The presentation of masculine experience in the English Gothic novel.

Buchanan, Alison Susan

The Presentation of Masculine Experience in the English Gothic Novel 1760-1818

A Thesis

submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

at

Durham University

by

Alison Susan Buchanan

December 1997

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Acknowledgments

I am very grateful for the guidance, patience and assistance of Dr. Pamela Clemit, my supervisor. I would also like to thank the other people who have supported and encouraged me throughout the writing of this thesis. First, and most importantly, I would like to thank my parents for all the love and generosity they have shown me. Without them this would not have been possible. I would also like to thank Dr. Faith Gildenhuys for the help and encouragement she has shown, and for sowing the seeds of the initial idea. Dr. Robin Dix very kindly read an early draft. Without the intellectual and emotional support of friends such as John Metson and Elaine, Wa'ed Spoul and Liam Keating, Ricardo Estée-Wale, Gillian Boughton, Margaret Sönmez, Simone Gunzenhauser, Gilbert Roberts and Mairi Van Looy who never lost faith I would have been lost. I would also like to say how grateful I am for the help and sympathy of Nina, Jason and Elizabeth, without whom I could not have stayed in Durham. Others have kept me going over the years it has taken to complete, and this list is extensive. It includes most particularly Phil and Rosemary Betts, Ann and Nigel Stacey, Ann and Peter Fraser, Geoff Williams, Alison Marshall, Kitty Sherratt and the Wray family all of whom have boosted my flagging confidence and kept me sane. Without the encouragement of all my friends at home, especially Michelle Gosselin, Fred and Natalie Jones, Madeleine Guibert, Renée Gosselin, Brenda Ball, Sheila Bowes, Barbara and Richard Eade, Gary Pinder and Peggy Cobbett I would have felt very dispirited at times. I remember those who have been silently supportive, Larry and Horace. I thank you all. Finally, I would like to say a very special thank you to Tom Sherratt whose concern to see the final draft completed certainly equalled my own.

Thesis Abstract

This thesis contends that Gothic fiction is centrally concerned with the disintegration of the literary experience of masculinity, and the decline of an ideal of masculine heroism. The thesis examines the gender of literary heroism and the absence of usable discourses of male virtue in specifically Gothic fiction. The argument is that Gothic fiction takes the social crisis of masculinity as one of its major concerns, and that this is expressed through the startling incongruity between the images of masculinity the novels inspire and the literal portrayals of agonised and emasculated masculine experience the novels present. Furthermore, the thesis argues that this discrepancy animates the increasingly inappropriate and distorted displays of heroic virtue figured in Gothic fiction.

The thesis opens by arguing that anxiety over heroic virtue found in Gothic develops from socio-literary manifestations of uncertainty over the meaning of maculine virtue. The first chapter explores early Gothic novels by Horace Walpole, Clara Reeve and Sophia Lee which introduce the Gothic preoccupation with the absence of effective literary heroism. Subsequently, the thesis proceeds to argue, through an examination of Radcliffe's early novels, that established forms of romance are consciously subverted in her Gothic form in order to illustrate the prevailing absence of male virtue. The publication of William Godwin's Caleb Williams is a pivotal moment in the history of Gothic fiction, and the thesis uses Godwin's subsequent Gothic novel, St. Leon, as evidence of the continuing manipulation of Gothic plot devices to illustrate changing ideals of heroic virtue. In Godwin's novels there is a shift from earlier novelistic dramatisations of the ramifications of the disintegration of the male subject as literary hero on the female experience, to a dramatisation of the disintegration of the masculine consciousness, and this subjective account of masculine torment broadens Gothic access to examinations of the paradox of male virtue. Thus, there is an expansion of the Gothic genre in The Monk and The Italian, encompassing the subjective experience of the disintegration of models of masculine heroic from a largely masculine perspective, yet engaging with contemporary discourses of gender and social responsibility. The thesis concludes with a reading of the failure to reconstruct heroic experience from existing models in Frankenstein. This deficiency is illustrated in the novel's transformation of failed heroic endeavour into a myth of masculine experience, disguising the social and personal hollowness of ideals of heroic virtue. Myths of male heroic virtue are replicated in each individual narrative of Frankenstein, so that the novel itself becomes a literalisation of the history of heroic traditions, indicating that further generations of men will be forced, with Gothic inevitability, into reproducing the failures of male virtue that their forefathers mythologised.

In this way, the thesis aims to suggest a new way of reading Gothic fiction. With a perception of the changing dynamics of literary heroism, the inconsistencies which exist between the evocation of masculine experience and its presentation in Gothic novels can be successfully reconciled with broader literary trends.

Introduction

This thesis examines the Gothic novel as a particular, and extraordinarily effective, generic response to eighteenth-century anxiety about the nature of masculine experience. This experience is rendered through the use of patriarchal history, gender stereotypes, and literary examples of increasingly dysfunctional heroic virtue. Gothic fiction's manipulation of formulaic plots creates an atmosphere of threatening inevitability. This, I argue, literalises the social experience of masculinity as it is culturally reproduced. Male protagonists in Gothic fiction are without access to a discourse of socially assimilable male virtue. During the period under discussion (1760-1818), these male characters demonstrate the decline and finally the death of an ideal of chivalric, or alternative, models of heroism in literature.

Critics have rightly moved away from discussions of the Gothic villain as the dynamic force behind the plots of Gothic novels.[1] However, the redirection of critical attention has largely overlooked a fundamental question about the absence of heroism in Gothic fiction. The nature of the heroic in literature has been examined, particularly with regard to the Romantic hero.[2] There has been, however, surprisingly little critical study of the disappearance of the heroic male in literary presentations. This absence parallels a revision of cultural understanding of masculinity, coincident with the novel's rise as a dominant literary genre. Although, as Michael McKeon has demonstrated, the sex of virtue was very much in question for most of the eighteenth century,[3] little work has been done on the problematic articulation of a concept of male virtue. Conversely, however, feminist critics have done much to redeem the

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[1]. Early studies focusing on the Gothic villain include Clara McIntyre, 'The Later Career of the Elizabethan Villain-Hero', PMLA, 40 (1925), 874-880; Mario Praz, The Romantic Agony (1933), trans. by Angus Davidson, 2nd edn (London: Oxford University Press, 1970); Lowry Nelson Jr., 'Night Thoughts on the Gothic Novel', Yale Review, 52 (1962), 236-257; Robert Hume, 'Gothic versus Romantic: A Revaluation of the Gothic Novel', PMLA, 84 (1969), 282-290; Robert Kiely, The Romantic Novel in England (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972).

[2]. See, for example, Colin Burrow, Epic Romance: Homer to Milton (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), pp. 250-275; Northrop Frye, The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976); Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (1957; repr. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 33-52; Walter Reed, Meditations on the Hero: A Study of the Romantic Hero in Nineteenth-Century Fiction (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974); P. L. Thorslev, The Byronic Hero: Types and Prototypes (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1972); Praz, The Hero in Eclipse in Victorian Fiction, trans. by Angus Davidson (London: Oxford University Press, 1956).

[3]. Michael McKeon, 'Historicizing Patriarchy: The Emergence of Gender Difference in England 1660-1760', Eighteenth-Century Studies, 28 (1995), 295-322 (pp. 312-315).

intellectual status of femininity. The 1970s and 1980s saw a directed search for the female by scholars: the female author, the female sublime, the female imagination, and the hidden poetics of female desire.[4] In addition, a great deal of criticism emphasised the overall gender fluidity of much eighteenth-century fiction.[5] On the whole, a critical consensus emerged that in much eighteenth-century fiction, and particularly within the movement of sensibility, there exists a crisis in the understanding of the meaning and sex of virtue.

Many of these readings arise from the legitimate argument that patriarchal criticism has for too long dominated the literary canon. Nonetheless, what has resulted is another, equally serious, critical elision. As prose fiction develops as a dominant literary genre in eighteenth-century culture, along with the culture of privacy and domesticity that accompanies widespread novel-reading, the masculine culture of the coffee-house is replaced by the feminine environment of home and family.[6] A concomitant change gradually occurs in the social role of men. In terms of women's history, the social change in masculinity is clearly not profoundly dramatic--there is no sudden breakdown in the legally and socially dominant patriarchal structures of society. Nonetheless, I argue, understanding of masculine experience shifts

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[4]. See, for example, Janet Todd, The Sign of Angellica: Women Writing and Fiction 1660-1800 (London: Virago, 1989); Patricia Yaeger, 'Toward a Female Sublime', in Gender and Ideology: Dialogues on Feminist Criticism, ed. by Linda Kauffman (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), pp. 191-212; Mary Poovey, The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley and Jane Austen (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); Patricia Meyer Spacks, 'Female Orders of Narrative: Clarissa and The Italian', in Rhetorics of Order/Ordering Rhetorics in Neoclassical English Literature, ed. by Douglas Canfield and J. Paul Hunter (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1989), pp. 158-172; Gillian Beer, 'Our Unnatural No-Voice: The Heroic Epistle, Pope and Women's Gothic', Yearbook in English Studies, 12 (1982), 125-151; Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979); Margaret Ann Doody, 'Deserts, Ruins and Troubled Waters: Female Dreams in Fiction and the Development of the Gothic Novel', Genre, 10 (1977), 529-572.

[5]. See, for example, G. J. Barker-Benfield, The Culture of Sensibility (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 104-148, 247-266; Madeleine Kahn, Narrative Transvestism: Rhetoric and Gender in the Eighteenth-Century English Novel (London: Cornell University Press, 1991); Michael McKeon, The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), pp. 212-272: Terry Castle, Masquerade and Civilisation: The Carnivalesque in Eighteenth-Century Culture and Fiction (London: Methuen, 1986); Todd, Sensibility: An Introduction (London: Methuen, 1986), pp. 88-109.

[6]. Jurgen Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Enquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society (1962), trans. by Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), pp. 36-51; Laurence Stone, The Family, Sex and Marriage 1500-1800 (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1977), pp. 239-261.

sufficiently to produce a cross-disciplinary fragmentation in the performance of social masculinity. This anxiety is most strikingly evident in the rise of Gothic fiction.

As a result of the discovery of this occlusion of the shift in masculine social experience, a critical gap has been uncovered in the examination of the changing nature of literary masculine experience. That gap is large, and this thesis makes no claim to fill it entirely. Indeed, this thesis examines the issue only in the particularly germane context of Gothic fiction, although its critical approach is indebted to much existing scholarship on the debate over the sex of virtue in a broad range of fictional and other prose at the end of the eighteenth century. There are certainly other areas of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature in which the critical approach indicated by this thesis could be applied to produce illuminating interpretations of masculine identity in crisis. The hypothesis under investigation here, that Gothic fiction dramatises a particular anxiety over the lack of effective models of male virtue, has revealed a deficit of critical investigations of the effects of cultural masculine uncertainty on eighteenth-century literature. This thesis suggests that such shifting uncertainty underlies the structures, and 'tendencies', to use William Godwin's term for a work's inherent moral bias,[7] of much eighteenth-century fiction, particularly Gothic. In this way, it would seem that an important element in the understanding of the development of eighteenth-century fiction and the meaning of manhood has been largely overlooked. Clearly there is scope for much more scholarly work using this type of approach.

However, this thesis concerns itself with the gender of literary heroism and with the absence of usable discourses of male virtue in Gothic fiction. The argument is that Gothic fiction takes the social crisis of masculinity as one of its major concerns. This argument derives its strength from the extraordinary discrepancy between the impressions of masculinity created by atmosphere and narrative subjectivity in the novels, and the literal portrayals of trapped, ineffectual and emasculated masculine experience. The reader's imagination is then encouraged by the Gothic formula to fill the space between the narrative fact and the demands of the fictional genre. This evokes a desire in the reader for a heroic presence, a model of heroic

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[7]. William Godwin, 'Of Choice in Reading', The Enquirer (1797), in The Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin, ed. by Mark Philp et al., 7 vols (London: Pickering, 1993), v, pp. 135-143 (pp. 138-139).

virtue. In reading the Gothic novel the reader's imagination fills a structural void with necessary heroic meaning in order to assuage a fear of heroic, and therefore literary and generic, failure.

The Gothic has roots deep in the early decades of the eighteenth century, but undeniably its most profuse flowering was in the final two decades of the century. The novels discussed in the body of the thesis are deliberately chosen from the Gothic canon. This is done in order to present the most effective demonstration of my argument. My reading of masculine experience runs counter to an established critical trend which glorifies feminine empowerment offered by canonical Gothic fiction at the expense of the crisis in masculine experience embedded in the structure of the plots. However, this emphasis on canonical Gothic novels certainly does not prevent my argument's application to other texts of the period which exhibit Gothic characteristics. Indeed, the omnipresence of Gothic elements across all types of fiction in the 1790s testifies not only to the selling-power of Gothic, but to its inherent suitability to multiple literary requirements. Those literary requirements include the imaginative renderings of heroic failures. Novels such as Robert Bage's Mount Henneth (1781), Elizabeth Inchbald's A Simple Story (1791), and Mary Wollstonecraft's Maria; Or, The Wrongs of Woman (1798), employ Gothic devices to serve broader novelistic aims.[8] In addition, the widely popular novels of Charlotte Smith (including the overtly radical Desmond (1792)), which cover the period of Gothic fiction's rise, make sophisticated and original use of many of the identifiably Gothic characteristics found in the novels of Ann Radcliffe and Sophia Lee. More radically inclined novelists like Mary Robinson found the Gothic mode useful as a fictional dramatisation of questions of social justice. Her Vancenza; Or The Dangers of Credulity (1792), Hubert de Sevrac, A Romance of the Eighteenth Century (1796), and Walsingham; Or, The Pupil of

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[8]. For discussions of 'broader novelistic aims', see, for example, Markman Ellis, The Politics of Sensibility: Race, Gender, and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 200-221; Felicity A. Nussbaum, Torrid Zones; Maternity, Sexuality, and Empire in Eighteenth-Century English Narratives (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); Kelly, Women, Writing and Revolution 1790-1827 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993); Chris Jones, Radical Sensibility: Literature and Ideas in the 1790s (London: Routledge, 1993); Todd, The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing and Fiction 1660-1800 (London: Virago, 1989); Gary Kelly, The English Jacobin Novel 1780-1805 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), esp. pp. 8-19; M. Ray Adams, Studies in the Literary Backgrounds to English Radicalism, with Particular Reference to the French Revolution (New York: Franklin and Marshall, 1947); Allene Gregory, The French Revolution and the English Novel (New York: Putnam, 1915).

Nature (1798), are all examples of this. In addition, the prolific range of lesser-known Gothic novels, including Eliza Fenwick's Secresy (1795), Regina Maria Roche's The Children of the Abbey (1796), and the novels of Eliza Parsons testifies to the variety and attraction of the Gothic for an eclectic assortment of novelists. The concern with the absence of a model of male virtue thematically connects Gothic fiction through a series of formalised plot devices but the broad sweep of this anxiety is also reflected in less overtly Gothic writing. For example, Memoirs of Emma Courtney (1796), by Mary Hays, which chronicles the passion of Emma for the seemingly unobtainable Augustus Harley, uses the unfulfilled desire for a heroic man as its driving force without the Gothic trappings of, for example, Fenwick's Secresy, in which the plot is not dissimilar.

The most readily recognisable form of heroic failure is the man of feeling, who cannot effect change but can only suffer for his understanding of human frailty. The gender ambiguities latent in the rise of sensibility and sentiment which precedes, overlaps, and, indeed, animates, Gothic fiction, have recently received much scholarly attention.[9] This critical attention has exposed the battle over the gender of virtue which informs much of the writings of Rousseau, Burke, Wollstonecraft and their contemporaries.[10] Nonetheless, much criticism focuses only on female authors of fiction, or restricts itself to anatomising aspects of sensibility. Critics who read sensibility as a heterosexual phenomenon with its own particular erotics often neglect the void that sensibility exposes: namely the lack of a genuine discourse of masculine virtue capable of synthesising influential theories of social virtue.[11] Adam Smith's

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[9]. See, for example, Markman Ellis, pp. 35-48; Barker-Benfield, pp. 240-247, 342-343; John Mullan, Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), pp. 123-135, 222-230; Todd, Sensibility, pp. 110-121; R. F. Brissenden, Virtue in Distress: The Novel of Sentiment from Richardson to Sade (London: Macmillan, 1974), pp. 68-77. For a variety of contemporary critical views on the gender implications of sensibility, see Syndy M. Conger, ed., Sensibility in Transformation: Creative Resistance to Sentiment from the Augustans to the Romantics: Essays in Honor of Jean H. Hagstrum (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1990).

[10]. See Claudia L. Johnson, Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender, and Sentimentality in the 1790s (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Rhonda Batchelor, 'The Rise and Fall of the Eighteenth Century's Authentic Feminine Voice', Eighteenth-Century Fiction, 6 (1994), 347-368; Gary Kelly, 'Women Novelists and the French Revolution Debate: Novelizing the Revolution/Revolutionizing the Novel', Eighteenth-Century Fiction, 6 (1994), 369-387.

[11]. Eighteenth-century writers on virtue and manhood include Shaftesbury, An Enquiry Concerning Virtue, or Merit (1714), ed. by David Walford (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977); David Hume, Essays Moral, Political and Literary (1742-52), ed. by T. H. Green and T. H. Gorose, 2 vols (London: Longmans, 1898), especially 'Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences'

moral philosophy, yoked as it is to the changing dynamics of commercial existence, makes the most effective attempt at defining a mode of social virtue which is at once masculine and centred around the private existence of the family.[12]

However, despite the attractions of Smith's forward-looking intimations of a commercial discourse of masculine social virtue, it is the reification of a former model of masculine community in the writings of Edmund Burke which has the greatest resonance for Gothic novelists. In both An Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful (1757) and Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790), Burke erects a platform of historical masculine honour and authority from which to observe the decline in standards of masculine heroism. The Enquiry achieves this through the delineation of a discourse of sublimity which effectively sets up masculinity as, paradoxically, a shared experience of alienation. The Reflections hesitates to pursue the theme of alienation, and instead employs the rhetoric of sensibility to envision a community of men bound by a discourse of chivalry glorified by historical distance. These views of masculine experience, which both effectively preclude the inclusion of the feminine, (as Burke famously objectifies and externalises such a paradigmatic embodiment of cultural femininity as Marie Antoinette),[13] are explored as literary archetypes of masculine heroic experience by the Gothic novelists.

I shall argue that Gothic fiction consistently inverts these paradigms to demonstrate their repressive limitations. In the first chapter I outline contemporary eighteenth-century manifestations of anxiety over the changing nature of male heroism, before entering on readings of what are essentially proto-Gothic novels: Horace Walpole's The Castle of Otranto

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(1742) and 'Of The Standard of Taste'(1742), i, pp. 174-196, 266-288; Adam Smith, An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations (1776), ed. by R. H. Campbell and A. S. Skinner, The Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith, II, 2 vols (Indianapolis: Liberty, 1976), i, 411-422; Bernard Mandeville, The Fable of the Bees; Or, Private Vices, Public Benefits (1732), ed. by F.B. Kaye, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1924); Montesquieu, The Spirit of Laws (1748), ed. by David Wallace Carrithers (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), pp. 200-206, 287-299; John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690), ed. by Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), pp. 233-287. For discussions of these writers and the crisis over manhood and virtue see, for example, Barker-Benfield, pp. 104-141; Jean H. Hagstrum, Eros and Vision: The Restoration to Romanticism (Evanston: University of Illinois Press, 1989); Hagstrum, Sex and Sensibility (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

[12]. For an account of the changes wrought on society by the new materialism, see Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, J.H. Plumb, The Birth of a Consumer Society (London: Europa, 1982).

[13]. Edmund Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790), in Burke, The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke ed. by Paul Langford et al. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), viii. pp. 121-122.

(1764), The Old English Baron (1777) by Clara Reeve, and Sophia Lee's The Recess (1785). I argue that these novels facilitate the later use of identifiably Gothic machinery to formulate plots which highlight the inadequacy of traditions of male heroic virtue. In Chapter Two the early novels of Ann Radcliffe are examined in the light of recent critical approaches to structures of romance. The argument is that Radcliffe consciously subverts traditional dependence on the male hero in romance. She incorporates the emerging Gothic discourse to reinforce the fact that absence of reliable heroic virtue invites not release, but a state of fearful apprehension. Chapter Three turns to the two Gothic novels of William Godwin, Caleb Williams (1794) and St. Leon (1799) and presents arguments for considering Caleb Williams a central, seminal novel in the development of Gothic fiction. More specifically, Caleb Williams makes the consciousness of the tormented man a viable and compelling subject for fiction, and introduces a new methodology to authors of Gothic fiction. Chapter Four examines The Monk (1796) by Matthew Lewis with Radcliffe's The Italian (1797) to demonstrate how the example of Caleb Williams changes the course and tone of mainstream Gothic fiction. In the discussion of The Monk, I argue that the novel is not merely an inspired production of a young literary dilettante, but also engages with many of the most influential discourses of gendered virtue and education of its time. The discussion of The Italian argues that Radcliffe shifts from the portrayal of the heroine's uncertain experiences of imagined heroism to the painful coming to self-knowledge of the male characters in order better to articulate the crisis in masculine experience. The final chapter argues that Frankenstein's interwoven narratives of failed heroic endeavour can be read as a sweeping commentary on, and refinement of, Gothic fiction's attempts to literalise the failure of heroic models. In Frankenstein, I argue, the repressive and limiting models of heroic virtue which other Gothic novels take as their starting point, are used to effect a literary replication of the cultural mythologising of heroic virtue. In this way, Frankenstein entirely subverts the very idea of heroic masculinity. Mary Shelley's novel represents an end to the eighteenth-century Gothic vision of tormented masculine experience requiring a coherent heroic vision. Yet, at the same time, Frankenstein points toward possible other, more poignant and individual, Gothic explorations of masculine torment.

Chapter One: The Idea of Heroism and Gothic Fiction: Horace Walpole's The Castle of Otranto, Clara Reeve's The Old English Baron, and Sophia Lee's The Recess

Gothic fiction has never been specifically examined as a literary mode designed to explore the variegated dynamics of masculine experience, or to represent the decline of the ideal of literary heroism. In this chapter, after a brief survey of the changing dynamics of heroism in various contexts in the eighteenth century, I shall demonstrate how the early Gothic novelists, Horace Walpole, Clara Reeve and Sophia Lee, respond to these changes by developing systems of heroic subversion, in form and content, which help to define the Gothic mode. In this way, the Gothic mode becomes fundamentally concerned with examining the component parts of masculine literary experience.

Considerable attention has been paid to Gothic fiction in recent years, particularly following the publication of David Punter's The Literature of Terror (1980), which broadened the scope and importance of Gothic fiction in literary history. However, the emphasis has veered away from his broadly Marxist approach. Although recently critics have turned to the social context of the family in their analyses of Gothic fiction, critical attention has tended to focus on the emergence of female subjectivity in Gothic, or of the genre as a revolutionary mode of fiction, written during a period of upheaval and acting out a severing with literary conventions that immediately precede it.[1] However, far from being a break with tradition, Gothic fiction, through its self-conscious absorption of existing traditions, is a mode admirably

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[1]. For examinations of Gothic fiction and the emergence of female subjectivity, see particularly Ellen Moers, 'Female Gothic', in her Literary Women (London: W.H. Allen, 1977), pp. 90-110; Doody, 'Deserts, Ruins, Troubled Waters', pp. 531-535; Claire Kahane, 'Gothic Mirrors and Feminine Identity', Centennial Review, 24 (1980), 43-64 (pp. 46-49) (repr. in The (M)other Tongue: Essays in Feminist Psychoanalytic Interpretation, ed. by Shirley Nelson Garner, Claire Kahane and Madelon Sprengnether (London: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 334-351 (pp. 338-340)); Beer, "Our Unnatural No-Voice", pp. 137-139; Nancy Armstrong, Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Kate Ferguson Ellis, The Contested Castle: Gothic Fiction and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology (Urbana Ill.: Illinois University Press, 1989); Eugenia C. Delamotte, Perils of the Night: A Feminist Study of Nineteenth-Century Gothic (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), pp. 149-157; Alison Milbank, 'Introduction', in Ann Radcliffe, A Sicilian Romance (1790), ed. by Alison Milbank (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. viii-xxviii (pp. xxii-xxvii); Birgitta Berglund, Woman's Whole Existence: The House as Image in the Novels of Ann Radcliffe, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Jane Austen (Lund: Lund University Press, 1993). For studies which discuss the political and revolutionary significance of the Gothic, see Ronald Paulson, 'Gothic Fiction and the French Revolution', ELH, 48 (1981), 532-534 (repr. in Ronald Paulson, Representations of Revolution 1789-1830 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), pp. 215-247); see also pp. 57-87); Gary Kelly, The English Jacobin Novel, pp. 14-19; Emma Clery, 'The Politics of the Gothic Heroine in the 1790s', in Reviewing Romanticism, ed. by P.W. Martin and R. Jarvis (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), pp. 69-85; Robert Miles, Ann Radcliffe: The Great Enchantress (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), pp. 57-72, 149-173.

suited to articulate a central concern with the changing literary experience of heroism that precedes its rise. The atmosphere of claustrophobia, of mingled nightmare and fantasy, which dominates the Gothic novel derives its power from the reader's uncertainty about the viability of literary heroism. This uncertainty forces from the reader an imaginative construction of heroic conduct to fill the vacuum, but this construction inevitably fails. In my analysis, the operation of the formulaic plots of Gothic novels depends on recognition by the reader of the romantic heroic formula and a subsequent realisation of its incipient failure. In Gothic fiction there is a conscious re-working of heroic models in order to underline the essential illusion of masculine heroic virtue. The simultaneous presence and absence of heroic experience is the key to the ambivalence of masculine experience in the Gothic novel. However, this sense of needing to redefine the nature of male virtue through a realignment of masculine roles occurs in other areas of intellectual expression in the eighteenth century. In order fully to appreciate how Gothic fiction articulates the potentially frightening implications of heroic failure, it is helpful first very briefly to examine other areas in which masculinity and male virtue were being recast as social concepts. These areas include the increasing centrality of the nuclear family to the eighteenth-century social landscape, the changing demands on political leadership this centrality produces, and an emerging aesthetic of isolated, alienated masculinity expressed in the discourse of sublimity.

Heroism and the Rise of the Nuclear Family

Gothic fiction expresses a concern with the role of the man within the family. The central themes of property, marriage and identity are inseparable from the concept of family. In addition, Gothic novelists, particularly Walpole, Radcliffe, Godwin and Mary Shelley, explore the discrepancies between developing ideas of fatherhood and historical traditions of paternal authority. Gothic fiction explores the frightening and difficult historical transition for men from the social exhibition of virtue through a shared code of honour in a male-ordered society to the private enjoyment of virtue as an individual in the newly dominant family unit, necessarily dependent on the female for its definition and continuation. The historian Jeremy Black contends that this process of redefining (implicitly male) virtue runs persistently underneath the Augustan approval of order and classical unity in the eighteenth century: 'There was a

profound sense of disquiet about the very nature of society, coming not so much from radicals, as from clergy, doctors and writers concerned about moral and ethical values. Morality was a crucial motif, and one that was fundamental to political debate and language...civic and personal honour, corruption and consistency were central themes'.[2] The nature and importance of the family, the meaning of property ownership, and the distinction between public and private authority, examined in Gothic fiction's subversion of the ideal of heroism, are concepts crucial to these 'central themes' of 'civic and personal honour'. As Michael McKeon has argued with reference to the origins of the novel, the tradition of male honour dominates much of eighteenth-century fiction, even as it splits between a lingering 'aristocratic ideology', and 'progressive ideology'.[3] These categories encompass a wide range of social, political and economic factors that contrive to change the very nature of masculine virtue. Originally, according to McKeon, aristocratic ideology arose from 'a set of related beliefs that birth makes worth, and that the interests of the family are identified with those of its head, and that among the gentry, honor and property are to be transmitted patrimonially and primogeniturally through the male line'.[4] This patrimonial structure, combined with the pervasive notion of masculine honour, generated a society built around masculine aristocratic virtue which descended through the male line and made the family a male-generated phenomenon: 'The notion of honor as a unity of outward circumstance and inward essence is the most fundamental justification for the hierarchical stratification of society by status...what it asserts is that the social order is not circumstantial and arbitrary, but corresponds to and expresses an analogous, intrinsic moral order'.[5] As progressive ideology encourages 'the detachment of "honor as virtue", from male aristocratic honor, it simultaneously encourages its relocation within not only commoners, but women, who increasingly come to be viewed not just as the conduit but as the repository of an honor that has been alienated from a corrupt male aristocracy'.[6] This shift of the locus of honour simultaneously situates the source of social identity within the nuclear

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2. Jeremy Black, The Politics of Britain 1688-1800 (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1993), p. 18.
3. Michael McKeon, The Origins of the English Novel 1600-1740 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), pp. 131-175 (pp. 150-159).
4. Michael McKeon, 'Historicizing Patriarchy', p. 297.
5. McKeon, Origins, p. 131.
6. McKeon, Origins, p. 158.

family, rather than the patrilineal one, and relocates the source of identity within the family in the female.[7] The civilising power of femininity was a given in the discourse of sensibility,[8] and was accepted as so universal that Hannah More later introduces it as indisputable at the close of the century. However, as her introduction to her essay on female education in 1799 shows, the concomitant effect of disengendered masculinity was less discussed, less widely accepted. Like writers before her, Mary Wollstonecraft in particular, More stresses the importance of changing gender dynamics on masculine behaviour and identity, and hints at a crisis of masculine experience born of the conflation of masculine and feminine exhibitions of virtue: 'The general state of civilised society depends...on the prevailing sentiments and habits of women, and on the nature and degree of the estimation in which they are held. Even those who admit the power of female elegance on the manners of men, do not always attend to the influence of female principles on their character'.[9] The angst and debilitating uncertainty of the male characters in Gothic fiction is attributable to the conflicting desire to exhibit a passive, and hence implicitly feminised, virtue of endurance and integrity, centred in domesticity, and also to assert an earlier masculinised virtue based on authority and position rooted in property.

Gradually, as the nuclear family increases in significance, the importance of lineage declines in favour of the more immediate family unit.[10] The effect of this change is to consolidate the nuclear family as the principal emblem of social identity. This emblem is, however, fraught with internal contradictions.[11] While it becomes almost an idealised state, in which, as Laurence Stone notes, 'the importance of property exchange, patrimony and dowry was undermined...by the quest for personal happiness', the rise of the family heralded, for men particularly, a prolonged sense of impermanence and isolation with regard to their social roles. The nuclear family 'involved a serious loss of identity with the lineage', and left the previously socially recognised patriarch 'as an atomized unit without a past....no longer linked to a piece of property or to tombstones in a graveyard, or to names in a family Bible'.[12] This isolation is

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7. McKeon, Origins, pp. 162-163, 219-222.
8. See Barker Benfield, pp. 215-286.
9. Hannah More, Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education (1799), in The Works of Hannah More, 11 vols (London: Thomas Caddell, 1830), v, p. 2.
10. Stone, The Family Sex and Marriage in England, pp. 325-404.
11. McKeon, Origins, p. 174.
12. Stone, pp. 396-397.

lessened in women's lives because of the rise in the importance of children and childbirth. Roy Porter suggests that childbirth was 'radically transformed' in the eighteenth century, as it moved 'from vulgar superstition to science, from the benighted past, into the progressive future'.[13] This public acknowledgement of the significance of birth, and by extension femininity, to the institution of the family further shifts the focus away from patrimonial lineage and toward the generative and nurturing faculties of the female. Necessarily, there is a reduction in the status of the masculine role within the family, and since the family exists as the base unit of society, within society itself. This adds to the sense of isolation and crisis which Stone identifies as the emotional condition of male experience in the early middle-class nuclear family.[14] It is this threatening sense of alienation and crisis, expressed through a longing to re-establish the past and to assert former models of masculine identity in an unreceptive world, which is a central feature of Gothic discourse. The collapse of a social order constructed around patrimony precipitates attempts to stabilise the transformations of social organisation through the recovery of a noble masculine past. It is my contention that Gothic fiction dramatises the threatening implications of the recovery of that past, and demonstrates how the feminine experience of domesticity and regeneration emasculates and fragments traditional models of heroism.

Gothic fiction constructs a nightmare world in which old models of patriarchy no longer function, but new and succeeding models of masculine heroism are weak and ineffective. Specifically, Gothic fiction describes the disappearance of the hero and the failure of other models of masculine heroism to operate in a transformed society without the defining exemplar of the domestic nuclear family or the animating imagination of feminine consciousness. Since the family, the perpetuation of it, and therefore the perpetuation of self and identity, necessarily depend on the female, the emphasis on the concept of family in Gothic fiction underlines the essential fallacy of the concept of autonomous masculine heroism.

Little note has been taken of the changing dynamics of masculine performance in literature which such a sociological shift must produce. However, the influence of John Locke

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[13]. Roy Porter, 'Eighteenth-Century Society Revisited', in British Politics and Society from Walpole to Pitt 1742-1789, ed. by Jeremy Black (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 29-52 (pp. 48-49).
[14]. Stone, pp. 396-397.

on the changing representation of the patriarchal family in fiction has received recent attention demonstrating the pervasiveness of Locke's influence on eighteenth-century perceptions about the moral and educational responsibilities of the family.[15] Locke's writings prepare the way for a view of the family which was contractual, based on a rational and reciprocal relationship with society, and which opposed the patriarchal model derived from the State articulated by Robert Filmer in Patriarcha (1680).[16] In Locke's view, private, domestic values extend into society, and are based on the ability and responsibility of every individual to acquire and disseminate concepts of duty, freedom and virtue.[17] However, the plight of the Gothic hero, since he is bereft of family and a domestic context, is that he is therefore ill-equipped to exercise this new social heroism as a literary heroic figure. The family, and its accompanying 'quantitative criteria of socioeconomic class', replaces 'the traditional, qualitative criteria of honorific status', with the result that 'the resilient power of 'honor' to extend its tacit sway over the range of personal identity is lost'.[18] Without the social status that family and domestic stability grant him, the Gothic hero is without identity and outside the realm of social consensus. Gothic novels evoke a sense of the heroic by involving the reader's familiarity with literary conventions in endowing the figure of the destabilised outcast with heroic potential. By creating a marginal figure without acceptable channels to social integrity, Gothic fiction challenges those conceptions of heroic identity on which it depends for its operation.

Since the male figures in Gothic fiction depend entirely on the reader to supply the context for the fear which they arouse, social consensus in the creation of normative standards for masculine heroism is therefore central to the mechanics of the Gothic novel. The basis for social consensus over the nature of heroic identity changes with the transformation of the role of the family. Locke's realignment of the patriarchal relationship, which emphasised private action as public good, was revised by Bernard Mandeville in The Fable of the Bees; Or, Private Vices, Public Benefits (1714, 1723). This essay tries to resurrect the idea of social

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[15]. Jay Fliegelman, Prodigals and Pilgrims: The American Revolution Against Patriarchal Authority 1750-1850 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 2. 12-23.
[16]. John Locke, Two Treatises of Government, ed. by Peter Laslett, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 286.
[17]. John Marshall, John Locke: Resistance Religion and Responsibility (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 296-299.
[18]. McKeon, Origins, pp. 162-163.

consensus, not as a means of determining virtue, but rather of sanctioning vice. For Mandeville, the primary motivation for action is still glory, and he defines masculine strength through the vices of pride, ambition, and competitiveness, which are employed to produce the 'superlative felicity which a man who is conscious of having performed a noble action, enjoys in self-love, whilst he is thinking on the applause he expects of others'.[19]

Mandeville's case for the potential benefits of traditional vices is redeemed and replaced within the paradigm of the nuclear family by Adam Smith in The Wealth of Nations (1776). Smith was able to articulate much more clearly a political economy which derives its impetus from the conduct of the private individual, centred around his prosperity as a householder, labourer and member of a family unit.[20] Smith is useful to a reading of Gothic fiction for his insight into the developing cultural symbolism of the home, and by extension, domestic existence. According to Smith, individuals centre their emotional, material and social identity in the physical symbol of the home, where their increased power as consumers is visible in the material rewards for their merit and virtue. Property and the home thus become symbols of intersecting codes of individual and patrilineal virtue. The home is therefore one of the crucial icons in the Gothic representation of heroic virtue and masculine identity.

Thus, property is often crucial to Gothic plots, and certainly to the troublesome question of masculine identity.[21] Property is central to the aristocratic family tradition of primogeniture, but as the nature of the family changes, definitions of property and ownership also change in the wake of Locke's writings. Locke's most explicit advocacy of the interrelationship between the individual and society is in his discussion of property. He argues that although the earth and 'all the fruits it produces...belong to all mankind...and nobody has originally a private dominion', private ownership is still defensible, since 'every man has a property in his own person: this nobody has any right to but himself. The labour of his body and the work of his hands, we may say, are properly his'.[22] This argument had already

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19. Mandeville, The Fable of the Bees, i, p. 55.
20. Adam Smith, Wealth of Nations, ii, pp. 82-99.
21. See April London, 'Ann Radcliffe in Context: Marking the Boundaries of The Mysteries of Udolpho', Eighteenth-Century Life, 10 (1986), 35-47; Poovey, The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer, pp. 10-14; Poovey, 'Ideology and The Mysteries of Udolpho', Criticism 21 (1979), pp. 307-330.
22. Locke, Two Treatises, pp. 304-306.

appeared in Locke's definition of personal identity in An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690): 'For since consciousness always accompanies thinking, and it is that which makes every one to be what he calls self...in this alone consists personal identity....and so far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that person'.[23] This is significant for readings of Gothic. Once the notion of personal identity is removed from one granted by the outside world, to one granted by the internal world of consciousness, a significant shift in the ordering of virtue and merit is made. Therefore, once the shift in social importance is made from the aristocratic extended family to the nuclear unit, this shift necessitates the reordering of masculine experience outside traditional manifestations of heroism depending traditionally on public glory and recognition for their existence. The relocation of the source of heroism within the family and the home means a significant disorientation for literary heroism, as is manifest in the Gothic novel.

Moreover, there is evidence that the disorientation and alienation of masculine heroism which the Gothic novels explore was also apparent in the non-literary world of political leadership. Where the changes in the patriarchal model of the family result in attempts to remodel or construct new figures of literary heroism and masculine virtue, similar reconstructions of the heroic ideal can be seen in the political world. By the end of the eighteenth century, a deliberate effort was made by political leaders in Britain to reinvent the model of leadership that had previously dominated political culture, but was visibly weakening. There is a sense of consciously redesigning the nature of leadership in response to popular dissatisfaction with existing models. The ruling class undertook to reconstitute themselves as a 'genuinely British ruling group' who could 'be packaged and presented so as to seem beneficent rather than burdensome, a national asset rather than an alien growth'.[24] A particular example of an earlier attempt to invent new models of leadership, or to invest men with new heroic qualities, will serve to illustrate the relationship between an emerging domestic masculinity and a move toward new political models of heroic virtue, combining individual integrity with affection and responsibility. A significant figure in many accounts of eighteenth-century

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[23]. Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, p. 335.
[24]. Linda Colley, Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 164-165.

politics, John Wilkes is a ready example of contemporary attempts to produce models of heroic virtue which respond to needs of family and individual, rather than of nation and state.

Wilkes appealed to a cross-section of the electorate, through his opposition to the Court and to the King's favourite, Lord Bute.[25] As the growing influence of 'extra-parliamentary agitation' which surrounded his rise demonstrates, a new private and independent code of masculine virtue was developing, separate from the imposed hegemonic models of aristocratic honour.[26] The failure of existing patrimonial and patriarchal structures to accommodate the needs of a growing constituency of independent, private men increased the sense of alienation from the traditional performances of public masculine virtue which were descending into travesties of aristocratic heroic integrity. In such a context, Wilkes was an ideal candidate for the initiation of male celebrity, a potential new heroic model.[27] Charismatic, skilled in the use of crowd psychology, he possessed a personal appeal that spawned a cult of personality with badges being worn and his name being chanted in the streets. He represented emerging social desire for a hero, without embodying the increasingly unattractive external signs of traditional masculine honour. Therefore, it is not surprising that the coupling of his name with the catchword 'liberty' had no real political resonance. It was Wilkes himself, the figure of the hero, who attracted the crowds and his popularity was 'by no means a fully-fledged political movement in which devotion to a set of political principles is in greater evidence than attachment to the person of a popular leader or hero'.[28]

However, this desire to invent new models of heroism was more universal than devotion to a single figure. Contemporary commentators recognised the lack of heroic models in politics and instinctively yoked this to literature. For example, in 1763, Elizabeth Montague, wife of an Independent MP, writes of her dismay at the turmoil and discontent in

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[25]. John Stevenson, Popular Disturbances in England 1700-1832 (London: Longman, 1979), p. 64; Ian Gilmour, Riot, Risings and Revolution: Governance and Violence in Eighteenth-Century England (London: Hutchinson, 1992), pp. 301-341 (p.328).

[26]. Stevenson, p. 74; George Rudé, 'Wilkes and Liberty: 1768-9' in Rudé, Paris and London in the Eighteenth Century: Studies in Popular Protest (London: Collins, 1970), pp. 222-267 (pp. 257-262) (first publ. in The Guildhall Miscellany, 8 (1957), 3-24)

[27]. Gilmour, p. 340.

[28]. Rudé, 'The London Mob', in Paris and London in the Eighteenth Century, pp. 293-318 (p. 316) (first publ. in The Historical Journal, 2 (1959), 1-18). On Wilkes's charisma see Rudé, 'Wilkes and Liberty', pp. 265-266; Stevenson, pp. 74-75; Gilmour, p. 332.

London, and concludes with a comment on the process of deconstructing and reconstructing ideals of heroism: 'The daemon of discontent is murmuring and whispering in well bred society, and bowling and scolding among the mob....all mankind are philosophers and pride themselves in having a contempt for rank and order and imagine they show themselves wise in ridiculing whatever gives distinction and dignity to kings and other magistrates....Alexander the Great was treated by contempt by a certain philosopher in a tub, but in this enlightened age, the man who made the tub would use him with the same scorn'.[29] Horace Walpole senses a similar danger in the devaluation of former models of heroic virtue when adequate replacements for them are lacking. He writes in 1769 that 'an outrageous pursuit of individual independence, grounded on selfish views, extinguishes genius as much as despotism does. The public good of our country is never thought of by men that hate half their country. Heroes confine their ambition to be leaders of the mob'.[30] Walpole's insight emphasises the isolation of former models of heroic virtue from the movement toward popular models of heroic masculine performance. That lurking alienated heroic virtue which Walpole refers to as 'genius', and which he fears might be as crushed by democracy as it is by autocracy, appears most vividly not in a political form but in an aesthetic one. The threatening and isolated presence of the masculine sublime pervades the Gothic as a spectral symbol of the impossibility of reinvesting former heroic models with their traditional virtues, and integrating them in a transformed context.

Heroism and Sublime Masculinity

Gothic fiction depends on an intense bond forged between the narrator and the reader which is rooted in the shared experience of a familiar plot. This expresses itself through a complex web of shared expectations, many of which are derived from an understanding of the conventions of literary heroism. However, others arise from a shared understanding and exhilaration in the poetics of terror which are derived from the aesthetic of the sublime. The sublime originates in powerful evocation of the awesome and the uncontainable, particularly in nature. The

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[29]. Cited in Black, British Politics and Society, p. 13.
[30]. Horace Walpole, The Correspondence of Horace Walpole, ed. W. S. Lewis, 48 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1937-1983), xxxix, pp. 120-121 (November 11, 1769).

association of the sublime with the social experience of masculinity in works such as Edmund Burke's A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful reinforces the threatening potential of misdirected heroism. David Hume's writings on the supremacy of the passions and the imagination over reason and experience similarly support Gothic fiction's innovative use of obscurity and ambiguity to draw from the reader's memory a supply of literary patterns that fuel the reader's fears and shape the plots.

