romance hero, Thomson does not seem too eager to take a side.

There is an uneasiness about the depiction of cannibalism in werewolf narratives in Thomson's story, but where Marie deals with this problem by eliding the cannibalism from her tale, Thomson contains the anxiety about the status of a cannibalistic hero within the safety of humour. The murdered children are mentioned only in relation to the muted reaction of the townspeople and in preface to their decision to deal with the werewolf problem by meeting in the inn and regaling each other with fantastic stories, rather than attempting any more heroic or effective solutions. In a sense, Thomson's story literalises the distinction between the folkloric werewolf and the romance werewolf that Marie refers to in *Bisclavret* by telling two stories at once: children can be eaten in a parodic tale about pompous scholars and drunken townsfolk based on Bordelon's *Monsieur Oufle*, while in the parallel narrative based on *Bisclavret* the hero can meet a suitably tragic end without mention of any such brutality. Yet tension arises where the two narratives meet at the end of the story, when the King's hunting party come across the werewolf as it attacks De Saintefleur. The sympathetic werewolf narrative would have the King recognise Gaspar's nobility, understand that De Saintefleur must have wronged him and discover a cure for his lycanthropy. But the peasants

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[66] Thomson, *Tales of an Antiquary*, Vol. 1, pp.iii, iv.

are out searching for someone to burn, and their children have been eaten. There is no way to reconcile these two stories without death. Gaspar, in werewolf form, kills De Saintefleur and is promptly killed by one of the King's knights in a blow which also mortally wounds Adéle:

> The Wolf gave one terrific howl, and fell backwards in the form of a tall gaunt man, in a hunter's dress; whilst Adéle, drawing a packet from her bosom, and offering it to the King, sank lifeless upon the body of her father, Gaspar de Marcanville, the Wehr-Wolf of Limousin.[67]

The packet, we can assume, is a letter Gaspar writes to explain his innocence to the King, which he entrusts to his family so that they may return to court after his death. The packet therefore represents the possibility of reconciliation and explanation, with all plots drawing together, but the story ends with Adéle holding it out as she dies, so that the reader is never granted this closure. The letter is something that Thomson himself cannot write: a conclusion to a story that is, in fact, two stories.

Thomson's text demonstrates an interplay between academic and popular knowledge in werewolf narratives which continued across the nineteenth century and into the works of Sabine Baring-Gould, who began his *Book of Were-Wolves* in 1865 with the claim that it was inspired by a visit to a small hamlet near La Rondelle. Here the local people warned him about a werewolf and managed to spook him a little: 'That this district harboured wolves is not improbable, and I confess that I armed myself with a strong stick at the first clump of trees through which the road dived'.[68] Although Baring-Gould does believe in the possibility of being attacked by a real wolf, the local people describe something far worse than that:

> "If the loup-garou were *only* a natural wolf, why then, you see" - the mayor cleared his throat – "you see we should think nothing of it; *but*, M. le Curé, it is a fiend, a worse than fiend, a man-fiend, - a worse than man-fiend, a man-wolf-fiend."[69]

Baring-Gould sees himself as a rational man of learning, and yet confesses to being frightened by the tale of this werewolf. He then proceeds to present an account of the history of werewolves, both in literary sources and in "real-life" situations. The work seems to seek to contain local werewolf narratives within an academic framework by taking a scholarly approach to the study of these stories, whilst at the same time seeking to make this information accessible to a broader audience. Although Baring-Gould's work is undoubtedly an impressive and extensive history of werewolf literature, it also represents a shift in

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[67] 'The Wehr-Wolf', p.260.
[68] Baring-Gould, *Were-wolves*, p.5.
[69] Baring-Gould, *Were-Wolves*, p.4.

werewolf scholarship away from the small circles of academics and antiquarians who were translating and editing medieval werewolf narratives towards a popular and accessible, but often less accurate, style.[70] This is not to say that Baring-Gould is not one of the academics and antiquarians, but his work aims itself towards a broader audience, paving the way for the movement of the werewolf narrative into popular forms such as Gothic and horror. Baring-Gould's book is predated, however, by George W.M. Reynolds' *Wagner, the Wehr-Wolf*, a novel which brings the werewolf firmly into the sphere of Gothic literature.

"Again those awful words!": The Threat of Cannibalism in George W.M. Reynolds' *Wagner, the Wehr-Wolf*

George W.M. Reynolds' *Wagner, the Wehr-Wolf, A Romance* was published as a serial in *Reynolds's Magazine of Romance, General Literature, Science and Art*, which later became *Reynolds's Miscellany*, in 1846-1847.[71] It was accompanied by woodcut illustrations by Henry Anelay along with various articles on diverse topics such as science, health, cooking and politics.[72] The novel is set in the sixteenth century across a range of locations, mostly in Italy and Germany, and is in some senses a sequel to another of Reynolds' supernatural novels, *Faust* (1845-6). As E.F. Bleiler notes in his 1975 edition of the novel, *Wagner* is the first 'significant use' of the werewolf motif in a modern English text: it is the first English novel to depict a werewolf as the main character and the focus of the story.[73] As well as this, *Wagner* is, to an extent, a sympathetic werewolf narrative, suggesting either direct or indirect influence from medieval romance, possibly through Thomson's short story. Although his works are little known today, Reynolds was among the most popular and famous novelists of the nineteenth century, particularly known for his "penny bloods". His most popular serial novel, *The Mysteries of London* (1844-1848) was the 'most widely read bestseller of the century' and remains 'one of the most contemporarily widely-read texts in the whole history

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[70] Willem de Blécourt details the inaccuracies of similar popular werewolf histories of the twentieth and twenty-first century: Blécourt, 'Monstrous Theories', pp.188-212.

[71] Bleiler, 'Introduction', p.xiii.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Bleiler, 'Introduction', p.xiv. In fact, what Bleiler claims is that 'no early English werewolf story survives, and Reynolds offers the first significant use of the motif in English'. I am assuming that either Bleiler is unaware of the existence of *William of Palerne* or that he is referring only to post-medieval English texts. It is also possible that he follows Sabine Baring-Gould in discounting *William of Palerne* because it is a translation from the French and so he does not consider it part of the English literary corpus.

of European literature'.[74] While many of the details of Reynolds' life are the subject of some debate now, it is nonetheless certain that he spent a significant amount of time living in France and drew inspiration from French literature for many of his literary works.[75] He was also heavily involved in Chartist politics and addressed the crowd during the Trafalgar Square demonstrations in March 1848, while his newspaper, *Reynolds's Newspaper*, was a popular source for radical politics.[76] Much of the scholarship on Reynolds' work relates to how his radical political ideologies are reflected in his literary output, particularly *Mysteries of London* and its later continuation *Mysteries of the Court of London* (1848-1856). *Wagner*, on the other hand, tends to appear in studies of werewolf literature, often divorced from a detailed consideration of Reynolds or the context in which he wrote. While this chapter considers *Wagner* in relation to several other werewolf narratives, both contemporary and older, it is also important to maintain an awareness of the novel as a reflection of Reynolds, his beliefs, and his readership.