The effect of evoking literary resonances was first described in this context by Addison in the Spectator. He outlines a mode of writing that is quintessentially a description of a Gothic novel: 'Descriptions raise a pleasing kind of Horrour in the Mind of the Reader, and amuse the Imagination with the strangeness and Novelty of the Persons who are represented in them. They bring up into our Memory the Stories we have heard in our Childhood, and favour those secret Terrors and Apprehensions to which the Mind is naturally Subject'.[31] The arousal of fear or tension in the reader overcomes reason, and depends on the denial of empirical experience. The response of the reader to the familiar, yet frighteningly unfamiliar, patterns of a Gothic novel parallels the experience of a child reading a fairy tale. The possibility that such fundamentally improbable happenings may somehow be imaginable keeps the reader's interest. In the same way, the discrepancy between the apparent performance of literary masculinity in the novels and the actual narrative manifestation of that masculinity is narrowed by the reader's imposition of the tradition of romantic heroism and villainy on the events of the novel. The recycling of romance as the primary literary formula of the Gothic reimposes aristocratic male virtue as the central literary experience of heroic masculinity, but immediately devalues it by placing it within the context of fantasy. 'If "aristocratic honor" is analogous to "romance" in the epistemological realm, "honor as virtue" occupies the place of "true history"'.[32] By invoking romance, the Gothic novel frees the reader from the epistemological teleology of 'true histories', and releases the reader into a world created from memory and experience. In A Treatise on Human Nature (1739-40), David Hume argues that since "tis impossible to satisfy ourselves by our reason why we should extend that experience beyond those particular instances which have

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[31]. Joseph Addison, The Spectator no. 419, July 1, 1712, in Critical Essays from The Spectator, with Four Essays by Richard Steele, ed. by Donald F. Bond (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), pp. 199-200.
[32]. McKeon, Origins, p. 152.

fallen under our observation', a mediating factor, 'custom', must supply the want of certainty.[33] Passions, in contrast, are individual, and are wholly owned by the individual, and are therefore superior in strength to reason. In Gothic fiction this dynamic works operates by introducing the reader to familiar literary patterns and then undermining and obscuring the patterns, forcing the reader to impose an individual pattern of heroism on the novel. In doing this, the very possibility of a concept of heroism arising from social consensus becomes impossible, since the process of creating and destroying literary heroic figures is demonstrably individual. The dialectic of passion and reason is thus transformed into one of heroic desire and heroic absence.

This dialectic is analogous to Hume's discussion of the impact of uncertainty on the imagination: "Tis certain nothing more powerfully animates any affection than to conceal some part of its object by throwing it in to a kind of shade....obscurity is always attended with a kind of uncertainty; the effort, which Fancy makes to complete the idea, rouzes the spirits and gives additional force to the passions'.[34] The effects of obscurity are more particularly discussed in the context of the gendered sublime in Burke's Enquiry. For Burke, to 'make anything very terrible, obscurity seems in general to be necessary. When we know the full extent of any danger...a great deal of the apprehension vanishes'.[35] Gothic writers, particularly Radcliffe, consciously use Burke's aesthetic to present the threat of masculine experience.[36] Thus, the Gothic experience of masculinity is often frightening because it is hidden and loosely articulated, resting rather in the imagination of the reader who is thrown off guard by the presentation of romanticised social aristocratic virtue displaced into a context of evil and isolation. A lingering sense of respect and recognition is necessary for the sublimity of the aristocratic model to operate. As Burke explains: 'That power derives all its sublimity from the terror with which it is generally accompanied, will appear evidently from its effect in the very few cases, in which it may be possible to strip a considerable degree of strength of its ability to

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[33]. David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature (1739-40), ed. by L. A. Selby-Bigge, 2nd edn, rev. by P.H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), pp. 414-415.
[34]. Hume, Treatise, p. 469.
[35]. Edmund Burke, A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful (1757),ed. by James T. Boulton, (London: Routledge, 1958; rpt. Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), p. 58.
[36]. See, for example, Chloë Chard, 'Introduction', in Ann Radcliffe, The Romance of the Forest (1791), ed. by Chloë Chard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp.xxi-xxiii; see also pp. 367-369, n. 3, 4, 5, p. 370-372, n. 15, 18.

hurt. When you do this, you spoil it of every thing sublime, and it immediately becomes contemptible'.[37] This is the dilemma of Gothic heroism. Without the implied ability to destroy the stability of the social order, the heroic alternative, often the lover-figure, appears weak and contemptible, offering no satisfactory alternative model of heroic conduct. This is the subtext to the Gothic experience of masculinity: that the experience of masculinity must necessarily alienate if it is to be effective as a model for heroic conduct.

To emphasise further the alienating aspect of the sublime, Burke describes the passions which 'are conversant about the preservation of the individual...chiefly pain and danger' as 'the most powerful of all the passions'.[38] This makes the sublime a threat to security, to the continuation of order, and involves the loss of identity in something uncontrollable. Sublimity is gendered masculine in contrast to the social experience of feminine virtues and therefore sublime heroism defines the masculine experience as one of isolation and solitude, potentially powerful, but fundamentally lacking in influence and integrity. For these reasons, Paulson explains Burke's masculine aesthetic as an experience of 'deprivation or absence: the unknown rather than the known'.[39] This is also the fundamental characteristic of Gothic fiction's reinvention of the idea of the heroic: it is derived from absence. The absence of any actual narrative heroic experience forces the reader to supply it from convention and supposition. The absence of heroic virtue is truly frightening for the reader of Gothic fiction, because it becomes impossible to construct a functional and virtuous model of masculine experience from the sublime, when opposed to beauty and virtue, while it is equally impossible to construct a model of the beautiful man as hero.

The difficulty of constructing a beautiful man was faced by Burke in his discussion of classical heroes: 'When we let our imaginations loose in romance, the ideas we naturally annex to that size are tyranny, cruelty, injustice, and everything horrid and abominable. We paint the giant ravaging the country, plundering the innocent traveller...such are Polyphemus, Cacus and others who make such great figures in romances'.[40] Conversely, Homer gave the 'Trojans,

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37. Burke, Enquiry, p. 65.
38. Ibid, p. 38.
39. Ronald Paulson, Breaking and Remaking: Aesthetic Practice in England 1700-1800 (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989), p. 213.
40. Burke, Enquiry, pp. 157-158.

whose fate he has designed to excite our compassion, infinitely more of the amiable social virtues...the councils of Priam are weak, the arms of Hector comparatively feeble; his courage far below that of Achilles. Yet we love Priam more than Agamemnon, and Hector more than his conqueror Achilles'.[41] There is clearly a difficulty in reconciling representations of male strength with masculine virtue. In literary expression, this reconciliation took the form of the man of feeling, who is physically and emotionally feminised, appropriating feminine signs of virtue--tears, trembling, and sighing--but is socially impotent, and often lacks sexual desire.[42] There is a gulf between male characteristics of physical strength and agility, and the masculine possession of virtue, a gulf characterised by an increasing anxiety to appropriate feminine signs of passivity and frailty. This produces an artistic crisis which requires the denial of male sexuality or the displacement of the male body. Similarly, romance, which had depended on the active performance of masculinity by its heroes, is transformed through the Gothic into a genre where heroism and masculinity are expressed through the physical absence of men: male characters dominate the reader's imagination rather than the narrative action.

The crisis of heroism which is fundamental to Gothic is so pervasive that it crosses artistic boundaries. The irreconcilability of the romantic-heroic genre with the representation of a physical hero is demonstrable in the social retreat from the male body coeval with the rise of Gothic fiction. For example, Dr. John Moore reports in View of Society and Manners in Italy (1781), that the figure of the Farnese Hercules, 'does not please all the world. I am told that the women in particular find something odious, even unsatisfactory in this figure', and goes on to say that his female companion, 'could not bear the stern severity of his countenance, his large and brawny limbs, and the club with which he was armed; Which gave more the appearance of one of those giants that, according to the old romances, carried away virgins and shut them up in gloomy castles, than the gallant Hercules, the lover of Omphale'. The woman declares that 'it was not in the nature of things that a man so formed could ever have been a reliever of distressed damsels'.[43] Moore himself senses a need to articulate a new and distinct

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41. Ibid, pp. 157-158.
42. See, for example, Todd, Sensibility, pp. 88-109.
43. Dr. John Moore, View of Society and Manners in Italy, 2 vols (London, 1781), ii. pp. 10-11.

image of the heroic which is not seen in the 'brawny limbs' of Hercules, and yet does not have 'the effeminate softness' he ascribes to the Belvedere Antinous.[44]

Gothic fiction participates the highly troublesome debate over the physical representation of male virtue. As signs of virtue move from external manifestations of worth, to internal moral qualities in literature, there is a parallel shift from public displays of physical manliness in former models of aristocratic masculine virtue to a disengendered passivity based on the appropriation of feminine virtue. Michael McKeon identifies this relocation of the physical as the tension between aristocratic and progressive ideologies over signs of virtue which defines the emerging genre of the novel.[45] In another sense, however, the retreat from overt representations of male strength is part of a deviation from the epic wholeness of the masculinity of the ancients, reflected in their sculpture, towards a more complex heroic identity. According to Mikhail Bakhtin, the novel distinguishes itself from epic by this very reversal of the ancient heroic ethos: 'One of the themes of the novel is precisely the theme of the hero's inadequacy to his fate or his situation...epic wholeness disintegrates in the novel...A crucial tension develops between the external and the internal man'.[46] Gothic fiction, by filtering the ideal of literary heroism, is thus significantly involved in the coalescence of the novel around issues of individual longing and heroic inadequacy.

This crisis of artistic representation of male virtue meant that the portrayal of the male body was often grafted onto landscape. The landscapes of Claude Lorrain, in which he 'could subordinate all his powers of perception and knowledge of natural appearances to the poetic feeling of the whole', replace the epic wholeness of the classical hero, while simultaneously supplying the sense of sublimity and ever-present danger which the absence of genuinely visible masculine power demands.[47] When Gothic fiction employs landscape as a substitute for male

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[44]. Moore, i, p. 502.

[45]. McKeon, Origins, pp. 212-272.

[46]. Mikhail Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination, trans. by Michael Holquist (Austin, Tx: University of Texas Press, 1987), p. 37.

[47]. Kenneth Clark, Landscape into Art, new edn (1949; repr. London: Murray, 1976), p. 128. The displacement of the male body into landscape in Gothic fiction has not been specifically studied, but Radcliffe's use of artistic sources and aesthetic theory has. See for example, Rhoda L. Flaxman, 'Radcliffe's Dual Modes of Vision', in Fetter'd or Free: British Women Novelists 1670-1815, ed. by Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1986), pp. 124-133; Charles Murrah, 'Mrs. Radcliffe's Landscapes: The Eye and the Fancy', University of Windsor Review, 18 (1984), 7-23; Nina da Vinci Nichols, 'Place and Eros in Radcliffe, Lewis and Brontë', in

beauty, it effectively displaces the desire for and fear of the male body. The attempt to possess and contain the landscape through description, with all the futility and ambiguity which necessarily accompanies such a venture, may be seen to represent the fundamental impossibility of depicting masculine virtue. The attempt to describe the disintegration and reconstruction of heroic integrity can be achieved only by resorting to a negative in Gothic fiction--describing what masculine virtue is not. The dependence on the reader's imagination to supply the lack of heroic substance means that the Gothic hero is perpetually a figure of uncertainty and obscurity, frightening because of his very unknowability. He is also in an ongoing state of creation and construction through the reader's imagination. The shift in plot structure alters the balance of power in the plots from action to the perception of action, from effect to the possibility of effect, and from virtue and strength to the appearance of virtue and strength. The reader is therefore actively involved in the process of reworking heroic models in a new literary context, and implicated in the construction of literary heroism.

Literature and the Construction of Heroism

Throughout the middle decades of the century concerted efforts produced a new literary aesthetic of heroism which developed into an ideal, native to Britain, but which modified other literary precedents. In fiction, this manifests itself in attempts to recast the ethos of affective social desire within a lineage of fictional masculine authority. However, there is a great gap between the effeminate hero of sentimental fiction, who depends on the existence of an unsentimental but highly social context to demonstrate his virtue, and the extremes of heroic endeavour which seem to invalidate the existence of social constraints. Gothic heroes and villains operate in this gap and are given shape from the void which surrounds them through the literary precedents available to the reader's imagination. The formulaic nature of Gothic exposes their deficiencies: apparent tyrants are invariably ultimately impotent, and lovers more passive and ineffectual than the heroines. Heroism in Gothic fiction becomes a smoke screen

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Female Gothic, ed. by Julian Fleenor (Montreal: Eden, 1983), pp. 187-206; Lynne Epstein, 'Mrs. Radcliffe's Landscapes: The Influence of Three Landscape Painters on Her Nature Descriptions', Hartford Studies in Literature, 1 (1969), 107-120; Elizabeth Wheeler Manwaring, Italian Landscape in Eighteenth-Century England (1925; repr. London: Frank Cass & Co, 1965), pp. 212- 217; Walter Scott, 'Ann Radcliffe' in Miscellaneous Prose Works (Edinburgh, 1834), iii, pp. 337-386 (pp. 354-355).

behind which the broken models of literary heroism shift their gender balance and plot significance.

Two contrasting examples of engagement with the deliberate construction of literary heroism appeared in 1753: Richardson's Sir Charles Grandison and Smollett's The Adventures of Ferdinand, Count Fathom. Both were tremendously influential, and demonstrate two distinct approaches to the conscious process of modelling a hero. Grandison had huge popular resonance in its time. It was more popular, and more widely cited, than Clarissa (1747-48).[48] Grandison went through three editions in three months, as well as a pirated edition published in Dublin. Each legitimate edition was thoroughly revised by Richardson, right up to his death in 1762, after which a fourth edition appeared with 150 of his latest revisions. In 1810 Mrs. Barbauld published an edition with 'the last corrections by the author', containing another 600 revisions.[49] The need continually to redefine 'the Character and Actions of a Man of TRUE HONOUR' was clearly a matter of concern and interest not only to Richardson, but more particularly, to his circle of female correspondents at whose insistence many of the revisions were undertaken.[50] Together, Richardson and his correspondents redesigned Grandison, modifying his behaviour and responses in an apparently inconclusive attempt to create the perfect literary hero. Grandison's new model of virtuous masculinity, then, is very much the product of the consciousness of his creator and the desires of his female readers. Fathom, in contrast, is a character who creates himself. Smollett's novel was described as something new and different, bearing 'strong marks of genius in the author', but whose protagonist is 'the most execrable hypocrite...that the most inventive power of an author could possibly create'.[51] Unlike the upper-class Sir Charles, Fathom has no social identity, 'was heir to no visible patrimony', and as such is a socially unstable figure. In the novel, he casts himself in the role of sentimental hero, of courtier and of lover, adapting willingly and ably to the demands of his situation. He controls completely his performance of heroic virtue, which Sir Charles, whose heroic virtue is consistently called into question and modified by his readers, does not. Yet as a

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48. Jocelyn Harris, 'Introduction', in Samuel Richardson, Sir Charles Grandison (1753-54), ed. by Jocelyn Harris, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), i, pp. xiii-xiv.
49. Harris, i, pp. xxvii-xxxviii.
50. Harris, i, pp. xxviii-xxx.
51. Monthly Review, viii (1753), pp. 203, 206.

marginalised and ostracised vagabond orphan, Fathom does not have the social control that Sir Charles initially appears to have.

Richardson sets out to make Sir Charles a model of coherent and self-contained masculinity whose performance is rooted in his own private virtue but is directed outwards to adorn society. The novel is a statement of the appropriate performance of masculine virtue since it 'presents to the public, in SIR CHARLES GRANDISON, the Example of a Man acting uniformly well thro' a variety of trying Scenes, because his actions are regulated with one steady Principle: A Man of Religion and Virtue; of Liveliness and Spirit; accomplished and agreeable; happy in himself, and a Blessing to others'.[52] The epistolary nature of the novel dramatises in novelistic form Richardson's conscious and deliberate attempt to refigure the hero. The letters, 'written, as it were, to the Moment, while the heart is agitated by Hopes and Fears on Events undecided', make the public Sir Charles a product of his fictional private self which is constantly in flux.[53]

Sir Charles is a less plausible and satisfactory model of new heroic virtue than might be supposed by the popularity of the novel. He is contradictory and his model of heroic virtue stands isolated from the rest of the male characters in the novel and is incapable of replicating itself. For example, Sir Charles wrestles with his conscience over the matter of duelling for most of the first volume. He differentiates his system of non-combative honour from the 'false glory' of the duellists, but he has been nonetheless schooled in the 'science of defence' by his father, who 'had high notions of honour', so he inevitably feels the assault on his pride in the challenge.[54] Sir Charles reconciles his 'passionate' manly nature with his sense of honour through compassionate dignity and concludes that duelling shows no courage and bestows no honour.[55] Thus, he retains the honours of the duel without fighting, but wins the rhetorical duel that duty, not pride or desire, finally compels him to fight. The tension in the novel arises from such examples of the division between the former system of romantic heroism based on a code of the active performance of honour--here the duel--and the new model of heroism exemplified

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52. Samuel Richardson, Sir Charles Grandison, ed. by Jocelyn Harris, i, p. 4.
53. Ibid, i, p. 4.
54. Ibid, i, pp. 256, 260-261.
55. Ibid, i, p. 265.

in Sir Charles's passive performance of honour. Sir Charles does not, however, succeed in imposing this model on the action of the novel.[56] His private ethos is admired but not emulated by the other male characters in the novel, from whose masculine experience it is completely separate. Despite his lengthy conversations with the men in the novel, they continue to conduct themselves in a manner generically distinct from that of Sir Charles. As a unique, and therefore inimitable, model of heroism, Sir Charles defeats the very purpose he was intended to serve.

The novel hints at the failure of Sir Charles to be an effective model of masculine experience when the reader learns that Sir Charles inherited his ideals of heroism from his mother. She was his 'oracle...she distinguished well between the false glory and the true'.[57] His heroism is therefore fundamentally feminine in origin and expression, rooted in duty and deference. Sir Charles's heroic dilemma is that he has successfully absorbed the feminine affective values which contribute to his appeal as a model of new heroism, but his maleness makes it impossible for him to pass on that code of heroic conduct: it must pass through the feminine consciousness. This has the paradoxical effect of rendering his heroism ineffective and impotent. Sir Charles Grandison is a pivotal novel in the literary process of consciously constructing literary heroic virtue which facilitates the rise of the Gothic. It challenges the limits and internal contradictions of the very concept of masculine heroic virtue, which the Gothic takes as its central concern.

Conversely, Fathom's ability to transform himself into characters who take on signs of heroic virtue makes him a 'living and existing miscreant from whom we shrink as from the presence of an incarnate fiend'.[58] The resulting realisation by the reader of the intrinsic unreliability of traditional signs of heroic virtue arouses the fear which Smollett identifies as 'the most violent and interesting of the passions' and avowedly made the driving impulse of his novel.[59] The deliberate employment of fear is specifically rooted in heroic performance, and this links Fathom clearly to the Gothic tradition. The novel is not wholly Gothic because it

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[56]. Ibid, i, p. 267.
[57]. Ibid, i, p. 261.
[58]. Sir Walter Scott, 'Tobias Smollett', in Prose Works, iii, pp. 117-190 (p. 177).
[59]. Tobias Smollett, The Adventures of Ferdinand, Count Fathom (1753), ed. by Damian Grant (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 6.

does not sustain the subjective authority of Ferdinand as he flees, 'haunted by the most terrible apprehensions', nor does it maintain the lurking violence of the graveyard scene when Renaldo comes in 'uncommon darkness' to mourn the departed Monimia.[60] His fierce desire to 'embrace the earth with which she [Monimia] was now compounded' appears to conjure her image when 'the figure of a woman, arrayed in white, with a veil', surfaces.[61] David Punter recognises the characteristically Gothic 'threat of rape and violence' which the sequence exploits,[62] but does not mention that the reappearance of the living Monimia ultimately denies the potency of Renaldo's violent desire, or even death, to destroy her virtue, her integrity or her life, and therefore mocks the power of her lover to exert any authority over her. This negation of potency, destroying the hero's vision of himself even as he creates it, is even more striking as a characteristic of the Gothic than the lurking threats of rape and violence. These two immensely popular but widely different novels offer contrasting paradigms for the ultimate failure of the ideal of literary heroism, and provide evidence of the widespread interest and concern in matters of heroic virtue.

However, the desire to construct new models of heroic virtue is also evident as a driving impulse in poetry and other fiction, as David Punter has shown in his overview of the Gothic poetics in Edward Young, Thomas Gray, William Collins and James Thomson.[63] The internal contradictions of existing constructions of literary heroism and ambivalence about the nature of heroic virtue are evident in such Gothic lines as these from Young's 'Night Thoughts':

> An Heir of Glory! a frail Child of Dust!
> Helpless Immortal! Insect infinite!
> A Worm! a God!--I tremble at myself,
> And in myself am lost! at home a Stranger...[64]

With the publication in 1762 of Letters on Chivalry and Romance by Richard Hurd, and the parallel fictional expression of those letters in Thomas Leland's Longsword, Earl of Salisbury, Gothic is formally introduced as a literary and novelistic concept. The relevance of

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60. Smollett, pp. 88, 317.
61. Smollett, pp. 317-324.
62. Punter, p. 46.
63. Punter, pp. 40-44.
64. Edward Young, Night Thoughts, ed. by Stephen Cornford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 39 (lines 78-82).

these works to the tradition of Gothic has been discussed by other critics.[65] More important here, however, is their importance to the articulation of a particular mode of heroic conduct which identifies Gothic fiction as a genre distinctively suited to the examination of the failure of literary heroism.

Hurd anticipates a tradition of modern criticism which reads the Gothic in political terms by making an explicit analogy between feudal romances and feudal societies: 'We hear much of Knights-errant encountering Giants, and quelling Savages, in books of chivalry. These Giants were oppressive feudal Lords, and every Lord was to be met with, like the Giant in his stronghold, or castle'.[66] This analogy also posits the chivalric tradition of the Knights-errant as a laudable code of heroic conduct, which is active and assertive, but ultimately serves the ends of social justice. Hurd is prompted by readings of Milton, Spenser, Shakespeare and the Italian poets to ask if the 'greatest geniuses of our own and foreign countries...were even charmed by the Gothic Romances. Was this caprice and absurdity in them? Or, may there not be something in the Gothic Romance peculiarly suited to the views of genius and to the ends of poetry?'[67] The Gothic romance is thus identified by Hurd as a mode particularly suited to investigations of heroic conduct, 'the ends of poetry', and the consideration of the nature of heroism, 'the views of genius'.

Longsword develops Hurd's vision of chivalry as a code of heroic conduct engaged with social justice, rather than personal glory. The paradigm of historical experience is domesticated and therefore particularises the exercise of knightly virtue and male honour. Although the Preface states that the sources 'are to be found in the antient English historians', the accuracy of the historical content is subordinate in importance to the shift in focus which Longsword represents.[68] Although Longsword presents the history of a knight, the Earl of Salisbury, it does not concern itself with his exploits on the battlefield, but rather with his fight

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[65]. See for example, Punter, pp. 6-7, 30, 54, 58; Elizabeth Napier, The Failure of Gothic: Disjunction in an Eighteenth-Century Literary Form (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), pp. 22-24, 62; Montague Summers, The Gothic Quest: A History of the Gothic Novel (1938; repr. New York: Russell and Russell, 1964), pp. 41-45, 158-172.

[66]. Richard Hurd, Letters on Chivalry and Romance (1762), ed. by Hoyt Trowbridge, Augustan Reprint Series, 101-102 (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, UCLA, 1963), p. 28.

[67]. Hurd, p. 4.

[68]. Thomas Leland, Longsword, Earl of Salisbury (1762), 2 vols (repr. New York: Garland, 1974).

to regain his home, to free his wife and son, and to settle down to a life of domesticity. It is to these ends, and not to the public honours of battle, that all his knightly training is employed. The novel opens as Salisbury returns, his career as a soldier finished, and he dreams of his future with his wife, 'my dearest ELA!....In thee and thy endearments shall all my future hopes be centered'.[69] Salisbury's identity is thus rooted in the domestic and no longer rests purely on his masculine role as a knight. Salisbury's identity as husband, father and homeowner are at stake throughout the novel, threatened by the abrogation of the knightly code of honour by the evil Raymond and the traitorous monk Oswald as they scheme together first to seize Salisbury's property and then to rise together in courtly influence by kidnapping Salisbury's infant son in order to blackmail his wife into marrying Raymond.

Leland employs the code of chivalry to orchestrate the performance of Salisbury's masculinity in the novel in so far as battles are fought and loyalties tested in the course of his fight for his castle. Longsword succeeds, however, in making it apparent to the reader that the exclusively male tradition of knighthood and the heroic code of conduct which underpins it are destructive and unfulfilling without an accompanying domesticity. Salisbury's friend Randolph refuses the Countess his sons as knights because 'the fond father could not yield to these sollicitations: he declared that his sons must first endeavour to render themselves more worthy'; Salisbury and Ela find that 'each was the more endeared to the other, by the late dangers and distresses of their separation'.[70] All 'future hopes' of knightly heroes are centred in a manifestation of feminised virtue. The fear of losing that, and in losing his domestic context of surrendering his identity, drives Salisbury's fight and the reader's interest. As the theme of the insubstantiality of the ideal of masculine heroism develops in Gothic fiction, that fear gets more oppressive for both reader and protagonist. The connection of chivalry and honour to social justice becomes more problematic, as the impossibility of reconciling masculine endeavour with domestic virtue appears to threaten rather than sustain domestic, and hence social, existence.

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[69]. Leland, i, p. 6.
[70]. Leland, ii, pp. 203, 204.

However, the Gothic tradition in fiction is generally understood to begin in earnest with the publication of Horace Walpole's The Castle of Otranto in 1764. Certainly, in Walpole's novel there is evidence of the conscious manipulation of convention and tradition to undermine ideals of functional literary heroism. The concern of Gothic fiction with heroic virtue is exhibited in both the structure and content of The Castle of Otranto. The Gothic novelists who follow Walpole explore the potential he uncovered, but it was only after novelists like Clara Reeve and Sophia Lee had further delineated the scope of subjective constructions of literary heroism that Gothic fiction really emerged as a distinct genre.

Walpole's The Castle of Otranto

Three elements in The Castle of Otranto are significant for the process of dismantling the mythologies of masculine heroism undertaken by Gothic fiction. First, there is the displacement of the chivalric romance narrative from the public world of adventure, emphasising the virtues of strength, will and authority, to the private world of the family and the home, rooting identity in the affective virtues of community, compassion and inner strength. Secondly, there is the question of the deliberate construction of masculine virtue, or the appropriation of heroic identity by usurping the established order: by grafting the symbols of autocratic social power on to the institution of the family, Manfred destroys both. Finally, there is a sustained critique of autocracy and excessive power in The Castle of Otranto. This critique is not directed solely at the tyrant, Manfred, who 'was naturally humane; and his virtues were always ready to operate, when his passion did not obscure his reason',[71] but at the complicity between ruler and subject which allows that power to be exercised. This complicity is replicated in a dynamic between narrative and reader which becomes common in Gothic fiction: literary models of heroic conduct are invoked to arouse certain expectations in the reader, despite the lack of substantiation for them in the action of the narrative, and are sustained through the reader's literary imagination This narrative strategy induces the fear aroused by Gothic fiction--not the fear of the tyrant, but the fear of the absence of a tyrant.

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[71]. Horace Walpole, The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story (1764), ed. by W. S. Lewis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964; repr. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 30. All further references to this edition are given in brackets in the text.

Otranto achieves the displacement of the chivalric tradition from a public world to a private one by moving the location of knightly conflict and distress to within the family home, and indeed within the family itself. By setting the novel in the Middle Ages, Walpole establishes a violent, but nonetheless chivalric and romantic, and therefore historically distant but familiar context.[72] This effect is consolidated when the novel mythologises the characters as types. In the opening paragraph, the familiar structure of romance is set up in clear and unmistakable terms. Manfred is 'prince of Otranto', who is feared for 'the severity of [his] disposition'. He has a daughter, 'a most beautiful virgin', and a son, 'a homely youth, sickly and of no promising disposition'. Manfred's overriding concern is for the perpetuation of his family. His wife is an 'amiable lady' whose concern about the impending early marriage of their son 'never received any other answer than reflections on her own sterility, who had given him but one heir' (CO, p.15). He is oblivious to the implications of an ancient prophecy which forecasts his downfall, and declares that 'my fate depends on having sons' (CO, p. 23).

The organising structure of the novel is romance. This subordinates character to archetypal plot, through which it gains cultural significance.[73] By shifting the action of the romance to within the boundaries of the castle and away from the open countryside or battlefield, Walpole reinforces not the freedom, but the constraints of archaic codes of chivalric heroic conduct, as John Dunlop notes: 'What analogy have skulls or skeletons--sliding panels--damp vaults--trap-doors--and dismal apartments, to the tented fields of chivalry and its airy enchantments?'[74] The relationship is rather one of antithesis. The context of romance invests the figure of Manfred with great power, but because his 'fate depends on having sons', which does not depend on his public authority, he cannot exercise any power in the one area that matters most to him. This reduces the boundaries within which Manfred really wants to exercise his power. He desperately wants to deny his own impotence by displacing the blame onto Hippolyta's sterility. Manfred declares that, 'neither Heaven nor Hell shall impede my designs!' (CO, p.15), but it is biology which defeats him. Articulation of the ultimately

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[72]. See Horace Walpole, 'Preface to the First Edition of The Castle of Otranto', in Otranto, ed. by W. S. Lewis, pp. 3-6 (p. 6).
[73]. Frye, The Secular Scripture, pp. 8-10.
[74]. John Dunlop, The History of Fiction (1814), 2nd edn., iii. pp. 470-2. Cited in Horace Walpole: The Critical Heritage, ed. by Peter Sabor (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), p. 99.

destructive desire of the male to perpetuate himself through the masculine institutions of property and name, without the need to defer either to the feminine mediation of mutual affection or to the fact of female reproduction, augments in volume and in quantity toward the end of the century. As part of an increasingly fierce debate over the distinctions between masculine and feminine virtue, and in response to the occlusion of feminine authority, in 1790 Mary Wollstonecraft responded acidly to Edmund Burke and his Reflections of the Revolution in France, published earlier that year: 'Who can recount all the unnatural crimes which the laudable, interesting desire of perpetuating a name has produced?'[75] This anxiety over the control of reproduction is a significant feature of the masculine experience in Gothic fiction, reaching its apotheosis in Frankenstein (1818).

In The Castle of Otranto Walpole chooses the castle as the governing symbol of the action. Like Leland, Walpole shifts the focus of historical experience away from public events to the struggle for authority and identity in the family and the home, but he also problematises the symbolic importance of the castle as home and source of identity. Seeking to re-assert his potency by divorcing Hippolyta, and marrying Isabella, fiancée of the lately deceased Conrad, Manfred literally drives Isabella underground, 'into a vault totally dark...[which] leads directly to the church of St. Nicholas' (CO, pp. 27-28). The existence of an underground passage proves that the castle is penetrable and capable of escape, devaluing its status as either prison or sanctuary. Manfred's dominion over the castle, like that over his family and fate, is shown to be deceptive. Here is a traceable progression in the fragmentation of masculine identity from Leland's knight, who retains his identity and integrity by re-possessing his home, and thus holds the title to both his castle and his novel, to Manfred, who is possessed by the symbol and reality of the castle, and cannot find the means to subordinate his masculine heritage and male self to the demands of home and family. The title of Walpole's novel, therefore, is not, Manfred, Prince of Otranto, but rather, The Castle of Otranto, showing the emasculating subservience of men to the ideals of patrilineal virtue. Walpole therefore extends his examination of the conflict between domestic masculinity and the tradition of masculine

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[75]. Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Men (1790), in The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, ed. by Janet Todd and Marilyn Butler, 7 vols (London: Pickering, 1989) v. pp. 7-77 (p. 22).

the castle threatens to collapse, at the appearance of its rightful owner, Manfred collapses as well: 'a clap of thunder at that instant shook the castle to its foundation; the earth rocked....The moment Theodore appeared, the walls of the castle behind Manfred were thrown down with a mighty force' (CO, p. 108). When he sees the foundation of his identity in danger, Manfred surrenders: 'let me at last do justice on myself!'(CO, pp. 108-9).

The fragility of the castle suitably represents the weakness of Manfred's own integrity. He has built his public identity on false foundations, and the fact that Manfred is a usurper in the castle-home is vital to the plot. By Manfred's act of usurpation the castle is transformed from a symbol of masculine authority into a haven of familial and feminine power in which Manfred is a masculine and alien presence. His usurpation is an invasion and makes his power illicit. He is at once the victim of masculine tyranny, and the perpetrator of it. Yet his downfall shows the futility of any efforts of the masculine code of heroic endeavour, through usurpation, to overcome natural virtue, since it is ultimately self-destructive: 'I would draw a veil over my ancestor's crimes....I pay the price of usurpation for all!....alas! nor male nor female, except myself, remains of all his wretched race' (CO, p. 109). The plot hinges on a prophecy of revenge for usurpation, and on Manfred's increasingly hysterical attempts to elude it (CO, pp. 15-16, 22-24, 57-59). Manfred's denial of usurpation is equally important for the thematic critique of models of heroic conduct. Virtue which is only performance, and not the manifestation of innate virtue--the displacement of true virtue by false--is destructive, and those who subscribe to the performance are as culpable as those who act it. Manfred's seizure of the castle, and of the social position it represents, demonstrates an attempt to construct a public role which exists completely separately from his private self. Manfred exemplifies the dangers of crediting the performance of virtue when, in using the language of grief, modesty and benevolence to persuade the knights of the propriety of his marrying Isabella, he ironically exposes the deficiencies of his heroic mode. The speech invokes all the tropes of male sentimental virtue, which is universally beneficial, but is wholly unrelated to Manfred's actual exercise of romantic heroism which is selfish and cruel. Yet he invokes a masculine community of sympathy which his actions make ironically impossible. He makes an explicit reference to the irreconcilability of his responsibilities as prince with his private desire for domesticity, while again ironically intending to fuse private desire with public glory: 'I am sure you feel for me...Pardon these tears!...I thought of nothing but resigning my dominions, and retiring forever from the sight of mankind....could I bear the thought of seeing a hard, unfeeling viceroy set over my

poor, faithful people?....I would submit to any thing for the good of my people' (CO, pp. 66-7). The discourse of private virtue is therefore demonstrably at odds with the performance of public masculine desire. The reverse of this paradigm is equally valid. Just as it is clear through Manfred that the recognisable face of masculine honour bears no relation to the performance of private virtue, so it is that private virtue which bears a recognisable masculine public face, has no relationship to the performance of honour when excluded from the acceptable discourse of masculine virtue. Thus Jerome's adoption of a public symbol of private virtue--the monk's habit--acts as a cloak of virtue, disguising his private sins.[76] This also represents a discrepancy between public signs of virtue and authority and the private exercise of them in religious institutions a theme which has stronger resonances in later Gothic fiction. On the whole, Otranto exposes a distinct lack of reliable social signs of male virtue.

Later Gothic novels explore the boundaries of power and authority, but Walpole offers a critique of absolute power, by mocking the tyrannical aspect of Manfred's character. Once Manfred loses touch with the virtues he possesses and is governed by solely by passion, he becomes progressively weaker and less effectual. Walpole employs elevated diction to highlight the discrepancy between Manfred's performance of heroism and his heroic context. Manfred's performance is that of the cowardly and duplicitous husband scheming to divorce his wife, and of the hypocritical politician who deceives the knights. His heroic or literary context is that of a great prince or villain. In Manfred's character there is always a space between the conception and the substance. When contemplating how to persuade Hippolyta to a divorce, 'the next transition of his soul was to exquisite villainy', but Manfred doesn't make the transition: 'But ere he could indulge this horrid hope, he reflected that Isabella was not to be found. Coming to himself, he gave orders...'(CO, p. 35). In 'coming to himself', Manfred reverts to the status of his real condition, and not the 'exquisite villainy' of the stage villains his diction evokes. Walpole has him echo Hamlet at the outset of the novel, 'Speak , infernal spectre!' (CO, p. 24), but later, when Manfred's inability to control the action of the plot is obvious, his diction echoes not Prince Hamlet, but Macbeth after he has been pushed to murder by Lady Macbeth. When Manfred cries out to a ghost at Frederic's bedside, 'Ha, what art thou, thou dreadful spectre!', Hippolyta comforts him, 'resume your soul, command your reason, there is none here, but we, your friends' (CO, p. 80). However, the tragic parallel is deflated immediately when Manfred ceases to play the role of

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[76]. See Walpole, Otranto, pp. 81-82, 55-6.

Shakespearean hero, and, 'relapsing into rage', becomes petty and jealous again when he hears Theodore has gone after Isabella: 'Yes, yes, that is not doubtful' (CO, 80). Manfred's failure to sustain the Shakespearean roles he assumes though his diction undermines his tragic potential and his potential to alarm the reader.[77] It also has the effect of making Manfred a figure of parody and pastiche. As Manfred adopts and invokes multiple Shakespearean roles, he becomes a caricature, an actor whose power is literally an illusion based on performance.

This theatricality is fundamental to the examination of masculine performance and its relationship with social power paradigms. Walpole renders Manfred something of a pathetic or parodic figure through his juxtaposition of the weak Manfred with his memorable Shakespearean predecessors. This immediately undermines Manfred's authority in the reader's imagination, yet the novel as a whole succeeds in creating an atmosphere of impending doom. This is because in the Gothic context, Manfred's power, however debased, is real. His social power, the authority which he exercises by public right and not through the exercise of private virtue, is a threatening force. In the context of Walpole's Gothicism, Manfred does have the power to execute Theodore, and he does have the legal right to force Hippolyta to divorce. According to the ideology of chivalric virtue, Manfred's social position presupposes his will and ability to be virtuous. Once he deviates from that code of honour and chivalry, the ramifications are ominous. Manfred is, however, again in a double bind, which illustrates the constraints of masculine codes of honour when applied to a domestic situation, and invalidates them as viable models: if he abides by the code of chivalric heroism, his dynastic hopes founder; if he deviates from it, his immediate family suffers. Walpole thus elevates the romance of the Middle Ages and the chivalric code of heroism by locating the potential for unrestrained power within it; but by invoking the conventions of romance, he emphasises the unreality of it all. To credit the apparent extent of Manfred's villainy is to credit the truth of the romance, an epistemological contradiction. In fact the historical distance illuminates the limitations of masculine authority: it does not reside in the position of the man himself, but in the belief in the position of the man which his performance generates. It is all an illusion.

The creation and breakdown of the illusion of male authority in the reader's mind is the area of subjectivity that Gothic fiction explores. When the illusion of masculine authority begins to

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77. See W. S. Lewis, 'Introduction', in The Castle of Otranto, ed. by. W. S. Lewis, pp. vi-xvi (pp.xiv-xv); Punter, pp. 52-3.

disintegrate, an uncertainty over the relative positions of performance and manifestation of masculine heroic virtue dominates the text. In The Castle of Otranto, Theodore and Frederick are relatively marginal, active and coherent figures, and it is only Manfred who transmits to the reader an uncomfortable ambivalence about the relative nature of power and authority, virtue and action. The fear and obsession that Manfred displays when threatened with the loss of his power drives his desire to make it manifest, but destroys his moral authority. His attempts to assert his authority fail, but the attempts themselves demonstrate a certain authority, and leave the reader uncertain. Manfred's authority, and that of the male Gothic characters who follow him, is granted largely by the reader who subscribes to the mythologies of literary heroism. The operation of patterns of literary heroism in the text, even when the actions of the hero have no relationship with the pattern of heroic conduct which they are enforcing in the plot, implicates the reader in the breakdown of masculine authority and the creation of the illusion of power derived from a disintegrating heroic code. The reader's literary imagination therefore fills the void between masculine performance and the manifestation of masculine virtue. In Gothic fiction the fear of operating within a vacuum of masculine authority is resolved by creating an excess of masculine power, which in turn, once it is demystified and made familiar, is powerless. This particular feature of Gothic fiction distinguishes it from other traditions of romance or tragedy. It is driven by the fear in the reader of facing the implications of the demystification of masculine authority and the failure of heroic models.

The Castle of Otranto is, then, a conscious articulation by Walpole of something much more complex than the mere 'attempt to blend the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern'.[78] Walpole brought to bear on the novel much of his own life experience, as well as a strong antipathy to the abuse of power, and a conscious sense of the lack of heroic substance in mid-century fiction: 'I thought that *nodus* was become *dignus vindice*, and that a god, at least a ghost, was absolutely necessary to frighten us out of too much sense'.[79] Walpole places his novel in direct contrast to 'the deplorably tedious lamentations, Clarissa and Sir Charles Grandison'.[80] He believed in the resonance of the romance tradition which encouraged the participation of the reader: 'whatever good sense we have, we are not *yet in any light* chained down to precepts and inviolable laws....we still prefer the

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78. Walpole, 'Preface to the Second Edition', in The Castle of Otranto, ed. by. W. S. Lewis, pp. 7-12 (p. 7).
79. Walpole, Correspondence, xl. p. 380 (18 March 1765).
80. Walpole, Correspondence, vi. p. 271 (20 December 1764).

extravagant beauties of Shakespeare and Milton to the cold and well-disciplined merit of Addison'.[81] The critical reception of his novel vindicates Walpole. There were positive reviews in the Critical Review and the Monthly Review.[82] The first edition of five hundred copies was sold in less than four months and a second edition immediately followed, and subsequently the novel has never been out of print.[83]

The undeniable appeal to Walpole's eighteenth-century readers must lie in more than the whimsical novelty that Walpole describes in his Preface. The resonances of Walpole's representation of the failures of romantic heroism evidently held a deep fascination and his percipient understanding, before Burke's Reflections, of the conflict between desire for chivalric heroism, and its absence, is repeatedly supported in experiences of social history. For example, the 'marked disrespect' aroused by soldiers in 1798 who failed to respond to a call to arms, raised 'once again the spectre of the possibility that the age of chivalry was dead'.[84] It is perhaps ironic that William Warburton, whom Walpole later mocked for comparing Otranto to a classical tragedy,[85] should come closest to assessing the appeal of the novel when he describes it as 'a Master-piece in the Fable, and of a new species likewise....The scene is laid in Gothic chivalry, where beautiful imagination, supported by strength of judgement, has enabled the author to go beyond his subject'.[86]

Walpole was admirably qualified to evaluate patterns of heroic conduct. Reading The Castle of Otranto with a consciousness of Walpole as author, the cogency of the critique of tyranny and the complicity of the public in the perpetuation of the smoke screen of heroic virtue, becomes more striking. While Walpole's account of the dream which inspired Otranto is well known, his aside, 'that I was very glad to think of anything but politics', is less often cited.[87] Walpole was described by Hardinge as 'at one time a zealot for the cause of liberty', and his reservations about the excessive force used against Wilkes to deny him his rightful seat in Parliament have clear resonances in his novel.[88]

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81. Walpole, Correspondence, xl, p. 379 (18 March 1765).
82. Critical Review, 19 (January 1765), pp. 50-1; Monthly Review, 32 (February 1765), pp. 97-9. See also Baron de Grimm on the appearance of the French translation in 1767, reprinted in Sabor, p. 72.
83. Lewis, 'Introduction', p. viii.
84. Colley, pp. 256-257.
85. Walpole, Correspondence, xli, pp. 409-410 (27 January 1780).
86. William Warburton, The Works of Alexander Pope (1770), iv, pp. 165-7, in Sabor, pp. 74-5.
87. Walpole, Correspondence i. p. 88 (9 March 1765).
88. George Hardinge, 'A Portrait of Walpole' (1813), in Sabor, pp. 289-292 (p. 291). Walpole's expressions of outrage and concern at the treatment of Wilkes appear throughout his correspondence. See for example, Walpole, Correspondence xx, pp. 86, 97, xxiii, pp. 6-7, 104-105, xxv, p. 323, xxxviii, pp. 307-309, 324-327; See also R. W. Ketton-Cremer. Horace Walpole 2nd edn (London: Duckworth, 1940; repr. London: Faber. 1946) pp. 216-217. For a reading of The Castle of Otranto in close relation to the Conway affair of 1764. see

Walpole's own Strawberry Hill, described by a correspondent as 'filled with virtú',[89] is physical testimony to Walpole's own sense of the need to look backward in history for an ancestral and heroic tradition.[90] It is also, however, emblematic of the selective appropriation of the past that Walpole uses as a technique: consciously constructing out of the past effective models for the present. Walpole used artefacts from Gothic cathedrals in his house, transforming their usage and modifying their meaning, much as he tried to do with the code of chivalry in Otranto.[91] In the novel, the castle is a scene of conflict between Manfred's masculine authority and the female power of reproduction. It is also the scene of tension when the idealised past--the novel's portrayal of the Middle Ages, and Manfred's own wilful denial of own personal history--disturbs and wreaks havoc in later years--Manfred's frantic attempt to preserve the castle and his false history for his children. The near-collapse of the castle demonstrates its fragility, physically and symbolically, in the face of attack and as an emblem of unchanging endurance. In his 'castle', Walpole demonstrates that *virtú* is adaptable and capable of possession. This possibility haunts much Gothic fiction with its elusiveness. Finally, for Walpole, the difference in temperament and ambition between him and his father, the long-serving Prime Minister, Sir Robert Walpole, must have reinforced the sense of the folly of trying to influence posterity through the generation of a family dynasty, and the vagaries of fate which made Walpole Earl of Orford against the odds, and late in life, offer an ironic comment on The Castle of Otranto.