With a long, winding plot describing the adventures of a large number of characters, *Wagner* is a rather difficult text to succinctly summarise, and as such I will focus only on the aspects of the plot directly concerning the werewolf. An old peasant, Wagner, is abandoned by his granddaughter and expects to die when he is visited by a mysterious man, later

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[74] Anne Humpherys and Louis James, 'Introduction' in *G.W.M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, eds. Anne Humpherys and Louis James (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2008), pp.1-15, p.7; Clare Pettitt, *Serial Revolutions 1848: Writing, Politics, Form* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), p.157.

[75] For accounts of Reynolds' life and work, see: Bleiler, 'Introduction', pp.vii-xiii; Dick Collins, 'George William McArthur Reynolds: A Biographical Sketch' in George W.M. Reynolds, *The Necromancer: A Romance*, ed. Dick Collins (Richmond, VA: Valancourt Books, 2007); Humpherys and James, 'Introduction', pp.1-15; Stephen Knight, *G. W. M. Reynolds and His Fiction: The Man Who Outsold Dickens* (New York, NY and Abingdon: Routledge, 2019). For discussions of Reynolds' connection to France and influence from French literature, see: Sara James, 'G.W.M. Reynolds and the Modern Literature of France' in *G.W.M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, eds. Anne Humpherys and Louis James (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2008), pp.19-32; Robin McWilliam, 'The French Connection: G.W.M. Reynolds and the Outlaw Robert Macaire' in *G.W.M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, eds. Anne Humpherys and Louis James (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2008), pp.33-49; Berry Chevasco, 'Lost in Translation: The Relationship between Eugène Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris* and G.W.M. Reynolds's *The Mysteries of London*' in *G.W.M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, eds. Anne Humpherys and Louis James (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2008) pp.135-147; Avril Horner, 'Victorian Gothic and National Identity: Cross-Channel 'Mysteries'' in *The Victorian Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp108-123; Jennifer Conary, 'G. W. M. Reynolds, the Paris Advertiser, and the Anglo-Parisian Press', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 53(2) (2020), 214-237.

[76] For discussions of Reynolds' politics, see: Ian Haywood, 'George W.M. Reynolds and 'The Trafalgar Square Revolution': Radicalism, the Carnivalesque and Popular Culture in Mid-Victorian England', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 7(1) (2002), 23-59; Michael H. Shirley, 'G.W.M. Reynolds, *Reynolds's Newspaper* and Popular Politics' in *G.W.M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, eds. Anne Humpherys and Louis James (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2008), pp.75-89; Juliet John, 'Reynolds's *Mysteries* and Popular Culture' in *G.W.M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, eds. Anne Humpherys and Louis James (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2008), pp.163-177; Louis James, 'From Egan to Reynolds: The Shaping of Urban 'Mysteries' in England and France, 1821–48', *European Journal of English Studies*, 14(2) (2010), 95-106; Pettitt, *Serial Revolutions*, pp.146-157.

revealed to be Faust. Wagner accepts Faust's offer to be granted youth and wealth if he takes on a terrible curse – the curse of the werewolf. He eventually ends up living near a wealthy family which includes the beautiful, deaf and dumb Nisida and he immediately falls in love with her. He also rediscovers his granddaughter, Agnes, who had been in a romantic relationship with Nisida's recently-deceased father, the Count of Riverola, and turns up at his funeral, where she faints. Wagner brings Agnes into his home but cannot reveal who he is. There she sees that he has three portraits, one of himself as an old man, one of Faust and one covered by a black cloth which he will not show to anyone. Wagner continues to visit Nisida, with whom he can communicate through signs, until one night he realises that the werewolf change is approaching and flees from her. He then transforms in the woods and rampages through the countryside at great speed. In the morning, Nisida (who it will later transpire is only pretending to be deaf and dumb for complex purposes involving her father committing murder and her mother dying of shock) murders Agnes in a jealous rage, assuming that she has some relationship with Wagner. When the body is discovered Wagner is accused of the crime, arrested and made to stand trial. He is found guilty and an attempt is made to execute him, but at the crucial moment he transforms into the wolf and rampages through the city and then out into the countryside, where he causes many deaths by knocking people over. Through a series of unfortunate circumstances, both Nisida and Wagner end up shipwrecked on the same island where they begin to make a life together. Nisida reveals her ability to hear and speak, but Wagner keeps his curse a secret and must vanish to the other side of the island once a month to transform. The demon who cursed Faust takes an interest in the situation and encourages Nisida to demand to know his secret. When Wagner reveals the truth, far from being horrified Nisida is pleased. She admits to the murder of Agnes and encourages Wagner to make a new deal with the demon, this time selling his soul in return for passage from the island. He flees from her in horror and they both separately manage to escape the island. Wagner seeks out a secret religious order he believes can cure his curse and is told that his fate is tied to Nisida, and the curse will be broken when he beholds two skeletons hanging from a beam. Nisida returns to Florence and continues her plans to establish her brother as an acceptable heir to her late father, including several attempts to destroy the woman he loves. Wagner, too, returns to Florence and eventually a mysterious closet is opened and the skeletons of Nisida's mother and uncle are revealed. The moment he sees them, Wagner sees visions of angels calling him forth, stretches out his arms and dies. When the full details of the two skeletons are revealed (Nisida's father murdered her uncle when he mistakenly believed her mother to be having an affair with him), Nisida repents of her attempts to get rid

of her brother's bride, explains her decision to pretend to be deaf and dumb for most of her life and promptly dies. The remaining, less murderous, characters live out happy lives.

In terms of political allegory, much of the plot of *Wagner* is not especially complicated or sophisticated. In the prologue, the old peasant Wagner is destitute, lonely and hopeless after being abandoned by his granddaughter Agnes, who he will later learn was seduced by an aristocrat, the Count of Riverola. Faust offers him not only youth, beauty and intelligence but also wealth, which will allow him to "go forth into the world to enjoy all those pleasures – those delights – and those luxuries" which have been hitherto unknown to him.[77] The payment in return for his transformation into a handsome, wealthy youth is initially described by Faust not as a corresponding monthly transformation into a werewolf but as an action: "That you prey upon the human race, whom I hate – because of all the world I alone am so deeply, so terribly accurst!"[78] As Faust is the subject of another of Reynolds' novels, *Faust*, the hints about his cursed condition may serve as an advertisement to readers to invest in another of Reynolds' works. These hints continue as Faust makes vague and intriguing references to the "Spirit" whom he must invoke to bring about Wagner's transformation, a spirit whose desires echo his own: "That you prey upon the human race, whom *he* hates as well as I" [original emphasis].[79] The first time Wagner hears the condition, he shakes his head, 'scarcely comprehending the words of his guest, and yet daring not to ask to be more enlightened'.[80] The second time he exclaims "Again those awful words!" as he casts 'trembling glances' around, as though fearing to be overheard agreeing to something so unthinkable.[81] Faust goes on to explain that he will become a werewolf once a month and Wagner agrees, fantasising about the fortune on offer:

> Wagner sat bowed over his miserably scanty fire, dreaming of pleasure- youth-riches- and enjoyment;- converting, in imagination, the myriad sparks which shone upon the extinguishing embers into piles of gold,- and allowing his now uncurbed fancy to change the one single room of the wretched hovel into a splendid saloon, surrounded by resplendent mirrors and costly hangings.- while the untasted fare for the stranger on the rude fir-table, became transformed, in his idea, into a magnificent

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[77] G.W.M. Reynolds, *Wagner, The Wehr-Wolf: A Victorian Gothic Classic of the Supernatural*, ed. E.F. Bleiler (Toronto, ON, and London: Dover Publications, 1975), p.6. All page references are to this edition.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.

banquet laid out on a board glittering with plate, lustrous with innumerable lamps, and surrounded by an atmosphere fragrant with the most exquisite perfumes.[82]

In his reverie, he forgets about 'the conditions whereby he was to purchase the complete realization of the vision', but Reynolds does not let the reader forget and so explicitly associates the luxury of Wagner's dreams with the violence implied in Faust's description of the werewolf transformation.[83]

Thus, Reynolds associates wealth not only with decadence but with exploitation: as Ronald Hamilton May has noted, the condition of the werewolf comes to represent the aristocrat 'as an animal who preys on the lower class'.[84] This notion of the aristocracy was a familiar one to readers of *Reynolds's Newspaper* as well as Reynolds' novels: according to Antony Taylor, to Reynolds the history of aristocracy was a 'history of avarice and self-interest' and his penny novels were filled with a 'vision of aristocracy as rapacious and acquisitive'.[85] Essentially, to Reynolds, the aristocracy were the enemy of the people.[86] Michael Diamond also describes the extensive and virulent attacks on royalty and aristocracy in *Reynolds's Newspaper* and notes that both the newspaper and Reynolds' fiction often offered 'a radical account of English history' to counter the fact that 'deference to the past, and to royalty and aristocracy in particular, had marred all previous histories'.[87] It is worth noting, then, that if Reynolds had any knowledge of Thomson's 'The Wehr-Wolf', his novel could be seen as a kind of radical alternative to the narrative. It would not be surprising if Reynolds did draw inspiration from the story, as his works were often heavily inspired by other texts: for example, *Mysteries of London* was based on Eugène Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris* (1842-1843), while one of his earliest novels, *Pickwick Abroad* (1837-1838), has been described by Helen Hauser as a 'plagiarism' of Charles Dickens' *The Pickwick Papers* (1836-1837).[88] Given what Robin McWilliam has described as Reynolds' 'bare-faced cheek in

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[82] Ibid.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Ronald Hamilton May, *Unrestrained Women and Decadent Old Aristocrats: the Nineteenth-Century Middle Class Struggle for Cultural Hegemony*, Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in The Department of English (1999), p.74.

[85] Antony Taylor, "Some Little or Contemptible War upon her Hands': Reynolds's Newspaper and Empire' in *G.W.M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, eds. Anne Humpherys and Louis James (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2008), pp.99-119, p.105.

[86] Chevasco, 'Lost in Translation', p.143.

[87] Michael Diamond, 'From Journalism and Fiction into Politics' in *G.W.M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, eds. Anne Humpherys and Louis James (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2008), pp.91-97, pp.91, 92-93.

[88] See Chevasco, 'Lost in Translation', pp.135-147; Helen Hauser, 'Form and Reform: The 'Miscellany Novel'', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 41:1 (2013), 21-40, p.27.

ripping off other people's ideas', it is fair to assume that *Wagner* drew inspiration from earlier werewolf narratives, likely from both English and French sources.[89] Indeed, Bleiler notes that 'it is reasonable to assume' that Reynolds knew of Frederick Marryat's *The Phantom Ship* (1839), but it is also possible that he was aware of some variation on Thomson's 'The Wehr-Wolf'.[90] The fact that the short story was reproduced in at least one periodical suggests that it may have had sufficient impact for Reynolds to have come across it in some form. While it is far from a certainty that Reynolds had direct knowledge of any version of Thomson's short story, it is interesting that aspects of the plot of Reynolds' novel are essentially an inversion of Thomson's narrative. In 'The Wehr-Wolf', Gaspar's werewolf condition is a result of his move from the aristocracy to the peasantry, which is presented as a loss of identity and humanity. His simple, rustic life in the forest with his daughter is mirrored in Wagner's origins in a hut in the woods with his granddaughter, but here it is the move from this impoverished condition to a position of wealth and privilege which marks the transformation from human to werewolf. If Reynolds did know any version of Thomson's text, he subverted the narrative to align with his political ideology.

Despite the repetition of the phrase in the prologue to the novel, Wagner does not actually 'prey upon the human race', those 'awful words' which seem so particularly evocative of cannibalism. Many people are killed by the werewolf, but this is a result of him barrelling through rural landscapes at immense speeds.[91] In a Tuscan village, for example, the werewolf's approach is signalled by 'a strange and ominous rush' and 'an unknown trampling of rapid feet' before he rushes past and kills a young child:

> 'Tis done- 'twas but the work of a moment: the wolf has swept by - the quick rustling of his feet is no longer heard in the village. But those sounds are succeeded by awful wails and heart-rending lamentations; for the child - the blooming, violet-eyed, flaxen-haired boy - the darling of his poor but tender parents, is weltering in his blood![92]

The threat of cannibalism which is evoked in the prologue is therefore never realised in the text, possibly as a reflection of concerns about the novel becoming too graphic. However, in her study of the impact of the Anatomy Act 1832 on nineteenth-century literature, Anna Gasperini argues that Reynolds depicts a form of cannibalism in *Mysteries of London* when

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[89] McWilliam, 'French Connection', p.34.

[90] Bleiler, 'Introduction', p.xiv.

[91] Indeed, Du Coudray notes that Reynolds' werewolf is not 'especially aggressive' and does not commit 'acts of gratuitous violence': Du Coudray, *Curse of the Werewolf*, p.61.

[92] *Wagner*, p.23.

he describes the gravedigger, Mr Jones, eating next to a fire in the 'bone-house' where he is burning human remains, noting an ominous suggestion that 'the cinders and ashes of the dead are contaminating his food, and therefore he is ingesting dead human bodies, which makes him a necrophage'.[93] The gruesome descriptions of the corpses that Mr Jones burns, combined with his indifference as he casually eats next to the burning remains, is at the very least a strong indication that Reynolds is not an author who would be particularly squeamish about graphic depictions of violence. The passage above also demonstrates this: it may not be the cannibalism promised in the prologue, but the image of the young child 'weltering in his blood' is both disturbing and gory. As well as this, other contemporary texts did not shy away from the depiction of cannibalism, including Marryat's *The Phantom Ship*, which is likely a source for Reynolds' novel. Marryat includes graphic descriptions of cannibalism in his short werewolf story told to the main character, Philip Vanderdecken, by a seaman named Krantz.