Despite the continued popularity of the novel, and notwithstanding the possibilities suggested in it, it was some time before the potential of Otranto, and Walpole's challenge to his readers to accept their complicity in the construction of mythologies of masculine heroism and to attempt to posit alternatives, were to be taken up directly. When they were, the attempt was to posit a masculine utopia, and it failed.

Clara Reeve's The Old English Baron (1777)

Not without reason was Clara Reeve's novel The Old English Baron initially entitled The Champion of Virtue when it was published in 1777. In The Progress of Romance, she contends that novels ought to be written with care, so that 'your reason may not be shocked, while your imagination is pleased' and

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John Samson, 'Politics Gothicized: The Conway Incident and The Castle of Otranto', Eighteenth Century Literature, 10 (1986), 145-158.

89. Walpole, Correspondence, xxxi, p. 216 (18 June 1784).

90. David McKinney, 'The Castle of My Ancestors: Horace Walpole and Strawberry Hill', British Journal of Eighteenth-Century Studies, 13 (1990), 199-214.

91. Lewis, 'Introduction', p. xi. Walpole's letters are littered with references to his work on Strawberry Hill. See, for example, Walpole, Correspondence, ii, p. 20, ix, pp. 102, 150-151, xx, p. 372, xxi, p. 471, xxvi, p. 39.

that if, 'novels were properly regulated with this design in always in view, they might become really useful to society'.[92] There is an overt moral tone to her novel, which distracts the modern reader, but like Otranto, it was tremendously popular in its day, according to one critic, 'one of the most successful and influential works of its generation'.[93] Mentioned in histories and studies of the Gothic novel largely for her explicit engagement with Walpole over his use of the supernatural, Clara Reeve remains on the margins of Gothic fiction critically and generically.[94]

Yet the novel must be termed Gothic initially, because Reeve herself uses that description. In her employment of Gothic devices, she limits herself to the judicious use of the supernatural, 'a sufficient degree of the marvellous, to excite the attention', and the deployment of the chivalric age as the setting and ideological context (OEB, p. 4). Moreover, her use of history has been wrongly evaluated. For some critics she debases the chivalric age by removing its mystique.[95] For David Punter, she merely uses 'the historical settings of Leland and others to give a narrative interest and attractiveness to a tale with a didactic purpose'.[96] Yet, her misuse of historical fact is less significant than the fact that she consciously attempts to convey a specific ethos through the evocation of a historical period--the recapture of an old order of masculine benevolence. She responds to the challenge implicit in Otranto to construct a paradigm of masculine heroic experience which has the family as its locus of status, authority, and social and private identity. Where Otranto approaches this challenge by deflating the role of the hero and exploiting his failure to dominate fate and the feminine world, Reeve can achieve it only by eliding the feminine presence altogether in the presentation of an experience of heroism.

The story is a tale of recovered identity, where Edmund, much like Theodore in Otranto, is assisted by Fate and the supernatural in the recovery of his patrimony, name and identity. However, Reeve's novel diverges from Walpole's tale of usurpation by shifting the emphasis away from the crisis inherent in the limits of masculine authority, to a celebration of its possibilities. This is why Reeve's

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92. Clara Reeve, The Progress of Romance, Through Times, Countries, and Manners, with Remarks on the Good and Bad Effect of it, on them Respectively in the Course of Evening Conversations (1785), 2 vols (London: 1786; facs. repr. New York: Garland, 1930), ii, 92.
93. James Trainer, 'Introduction', in The Old English Baron: A Gothic Story (1777), by Clara Reeve, ed. by James Trainer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), p.vii. Further references to The Old English Baron are to this edition, and are given in brackets in the text.
94. Clara Reeve, 'Preface to the Second Edition', in Clara Reeve, The Old English Baron, ed. by James Trainer, pp. 4-5.
95. Devendra Varma, The Gothic Flame (New York: Methuen, 1957), p. 79.
96. Punter, p. 55.

novel is limited as a source for later Gothic novelists. There is no crisis of masculine experience in The Old English Baron. This has been noted obliquely by critics who have observed the unique cosiness of the chivalric experience it portrays: 'it is this homely and practical streak that differentiates The Old English Baron from any other Gothic story whatever; nowhere else do we find knights regaling on eggs and bacon and suffering from the toothache'.[97]

What is notable about the use of domestic detail is its effect not on the narrative drive of the plot or on the demystification of the experience of chivalry, but on the gendering of the plot and the disengendering of the men.[98] Although Edmund does, nominally, fall in love and marry, his joy at the recovery of his rightful inheritance allows for the spontaneous creation of an entirely male family. Edmund has been the special care of Sir Philip Harclay and of Baron Fitz-Owen. Once he inherits, he cries, 'What!...am I to be deprived of both my fathers at once?....How shall I, a young man, acquit myself of so many duties as will be upon me without the assistance of my two paternal friends?' (OEB, p. 146). Indeed, he addresses Sir Philip with a lover's diffidence, 'Oh, Sir Philip! will you too leave me? once you gave me hopes--'. He stopped, greatly affected' (OEB, pp. 146-147). Sir Philip's response is no less passionate: 'tell me truly, Edmund, do you really desire that I should live with you....Then, my dear child, I will live and die with you! They embraced with tears of affection' (OEB, p. 147). Emma Fitz-Owen appears only as a figure to be bestowed and received as the final symbolic benediction on a fantasy of a masculine family. The family is complete when the Baron announces that 'I will give my daughter to the heir of Lovel [Edmund], and then I shall have discharged my duty to him and my promise to Sir Philip Harclay' (OEB, p. 146). Emma is merely the mediation in a triangle of homosocial desire which allows a masculine fantasy of community to continue uninterrupted,[99] since she is the means of making the Baron the legal father of Edmund, and of uniting Edmund, Philip, and the Baron in a family dynamic. This is sealed, inevitably, with an agreement over property: 'My good Lord, said Sir Philip, you have disposed of two houses, and have none to receive you; will you accept of mine?' (OEB, p. 147). The ideal family is therefore by implication one that is wholly masculine,

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97. J.M.S. Tompkins, The Popular Novel in England 1770-1800 (London, 1932), pp. 229-30. See Reeve, Baron, p. 13.

98. For the increased use of domestic detail as part of a feminized aesthetic, see Naomi Schor, Reading in Detail: Aesthetics and the Feminine (New York: Methuen, 1987); Patricia Meyer Spacks, The Female Imagination: A Literary and Psychological Investigation of Women's Writing (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976); Spacks, 'Female Orders of Narrative', pp. 158-72.

99. See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), pp. 21-27.

centred around property and the code of masculine honour, created without the mediation of the feminine. Reeve's knights appropriate the poetics of sentimentalism which also has the effect of disengendering them.[100] As Walter Scott points out, this passivity is not in accord with the chivalric historical context, 'for if Fitzowen be considered as the Old English Baron, we do not see wherefore a character, passive in himself from beginning to end, and only acted on by others, should be selected to give a name to the story'.[101] In eliminating conflict between the masculine paradigm of experience and the feminine domestic context, Reeve eliminates the crisis of masculine experience on which Gothic fiction depends.

Despite her employment of the supernatural, Reeve's example of an idealised chivalric existence fails as a Gothic novel, but not as a Gothic model. Although Reeve accepts Walpole's denomination of the family as the backdrop to the struggle for a new mode of masculine heroism, she shows how Gothic is least suited to dramatise that struggle. Nonetheless, she definitively locates the crux of the Gothic in an exploration of masculine experience. She focuses attention on the problematic nature of the presentation of the supernatural. Through her 'homely' account of history, she facilitates the presentation of history in later Gothic novels as subjective experience, recounted by individuals as a sequence of private and personal episodes, rather than as a received account of political events, which is particularly significant in view of Sophia Lee's presentation of intensely personal first-person historical narrative in The Recess.

Sophia Lee's The Recess; Or A Tale of Other Times (1783-85)

Sophia Lee's The Recess is a lengthy and complex account of the lives of the fictional illegitimate twin daughters of a secret marriage between Mary Queen of Scots and the Duke of Norfolk. The narrative drive is toward escape, but the action is a series of captivities. In the development of the Gothic novel's preoccupation with the anxiety of male influence before Radcliffe, Lee's novel functions as an early, but highly effective, example of displacing heroic experience from the male on to the female by inverting historical understanding of heroism. Walpole's model exposes the hollowness of political authority in a family context, and Clara Reeve attempts to elide the feminine experience by having her

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[100]. For a discussion of the disengendering effect of the poetics of sentimentalism, see Todd, Sensibility, pp. 88-109; Melinda Alliker Rabb, 'Engendering Accounts of Sterne's A Sentimental Journey', in Johnson and His Age, ed. by James Engell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), pp. 531-558.
[101]. Scott, 'Clara Reeve', in Prose Works, iii, pp. 325-336 (p. 326).

knights appropriate it entirely. In Lee's novel there is an indication of the technique Radcliffe will use to examine the influence of literary constructs of heroism on the female imagination.

The novel is written in the form of a lengthy letter from Matilda, interrupted by one from her sister, Ellinor. The sisters are fated from birth to be caught in the intersection between public and private existences. They are the secret progeny of public figures, and their dilemma is compounded by their respective marriages to two of the most prominent courtiers of the court of Elizabeth I. Matilda marries Lord Leicester, and Ellinor, the Earl of Essex. These marriages force the sisters into a constant state of flight, pursuit and deception, as they and their husbands try to create an environment which is hermetically sealed from the invasions of the outside world. The claustrophobia of their existence is reflected in their repeated confinements, faintings, narrow escapes and tragic recaptures. The narratorial idiom--one isolated voice speaking of her past from a distance--emphasises the unbalanced, introverted and highly claustrophobic atmosphere.

The important things to note here about Lee's novel are, firstly, that she involves the reader in an evaluation of the truth of history and of historical assumptions about the nature of heroism. Secondly, she derives the impetus for her plot from the desire of the sisters to possess, physically, imaginatively, and historically, the men they love. The female control of the narrative, then, occludes the actual historical Leicester and Essex and imposes on them the identities of lover and husband. Masculine identities are explicitly portrayed as areas of intense desire and disagreement, a tension which will continue throughout Gothic fiction. The crisis of masculine identity is emphasised by the fact that the fear of discovery, of being exposed as husbands, impels them to flight. Finally, the novel creates a world, however political and masculine, where no bonds exist between the men. They are discrete entities in the narrative which has the effect of reinforcing the sense of masculine alienation, and marks a significant break from any literary predecessors. The male experience in The Recess is a divided one, torn between public performance and private life, and becomes an experience of persecution.

Lee's manipulation of setting, plot devices, and narrative technique encourages the reader's participation in a subjective experience of masculine heroism. The novel depends on this for its momentum. First, she gives the reader a literary context for the access to historical experience. 'The

reign of Elizabeth' was, she tells her readers, 'the age of Romance'.[102] This has the same effect that the skeletal outline of the romantic paradigm has in the first paragraph of Otranto. It gives licence to the imagination, and invokes a system of reading that depends on the employment of literary models. She uses real men and fictional women as protagonists to underline that it is the inheritance of masculine constructs of heroism that dominate women's lives, but--and this is highly significant in the light of Radcliffe's subsequent fiction--women are implicated in the creation and transmission of those heroic constructs. The letters which transmit the historical knowledge in The Recess are penned by female hands, and there are conflicting views. Matilda writes in consistently glowing terms of her lover's devotion, but Ellinor writes that Leicester has a 'heart, not warm by nature [and] rendered...callous from having always passed his life in the chilling atmosphere of a Court. Unbounded in his projects, timid and subtile in his actions, tyrannick in his pursuits, the object he could not govern, could never long attach him' (R, ii, p. 160). Indeed, she claims there are grounds to excuse her sister's gullibility, and by implication, anyone who might mistake his true nature: 'Ambition, pride, and vanity, these traits in almost every character, were in him so exquisitely blended and corrected by the frost of his nature that they might often be mistaken for nobler passions' (R, ii, p. 150). By excusing at once her sister and the reader for being deceived by Leicester's charm, Ellinor's cautionary comments remind the reader of the one-sidedness of the vision of Leicester they have previously had. This undercuts the authorised transmission of public history and opens the door to doubt about the authority of any account.

Lee uses the imagery of ghosts and spectres and the diction of transcendence to increase the sense of participation in the reader. Matilda describes herself as 'the forlorn, the widowed wanderer, as one arisen from the dead' (R, ii, 150). She does, indeed, haunt the reader's consciousness as a presence, rather than as an individualised character, and this reinforces the reader's sense of being haunted by history, part of an ongoing process of hermeneutics. It has been noted that the narrative presentation of political history in The Recess makes use of Gothic imagery to mediate the subjective understanding of political history as a source of cultural identity: 'In particular, it provides access to a private and interior space which can then be surreptitiously arranged, even built, to suit the needs of the broader

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[102]. Sophia Lee, Preface to The Recess (1783-5), 3 vols, intro. by Devendra Varma, foreword by J.M.S. Tompkins (repr. New York: Arno Press, 1972), i, p. 1. All further references to this edition are given in brackets in the text.

cultural order that encompasses it'.[103] The conscious use of spectral metaphors and imagery of decay and natural ruin reinforce the sense of uncertainty about the interplay between past and present.[104] Mary is 'part of one great mystery' to her children as they grow up. The sisters emerge in adolescence from beneath the ground like spectres. Ellinor plans her own death, and then appears before Elizabeth who thinks she is a ghost (R, ii, pp. 180-185). The combined effect of the spectralization of the women and the first-person narrative is to make the women seem omnipresent in the narrative. The men they love are denied voice and participation, since the only accounts of their thoughts, actions and speeches are related through the sisters. This displacement of the men from involvement in the action to existence within a female consciousness is seen when Leicester is fleeing with Matilda and they are trapped in the recess. Leicester is physically a prisoner in Matilda's home. Elizabeth's soldiers, representatives of his public role, pursue him above ground, but in fleeing them and the public self they wish to reclaim, he retreats to the recess and becomes completely disempowered. It is Matilda's dominion: 'Oh, matchless, matchless woman!...never, never can it be; your fortitude totally subdues mine, and melts my soul to woman's weakness.--Oh! thou who gavest me this angel, canst thou have abandoned her to brutality, and me to distraction!' (R, ii, p.9). This speech, in which Leicester makes unconsciously ironic use of the phrase 'woman's weakness' to accentuate his own, captures some of the essence of masculine experience in the novel. His translation of Matilda, 'this angel', grants her the mediating and guiding status that her consciousness imposes on the narrative. He is 'completely subdued' by Matilda. In the novel's organisation, the family and home do not offer sanctuary or refuge to the men, but are sources of their turmoil, subjection, and eventually, of their deaths.

Lee follows Reeve and Walpole in setting the family up as an alternative unit of authority in society. In The Recess, the family and the court are impervious to assimilation or mutual coexistence. In fact, they become threats to each other. In the Introduction to the Arno reprint of The Recess, Devendra Varma notes that there is in the novel 'an absolute dichotomy, intelligently drawn between the hypocritical (and correspondingly insecure and ruthlessly repressive) public world of the court and the private, invariably protected by absolute secrecy under the pain of imprisonment or death'. For Varma,

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[103]. Jayne Elizabeth Lewis, 'Ev'ry Lost Relation: Historical Fictions and Sentimental Incidents in Sophia Lee's The Recess', Eighteenth-Century Fiction, 7 (1995), 164-184 (p. 171).

[104]. For a discussion of the spectral in Gothic fiction, see Terry Castle, 'The Spectralization of the Other in Ann Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho', in The Eighteenth Century: Theory, Politics and Literature, ed. by Felicity Nussbaum and Laura Brown (New York: Methuen, 1987), pp. 231-253 (repr. in Terry Castle, The Female Thermometer: 18th Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) pp. 120-139).

this is one of two things represented by a 'disjunction of life and death force', and largely disconnected from what he correctly identifies as the 'central metaphor', confinement.[105] However, domesticity and the longing for family are as constrictive and 'ruthlessly repressive' as the world of the court. Indeed, for Leicester, there is the implication that the court is an escape from the 'absolute secrecy' of his marriage: 'I began to dread that satisfied love had given place to ambition, that considering me as the only bar between himself and Elizabeth...he vainly regretted having made me so' writes Matilda (R, i, p. 221). After their marriage, the recess is transformed from sanctuary to prison. It was 'sacred once to piety and innocence, but now, alas! the shelter of rapine, perhaps murder!' (R, ii, p. 1). Marriage has an even more drastic effect on the men. Their lives become divided and domesticity has the effect of rendering them completely distorted. Life at court is filled with 'vices and miseries' because it reverses the usual scale of virtues: 'There you can have no vice so injurious to yourself as sincerity; no merit like hypocrisy' (R, i, p. 20). It is, however, the state of marriage that truly perpetuates this inversion of values. Were Leicester ever sincere and honest at court about his marriage and love for Matilda, it would cost him his life. So in fact for Matilda, who bemoans the vices of a masculine court, Leicester's hypocrisy is not only highly desirable but necessary. For Ellinor and Essex, who is already married when they meet, recourse to the paralysing discourse of sentimentalism is required to absolve them from hypocrisy: 'What are the ties of marriage, said my Lord, (the tears mingling on our cheeks) to these invisible ligaments of the soul' (R, i, 203). The Recess initially presents the family as an alternative means of ordering masculine experience, but then subverts that intention by not offering within the family any viable alternative role to their public court performance. The choice is thus between self-abnegation or denial of the self for political ends. In Lee's novel, marriage and the family are a threat to masculine authority. They represent a destruction of the self through a surrender to affective values. Alternatively, marriage can be read as a political manoeuvre which denies the very capacity for affective values. This is articulated by Ellinor, who writes to her sister that, 'Leicester, it is true, loves you; but in you, at present, are centered future distinction, pomp, and a variety of pleasure never yet indifferent to him' (R, i, p. 242).

Arguably, marriage is not the beginning of a new existence, but the end of the masculine romance. The promise that Leicester makes to Matilda is rich with ambiguity: 'Summon all your fortitude, my love, and let us concert every measure necessary to our mutual safety, for I will take

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105. Devendra Varma, 'Introduction' to The Recess; Or, A Tale of Other Times i, p. xix.

every care of myself that you would wish me. Never more, I swear, will your husband leave you. Dreams of fortune and favour fade away before the realities of life' (R, i, p. 247). Matilda reads this as the triumph of love over policy, but there is a definite hint of surrender and of a devolved responsibility. Leicester depends on Matilda's fortitude. In Matilda's account, he describes himself as 'your husband', hiding volition behind duty to his role as a consort and possession. Most significant is the use of the image of fading dreams to describe his courtly life. He then uses the suitably ambiguous phrase, 'realities of life', to suggest the end of an illusion, a romance. In this context the romance is the story of courtly existence and not the romance that his wife has been writing in her letters. The ambiguity serves to remind the reader that the masculine experience exists outside the reaches of Matilda's letters, and is largely unknowable. In this way, The Recess points toward later Gothic novels of feminine subjectivity, such as Ann Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794), where the experience of masculine heroism in the narrative takes place entirely through the combined mediation of the imaginations of heroine and reader.

The third consideration when evaluating The Recess in terms of the destabilising of masculine heroic identity in the Gothic tradition is the absence in Lee's novel of male friendship. Instead, what characterises the experience of masculinity is a sense of displacement and disorientation. The narrative insistence on the sisters' experience of loss has the effect of presenting the men as absences who exist most fully in the imaginations and memories of their lovers. Lee's novel deconstructs the myth of male sociability by fragmenting masculine experience. The code of performance which governs them at court is wholly devalued. Without it, moreover, the powerful, charming courtiers become frightened fugitives, without sanctuary.

The sheltered world of the recess is literally buried under the emblem of the code of chivalry: 'Some famous knight... lay on the tomb' (R, i, p. 87). Under this relic of the masculine order, the sisters exist in a sheltered and hidden world of their own. When they finally appear from the recess it is to discover that, 'at each corner stood a gigantic statue of a man in armour, as if to guard it, two of whom were now headless' (R, i. p. 87). That the order and solidarity of the code of chivalry is shattered is physically visible to the women when they emerge. The image of the gigantic headless knights who failed to guard the sisters in their prison-recess, is central to the devaluation and destabilisation of masculine performance.

Leicester and Essex are rendered through the letters of the sisters as companions at court, and members of a courtly contingent of men. However, they do not form friendships at court, which is a scene of competitive politics, nor do they form close friendships with each other or with any other man once they escape from the court. Their lives are spent in a state of isolation and alienation from the masculine world that they abandoned, but they do not participate in any alternative system of sociability. In Lee's novel, the man who abandons the public performance of masculinity for private affection, sacrifices completely the world of men. In later Gothic fiction this sense of masculine alienation, of being without an acceptable pattern of masculine heroism, the state of being without a home and therefore without a province of authority or a source of identity, will become more markedly an experience of mental and physical isolation. In Lee's novel, however, the implications of the mental, physical and emotional isolation of men from the homosocial continuum are first raised. Dependent on entirely masculine-ordered models of heroic conduct for the acquisition of social identity, male characters in Gothic fiction find that the impetus for inventing a new model of masculine virtue no longer accrues from interaction with other men, previously an affirming masculine experience, but from an untried intersection with the uncertainties of feminine virtue. Gothic masculinity is cut off from earlier embodiments of masculine heroism and exists, alienated and without recourse to social integration, on the edges of cultural acceptability

The Recess is perhaps less a Gothic novel than a novel about the making of history, but as the Gothic tradition progresses, Gothic itself becomes increasingly involved in the experience of history as present fiction and absorbs Lee's formulation of a present haunted by the past. Certainly, as the most prominent Gothic novel to appear in the twenty-five years between Otranto and Radcliffe's first novel, The Recess offers much to Radcliffe for future exploration. Lee's internalised narrative technique, her involution of plot, and most notably the displacement of heroic meaning from the male to the female protagonist, are all given due consideration in the works of Radcliffe. Lee's novel heightens the subjective intensity of fiction to an extent previously unknown. She challenges the reader's hermeneutical approach much more consistently than either Walpole or Reeve. In achieving this combination of familiarity and uncertainty, she implicates the reader in every heroic construction, an engagement which later Gothic authors like Godwin and Mary Shelley explore fully. Lee elevates the poetics of terror and suspense, raising narrative dread from mere machinery to formal art, partly through the sequences of flight and pursuit that constitute the action, and partly through the rhetoric of

fear and exhaustion which dominates the letters of Matilda. Lee thus gives Radcliffe a pattern to trace through the poetics of persecution which embroider her own narratives of heroic absence. Lee is also innovative in the use of landscape and spectral imagery, which would find a more receptive audience in Radcliffe's readers.

Chapter Two: Ann Radcliffe and the Feminine Desire for Romantic Heroism

Ann Radcliffe uses the structures of romance specifically to create a narrative environment in which to demonstrate the void of viable heroic traditions. This manifests itself in an ironic subversion of the romance models her structure seems initially to subtend.[1] By conflating the hero with the heroine, Radcliffe's novels forcibly demonstrate how existing models of literary heroism fail to operate in narratives of modern romance. This renders traditional signs of masculine experience ineffectual and irrelevant. Radcliffe's Gothic heroines in particular face the failure of heroic ideals to function in their own plots. Their imaginary villains are not ultimately powerful, and their lover-heroes are largely absent, too gentle to act, and dependent on the heroine for animation. The Radcliffe heroine exists in a world of illusion where the appearance of heroic virtue sustains the social structure around her, but the absence of actual heroic virtue leaves her disorientated.

Although critics have largely neglected Radcliffe's subversion of traditional romance, this subversion gives her novels generic coherence, and demonstrates that Gothic romance is particularly suited to dramatise the failure of ideals of literary heroism.[2] This chapter will first examine Radcliffe's affiliations with romance and then her first four novels, The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne (1789), A Sicilian Romance (1790), The Romance of the Forest (1791), and The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794) to demonstrate how her understanding of the romance conventions deepens. As her use of the romance mode becomes more sophisticated, her sense of the crisis it exposes in the nature of literary heroism sharpens. I will show that there is a marked development in her narrative technique which supports the contention that her romances subvert the figure of the hero and displace responsibility for the creation and sustenance of literary heroism onto the heroine. I will also show that Radcliffe's novels effect the disappearance of the physical man by replacing male presence with descriptions of landscape.

In taking Gothic fiction in the direction of romance, Radcliffe follows those who, like Clara Reeve's Euphrasia in The Progress of Romance (1785), argue that heroic romances were such a blend of fact and fiction, 'that a common reader could not distinguish them'.[3] The increasingly solipsistic

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1. Although there has been no critical discussion of Radcliffe's stylistic subversion of the romance mode, the tension between form and content has been noted with a general regard to Radcliffe's conservative politics in Barbara Benedict, 'Pictures of Conformity: Sentiment and Structure in Ann Radcliffe's Style', Philological Quarterly, 18 (1989), 363-377.

2. For a dissenting view on the coherence of Gothic form and style in general see Napier, p. 4.

3. Clara Reeve, The Progress of Romance, Through Times, Countries, and Manners, with Remarks on the Good and Bad Effect of it, on them Respectively, in the Course of Evening Conversations, 2 vols, 2nd edn (1786; repr. New York, Garland, 1930), i, p. 65.

perspective of Radcliffe's heroines in the novels leading up to and culminating in The Mysteries of Udolpho, perverts the reader's view of the masculine heroic experience wished for and encountered by the heroines such that the internal demands of romance, implied by the narrative and plot devices, are at odds with the operation and outcomes of heroic masculinity in the novels themselves. Thus the reassuringly familiar conventions of romance are transmuted into frighteningly unfamiliar, unreliable, ungendered, figures of heroic virtue.

Radcliffe's romances effectively deny any potency to the experience of masculinity by defining the masculine experience through the feminine. The lack of heroic presence is evidence of romance subversion, since it denies the hero-centred tradition of romance.[4] Radcliffe's romances, in contrast, work towards erasing the physical man from Gothic fiction and replacing him with landscape and figures of the literary imagination. Masculine experience is controlled and transmitted through the feminine consciousness and becomes ineffectual in any other form. These effects are achieved through Radcliffe's manipulation and organisation of the recognisable conventions and structures of romance. As such, Radcliffe uses the mode for a rigorous investigation of a legacy of literary heroic models which lingers, displaced and alien, in an emerging fictional tradition of family and domesticity. Emotional states which 'are identifiably feminine and closely associated with isolation, dependence, and sexual fear',[5] are rather associated with states of anxiety increasingly inhabited by men. Masculine heroism, in its unmodified literary form, is alienated and isolated, ineffective and illusory. Subscription to the illusion of romance, as Radcliffe demonstrates, is therefore personally and socially threatening. In as much as Radcliffe's romances engage with 'women's extreme discontent with the social and

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4. For discussions of the centrality and nature of heroic experience see, for example, Carl Jung, 'Anima and Animus', in Two Essays on Analytical Psychology (New York: Meridian, 1956), pp. 198-223; Sigmund Freud, 'The Ego and the Id', in On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis, in The Penguin Freud Library, ed. by Angela Richards, 15 vols (London: Penguin, 1984; repr. 1991), xi, pp. 339-408; Erich Neumann, The Origins and History of Consciousness (1949), trans. by R.F.C. Hull, Bollingen Series 42 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970); Otto Rank, The Myth of the Birth of the Hero (1970), in In Quest of the Hero, intro. by Robert Segal (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Fitzroy Richard Somerset Raglan, The Hero: A Study in Tradition, Myth and Drama (New York: Vintage, 1956, repr. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1975), pp. 172-217 (pp. 189-191); Reed, Meditations on the Hero, pp. 1-33. For a discussion which argues that the heroic requires a union with life-giving female presence, see Joseph Campbell, Hero with a Thousand Faces (1949), 2nd edn (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), pp. 118-126. For discussions which link the idea of heroism with cultural necessity, see Raney Stanford, 'The Romantic Hero and that Fatal Selfhood', Centennial Review 10 (1968) 430-454; Frederick Garber, 'Self, Society, Value and the Romantic Hero', Comparative Literature 19 (1967) 321-333, reprinted in The Hero in Literature, ed. by Victor Brombert (New York: Fawcett, 1969), pp. 213-227.

5. Coral Ann Howells, Love, Mystery and Misery: Feeling in Gothic Fiction (London: Athlone, 1978; 2nd edn, 1995), p. 49; cf. Doody, Deserts, Ruins and Troubled Waters, pp. 530-535.

psychological processes which transform them into victims',[6] the novels simultaneously and consistently demonstrate how the failure to imagine an effective model of masculine heroism transforms all society into victims of illusion, and thus of tyranny.

Radcliffe arouses the fear inherent in the absence of functional masculinity through the manipulation of her reader's fused fantasies and fears. As a result of the confusion of the real and the unreal, Radcliffe's fiction is readily incorporated into a category of fictions where the distortion of perspective is achieved either through the limitations of individual perspective, what Kathryn Hume terms 'perspectivist literature', or through the creation of 'worlds that are skewed...which are so cleverly twisted that we cannot say '*this* is an exaggeration, but *that* is true'.[7] In my reading of Radcliffe, this produces the Gothic effect of fearful asymmetry, in which the imaginatively realised desire of the heroine is frighteningly inapplicable to the narrative situation, and the female 'protagonist...staggers through these skewed, hall-of-mirrors worlds unenlightened, but readers are made to feel the confusion of helplessness, the feebleness of their interpretative powers'.[8] Since the desire for a functional heroic model drives the narrative, but is consistently thwarted and frustrated, the powerlessness of both heroine and reader to evaluate the performance of the heroic in Radcliffe distorts the formulaic basis of romance.

Radcliffe's romances are structurally cohesive with Frye's anatomy of romance, but they reverse the paradigm of heroic quest to form a quest for the heroic. In Radcliffe's novels, not the hero but the heroine 'goes through a series of adventures and combats which [s]he always wins'.[9] This is a strong indication of heroic fragmentation and displacement, and I suggest that it emphasises the superfluity of actual masculine experience to the plot since the hero is no longer the link in the 'and then' narrative of romance.[10] This deliberate use of romance is ignored or misread by critics who mistake the disturbing dissonance in Radcliffe's Gothic fiction for generic hesitation.[11] In fact, this hesitation is at the core of Radcliffe's use of romance. The incomplete transition from illusion to reality or vice versa makes the dread of heroic experience more powerful. Radcliffe's romances are propelled by desire for

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6. Tania Modleski, Loving with a Vengeance: Mass-Produced Fantasies for Women (New York: Methuen, 1982), p. 84.
7. Kathryn Hume, Fantasy and Mimesis: Responses to Reality in Western Culture (London: Methuen, 1984).
8. Hume, p. 125.
9. Frye, Secular Scripture, p. 67; see also Gary Kelly, 'A Constant Vicissitude of Interesting Passions: Ann Radcliffe's Perplexed Narratives', Ariel, 10 (1979), 45-64 (p.55).
10. Frye, pp. 47-48.
11. See for example, Duncan, p. 21.

the unreal, the impossible heroic 'reality'. In this sense Radcliffe's fiction lies within the realm of the fantastic: 'a literature of desire, which seeks that which is experienced as absence and loss....The fantastic traces the unsaid and the unseen of culture: that which has been silenced, made invisible, covered over and made 'absent".[12] The resulting spectralization is an effort to reproduce and to repossess the past by creating it in a haunting, pervasive, spectral sense. The heroine forces historical models into her contemporary context by seeking, and inevitably failing, to possess the spectral masculine virtue she imagines. Radcliffe's Gothic romance demonstrates that any attempt to reincorporate--very much in the literal sense of em-bodying--new social ideals of masculine heroism into literary models of romance must fail. For this reason, her novels are haunted by absent male figures: imprisoned Osbert, Hippolitus presumed dead, captured Theodore, distant Valancourt, the late Earl of Athlin, the deceased father of Adeline, and the late St. Aubert.

In exploring the space between the heroine's desire for heroic romance and the external plot which negates it, Radcliffe uses romance to mediate the boundaries of self and world, as well as to define those boundaries.[13] However, Radcliffe's fiction expresses anxiety not about the besieged boundaries of the feminine psyche, but rather about the divided and distressed masculine consciousness, since the permeability of the boundaries of identity is primarily a cause for masculine anxiety, or for anxiety over the masculine. The permeability of the hero is revealed in the Radcliffean heroine's assumption of responsibility for his role. Under the illusion of masculine heroism, the heroine inadvertently becomes heroic as she attempts to repossess heroic virtue through her imagination. In driving toward this goal of possession, heroic identity is fragmented beyond recovery, and therefore is revealed as an illusion.[14] Mary and Matilda in The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne, Julia Mazzini, in A Sicilian Romance, Adeline Montalt, in The Romance of the Forest, and Emily St. Aubert in The Mysteries of Udolpho, having at some point assumed the active role of romance hero, appear at the

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12. Rosemary Jackson, Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion (London: Methuen, 1981), pp. 3-4; for other explanations of the same phenomenon, see Sigmund Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia' (1917), in On Metapsychology, pp. 245-268 (p. 241); Castle, 'The Spectralization of the Other', in The Female Thermometer, pp. 120-139 (pp. 126-129); Castle, 'Spectral Politics: Apparition Belief and the Romantic Imagination', in The Female Thermometer, pp. 168-189. For a different interpretation of the importance of the reader's hesitation see Tzvetan Todorov, The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre (1970), trans. by Richard Howard (Cleveland Ohio: Case Western Reserve University Press, 1973), p. 33.

13. For readings of boundaries which ignore romance as a generic tool see, for example, Delamotte, Perils of the Night, pp. 14, 149-192; Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, The Coherence of Gothic Conventions (New York: Arno, 1980; repr. New York: Methuen, 1986), p. 13.

14. For the centrality of 'paradox' and 'divisive tension'--heroic fragmentation--to the 'romantic novel', see Robert Kiely, The Romantic Novel in England (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 17.

conclusions of their romances to possess both their lovers and their paternities. Although they have not managed to possess the masculine virtue they imagined, they have acquired the ability to overcome the fear of its absence. Psychoanalytic criticism goes some way to explaining the complex union between a desire for the heroic expressed by Radcliffe's heroines, and the fear which its functional absence sustains.[15] In such an interpretation, thwarted desire for the heroic at the core of Gothic romance is encoded in a system of wishful projections of heroic fantasy, balanced by a wilful resistance to them.[16]

Because Radcliffe's subjective narratives depend on this desire, it is not that they produce a 'romance rhetoric in which desire is sublimated to drive the plot without a visible agent',[17] but rather that her particular use of romance obliges the heroine (and the reader) to conjure up a visible and credible agent to drive the plot, in effect, a representation of their desires, thereby blurring the distinctions between illusion and reality, power and impotence, hero and heroine. This has the paradoxical effect of making the experience of masculinity a spectacle in the novels, something that is created and observed, while simultaneously removing narrative masculinity as heroic experience, thus rendering it invisible. Often, the hero/villain exists in a state of isolation and separation because he is configured through the desires of the reader and heroine, and therefore must always be apart from them, the object and spectacle of the narrative.[18] The responsibility for the experience of heroic masculinity is thus transferred from the acts of the male protagonists to the consciousness of the heroines.[19]

The 'improbable, desiring, erotic, and violent world of romance' necessarily formulates a need for the heroic. This generates in turn a recurring performance of the heroic which produces the 'sense that more is meant than meets the ear in romance' arising 'from the reverberations that its familiar conventions set up within our literary experience'.[20] Like Burke, Radcliffe uses romance discourse to

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15. See, for example, Carl Jung, Psychological Types, trans. by H. G. Baynes, rev. by R.F.C. Hull, in The Collected Works of C. J. Jung (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), vi, p. 59; cf. Freud, 'The Ego and the Id', pp. 352-353.

16. For studies of this dialectic of attraction and repulsion with specific reference to Emily's sexual desire, see Cynthia Griffin Wolff, 'The Radcliffean Gothic Model: A Form for Feminine Sexuality', in The Female Gothic, ed. by Julian Fleenor (Montreal: Eden Press, 1983), pp. 207-223; For a reading of the attraction and rejection of the sublime, see Spacks, Desire and Truth: Functions of Plot in Eighteenth-Century English Novels (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 155-157.

17. Duncan, pp. 37-38.

18. For a different reading of the hero's separation, see Judith Wilt, Ghosts of the Gothic: Austen, Eliot, and Lawrence (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 19.

19. Critics have noted this with reference to the increased power of feminine subjectivity. See, for example, Gary Kelly, English Fiction of the Romantic Period, 1789-1830 (London: Longman, 1989), p. 50; Debra Malina, 'Rereading the Patriarchal Text: The Female Quixote, Northanger Abbey, and the Trace of the Absent Mother', Eighteenth-Century Fiction, 8 (1996), 271-292 (p. 273).

20. Frye, Secular Scripture, pp. 61, 59.

articulate a longing for lost perfection. However, Radcliffe is more radical in her manipulation of conventions. Burke, for example, refers to 'the pleasing illusions, which made power gentle, and obedience liberal', in talking of an earlier age of apparent political stability. When these 'pleasing illusions' which 'incorporated into politics the sentiments which beautify and soften private society' falter, it is as if 'the decent drapery of life is to be rudely torn off'.[21] Burke argues for the necessity of illusion to the operation of power and government. However, in Radcliffe's reading of romance, power and order themselves are dangerous illusions. Her fiction is concerned with the 'nothing' behind Burke's drapery. Because, of necessity, this absence is indescribable and therefore unopposable or unassimilable, it is far more threatening than the presence of even the most powerful hero. Radcliffe is responsible for developing the subjective feminine experience of the absent hero/failed hero constructed out of romantic desire. Thus, in The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne Mary transforms Alleyn from peasant to hero in her imagination, and the force of her imagination makes him a hero, but in A Sicilian Romance, Julia's efforts to make a hero of Hippolitus succeed only in his absence. In The Romance of the Forest Adeline's search for a father ends in the discovery of his murder, and La Motte requires her feminine mediation to re-establish himself in the public masculine world after ruining his own name through weakness and dissipation, while in The Mysteries of Udolpho, Emily figures a villain whose imaginary potency far outstrip his minimal power and authority.

The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne

In The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne Radcliffe first achieves the effect of an illusory world in which the conventions of romance, rather than those of fictionalised personal history, order the narrative. She maintains this method of organising narrative structure throughout her next three novels. For contemporary reviewers, this fantastical quality was the most salient, if not the most admirable, quality of Radcliffe's first novel. The Critical Review mentions 'some fancy and much romantic imagery',[22] while the Monthly Review expresses the opinion that the novel would appeal to 'those who are delighted with the *marvellous*, whom wonders, and wonders only, can charm', but felt that 'this can be little relished but by the young and unformed mind'. The fault lay in the plot, 'a series of events, which seem not to have their foundation in nature'.[23]

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21. Edmund Burke, Reflections, p. 128.
22. Critical Review, 68 (September 1789), p. 251.
23. Monthly Review, 81 (December 1789), p. 563.

Radcliffe's overt use of romance in the face of such contemporary uncertainty about its viability for serious fiction suggests a possible early ideological affiliation in Radcliffe of romance with novelistic purpose. There are three features of The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne which are relevant to my discussion. In her first novel, Radcliffe does not deviate from the architectural prioritising of her predecessors, Walpole and Lee: like them she adopts the castle as the physical representation of authority and home, making it the structural centre of her narrative and also central in the title. Secondly, The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne shows Radcliffe's first tentative attempts at heroic displacement. Her heroes are imprisoned and thereby temporarily forced to suspend active participation in the plot; her heroines begin to imagine their heroes, and, through their imaginations, to direct the course of the action. Thirdly, the novel is characterised by a sense of loss and melancholy, which is rooted in the absence of coherent masculine identity. Although in this early novel, the fragmentation of the heroic self is minimal, the deliberate nullification of heroic identity is already apparent. There is a disturbing dissonance between the expectations of heroic performance aroused in the reader, and actual masculine participation in the narrative. The mood of melancholy and longing which dominates the novel will increasingly support Radcliffe's later plots of feminine desire for the heroic.