In *The Phantom Ship*, Krantz's father murders his mother and flees to the Hartz Mountains, where he becomes abusive and cruel to his three children, Krantz, his older brother Caesar and his little sister Marcella. After following a white wolf one day, Krantz's father comes across a woman and her father, whom he invites into his home where he eventually falls in love with the woman, Christina. Her father makes Krantz's father swear that he will never raise his hand to harm Christina and if he fails in this vow then the vengeance of the spirits of the Hartz Mountains will fall on his children, who will be torn apart 'by the vulture, by the wolf, or other beasts of the forest' and their flesh will be 'torn from their limbs, and their bones [will] blanch in the wilderness'.[94] After the marriage, Krantz and his siblings notice that their new stepmother leaves in her nightdress each night, during which time they hear a wolf breathing at their window. Krantz's brother follows her one night and attempts to shoot her but is killed, and though Krantz's father piles rocks on his grave to prevent wolves digging it up, the body is nonetheless unearthed and eaten. Marcella is next. Krantz and his father discover her after she is mauled by the white wolf and once she is buried Krantz follows Christina out of the house one night and sees her removing the stones from the grave 'with all the ferocity of a wild beast'.[95] He runs to wake his father and bring him to the grave, where he is finally confronted with the horrifying truth:

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[93] Anna Gasperini, *Nineteenth Century Popular Fiction, Medicine and Anatomy: The Victorian Penny Blood and the 1832 Anatomy Act* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), p.195.
[94] Frederick Marryat, *The Phantom Ship* (London: Richard Bentley, New Burlington Street, 1847; 1st edn. 1839), p.350. All page references are to this edition.
[95] *Phantom Ship*, p.355.

> Imagine his horror, when (unprepared as he was for such a sight) he beheld as he advanced towards the grave, not a wolf, but his wife, in her night dress, on her hands and knees, crouching by the body of my sister, and tearing off large pieces of the flesh, and devouring them with all the avidity of a wolf.[96]

Krantz father shoots and kills Christina and so, despite the mitigating circumstances, he has broken his vow to never harm her and Krantz is cursed. Matt Salyer has demonstrated how this episode in *The Phantom Ship* reflects Marryat's experiences during the Lower Canada Rebellion in December 1837, as well as detailing the progression of werewolf narratives into Canada in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth century from France, particularly the legends surrounding the Beast of Gévaudan: 'Inspired partly by the national frenzy that accompanied the incidents at Gévaudan, and partly by *the voyageurs*' reception of corresponding Algonquin legends about the *wendigo*, a cannibalistic beast-man, the werewolf effectively 'moved' to French Canada by the late eighteenth century'.[97] Marryat's werewolf story is therefore deeply rooted in his experiences in Canada in the 1830s. His other novels also include examples of narratives involving the threat of cannibalism, however, including his "Robinsonade" (a story inspired by Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*), *Masterman Ready* (1841-2).[98] Evidently, cannibalism was not off the table in nineteenth-century novels.

The issue for Reynolds in *Wagner* is not that he was unable or unwilling to depict cannibalism, it is that Wagner is the hero of his Gothic romance and as such must remain sympathetic to some degree. This is, essentially, the same challenge faced by the medieval romances which sought to move a concept of the violent and destructive werewolf into the context of a courtly chivalric narrative. For Reynolds, the idea of the aristocracy preying on the human race is appealing and evocative but realising it in the text would remove any possibility of redemption for Wagner, who must remain morally ambiguous as he represents both the humble old peasant of the prologue and the rich, decadent nobleman who chose to wreak destruction on the countryside. Like the poet of *William of Palerne*, Reynolds sanitises the violence from his source texts, which would include Marryat's novel at least.

Yet while Wagner may not be the cannibalistic monster that was promised in the prologue, Nisida is almost violent enough to make up for it. May has noted how criticism of

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[96] *Phantom Ship*, pp.355-356.
[97] Matt Salyer, ''Let us wash the blood from your mouth': Revolutionary Horror and Lycanthropy in Frederick Marryat's *The Phantom Ship*', *Gothic Studies*, 20(1-2) (2018), 95-110, p.102.
[98] On the implication of the threat of cannibalism in *Masterman Ready*, see Susan Naramore Maher, 'Recasting Crusoe: Frederick Marryat, R.M. Ballantyne and the Nineteenth-Century Robinsonade', *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, 13(4) (Winter 1988), 169-175.

the aristocracy in *Wagner* is often transposed onto female characters, who face far harsher punishments for moral transgressions than men do in the text.[99] The demonisation of Nisida is one aspect of this, and May sees Wagner as a character caught up in aristocratic scandal caused by a woman.[100] Hannah Priest argues that nineteenth-century werewolf narratives such as Marryat's in *Phantom Ship* seem to recall a motif of wicked women who victimise a male protagonist in earlier werewolf stories but they 'displaced the corporeality and animalistic savagery onto the body of the female'.[101] She sees *Wagner* as an exception to this rule and, of course, in many ways it is. However, the transposition of criticisms of the aristocracy onto women in Reynolds' novel seems to also be reflected in a displacement of some of the aspects of the werewolf onto Nisida. It is worth noting, having discussed the importance of the werewolf being mute in the medieval werewolf texts, that in *Wagner* it is Nisida, not the werewolf, who cannot (or will not) speak and communicates through sign language for most of the novel. More importantly, though, Nisida's violent and cruel nature associates her with monstrosity almost as much as Wagner. Indeed, Reynolds uses a phrase to describe Nisida that is identical to one of Marryat's descriptions of Christina in *Phantom Ship*: 'her eyes flashed fire'.[102] Nisida is not a cannibal, of course, but she seems to have acquired some of the monstrosity of the werewolf. In the scene in which she murders Agnes she is repeatedly described in dehumanising terms: 'the lightnings of those brilliant, burning, black eyes' is 'absolutely blasting' as she approaches the terrified Agnes, before her 'basilisk-eyes darted forth shafts of fire and flame' and she approaches her victim like 'an avenging fiend in the guise of a beauteous woman'.[103] Agnes' reaction to this terrifying sight is curious: she is 'stupefied – stunned – fascinated, - terribly fascinated by that tremendous rage'.[104]

Nisida is not only violent, but her violence is explicitly associated with the transgression of boundaries, specifically the boundaries between male and female.[105] When visiting Wagner in prison Nisida disguises herself as a man and an encounter follows between the two lovers which is described with Reynolds' usual eroticism (indeed, Louis James

[99] May, *Unrestrained Women*, p.64.
[100] May, *Unrestrained Women*, p.92.
[101] Hannah Priest, 'Like Father Like Son: Wolf-Men, Paternity and the Male Gothic' in *Werewolves, Wolves and the Gothic*, eds. Robert McKay and John Miller (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2017), pp.19-36, p.19.
[102] *Wagner*, p.24; *Phantom*, p.353.
[103] *Wagner*, p.26.
[104] Ibid.
[105] See also May, *Unrestrained Women*, p.190.

describes some scenes in *Wagner* as 'soft pornography').[106] Here, however, the suggestion of homoeroticism seems designed to emphasise the transgressive nature of Nisida's disguise:

> For never had his Nisida appeared to him so marvellously beautiful as he now beheld her, disguised in the graceful garb of a cavalier of that age. Though tall, majestic, and of rich proportions for a woman, yet in the attire of the opposite sex, she seemed slight, short, and eminently graceful. The velvet cloak sat so jauntily on her sloping shoulder, the doublet became her symmetry so well, and the rich lace-collar was so arranged as to disguise the prominence of the chest—that voluptuous fulness which could not be compressed![107]

As well as disguising herself as a man in the prison, Nisida is frequently associated with masculinity, particularly when acting on her violent impulses:

> Terrible was she in the decision of her masculine—oh! even more than masculine character; for beneath that glorious beauty with which she was arrayed, beat a heart that scarcely knew compunction – or that, at all events, would hesitate at nothing calculated to advance her interests or her projects.[108]

Nisida's transgression of boundaries around masculinity and femininity is therefore explicitly related to her monstrous characteristics.