Like Walpole, Radcliffe uses the castle as the locus for the collision of authorities and for the assertion of identity. The novel opens with the image of the castle of Athlin, 'an edifice built on the summit of a rock whose base was in the sea'.[24] This recalls Samuel Johnson's description of Slanes castle, 'built upon the margin of the sea, so that the walls of one of the towers seem only a continuation of a perpendicular rock, the foot of which is beaten by the waves', and Radcliffe appears to credit Johnson's assertions that the 'fictions of the Gothick romances were not so remote from credibility as they are now thought'.[25] Radcliffe evokes the images of feudal tyrants, familiar from the writings of Hurd, Walpole, and Johnson, among others, only to reduce the chivalric heroes to figures of powerlessness through the invocation, and subsequent subversion, of romance. She sets up a world of mini-kingdoms, in which clashes between clans are violent and personal: the clan of Dunbayne is led by the 'proud, oppressive, revengeful' Malcolm, 'still residing in all the pomp of feudal greatness' (CAD,

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24. Ann Radcliffe, The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne (1789), ed. by Alison Milbank (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 3. All further references to this edition are given in brackets in the text.
25. Samuel Johnson, A Journey to the Western Isles of Scotland (1775), ed. by Mary Lascelles in The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson, 16 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), ix, pp. 18-19, 77.

p. 3), and the clan of Athlin by young Osbert, whose 'breast...kindled with the noble purpose' and whose people 'fondly cherished the hope that their young Lord would one day lead them on to conquest and revenge' (CAD, pp. 7, 5). This again recalls Johnson's vivid contextualising of 'Gothick romances' in conflicts of masculine authority: 'the fictions of romantick chivalry had for their basis the real manners of the feudal times, when every lord of a seignory lived in his hold lawless and unaccountable, with all the licentiousness and insolence of uncontested superiority and unprincipled power'.[26] However, in Radcliffe's reworking of heroic identity violence and usurpation are defeated by virtue and loyalty, as the foundling Alleyn is revealed as the true, noble and beneficent heir to the castle of Dunbayne. His accession inaugurates a celebration of domesticity, seen in the revelry at his marriage to Mary. When the recovery of Alleyn's identity makes this marriage to Osbert's sister Mary possible, the castle is transformed from an overt symbol of feudal tyranny and illegal power, to a glorified home with a 'drawing-room' as well as a 'banquetting-room' (CAD, p112). Its final role is not as a fortress to prevent invasion, but rather to have 'the gates thrown open', so that 'mirth and festivity resounded through the walls' (CAD, p. 112).

In the first paragraph the context of masculine rivalry and performance is established. Between the clans of Athlin and Dunbayne, 'frequent broils had happened....Malcolm, whose pride was touched by the defeat of his people; whose ambition was curbed by the authority, and whose greatness was rivalled by the power of the Earl, conceived for him that deadly hatred....and he meditated his destruction' (CAD, p.3). Although the development of the plot negates heroic identity, the putative plot is thus rendered as one of male adversaries locked in a cycle of revenge. The conflict between the genuine, legitimate and virtuous Osbert, Earl of Athlin, and the selfish usurper, Baron Malcolm, is represented by the two castles; the difference between the men is rendered through the physical description of their castles: Athlin is 'more venerable from the virtues it enclosed' (CAD, p. 3), but Dunbayne, whose present owner is an example of 'the bad policy of oppression' (CAD, p. 7), is 'an abode, whence light and hope were equally excluded' (CAD, p. 17), and 'there the virtues were captive, while the vices reigned despotic' (CAD, p. 39). Dunbayne becomes the prison of the captured Osbert and Alleyn, thus enclosing and capturing virtue in a manner opposite to the castle of Athlin. The castles themselves become contrasting figures of ambiguous meaning. With its 'lofty towers [which] frowned in

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26. Johnson, pp. 77, 155. For a brief discussion of Johnson's influence on the novel, see Alison Milbank, 'Introduction', in The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne, pp. vi-xxiv (pp. xii-xiii).

proud sublimity' (CAD, p. 13), its cells, vaults and castle walls, Dunbayne is a forbidding, lonely and powerful place. Yet it is transformed by the presence of captive virtue into a scene of pastoral idyll, as Osbert hears Laura's music, and 'observing the progress of...birds...caught the sound of that sweet lute' (CAD, p. 33). With a 'subterraneous way' and 'passages into the rock' (CAD, p. 27) Dunbayne is accessible and penetrable, built on non-existent foundations. By contrast, Athlin, from the lack of description devoted to it, is less a representation of feudal oppression and sublime power than a figurative refuge. It is a castle in name only, since it is more home than fortress, and descriptions of towers, walls, vaults, passages and cells are out of place and irrelevant. This opposition continues through the novel. The trajectory of the action travels between the two, mostly through the figure of Alleyn, who escapes Dunbayne and organises the rescue of Osbert, who is captivated more by his love for Laura than by the tyrant Malcolm.

This travelling between the two castles sets up the alternative worlds of romance which overlap so as to make reality and imagination indistinguishable. The process of heroic displacement and destabilisation can then begin. Once Osbert and Alleyn are prisoners at Dunbayne, Athlin becomes a wholly feminine environment in which images of the absent men are conjured up. In what becomes characteristic of Radcliffe's later novels, the male figures are removed from direct participation in the narrative and become presences in the feminine imagination. The women in Athlin are almost driven mad by the images that tradition and legend suggest, but they are unable to supply any others. Mary finds that 'the idea of her brother, surrounded with the horrors of imprisonment and death, would often obtrude on her imagination, with an emphasis which almost overcame her reason', and when her thoughts turned to Alleyn, 'her heart often melted in compassion at the picture which her fancy drew of his sufferings' (CAD, p. 15). Likewise, Matilda rejects the Baron's demand of Mary's hand in marriage until 'the bleeding figure of her beloved son, pale and convulsed in death, started on her imagination, and stretched her brain almost to frenzy' (CAD, p. 44). The castles are thus again employed in opposition to one another: Athlin is a seat of feminine affection which images tyranny, while Dunbayne is a seat of tyranny, whose victim, Osbert, images affection and love. While his mother and sister imagine untold sufferings and horrors for him, Osbert composes sonnets (CAD, p. 39) and escapes through a panel in his cell to hear another tragic history (CAD, pp. 51-54, 59-66). When Osbert catches sight of the widow and daughter of the Baron's late brother, 'his eyes were suffused with tears of pity' (CAD, p. 34). The process of feminisation, signalled in this initial appropriation of signs of

feminine virtue, is complete when Osbert's self-identification is transformed by feminine presence. On closer sight of the daughter, Laura, Osbert is freed in his imagination: he 'forgot the danger of his present situation...he forgot even that he was a prisoner' (CAD, p. 53).

This confusion of the worlds of the real and the imaginary is explicitly associated with masculine fantasy. Osbert, deeply offended by the injustice suffered by the Baroness, 'occupied with the hateful image of the murderer, was hardened against anger', and threatens to go immediately to Malcolm, 'and would have delivered the earth from a monster' (CAD, p. 66). The Baroness calls him back, and 'the illusion of passion disappeared....he found himself as a traveller on enchanted ground, when the wand of the magician suddenly dissolves the airy scene, and leaves him environed with scenes of solitude and despair' (CAD, p. 66). Radcliffe thus renders the masculine fantasy of Osbert, 'the wild hope, with which he deluded his reason, that he might be able to assist them' (CAD, p. 55) as enchantment in the face of the grim 'reality' of feudal tyranny and his imprisonment. Similarly, this 'reality' is undermined when the clan of Athlin is first betrayed by the duplicity of Malcolm, and the men try to 'discover any clue which would lead them through this intricate maze of wonder, to the villain' (CAD, p. 31).

Fantasies of masculine torment, transmitted through cultural representations of masculine activity, govern the feminine imagination as well. Torn between sacrificing her brother or marrying Malcolm, Mary is haunted by 'the spectacle of her beloved brother, encircled with chains...the scene was too affecting; fancy gave her the horrors of reality' (CAD, p. 45). The sentence is sufficiently ambiguous to allow the possibility that fancy does not only give --i.e. paint--the horrors of reality to Mary's imagination, but that fancy gives her the horrors--i.e. makes her frightened--of reality. The power of fancy to mislead and to govern actions, most potently when it creates images of heroic virtue, is here syntactically combined with the ability of fancy to override reality altogether, and therefore to render the distinction between illusion and reality an impossible one. Similarly, when the Countess sees Alleyn, heroic identity and authority are questioned. She calls him her son, and faints. Upon waking, she asks, 'was it a vision that I saw, or a reality?' and the 'whole company, moved their eyes round the hall, but could discover nothing extraordinary' (CAD, pp. 110-111). Finally, she ironically confirms her reality by recourse to her imagination: 'It was himself; his very air, his features, that benign countenance which I have so often contemplated in Imagination!' (CAD, p. 111). Before the truth is finally discovered through a mark on Alleyn's arm, the Countess's friends wonder 'whether a sudden

frenzy had not seized her brain' (CAD, p. 111), but when the figure of imagination, in this case that of Alleyn, turns out to be real, the 'realistic' narrative of revenge transforms itself, through the recovery of identity, into romance.

To realise her romance fully, however, Radcliffe expands her vision beyond the masculine-imagined confines of castles. The castles operate sufficiently as emblematic representations of conflicting heroic models, and like the heroes, are infiltrated by the feminine imagination. Athlin is left undescribed and without physical presence, and significantly, it is in this castle, without walls, or any evident boundaries, that Radcliffe chooses to conclude the romance. In this first novel, Radcliffe is developing the idea of the power of the imagination to invent oppression and to escape it, through the mediation of images of the heroic man, and thereby to undermine the myths of the literary hero and villain, who are, indeed, only figures of the imagination. Radcliffe uses the two strongholds to convey the contrast between the castle as mere property, the way the Baron of Dunbayne uses it, and the castle as home and source of family identity. Nonetheless, this device restricts her drive toward romance, and in her subsequent novels, she abandons it in favour of wider, more integrated and less bounded settings.

Within this restriction, however, The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne successfully outlines the process of heroic displacement that dominates Radcliffe's later novels. The subjective experience of heroism by the women, Mary, and Matilda, even Laura and the Baroness, appears initially to be marginal to the action, which is centred around the battle to avenge the death of the old Earl and to regain his lands. Once Osbert is effectively removed from action through his imprisonment, however, the imaginings of Mary and Matilda determine the narrative action and create the narrative tension. By alternating between the despair and the envisioned terror at Athlin, and the pastoral love-idyll in Dunbayne, Radcliffe underlines the powers of delusion necessary to drive the heroic experience. Osbert is susceptible to his own visions of himself as hero, but the Baroness reminds him that these are enchanted visions. He is thus made aware of his own powerlessness.

The poetry which appears at intervals, written by Osbert in moments of reflection, helps to sustain the sense of longing and sadness which permeates the novel. This sense is initiated by the novel's premise of the irreplaceable loss of a genuinely virtuous man. The Earl of Athlin was killed, and 'inconsolable for his death, Matilda had withdrawn from the public eye' (CAD, p. 3). The death of her husband, therefore, initially diminishes Matilda's public self. However, the memory of her husband gradually dominates her outward self and makes her more an object of admiration. Her individual lack

of heroic accompaniment lends her distinction, so that she is herself made an object of desire, a monument of heroic suffering, through the visible display of her own desire. As her, 'grief declined into a gentle, and not unpleasing, melancholy', it 'gave a soft and interesting shade to the natural dignity of her character' (CAD, pp. 4-5). Thus, heroic longing in women becomes a form of heroic displacement, and nearly negates the necessity for active masculine heroism: the grief Matilda feels causes her to attempt to prevent Osbert from acting out his role as avenger and lord of the clan. In addition, the loss of the earl, and the tradition of heroic virtue which he represents also threatens to emasculate the divided Osbert. His filial affection and loyalty to Matilda's heroic code of passive suffering force him to 'stifle the emotions which roused him to arms' (CAD, p. 5). The lingering tradition of the Earl's virtue is therefore of no comfort to Osbert who becomes a hero only when he defines himself as champion against the oppression of the Countess and her daughter, and then remodels his own code of heroic conduct to match their situation. While the memory of his father haunts his imagination, 'the breast of Osbert kindled with the noble purpose' (CAD, p. 7). However, this masculine-inspired heroism fails him, as it causes him to be trapped in a symbolic representation of masculine authority, Dunbayne, and he cannot replace his father either in image or action.

The impetus to action is, then, a nostalgic longing to recapture the past, to perpetuate the memory of the Earl, either in Matilda's sorrow or in Osbert's actions. This nostalgia is shown to be a cultural phenomenon rather than an individualised yearning, since the late earl 'was adored by his clan; and they were eager to revenge his injuries' (CAD, p. 5). As a link between present and past manifestations of masculine authority, the engagement with Malcolm is determined upon during a ceremony to commemorate 'an attempt...made two centuries before, by an hostile clan to surprize them' (CAD, p. 9). Although Osbert postpones acting while 'the image of his weeping mother crossed his mind' (CAD, p. 7), the combination of the memory of the wrongs done to his noble father and the martial celebrations prompt him to overcome his 'filial love, regret, and pity', which were at odds with the 'filial duty, honour, revenge [which] commanded him to go' (CAD, p. 11). Here is the division between private domestic affection and public virtue which characterises the torment of the masculine experience. The clan tries to recreate its hero by invoking the past and imposing a masculine vision of virtue on Osbert. It is not, however, Osbert's bravery, nor his martial prowess which saves the clan. He is transformed from soldier to lover-poet in the castle of Dunbayne once he is free of the image of his father and therefore able to construct an independent heroic model. By contrast, the flexible and

adaptable peasant Alleyn achieves the honourable resolution between past and present heroic virtue. He travels between Mary and Matilda conjuring images of horrific torture, the hiding place in the cave between the castles where the clan lay their plans, and the Castle of Dunbayne. His peasant upbringing frees him from imposed traditions of aristocratic honour and allows him to be a mediating figure, bringing news of Osbert to Athlin, and comforting Mary and Matilda, as well as leading the army to rescue Osbert. He becomes a hero by default, taking over the role that Osbert imagined, and then left empty. It is 'Alleyn who was to lead the enterprize, and it was Alleyn who might fall in the attempt' (CAD, p. 31). Mary finds that 'the insignificance of the peasant was lost in the nobility of his character' once 'the monitor in her breast constantly presented to her mind the image of Alleyn, adorned with those brave and manly virtues' (CAD, p. 31). The pastoral convention of recovered identity is given particular focus when Alleyn is discovered to be a prince by birth: it would seem that the image of the heroic projected by a specifically feminine imagination is able to transcend and transform the individual.

Emphasising the heroism of the peasant-figure, Robert Miles sees in Radcliffe's first novel a 'coded anti-aristocratic animus', which, he argues, sharpens in focus and deepens in subtlety in her later novels.[27] In fact, the 'animus' in Radcliffe's work is determined less by class than by gender. She removes the heroic authority from the a male-generated plot of action to a feminine-generated plot of desire. In The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne, the social category of feudal aristocracy, to which all the characters including Alleyn belong, is part of Radcliffe's romance structure, substituting in part for the hero, meant to be 'superior in *degree* to other men and his environment',[28] but absent in the novel. This presentation of feudal social organisation as a heroic system in itself decentralises the role of hero. Radcliffe's ahistorical use of the middle ages allows her the flexibility of an alternative world, one which associates illusion with tyranny,[29] and which destabilises the reader by offering an environment that is almost, but not completely, familiar. The past haunts the reader with its ultimate unknowability in Radcliffe's novels, in the same way that the possibility of enchantment and the supernatural do. Since the institutions of aristocratic hierarchy, dependent on primogeniture and self-perpetuation, are automatically gendered masculine, Radcliffe's destabilisation of those institutions offers a critique of

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27. Miles, Ann Radcliffe, p. 78.
28. Frye, Anatomy, p. 33.
29. Frye, Secular Scripture, p. 54.

masculine experience, for which the feudal middle ages are emblematic, highlighting the crisis of masculine identity.

The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne subverts romance structures by destabilising literary masculine experience. Many of the themes and characteristics of Radcliffe's later fiction are present in her first novel. Particularly, the interruption of the tale of revenge by a love story shows that Radcliffe was already using techniques of narrative distraction, stylistically echoing the inability of her male characters to exert any extended control over their environments. In this first novel she concentrates on decentring masculine experience by collapsing the power and integrity of the revenge narrative into tales of heroic imprisonment, and on the failure of the masculine tradition of violence by removing, and then feminising, the hero. The feminine desire for a hero, however, soon produces another one, and it is this aspect of feminine desire that Radcliffe explores in her later novels. In A Sicilian Romance, and even more in A Romance of the Forest, the structures of romance and recovered identity--imposed externally on male figures by a feminine consciousness or acquired by the heroine through an investigation of masculine identities--are manipulated to produce tightly-plotted narratives. Yet these narratives leave the implications of literary masculinity undescribed and depend on the subjective participation of the reader in the construction of masculine experience. The female characters create narrative suspense through their terrible fancies, and it is they who supply the lack of the heroic. Radcliffe shows insight and innovation in her manipulation of romance conventions to achieve this radical destabilisation of masculine identity, while retaining the traditional structure and coherence of romance. In the following two novels, she focuses her reader's attention less on the external Gothic machinery of the castle and its inhabitants, and more on the frightening potential of heroic absence which romance allows her to explore. Tellingly, in the titles of her next two novels, Radcliffe abandons the image of the castle and openly states her preference for romance.

A Sicilian Romance and The Romance of the Forest

Radcliffe's next two novels were more generously reviewed than her first. The emphasis of this overwhelmingly favourable reception marks a new critical recognition of the centrality of the structures of romance in Radcliffe's novels, and a tacit appreciation of the social and literary value of romance itself. For example, the Monthly Review commended the writer's 'happy vein of invention', and the 'romantic scenes and surprizing events',[30] while the Critical Review considered that the 'novel engages

30. Monthly Review, 3 (September, 1791), p. 91.

the attention, in defiance of numerous improbabilities and 'hair-breadth scrapes".[31] The two novels clearly show Radcliffe's progress toward an assured articulation of the crisis of masculine heroism through the use of romance. In writing of The Romance of the Forest, the reviewers were even more appreciative of the use made of romance conventions. The Monthly Review went so far as to praise the potential of romance to reconcile fantasy with social existence: 'The days of chivalry and romance being (ALAS! as Mr. Burke says,) for ever past, we must hear no more of enchanted forests and castles....yet still forests and castles remain, and it is still within the province of fiction, without overstepping the limits of nature, to make use of them....By the aid of an inventive genius, much may still be done, even in this philosophical age, to fill the fancy with marvellous images, and to "quell the soul" with grateful terrors'.[32] The Romance of the Forest confirmed the appeal of Radcliffe's use of romance, while for the Critical Review, the work demonstrated 'the extraordinary powers of Mrs. Radcliffe', better than the later and more famous Mysteries of Udolpho.[33] Moreover, the publication of A Sicilian Romance and The Romance of the Forest initiated the publication of a flood of Gothic tales, fragments and stories in the literary magazines. Following Radcliffe's success, the rediscovery and reproduction of Gothic romance took hold in the popular imagination.[34]

In these novels, Radcliffe frees herself from the boundaries of the physical structure of the castle as the central locus for Gothic romance. Rather than using the figure of the castle to enclose narrative experience, she relocates the experience of Gothic romance in the consciousness of her heroines. This makes masculine authority, which the castle represents, at once less visible and more pervasive. For example, in A Sicilian Romance, Julia flees the castle of Mazzini and the 'father who abuses his power', to assert 'the liberty of choice, which nature assigned'.[35] However, the liberty of choice outside the castle is demonstrated to be minimal, and still governed by ideals of masculine authority. Julia is caught between two conflicting codes of masculine conduct, one transmitted through male culture based on the performance of masculine honour, which she tries to flee, and one based on her brother Ferdinand's model of sentimentalised homosociality, which she attempts to conjure up

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31. Critical Review, 1 (March, 1791), p. 350.
32. Monthly Review, 8, pp. 82-86 (p. 82); for a similarly enthusiastic review, see Critical Review, 4 (April, 1792), pp. 458-460 (p. 458).
33. Critical Review, 11 (August, 1794), pp. 361-372 (p. 362).
34. Robert D. Mayo, The English Novel in the Magazines, 1740-1815 (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 350.
35. Ann Radcliffe, A Sicilian Romance (1790), ed. by Alison Milbank (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 61. All further references to this edition will be given in brackets in the text.

through the unconfined space of memory and imagination. Neither of these models of masculine experience helps her to achieve any kind of freedom, nor do they provide satisfactory models of masculine experience. On the one hand, there is her tyrannical father, the Marquis de Mazzini and the husband he has chosen for her, the Duc de Luovo, who are united by the code of honour which they share: 'The pride of the duke was severely wounded by this elopement....The duke, fired with indignation at the duplicity of the marquis, poured forth his resentment in terms of proud and bitter invective; and the marquis, galled by recent disappointment, was in no mood to restrain the impetuosity of his nature' (SR, p. 73). The two men readily agree on a course of action, 'to pursue Julia with united, and indefatigable search;...that whenever she should be found, the nuptial should be solemnized without further delay' (SR, p.74). This will undermine Julia's sense of what constitutes heroic virtue, but will assure her status in the established masculine-organised hierarchy of heroic conduct. In contrast to this older, but ultimately ineffective, model of masculine conduct, Julia's brother Ferdinand and her lover Hippolitus offer sympathy, but no security. Ferdinand urges Julia to flee in the tones of a lover, rather than offering her the protection of a brother: 'I love you too well tamely to suffer you to be sacrificed to ambition, and to a passion still more hateful' (SR, p. 61). Whereas the marquis and the duke need to satisfy their honour and reputations through the marriage of Julia, Ferdinand's agenda is to forge a new and deeper bond with Hippolitus. The alternative model of heroic virtue he presents is one which excludes Julia just as much as that of the Duke and the Marquis does. Ferdinand looks forward only to the time when the relationship between himself and Hippolitus will become codified through Julia, making the bond of sympathy between them official: 'I now glory in calling Hippolitus my friend--let me ere long receive him as a brother' (SR, p. 61).

These models of masculine authority collide in the figure of the Abate in the convent in which Julia seeks refuge. The Abate conflates duty and compassion and fuses them in the denomination 'father'. The tension aroused by the confusion of public and private authority is evident in the ambivalent term 'father'. The marquis charges 'the church to yield to the superior authority of the father' (SR, p. 129), but the Abate addresses Julia as 'daughter'. Nonetheless he goes on to say that 'you have dared to dispute--nay openly to rebel, against the lawful authority of your father', meaning the marquis (SR, p. 131). The Abate's confusion over the limits of masculine authority translates into a battle of masculine pride, with the possession of Julia's person as the visible symbol of active prestige, the defining symbol of a 'father's' authority: 'Julia obtained from his pride, that protection which neither his

principle or his humanity would have granted' (SR, pp. 129-30). Julia, or the control of the feminine which she represents, then becomes the focus for both men: 'Proud of his religious authority, [the Abate] determined never to yield the prerogative of the church to that of the father, and resolved to oppose the violence of the marquis with equal force' (SR, p. 133). Thus, the convent, metonymically a feminine sanctuary, becomes a locus for conflicting paradigms of masculine authority trying to govern the feminine imagination.

As an enclosed feminine community, the convent allows Julia and Cornelia to explore the extent to which they have been governed by models of masculine authority. The Abate is an amalgam of historical models of paternal authority, but not a model for domestic fatherhood. Confessor, leader, religious figure, and father, he is immured in the anachronistic convent and isolated from the world of masculine existence. Nonetheless, his performance of masculinity is directed outwards toward the public display of honour and in this way he is linked to the restrictive masculinity of the Duke. This is confirmed by the Abate's admission that the two men are linked through 'a secret which shall make your heart's blood run cold; a secret which involves your honour, nay, your very existence' (SR, p. 139). The secret concerns the Duke's illegal second marriage and the shared knowledge again shifts the balance of power in the battle to deserve and enact all the authority of the denomination 'father'. The symbolic importance of the visible display of authority over Julia is paradoxically central to Julia's understanding of her own ability to control the manifestations of masculine identity. Without Julia, each man is nothing in the eyes of the other. For this reason, although the Abate runs the abbey according to the philosophy of an absolute tyrant--'The man shall tremble...who dares defy our power, or question our sacred authority' (SR, p. 130)--his power is limited by the one aspect of fatherhood he cannot take on: that of her biological father. Unless Julia takes the veil, renounces her paternity, and therefore implicitly condones his authority, his power has no real meaning: he says 'I possess not the power, had I even the inclination, to protect you....the marquis may apply to a power from whom I have no appeal, and I shall be compelled at last to resign you' (SR, p. 141). Each man, therefore, is dependent on Julia for the sanction of his authority.

Thus Radcliffe sets up a narrative of conflicting masculine experiences which are transmitted to the reader through Julia. This invites the reader to evaluate the relative merits of different codes of masculine behaviour as they are filtered and experienced through the feminine consciousness. Masculine experience becomes a series of created and dictated performances operating within a

feminine imagination. This imagination, which the reader implicitly shares, seeks to formulate a sufficiently coherent masculine heroism to operate outside traditional masculine paradigms. That is, in order to liberate their feminine existence in the convent, Julia and Cornelia must seek to formulate a masculine authority which will meet their needs, rather than accepting unsuitable masculine paradigms of conflicting jurisdictions of public and private authority. By dying of grief, Cornelia, like Clarissa Harlowe before her, powerfully asserts her independence from these models of masculine power, but in doing so, she negates her ability to reinvent those models through her imagination. Conversely, Julia's escape from the convent to follow the ideal of Hippolitus signals her belief in her own ability to establish a new, and feminine-driven, model of masculine heroism which will serve her needs by fusing public and private authority and performance. Hippolitus is the only possible source for Julia's reinvention of heroic virtue, since the limiting and self-destructive experience of heroism exhibited by the Duke and the marquis is as impossible to sustain as Ferdinand's fragile vision of heroic conduct--explicitly rendered as an enchanted vision when an 'act of cruel authority now dissolved the fairy dream of happiness which his fancy had formed' (SR, p. 57).

This theme of 'real' heroic conduct, as imagined by women, in conflict with the performance of 'false' masculine honour as displayed by the masculine imagination, is underscored by the inset narratives. First, Madame de Menon relates how in her own life conflicts of male honour have brought her only unhappiness, even though they worked themselves out within established and acceptable social boundaries. She tells Julia how Louisa, the mother of Julia and Madame de Menon's best friend, was in love with Madame de Menon's brother, but a 'dispute, which it seems originated in a trifle....was decided by the sword, and my dear brother fell by the hand of my husband' (SR, p. 32). Overcome with 'unavailing grief and remorse', M. Menon eventually 'rushed into the heat of battle, and there obtained an honourable death'. He had 'long wished for death, and waited for an opportunity of obtaining it without staining his own character' (SR, p. 33). Without a witness to her marriage, Madame de Menon had her inheritance seized by the brothers of her husband. Madame de Menon's history is clearly a realistic one, devoid of romantic trappings, and serves as a narrative indicator of the plot's purpose: to emphasise the inefficacy and destructive nature of existing patterns of masculine authority and to highlight the absence of alternatives.

The second inset narrative is told by Cornelia, before her death, to Julia within the walls of the convent, itself a place of conflated and indistinct masculine presences, and blends patterns of masculine

conduct, only to result in the nullification of them all. Like Madame de Menon, Cornelia's life was ruined by the adherence of otherwise good and virtuous men to an outmoded code of masculine behaviour. Unable to escape or to modify their behaviour, she is reduced to reintegrating them in her life by imagining their presences in different forms. Cornelia is the daughter of an impoverished but 'noble father' who is an example of the tension between public and private masculinity. He 'united in an eminent degree the mild virtues of social life, with the firm unbending qualities of the noble Romans' (SR, p. 119), and this generates a 'conflict between pride and parental tenderness' (SR, p. 121). Cornelia falls in love with an impoverished younger son, Angelo, but her father, obeying masculine dictates of social responsibility and authority, 'considered a marriage formed in poverty as destructive to happiness, [and] prohibited his suit' (SR, p. 119). In order to marry Cornelia, Angelo must remodel himself so that his masculine virtue will be recognisable as an existing form of heroism. He chooses to affiliate himself with the pursuit of traditional signs of masculine virtue, and enters the service of the king where he 'sought in the tumultuous scenes of glory, a refuge' (SR, p. 119). Upon hearing of his death, Cornelia chooses the veil and isolation from any order of masculine authority, rather than marriage to her other suitor, the marquis. Her father discovers that his authority has no effect on the outcome of his daughter's happiness, or rather that he cannot force her into a paradigm of masculine-ordered happiness. Cornelia carries the image of Angelo as she knew him--functioning outside the paradigm of publicly identifiable masculine honourable heroism--with her to the convent. The effect of his omnipresent and independent image in her consciousness is such that Cornelia can summon Angelo by the sheer power of longing and desire. For example, when she goes to confession with 'but one crime to deplore, and that was the too tender remembrance of him for whom I mourned, and whose idea, impressed upon my heart, made it a blemished offering to God', she is astonished to find that 'in the features of the holy father [she] discovered Angelo!' (SR, p. 122). Immediately, '[h]is image faded like a vision from...sight' (SR, p. 122). Cornelia cannot bear the reality of seeing Angelo, but neither can she bear his absence. Once she sees him, the 'effects had been so mutually painful', that he reacts 'by assuring [her]that [she] should see him no more' (SR, p. 123). Cornelia never does see him again, and later dies of grief. The impact of her narrative is to reinforce Julia's decision to flee the old codes of conduct represented by the marquis, but Cornelia's death emphasises the frightening impossibility of envisioning a practical solution to the crisis of heroism. For once her image of Angelo is discovered to be real, and not a vision, he disappears.

The sense of paradox which characterises the figuration of the heroic is analogous to the world of enchantment which exists outside the castle Mazzini, symbolically outside the boundaries of aristocratic models of masculine honour. Having fled the castle and the existing world of masculine heroism, Julia leaves the castle walls, and enters a world of romance and enchantment, propelled by the apparent death of Hippolitus. Believing that she has seen Hippolitus stabbed, Julia faints. Recovering, she is disorientated without the presence of Hippolitus, and her world becomes unrecognisable. She 'finds herself in a room of which she has no recollection' (SR, p. 68). Now absolved from the necessity of fusing her imaginary constructions of Hippolitus with the limitations of the masculine world of structured performance, Julia literally seems to vanish from the restrictions of masculine authority: 'She had been confined in a small room in a remote part of the castle, to which no person had been admitted....Without them it was impossible she could have escaped: the windows being barred and grated, and opening into an inner court, at a prodigious height from the ground' (SR, p. 73). Later, '[e]very enquiry after Julia...proved fruitless' (SR, p. 80). This is the break in consciousness that marks the true beginning of the romance. The castle Mazzini is superficially Gothic, with strange noises and haunted passages, but it is only upon leaving the castle that Julia's true Gothic romance--her figuration and imaginative experience of the heroic--begins.

Before leaving the castle boundaries, Julia seems almost capable of summoning the presence of Hippolitus. His image, however, is not rendered as believable or even comfortingly reliable, but rather as delusion. His image 'would frequently intrude upon her fancy' (SR, p. 42), and immediately after singing the suggestive words, 'Still through the deep'ning gloom of bow'ry shades/To Fancy's eye fantastic forms appear', Julia is astonished by 'a sigh that stole from among the trees, and directing her eyes...beheld--Hippolitus!' (SR, pp. 43-44). Once outside the castle, and the insidious presence of masculine traditions, masculine heroism, even in the form of Hippolitus, is no longer merely fanciful, but a manifestation of primitive superstition. Julia can only summon the memory of Hippolitus through the repetition of an ode in which the gentler fantastic forms of fancy are replaced by the more threatening 'Wild--hideous forms' of superstition (SR, p. 117).

Julia's reappearance in the castle is also precipitated by news of Hippolitus. Upon hearing of his survival, Julia returns to the world of 'reality': 'From the languid stupefaction which despair had occasioned she revived as if from a dream, and her sensations resembled that of a person suddenly awakened from a frightful vision' (SR, p. 145). The tension aroused by the delay in rewarding her

desire for the possession and control of masculine virtue is not, however, relieved until the marquis, and the code of masculine conduct he represents, are completely removed. Whereas Julia's construction of Hippolitus is shown to have a positive effect on masculine identity, the marquis is revealed to be a villain created by a perversion of the literary tradition of courtly love, where a man is redeemed by love of a virtuous woman. In this ironic reversal the marquis is lowered by his love for a woman who, in forsaking a feminised vision of domestic security for a distorted vision of masculine heroic virtue, similarly twists the gendered boundaries of virtue. The marquis cries out in despair against the frailty of masculine virtue in the face of male desire: 'Heaven has made that woman the instrument of its justice, whom I made the instrument of my crimes;--that woman, for whose sake I forgot conscience, and braved vice--for whom I imprisoned an innocent wife, and afterwards murdered her' (SR, p. 191).

Once the hollowness of the former literary model of aristocratic honour is exposed, Ferdinand's masculine heritage is destroyed, and his experience of masculine virtue painfully confusing and inadequate. However, a new way forward for masculine heroism is suggested when he discovers a contrasting new model of family and domestic identity with the marchioness, Hippolitus and Julia in a cave: 'Within appeared a cheerful blazing fire, round which were seated several persons, who seemed like himself to have sought shelter from the tempest of the night' (SR, p. 196). The ironic replacement of the civilised castle by the primitive cave as the locus for identity and power confirms the artificiality and potential threat inherent in the performance of masculine models of heroic virtue, and reinforces the quality of enchantment that surrounds masculine models of literary virtue: 'From this period the castle of Mazzini, which had been the theatre of a dreadful catastrophe...was abandoned' (SR, p. 198).

Ferdinand's homosocial heroic fantasy is considered by Julia and finally dismissed. Her confusion of the image of her brother with that of her lover delays her return to the castle, and the subsequent destruction of its enchantments. This sexualises her relationship with Ferdinand and desexualises the relationship with Hippolitus, but also formulates the triangle that Ferdinand had created in fantasy: his union with Hippolitus through Julia. In her imagination, Julia does indeed unite Hippolitus with Ferdinand. Hippolitus saves her from threatened rape, and 'she called wildly upon the name of Ferdinand' (SR, p. 165). To have only one of the men with her leaves Julia feeling incomplete and dissatisfied. She replicates the pattern of persistent longing for the absent hero. Hippolitus is inadequate as a model of masculine virtue because he is so closely identified with her sexual desire for a lover and not sufficiently identified with her desire to establish his social existence as a man. Julia's

'mind was occupied with dreadful anxiety for Ferdinand....Even the presence of Hippolitus, which but lately would have raised her from misery to joy, failed to soothe her' (SR, p. 171). Once Julia learns the truth about her father the extent of his hypocrisy devalues his authority and frees her from any moral obligation to him. This allows her to reach the final stage in her modelling of heroic virtue and to separate her family obligations to her brother from her choice of family and domestic sovereignty with Hippolitus. With this, her ability to summon the actual presence of Hippolitus returns. In the cave she tries to conceal first 'her anxiety for Ferdinand and Hippolitus, the idea of whom incessantly haunted her imagination' and then herself, as if her anxiety for them annihilates herself: 'she retired to the avenue leading to the cavern and escaped discovery' (SR, p. 183). However, the reader subsequently learns that her anxiety caused her to disappear at precisely the moment that Hippolitus 'returned to the cavern in search of Julia....[and] penetrated to the cavern beyond, and from thence to the prison of the marchioness' (SR, p. 197). Julia's crisis of anxiety over the roles and fates of Ferdinand and Hippolitus precipitates the conclusion of the romance. The emancipation of the marchioness from imprisonment initiated by false ideas of masculine virtue follows Julia's release from uneasiness over the distinction between lover and family. The explicit purpose of the romance from which they have been released is to contrast the 'real' domestic happiness which the marriage of Hippolitus and Julia inaugurates with the fantastic alternatives which the pair had witnessed: 'The recollection of the difficulties they had encountered, and of the distress they had endured for each other, now served only to heighten by contrast the happiness of the present period' (SR, pp. 198-9).

In A Sicilian Romance, then, Radcliffe expands the subversion of the plot of the avenging hero she achieved in The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne. She dramatises the consequences incumbent upon absence of heroic masculinity. The confusion and stupefaction that result from the stultifying and destructive existing models of masculine heroism force the heroine to take responsibility for invoking a model of masculine virtue that will sustain her and the reader through their narrative adventure. However, the novel's plot, although tortuous, cannot sustain anything other than the dual portrayal of masculine heroism which presents the impossibly perfected and 'fantastic' form of Hippolitus as conjured through the heroine, or the confused, inappropriate and destructive masculine performances of traditional, and anachronistic masculine honour which are rooted in the male characters' imaginations. This dualism is expanded in The Romance of the Forest, so that Radcliffe's presentation of masculine experience acquires more complex features. She turns her attention from the action of the plot to the

description of inaction, shifting the emphasis from the ineffectiveness of former models of heroic conduct, to the absence of new possibilities.

In The Romance of the Forest Radcliffe develops her manipulation of romance and introduces a sophisticated use of landscape and scenery to displace heroic experience from the physical man onto the natural environment. These are significant features of the novel in which, according to her first biographer Talfourd, she 'first exhibited the faculty of controlling and fixing the wild images which floated around her, and of stamping on them the impress of consistency and truth'.[36] Here Radcliffe begins what Tompkins refers to as her major contribution to literature, 'her analysis of fear'.[37] Through the privileging of scenic imagery, she blends the fear of the absence of the heroic with the conventions of romance. In her journal Radcliffe notes the limitations of language to convey the unlimited fascination of nature: 'A repetition of the same images of rock, wood, and water, and the same epithets of grand, vast, sublime, which necessarily occur, must appear tautologous, though their archetypes in nature, ever varying in outline or arrangement, exhibit new visions to the eye'.[38] Radcliffe inverts the linguistic restrictions on the novelist to make figurative diction a release. She uses the features of nature which are so variegated as to be ultimately indescribable to underline the constrictions of literary heroism. The use of natural scenery conveyed through archetypal images allows Radcliffe to imply the presence of masculine archetypes without presenting the physical fact of a man. The erection and erosion of romance archetypes is effected in The Romance of the Forest through the deflection of desire from the restrictions of available models of heroic conduct to the unending variety of landscape masculinised through the language of Burke's sublime.

The emergence of landscape painting and the aesthetic of the picturesque in the eighteenth century participates in a discourse of property and ownership.[39] By using landscape to stand for the increasingly unsuitable and unworkable literary archetypes of heroic masculinity, Radcliffe moves tentatively towards the pictorialisation of male sexuality in a manner previously untried in literature, although it is related to this discourse evident in eighteenth-century landscape painting. By transferring heroic masculinity from the literary and the specific to the imaged and the vague, Radcliffe reduces its

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36. T. N. Talfourd, A Memoir of the Life and Writings of Mrs. Radcliffe (1826), prefixed to Ann Radcliffe, Gaston de Blondeville Or; The Court of Henry III Keeping Festival in Ardenne (London: 1826; repr. New York: Arno, 1972), pp. 10, 124.
37. Tompkins, p. 258.
38. Talfourd, p. 118.
39. Paulson, Breaking and Remaking, pp. 246-329 (pp. 259-277).

potency as a social force, and encourages the process of delimiting masculinity. By presenting masculine experience to her readers as a picture, Radcliffe offers her readers a chance to participate, as the heroine does, in the vicarious ownership of male sexuality. Her pictorialisation offers her readers a language in which to delineate their desire. The importance of access to a vocabulary of desire is central to both erotic and social imaginations. The invention of a code to express specifically feminine erotic or social desire overcomes the fact that '[w]omen were never even permitted to *dream* about such things, much less bring them to life on canvas....Women have no imagery available--no accepted public language to hand--with which to express their particular view point'.[40] In her journal, Radcliffe relates landscape to the projections of imagination in a way which articulates the association between her pictorialism and her presentation of the masculine experience: 'awful as its scenery appears, it awakens the mind to expectations still more awful, and, touching all the powers of the imagination, inspires that 'fine phrenzy' descriptive of the poet's eye which not only bodies forth unreal forms, but imparts to substantial objects a character higher than their own'.[41]

Radcliffe's journal gives additional evidence of an interest, significantly, in the male body as spectacle. For example, she describes Benjamin West's altar-piece of Lazarus rising from the dead in these terms: 'The face well expresses the wanness and sharpness of death; but...[t]he attitude of Lazarus is indeed such that he might be taken for a person dying rather than one returning to life....The principal female figure, who supports Lazarus, is clear beautiful and natural....The faces of the spectators do not sufficiently speak astonishment, awe, and adoration, except that of one, seen remotely and obscurely'.[42] She is critical of the presentation of the spectators as well as the figure, showing her understanding of the significant relationship between the two. This is very much the effect she strives for in her novels, to create in the reader the sense of being a spectator of the reanimation, by a supporting feminine consciousness, of heroic models which have failed. In West's altar piece, for Radcliffe, the female figure supporting Lazarus is the central and best realised figure. In her novels, the women support the reformulated models of heroic conduct, but their gazes are directed at the landscape which supplies their physical presence.

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40. Linda Nochlin, 'Eroticism and Female Imagery in Nineteenth-Century Art', in Nochlin, Women, Art and Power and Other Essays (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989), pp. 136-144 (p. 139).
41. Ann Radcliffe, A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794, through Holland and the Western Frontier of Germany, with a Return Down the Rhine: to Which Are Added Observations during a Tour of the Lakes of Lancashire, Westmoreland, and Cumberland (London: 1795), p. 477. Cited in Murrah, 'Mrs Radcliffe's Landscapes', p. 8.
42. Talfourd, p. 33.

Radcliffe's use of landscape imagery is made more complex by her appropriations from painters and travel-writers. What is presented as a unique moment of visual and emotional connection emerges as part of a cultural matrix. The multiple references in Radcliffe's writing to aesthetic theorists like Gilpin or Burke, to painters and writers like Claude, Rosa, Poussin, or Thompson, Shakespeare and Gray,[43] reinforce her interest in the cultural production of models of heroic virtue. Cultural forces complicit in the production of ultimately unworkable models of heroic virtue lurk at the heart of Radcliffe's Gothic. She uses romance as the glass through which to observe literary models of heroic virtue, and it is this authorial gaze, most frequently turned on the landscape, that develops the sense of masculinity as spectacle. This is an unprecedented development in fiction, and supports much of the later Gothic drive toward an understanding and ownership of the masculine self. However, Radcliffe implicitly invites the reader to construct an image of heroic identity, replicating the cultural process, only, finally, to emphasise the isolation and alienation inherent to the masculine experience by reminding the reader that the landscape which substitutes for it, is perpetually outside the scope of words.

The phenomenon of displaced sexuality is familiar as the spectacle of feminine sexuality, exhibited as a maiden in distress, with which recognisable convention Radcliffe opens The Romance of the Forest. Adeline is introduced as 'a beautiful girl...[whose] features were bathed in tears, and she seemed to suffer the utmost distress'.[44] This is the gaze of male ownership[45] which also characterises the eighteenth-century attitude to landscape. However, Radcliffe diverts the reader's gaze away from femininity in distress, and therefore in need of male protection, to masculinity in torment and in need of female guidance. La Motte, asked by Adeline's captors to take her away, is 'perplexed...with new fears' and is frightened into inaction by the 'reflections [which] passed over his mind in tumultuous rapidity' until he is stirred into action by a servant 'sent by Madame La Motte in search of him' (RF, p. 6). By deflecting the reader's visual imagination, Radcliffe directs attention to the frightening potential inherent in the failure of masculine performance. She suggests that, through the ability to see or envision the

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43. Radcliffe's Journal contains scattered references to these writers and theorists. See Talfourd, pp. 47, 55-56, 62, 65, 71, 79, 80, 98. For discussions of the influence of aesthetic theorists on Radcliffe, see Samuel H. Monk, The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in XVIIIth-Century England (New York: MLA, 1935; repr. Toronto, ON: Ambassador Books, 1960), pp. 217-229; Christopher Hussey, The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View (London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1927), pp. 231-249.

44. Ann Radcliffe, The Romance of the Forest (1791), ed. by Chloë Chard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 5. All further references to this edition will be in brackets in the text.

45. For a discussion of this image as a key to a reading of the novel, see Miles, pp. 117-120.

limits of masculine authority, it is automatically circumscribed and controlled by the feminine gaze, just as La Motte 'determined to disclose what could no longer be concealed' when faced with evidence of his wife's presence (RF, p. 6).

Radcliffe reinforces this destabilisation of literary heroic experience by making an immediate association between La Motte's identity and the landscape. La Motte turns to the landscape to confirm his situation, but then, as the landscape becomes more visible to him, he takes on greater courage and his identity becomes stronger: 'La Motte now looked anxiously from the coach window, that he might judge of their situation...The obscurity of the dawn confined his views...The sun at length tinted the eastern clouds and the tops of the highest hills, and soon after burst into full splendour on the scene. The terrors of La Motte began to subside' (RF, p. 9). As both the reader and La Motte gaze on the landscape which substitutes for the man himself, Radcliffe achieves the displacement of masculine presence and male sexuality. This transforms the active exercise of masculinity into a passive experience. John Berger describes this process in his analysis of paintings of female nudes. The nudes are not expressions of the subject's own sexuality, which is only 'superficially manifest', rather, 'the painting's sexuality is manifest not in what it shows but in the owner-spectator's...right to see her naked. Her nakedness is not a function of her sexuality but of the sexuality of those who have access to the picture'.[46] La Motte and the other male characters are not given the opportunity to express their claims to masculine virtue by participation in the plot, but are granted or denied heroic status by the reader's, and Adeline's, ability to project a desire for heroic conduct onto them as it is mediated through the landscape. By making both masculinity and landscape figurally incomplete, Radcliffe qualifies the passivity; there is still potential for danger and unpredictability. Nevertheless, Radcliffe engages with the beholder who brings the desire for sublimity and power to the scene, and not the scene itself. Radcliffe's innovative fusion of romance models with contemporary aesthetic theory produces a new development in Gothic fiction. Masculine anxiety becomes a literary spectacle.

As La Motte's vacillation increases, Adeline's sensitivity to landscape becomes central. Adeline displaces the hero as the central figure of the romance. Her quest is to find an alternative to the weak, but still socially powerful, models of masculine experience which surround her. The source for her inspiration, as well as the means of articulating and representing her desire, is to be found in landscape.

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46. John Berger, 'The Past Seen from a Possible Future', in John Berger, Selected Essays and Articles (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 215.

The novel establishes Adeline's sensitivity to aesthetic experience early in its romance formulation as part of her appropriation of the role of the hero. Adeline's innate appreciation of nature is a demonstration of strength and endurance, as well as of sensibility: 'Adeline, whose mind was delicately sensible to the beauties of nature....had not lost by long oppression that elastic energy, which resists calamity; else, however susceptible might have been her original taste, the beauties of nature would no longer have charmed her thus' (RF, p. 9). Radcliffe underscores the point that Adeline's perception of the requirements for a new model of masculinity will initially be tentative and possibly unreliable since her contact with natural beauty, and the masculinity it represents, has to this point been limited: 'she had seldom seen the grandeur of an extensive prospect, or the magnificence of a wide horizon--and not often the picturesque beauties of more confined scenery' (RF, p. 9). This sentence also introduces the contrast between the feminised picturesque landscape which is confined and therefore readily possessable, and the masculinised 'extensive prospect' or 'horizon' which challenges the viewer/reader to attempt its possession. The romance in which Adeline acts as hero attempts possession of masculine experience through the feminine imagination. When her romance succeeds in this, Adeline relinquishes the role of hero, and wakes from the enchantment which the misleading aura of authoritative masculine experience weaves.

In The Romance of the Forest, Radcliffe challenges the boundaries and illusions of romance more ironically than in her preceding novels. To La Motte the first sight of Adeline held by banditti 'appeared like a vision, or one of those improbable fictions that sometimes are exhibited in romance: he could reduce it to no principles of probability, or render it comprehensible by any endeavour to analize it' (RF, p. 8). As Frye writes, romance always 'moves in a world in which the ordinary laws of nature are slightly suspended'.[47] To La Motte, Adeline's situation is distinctly unreal, and he is unsure of his epistemological position: 'Such elegance and apparent refinement, contrasted with the desolation of the house, and the savage manners of the inhabitants, [and] seemed to him like a romance of the imagination rather than an occurrence of real life' (RF, p. 7). This uncertainty and the effect it has of making La Motte a reader/spectator of the romance rather than an active participant reinforces the tangential role that the male characters have in Adeline's romance. They, like the reader, are outside the romance in which Adeline engages with landscape and nature in order to articulate a female-generated representation of potent masculine virtue.

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47. Frye, Anatomy, p. 37.

Adeline seeks to fill a vacuum with heroic presence first by thoughts of Theodore and her putative father, then by poring over the torn manuscript, and finally by coalescing her desire for visible manifestations of masculine virtue into her narrative possession of the Savoy landscape. Her progress toward a full experience of landscape begins with her displacement of La Motte as a heroic figure in the romances she constructs. Gradually, Adeline's implied superiority to La Motte displays itself in action. This places La Motte in a position of weakness and submission, until finally he acknowledges that he owes his existence to her. When he says, 'from this moment consider me as your debtor' (RF, p.62), he effectively abdicates the roles of father and protector, which both inspire and require heroic virtue, and hands Adeline the romance's central heroic role. Adeline goes so far as to conceal his identity completely in explaining her own presence as heroic figure, so unconditionally does she appropriate La Motte's role as hero in her own romance. La Motte says to her, 'you must account for your appearance so as not to discover me' (RF, pp. 62-63).

La Motte's inadequacy as a heroic figure is associated with his inability to derive comfort or strength from the landscape after his initial flight from Paris. Radcliffe early hints that La Motte cannot fill the role of hero, either as father, protector, husband or leader. He falls into a daydream during their first escape from Paris, and when the 'sudden stopping of the carriage roused the latter [La Motte] from his reverie, and filled the whole party with the terror of pursuit; he was unable to supply the necessary direction' (RF, p. 3). His bravery is negligible, as when hiding from the kidnappers he 'endeavoured to await the event with fortitude; but La Motte could boast of no such virtue' (RF, p. 4). When faced with the prospect of discovery, 'the perturbation of fear almost confounded his senses' and his 'heart trembled at the sound, and he was unable to move' (RF, pp. 85, 86). As contemporary commentators realised, La Motte was neither hero nor villain, but a man in search of a mode of conduct which would return his masculine identity to him in visible form. Scott, for example, 'would rather term him weak and vicious than villainous...at every moment on the point of becoming an agent in atrocities which his heart disapproves of'.[48] It requires the mediation of Adeline's feminine virtue to reintegrate La Motte into masculine society. He 'was always a weak, and sometimes a vicious member of society: yet his mind was active, and his imagination vivid, which, co-operating with the force of passion, often dazzled his judgement...Thus he was a man, infirm in purpose, and visionary in virtue: in a word...his virtue, such as it was, could not stand the pressure of occasion' (RF, p. 2). The interpolation of feminine honour is

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48. Walter Scott, 'Mrs. Radcliffe', in Miscellaneous Prose Works (Edinburgh: 1832), vol. iii p. 342

nonetheless able to reverse the corrosive effects of masculine-ordered social performance on individual virtue. When the feminine performance of virtue is internalised, masculine performance is modified and restored to its potential integrity. First through Adeline's 'earnest supplications' La Motte's 'sentence was softened from death to banishment', when he is convicted of robbery. Then this 'kindness operated so powerfully upon his heart...that his former habits became odious to him, and his character gradually recovered the hue which it had probably always have worn had he never been exposed to the tempting dissipations of Paris' (RF, pp. 353-354).

Before Adeline becomes aware of the power of feminine virtue to modify and determine aspects of masculine identity, she and the reader experience masculine virtue, transmitted through romance, as transient, superficial, and unreliable: 'How had my imagination deceived me!' (RF, p. 150). By contrast, Adeline turns to figuring masculinity in the landscape. The changing nature of the forest and landscape figuratively represents the fluid and unreliable representations of masculine experience with which she comes into contact, until, having apparently lost Theodore completely, she enters a period of relative stasis in Savoy, and comes closest to possessing the landscape through her imagination. Rather than exhibiting virtue and strength, the experience of masculinity is characterised by relentless anxiety, secrecy, danger and duplicity. These elements are present in the changing forest and in the mouldering abbey, representing the ruins of the patriarchal world. As Scott, the critic most sensitive to the nuances of Radcliffe's use of romance, rightly notes, 'The tale was more striking, because...relieved by descriptions of the ruined mansion, and the forest with which it is surrounded under so many different points, now pleasing and serene, now gloomy, now terrible'.[49] Adeline's sensitivity means that she is aware of the potential for terror inherent in the sublimity of the ruin. In an echo of Burke's delineation of heightened aesthetic awareness,[50] her sensitivity 'led [her] fancy on to scenes of horror' and she finds a 'kind of pleasing dread thrilled her bosom, and filled all her soul' (RF, p. 18). Adeline therefore immediately associates the obscurity which veils the ruin with Burkean terror originating in power, and is suitably affected. She is unable to identify in her experience any reliable model of masculine virtue which originates in the aristocratic tradition of honour and heroic conduct. In her experience, the patriarchal family as a sustainer of masculine virtue fails through the willingness of its participants to perpetuate its mutations of virtuous authority, depicted in the ever-changing forest which surrounds the

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49. Scott, 'Mrs. Radcliffe', p. 343. Radcliffe praised Claude in similar terms, see Talfourd, p. 65.
50. See Burke, Origins, p. 13.

architectural image of its gradual decline. In contrast to Adeline, La Motte's 'fancy bore him back to past ages', as he yearns to be a part of a decaying masculine tradition (RF, pp. 15-16). The forest shelters from view the workings of the old heroic models and initially gives them the aura of romance. The 'high and spreading trees...diffused a romantic gloom around', but it is an unmistakable fact that the abbey and the grandeur it represents is inhospitable and out of time: 'Several of the pillars, which had supported the roof, remained the proud effigies of sinking greatness' (RF, p. 16). La Motte, having failed to exert his authority in the 'real' masculine world, strives to reinvent a masculine model of virtue in the abbey. As Scott writes, La Motte avenges himself on a masculine world which rejected his weaknesses by 'playing the gloomy despot within his own family, and tyrannising over those who were subjected to him only by their strong sense of duty'.[51] Once Adeline frees herself from the sense of duty which binds her to the old system of masculine-ordered existence, she is able to flee the limitations of the forest to the Savoy landscape which represents a model of masculine experience more reliably and readily describable, and therefore more capable of possession.

The geographic limits of the forest shelter the old forms of romantic heroism, which are falling into a natural historical decay. In contrast the deliberately constructed 'high lonely wall' which surrounds the palace of the Marquis on the edge of the forest is unnatural, contrived and vulnerable (RF, p. 156). The lavish house of the Marquis, with its high walls and ornate gardens, celebrates the manufactured exterior of virtue and artificial heroism which he presents to the world, and conceals the true nature of his conduct: 'The whole seemed the works of enchantment, and rather resembled the palace of a fairy than anything of human conformation' (RF, p. 156). Here he has truly created his own landscape (RF, pp. 156, 163-164), much as he has created his own identity and defined his masculine experience. But Adeline's comment suggests that both are eerily and suspiciously ordered and unreal. She wonders, 'Is this a charm to lure me to destruction?' (RF, p. 157), warning readers who would succumb to readily available, easily recognisable, but deceptive and unworkable idioms of masculine heroism.

The use of scenic environment to figure masculine presence is seen, for example, in Adeline's first venture into the woods around the ruined abbey. This presents her first with an Edenic dawn as 'the landscape...moist with the dews of night, and brightening with the dawn...carols of new-waked birds saluted her...the fresh gale came scented with the breath of flowers, whose tints glowed more vivid

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51. Scott, 'Mrs. Radcliffe', p. 342.

through the dew drops' (RF, p. 75). She is not wholly safe, however, and the reader is made anxious for her safety as she is misled by the beauty of the morning. 'She wandered on without noticing the distance', and she is captured, 'lost in a reverie' (RF, p. 75). The intruder into her idyll is a male figure whose presence destroys the unity of landscape. Instead, his presence forces Adeline to reorient herself in relation to the abbey, and the scenic space in between, now invaded by male presence, becomes threatening by its spaciousness, rather than liberating. Initially a 'thousand apprehensions shot athwart her busy thought; and she now remembered her distance from the abbey' (RF, p. 76). The dawning of her awareness of the possible influence of a male presence on her identity is conveyed in the sonnet of awakening she composes, nominally inspired by a lily. 'But soon, fair flow'r! the morn shall rise!/....like thee in sorrow's shade,/Full oft I mourn in tears, and droop forlorn:/And O! like thine, may light my glooms pervade/And Sorrow fly before Joy's living morn!' (RF, p. 76).

The sense of undefined longing, of being confined by darkness, translates into unsatisfied desire for imaginative freedom with respect to her heroic models. This unfulfilled desire is filtered through Adeline's changing and unstable perceptions of the forest. When La Motte is her friend, the forest is a comfort and inspiration, with its 'sweet, complacent melancholy....the sun...spread a purple glow over the landscape, and touched the forest glades with a softer light' (RF, p. 83). But when she plans to flee the abbey and La Motte, she finds the 'thickest part of the forest....a gloomy, romantic part...almost impervious to the rays of the sun' (RF, pp. 148-149). Her ideal lover, Theodore, transforms the hollow and lonely forest in which Adeline finds herself just prior to his appearance. Adeline is in 'a lonely recess, formed by high trees' where 'the wind sighed mournfully' (RF, p. 100). Theodore supplies the lack Adeline feels in the forest, and transforms it temporarily into a locus for social interaction rather than calm reflection, asking her 'to meet [him] in some part of the forest at about this time tomorrow evening' (RF, p. 102). When Adeline is forced to flee the forest it becomes a dark mass of impressions and in her fright she perceives it to be haunted by male presences: 'often did she start as the breeze shook the light leaves of the trees, or as a bat flitted by...and often, as she looked back...thought she distinguished, amid the deepening gloom, the figures of men' (RF, p. 153). The diverse representations of heroic virtue which are presented to Adeline through the range of description and atmosphere in the forest are, nonetheless, limited by the function of the forest which is to restrict and define her existence. Once free of the confines of the forest, the strict boundaries of masculine and feminine virtue it exhibits break down into the more open and plural landscapes of Savoy.

Although he is not strictly confined by the forest, the Marquis de Montalt, like the old order of masculine honour which he represents and strives to preserve, appears within the forest, albeit as an alien and intrusive presence. However, the Marquis's threatening social and sexual predation is rendered not by the forest itself, but as violent storms. The Marquis appears 'one stormy night' (RF, p. 85), and he and his men become part of the storm: 'the violence of the assailants seeming to increase with every gust of the tempest' (RF, p. 86). The insidious threat which he seems to present is emphasised by a grammatical ambiguity which allows confusion between the marquis and an anthropomorphised storm: 'The Marquis had been near two hours at the abbey, and the tempest still continuing, Madame La Motte offered him a bed' (RF, p. 90). The aura of the Marquis lingers. La Motte searches for him as he 'from the gates raised a look of impatience to the clouds. Nothing was to be seen through the darkness of night--nothing heard but the howlings of the storm' (RF, p. 91). Montalt's affiliation with the violence of nature continues when he has Adeline kidnapped. Her faith in the sanctuary of the forest is shattered by the invasion of the abductor. This infringement is attended by 'a storm of rain, accompanied by thunder and lightning' which was 'violent and long' (RF, p. 156). The artificiality of the virtue which the Marquis presents as masculine honour is thus even more potentially destructive than the indistinct and mysterious renderings of archaic masculine conduct which the forest undertakes to represent, and with which the storm of the marquis is in direct conflict.

In opposition to Montalt's aristocratic performance of social masculinity, Adeline finds a new model of masculine virtue in the La Luc family idyll. The widower-father has assumed the role of mother by necessity, and the fusion of traditions of feminine virtue with the plot of family experience contrasts sharply with the plot of masculine cupidity, honour, and complicity which has propelled Adeline through her flights and pursuits in the forest. The peaceful and varied Savoy landscape effectively blends the Burkean sublime with the Burkean feminine and social beautiful. The mountains have the 'savage grandeur' of the masculine, and the social valleys 'smiling in fertility and gay with towns and villages' (RF, p. 235) offer a counterbalance. This scenic journey, which takes place under the guardianship of the dualised mother/father figure of La Luc, allows the reader and Adeline to absorb through visual representation the various manifestations of masculine heroism she has encountered. As Adeline's confidence and self-assurance increases, so does the intensity of her experience of landscape. This gradual assurance in her association with landscape allows her to be more assertively imaginative in her rendering of heroic desire. As genuine memories of Theodore

disappear, they are replaced with his image in 'her fancy, accompanied by all the exaggerations of terror' (RF, p. 259). As the landscape increases in synchronic beauty, Adeline becomes more comfortable and familiar with it, and therefore able to possess it through description and response. Her images of Theodore then become more radically separate from the probable or the possible, as her need for viable masculine virtue is replaced by desire for male presence.

Adeline's desire for heroic virtue is diffused through the self-sufficiency of the La Luc family. Blended masculine and feminine virtue supplies its own environment and context in the Savoy. In order to obtrude on this self-contained, gender-balanced environment Adeline's images of Theodore consequently become more violently distorted and his role in Adeline's romance construction must be more aggressively heroic. Adeline's contact with this landscape and these friends modifies her responses to natural landscape and transforms her requirements for heroic virtue. When 'seeking refuge from the Marquis de Montalt....[Adeline] had watched the fall of evening and the fading prospect, and she remembered what a desolate feeling had accompanied the impression which those objects made. She had then no friends--no asylum--no certainty of escaping the pursuit of her enemy. Now she had found affectionate friends...and was delivered from the terrors she then suffered' (RF, p. 294). When she exchanges the responses of alienation and fear in the face of the landscape to peaceful sympathy, Adeline is able to restore the role of hero in the romance to a male figure, by transferring to Theodore the terror and oppression which had dominated her experience. This produces a romance irony: as Theodore is imagined at his most vividly heroic, he is least valuable and necessary as a heroic presence.

Removed from the obscure and often impenetrable workings of masculine society as seen in the forest, Adeline recognises that she has exchanged the possession of her own identity and security for the ephemeral presence of Theodore who belongs initially to the forest's order of masculine performance. She supplies this lack with ever more graphic images of constrained and tortured heroism. In her imagination, 'she saw him in chains, and struggling in the grasp of ruffians, or saw him led, amid the dreadful preparations for execution, into the field; she saw the agony of his look, and heard him repeat her name' (RF, p. 259). Her imagination runs wild in its new-found security and she is not restricted to the realistic portrayal of Theodore whose actual features are fading from her recollection, as her desire draws his image from the landscape before her. Adeline 'would ramble alone through scenes, whose solitary grandeur assisted and soothed the melancholy of her heart. Here she would retrace all the

conduct of her beloved Theodore, and endeavour to recollect his exact countenance, his air, his manner' (RF, p. 260).

The search for masculine heroic virtue through the fantastic images of a masculine tradition of romance is successful only when the heroine acknowledges its irreconcilability with social existence. Theodore embodies the reconciliation of heroic virtue with social integration, not by action, but by revealing that M. La Luc is his father, and therefore that he is part of the landscape which Adeline appropriated to draw his likeness. He is nothing like the persecuted invading presence she had imagined, and the images of his torture and oppression disappear from Adeline's romance. Instead, her feminine presence effects his reincorporation into the masculine world when the army rewards him for his 'gallant conduct' towards herself (RF, p. 353). Wholly circumscribed by feminine experience, Theodore then appears as a physical presence in the Savoy landscape which had substituted for him during his absence from Adeline. She is now able to assimilate the masculine presence of him 'whom in these very scenes she had lamented as lost to her forever' without disrupting the feminised 'picturesque beauty' which surrounds her (RF, p. 359) .

Theodore's image is evoked throughout by landscape which inspires loss and lament. The atmosphere of melancholy which surrounds him figures heroic virtue as a product of autumn, symbolically of lost hope and dying beauty. Prior to his appearance in the forest, Adeline 'walked pensively', and the 'scene, which autumn now touched with her sweetest tints, softened her mind to a tender kind of melancholy, and she suffered a tear, which, she knew not wherefore, had stolen into her eye, to tremble there unchecked' (RF, p. 100). The mood is of a sensed but unarticulated loss implicitly associated with the absence of true heroic virtue. Theodore, also, is haunted by a sense of inadequacy: 'Would that I could deserve the title of your friend, and be thought worthy of it by yourself!' (RF, p. 101). As in Radcliffe's previous novels, heroic virtue is the product of feminine desire, but nowhere is she more explicit in connecting the presence of masculine virtue with autumn and melancholy and the passage of beauty.

The image of the heroic is summoned by feminine desire to replace what is missing. This sense of longing is emphasised by the absence of Theodore for much of the plot's action, and the fact that his perpetual presence, as evoked through Adeline's consciousness, is always a painful reminder of the absence of heroic virtue. His memory, the thought of him, or his image always brings 'a pang' (RF, p. 135), or 'unceasing anxiety' (RF, p. 259), or is 'too dangerous to her peace' (RF, p. 97). However, the

attempt to possess an image of masculinity as embodied in a physical man rather than in the physicality of the landscape consistently fails. Crucially, when Adeline deliberately goes looking for Theodore, he is not there. 'A second time she came back and Theodore was still absent' (RF, p. 106), and Adeline remains significantly impervious to the scenery around her, incapable of sublimating her desire for Theodore's physical presence in the landscape. The prospect, rather than the imaginary conjuring, of masculine presence perpetually disappoints, as Adeline discovers, waiting 'till the fall of twilight in fruitless expectation' (RF, p. 107). Even when Theodore reappears in the narrative to marry Adeline, he does not figure as a physical man. Instead, the domestic role which he has assumed, represented by a villa, is absorbed into the landscape. The setting of the villa becomes emblematic of the successful integration that Adeline has achieved between the wild scenery of the masculine sublime, the unreliable and often threatening darkness of the forest, and the picturesque beauty of the gentler Savoy. She has inscribed her feminine desire for the heroic into her own landscape, thus achieving possession of the masculine through a possession of the landscape. Theodore, as represented by his villa, becomes part of Adeline's romance of feminine desire, rather than achieving heroic success in a masculine quest for social acceptance in a hierarchical paradigm of public performance: 'he purchased a villa...almost encircled with woods, which forming a grand amphitheatre swept down to the water's edge, and abounded with wild and romantic walks. Here, nature was suffered to sport in all her beautiful luxuriance....presented an ever moving picture...crowned with the snowy and sublime alps...exhibited scenery of almost unequalled magnificence' (RF, p. 362).

Although lack of heroism in the romance is emblematically supplied through the replacement of the physical man by landscape, Adeline's attempt to solve the mystery of the fragmented manuscript supplies a narrative of heroic substitution. Adeline thus becomes the author of a written romance, as well as the hero of Radcliffe's romance. This dual approach to the construction of masculine heroism through romance allows Radcliffe to explore the means of possessing masculine presence through language. By giving Adeline the chance to experience models of heroic virtue through landscape, Radcliffe succeeds in making masculine experience a spectacle. In addition, by allowing Adeline to take on the role of romance hero, and to absorb heroic experience, Radcliffe makes the experience of masculinity one which can be vicariously enjoyed by her female readers. By making the narrative one of suspense and delayed discovery, Radcliffe invites the reader's empathy with the confusion felt by men seeking a viable mode of masculine conduct. But in giving Adeline the fragmentary manuscript,

Radcliffe presents masculine heroism as something which can only, ultimately, be completed by the feminine imagination.

Radcliffe makes one loaded reference to the delusory potential of credulous subscription to stereotypes of romantic heroism when La Motte asks Adeline, 'is it possible that you can persist in this heroism of romance, and prefer a father so inhuman as yours, to the Marquis of Montalt?' (RF, p. 136). When read in the light of the novel's denouement, this passage effectively sums up Radcliffe's use of romance and romantic heroism. Radcliffe emphasises that the heroism of romance is entirely illusory, but that the successful operation of romance nonetheless hinges on these delusory constructs of heroic virtue. She stresses that illusion is centred around the figure of the father. This effectively forces a reappraisal of the social and cultural meaning of a patriarchal system which places excessive authority in the figure of the father--a figure which turns out to be ambiguous at best, and powerless at worst, when called upon to supply the needs of its feminine dependants. Radcliffe's romances thus force her heroines to acknowledge the illusion of masculine heroism, and then to survive without it by inscribing new, feminine-conceived, models of masculinity within a changing dynamic of masculine identity. In much the same way that landscape allows her female readers a pictorial language of fantasy to describe desire, the structure of her romances allows her readers to adapt an established narrative mode to accommodate changing literary models. The Marquis de Montalt, as Adeline learns eventually, is her uncle. He has murdered her father, and needs either to murder or to marry Adeline to retain the property seized illegally from her upon her father's death. This property sustains his position as an aristocratic figure, an emblem of the old codes of masculine honour which dominate romance discourse. These codes are undercut and demeaned by his conduct in preserving them. Thus, when La Motte refers to 'a father so inhuman as yours', he refers either to her dead parent, in an ironic use of the adjective inhuman, or to the Marquis de Montalt, who masqueraded as her father, and in mistreating Adeline is the most cruel and inhuman of relations. Her natural father is the hero of the romance she reads in the manuscript. Therefore her romance becomes real and her reality an illusion.

Adeline's possession of the completed tale which the mysterious manuscript contains is similar to her possession of the landscape. Once Adeline successfully achieves the devolution of desire by transferring her feelings for Theodore on to the landscape, the longing for heroic virtue is reassuringly controllable. In Nice, 'these visions of memory, painful as they were, no longer excited the phrenzy of grief they formerly awakened in the Savoy....To these solitary indulgences generally succeeded

calmness' (RF, p. 288). The reflections which the landscape inspire in Adeline are intimately connected with her encounters with disturbing and destructive manifestations of masculine conduct. Once she is in control of her responses to the various modes of masculine conduct, and recognises the nurturing strength of the La Luc model of domestic heroism, she can say convincingly of the other more violent and anti-social forms modes of masculine virtue as they are represented in landscape, 'it seems...as if we were walking over the ruins of the world, and we were the only persons who had survived the wreck' (RF, p. 265).

Contemporary reviewers considered Radcliffe's scenic descriptions the most effective parts of the novel.[50] It was a technique she would hone for her next novel so that, as Scott, who of all Radcliffe's reviewers was most receptive to the delicate gradations of romance, later wrote, 'everything in The Mysteries of Udolpho is on a more sublime scale, than in The Romance of the Forest; the interest of a more agitating and tremendous nature; the scenery of a wilder and more terrific description; the characters distinguished by fiercer and more gigantic features'.[51] The Mysteries of Udolpho brings together the strands which Radcliffe had wound through her earlier novels: the conscious subversion of romance, the depiction of an absence of heroic experience in modern romance, and most forcefully, an examination, through the subjective experience of the heroine, of the effects of the absence of coherent models of literary masculine experience on the imagination.

The Mysteries of Udolpho

The Mysteries of Udolpho marks Radcliffe's most deliberate accumulation of effects and techniques to sustain her vision of Gothic: the fear of the absence of the hero. Everything she has found successful in her previous novels is presented in a more consciously effective, more deliberately individualised, manner. Udolpho was tremendously popular, suggesting the immediate appeal of her subversion of romance conventions to the contemporary imagination, and remained part of the shared literary consciousness well into the nineteenth century.[52] Talfourd writes that '[o]f all the romances in the world, this is perhaps the most romantic' in his memoir of Radcliffe.[53] The Mysteries of Udolpho is the most widely examined of Radcliffe's novels, and has a lengthy and varied critical history.[54] This

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50. See, for example, Critical Review, n.s. 11 (1794), pp. 361-372, (p. 362).
51. Scott, 'Mrs. Radcliffe', p. 346.
52. See Bonamy Dobrée, 'Introduction' in Ann Radcliffe, The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794), ed. by Bonamy Dobrée (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. v-xiv, (p. v).
53. Talfourd, p. 126. See also Scott, 'Mrs. Radcliffe', p. 347.
54. Some critics have read The Mysteries of Udolpho as an example of Radcliffe's conservative politics. See Mary Poovey, 'Ideology and The Mysteries of Udolpho', Criticism 21 (1979), 307-30; David Durant, 'Ann

analysis will restrict the discussion to the ways that the novel demonstrates the genealogy that I have outlined above. The plot should be read as a nightmare of confusion over the nature of heroic identity which has its origin in Emily's loss of confidence in the integrity of her father. Emily's figurations of Montoni and Valancourt are controlled by memories and images of her father. The novel develops the relationship between landscape as the source of the heroine's pleasure, and the displacement of heroic virtue which was begun in The Romance of the Forest, as well as further investigating the idea of the father, rather than the patriarch, as a source of masculine virtue and domestic heroism.

From the relatively straightforward plot of her first novel, Radcliffe elaborates her Gothic vision until she formulates a narrative system whereby most of the fear, and all of the tension, are aroused by the alternating presence and absence of the male characters rather than the action of the plot. As her technique develops, she privileges the subjective experience of her heroines. In Udolpho, this technique reaches its most sophisticated expression as Emily's inward turn of narrative sustains the mysteries, formulates the implied terrors, and supplies the lack of literary heroism. Similarly, Radcliffe's confidence in her vision and method exhibits itself in the quantity of scenic description in Udolpho, although the amount of description caused murmurs among even the favourable reviews. Coleridge suggests that the novel might have been improved had it been one volume shorter, and Talfourd refers to 'those who would complain of the minuteness of Mrs. Radcliffe's descriptions'.[55] In Udolpho, Radcliffe returns to the emblematic potential of the castle, which she had begun to explore in her first novel. From A Sicilian Romance and The Romance of the Forest, she retains the plot of the heroine alternately in flight and captivity, lacking a father, and supplying through her imagination,

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Radcliffe and the Conservative Gothic', Studies in English Literature, 22 (1982), 519-530; For varying views on the meaning of Radcliffe's aesthetics see, for example, Daniel Cottom, The Civilised Imagination: A Study of Ann Radcliffe, Jane Austen and Walter Scott (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 35-50; Durant, 'Aesthetic Heroism in The Mysteries of Udolpho', The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation, 22 (1981), 175-188 (p. 187). Robert Miles identifies Emily's psychological strategies as subversive, revealing 'an anatomy of her culture's deep structure' in The Great Enchantress, pp. 129-148 (p. 148). For other views on Emily's excessive sensibility see for example, Nelson C. Smith, 'Sense, Sensibility and Ann Radcliffe', Studies in English Literature 12 (1973), 577-590; Claudia Johnson, Equivocal Beings, pp. 95-116 (p. 96); Terry Castle's excellent analysis of the use of spectral imagery in Udolpho places it in an eighteenth-century context of the subversive uncanny. Other critics have read the novel either as an empowerment of the feminine imagination or as a search for displaced maternity. See, for example, Patricia Spacks, Desire and Truth, pp. 147-174); Ellis, pp. 121-124; Kahane, 'The Gothic Mirror', pp. 334-9. The threat to feminine identity posed by the castle architecture is examined by Delamotte, Perils of the Night, pp. 14-29. April London discusses the centrality of ownership of all property in the novel in 'Ann Radcliffe in Context', pp. 38-45.

[55]. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'Review of The Mysteries of Udolpho', in Critical Review, n.s. 11, (1794), pp. 361-372 (pp. 371-2); See also Coleridge, 'Review of The Mysteries of Udolpho', in Critical Review, n.s. 11, (1794), pp. 361-372; see also Coleridge, 'Review of Ann Radcliffe's The Italian', Critical Review, n.s. 23, (1798), pp. 166-169 (p. 166); Talfourd, p. 122.

literary figurations of the hero and the villain. From The Romance of the Forest particularly, she retains the pastoral idyll of a domestic Eden, but in Udolpho this image delineates the structure of the plot rather than serving as an enchanted lull in the action. St. Aubert, a figure of idealised paternalism, haunts Emily's narrative--the terror begins when he dies and Emily is left to her aunt's charge. This terror grows in intensity until Emily abandons her nightmare images of heroic virtue by resolving the doubts she had over her father's integrity, 'which her reason could neither vanquish, or confirm'.[56]

Emily's fear impels the plot of Udolpho. This fear is predicated on the unpredictability of heroic virtue. Despite her situation being deliberately and consciously romantic, Emily's narrative is curiously dominated by the absence of hero and villain. St. Aubert dies, initiating the fear of the insubstantiality of masculine virtue. The man her aunt marries, and around whom Emily's uncertainties about masculine experience revolve, Montoni, is isolated and obsessed with his name, honour and property. Emily translates his social vices of greed and selfishness into sexual ones of cruelty and lust, in much the same way that she transposes her sexual desire for Valancourt onto socially acceptable aesthetic responses to landscape. This makes Montoni appear a more potent and threatening tyrant than his actions warrant, and creates in Valancourt an impossibly virtuous lover, when he is in fact a weak and fallible man. Absent for most of the action, Valancourt exists primarily through Emily's imagination, but the process of creatively producing a hero is more explicitly misleading here than in previous novels. Emily she imposes every conceivable virtue on the image she creates, only to discover that gambling and wanton behaviour have prevented Valancourt from enacting the role of hero when the opportunity of saving her really does arise. Emily's wholly faulty understanding of the men who dominate her consciousness creates a narrative which compels such a misreading of masculine experience. In order to participate in the suspense, the reader complies with the misreading of masculine virtue. This conjunction of reader and heroine imposes traditions of romantic heroism on a narrative whose events do not sustain the conventions. This results in a vision of radically distorted masculine power, which depends not on its genuine existence, but on a credence in it for the exertion of authority. The potential outcome for those who subscribe to illusions of masculine heroism is thus to render to masculine institutions power that they do not inherently possess.

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56. Ann Radcliffe, The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794), ed. by Bonamy Dobrée (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 663. All further references to this edition will be given in brackets in the text.

Emily's memory of St. Aubert controls the course of her experience. She is drawn back into society by 'the remembrance of Valancourt', but the 'esteem...which St. Aubert had repeatedly expressed for him, sanctioned this' (MU, p. 89). St. Aubert's last instructions to her introduce her first doubts and fears about the reliability of masculine virtue. Told to destroy his private papers, Emily reads 'a sentence of dreadful import' (MU, p. 103). Its words 'roused equally her curiosity and her terror' and the longer she thinks about the sentence, 'the more it inflamed her imagination' (MU, p. 103). This inflamed imagination, stimulated by doubt over the perfectibility of masculine virtue, drives the remainder of the novel. The memory of her father provokes a contrast between her upbringing and her imprisonment (MU, p. 329), and transmogrifies her aunt from an 'imperious' and petty guardian, to 'the sister of her late beloved father' (MU, p. 366). The possibility that her father is watching over her and directing her life brings solace (MU, p. 340). Emily realises that her social self is bound up with his existence and his death leaves her utterly alone and without social standing: 'For since my father died...every body forsakes me' (MU, p. 351). As in The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne, the plot of Udolpho is governed by memories of departed masculine virtue and a quest to recover it. In the earlier novel, the imposition of identities on the young men by the women was heavy-handed and ostentatiously in the traditions of romance. By contrast, Emily's imposition of identities on Montoni and Valancourt is achieved with more complexity and subtlety.

Emily's quest for heroic virtue is centred in retrieval and re-construction, driven by a need to replace her father as a model of masculine experience. As the contrast between Valancourt's own conduct and Emily's figuring of it shows, recapturing a tradition of literary heroism is fundamentally impossible, even in a romance. Valancourt is not only physically absent, but weak and extravagant, and he succumbs easily to temptations of gambling without the image of Emily before him (MU, pp. 291-295).[57] Emily smiles at Annette's 'ideas of Valancourt' (MU, p. 391), but is subsequently to discover that her 'idea of Valancourt, and her confidence in his faithful love, [which] had been her only solace' is equally inaccurate (MU, p. 251). In fact her imagination has deluded her: 'the countenance she had so frequently in absence endeavoured to recollect...she perceived...was not the same as when she last saw it' (MU, p. 502). Her identification with the image she has created of Valancourt is so

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57. For the gendering of gambling as a masculine vice, see for example, Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, Works, v, p. 214; Wollstonecraft, Letters Written During A Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark (1796), Works, vi, pp. 299, 342; William Godwin, St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century (1799), ed. by Pamela Clemit, Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin, 8 vols (London: Pickering, 1992), iv, pp. 51-57, 66.

intense that even when faced with evidence of his dissolute behaviour, 'she had not fortitude to dare conviction. Her heart was overwhelmed with anguish at the mere suspicion of his guilt, and she could not endure a belief of it' (MU, p. 506). This fatal knowledge of Valancourt's fallibility deprives Emily's imagination of its power to generate soothing or reassuring images. There is an unacceptable disjunction between desire and reality that forms the crux of Emily's coming to an understanding of the masculine experience. Finally, secure in the knowledge that her father was the model of domestic heroism she conceived him to be, Emily has a true model of masculine virtue which will sustain both her and Valancourt. Whereas previously she cannot continue 'contemplating his image in her heart, for he was no longer the same Valancourt that she had cherished there' (MU, p. 581), once she realises that her father and not Valancourt exists as the true model of masculine perfectibility, Valancourt is rewritten as a figure of masculine romance and not feminine desire. She and Valancourt are made aware of 'how cruelly [his] conduct has been misrepresented' by his acquaintances. From this point, he regains 'his look, his voice, his manner...which had formerly distinguished him' (MU, pp. 668-669), as his appropriate role is established. Emily is able to forgive Valancourt for the lesser crimes of indulgence which he committed, and having done so can re-model the Valancourt who had changed into the Valancourt he had once been. Thus, Emily is forced to create an imaginary model of heroism to sustain her, while appropriating from it the virtues of fortitude, endurance and restraint. By transforming herself into the hero of her own romance, Emily inverts the paradigm of the chivalric romance where the ennobling love of a woman inspires knightly deeds. When Montoni tells her, 'you speak like a heroine', she remembers that 'for Valancourt's sake she had thus resisted' Montoni's demands and revels in 'the full extent of her own superiority to Montoni' (MU, pp. 381-382).

Montoni is characterised as a selfish, greedy man whose cruelty eventually defeats its own purpose when his wife is so disgusted that she refuses to sign over her estates (MU, p. 371). His threats are empty, and he achieves none of his desired goals. Emily does not marry Morano, the suitor chosen for her by Montoni, his wife does not release her property, Emily will not sign over her estates. This is not to say he is not cruel, despotic and devious. His concern, however, is not with the murder or rape of Emily, that is, he does not seek control over her person, but rather control over the perception of his own identity through the possession of the property that she owns. Montoni is of the old order of aristocratic masculine virtue, governed by a code of honour which provokes him to a duel at the imputation of cowardice (MU, p. 363). This tradition of masculine virtue is impossible to integrate

within an ordered and moderate society where identity and security are rooted in the family. Montoni's heroic virtue, although it functions well within the tradition of mercenaries in which Radcliffe sets him (MU, p. 358), is alarming because it threatens the central importance of family as the source of identity. Udolpho, he confesses, came to him through 'the female line', through a distant relation (MU, p. 289). Unlike most previous Gothic villains he is not a usurper, but his marriage is intended solely to acquire his wife's property. His subsequent attempts to acquire Emily's estates first by cunning and then by force demonstrates his passionate identification of property with self and identity and thereby affiliates him with the usurpers of previous Gothic novels. Montoni debases the model of husband and father set up by St. Aubert. His dependence on cruelty and oppression rather than compassion and persuasion isolate and defeat him.

In attempting to configure Montoni as villain, Emily overlooks the powerlessness which eventually results from Montoni's debasing of masculine honour. Instead, she produces through her imagination a much more violent and terrifying figure than the character of Montoni justifies. This figure is, indeed, the product of the kind of superstition which Emily fears when, although 'she knew, that neither Morano's solicitations, nor Montoni's commands had lawful power to enforce her obedience, she regarded both with a superstitious dread, that they would finally prevail' (MU, p. 209). Montoni accedes to this figuration of him as evil, not by his actions or words, but by the lack of them. Seeing 'his countenance was darker and sterner than usual', Emily tells herself that 'could I know the thoughts, that are known there, I should no longer be condemned to this torturing suspense' (MU, p. 243). She recognises that she is limited in her knowledge of him by his silence, and through this acknowledgement of the limitations of Emily's subjective experience Radcliffe underlines how the alienating process of a code of masculine behaviour which rests solely on the performance of public virtue is destructive to both.

The distance of Montoni from the tradition of social masculinity and the threatening potential of his character are rendered visible initially by his castle. Returning to the emblematic techniques of The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne, Radcliffe uses Udolpho to render Emily's fears of Montoni and the power which she attributes to him. When Emily first sees it, 'silent, lonely and sublime, it seemed to stand the sovereign of the scene' (MU, p. 227). Clearly, this is an emblematic rendering of her feelings for Montoni himself. When she leaves the castle, assured, at least, of her own integrity and superiority, she passes 'under the huge portcullis, which had formerly struck her with terror and dismay, and,

looking round, saw no walls to confine her steps' (MU, p. 400). It is now the outside world which threatens: 'mountains infested by hostile parties' (MU, p. 400). The castle still has 'towers and terraces' but the 'sun's rays, streaming through an autumnal cloud, glanced upon a part of the edifice', and Emily gazes through tears at the castle walls, 'lighted up with sudden splendour, and then, as suddenly were shrouded in gloom' (MU, p. 401). Here again is an identifiable transferral of Emily's developing intellectual understanding of Montoni onto the physical representation of the castle.

Landscape and scenery are an even more intimate language here than in The Romance of the Forest. Alpine beauty forms the initial bond between Valancourt and Emily. They appreciated together the 'majestic summits...whose appearance was changing every instant, as the varying lights fell upon their surface' (MU, p. 53). The memory of this journey, where they had shared the discovery of changing scenery and varied prospects as they made each other's acquaintance, recurs. The pair 'talked of the scenes they had passed among the Pyrenean Alps', and the discussion 'recalled forcibly to Emily the idea of her father, whose image appeared in every landscape' (MU. pp. 105-106). The memory is the same one that reunites Valancourt and Emily, who are bound through their experience of the Alps. Emily 'then loved, with enthusiasm, whatever was great and good', and Valancourt pleads with her, 'Tell me, Emily, that you will not forget that journey' (MU, pp. 503-504). The novelty of the scenes and their variability are suggestive of the excitement and candour of their initial love, under the benevolent eye of St. Aubert. Valancourt and Emily communicate through silence (MU, p. 50), and translate their mutual desire into a hunger for scenic wonders. Valancourt parts from them 'to explore new scenes among the mountains', and Emily 'gazed with enthusiasm on the vastness of the ocean' (MU, pp. 55-56, 58).

In previous novels Radcliffe had experimented with the various ways of conveying the power of the heroine's desire to summon the actual presence of the hero. In Udolpho, this is achieved through the mediation of landscape as it is associated with the memory of St. Aubert. His emplacement as a new feminine-ordered model of masculine experience controls the union of Valancourt and Emily through their memories of landscape. Emily leaves a scene of merriment in Languedoc because it reminds her of her father. She wanders on until 'she found herself near the avenue, which, on the night of her father's arrival, [the servant] Michael had attempted to pass in search of a house, which was still as wild and desolate as it had then appeared' (MU, pp. 500-501). Into this re-creation of a scene formerly beheld, Valancourt suddenly appears (MU, p. 501). Without the assistance of the scenic recreation of a past

event, the reappearance of Valancourt would have been incongruous and disruptive. As Radcliffe presents it, Valancourt belongs in the tableau Emily remembers, and her longing has the effect, apparently, of producing him.