Nisida's depiction seems consistent with Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's discussions of monstrosity in his 'Monster Culture (Seven Theses)', particularly in terms of his definition of the monster as a 'hybrid' which transgresses boundaries.[109] Cohen argues that the concept of the monster can also be used to police the boundaries of acceptable behaviour, defining those who refuse to conform as monstrous threats to the stability of society and culture, such as the woman 'who oversteps the boundary of her gender role' or those with "deviant" sexual identities.[110] In this sense, the monster can be used as a narrative device which allows subversive ideas to be explored and enjoyed before ultimately being rejected in favour of a return to normativity and stability:

> Through the body of the monster fantasies of aggression, domination, and inversion are allowed safe expression in a clearly delimited and permanently liminal space.

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[106] Louis James, 'Time, Politics and the Symbolic Imagination in Reynolds's Social Melodrama' in *G.W.M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, eds. Anne Humpherys and Louis James (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2008), pp.181-200, p.190.
[107] *Wagner*, p.30.
[108] *Wagner*, p.50.
[109] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, 'Monster Culture (Seven Theses)' in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 3-25.
[110] Cohen, 'Monster Culture', p.9.

Escapist delight gives way to horror only when the monster threatens to overstep

these boundaries, to destroy or deconstruct the thin walls of category and culture.[111]

'Escapist delight' in a fantasy of 'aggression, domination, and inversion' seems a particularly apt way to describe Reynolds' depiction of Nisida, which simultaneously emphasises her frightening and violent nature while also implying an erotic enjoyment of her transgressions. Even as she commits murder, her own victim is not just 'stupefied, stunned' but also 'fascinated, terribly fascinated' by her. Nisida therefore seems to represent monstrosity almost as much as Wagner. Indeed, the threat that Nisida presents, both within the novel and in Reynolds' ideology, is a threat which must be contained, as her disruptions have disastrous consequences: the murder of Agnes leads to Wagner's arrest for a crime he did not commit, which causes him to rampage through the city as a werewolf after he is sentenced to execution, while her attempts to keep her brother from marrying beneath his station place her in direct opposition to the happy resolution of the narrative. The werewolf, on the other hand, is a reflection of the exploitation of the working classes by the aristocracy and as such it is not so much a threat to the social order as a mirror of it: it does not disrupt the narrative in the same way that Nisida does because it is a metaphor for the actual state of Reynolds' contemporary society and so rather than threatening the 'thin walls of category and culture', the werewolf enforces class boundaries through its representation of the exploitation of the working classes by the aristocracy. It is through this enforcement of boundaries that the werewolf takes on its monstrosity, while Nisida is monstrous in her transgressions. Reynolds therefore seems almost as inclined as other nineteenth-century werewolf authors, such as Marryat, to displace at least some of the violence and monstrosity of the narrative onto a female character. The demonisation and dehumanisation of women is a consistent thread in werewolf narratives from the medieval romance and into the nineteenth century, even where the werewolf is male.

'And yet this being wore a human shape': Clothing, Disguise and Identity in *Wagner, the Wehr-Wolf*

Du Coudray notes 'Reynolds was the first nineteenth-century writer to depict the dramatic horror of the transformation' of the werewolf, where most contemporaneous werewolf texts

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[111] Cohen, 'Monster Culture', p. 17.

do not describe the metamorphosis itself in detail.[112] Reynolds' text is therefore one of the earliest examples of a shift in the depiction of werewolves which would continue into the twentieth century, when audiences of horror films would expect to see a physical transformation.[113] Anticipating the portrayal of werewolves in later horror narratives, Reynolds presents the transformation as a brutal and disturbing process:

> But, lo! what awful change is taking place in the form of that doomed being? His handsome countenance elongates into one of savage and brute-like shape; - the rich garment which he wears become a rough, shaggy, and wiry skin; – his body loses its human contours – his arms and limbs take another form; and, with a frantic howl of misery, to which the woods give horribly faithful reverberations, and with a rush like a hurling wind, the wretch starts wildly away – no longer a man, but a monstrous wolf![114]

The sense of distancing in the passage, in which Reynolds seems to step back from the narrative to describe the transformation of 'a man' rather than using Wagner's name, is a reflection of the importance of illustration in his serialised novels.[115] Indeed, his description of the transformation does match with a specific picture, the mysterious portrait covered with black cloth that is finally revealed at Wagner's trial, after much suspense:

> For, oh! the subject of the picture was indeed awful to contemplate! It had no inscription: but it represented, with the most painful and horrifying fidelity, the writhings and agonizing throes of the human being during the process of transformation into the lupine monster. The countenance of the unhappy man had already *elongated into one of savage and brute-like shape;* and so admirably had art counterfeited nature, that the rich garments seemed changed into a *rough, shaggy, and wiry skin!* [original emphasis][116]

The reaction to this image in the courtroom is one of shock and terror: the usher 'recoiled with a cry of horror', the assistant judge cries out "A Wehr-Wolf!" and 'his countenance

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[112] Du Coudray, *Curse of the Werewolf*, p.51.
[113] Brenda S. Gardenour Walter, *Our Old Monsters: Witches, Werewolves and Vampires from Medieval Theology to Horror Cinema* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company Inc. Publishers, 2015), p.12.
[114] *Wagner*, p.23.
[115] See Trefor Thomas, 'Rereading G. W. Reynolds's *The Mysteries of London*', in *Rereading Victorian Fiction*, eds. Alice Jenkins and Juliet John (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp.59-80, p.61; Brian Maidment, 'The Mysteries of Reading: Text and Illustration in the Fiction of G.W.M. Reynolds' in *G.W.M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, eds. Anne Humpherys and Louis James (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2008), pp.227-246; Tanja Weber, 'The Media Mysteries of London' in *Nineteenth-Century Serial Narrative in Transnational Perspective, 1830s-1860s: Popular Culture-Serial Culture*, eds. Daniel Stein and Lisanna Wiele (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp.213-230.
[116] *Wagner*, p.63.

became as pale as death', and the ladies among the spectators to the trial 'gave vent to screams, as they rushed towards the doors of the tribunal'.[117] Only the Chief Judge remains calm, even as his assistants, the Procurator Fiscal, the sbirri and the officers of the court are all 'pale and trembling with vague fears'.[118] The effect of the portrait is 'thrilling and appalling' indeed, but the reader does not get to see it: the accompanying woodcut for the werewolf episode shows him crashing through a funeral train, causing the body to fall out of the coffin and killing a monk by knocking him to the ground, while the trial sequence is illustrated with a depiction of a demon visiting Wagner in his prison cell the night before the trial.[119] As the portrait is a source of such excessive horror in the courtroom, it of course makes sense that Reynolds and Henry Anelay, who made the woodcuts for *Wagner*, would not make it the subject of one of the illustrations in the magazine: the transformation is so horrifying that any attempt to reproduce such a concept in reality would inevitably fall short.

Du Coudray interprets the transformation passage in *Wagner* as indicative of an emphasis on 'embodied horror' drawing on elements of the grotesque in nineteenth-century Gothic literature.[120] She focusses on the contrast between Wagner's human form and 'the 'shaggy' form of the wolf', situating *Wagner* within her broader discussion of the emergence of a new emphasis on 'selfhood' in Enlightenment philosophy by identifying Wagner's body as a projection of 'a vision of the ideal or 'universal' subject'.[121] She therefore interprets the transformation sequence in Reynolds' novel as an example of a nineteenth-century text which treats the threat of the werewolf as emanating 'from within the Self or Same' rather than from an 'externalized Other'.[122] Whilst Du Coudray's analysis of werewolf narratives within the context of Enlightenment philosophy is fascinating and illuminating, the brevity with which *Wagner* must necessarily be treated in a work which seeks to chart the development of the modern werewolf across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries results in an interpretation which does not consider how the novel relates to its immediate context. While in general Enlightenment principles it would not be surprising to find the idea of the Self or Same being expressed as a 'white, bourgeois male' described as 'young, handsome, and splendidly attired', in a novel by the Chartist G.W.M Reynolds, circulated in the pages of *Reynolds's Magazine* alongside 'Letters to the Industrious Classes' advocating for improvements in the

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[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid.
[119] *Wagner*, pp.29, 65.
[120] Du Coudray, *Curse of the Werewolf*, p.51.
[121] Du Coudray, *Curse of the Werewolf*, p.51, 53, 3.
[122] Du Coudray, *Curse of the Werewolf*, p.53.

lives of the working class population of London, it is a slightly more controversial suggestion.[123] As Reynolds uses the destruction of the werewolf as a metaphor for exploitation and oppression, it might be more accurate to say that in *Wagner* the threat of the werewolf emanates from the externalised Other of the aristocrat towards the Self or Same of the working classes, represented in the novel by the peasantry.

More importantly, however, Du Coudray's analysis of the transformation scene does not take into account a very important detail: it is not Wagner's body that transforms in the 'shaggy' form of the wolf but his clothes. In the description of the transformation, it is 'the rich garment which he wears' that become the 'rough, shaggy, and wiry skin' of the werewolf. Understood in context, this does make sense: the clothes are symbolic of Wagner's change in station from the peasant of the prologue to the wealthy gentleman, integrated into the society of the aristocracy. As an extension of Reynolds' political metaphor, the fact that the external body of the werewolf which rampages through the countryside is a rendering of the aristocratic coverings of Wagner's 'rich garments' seems, if anything, a little heavy-handed. However, in a text which also shows a consistent interest in disguise, particularly in relation to the transgression of boundaries, the transformation of the clothes as part of the werewolf transformation raises some interesting questions about the nature of identity in the text, especially as the garments are not only a symbolic element of the transformation but also a crucial part of the plot. When Wagner returns from one of his transformations and casts his bloody garments aside, they are discovered by several officers investigating Agnes' murder and it is because of this that Wagner is falsely accused of the crime, arrested and put on trial. When Marryat's Christina returns from her deadly confrontation with Krantz's brother, one indication that she is the wolf is that Krantz and his sister notice that 'her right leg was bleeding profusely, as if from a gun-shot wound'.[124] In Wagner's case, it is not his skin but his clothes which bear the marks of his transformation to the wolf. During his trial, Wagner explains the blood on the garments by stating that it 'flowed from his own body, which had been scratched and torn in the mazes of the woods' and as he is careful not to outright lie during the trial this seems like the truth.[125] This creates an interesting conundrum – if the blood is Wagner's own, why is his human body unharmed? Evidently, in becoming the skin of the werewolf Wagner's garments have become flesh and blood, so that his guilt is written not onto his skin but onto his clothes.

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[123] Ibid.; Bleiler, 'Introduction', p.xiii.
[124] *Phantom Ship*, p.352.
[125] *Wagner*, p.63.

The idea of clothing transforming during the werewolf transformation is not unique to Reynolds' text. Indeed, it could have been suggested by Thomson's 'The Wehr-Wolf' if Reynolds did have any knowledge of it: in the short story, the identity of the werewolf is determined by the townspeople when his severed paw reverts to a human arm and still bears Gaspar's executioner's brand as well as the 'worn-out sleeve of a hunter's coat'.[126] A similar convergence of clothing and skin is found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in which Lycaon is transformed into a wolf by Jupiter as punishment for plotting to kill him and also cooking and serving up a hostage who had been under Jupiter's protection:

> Frightened out of his wits, Lycaon fled to the country
>
> where all was quiet. He tried to speak, but his voice broke into
>
> an echoing howl. His ravening soul infected his jaws;
>
> his murderous longings were turned on the cattle; he was still possessed
>
> by bloodlust. His garments were changed to a shaggy coat and his arms
>
> into legs. He was now transformed to a wolf. But he kept some signs
>
> of his former self: the grizzled hair and the wild expression,
>
> the blazing eyes and the bestial image remained unaltered.[127]

Ovid's tale of Lycaon is a potential common source for many of the werewolf narratives discussed in this chapter, particularly for the transformation of clothes into wolfskin. The blurring of the lines between skin and clothing is also present in Gerald of Wales' twelfth-century *Topographia Hibernica*, in which he recounts an Irish tale about a priest who was persuaded to give communion to a dying werewolf after her companion folds back her wolf-skin to reveal the body of an old woman underneath.[128] *William of Palerne*, as discussed above, also plays with the idea of the relationship between wearing animal skins and actual transformation, and there is a slight chance that Reynolds' could have known the romance as the first full edition was published by Frederic Madden in 1832 for the Roxburghe Club and enjoyed a small circulation.[129] A few years before that, Charles Henry Hartshorne had printed a fragment of the romance in his *Ancient Metrical Tales* (1829), in which he entitles it 'Willyam and the Werwolf'.[130] Hartshorne provides little commentary on the text though, and

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[126] 'The Wehr-Wolf', p.257.

[127] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. David Raeburn (London: Penguin Books, 2004), I.232-239.

[128] Gerald of Wales, *Topographia Hibernica* in *The Historical Works of Giraldus Cambrensis*, trans. Sir Richard Colt Hoare, revised and ed. Thomas Wright (London: George Bell and Sons, 1894), pp.80-81.

[129] *The Ancient English Romance of William and the Werewolf*, ed. Frederic Madden (London: Roxburghe Club, 1832).