Similar affiliations with other landscapes arouse Emily's imagination and excite a response. Radcliffe's characters may indeed be 'nothing to us, except as filling up the scene' because of their lack of individuation and physical descriptions,[58] but she occludes their physical human presence by replacing the male body with landscape, and giving her heroines a subtly erotic diction with which to image desire. These scenes fill the characters with passion without the overt stimulus of sexual desire. Emily, inspired by 'the remembrance of Valancourt', walks to a window overlooking the ramparts, 'below which spread the woods she had passed in her approach to the castle. But the night-shade sat deeply on the mountains beyond, and their indented outline alone could be faintly traced on the horizon, where a red streak yet glimmered in the west' (MU, p. 229). The woods which had terrified her initially are quickly passed over. It is the mountains, hidden by night-shade but illuminated by one red streak, that capture Emily's imagination and symbolise her desire to see in the landscape some representation of Valancourt's physical self. It is not so much that Radcliffe's landscapes themselves are detailed figurative representations of sexual desire, but rather that the absence of the male body in her novels, emphasised by the feminisation of her heroes,[59] is transposed onto the powerful and sublime landscapes. Her heroines can then describe a physical response, initiated by their thought of the hero, without the problematical associations of male sexuality with masculine virtue. For example, as Emily leaves Udolpho, she considers that the walls may confine Valancourt, but she is also aware of the 'melancholy sighing of the wind among the pines, that waved high over the steeps, and the distant thunder of a torrent assisted her musings, and conspired with the wild scenery around, to diffuse over her mind emotions solemn, yet not unpleasing' (MU, p. 401).

In The Mysteries of Udolpho Radcliffe employs techniques she had been developing to achieve the fusion of the heroine's subjectivity with the overwhelming presence of masculine virtue. She allows Emily to indulge in the fantasies of romantic heroism, much as the earlier heroines did, but the dangers to Emily are greater and her errors more telling. Moreover, Emily is also most explicitly figured as a participant in the development of her own romance. The hidden identity of the heroine, significant in

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58. Talfourd, p. 119.

59. See William Hazlitt, 'Why Heroes of Romances are Insipid' in The Complete Works of William Hazlitt, ed. by P. P. Howe, 21 vols (London: Dent, 1930-34), xvii, pp. 246-254 (p. 251).

Romance of the Forest, is relegated here to a secondary importance. What is vital is not that Emily discovers she is the niece of the marchioness, her father's sister, but that she is her father's daughter and not the offspring of an illicit alliance. This clears her mind of the lingering doubts about her father's integrity and ends the nightmare of searching for a heroic substitute. Valancourt, even in his tarnished state, can marry her, free as she now is to see models of heroic virtue with accuracy, not suffer the exaggerations of terror at their inadequacy. As the imperfect Valancourt challenges her by offering her the choice between his presence as a man, or his absence as an ideal--'Stay, Emily....I will no longer distress you by my presence' (MU, p. 626)--Emily has to decide what is more acceptable: the presence of imperfection or the absence of perfection, which can only taunt her with its unattainability. The Mysteries of Udolpho articulates the uses of scenic response to mediate the expression of sexual desire.

The Mysteries of Udolpho, then, is the culmination of Radcliffe's particular vision of the Gothic. In her first four novels, she develops a structure, consciously and deliberately built on the foundations of romance conventions. This allows her to formulate distorted but not alien worlds in which her readers are occasionally as disorientated as her characters. The conventions of romance demand the presence of the heroic, and Radcliffe's Gothic vision builds up the fear and suspense that the absence of that heroic idiom produces in the reader. In Udolpho Radcliffe achieves the figuration of alienated masculine experience, as it is experienced by the heroines. The external machinery that she uses to achieve her effects was immediately recognised and seized upon by imitators, and generated an enduring school of formula Gothic fiction. In addition, there are significant developments for later Gothic fiction in the her evolution of the Gothic as serious romance. William Godwin in particular recognised the potential for fiction which Radcliffe's novels suggest, and develops them most clearly and immediately in his novel Caleb Williams (1794).[60] Godwin intensifies the masculine experience so that it overflows discrete categories of romantic hero and villain. Radcliffe's achievement was to focus an awareness of the lack of functional, acceptable, representations of literary masculine virtue, and to suggest that the appropriate response to the absence of the heroic was fear; Godwin's novels transfer the obsessive fear of masculine failure from the consciousness of the heroines to the tormented consciousness of the male subject.

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60. For evidence that Godwin read Radcliffe, see Kelly, The English Jacobin Novel, p. 191; Pamela Clemit, The Godwinian Novel: The Rational Fictions of Godwin, Brockden Brown, Mary Shelley (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), p. 46.

Chapter 3: William Godwin and the Crisis of Masculine Experience: Caleb Williams and St. Leon

> Have you read Caleb Williams?--that singular production--a novel without love, or intrigue, on the part of the three principal male characters, and without ruined castles, and haunted galleries; yet, where expectation is excited to breathless ardour, and where the terrible Graces extend their petrifying wands. The style of this extraordinary work is manly, compressed, animated, and impressive...[1]
>
> But, with yet greater powers...does the author of Caleb Williams grapple our attention. I conceive that he said to himself--'I will write a book that shall have no prototype, yet the taste of the age for the marvellous shall be humoured. Female pens have given us ruined castles, tolling bells, lights that palely gleaming, make darkness visible....Let me try if I cannot harrow readers, who have mind, with dread and breathless expectation, without exciting supernatural ideas, and even without the assistance of enamoured interests.' If such was his design, the success is complete.[2]

Anna Seward's immediate reactions to Godwin's most famous novel offer some evidence of the contemporary appeal of Caleb Williams. She also recognises that although Godwin's novel relies for its effect on the same responses evoked by more traditional Gothic novels, it yet remains apparently outside the Gothic tradition. Seward notes that the tension, the 'dread and breathless expectation', is aroused in the reader through the interaction and interanimation of the three male characters. Certainly, Godwin's integration of his political thought with his considered expression of fictional technique makes Caleb Williams a powerful achievement in its own right.[3] However, while accepting the arguments of Mark Philp that it is inadvisable to try to separate Godwin's fiction from his philosophy, and acknowledging the tradition of the 'Godwinian novel', as delineated by Pamela Clemit,[4] I shall demonstrate, through an analysis of the two novels which brought Godwin most acclaim as a writer of fiction, Caleb Williams (1794) and St. Leon (1799),[5] that there is a much stronger interdependence

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1. Anna Seward, The Letters of Anna Seward 1784-1807, 6 vols (Edinburgh: 1811; repr. New York: AMS, 1975), iv, pp. 210-211. (Seward to George Hardinge, 13 May 1796). For similar insight, see the Analytical Review, 21 (February 1795), pp. 166-175.
2. Seward, iv, pp. 228-229. (Seward to Mrs. Stokes, 30 June 1796).
3. For various assessments of Godwin's achievement in Caleb Williams, see P. N. Furbank, 'Godwin's Novels', Essays in Criticism, 5 (1955), 214-228 (pp. 215-219); Mitzi Myers, 'Godwin's Changing Conceptions of Caleb Williams', Studies in English Literature, 12 (1972), 591-628; Gary Kelly, The English Jacobin Novel, pp. 179-210; Alex Gold Jr., 'It's Only Love: The Politics of Passion in Godwin's Caleb Williams', Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 19 (1977),135-160 (pp. 153-154); Tillotama Rajan, The Supplement of Reading: Figures of Understanding in Romantic Theory and Practice (London: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 183-190; Clemit, pp. 46-63.
4. Mark Philp, Godwin's Political Justice (London: Duckworth, 1986), pp. 106-107; Clemit, pp. 2-9.
5. See for example, William Hazlitt, 'Mr. Godwin' (1830), Works, xvi, p. 394; Hazlitt, 'On the English Novelists' (1819), Works, vi, p. 131; Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'On "Godwin's Mandeville"' (1817), in The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, ed. by E.B. Murray, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993-), i, pp. 276-279 (pp. 276-277); William Maginn, 'William Godwin', A Gallery of Illustrious Literary Characters, no. 53, Fraser's Magazine, 10 (October, 1834), p. 463.

and interanimation of the Gothic mode and Godwin's fiction than has been noted.[6] Godwin's fiction successfully transfers the focus of Gothic from the detached observation of the alienation of masculine experience by the heroine to the subjective account of the terror of masculinity in crisis.

Godwin's fiction marks a clear point of transition in Gothic fiction. It also, in a related sense, demonstrates a crucial shift in conceptions of heroic identity. Caleb Williams was, Godwin notes later, 'the offspring of that temper of mind in which the composition of my 'Political Justice' left me'.[7] The fiction is intimately connected with his political philosophy which advocates a revision of the relationship between the individual and society--one which does away with the mediation of government and imposed leadership.[8] This vision necessarily demands a reassessment of the values and roles imposed on individuals by a society governed by institutions. According to Godwin, if institutions are permitted to shape the manners and morals of society, then society is inevitably corrupted by the suppression of the free exercise of reason.[9] The efforts of individuals must therefore be directed towards a rational assessment of a mode of conduct best suited to improve the general condition and, through this, achieve the elimination of the influence of institutions and other forms of social coercion. Since it is a 'principle, which has entered deeply into the systems' that 'it is the duty of governments to watch over the manners of the people', Godwin is concerned to emphasise that this belief itself is at fault. Godwin suggests instead that, since the 'legitimate instrument of effecting political reformation is truth', then let 'truth be incessantly studied, illustrated and propagated, and the effect is inevitable. Let us not vainly endeavour by laws and regulations to anticipate the future'.[10]

Godwin's recognition that the organisation and institutions of society lead to its own destruction implies an understanding of their fundamentally patriarchal construction. It is no accident that Caleb Williams presents an overwhelmingly male experience. Godwin's overriding philosophical concern was with the detrimental effect of institutions on the potential improvement of society through

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6. For dismissive accounts of Godwin's Gothic, see Harvey Gross, 'The Pursuer and the Pursued: A Study of Caleb Williams', Texas Studies in Literature and Language 1 (1959) 401-411 (pp. 404-405); W. A. Flanders, 'Godwin and Gothicism: St. Leon', Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 8 (1967), 533-545; B. Sprague Allen, 'William Godwin as a Sentimentalist', PMLA, 33 (1918), 1-20. Studies which have given serious consideration to Godwin's relationship to the Gothic include Punter, pp. 130-141; Kiely, pp. 81-97; Paulson, Representations of Revolution, pp. 230-239. The reverse relationship, between the development of the Gothic and Godwin, has not been studied before.

7. Godwin, autobiographical note for 1793, cited in Charles Kegan Paul. William Godwin, His Friends and Contemporaries, 2 vols (London, 1876), i, p. 78.

8. William Godwin, Political Justice (1793), ed. by Mark Philp, in Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin, iii, pp. 66-80 (pp. 70, 76); see Philp, Godwin's Political Justice, pp. 127-137.

9. Godwin, Political Justice, p. 381.

10. Godwin, Political Justice, pp. 313, 319.

uninhibited rational discourse. He understood that institutions were predominantly patriarchal and that their supremacy implicates and victimises men in a very particular way. When, in an otherwise convincing analysis of Caleb Williams which draws the novel into the Gothic tradition through the sentimental 'granddaughters of Clarissa', Paulson remarks that 'Godwin changes only the sex', he dismissively elides a vital and fundamental element of Godwin's influence on the Gothic tradition.[11] It is highly significant that Godwin changes the sex of the protagonist, because this radically alters the course of the Gothic tradition. Making his protagonist a man, while employing the claustrophobic atmosphere and plot of capture and escape of the Gothic novel, enables Godwin to transfer the literary experience of a crisis in masculine roles from the subjective account of the female observer, who sees masculinity as a spectacle, or a figure of romance, to the masculine consciousness itself. The shift away from a coherent maleness to a fragmented masculine consciousness is implicit in the Gothic novels which precede Caleb Williams,[12] but Godwin's novel expands the restrictive formal conventions which were already beginning to make the genre repetitive,[13] and marks a shift away from the outward trappings of masculinity bounded by convention and social expectation which Walpole had portrayed in Otranto. Instead, after the publication of Caleb Williams, the Gothic novel was reinvigorated and was shown the means to broaden and deepen the investigation which had first inspired it: the alienating experience of masculinity.

Caleb Williams is innovative at several levels. Hazlitt's well-known comment that for 'a metaphysician to write a popular romance' was a 'new and startling event in literary history' is one indication.[14] Hazlitt rightly identifies that Godwin's major innovation was to develop a new intimacy between reader and narrator in Caleb Williams: 'no one that ever read it could possibly forget it, or speak of it after any length of time but with an impression as if the events and feelings had been personal to himself'.[15] The reader feels drawn into Caleb's myopic visions of himself and Falkland, and thus becomes part of the process of perpetuation, the construction of the absent villain, upon which the Gothic mode turns, unless a conscious effort to resist and to evaluate the narrative objectively is

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11. Paulson, Representations of Revolution, p. 230.
12. For a provocative discussion on the emergence of masculine weakness in Radcliffe, see Doody, 'Deserts, Ruins and Troubled Waters', pp. 563-572.
13. See Mayo, The English Novel in the Magazines, p. 350; Mayo, 'Gothic Romance in the Magazines', PMLA, 65 (1950), 762-789 (pp. 778-779).
14. Hazlitt, 'Mr. Godwin', Works, xvi, p. 394. See also, Monthly Review, n.s. 15 (Sept. 1794), pp. 145-149; Analytical Review, 21 (February 1795), pp. 166-175.
15. Hazlitt, The Spirit of the Age (1825), Works, xi, p. 24.

made.[16] This chapter intends to examine Caleb Williams as both a product of, and a pivotal influence on, the development of Gothic fiction, focusing on Godwin's sophisticated presentation of the multiple levels of masculine relationship. First, the emphasis on performance will be examined to explore the aspect of role-playing in Godwin's portrayal of masculine experience. Then the novel will be treated as the exposition of three phases of specifically masculine oppression.[17] The chapter concludes with a brief analysis of St. Leon. This novel, although much less frequently read as part of the Gothic tradition, is in many ways overtly and consciously Gothic, and will be read as a refinement of Godwin's analysis of the roles in which men are imprisoned, and in turn imprison themselves.

Caleb Williams: Of Masks and Men

As for many contemporary reviewers, for Shelley, 'the character of Falkland' represented 'the very sublimest enterprises of thought', and is the hero of the story; Caleb Williams is the mediator.[18] Hazlitt, for example, implicitly recognises that Caleb creates Falkland for the reader--without Caleb's participation and imagination there would be no Falkland and no hero.[19] However, Godwin is at some pains to undermine the certainty of the reader as to the reliability of any identification of role in a society which imposes impossible and destructive codes of conduct on men in an attempt to preserve itself from certain moral decay. The published ending is Caleb's postscript to Falkland. Caleb closes his narrative by writing, 'I began these memoirs with the idea of vindicating my character. I have now no character that I wish to vindicate; but I will finish them that thy story may be fully understood; and that, if the errors of thy life be known...the world may at least not hear and repeat a half-told and mangled tale'.[20] Caleb professes to have lost his character in the representation of Falkland. Much turns on the word 'character'. The definitions of the word 'character' in the Oxford English Dictionary

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16. Different interpretations of narrative ambiguity arising from the first-person narration include Michael Deporte, 'The Consolations of Fiction: Mystery in Caleb Williams', Papers in Language and Literature, 20 (1984), 154-164; Robert Uphaus, 'Caleb Williams: Godwin's Epoch of Mind', Studies in the Novel, 9 (1977), 279-296; Andrew Schreiber, 'Falkland's Story: Caleb Williams' Other Voice', Studies in the Novel, 17 (1985), 255-265; Donald Wehrs, 'Rhetoric, History, Rebellion: Caleb Williams and the Subversion of Eighteenth-Century Fiction', Studies in English Literature, 28 (1985), 497-511; Karl Simms, 'Caleb Williams' Godwin: Things as They Are Written', Studies in Romanticism, 26 (1987), 343-363.

17. There are several critical approaches which have found the tripartite structure of Caleb Williams a useful starting point. See for example, D. H. Monro, Godwin's Moral Philosophy: An Interpretation of William Godwin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), pp. 86-132; Kelly, The English Jacobin Novel, pp. 184-207; Clemit, pp. 56-69.

18. Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'On "Godwin's Mandeville"' (1817), p. 276; See also Critical Review, 11 (June, 1794), pp. 290-296 (p. 290); Monthly Review, 15 (October 1794), pp. 145-149 (p. 145); Hazlitt, 'Why Heroes of Romances Are Insipid', (1827), Works xvii, p. 253.

19. Hazlitt, 'On the English Novelists', Works, vi. p. 131.

20. Godwin, Things As They Are; Or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams (1794), ed. by Pamela Clemit, Novels and Memoirs iii, p. 277. All further references to this edition will be given in brackets in the text.

show that meanings which imply an assumed role first take hold and work themselves into increasingly common usage toward the end of the eighteenth century. Henry Fielding defined the word 'character' as 'one constant imposition' which the 'crafty and designing Part of Mankind, consulting only their own separate Advantage, endeavour to maintain' and thereby 'the whole World becomes one vast Masquerade'.[21] As the century progresses, the sense of an act or assumed role takes on a more significant and pointed meaning toward an emerging romantic consciousness. Godwin's complex and deliberate use of the word shows the germination of later investigations of the relationship between creator and created. As Albert Camus writes in his analysis of rebellion, '[m]uch more than the cult of the individual, romanticism inaugurates the cult of the "character"'.[22] Logically, also, this invention of 'a character implies a public....He can only be sure of his own existence by finding it in the expression of others' faces. Other people are his mirror....Perpetually incomplete, always on the margin of things, he compels others to create him, while denying their values'.[23] This involvement of others in the creation of character was also identified by Henry Fielding in a clear articulation of eighteenth-century concern with the public performance of masculinity. Like Godwin, Fielding writes that society is most at risk when 'we take the Colour of a Man's actions not from their own visible Tendency, but from his public Character: When we believe what others say of him'.[24] Godwin agrees that character is something imposed both on and by the individual. He defines character as 'the result of a long series of impressions communicated to his mind, and modifying it in a certain manner, so as to enable us, from a number of these modifications and impressions being given, to predict his conduct'.[25] Godwin's novel explores the interplay between external impressions and internal modifications, between a developing character and his audience, as it expresses itself in the drama of masculine roles.

The importance of external impressions on the shaping of character, and the stress on the performance of acquired or imposed roles is explored in the contentious definition of the word 'hero'. Caleb and Falkland disagree on the interpretation of Alexander as a great figure, with Falkland defending tyranny and bloodshed in the cause of 'the generation of knowledge and virtue' (CW, p. 99). Falkland is then later forced to agree with Caleb's assertion that the world's 'affairs cannot be better in

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21. Henry Fielding, 'An Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men' (1739-40?), in Fielding, Miscellanies (1743), ed. by Henry Knight Miller, 3 vols, The Wesleyan Edition of the Works of Henry Fielding, i, pp. 153-178 (p. 155).
22. Albert Camus, The Rebel (1951), trans. by Anthony Bower (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1953), p. 47.
23. Camus, p. 48.
24. Fielding, 'Characters of Men', p. 163.
25. Godwin, Political Justice, p. 161.

the direction than of the genuine heroes; and, as in the end they will be found the truest friends of the whole, so the multitude have nothing to do, but to look on, be fashioned and admire' (CW, p. 105). The passive external 'fashioning' of the multitude is mirrored in Falkland, who is as clearly 'fashioned' by his derived ideas of honour and chivalric heroism: his 'love of fame'. Godwin's rewriting of Richardson's virtuous man of honour is evident in Falkland, as is his reading of Burke's defence of the old system of chivalric honour as a measurement of true manhood, 'that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honour...which ennobled whatever it touched, and under which vice lost half its evil, by losing all its grossness'.[26] Godwin shifts Burke's emphasis to the *appearance* of honour in order to demonstrate how empty, how socially destructive and alienating the ideal of masculine virtue is. Falkland admits that, in the cause of preserving his honourable reputation, there 'is no crime so malignant, no scene of blood so horrible, in which that object cannot engage me' (CW, p. 123). Since Falkland is only ever seen through Caleb, Caleb's character develops in symbiosis with Falkland's; they share the sense of being trapped victims of a masculine-ordered society where the dictates of male performance limit the scope of masculine identity. Like Falkland, who is driven to preserve the honour which defines him in the face of what he feels is Caleb's persistent persecution, Caleb is shaped by the 'persecution [which]at length gave firmness to my character, and taught me the better part of manhood' (CW, p. 138). He identifies so intensely with Falkland that they become virtually indistinguishable. The contradictory emotions which Falkland's conduct and position inspire in Caleb drive his attempts to establish a separate vision of the heroic. He aims to remodel himself completely as a person, distinct from Falkland's prototype: 'There was nothing I so ardently desired as the annihilation of all further intercourse between us, that he should not know there was such a person on earth as myself' (CW, p. 141). However, their roles depend on each other for inspiration and audience. When, spurred by the torment of perpetual pursuit, Caleb is driven to denounce Falkland to his face, Caleb himself is destroyed by the process of denunciation: 'Such has been the result of...delivering myself from the evils

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[26]. Burke, Reflections, p. 127. For the literary derivations of Falkland's sense of the honourable man see Gerard A. Barker, 'Ferdinando Falkland's Fall: Grandison in Disarray', Papers on Language and Literature, 16 (1980), 376-386; Eric Rothstein, 'Allusion and Analogy in the Romance of Caleb Williams', University of Toronto Quarterly, 37 (1967), 18-30; Donald Roemer, 'The Achievement of Godwin's Caleb Williams: The Proto-Byronic Squire Falkland', Criticism, 18 (1976), 43-56. For accounts which relate Falkland's notions of chivalric honour to Godwin's interpretation of Edmund Burke, see David McCracken, "Godwin's Caleb Williams: A Fictional Rebuttal of Burke', Studies in Burke and His Time, 11-12 ((1969-1971), 1442-1452; McCracken, 'Godwin's Reading in Burke', English Language Notes, 7 (1970), 264-270; Marilyn Butler, 'Godwin, Burke and Caleb Williams', Essays in Criticism, 32 (1982), 237-257; Clemit, pp. 39-45. For evidence that Godwin read Grandison prior to writing Caleb Williams, see Kelly, The English Jacobin Novel, pp. 191-192; Clemit, pp. 46, 54-56.

that had so long attended me...it is only now that I am truly miserable' (CW, p. 276). The male characters change roles in Caleb's narrative, and the consequences of Caleb's revelation are, implicitly, the social upheaval, or more accurately the inefficacy, of men whose will to authority is encoded in a chivalric model of anachronistic masculine virtue.[27] Falkland, the murderer, becomes a man 'of noble nature' who 'has qualities of the most admirable kind....a man worthy of affection and kindness', and Caleb is 'the worst of villains....a murderer, a cool, deliberate, unfeeling murderer' (CW, pp. 274-275). Significantly, however, Falkland, and therefore the representation of that 'rare virtue' which Burke describes as heroic, dies within three days of the destruction of his character.[28]

In this way, masculine experience is detailed through the depiction of men as fashioners of each other, but also as performers, and thus develops as a symbiotic experience of role-playing in which each man's role depends on another's man's presence to act as audience. Falkland says to Tyrrel: 'This public scene is the only place where I can have any thing to say to you' (CW, p. 83). Without Falkland, although he tries to assume Falkland's role, Caleb eventually loses his own role, and his role-model; without Caleb, Falkland shrinks to nothing. Each man imagines his role before undertaking it. Falkland's readings in tales of chivalry found expression in his 'conduct, which was assiduously conformed to the model of honour that his fancy suggested' (CW, p. 11). Caleb 'figured to [himself] every situation in which [he] could be placed, and conceived the conduct to be observed in each' (CW, p. 165). In the words of Camus, a character 'is, by occupation, always in opposition. He can only exist by defiance....Disoriented, like all people without a rule of life, he is coherent as a character. He plays at life because he is unable to live it. He plays at it until he dies, except for the moments when he is alone and without a mirror....to be alone is not to exist'.[29]

The novel is replete with uses of the word character which suggest an assumption or presentation of a role, as well as verbs which suggest the artificiality of social masculinity. Caleb is moved 'by curiosity to study [his] master's character, and...found in it an ample field for speculation and conjecture' (CW, p. 7). Tyrrel had 'figured to the greatest advantage, as the grand master of the *coterie*', but 'was of too vehement a temper to maintain the character of a consistent politician' (CW, pp. 18, 36). Caleb is convinced of Falkland's guilt as he watches Falkland 'act in his official character'

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27. For a discussion of the ending's implications for Godwin's maturing philosophical vision, see Philp, Godwin's Political Justice, pp. 113-114; Barker, pp. 385-386.
28. Burke, Reflections, p. 196.
29. Camus, pp. 47-48.

of a magistrate (CW, p. 114).Collins says of Falkland, 'How atrociously absurd to suppose...such a man to play the part of a lurking assassin' (CW, p. 90). Previous to his murder of Tyrrel and the wrongful execution of the Hawkinses, Falkland 'had before been fond of public scenes, and acting a part in the midst of the people (CW, p. 92). Caleb finds 'something strange in the character of Hawkins', because 'he appeared at first' so 'firm, so sturdily honest' to have turned into a murderer (CW, pp. 95-96). Hawkins, accused by Tyrrel, in a paraphrase of Bosola, of wrongly calling himself a gentleman 'So, you are a gentleman are you? A pretty gentleman truly!', responds with an echo of the Duchess of Malfi's dramatic statement of identity: 'Though I am a plain working man, your honour, do you see? yet I am a man still' (CW, pp. 38, 39).[30] The assertion of masculine identity becomes crucially problematic. Each man finds that he must either subscribe to the social vision of himself and sacrifice his existence, or else create an existence outside of the ordinary realms of acceptable masculine roles in which he has no social identity.

The context of performance and role-playing is the thread that links the experiences of the men. Caleb's own narrative is a performance consciously undertaken as a form of entertainment and distraction, as well as an attempt at persuasion, 'to divert my mind from the deplorableness of my situation' and also so that 'posterity may...be induced to render me a justice' (CW, p. 5). Caleb opens his narrative by saying, '[m]y life has for several years been a theatre of calamity' (CW, p. 5). The death of Emily was 'a scene acted upon too public a stage', and 'irresistibly excited in every spectator of the scene' that 'of regarding Mr. Tyrrel as the most diabolical wretch' (CW, p. 79). In Mr. Collins's narrative history of Falkland, he introduces the sequence of events that led to the murder of Tyrrel and the hanging of Hawkins by saying that he will 'lift the curtain, and bring forward the last act of the tragedy' (CW, p. 45). The prisoners live in 'a theatre of constant melancholy' (CW, p. 160). In a scene reminiscent of the play within a play from Hamlet,[31] Caleb watches Falkland, who, during the trial, responds like a spectator at a play. He first 'started with astonishment', then he 'shifted his posture like a man who is unable longer to endure the sensations that press upon him', and 'tears of unbidden anguish roll down his cheeks' until 'he could endure it no longer. He suddenly rose, and with every mark

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30. See John Webster, The Duchess of Malfi (1623), ed. by John Russell Brown (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1974, repr. 1977), p. 124. (Bosola to the Duchess, IV, ii, 135; the Duchess' reply, IV, ii, 142).

31. Shakespeare, Hamlet, ed. by John Dover Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934), pp. 69-74. III, ii, 134-266.

of horror and despair rushed out of the room' (CW, pp. 116-117). The subsequent trials and inquiries after truth have similar resonances of conscious performance.

The second volume continues the pattern of staged performance as Caleb opens with the comparison of his narrative to a sworn statement, but undermines his reliability with a reinforcement of the sense of an earlier contrived performance: 'My feelings were successively interested for the different persons that were brought upon the stage' (CW, p. 95). Caleb's trial for theft, arranged by Falkland, is introduced as a staged drama: 'the servants already assembled in expectation of me, and my accuser....Mr. Falkland entered at one door, almost as soon as I entered at the other' (CW, p. 146). Caleb refers to himself as 'of all the spectators that individual who was most at a loss to conceive through every stage of the scene what might come next' (CW, p. 150), and Mr. Forester accuses Caleb of having 'chosen [his] part' (CW, p. 154). The final volume sees Caleb assuming a series of disguises and identities: a beggar, an Irishman, a Jew, and a cripple (CW, pp. 208, 212, 226, 236). The assumption of roles ensures Caleb's safety as an anonymous outsider; only in those instances when his disguise is exposed, or when he voluntarily identifies himself does Caleb re-enter the world of established masculine roles and seem in imminent danger. (CW, pp. 240, 221).

The novel concerns itself ultimately with the emptiness of the roles which society forces eminent men to assume. These appearances deceive the protagonists, and others around them, but are in the end destructive and ineffectual. The unreliability of appearances is emphasised in an ironic reminder to the reader through the farmer Thomas, who is shocked by the news that Caleb appears to have stolen from Falkland. Crediting what Caleb asserts is falsified evidence, Thomas proclaims, 'I will never take any body's word, nor trust to appearances, thof it should be an angel' (CW, p.156). Caleb does not despair in the worst of cells, because he 'had for some time learned not to judge by appearances' (CW, p. 178). A similar twist is put into the word 'character'. After his denial of events at Caleb's trial, and his destruction of Caleb's reputation, Falkland is told by Forester, with an irony understood only by the reader who credits Caleb's account, 'I have no doubt that your character in the judgement of every person that has heard...stands higher than ever....you must be considered a martyr in the public cause' (CW, p. 153). In effect, every protagonist is a 'character' who is also martyr to a vision of the public cause: Tyrrel, Hawkins, Falkland, Caleb, Mr. Forester, Raymond, and even the thief-turned-informer Jones. Each man is a martyr at once to his own vision of what he ought to be, and to what he feels is the public vision of what he ought to be. The men are united through a

persistent adherence to the social conventions that produced the roles which they perform They are all caught in the trap that the thief-captain Raymond outlines to Caleb: 'those very laws which, by a perception of their iniquity drove me to what I am, now preclude my return....the institutions of countries...leave no room for amendment....It signifies not what is the character of the individual at the hour of trial. How changed, how spotless, and how useful avails him nothing....What then can I do? Am I not compelled to go on in folly, having once begun?' (CW, p. 203).

This sense of being forced into a role by circumstances and social pressure extends to all the men. Each is a player, an image and a character, recognisably derived from the tales of 'chivalry and romance' which so inspired Falkland (CW, p. 11). Each man is connected to the other through his performance of a masculine role and each is passionately determined to preserve the identity which has been imposed upon him. The men are linked through a context of masculine authority which allows them to delineate their roles, but they are connected also as victims of the masculine tradition which forces the roles on to them. Hawkins vows that 'I will lose all that I have...but I will not make a gentleman's servant of him' (CW, p.39) and will not abandon the fight with Tyrrel because, 'being once involved, there was a stubbornness in his nature that would not allow him to retract' (CW, pp. 41-42). He sacrifices himself and the son he sought initially to save from social disgrace, and they die as murderers (CW, p. 92). Tyrrel is despised and ostracised by those from whom he expects admiration, and plans a defiant final superlative performance. He 'determined to collect his strength for a decisive effort, and to meet the whole tide of public opinion in a single scene' (CW, p. 82). The failure to 'effect his re-establishment' results in his complete alienation from the order of masculine experience, and ultimately kills him. Feeling himself dishonoured by their encounter, Falkland murders Tyrrel in secret, letting the Hawkinses take the blame. As each man in turn assumes victim status, the narrative becomes a parody of voyeuristic sentimental fiction. Instead of glorying in the appropriation of feminine signs of virtue which disengender them and participating in a discourse which depends on inaction for its successful realisation, the male characters in Caleb Williams are consistently thwarted in their attempts to exert control over their fates. The active exercise of masculine authority, not the passive exhibition of feminised virtue, equally makes Hawkins a victim for seeking to create a masculine role

unsanctioned by the masculine heritage of honour, and Falkland a victim for performing the sanctioned role that honour demands of him.[32]

The complicity between the performers and audiences of masculine roles sustains the suspense and intimacy of the narrative. It is one of Godwin's strengths as a novelist that the universal enchantment woven by the spell of unchallenged masculine roles, which he most earnestly condemns, is simultaneously the illusion which drives his novel. Tyrrel, 'accustomed...to the obedience and trembling homage of mankind', believed until he murdered Emily Melvile through neglect that 'no excess on his part would ever be potent enough to break the enchantment' (CW, p. 81). The enchantment had hung over Tyrrel, as well as over the citizens who deferred to him. Falkland also confesses to being under a spell of sorts: 'I was the fool of fame...I am as much the fool of fame as ever'. The recognition of fame's enchanting powers does nothing to reduce its charm: 'I cling to it with my last breath. Though I be the blackest of villains, I will leave behind me a spotless and illustrious name' (CW, p.122). Falkland ends a shattered man who 'spent a life of the basest cruelty to...protect myself against the prejudices of my species' (CW, p. 275). Caleb is so shaken by the collapse of Falkland, 'I have been his murderer' (CW, p. 276), that Falkland becomes a kind of talisman, or supernatural charm for him. Caleb is haunted by the image of his hero. 'His figure is ever in imagination before me. Waking or sleeping I still behold him' (CW, p. 276). Without Falkland to admire, to figure through his imagination, to define himself against, Caleb loses his own identity. He had been unsure of his role, adamant that he will never be an informer (CW, p. 124) but equally determined not to be a servant indentured through his secret to Falkland forever (CW, p. 129). His only escape is to flee the physical presence of Falkland, and to try to abandon the identity that would be imposed upon him. The fact that he carries the mental and figurative image of Falkland everywhere with him ensures Caleb's misery. He is trapped not by being imprisoned in his own role, but by a failure to find a role free of contamination from any other.

Appearance, not substance, is the key to the destructive nature of masculine performance. This is underlined through the changes in physical appearance of the central protagonists. Falkland's appearance changes as does Caleb's. Caleb, with no role or identity, boasts of his 'considerable facility in the art of imitation' (CW, p. 212) and is able to lose himself amidst the multitude of disguises he assumes, but is then cut off from society by his inability to reveal himself (CW, p. 227). Falkland,

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32. For Godwin's reading in sentimental fiction, see Kelly, The English Jacobin Novel, pp. 191-192. For a discussion of the disengendering effects of sentimentalism, see Todd, Sensibility, pp. 88-109; Mullan, pp. 117-146; Barker-Benfield, pp. 104-153.

however, becomes physically less man-like as his conduct becomes more obsessively concerned with preserving his image. When Caleb sees Falkland for the penultimate time, 'he was totally unlike the man he had once been....the spectacle which now presented itself to my eyes....appeared like nothing that had ever been visible in human shape' (CW, p. 247). This element of satanic reversal underlines the demonic potential of a hollow masculine experience. Godwin has a specific use for the potentially supernatural, so vital an ingredient of the Gothic mode. Where the hauntings and manifestations of Radcliffe's novels were employed to arouse the fear of masculine power in the heroine's imagination, and where in the novels of Walpole and Lee, ghosts and spectres were used to emphasise the limits of masculine systems of order, in Godwin the suggestion of the supernatural is used to make the 'spectre' of destructive masculinity 'real' in the shape of Falkland.

Having established that the language of performance dominates Caleb Williams, and that the insubstantiality of masculine virtue as filtered through the demands of social performance orders the plot, the structure, as three phases of masculine experience, can briefly be examined. The novel's three volumes draw attention to modes of conduct specifically masculine in nature. In his 1832 preface to the Standard Novels edition of Fleetwood, Godwin writes that he planned Caleb Williams in reverse, by conceiving a 'fugitive in perpetual apprehension of being overwhelmed with the worst calamities, and the pursuer, by his ingenuity and resources, keeping his victim in a state of the most fearful alarm'.[33] Godwin then had to 'conceive a dramatic and impressive situation adequate to account for the impulse that the pursuer should feel'.[34] Godwin suggests that the only impulse could be a murder, but the true motivation for Falkland is not to keep the murder, as such, a secret, so much as to preserve, through keeping it secret, the reputation and good standing which he possesses under increasingly false pretences. In the third volume Caleb and Falkland are entangled in a mutually destructive relationship. This is the result of their common adherence to the code of honour and social virtue which grants Falkland his standing and inspires Caleb's initial veneration. Their inability to discuss, to assess and ultimately to alter the roles they have assumed, contributes to their alienation and isolation from the social world which first created, and then defined them. Godwin uses the first two volumes to delineate the process by which men are socially defined, and then their roles created and perpetuated.

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33. Godwin, 'Preface to the 1832 Standard Novels Edition of Fleetwood' (1832), in Novels and Memoirs, v, p. 9. Harvey Gross takes this as his definition for the Gothic mode, and therefore for the basis of the Gothic elements of Caleb Williams. See Gross, 'The Pursuer and The Pursued', pp. 404-405.
34. Godwin, 'Preface' to Fleetwood, p. 9.

In the first volume, the hierarchical presentation of Falkland and Caleb as the man of honour and his servant, and Tyrrel and Hawkins as the squire and his dependant, is carefully undertaken.[35] It is underlined by the fact that the narrator is, for a time, Mr. Collins, himself a loyal servant who has internalised hereditary assumptions of masculine worth. Very broadly, the first chapter introduces Caleb, the second, Falkland, the third Tyrrel, and the fourth the figure of Mr. Clare. Clare's vision of Falkland's 'usefulness', clearly derived from Godwin's own philosophy, lingers in the reader's mind. Clare, a poet, appears as an ideal figure who 'regarded the errors of others without a particle of resentment, and made it impossible for any one to be his enemy' (CW, p. 23). Although Clare dies early in the narrative, before his death he speaks to Falkland, 'whose future usefulness I contemplate with greater hope' about the progress of history, 'a great series that is perpetually flowing', and urges the promotion of the 'general welfare, the great business of the universe' which Falkland ought to undertake. 'We should be contemptible indeed, if the prospect of human improvement did not yield us a pure and perfect delight' (CW, pp. 32, 31). However, Falkland's vision of his usefulness extends only to the perpetuation of his name and reputation to future generations as a model and a memory. Falkland's increasing isolation from the world, his attempt to preserve his honour, is rendered even more poignant and culpable when seen in the light of Clare's optimism.

The principal male characters are drawn in quick succession. They are portrayed in short sketches which give ready evidence of their ability to absorb and perform roles as well as their desires to ascribe roles to other men in accordance with their individual philosophies. Godwin thus efficiently sets up Caleb as an observer and pupil and presents contrasting masculine roles and experience in Falkland and Tyrrel. At the same time, Godwin stresses the intersections of personal and social forces which combine to produce the male characters. Caleb describes himself as having 'an inquisitive mind' (CW, p. 5). He spent his early life 'almost wholly engrossed by reading and reflexion', and immediately found in Falkland 'an ample field for speculation and conjecture' (CW, p.7). In the next chapter, Falkland is also shown to be a product of 'reading and reflexion': he read 'the heroic poets of Italy' and 'from them imbibed the love of chivalry and romance' (CW, p. 11). The chapter includes an account of his life in Italy and his involvement in 'affairs of honour' in Italy in which he 'acquitted himself in the most brilliant manner as a man of gallantry and virtue' (CW, pp. 11, 16). Clearly influenced by

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35. For a discussion of the possible significance of the names of the characters, see Rothstein, 'Allusion and Analogy', pp. 22-24; Kelly, The English Jacobin Novel, pp. 201-203; G.A. Starr, 'Henry Brooke, William Godwin, and Barnabas Tirrell/Tyrrel', Notes and Queries, 25 (1978), 67-68; Clemit, pp. 50-51.

Richardson's Grandison, who also proved himself a man of honour during an Italian sojourn, and was also involved in rescuing a orphan named Emily, this episode of Falkland's early life is placed in the context of Burke's visions of honour and virtue.[36] The experience reinforces Falkland's 'own impatience of stain or dishonour' (CW, p. 16), just as Burke laments the loss of a masculine sensibility which 'felt a stain like a wound'.[37] Godwin uses Burke's language against him, to show that since Falkland derives his role models from ancient chivalric tales and gains his experience abroad, he lives by standards which are inappropriate to his own age and environment, artificial as well as unrealistic.[38] A similar tone of parody is maintained in the introduction of Tyrrel as 'the true model of the English squire' (CW, p. 17) and a 'rustic tyrant' (CW, p. 34). Tyrrel is not without charm, 'considerable copiousness of speech and a rich but undisciplined imagination', and like Falkland is 'sure of an audience' who would have 'a ready laugh' (CW, p. 18). Godwin refers to Tyrrel's 'subjects' (CW, p. 18) and establishes the rivalry between Falkland and Tyrrel as a conflict of rulers, a clash of patterns of masculine conduct. The patriarchal tradition depends for its perpetuation on the subscription to a code of honour universally understood and revered, and to an aristocratic order of merit rather than a democratic one regulating social intercourse. Godwin sets up the comparison early between Tyrrel's tyranny and Falkland's benevolent despotism. Although Falkland's 'advantages...possessed in the comparison are palpable' (CW, p. 19), and Tyrrel's 'subjects...were sufficiently disposed to revolt against his merciless dominion' (CW, p. 19), the two men operate within a system of perceived rather than merited superiority. Significantly, Falkland's supreme advantage is that he is less male, more manly by dint of his feminine qualities, than Tyrrel. His 'polished manners were admirably in unison with feminine delicacy' but were 'elegant without effeminacy' (CW, pp. 19, 20). However, as Wollstonecraft points out, polished manners readily lend themselves to charm and hypocrisy.[39] Where Tyrrel is presented as a cruel figure, regularly referred to as a tyrant (CW, pp. 57, 79, 92), he is also 'indebted to a self-satisfied effrontery and a boisterous and over-bearing elocution' for his standing. He is trapped within one role which his upbringing, 'the tuition of his mother, a woman of very narrow capacity', has taught him to expect will be admired (CW, p. 17). He is portrayed as the genuine, if unattractive, product of actual socialisation. Falkland, on the other hand, is the product of an imagined socialisation, one which

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36. For Grandison's Italian adventures, see Richardson, Grandison, ii, pp. 520-536, 556-606, 609-653.
37. Burke, Reflections, p. 127.
38. For the sophisticated levels of engagement with Burkean diction in Caleb Williams, see Clemit, pp. 53-55.
39. Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, in Works, v, pp. 86, 92-93, 102.

is detached from his own place and time. It produces a charming and worldly man, but one whose sense of self and of his masculine role is lost. He is a man able only to perform a role rather than to live a life. Falkland is able 'to perceive almost instantaneously the proceeding it most became him to adopt' (CW, p. 20).

The first volume thus establishes the roles which Tyrrel and Falkland have taken for themselves in the miniature dominion over which they are competing. Caleb is carefully established as a listener and observer. In the second volume, Godwin turns to a closer examination of the means by which masculine roles are socially enforced. He chooses to portray a manipulation of the legal system and to give a graphic account of imprisonment.[40] The combination of the two is to undermine yet again the confidence of the reader in the accuracy of any information. Caleb turns from the story of Collins to his own narrative, destabilising the reader, and enforcing the impossibility of certainty through his first-person account. Of Collins's story he says, 'the original communication...appeared sufficiently distinct and satisfactory; but, as I brooded over it, it gradually became mysterious' (CW, p. 95). Later Caleb challenges his readers, 'Thank God, exclaims the Englishman, we have no Bastille!....Go, go, ignorant fool! and visit the scenes of our prisons' (CW, p. 161). The reasoning is the same behind both Caleb's reinterpretation of Collins's narrative and the exhortation to visit the prisons of England. Taken on word of mouth, or appearances alone, knowledge does not amount to truth. Godwin uses the legal system to show how the institutions which society sustains and on which it depends for its protection are themselves destructive and threatening. In the same way, he has been constructing an argument about the social creation of men of honour who govern the nation, and Godwin undermines the reliance on both the men produced by society and the institutions those men uphold to create an inextricable network of dependencies. The presentation of the prison, for example, suggests social complicity in the production and reproduction of crime and criminals. 'These...are the engines that tyranny sits down in cold and serious meditation to invent. This is the empire that man exercises over man. Thus is a being, formed to expatiate, to act, to smile and enjoy, restricted and benumbed' (CW, p. 161). Brightwel, Caleb's cellmate, 'would have been an ornament of any age', and died 'of a disease the consequence of his confinement' (CW, p. 170). Caleb reckons that if he 'had been apprehended on the most frivolous reasons...[he] must still have waited about two hundred and seventeen days before my innocence could

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40. See Kelly, The English Jacobin Novel, pp. 195-196.

be cleared' (CW, p. 168). The culpability is shared and the roles of criminal and victim are presented as at best indistinguishable and at worst interchangeable.

The largely unjust and cruel treatment of Hawkins, Brightwel and Caleb by the legal system is shown to be the result of the credence granted to the established roles of social masculinity. Forester defends the legal system to Caleb in brutally honest terms. 'Make the best story you can for yourself; true, if truth as I hope, will serve your purpose; but, if not, the most plausible and ingenious you can invent' (CW, p. 145). Forester then advises Caleb to 'leave out of it whatever tells to the disadvantage of Mr. Falkland. Defend yourself as well as you can, but do not attack your master. It is your business to create in those that hear you a prepossession in your favour' (CW, p. 153). Falkland's repeated exoneration at the hands of courts he has contrived makes it increasingly difficult for him to retract any of the accusations levelled against Caleb, and his only option is to try to ameliorate Caleb's suffering. This plan imposes new roles on other men. The jailor, for example, asked by Falkland to offer a room with his own family to Caleb, 'appeared to be acting a part, unnatural and that sat with aukwardness upon him' (CW, p. 169). Falkland's ironic assertion that it 'was proper that [Caleb] be brought to public shame, that other people may not be deceived in him as we have been' (CW, p. 154), makes him a prisoner of his own hypocrisy. He has admitted that 'This it is to be a gentleman! a man of honour! I was the fool of fame. My virtue, my honesty, my everlasting peace of mind were cheap sacrifices to be made at the shrine of this divinity' (CW, p. 122). Falkland is as much a prisoner of the institutions of the world of which he is apparently master, as Caleb is of the prison-house. Caleb, in fact, reflects that, 'I exult, and reasonably, over the impotence of my persecutor. Is not that impotence greater than I have yet imagined? I say, he may cut off my existence, but cannot disturb my serenity' (CW, p. 167). Out of reach of the social ordering of men, and without a character, a reputation, an identity, temporarily untroubled by the paradoxical fear of and admiration for Falkland, Caleb is, as Falkland can never be, entirely free.

The third volume is the climactic volume in which the pursuit takes hold of the reader's imagination. In this volume, the roles which the men had assumed, or acquired in the earlier volumes disintegrate and collapse into one another. First, Caleb is taken up by a group of thieves, whose leader Raymond turns out to be a kind, gentle and honourable man whose aim is virtue and integrity (CW, pp. 196, 201, 203). Jones, the most hardened of the thieves, later takes on the legitimate role of thief-taker, as he becomes the pursuer of Caleb in the pay of Falkland (CW, pp. 230-235, 259-261, 265-266). This

blurred boundary between law-enforcer and law-breaker further confuse the reader's certainty as to the social meaning of masculine performance.[41] Far from evaluating his progress toward a greater sense of his own manhood, Caleb spends a brief period reliving his youth, wondering if his adventures had been 'a distempered and tormenting dream', and likens himself to 'a man recovered from six months raging delirium, from ideas of horror, confusion, flight, persecution, agony and despair!' (CW, p. 255). Here, he 'forgot there was such a person as Mr. Falkland in the world' and is free temporarily again to live in an Eden without external character-shaping male role-models. Nonetheless, Caleb's fantasy of independence, his 'chance, by continuing long in one residence, of acquiring a character of integrity' is shattered by the efforts of Falkland. Caleb's own role as his own historian collapses into Falkland's, who was 'industrious in disseminating that which in the eye of the world seemed to amount to a demonstration of the profligacy and detestableness of my character. It was, no doubt, from him that the detested scroll had been procured' (CW, p. 259).

The final confrontation between Caleb and Falkland sees the ultimate collapse of externally-imposed roles and stands as evidence of Godwin's uncertainty about the widespread ramifications of social institutions which demand artificial performances, and where discussion, truth, and with truth, virtue and integrity, are not allowed to triumph.[42] The final trial is an emotionally charged exhibition which hints at the possibilities for a rewarding masculine experience, if ever emotion and reason are united in genuine communication rather than artificial performance. Although Falkland and Caleb are before a court, what begins as testimony, in which Caleb speaks of Falkland in the third person, 'He, in compassion for whose fallen state, I would willingly forget...would compel me to accuse, that he might enter upon his justification', becomes an intimate dialogue between the two men, so that the legal process is effectively subsumed under the discussion of the two men. 'You began in confidence; why did you not continue in confidence?...You threatened me: did I then betray you?' (CW, pp. 272-273). Falkland responds to the direct appeal, and regrets his tardiness in listening without prejudice to Caleb. 'Williams...you have conquered! I see too late the greatness and elevation of your mind' (CW, p. 275). Here is the dramatisation of Godwin's vision: 'The only substantial method for the propagation of truth is discussion, so that the errors of one man may be detected by the acuteness and severe disquisition of

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41. For a discussion on the ambivalent attitude of the eighteenth century to thief-takers, see Ian Ousby, The Bloodhounds of Heaven: The Detective in English Fiction from Godwin to Doyle (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 10-13, 29-31.

42. See note 27, above. For discussions of the this interpretation, see, for example, Philp, pp. 113-117; Myers, 'Godwin's Changing Conceptions of Caleb Williams', pp. 620-628.

his neighbours. All we have to demand from the officers of government, at least in their public character, is neutrality. The intervention of authority in a field proper to reasoning and demonstration is always injurious'.[43] Had Falkland and Caleb, Tyrrel and Hawkins not been forced, by convention, social structures and institutions, and false conceptions of virtuous manhood, into established patterns of masculine experience, which demand the performance of a limited number of existing roles, thus preventing them from participating in discussion, then the justice done would have been, quite possibly, more satisfactory.

Because his masculine experience is also exposed as empty, Caleb takes no pleasure in the social vengeance he has achieved through the institution of the law: 'I thought that, if the guilt of Falkland were established, fortune and the world would smile upon my efforts'. Instead, 'it is only now that I am truly miserable' (CW, p. 276). In the diction of eucharistic prayer, Caleb attempts to imbibe the spirit of Falkland, 'Falkland, I will think only of thee, and from that thought will draw ever-fresh nourishment for my sorrows!' (CW, p. 276). Falkland is transubstantiated, through the religious diction, into a saviour-figure, a mythologised being whose strength is inspirational. Caleb, without Falkland, begins to replicate the cycle of masculine-created and masculine-received mythologies that destroyed them both. He needs to draw inspiration from the spirit of Falkland. Caleb is bereft without Falkland, since in his own vindication he destroys Falkland's performance as an honourable man, and leaves himself no defining model, no role to play in opposition. 'I have now no character to vindicate' (CW, p. 277). He links the search for masculine models of virtue with a Gothic tradition as he identifies the downfall of Falkland using Gothic imagery: 'From that moment thou only continuedst to live to the phantom of departed honour' (CW, p. 277).

This nightmare of apparently inevitable isolation or an increasingly unbearable double existence of irreconcilable public and private selves located specifically in the masculine consciousness is the legacy which Godwin bequeaths to Gothic fiction. The explicit introduction of a divided public and private man, in the 'two characters...the Mr. Falkland of a date prior and subsequent to these events' (CW, p. 86), as a socially produced and socially threatening force is a turning point in eighteenth-century Gothic. The masculine experience is recognised as one of torment and restriction, rather than of freedom or humorous pathos. Following the publication and tremendous popularity of

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43. Godwin, Political Justice, p. 106.

Caleb Williams,[44] Gothic fiction discovered a new approach to its initial subject, and achieved new sophistication. Whether seen from the perspective of feminine subjective accounts of the earlier Radcliffe novels, or in the innovative and intimate masculine subjective narratives of Godwin and many of the Gothic novelists who follow him, the masculine experience was openly acknowledged as socially prescribed, constricting and, without the redemption of family, love, and a humbling recognition of dependence was understood to be frightening, alienating and ultimately destructive.

St. Leon: The Love of Honour or the Honour of Love?

In common with other reviewers Percy Bysshe Shelley felt St. Leon a lesser novel than Caleb Williams, referring to its 'inferior distinctness'.[45] However, the later novel continues the examination of the nature of masculine experience through roles imposed on men that is a central feature of Caleb Williams. I argue that Godwin's second Gothic novel approaches the presentation of masculine experience by broadening the historical awareness of Gothic to achieve a transhistorical parable of masculine cultural inheritance. In St. Leon's immortality the novel acquires the dimension of a never-ending experience of history which emphasises the degree to which men are the victims of historical models, culturally encoded in a pattern of reproduction that ensures the perpetual isolation of masculine experience when that experience exists separately from the feminine experience of biological reproduction. Godwin also investigates the necessity of domestic affection and family as a component of a satisfactory masculine experience of virtue in St Leon to the concern with roles, figures and characters central to Caleb Williams. The Gothic devices of a half-known secret, imprisonment, flight and pursuit, a trunk containing illicit knowledge, and the struggle to come to terms with the increasingly isolating experience of masculine heroism are all present in St. Leon.[46] When St. Leon bemoans his outcast state--'Mystery was the great and unconquerable bane of my situation' (SL, p. 318)--it is clear that the mystery and isolation are intimately connected with his quest to be the perfect man. Initially, St. Leon is that 'Happy, happy, happy man!' for whom 'the whole world are his servants, and he, if his temper be noble and upright, will be the servant of the whole world' (SL, pp. 137-138). But soon, the dream of glory, wealth and power becomes a nightmare of isolation, alienation and perpetual misunderstanding. 'I had no illustrious ancestry...neither lineage nor parent; I had neither wife nor children....I had not

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44. Hazlitt, 'Mr. Godwin', Works, xvi, p. 394.
45. Shelley, 'On "Godwin's Mandeville"', p. 276; See also, for example, Hazlitt, 'On the English Novelists', Works, vi, p. 131.
46. Godwin, St. Leon, Novels and Memoirs, iv, p. 13, pp. 179, 267-272, 341-344, p.339. All further quotations from this edition will be given in brackets in the text.

even the ordinary advantage, which is within the reach of almost every man, of connections and acquaintance...friends with whom long habits of familiarity had given birth to reciprocal endearment' (SL, p. 319). St. Leon's experience of mystery and imprisonment arise largely from the role he has mistakenly fashioned for himself: the ultimate man of honour. Godwin uses Gothic devices to arise within the increasingly oppressive narrative of heroic expectations to underline how fantastic the expectations of honour are. The Gothic mood of claustrophobia emphasises the nightmare quality of St. Leon's dreams of glory, and reinforces St. Leon's sense of being trapped in a dialectic of historical masculine experience where a man is either publicly sanctioned by other men or privately happy away from the masculine world. Marguerite shows him that there is a mediation possible if his masculine desire can internalise feminine virtue, but St. Leon is so blinded by the reproduction of alienating masculine myths that he cannot accept it..

In addition to formulaic Gothic devices, St. Leon incorporates family affection as a source of fear and uncertainty for men. St. Leon develops the theme of masculine consciousness trapped by its own understanding of historical heroism. Historical consciousness of masculine heroism is produced and received by men who cut themselves off from a natural means of reproducing themselves--through the family. Uncentred around domestic security, the isolated man is a ready victim of masculine mythologies through his complete social isolation. The stranger, who by his very namelessness warns of the loss of identity which subscription to the myth of ultimate heroism risks, refers obliquely to the desolate anonymity contingent on possession of the secret when he tells St. Leon, 'my country, my family, my adventures...you shall never know....When this heart ceases to beat, that tale shall cease to have a place on the face of the earth' (SL, p. 122). St. Leon has an uneasy sense of what this might mean for him. 'Must I for ever live without a companion....Nor did it sufficiently console me to recollect that, as one set of friends died off the stage, another race would arise....I felt that human affections and passions are not made of this transferable stuff' (SL, p. 139). Confusion between heroic endeavour and masculine virtue occurs most evidently in the lack of distinction St. Leon makes between ancestry and family. In St. Leon, the protagonist concerns himself with 'doing honour to my ancestors and my country, and vindicating the consideration due to the house of St. Leon', through any means (SL, p. 46). The result is the destruction of his family through gambling (SL, 65-67). In acquiring the secret of immortality and wealth, the philosopher's stone, St. Leon sees a method of bypassing the natural, biological and social means of reproducing self and name--the family--and the conventional

method of instilling virtue--through example and industry--by creating a position for his son, and the appearance of virtue through that position. For St. Leon, the secret is divine reward for his children, a means of restoring their birthright, not a punishment for his denial of his paternal responsibilities: 'because, by my guilt and folly, my children have been deprived of the distinction and rank to which they were born....Because I have endured more than man ever endured from the privation of fortune, God in his justice has reserved for me this secret of the transmutation of metals'(SL, p. 138). St. Leon is ironically wholly unaware of his failure to recognise the true nature of heroic masculine experience. 'I can never again fall into that wretchedness, by which my understanding was subverted, and my heart was broken' (SL, p. 138). Instead, by attempting to create an entirely separate and unilateral method of preserving and protecting his family name, rather than the actual persons of his family, St. Leon finds himself permanently cut off from them (SL, p. 297).

Godwin exposes the fragility of modes of masculine heroism which sustain a false notion of masculine security through an account of the potential of domestic happiness. The conflict St. Leon experiences between the needs and expectations of his wife and family, and the needs and expectations of his historical lineage as he conceives them to be destroys him as his perspective on his son's true heroic virtue is lost in St. Leon's dreams of heroic splendour: 'I resolved that my shepherd-boy, bred in obscurity...should burst with sudden splendour upon his country men, and prove in the field his noble blood and generous strain....With the advantages I could afford...the career of Charles could not fail to be illustrious and rapid' (SL, p. 141). Dismayed by his father's conduct, Charles rejects his lineage, and achieves an illustrious career as Charles de Damville, effectively annihilating the family and name of St. Leon: 'I am alone in the world. I have no father, no mother, no brethren. I am an exile from my country, and cut off from those of my own lineage and blood' (SL, p. 354). He is offered redemption, though, through his marriage to Pandora. St. Leon himself is condemned to an eternal existence, unable, either through reintegration in his family, remarriage, or through the recognition of his son, to correct the irremediable error of subordinating domestic security to false historical notions of masculine honour. He is ironically forced to acknowledge that the greatest service he can render his family is to provide proof of his own death in order completely to remove himself from them: 'By furnishing to them the proper documents to certify the death of their father, I flattered myself that I had cut them off more effectually than before from all connection with my unpropitious destiny' (SL, p. 296).Instead, St. Leon wanders across Europe watching mistakes wrought by the espousal of false heroism: 'Such is war:

such are the evils nations willingly plunge into, or are compelled to endure, to pamper the senseless luxury or pride of a Ferdinand and a Solyman!' (SL, p. 300). The isolation which the artificial preservation of St. Leon's honour, through the acquisition of the philosopher's stone, produces leaves him 'stripped of wife and children, though no man could prize those benefits more dearly than I....the wealth of a nobleman; but I was deprived of his adventitious attributes' (SL, p. 319). This is contrasted with the heroism of his son, who when faced with the choice between illicit wealth and moral integrity chose 'poverty and innocence...the loss of every friend' over 'wealth...with ignominy, or an equivocal character'(SL, p. 383). In choosing to evaluate his identity in terms of virtue rather than honour, Charles 'gained the character of the bravest soldier in Hungary', renowned for 'his gallantry, his winning qualities and his virtues' (SL, p. 383). He sought not glory or honour, but rather, a new code of masculine heroism where the signs of success are distinct from the public community of masculine tradition.

Godwin's delicate use of the word 'character' emerges again in these examples of masculine roles. As in Caleb Williams, Godwin consistently uses the language of performance and theatre to describe the tradition of masculine experience, particularly the expression of false honour, 'the theatre of glory' (SL, p. 18). The ceremonial meeting between Francis I and Henry VIII fills the young St. Leon's imagination with a vision of masculine excellence: 'I never shut my eyes without viewing in imagination the combats of knights....Francis the First stood before my mind the abstract and model of perfection and greatness' (SL, p. 18). The ideal, however, is subverted by the terms of conscious performance in which it is described: 'These scenes were acted in the midst of a vast amphitheatre of spectators'. Even the lack of performance, when 'all ceremony was laid aside' becomes somehow a performance, 'a delightful and ravishing spectacle' (SL, p. 17). Looking back , St. Leon senses the manipulation such performances achieve, 'what an effect a scene like this was calculated to produce', but not the destructive results of the orchestration (SL, p. 17).

Exposed to such influences, St. Leon consistently speaks of his character as if it is separate from him, externally created and presenting itself independently. He identifies a 'feature of my individual character which has already frequently presented itself to the attention of the reader' (SL, p. 214). The necessity of performance to St. Leon's masculine identity emerges as the source of much of his later confusion. He finds in his 'love of admiration and spontaneous deference' the root of many of his troubles (SL, p. 214). Gradually, seeking admiration, he confuses the meaning of identity, so that

his name becomes synonymous with his virtue. His name and the attendant perceived character, 'the inheritance of our honour', was everything to St. Leon. 'All other possessions I had ever held cheap and worthless in comparison with that of an illustrious name' (SL, p. 155). This is at the root of his discussion with Monluc who demands to know the source of St. Leon's new wealth. Monluc distinguishes carefully between the public character and the private man. Monluc insists that it 'is not the vindication of your character to the world with which we are at present concerned. It is only necessary that you should furnish a sufficient ground to justify me to myself for interfering on your behalf' (SL, p. 183). St. Leon insists on operating within a discourse of honour, asking if Monluc 'does not recognise in me the countenance, the voice, the turn of thought, of a brother....A Frenchman, the descendant of illustrious ancestors' (SL, p. 189). The discourse is, however, open to distortion, and Monluc acknowledges this when he asks about the roles St. Leon appears to be playing. 'Under what appearance shall I consider you in the records of my memory?' (SL, p. 190).

St. Leon's experience of masculinity becomes increasingly one of discomfort and alienation as his obsession with appearance increases. He lives, even in his memory and imagination, as a performer. He is haunted by 'the degraded figure he made [which] will rise for ever fresh to his imagination' (SL, p. 191). But the boundaries between his imagination and the world are blurred. His son asks him 'if I believe you what avails it? The world will not believe. Your character is blasted' (SL, p. 163). Subsequently, St. Leon experiences fully the process of deliberately constructing an identity, followed by the conscious destruction of identity when he takes on the role of benefactor. Initially, '[w]herever I appeared, the people followed me with their gratitude and blessings; ballads were written in my praise; the very children were taught to lisp the virtues of the saviour of Hungary' and 'these things, that I felt within as ...the ambrosia of Heaven....I was like a God' (SL, pp. 304-306). Disappointed not to find in him the man they had wanted to perceive, '[a]ll these persons left no effort untried to defame my character' (SL, p. 308). The reader is uncertain of St. Leon's right to sympathy during his efforts at benevolence. Since St. Leon's character is the subject of several mutations, the reader is acutely aware of the deliberate effort being made to present a persuasive and appealing performance, a constructed character, in the memoirs. Shaped initially by dreams of glory, he then confesses that 'the society of Marguerite had contributed much to the improvement of my character' (SL, p. 51). However, '[h]igh heroic feats, and not the tranquillity of a rural retirement, or the pursuits of a character professedly literary, had been the food of my imagination' (SL, p. 74). This uncertainty

about St. Leon's true character alienates the reader's sympathy, and therefore epistemological doubt affects the reader and replicates St. Leon's isolation in his narrative history.

Godwin turns specifically to the problematic issue of character in his writings in The Enquirer, published in 1797, between Caleb Williams and St. Leon and the revisions to Political Justice. Godwin is adamant that, to a great extent, circumstances determine character: 'That a man brings a certain character into the world with him, is a point that must readily be conceded. The mistake is to suppose that he brings an immutable character'.[47] Thus St. Leon connects his own corruption with the traditions of masculine performance around him as he excuses his youthful vanity: 'a very young man rather takes the tone of his passions from those about him, than forms one that is properly his own' (SL, p. 36). Godwin had written in The Enquirer that society is implicated in the destruction of the potentially admirable characters of its leaders. 'Possessed with an unhallowed spirit of ambition, the purity and fervour of benevolence...are lost. They are launched perhaps upon the ocean of affairs; they mix with the giddy scene of fashion; they are initiated into all the degrading arts, by which extravagance is supported, and sudden fortune is acquired; and they prey upon the unwary and the industrious, unless opportunity and policy should call them to prey upon the vitals of their country'.[48]

St. Leon experiences a similar confusion between virtuous benevolence and self-aggrandisement. He is caught up in a perpetual pageant of replications of his mistaken readings of the nature of masculine heroism. He chooses Hungary as the site of his efforts at benevolence because, 'from the battle of Warna in 1444, to the battle of Mohacz in 1526...this generous nation had unsuccessfully achieved prodigies of valour....My thoughts dwelt with rapturous admiration upon the exploits of the heroic Huniades' (SL, p. 298). St. Leon is determined to 'confer substantial benefit on this unfortunate nation' (SL, p. 300), and undertakes the regeneration of Hungarian agriculture. He becomes 'a phenomenon which could not be too much admired, or too loudly extolled' (SL, p. 304). However, rooted again in the performance of masculine paternalism rather than empathy with the Hungarians, his efforts go badly wrong: 'I had looked for happiness as the result of the benevolence and philanthropy I was exerting; I found only anxiety'. He confuses an inward sense of his own virtue, which he lacks, with the sense of virtuous endeavour, which his patronising condescension in the role of benefactor engenders. Masculine virtue, as St. Leon performs it, is distinct from innate virtue because it depends on the

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47. Godwin, The Enquirer (1797), ed. by Pamela Clemit, Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin, 7 vols (London: Pickering, 1993), v, p. 92.
48. Godwin, Enquirer, p. 149.

perception of its existence for the performer to feel satisfied: 'Let no man build on the expected gratitude of those he spends his strength to serve! Let him be beneficent if he will; but let not depend for his happiness on the conviction of his rectitude and virtue that is to be impressed on the minds of others!' (SL, p. 309).

In the 'Essay of History and Romance' (1797), Godwin admires the leaders and great men of history, supposing them to be 'epitomes of the world', showing 'the development of great genius, or the exhibition of bold and masculine virtues'. However, Godwin is quick to note that the theatrical public performance of these characters is understood, but ought not to be the only facet examined by history: 'I am not contented to observe such a man upon the public stage, I would follow him into his closet. I would see the friend, and the father of a family, as well as the patriot. I would read his works and his letters....I would collate his behaviour in prosperity with his behaviour in adversity....I should rejoice to have...a journal of his ordinary and minute actions'.[49] Later in the essay Godwin again underlines how the presentation of character can distort true understanding. Speaking of 'Alexander, Caesar, Cicero and Queen Elizabeth' he notes 'how widely do the best informed persons differ respecting them' and suggests that perhaps, 'by all their character is misrepresented'.[50] Godwin argues that the 'conjectures of a historian must be built on a knowledge of the characters of his personages', but insists that not only can a historical figure never be properly known, but 'we never know any man's character'.[51] The mutability of character and the demands of performance are among the reasons for this. St. Leon similarly begins 'to picture to myself...the objects I would resolve early to accomplish' (SL, p. 140), but because he is unable to see public character and private life as inextricably bound, he errs quickly in the estimation of the implications of his ambition on his private life. St. Leon thus misreads history as a romance in which he plays the hero, rather than as an interaction of a multitude of private lives, and overlooks the possibilities for heroism in his own romance of domestic life. In attempting to render history and himself in this deliberately contrived fashion, St. Leon illustrates Godwin's differentiation between 'the falsehood and impossibility of history' and the 'reality of romance'.[52]

Godwin's privileging of romance over history argues a scepticism about the presentation of history as 'fact'. It does not suggest that Godwin was unaware of the influence of a historical

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49. Godwin, 'An Essay of History and Romance' (1797), ed. by Pamela Clemit, Political and Philosophical Writings, v, pp. 290-301 (pp. 294-295).
50. Godwin, 'History and Romance', Political and Philosophical Writings, v, p. 300.
51. Godwin, 'History and Romance', Political and Philosophical Writings, v, p. 300.
52. Godwin, 'History and Romance', Political and Philosophical Writings, v, p. 300.

consciousness on modes of masculine heroic conduct. Godwin invigorates the embryonic historical novel by questioning the legacy of history within a political, social and personal context. Where earlier Gothic novels had largely used history to mediate the fragmentation of the heroic--literary expressions of an aesthetic of transition and transcendence Paulson terms 'the aesthetics of mourning'[53]--Godwin integrates the experience of history with the framing of a specifically masculine consciousness. St. Leon's upbringing is dominated by the historical models of masculine heroism that produce his misreading of history. He was meant to be 'a worthy successor of the counts de St. Leon, who had figured with distinguished reputation in the wars of the Holy Land' (SL, pp. 14-15). His mother, because she is 'a woman of a rather masculine understanding', encourages the masculine-ordered images of his visualisations of virtue. She attempts to transpose the image of her dead husband onto her developing son, transforming him from an individual into a type, much as masculine-generated mythologies create images of themselves which become increasingly monstrous and fantastic because they are not rooted in social or domestic existence. St. Leon is not able to translate the sympathy he shares with Marguerite into a discourse of heroism. Burke's rhetorical fusion of emotion and sensibility with a historical experience of masculine virtue demonstrably fails, since it is inaccessible to St. Leon.[54] Instead, representations of masculine virtue operate within an alienating discourse of honour and performance, in an artificial community of men, where women are spectators and excluded, rather than in the socially valid unit of the family. This process is dehumanising because, by emphasising the component parts of a code of honour, the discourse of honour anatomises and objectifies masculinity, but eliminates the man. The 'object to which my attention was principally called was the pursuit of military exercises, and the cultivation of everything that could add to the strength, agility, or grace of my body, and to the adventurousness and enterprise of my mind. My mother loved my honour and my fame more than she loved my person' (SL, p. 15).

Godwin adopts the frame of a trans-historical narrative to demonstrate that society and the male individual are integrally linked in this dehumanising discourse through both historical process and historical interpretation. In the novels of Walpole, Reeve, Radcliffe, and even, though to a lesser extent, in the more integrated historical experience of Lee's The Recess, historical setting is separate from the operations of character, and the novels lack the 'specifically historical, that is, the derivation of the

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53. Ronald Paulson, Breaking and Remaking, pp. 203-245 (pp. 205-206).
54. For a discussion of Burke's vision of chivalric heroism in these terms, see William Dowling, 'Burke and the Age of Chivalry', Yearbook of English Studies, 12 (1982), 109-124 (pp. 122-123).

individuality of characters from the historical peculiarity of their age' that Lukàcs notes.[55] Instead, history is used to evoke a sense of displacement, of anachronistic models of heroic conduct. The historical settings suggest a permeability of present and past and express the loss of, and the desire to reconstruct, models of the heroic. In all Gothic novels history is invaded by contemporary sensibility and vice versa. Experience of the heroic is thus an experience of anachronism, a terrifying mixture of nostalgia and unfamiliarity. However, as a result of his unique historical position as an immortal, St. Leon himself blends past with present and his isolation conveys the hollowness of heroic ideals. St. Leon's experiences of history as a never-ending process remind his contemporary readers of the unbroken lineage and inheritance not only of intolerance, as in his experiences of the Inquisition, but of cultural myths of heroic virtue.

St. Leon's experience of injustice underscores Godwin's adamant belief in the centrality of individual experience to an understanding of history: 'He who would study the history of nations abstracted from individuals whose passions and peculiarities are interesting to our minds, will find it a dry and frigid science. It will supply him with no great ideas....The study of individual man can never fail to be an object of the highest importance. It is only by comparison that we come to know anything of mind or of ourselves'.[56] Therefore, when St. Leon confuses individuals with nations he is already misunderstanding the scope of heroic conduct. 'But what are princes and kings and generations of men to me? I shall become familiar with the rise and fall of empires' (SL, p. 139). He sees history in great scenes (SL, p. 299). Only when confronted by the individual in the form of Bethlem Gabor does St. Leon have the opportunity of exercising the 'comparison' that Godwin suggests is the path to knowledge. It is logical that the encounter with Gabor should reinvigorate St. Leon. In Gabor, he meets a figure against whom he can define himself again, against whom he can exercise the comparison leading to self-knowledge. St. Leon draws inspiration from the struggle to define his own code of conduct against Gabor's: 'He gave me a passion; he gave me an object; he gave me comparative happiness. I was roused to opposition' (SL, p. 342). Gabor and St. Leon have deeply contrasting ideals of manhood. Gabor despises St. Leon for not 'seeking occasions of glorious mischief and vengeance'. He condemns 'the man in whom kindness produces no responsive affection, and injustice no swell, no glow of resentment' and rejects St. Leon because St. Leon's understanding of heroic conduct was not

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55. George Lukàcs, The Historical Novel (1937), trans. by Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (London: Merlin, 1962; repr. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), p. 15.
56. Godwin, 'History and Romance', Political and Philosophical Writings, v, p. 292.

identical to his own: 'I hated you the more, because, having suffered what I had suffered, your feelings and conduct on the occasion have been the reverse of mine' (SL, p. 338). Like St. Leon he needs to vindicate his own character in a heroic context: 'Your character, I thank God! is of all beings the most opposite to that of Bethlem Gabor' (SL, p. 338). It is not, of course, opposite, and the two men are linked through more than a quest to define masculine virtue. Bethlem asks 'Would I consent to see my name joined in pension list with my mortal enemy?' (SL, p. 338) St. Leon had been as passionate about his own honourable name; he was as fired with resentment when the Hungarians did not respond as Gabor; like Gabor, he is lonely as a result of his will to power. Therefore when St. Leon says 'Amidst all my experience of the varieties of human character, this was a species that had never fallen under my observation before' (SL, p. 338), he is saying more about his own self-awareness than about the fantastic features of Gabor. St. Leon escapes from the tyranny of historical cycles encompassing only broad visions of greatness through this encounter. Although he cannot resurrect his own self, or reassemble his broken family he can, through the personal experience of history, come to some definition of his own individual code of masculine conduct. As St. Leon becomes aware through his encounter with Gabor, defining masculine virtue involves acknowledging the value of sympathy and community. Most readily accessible through the family, these qualities define masculine virtue as much as the external performance of honour.

The centrality of domestic affection to Godwin's articulation of masculine heroism informs the delineation of masculine experience in St. Leon. In his preface Godwin writes, 'I apprehend domestic and private affections inseparable from the nature of man...True wisdom will recommend to us individual attachments....since it is the object of virtue to produce happiness, and since the man who lives in the midst of domestic relations will have many opportunities of conferring pleasure' (SL, p. 11). Indeed, a man's domestic affections are the route to social heroic endeavour: In 'harmonising his soul', they might 'be expected, if he is endowed with a liberal and manly spirit, to render [a man] more prompt in the service of strangers and the public' (SL, p. 11). Modified from his moving memoir of Mary Wollstonecraft, published the previous year, these sentiments show a developing certainty, achieved through personal experience, of the edifying aspects of sympathy and aspects of feminised virtue on the experience of masculinity. Taken with his statement that, although he had been 'anxious...to modify' the parts of Political Justice which seemed to run counter to his increasing faith in 'the affections and charities of private life', Godwin saw no change 'respecting the principle of justice,

or any thing else fundamental to the system there delivered' (SL, p. 11), it is possible to argue that Godwin presents an experience of masculinity fortified and not emasculated by the internalisation of feminine virtue. Mark Philp has persuasively demonstrated that Godwin's central thesis--the 'unspeakably beautiful' doctrine of private judgement--remains unchanged through all the revisions to Political Justice, and in fact that Godwin's increased awareness of the validity of sympathy in evaluating truth adds rather than detracts from the argument about the complexity of truth.[57] St. Leon is then arguably a fictional representation of the 1798 edition of Political Justice, which incorporates most fully Godwin's changing attitudes to sympathy and the domestic affections. Both works are therefore part of a process of intellectual development rather than intellectual retraction, which takes into account a changing social, political and intellectual context, but does not change Godwin's fundamental vision of virtue.[58]

Possibly drawing on his own brief time with Wollstonecraft, in St. Leon Godwin emphasises at once the fragility and the overwhelming importance of domestic affections. Several times St. Leon refers to his period of tranquillity as an illusion: 'I dwell upon this image with fond affection....Where are they now? How has all this happiness been maliciously undermined, and irrevocably destroyed? To look back on it, it seems like the idle fabric of a dream' (SL, p. 115). However, St. Leon's illusions get confused. His dreams of glory become nightmares while his previous existence in which he was unhappy because he had not 'surrendered [his] claim to admiration and homage' and 'could not figure...a genuine satisfaction unaccompanied by these accessories' (SL, p. 79) becomes a dream. However, to men raised on images of knightly heroism, masculine experience is portrayed as a tormented journey from one form of captivity to another. Just as he had felt claustrophobic in the tiny cottage and confined by his domestic existence, St. Leon feels trapped and driven to madness by his former images of glory. The eternal exclusion from domestic happiness becomes part of the Gothic experience of masculinity as a nightmare of alienation and isolation due to the inheritance of historical modes of masculine conduct: 'If all that I had recently passed through could but have proved a dream, if I could have awakened and freed myself from the phantoms of this horrible vision....How profound a feeling of contentment with humble circumstances and a narrow station would have been produced in

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57. Philp, Godwin's Political Justice, p. 209, pp. 116-117.
58. Ibid. pp. 202-228 (pp. 209-218).

my mind! Alas, the conception of those advantages and that peace was the illusion, and not the evils I had sustained, and from which I could not escape' (SL, p. 192).

Heavily influenced by his time with Mary Wollstonecraft, and deeply affected by her death, Godwin likely, as Philp suggests, wrote St. Leon in part, 'to recreate the sphere of personal happiness which he had shared with Mary Wollstonecraft'.[59] Certainly, the novel's intense examination of the alienation of a man deprived of domesticity shows the influence of her thought and writings. The dissonance between St. Leon's public character and the private happiness he yearns for are reminiscent of the division Wollstonecraft condemns as a source of social disaffection. She had written in A Vindication of The Rights of Woman of the importance of domestic affections to greater social harmony: 'public affections, as well as public virtues, must ever grow out of the private character'.[60] In Letters written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark (1796), she writes: 'Friendship and domestic happiness are continually praised; yet how little is there of either in the world, because it requires more cultivation of mind to keep awake affection, even in our own hearts, than the common run of people suppose. Besides, few like to be seen as they really are'.[61] St. Leon is obsessed by the fear that his wife will no longer love him when she knows his true character. However, this fear is complicated by St. Leon's uncertainty as to what his true character is, particularly in the face of Marguerite's stark, uncomplicated honesty. Compulsively maintaining his public persona, unwilling to recognise, or be recognised as, a weak-willed and vacillating man dependant on history and lineage rather than self and family for identity, St. Leon finds that Marguerite's virtue invisibly erodes the questionable authority of masculine performance. Ironically, however, it demands superhuman efforts to maintain the illusion of authority: 'The more I loved her for her confidence, the less I could endure myself in her presence. To play the hypocrite for so many hours...was a task too mighty for human powers to execute' (SL, p. 65). St. Leon's gambling first posits the tension between destructive masculine honour and the emerging domestic heroism that a life with his wife Marguerite presents. St. Leon abandons his wife in order to follow his 'insane project of supplying the inadequateness

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59. Philp, Godwin's Political Justice, p. 223; see also Clemit, 'Introduction' to William Godwin, St. Leon, ed. by Pamela Clemit (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. vi-xxiii (pp. xv-xvi); cf. Godwin's Preface to St. Leon, Collected Novels, iv, p. 11; Godwin, Preface to The Enquirer, Political and Philosophical Writings, v, p. 79.

60. Wollstonecraft, Works, v, p. 234.

61. Mary Wollstonecraft, Letters Written During A Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark (1796), ed. by Janet Todd & Marilyn Butler, in The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, 8 vols (London: Pickering, 1989), vi, pp. 238-345 (p. 299).

of...fortune' (SL, p. 59). According to Wollstonecraft, gambling in particular emphasises a peculiarly masculine failure.[62] Wollstonecraft had earlier written of 'the baleful effect of extensive speculations on the moral character'. This is because men operate on a 'system of morality...in general held together by one grand principle, which loses its force the moment they allow themselves to break over with impunity the bounds which secured their self-respect' and then, inevitably, 'a man ceases to love humanity, and then individuals, as he advances in the chase after wealth....all the endearing charities of citizen, husband, father, brother become empty names'.[63] The significance of the 'empty names' is not lost on Godwin, who, in St. Leon, examines the nature of these roles and how their performance shapes masculine consciousness.

Godwin establishes the fact that St. Leon's vision of what a father owes to his children is markedly different from Marguerite's, and indeed, from the children's. St. Leon cries melodramatically, 'I am a father, and will show myself worthy of the name', but Marguerite pleads, 'Think what it is to be indeed a father, and make yourself that!' (SL, p. 100). St. Leon is concerned to succeed as a father by re-establishing his family in France: 'I would return to the court of...Francis, and present to him my boy, the future representative of my family' (SL, p. 140). St. Leon's vision is always that of going backwards, returning to France, re-establishing himself, aiming to 'repurchase the property of my ancestors' (SL, p. 140). Marguerite's vision for her son looks forward, growing organically out of the family unit. 'What is chivalry, what are military powers and glory?....my heart bounds with joy, as I feel my relations to society multiply....Our son...will probably never become a *preux chevalier*, or figure in the rolls of military heroes, but he may become something happier and better' (SL, p. 78). St. Leon is convinced that he is perceived as 'a miserable and distracted father of a family' (SL, p. 86). His sense of failure as both parent and knight makes him unable to look forward. Unlike Marguerite, he is incapable of adapting, and cannot change his conceptions of true heroic conduct, or of the obligations owed by a father to his son. The 'lessons of my education had left too deep an impression' (SL, p. 79). Presented with the image and experience of a truly satisfactory mode of masculine heroism, St. Leon destroys it in an effort to reinvent former role models.

St. Leon's most serious and tragic error is not simply a consistent surrender to temptation and dreams of wealth. It is, rather, the complete misconstruction of the nature of masculine virtue and of

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62. Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, Works, v, p. 214.
63. Wollstonecraft, Short Residence, Works, vi, p. 342.

the potential of domestic heroism. Wollstonecraft calls '[c]onfidence and truth, the charm as well as cement of domestic life'.[64] St. Leon destroys both of these in his quest for glory: 'What distress was mine, who...could impart no confidence, and indulge no sincerity! I felt a misery, of which, till this hour, I had been unable to form a conception' (SL, p. 148). Labouring under delusions inherited through historical models of heroic conduct, St. Leon is swayed by the arguments of the stranger, whom St. Leon denominates a philosopher. In response to St. Leon's assertion that he has no secrets from Marguerite, the philosopher responds in disgust. 'Feeble and effeminate mortal! You are neither a knight nor a Frenchman! ....Was ever gallant action achieved by him who was incapable of separating himself from a woman? Was ever a great discovery prosecuted, or an important benefit conferred upon the human race, by him who was incapable of standing, and thinking, and feeling, alone?....In vain might honour, worth, and immortal renown proffer their favours to him who has made himself the basest of all sublunary things--the puppet of a woman' (SL, pp. 109-110). St. Leon fails to appreciate that *without* a woman, the masculine experience of virtue has no meaning and no power. It was Marguerite who first saves St. Leon from himself (SL, p. 39). It is Marguerite who sways the judgement of Monluc, because, of 'the husband of such a woman...I should always be inclined to think well' (SL, p. 188). Still more significant is St. Leon's recognition of his utter inadequacy as a man, without the succour and security which a wife and family provide: 'I can no longer cheat my fancy. I know that I am alone....Society is a bitter and galling mockery to my heart; it only shows in more glaring colours my desolate condition....If at any time I have had a glimpse of pleasure, it has irritated, only to deceive; it has increased the appetite, while it displayed in stronger colours, my impotence to gratify it' (SL, p. 289). In an adumbration of Frankenstein, St. Leon tries to create the role of father and parent on a grander scale by orchestrating the rebirth of Hungary. He loves the Hungarians like a parent, in spite of 'their fickleness, their injustice, even the atrocious calumnies they admitted and propagated against me could not wean my attachment from these beings, a great portion of whom, but for my interference, would, I believed, long ere this have expired' (SL, p. 310). Nonetheless, his confused ambition to father an entire race unilaterally, and also to recover his public identity in the resulting glory fails on all counts. Like Caleb and Falkland, who also suffer in isolation, unable to interact honestly with other men, St. Leon's conceptions of self, honour and masculinity become increasingly warped. Challenged into self-awareness by Bethlem Gabor, St. Leon emerges from his

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64. Wollstonecraft, Short Residence, Works, vi, p. 325.

final imprisonment, not a happy man, but a free one. He is now free of illusions of glory, released from the false conceptions of masculine heroism. Only then can he can act, anonymously and without a desire for glory and recognition, to advance the marriage of Charles and Pandora (SL, pp. 376-383). This gesture indicates that St. Leon, like Caleb and Falkland, has come upon the answer, even if the answer has come too late. The unnatural isolation produced by strict adherence to outmoded principles of honour is too high a price for individuals and society to pay. Without love and integrity, honour becomes meaningless. Charles, striking out to mould his own code of honour, can say, 'I must henceforth stand by myself....I am young, strong, and enterprising and courageous. The lessons of honour and nobility live in my bosom' (SL, p. 163) because he is the product of the tempered upbringing of his mother as well as of his father's masculine cultural inheritance--the honour of the St. Leon family. He can therefore carve a new system of honourable conduct from the union of domestic happiness he cherished and the glory he seeks.

St. Leon's desire to locate his identity in the role of a 'knight', to seek 'honour, worth, and immortal renown' in the sense only of public performance, and not in the sense of the private man who lives in the affections of his family, constitutes a disastrous misreading of the changing standards of masculine virtue. In doing so, he condemns himself to an anachronistic existence outside time, at home nowhere, and eternally bereft of identity. The philosopher's calumny marks the critical turning point for St. Leon. Presented with the distorted vision of masculine experience without a woman to define and guide him, St. Leon's evaluation of the nature of virtue and the performance of his ideal of masculine heroism depends on his response. Once he gives in, he says of himself, 'I was another creature' (SL, p. 137). He is no longer a father, a husband or even a nobleman. He is that unique and impossible being: a man created by men alone. The result is an unending nightmare.