[130] Charles Henry Hartshorne, *Ancient Metrical Tales: printed chiefly from original sources* (London, William Pickering, 1829), pp.256-287.

his transcription was later described by Skeat as 'in places, simply inexplicable'.[131] While Reynolds' novel has some similarities with *William of Palerne*, these are not necessarily sufficient to make an argument for direct influence. As these two texts represent two of the earliest full-length treatments of the werewolf in English literature, however, a comparative approach can be useful and illuminating.

Indeed, reading *Wagner* through the discussions around disguise and transformation in *William of Palerne* can be particularly helpful. Both texts use clothing and disguise as a reflection of transgressions of the boundaries of both class and gender, while suggesting that these are also elements in the transgression of boundaries between human and animal. However, there is a limit to the extent to which Alphonse can be interpreted as being disguised as a werewolf or trapped in a wolfskin, whereas in *Wagner* not only is it explicit that the skin of the wolf is representative of Wagner's clothes rather than his body, but the implications of this extend beyond the nature of the werewolf and into the nature of Wagner as a human as well. Even if Alphonse is not in disguise as such, it is still true that his power as the werewolf comes from his mind, representative of his human nature, and his ability to *appear* to be a werewolf: he tricks the characters hunting down William and Melior because they believe that he will act as a werewolf would and kill the child, while in fact his actions reflect his nobility. On the other hand, Wagner's power as the werewolf comes from his supernatural speed and strength, while his appearance, the 'rough, shaggy, and wiry skin', is only an external symbol of his monstrosity and his descent into animalistic rage. If Wagner's clothes map onto the wolfskin, then they are also only an external symbol of something unnatural and potentially monstrous, Wagner's youthful body. In *William of Palerne*, characters take on and off disguises and play with gender, class and species boundaries but ultimately the narrative returns to stability, with all categories restored. In *Wagner*, it seems hard to determine where a disguise ends and a body begins. The skin of the werewolf maps onto Wagner's clothes, so that the clothes are torn and bleeding while Wagner's human skin remains intact. Yet this skin is also a disguise, an unnatural form for a man who has been transformed through demonic intervention. While Du Coudray interprets the focus on the 'young, handsome, and splendidly attired' body of Wagner before the transformation as a reflection of an Enlightenment universal subject, 'indistinguishable from other human bodies', descriptions of the perfection of Wagner's body in the novel recall his demonic pact

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[131] Walter. W. Skeat, 'Introduction to "The Romance of William of Palerne" in *The Romance of William of Palerne: (Otherwise Known as the Romance of "William and the Werwolf")*, ed. Rev. Walter W. Skeat (London: Early English Text Society, 1867; repr. 1898), pp.i-vii, p.ii.

and the fact that his body is, in a sense, unreal and illusory. His return to human form, in which he becomes 'a handsome – young – and perfect man once more', might take on more of an uncanny than aspirational tone when considered in this context.[132]

In fact, Wagner's changed body brings him into close association with a particularly monstrous character: the demon who appears to tempt him to sell his soul in return for freedom when he is trapped in prison. This demon appears suddenly in the dungeon and immediately seems uncanny, with Reynolds describing him as having 'so withering—bitter—scornful—sardonic a smile, that never did human face wear so sinister an expression'.[133] Although he is clearly 'no mortal being', he appears in a human form:

> And yet this being wore a human shape, and was attired in the habiliments of that age,- the long doublet, the tight hose, the trunk breeches, the short cloak, and the laced collar, but his slouched hat, instead of having a large and gracefully waving plume, was decorated with but a single feather.[134]

Like Wagner, the demon has disguised himself in rich garments but here it is more explicit that he is also *wearing* 'a human shape'. That this description also applies to Wagner becomes evident when he eventually breaks the curse and transforms back into an old man before dying, when his unnatural body becomes a site of horror. Wagner's death, the promised "cure" to his lycanthropy, is brought on by the sight of the two skeletons, which a manuscript written by the Count of Riverola reveals were both stripped of their flesh by a surgeon; Riverola has the flesh buried separately with their clothing. As Wagner transforms back into an old man, the description suggests that his return to his natural body draws him closer to the state of the two skeletons as their 'fleshless mouths' and 'eyeless sockets' watch on while his mouth 'falls in' and his eyes fail:

> There – even there, as he kneels, – and now – even now, as his looks remain bent upon the ghastly skeletons which seem to grin with their fleshless mouths, and to look forth with eyeless sockets, – yes – even there and even now – is an awful and a frightful change taking place in him whom Nisida loves so well: – for his limbs rapidly lose their vigour, and his form its uprightness – his eyes, bright and gifted with the sight of an eagle, grow dim and failing – the hair disappears from the crown of his head, leaving it completely bald – his brow and his cheeks shrivel up into countless wrinkles – his beard becomes long, flowing, and white as threads of silver –

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[132] *Wagner*, p.24.
[133] *Wagner*, p.59.
[134] Ibid.

his mouth falls in, brilliant teeth sustaining the lips no more – and with a hollow moan

of an old, old man, whose, years are verging fast towards a century, the dying Wagner

sinks upon the floor![135]

The skeletons act as a revelatory event both of the history of Nisida's family and of the true nature of Wagner, revealing what lies beneath the outer image literally but also figuratively, in that they reveal the past events that underlie the narrative. All disguise is stripped away, like the flesh stripped from the skeletons, and the result is a kind of honesty in death and a grim *memento mori*.

To conclude this chapter, I will return briefly to the trial sequence in *Wagner*, as a point in the narrative which engages with the distinction between folk belief and other forms of knowledge which have been a common theme in many of the werewolf narratives in this chapter. After the entire court responds with terror to the uncovering of the portrait of Wagner mid-transformation, the Chief Judge remains calm as he finds Wagner guilty and sentences him to be executed '*precisely at the hour of sunset on the last day of the present month*'.[136] When the Procurator Fiscal points out that this is the hour when the werewolf is said to transform, the Chief Judge cuts him off:

"I am aware of the common superstition," interrupted the Chief Judge, coldly and

sternly; "and it is to convince the world of the folly of putting faith in such legends

that I have fixed that day and that hour in the present instance."[137]

Where Thomson's 'The Wehr-Wolf' depicts competing ideas about the nature of the werewolf and does not entirely resolve them, Reynolds' *Wagner* presents folk knowledge, the 'common superstition', as essentially accurate. This may be part of Reynolds' political project: the imperious judge's dismissal of the legitimate concerns of the ordinary people directly results in a scene of carnage in which the judge himself and many others are killed, painting his belief in his own greater intelligence and superiority as dangerous and selfish. However, it also reflects a necessary shift as the werewolf moves from romance towards horror: in texts which wish to depict the werewolf as a terrifying existential threat, the emphasis needs to be on the folk werewolf – the werewolf which would have torn the provost's child to shreds in *William of Palerne*, the werewolf which half-devours the townspeople's children in 'The Wehr-Wolf' or the werewolf which would 'prey upon the human race' in *Wagner*. Reynolds' novel is a key moment in the transference of the werewolf

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[135] *Wagner*, p.140.
[136] *Wagner*, p.63.
[137] Ibid.

from the spheres of folklore and medieval romance into modern horror and this is reflected in his approach to folk knowledge in the text. Running alongside a renewed interest in medieval werewolf romances, the movement of the werewolf into Gothic literature is characterised by competing ideas about the nature of the werewolf: both Thomson and Reynolds engage with the concept of the werewolf in the 'common superstition' but struggle to incorporate this folkloric notion of a cannibalistic werewolf into texts which are characterised by a desire to present the werewolf protagonist as sympathetic. Written during the early years of the revival of interest in werewolf literature in English, *Wagner* experiments with how to integrate the werewolf into the genre of Gothic romance: playing with connotations of cannibalism and transgressions of gender, class and species, Reynolds tests out the boundaries of the werewolf in the nineteenth-century Gothic, successfully drawing it from the realm of antiquarian adaptations of medieval texts and into the popular sphere.

Conclusion

"Oh, and Tom Marrok?" Laura said. "Well, that is a reference to Sir Marrok, a werewolf in Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, written in the 1400s, and you've probably read that too."

"I have," he said. His eyes were fastened on the faces of the men.

"The plots don't matter," she said. "Neither do the dates. What matters is that the names all refer to characters in werewolf literature."[1]

In Anne Rice's novel *The Wolf Gift* (2012), two characters, Laura and Reuben, realise that several mysterious men in a secret society they are investigating are, in fact, werewolves when Laura connects all their names to the authors and characters in famous werewolf stories, speculating that they have chosen to take on these names either as 'a clever device for members of a club' or as 'deliberate signals to others who share the same very special gift'.[2] G.W.M. Reynolds' 'extremely famous story' of *Wagner* is mentioned, along with Alexandre Dumas' 'Le Meneur de loups' (1857) and Frank Norris' *Vandover and the Brute* (1914).[3] As Laura describes her discovery to Reuben, however, not all of her information is accurate: "Gorlagon – he's a werewolf in a medieval story by Marie de France", she explains, to which Reuben replies "Of course. I read that story ages ago!".[4] It is, of course, curious that he recalls reading Marie de France's *Gorlagon*, as it does not exist. Marie's werewolf lay is *Bisclavret*, while *Arthur and Gorlagon* is an anonymous late-medieval Latin prose romance. Perhaps Laura's muddled information comes from her use of 'one of those books on werewolf literature' which we might connect with the popular werewolf histories that Willem de Blécourt so rightly dismisses as flawed and ahistorical.[5] As it happens, though, the reason for Rice's inaccuracy readily presents itself: the character who has taken on the name from Marie de France is Russian. "Sergei Gorlagon" certainly sounds like a far more convincing name for the character than "Sergei Bisclavret". Yet Marie de France is a name with some

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[1] Anne Rice, *The Wolf Gift* (London: Arrow Books, 2012), p.355.
[2] Ibid.
[3] *Wolf Gift*, pp.354, 355.
[4] *Wolf Gift*, p.354.
[5] *Wolf Gift*, p.353; Blécourt, 'Monstrous Theories', p.188.

weight, and it would be a shame not to mention her. Hence a quick sleight of hand and Rice can both refer to Marie de France's lay and still have a believable character name based on an existing werewolf narrative. Accuracy is not the point here. Rice's list serves a function in the plot, but it also serves to ground her own werewolf narrative in the idea of a long and ancient history of werewolves, without attempting to enter into specifics on the details of this history or the texts that produce it. As Laura remarks, "[t]he plots don't matter" and "[n]either do the dates".[6] In the use of medieval werewolf texts in Gothic literature, accuracy will be observed insofar as it serves the plot. Beyond that, the facts don't matter.

This is, in essence, the crux of how medieval romance appears in Gothic literature. Even an author like Clara Reeve, with a genuine interest in the history of literature, uses the medieval past as a stage for the projection of her own interests, producing a novel that, perhaps ironically, does mirror some of the values and concerns of Middle English romance despite rooting its own values and concerns firmly in eighteenth-century politics and ethics. The use of a constructed medieval setting to reflect contemporary concerns is also evident in the works of authors like Francis Lathom and William Henry Ireland who, against a backdrop of scepticism and scrutiny in the production and dissemination of historical texts, invent medieval manuscripts to critique contemporary literary and antiquarian cultures. James White, on the other hand, evokes real medieval romances but places them into imagined manuscripts in abbeys and monasteries that were fated to fall into ruin, repeatedly depicting the destruction of historical artefacts to undermine the authority of contemporary antiquarians and historians. In a similar vein, James Hogg resituates the Middle English romance in a living, evolving and atemporal tradition of interaction between written and oral narratives to challenge and criticise the antiquarian impulse to collect, categorise and stabilise local and folkloric traditions. Finally, in the werewolf narratives of the nineteenth century, the sympathetic werewolf of romance is blended with the vicious werewolf of folklore to produce a version of the myth that works for the Gothic, taking the elements from medieval romance that are compelling and appropriate for a Gothic formation of the werewolf while eliding or amending those aspects that do not appeal. In later werewolf narratives, including Rice's novel, the medieval past plays an authenticating role in establishing the concept of the werewolf as one rooted in tradition and history, while details and facts about the medieval romances are ignored or glossed over.

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[6] *Wolf Gift*, p.355.

What all these approaches to medieval romance have in common is the desire to evoke a notion of literary heritage to be utilised for the author's own ends, with varying degrees of regard for the actualities of medieval literature and culture. Lathom and Ireland's imagined manuscripts, Reeve's list of Middle English "prose" romances in the *Progress*, White's vanishing artefacts, Hogg's broken tradition and the werewolf's vague roots in folkloric and romantic history, all involve a process of rewriting the concept of the medieval romance to serve the aims of the author. The relationship between Middle English romance and Gothic literature, then, might be described as one of curation and collation, in which the medieval texts are mined for details that may be attractive to the Gothic mode or paraded as puppets in a series of debates about the nature of history, tradition and literature in contemporary political, historiographical and antiquarian discourses. The romance is a contested site in these discourses, torn between competing narratives about the uses that the past can serve in the present and the nature of history itself. Most of all, though, medieval romance is torn between what it actually is and what the Gothic wants it to be. An ongoing process of reinvention, rewriting, projection and imagination, the Gothic engagement with medieval romance often bears little relation to the realities of the medieval texts. More interested in the ways in which Middle English romance can be utilised in contemporary literary, cultural and political discourses than in the romances themselves, Gothic fiction has a tendency to produce responses to the romances that ignore inconvenient details about the texts while either reworking aspects of them into a distinctly modern mode or simply evoking the idea of them as authenticating background detail. In other words, as Rice so aptly puts it, when the Gothic encounters the medieval, the plots and dates don't matter.

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I, Charlotte Anne Kennedy, do hereby certify that this thesis, submitted for the degree of PhD, which is approximately 79,500 words in length, has been written by me, and that it is the record of work carried out by me, or principally by myself in collaboration with others as acknowledged, and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for any degree. I confirm that any appendices included in my thesis contain only material permitted by the 'Assessment of Postgraduate Research Students' policy.

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