St. Leon, then, broadens the vision of men trapped in their own consciousness of manhood first introduced in Caleb Williams. The novel makes use of the domestic context of the family to explore the futility of indulging in fantasies of masculine independence. The sweeping historical background reduces the figure of St. Leon at the same time as it emphasises his marvellous existence. More significantly, there is an overt acknowledgement of the process of historical consciousness by which masculine roles are created and handed down through a specifically masculine cultural process. In this respect St. Leon is Godwin's revision of Caleb Williams, bringing the corrosive effects of an over-developed and misplaced sense of the social meaning of manhood forward into a general historical and

social context. He was certainly not the only one to appreciate the novelistic, and specifically Gothic, potential of the vein of masculinist nightmare which he had uncovered in Caleb Williams. Between the publication of these two novels, two other significant Gothic novels were published: Matthew Lewis's The Monk in 1796 and Ann Radcliffe's The Italian in 1797. Both of these novels show a development in Gothic fiction which could not have happened without Caleb Williams. The two novelists are regularly acknowledged to be mutually indebted, but their debt to Godwin has never been recognised. His earlier novel cleared the path for their accounts of masculine torment, and for their narrative methodology of taking the masculine consciousness as the site of conflict. In the next chapter, I intend to show how the Gothic presentation of masculine experience in these novels develops a vision of performance and expectation, constriction and oppression, that owes much to the influence of Godwin.

Chapter Four: The Monk and The Italian: Visions of Power and Impotence

Masculine torment is more dramatically articulated in Matthew Lewis's The Monk, and Ann Radcliffe's The Italian than in the Gothic tradition preceding Caleb Williams. Following the popular and critical success of the masculine Gothic narrative of Caleb Williams, The Monk examines the destructive potential inherent in the attempted appropriation of aspects of feminine virtue by models of masculine integrity. In The Monk, the narrative prominence of social institutions and the role of image and performance so crucial to Caleb Williams are absorbed in the construction, and subsequent destruction, of models of masculine heroic virtue. In The Italian the external power structure is more directly presented than in Lewis's novel, but the narrative explores a parallel struggle to formulate a strong and autonomous masculine heroic ideal which is at once powerful and virtuous. This chapter will examine the techniques used in each novel to delineate first the ideal, then the impossibility of the ideal, and finally the terror that masculine experience is not one of virtuous achievement, but one of struggle and division. In these novels, the male characters do not operate as integrated individuals, but rather they are torn and divided by a consciousness of the shortcomings of their socially-imposed masculine roles. This chapter will show that both Lewis and Radcliffe, in her final Gothic novel, take up Godwin's challenge to explore the corrosive influences of social institutions and social expectations on the experience of masculinity. Radcliffe distances herself from Lewis's engagement with sexual desire, but explores graphically the nature and influence of the tyranny and hypocrisy of social desire.

Matthew Lewis's The Monk: Feminised Virtue as Masculine Vice

The eighteenth-century anxiety over the issue of masculine heroic identity--the composition of male virtue--influences the direction taken by Gothic fiction under Lewis, a direction which is not due entirely to either the aftermath of the revolution, or to the infiltration of more lurid German novels in translation.[1] There is a highly effective rendering of divided masculine consciousness trapped in a veneer of socially-produced and defined virtue which is impracticable, emasculating, and destructive in The Monk. Yet the lack of adequate alternative models of heroic virtue has equally terrifying consequences. Lewis energetically explores this aspect of Gothic fiction, following Godwin's lead into a Gothic rendering of cultural masculinity. This section will consider the presentation of Ambrosio first

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[1]. See Conger, German Influences, pp. 12-110; Parreaux, pp. 26-31; for a discussion on the Englishness of German drama, and its pollution through Jacobin ideas, see Coleridge, Biographia Literaria ed. by James Engell and W. Jackson Bate, 2 vols in The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. by Kathleen Coburn, 16 vols (London: Routledge, 1983), 7:ii, pp. 211-212, 221.

as a virtuous and feminised figure, then as undergoing a gradual process of re-masculinisation, toward a consequent fall from virtue. The subplot of Raymond and Agnes will be briefly examined in the context of Raymond and Lorenzo's failures as figures of chivalric heroism.

Most critics readily acknowledge the admiration Lewis avowedly felt for The Mysteries of Udolpho, which he called 'one of the most interesting Books that ever have been published',[2] and grant that the success of The Monk owed much to novels written by Radcliffe and her school. However, there has not been a sufficient recognition of the wider significance of the shift, apparent in The Monk, away from subjective feminine accounts of the terror of masculine confusion in Radcliffe's novels, to internal conflicts of masculine experience dramatised by Godwin.

Critics have, on the whole, also overlooked tensions in the novel arising from issues of gendered virtue. The division in critics between the 'novels of terror' written by Radcliffe and her followers, and the 'novels of horror' written by Lewis and those who followed him, disregards the progression in English Gothic fiction, through an increased sensitivity to masculine subjectivity, toward a radical transformation in the aesthetic of masculinity.[3] Yet reading The Monk in the context of a tradition of Gothic fiction which explores the anxiety inherent in masculine experience, suggests that the subversive narrative strategies centre around the unease informing the performance of virtue. Again, in approaching Lewis's manipulation of gender signs, critics have largely neglected the novel's intersection with contemporary gender anxiety, concentrating instead on his psychological precocity,[4]

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2. Lewis, letter to his mother, 18 May 1794, cited in Margaret Baron-Wilson, The Life and Correspondence of M. G. Lewis, 2 vols (London: 1839), i, p. 123. Reprinted in Louis F. Peck, A Life of Matthew G. Lewis (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), pp. 208-209 (p. 208).

3. For a discussion of the division between terror and horror see, for example, Lowry Nelson Jr., 'Night Thoughts on the Gothic Novel', Yale Review, 52 (1962), 236-257 (pp. 239-242); Robert D. Hume, 'Gothic vs. Romantic: A Rejoinder', PMLA, 84 (1969), 282-290 (p. 285); Edith Birkhead, The Tale of Terror: A Study of the Gothic Romance (London: Constable, 1921), pp. 66-68; Fiedler, pp. 107-116, 149; Kiely, pp. 98-117. For a discussion of the influence of German Gothic on Lewis see Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'Review of the Monk', in Coleridge, Miscellaneous Criticism, ed. by T. M. Raysor (London: Constable, 1936), p. 370; Syndy M. Conger, Matthew Gregory Lewis, Charles Robert Maturin and the Germans: An Interpretative Study of the Influence of German Literature on Two Gothic Novels (Iowa City: University of Iowa, 1976); Conger, 'Sensibility Restored: Radcliffe's Answer to Lewis's The Monk', in Gothic Fiction: Prohibition/Transgression, ed. by Kenneth Graham (New York: AMS, 1989), pp. 113-149; Kiely, pp. 99-102; Peck, pp. 13-15.

4. See, for example, Frederick S. Frank, 'The Gothic Romance: 1762-1820', in Horror Literature: A Core Collection and Reference Guide, ed. by Marshall Lyon (New York: Bowker, 1981), pp. 3-175 (p. 25); Robert D. Hume, p. 285. For other psychological readings, see Joseph Andriano, Our Ladies of Darkness: Feminine Daemonology in Male Gothic Fiction (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), pp. 31-45 (pp. 33-37); Nina da Vinci Nichols, 'Place and Eros in Radcliffe, Lewis and Brontë', in Female Gothic, ed. by Julian Fleenor (Montreal: Eden Press, 1983), pp. 187-206; Peter Grudin, 'Matilda and the Rhetoric of Deceit', Journal of Narrative Technique, 5 (1975), 136-146; For a discussion which approaches the division of the Gothic protagonist as an issue of surface and depth in Gothic fiction see Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, 'The Character in the Veil: Imagery of the Surface in the Gothic Novel', PMLA, 96 (1981) 255-270.

the unambiguous use of the supernatural,[5] or else reading The Monk as an example of the fragmented literary and aesthetic endeavours produced during the revolutionary period.[6] Critics who read The Monk from a position of gendered criticism generally disregard Lewis's engagement with the eighteenth-century debate over virtue and education in favour of differentiating between male and female Gothic.[7] However, although the centrality of a presentation of a masculine consciousness to any formulation of heroic virtue separates The Monk from Radcliffe's earlier works, Radcliffe's thematic concern with the absence rather than the presence of male heroic virtue finds expression in Lewis. Thus Radcliffe's thematics are expanded and her sensibility is recentred in the masculine consciousness, not attacked or subverted.[8] The Monk thus blends Radcliffe's heroine-centred third-person exploration of masculinity with Godwin's narrative of masculine subjectivity to demonstrate the changing form of Gothic fiction.

Some critics approach this position. Kiely, for example, argues that The Monk presents a theatrical 'world of performers and spectators', where Ambrosio is 'the hero too large for any of the roles'.[9] In another persuasive analysis which touches the issue of gendered complexity in The Monk, Kilgour reads the novel as a rewriting of Radcliffe, in which Lewis's plots 'follow both the male and female entrance into the world, and development from innocence to experience'.[10] Yet The Monk, like The Italian, presents an experience of role-playing and ambivalence which is exclusively masculine, because it originates in and develops with the Gothic vision of a terrifying lack of functional masculine virtue. In addition, The Monk goes beyond a rewriting of Radcliffe, and, in its references to

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5. See for example, Robert F. Geary, 'M. G. Lewis and Later Gothic Fiction: The Numinous Dissipated', in The State of the Fantastic: Studies in the Theory and Practice of Fantastic Literature and Film, ed. by Nicholas Ruddick (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1992), pp. 75-81; Nancy Caplan Mellerski, 'The Exploding Matrix: The Episode of The Bleeding Nun in M. G. Lewis's Monk', in Forms of the Fantastic, ed. by Jan Hokenson and Howard D. Pearce (New York: Greenwood, 1986), pp. 41-47; D. L. MacDonald, 'The Erotic Sublime: The Marvelous in The Monk', English Studies in Canada, 18 (1982), 273-285; Robin Lydenberg, 'Ghostly Rhetoric: Ambivalence in M. G. Lewis's The Monk', Ariel, 10 (1979), 65-79; Todorov, pp. 126-129; Peter Brooks, 'Virtue and Terror: The Monk', English Literary History, 40 (1973), 249-263.

6. See, for example, Marquis de Sade, 'Reflections on the Novel' (1800), in The 120 Days of Sodom and Other Writings, ed. by Austyn Wainhouse and Richard Weaver (New York: 1966; repr. London: Arrow, 1990), p. 109; Paulson, Representations of Revolution, pp. 219-225; see also Wendy Jones, 'Stories of Desire in The Monk', English Literary History, 57 (1990) 129-150. For a study of the publication history through the revolutionary period, but one which again ignores the debate over male virtue, see André Parreaux, The Publication of The Monk: A Literary Event 1796-1798 (Paris: Librairie Marcel Didier, 1960).

7. See for example, Ellis, The Contested Castle, p. xiii; Moers, 'Female Gothic', pp. 90-92.

8. Conger, 'Sensibility Restored', pp. 129-145.

9. Kiely, p. 108. For a discussion which sees the relevance of disguise in The Monk as part of Lewis's homosexual 'appeal for sympathy and emotional openness', see Napier, pp. 112-132 (p. 113).

10. Maggie Kilgour, The Rise of the Gothic Novel (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 142-169 (p. 142).

contemporary issues of socialised and gendered virtue, reveals the impossibility of reconciling male and female experience without redefining the nature of masculine virtue itself.

The Monk certainly shows a Godwinian preoccupation with the fashioning of masculine consciousness and Lewis's first mention of having written his novel appears in the same letter to his mother which recommends Caleb Williams to her attention: 'you ought to read Caleb Williams; It is a new style, and well written'.[11] Not only are certain elements of the plot reminiscent of Godwin's novel--like Godwin's Falkland, the monk Ambrosio is precipitated into committing a murder by a sudden desperate impulse to save his reputation--but the 'new style' to which Lewis refers is emulated. The progressive deterioration of a particular model of masculine experience is chronicled through the subjectively-presented account of the divided man himself. Although Ambrosio's narrative is not first-person, Lewis, as narrator, slides in and out of the monk's tormented consciousness, and this effects a destabilisation of narrative certainty. Like Falkland, Ambrosio appears as the product of circumstances, a man created by environment and education. However, Ambrosio's gradual separation of fact from image is more closely examined than Falkland's, both before and after the murder. Unlike Falkland, Ambrosio's experience of masculinity is presented from the outset as rooted in a complex definition of virtue and therefore inherently unbalanced and problematic.

Lewis follows Godwin in making masculine experience a locus of torment and powerlessness, rather than a source of strength and security, but deviates from Godwin by underlining the controversy over the gendered ownership of virtue as the root of much masculine uncertainty. A reading which acknowledges intersections between The Monk and the background of the eighteenth-century debate about gendered education and the possession of virtue, in which Godwin participated but which was dominated, on opposite sides, by Rousseau and Wollstonecraft, reveals the importance of this controversy to the novel.

Lewis presents Ambrosio as a non-gendered ideal: a physically sublime man who has internalised feminine virtue. As a vision of perfected masculinity, Ambrosio is necessarily without sexual desire at the outset of the novel. This construction of masculine perfection, however, causes Ambrosio gradually to doubt himself, his senses and his values, finally driving him to violence and excluding him completely from the world. The values of society imposed on men through the

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11. Matthew Gregory Lewis, letter to his mother, Sept. 23, 1794, in Life and Correspondence, i, p. 134. Reprinted in Peck, p. 213.

institutions and the roles which they are forced to assume govern the performance of masculine roles in The Monk. Whereas Caleb Williams concentrates only on the internalised political and historical forces inherent in the formation of masculine consciousness, The Monk also confronts the role of sexual desire in any formulation of a conception of masculine virtue. The introduction of the problem of sexual desire into the Gothic examination of socially defined masculinity leads the novel into an engagement with contemporary discourses of gendered virtue.

The Monk emphasises the gender distinctions society imposes on virtue and desire, even as, in the androgynous figure of the demon Rosario/Matilda, the boundaries of sex are blurred. The disturbing and destructive force of sexual energy is shown to be the weak link in the chain of qualities by which heroic virtue is recognisable. Lewis takes as his subject a putatively perfect man, untainted by earthly femininity. The monk Ambrosio is seen as, 'a present...from the Virgin' of whom the 'smallest stain is not to be discovered upon his character'.[12] From this point, the novel concerns itself with the destruction of the myth of the perfect man, the man who can survive without femininity. The presentation of Ambrosio situates him between the culturally emerging categories of masculine and feminine. This connects The Monk with attempts at reconciling the heroic with an increasingly feminised aesthetic of male virtue in earlier Gothic fiction. Lewis follows Godwin's method of an intense psychological investigation of the construction and dissolution of coherent masculine models of heroism, and this results in an increasingly threatening and antisocial masculine experience. But Lewis also appears to refer to the continuing debate over gendered education which pervades the writings of Rousseau, Wollstonecraft and others. There is no external evidence to suggest that Lewis engages with these writers directly. However, internal evidence in the novel suggests an awareness of contemporary parameters of the debate about the purposes of education, and the sex of virtue. Rousseau's advocacy of distinct educations for men and women, for example, is recalled in the novel's reiteration of the influence of Ambrosio's education on his adult torment. Ambrosio's ambivalent attitude to gender and his struggle with his sexual identity stem from his monastic upbringing, which Lewis casts in the mould of Rousseau's writings on female education. Ambrosio's responses to that education, and his rebellion are similarly reminiscent of Wollstonecraft's stinging responses in A Vindication of the Rights of

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12. Matthew G. Lewis, The Monk (1795), ed. by Howard Anderson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973; rept., 1987), p. 17. All further references to this edition will be given in brackets in the text.

Woman to Burke's feminisation of men and the state in his Reflections,[13] and to Rousseau's construction of women in Emile.

The initially modest and celibate monk, enclosed physically by the walls of the monastery and spiritually by his vows is an embodiment of culturally feminised virtue. Ambrosio's education and outlook are frequently associated with the educational formation of a code of feminised virtue, as Lewis recalls much of the diction and imagery of the debate over gendered education. For example, when referring to the education of daughters, Rousseau writes of the advisability of constraint, while warning of the dangers of excessive restraint. Girls, and women, are by the very fact of being female, restricted by the demands of social performance and propriety: 'Girls ought to be vigilant and industrious....They ought to be constrained very early. This misfortune...is inseparable from their sex...and they are never delivered from it without suffering far more cruel misfortunes. All their lives they will be enslaved to the most continual and most severe of constraints--the proprieties. They must first be exercised in constraint, so that it never costs them anything to tame all their caprices....teach them above all to conquer themselves. Amidst our senseless arrangements a decent woman's life is a perpetual combat against herself'.[14] Ambrosio's education is presented in very similar terms, and this places him within a paradigm of unmistakably feminine experience which distorts his natural masculinity. It 'was by no means his nature to be timid: But his education had impressed his mind with fear so strongly, that apprehension was no become part of his character' (M, p. 236). By nature 'enterprizing, firm, and fearless', he would 'have shown himself possessed of many brilliant and manly qualities' only had 'his Youth been passed in the world' (M, p. 236). Instead, he was persuaded 'that happiness existed not without the walls of a Convent', and the 'noble frankness of his temper was exchanged for servile humility' (M, pp. 236-237). He is torn by 'the different sentiments, with which Education and Nature had inspired him...combating in his bosom' (M, p. 238). Ambrosio's monastic upbringing constructs him as feminine, but his maleness defies those conceptions of virtue.

Ambrosio identifies the merits of a monastic education in terms of simultaneous constraint and permissiveness, which are very similar to Rousseau's: "Tis in this particular that I place the principal

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13. For discussions on Wollstonecraft's anxiety over gender in Burke, see Claudia Johnson, pp.7-12, 23-46. For Wollstonecraft's response to Burke's feminizing of the state, see Virginia Sapiro, A Vindication of Political Virtue: The Political Theory of Mary Wollstonecraft (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 186-222.

14. Jean Jacques Rousseau, Emile; Or, on Education (1762), trans. by Allan Bloom (London: Penguin, 1979, rept. 1991), p. 369.

merit of a Monastic Institution. It secludes Man from the temptations of Vice; It procures that leisure necessary for the proper service of the Supreme; It spares him the mortification of witnessing the crimes of the worldly, and yet permits him to enjoy the blessings of society' (M, p. 54). Significantly, once he has been exposed to the beauty of Matilda, and begins the process of re-masculinisation, Ambrosio no longer praises the life in a monastery, but 'looked with disgust on the monotony of a Convent' (M, p. 86). The idealised community of men transforms itself, through unsubsumable male sexual desire, into a restrictive, unfulfilling, and, in Rousseau's terms, female, institution. Rousseau's advocacy of educating women to be consciously submissive seems to be inverted by Lewis in order to demonstrate that cultural appropriations of virtue are not dependent on sex. He draws a parallel between a belief in superstition and the distorted visions of virtue it produces, and the liberating rationality of differentiated virtue which acknowledges sexuality as a component of, rather than a barrier to, the exercise of virtue. In the lengthy inset tale of Raymond and Agnes, Agnes is released from the constraints of female education by her rational approach to superstition and sexuality, but she is cruelly deprived of the opportunity to exercise her freedom of choice by Raymond's delusion of the Bleeding Nun, possibly inspired by his fear of her uninhibited femininity. Conversely, Ambrosio tortures himself in the monastery for not being able to release his sexual energy because he has surrendered to the superstition surrounding the assumption of non-gendered virtue.

Lewis also appears to recall Wollstonecraft's debate with Rousseau over the unnaturalness of female education in Ambrosio's struggle to reconcile his appropriation of feminised virtue with his natural male self. In her refutation of Rousseau's argument, Wollstonecraft's translation of the last sentence in Rousseau's quotation (cited above) is, 'The life of a modest woman is rendered, by our absurd institutions, to a perpetual conflict with herself'.[15] This makes an explicit connection between formal institutions, the regulation of social conduct and the restrictions imposed on women. Ambrosio's position as an overt product of an institution, in these terms, feminises him and renders him as a figuration of her argument. Ambrosio finds himself in a position similar to that of a young, virtuous woman, a Pamela, a Clarissa or an Emily St. Aubert, who has governed her passion and instinct for the sake of social virtue--a unique situation for a man: "Who but myself has passed the ordeal of Youth, yet sees no single stain on his conscience? Who else has subdued the violence of strong passions and an impetuous temperament, and submitted even from the dawn of life to a voluntary retirement? I seek for

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15. Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, Works, v, p. 236.

such a Man in vain. I see no one but myself with such resolution' (M, p. 40). Similarly, Wollstonecraft argues that the life of a modest woman becomes a perpetual conflict because, 'this very system of education makes it so. Modesty, temperance, and self-denial are the sober offsprings of reason; but when sensibility is nurtured at the expense of the understanding, such weak beings must be restrained by arbitrary means, and be subjected to continual conflicts'.[16] Ambrosio's education, by monks who had exploited him and 'terrified his young mind, by placing before him all the horrors with which Superstition could furnish them' (M, p. 237), places him in a similar situation of internally opposing 'characters'. He endures 'the contest for superiority between his real and acquired character' (M, p. 237), wherein 'Humility's semblance combated with the reality of Pride' (M, p. 39).

Later, Wollstonecraft writes of the 'wearisome confinement' of a woman's education, which prevents 'the pure animal spirits, which make both mind and body shoot out' from developing, and argues that this produces 'that pitiful cunning which disgracefully characterizes the female mind...whilst women remain the slaves of power'.[17] Again, Lewis seems to evoke Wollstonecraft's imagery and diction of confinement. Ambrosio's cunning, which takes the form of arranging to be the confessor to Antonia and Elvira as well as making use of enchantments and spells, is the product of his restrictive existence within the monastery and his consequent lack of exposure to the ways of the world. He 'had never been outside the Abbey-walls' previous to being appointed Superior (M, p. 17), and fears to 'abandon the solitude of [his] retreat' (M, p. 40), lest '[he] may not be tempted from those paths which till now [he has] pursued without wandering' (M, p. 40). This leads to the inevitable crisis over sexuality which is predicted in the Vindication. Ambrosio is the frightening protagonist not just of his own Gothic nightmare, but, read through Wollstonecraft's anxiety over the conflation of gender, the protagonist of a social narrative of degeneracy based not on male lust, but on the failure of men to admit their masculinity, and thereby deforming maleness into depravity. The smoke screen of modesty, borrowed from the feminine vocabulary of delicacy, is employed by Ambrosio to denote his initial affiliation with femininity. But, as Wollstonecraft notes, modesty can quickly become 'a sickly hothouse plant' and the affectation of modesty, 'the fig leaf borrowed from wantonness' gives 'zest to voluptuous enjoyments'.[18] Ambrosio is unable to escape from the artificially confined and regulated space of the convent, a human hothouse substituting for the natural beauties of the outside world, and producing

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16. Ibid. pp. 151-152.
17. Ibid. p. 236.
18. Ibid. p. 196.

exotic and fragile plants unaccustomed to the rigours of natural existence. In this unreal environment his artificially-acquired assumptions about virtue, gender, and sexuality are nurtured, but on contact with the broader world are thrown into turmoil.

Constructions of virtue and gender seem as contrived and remote as the garden itself. At the moment of his encounter with Matilda, Ambrosio, rather than representing the true glorious manhood which his exterior self presents to the world, embodies the potential dangers of effeminate masculinity which preoccupy Wollstonecraft. His feminised education and the emphasis that it places on his sanctity and modesty makes his gender and sexuality so 'equivocal', to use Wollstonecraft's expression, that he exactly dramatises the situation Wollstonecraft most dreads. In her vision the trend towards effeminacy in men debases their sexuality so that 'a wanton stimulus is required to rouse it' and 'so voluptuous, indeed, often grows the lustful prowler that he refines on female softness'.[19]

The first step in a process of social decay is compulsive hypocrisy. Driven by his sexual desire and social vanity, Ambrosio gradually learns the sexual cunning that Wollstonecraft initially associates with the effects of education and powerlessness in women. Although Ambrosio circumvents the boundaries of his existence first in sexual fantasy, he is unable to articulate or act on his sexual desire in the outside world, much like the women Wollstonecraft describes, and like them, Ambrosio has recourse to deliberate cunning. He plots first to 'retain the Esteem of Men, and even the protection of Heaven' by, initially, '[a]dhering strictly to every rule of his order save Chastity' (M, p. 227), much as, according to Wollstonecraft, 'women, of all classes, naturally square their behaviour to gratify the taste by which they obtain pleasure and power'.[20] Ambrosio learns the value of deceptively squaring his male sexual self with his feminine-gendered character.

Wollstonecraft's paradox is that that strong men have been 'emasculated by hereditary effeminacy', by their subjection to feminine virtues of weakness, indulgence, beauty, but are yet, because of 'the constitution of their bodies...seem to be designed by Providence to attain a greater degree of virtue'.[21] Men, according to Wollstonecraft, need to redeem 'bodily strength from being the distinction of heroes' and refute the argument that 'it appears inimical to the character of a gentleman'.[22] Ambrosio's character is at the intersection of Wollstonecraft's argument. Strong, handsome, and

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19. Ibid. p. 208.
20. Ibid. p. 208.
21. Ibid. p. 95.
22. Ibid. p. 107.

virtuous in the strength of his resistance to temptation, he epitomises Wollstonecraft's ideal of manliness. Despite his feminised acculturalisation, Ambrosio is presented as a physical embodiment of the masculine sublime: 'He was a Man of noble port and commanding presence. His stature was lofty, and his features uncommonly handsome....there was a certain severity in his look and manner that inspired universal awe, and few could sustain the glance of his eye at once fiery and penetrating' (M, p. 18). The reader is therefore prepared for a process of re-masculinisation in Ambrosio and his subsequent sexual awakening which loosely follows Wollstonecraft's agenda. She urges men to separate themselves from a tradition of male virtue which does not create men, so that 'a depraved sensual taste may give way to a more manly one--and *melting* feelings to rational satisfactions' and thereby to reassert their masculinity, by repositioning rationality as the measure of both sexes, rather than allowing gender distinctions to flow together in a mixture of debased notions of sentimental virtue.[23]

Ambrosio, however, is not like the socially prominent and active men addressed by Burke's Reflections, but an isolated, and hence feminised, figure. His strength and comeliness invest his masculinity with maleness, in Wollstonecraft's terms, but his feminised upbringing distorts his sense of masculinity, so that it manifests itself as vanity and self-absorption. But more significantly, this feminine vanity perverts his sense of his own sexuality. Like Rousseau's women, he becomes a prisoner of his body, so that his actions are governed by and suffused with sexual desire, rather than his manly sexual desire being governed by rational masculine virtue. Ambrosio is aware of the dangers of his isolation, and defines them in terms of sexual predation, much as the discourse of modest femininity does:[24] 'I must now abandon the solitude of my retreat; The fairest and noblest Dames of Madrid continually present themselves at the Abbey...I must accustom my eyes to Objects of temptation' (M, p. 40), since previously he 'never saw, much less conversed with, the other sex: He was ignorant of the pleasure in Woman's power' (M, p. 238). In describing Ambrosio's artificial standards of virtue and his ready surrender to sexual desire, Lewis appears to draw on Wollstonecraft's condemnation of the confusion of ignorance with innocence as something particularly characteristic of the attitude to women. Wollstonecraft wonders with what logic 'should [women] be kept in ignorance under the

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23. Ibid. p. 46; for a discussion of this aspect of Wollstonecraft's writings in terms of her thoughts on the French Revolution see Gary Kelly, 'Mary Wollstonecraft as *Vir Bonus*', English Studies in Canada, 5 (1979), 275-291.

24. See for example, Todd, Sensibility, pp. 37-38; Ruth Bernard Yeazell, Fictions of Modesty: Women and Courtship in the English Novel (London: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp.40-44.

specious name of innocence?', pointing out that 'Ignorance is a frail base for virtue!'[25] Like Ambrosio, who was presented 'with all the horrors with which Superstition could furnish' him, so that 'his imagination [was] constantly dwelling upon these fearful objects' (M, p. 237), so women, according to Wollstonecraft, are at risk of becoming victims of the ignorance imposed upon them. 'The mind will ever be unstable that has only prejudices to rest on, and the current will run with destructive fury when there are no barriers to break its force'.[26] Ambrosio's increasingly debased actions when the dam of his chastity is broken are a dramatic rendering of this, while also portraying one of Wollstonecraft's 'equivocal beings' who require increasingly debauched forms of sexual excitement to resurrect their now latent masculinity.[27]

Ambrosio's divided nature is presented initially as a form of restrained self-delusion, confusing the meaning of religious humility with its performance--'He was no sooner alone, than He gave free loose to the indulgence of his vanity....Religion cannot boast Ambrosio's equal!' (M, pp. 39-40). This status as icon becomes his source of identity and this reinforces the divisiveness of Ambrosio's internalised feminine gender and his external construction as masculine hero. Objectified by his congregation as sexually desirable, 'few of his Penitents would have rejected his addresses', but simultaneously desexualised by the same congregation who 'thought it an easier task to inspire with passion the marble statue of St. Francis, that the cold and rigid heart of the immaculate Ambrosio' (M, p. 239), Ambrosio is manoeuvred into a position of passive acquiescence in the process of defining and modelling his social virtue and sexual character His status as a visible manifestation of male modesty is described as 'the fabric of reputation which it had cost him thirty years to erect', and tearing the fabric would 'render him the abhorrence of that people of whom He was then an Idol' (M, p. 227). Here, Lewis again subverts Rousseau's feminine paradigm in order to blur the boundaries of sex and gender, and dramatises Wollstonecraft's sharp rebuke about the distinction between virtue which encompasses sexuality, and the acquisition or social conferral of virtue which ignores it.[28] Like Rousseau's women who are objectified through their 'art and beauty' in the cause of pleasing men, Ambrosio is objectified by the women who come to see him. Rousseau suggests that a woman ought always to 'give an attractive turn to her gestures and a flattering accent to her voice, to walk lightly, to

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25. Wollstonecraft, Works, v, p. 132.
26. Ibid, p. 88.
27. See note 23, above, and Wollstonecraft, Works, v, p. 44-48.
28. Wollstonecraft, Works, v, p. 140.

assume gracious attitudes and to choose situations where she looks her best'.[29] Equally, Ambrosio's 'exemplary piety, persuasive eloquence, and pleasing manners secured him universal Esteem', despite his seduction by Matilda, and increasingly rapid descent into violence. Ambrosio is dependent on his status as object of admiration, as an object of physical desire, for his social and masculine identity. He 'continued to be the admiration of Madrid....the Women sang forth his praises loudly, less influenced by his devotion, than by his noble countenance, majestic air, and well-turned graceful figure' (M, p. 239). This is akin to what Wollstonecraft terms the deplorable situation of women, 'confined in cages like the feathered race, [with] nothing to do but to plume themselves, and stalk with mock majesty from perch to perch'. Rooted in men's desire to own and control through the act of observing,[30] the 'passions of men have thus placed women on thrones', to be 'quickly scorn'd when not ador'd'.[31] Ambrosio is at constant risk of the revelation that he has committed the one sin--sexual incontinence--that forever renders a woman unfeminine. His situation is akin to that of the consciously modest woman, who, as Catherine Macaulay wrote in 1790, 'let her only take care that she is not caught in a love intrigue, and she may lie, she may dissemble, she may defame...yet preserve her reputation and her peace'.[32]

Thus, The Monk appears to engage with a range of images from Wollstonecraft and Rousseau to invigorate the Gothic preoccupation with constructions of manhood. Lewis relocates the debate over the possession of virtue to the masculine consciousness, as Wollstonecraft does, and uses her terminology to do so, but rather than suggesting a possible reconciliation of maleness with virtue, he confronts boldly the fate of men who subscribe to feminine delicacy for their own refinement, and represents the consequences of the social sacrifice of sexual and gender difference at the altar of homogeneous, and hence meaningless, transgender virtue: violent destruction.

Ambrosio's gender position, however, grows increasingly problematic. For while he is the object of admiration and desire within the novel, he also fulfils the function of suffering spectacle for the reader, who is aware of his torment. Ambrosio thus paradoxically confirms the chivalric discourse of heroic virtue which his existence as a feminised construction undermines. Through the lens of chivalric sensibility, as Claudia Johnson has pointed out, the male gaze becomes less one of distanced patriarchal approbation, or even sexual desire, and more one of predatory and unsympathetic self-

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29. Rousseau, p. 373.
30. See Robert Miles, The Great Enchantress, pp. 117-121 (p. 117).
31. Wollstonecraft, Works, v, p. 125.
32. Catherine Macaulay, Letters on Education (London: 1790), p. 210; cf. Wollstonecraft, Works, v, pp. 206-207.

serving necessity: '[T]he spectacle of immanent and outrageous female suffering may not be the unthinkable crime which chivalric sentimentality forestalls, but rather the one-thing-needful to solicit male tears and the virtues that supposedly flow with them'.[33] Ambrosio is thus placed again in a feminised paradigm, but this time in the position of the female victim who confirms the [male] reader's superior virtue. Yet Ambrosio's suffering is uniquely masculine. He is destroyed by the lack of heroic paradigms of literary masculine experience which allow for a tormented and extra-social masculine experience. Ambrosio's lust, which has no social context--he lives in a monastery--and no social role--he cannot marry--is unassimilable. No tradition of masculine subjectivity is readily accessible, whereas fictions of feminine modesty govern and guide the expression of female sexuality within the private sphere of imagination: 'The public realm and the 'public mind' exist as defences against the private sphere, in which desire, conceived as irrational and arbitrary is held to rank supreme....The fact that women were denied a public voice within seventeenth- and eighteenth-century liberalism meant that the 'voice' of woman was necessarily that of privatized, irrational desire'.[34] There is no parallel discourse for men who are divorced from the public sphere. The failure of public, masculine, heroic discourse to accommodate male sexual desire is highlighted in Ambrosio's increasing inability to express himself, or to achieve his desire without the feminine assistance of Matilda. In this contest, his discourse is one of 'privatized, irrational', but male, desire which has no traditional expression other than through the 'voice of woman'. Ambrosio can only diminish his powerlessness by manipulating the contemporary feminine discourses available to him.

One of these is modesty. Conduct-books for young women are anxiously concerned with the 'crucial transition period' for a young woman between 'her father's house and her husband's', and that this critical stage is often survived with the assistance of natural feminine modesty.[35] Ambrosio, with apparent natural modesty, 'was immediately sensible of the extreme impropriety should Matilda be permitted to remain' (M, p. 62). However, it was an effort to acquire his veneer of modesty: 'After vanquishing the impetuous ebullitions of Youth; After passing thirty years in mortification and penance, I might safely permit your stay, nor fear your inspiring me with warmer sentiments than pity' (M, p. 63). On gazing at his portrait of the Madonna--'Were I permitted to twine round my fingers

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33. Johnson, Equivocal Beings, p. 15.
34. Jean Bethke Elshtain, Public Man, Private Woman: Women in Social and Political Thought, 2nd edn (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 118-119.
35. Yeazell, pp. 43-45 (p. 44).

those golden ringlets, and press with my lips the treasures of that snowy bosom' (M, p. 41)--Ambrosio, like a modest woman, uses what Dr. John Gregory refers to as 'all the subterfuges of ingenuity to conceal [knowledge]from herself',[36]and convinces himself, 'It is the Painter's skill that I admire, it is the Divinity that I adore!' (M, p. 41). Ambrosio's affiliation with a tradition of female modesty, rooted in his secluded upbringing, is revealed again in his self-deluding response to Matilda. Citing Dr. Gregory's Father's Legacy to His Daughters (1774), Yeazell identifies the slow process of awakening appropriate to a woman of delicacy. 'It is even long before a woman of delicacy dares avow to her own heart that she loves', and chronicles the progress of affection: 'Some agreeable qualities recommend a gentleman to your common good liking and friendship. In the course of his acquaintance, he contracts an attachment to you. When you perceive it, it excites your gratitude; this gratitude rises into a preference; and this preference perhaps at last advances'.[37] Similarly, Ambrosio hides his affection from himself: 'He perceived not, that his vanity was flattered by the praises bestowed upon his eloquence and virtue; that He felt a secret pleasure in reflecting that a young and seemingly lovely Woman had for his sake abandoned the world...Still less did he perceive that his heart throbbed with desire' (M, p. 62). His affection begins with a friendship with Rosario and proceeds through gratitude first for Matilda's admiration--'He could not avoid being flattered by Matilda's declaration'--and then for her actions as 'the preserver of his life' (M, p. 90). But Ambrosio's acquired modesty is not sufficient for one 'in the full vigour of Manhood' (M, p. 90), and his male self eventually dominates the external signs of feminised virtue.

Ambrosio is thus at once unable to succeed as a man without feminine assistance, and trapped in a female role, but tormented by male desire. When that desire focuses on Antonia, the lack of models for masculine virtue is made apparent. The contrast is startling between the initial fantasy where Ambrosio is a public, social man who thinks in chivalric terms--'To acquire the right of obliging her, and hear the artless expressions of her gratitude...' (M, p. 243)-- and the brutal reality of Antonia's rape and death. Ambrosio's inability to operate as both object and subject of desire and admiration underlines the failure of masculine experience to absorb successfully the signs of feminine virtue. Feminine virtue when internalised by men expresses itself as masculine vice.

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36. Dr. John Gregory, A Father's Legacy to His Daughters (London: Strahan & Caddell, 1774), pp. 82-83; cited in Yeazell, p. 41.
37. Gregory, p. 82; cited in Yeazell, p. 41.

Ambrosio completes this cycle when he surrenders to the ultimate indicator of masculine experience--male sexual desire--and thereby renders masculine identity, as filtered through social signs of virtue, irreconcilable with virtuous heroism. This surrender casts the feminine as demonically, and hence uncontrollably, subversive: Ambrosio's struggle to delineate the boundaries of his sexual and gender identities ends by demonising the feminine Matilda. Masculine selfhood, when expressed through male sexual desire, has no idiom of virtue and is therefore seen as destructive and threatening. The family is shattered by expressions of male sexual desire--Ambrosio kills his mother and rapes his sister, while Raymond's passion indirectly causes his fiancée, Agnes, to be imprisoned and tortured, and her brother Lorenzo to lose Antonia. The perpetuation of social institutions is threatened by the cultural production of men whose experience of masculinity is governed by a desire for the feminine virtues of mutual love, and domesticity, embodied in the women they desire. This desire results in the removal of these men from within the acceptable boundaries of a traditional public and patriarchal paradigm--Elvira's husband is disinherited after his marriage, Lorenzo runs the risk of similar social and economic isolation should he marry Antonia, and Raymond succumbs to paralysing illness, unable to sustain any social role when Agnes is alleged to have died. While the desirability of domestic virtue is ostensibly extolled in the novel, it remains peripheral to the central action of the novel which has at its heart an exploration of corrosive passion.[38] However, this contradiction can be resolved if the novel is read as a chronicle of masculine experience torn between the desire and the fear of being absorbed by the feminine code of virtue, and the desire to absorb and thereby destroy the feminine voice in an ultimate expression of masculinity.[39] This struggle diminishes all the male figures in the novel, and they fail as heroic models. For despite their representative or iconic status as Cavaliers, knights, and monks, the powerlessness of Ambrosio, Lorenzo, and Raymond is what is most striking.

Ambrosio's struggle to reconcile sexuality with virtue has manifold resonances other than those readily found in the debate over the gendered possession of virtue through education. Representation of virtue, particularly in revolutionary discourse, is bound up with changing perceptions of self and the body.[40] While Lewis does not engage specifically in the debate about the meaning of masculine virtue

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38. Gary Kelly, English Fiction of the Romantic Period 1790-1830 (London: Longman, 1989), p. 56.
39. For a discussion of this particular aspect of masculine romanticism, see Anne K. Mellor, Romanticism and Gender (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 17-29.
40. Dorinda Outram, The French Revolution and the Body: Sex, Class and Political Culture (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), pp.50-53, 66-89, 126-152; Outram, 'Revolution, Domesticity and Feminism', Historical Journal, 32 (1989), 971-980 (p. 973); Outram, 'Le Langage male de la Vertu', in The Social History of Language, ed. by Peter Burke and Roy Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 120-

taking place in revolutionary France, The Monk offers an intriguing comment on the inevitable conflict between discourses of male sexual power and socially virtuous masculinity. Due to his lack of sexual and gender awareness, Ambrosio is believed not to be a mere man: It 'is reported...that He knows not in what consists the difference of Man and Woman. The common People therefore esteem him to be a Saint' (M, p. 17). When confronted with what cannot be absorbed in the appropriation of feminine virtue--male sexual desire--the construction of masculine virtue falters, and eventually destroys itself, surrendering to demons produced by the collision between feminine and masculine models of virtue, which remain unsubsumable.

Collision with the unsubsumable other is seen in Ambrosio's emergence from the feminine paradigm of educational and social construction which begins with his contact with Rosario/Matilda. The process of discovery is rooted in sexual difference and sexual ambivalence. The very word 'woman' has transformative properties of enchantment. Matilda, in the guise of Rosario, confesses, 'how I tremble to name the word!' and Lewis emphasises the ambivalence with the contrast between the gender of his pronouns and the noun of the speech, 'Father!' continued *He* in faltering accents, 'I am a *Woman*! [my italics]' (M, p. 58). The revelation casts a spell on Ambrosio. As if 'touched by the Rod of some Magician', he 'found himself incapable of pronouncing a syllable, and remained in silence gazing upon Matilda' (M, p. 59). From the point at which he discovers Rosario's disguise, a process of re-masculinisation begins. This invokes a dynamic of masculine experience dependent on the initial stimulus of feminine difference to precipitate an attempt at masculine usurpation of the feminine.[41] Ambrosio is a powerful and threatening figure only when he is at his weakest and most vulnerable--under the influence of a desire to conquer and absorb the female. Ambrosio initially declares, 'I doat upon Antonia, but am not so blinded by lust, as to sacrifice for her enjoyment my existence in this world and the next' (M, p. 268). But after glimpsing Antonia naked through a magic mirror, Ambrosio cries 'I yield' (M, p. 271). This leads him to the final surrender of his own authority. He completes a pact with the devil, but Matilda warns him that he is of too vacillating a nature to control the demons: 'You want strength of mind to force them to obedience' (M, p. 278). The contract with the demons

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135 (pp. 125-126). See also Lynn Hunt, The Family Romance of the French Revolution (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 96-100, for a discussion of the implications of the idea of dissimulation as a particularly feminine wile for the construction of revolutionary ideas of masculine virtue. For the changing gender balances seen in the transition from physically masculine representations of revolution to the more feminine emblem of liberty, see Hunt, Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 99-115.

41. See Mellor, pp. 18-29.

which grants Ambrosio the power he seeks, demonstrates his weakness. Ambrosio's power is shown to be an illusion in the same way that his virtue is, and he is thereby unsexed, possessing neither feminised virtue nor masculinised authority. He hovers on the edge of becoming a demon, taunting the reader to grant him the cultural label of outcast appropriate to a woman who has surrendered to sexual desire. Lewis continues to blur the cultural definitions of gender, as Ambrosio's demonic energy which was so terrifyingly associated with his unbounded male desire, is however, eventually destroyed by his indecision and cowardice.

Instead, it is Matilda's aggressive femininity which emerges as the controlling discourse. Ambrosio transfers responsibility for the contract with the demons to Matilda, just as he transfers responsibility for his sexual transgression on to her. Ambrosio rationalises that 'as He employed *her* [Matilda's] assistance, not that of the Daemons, the charge of Sorcery could not be laid to his charge'(M, p. 273). He makes Matilda's femininity his demon and in demonising her femininity, places that femininity as irrecoverably outside himself, sacrificing any possibility of integrating feminine virtue with his male desire. Similarly, he substitutes sexual desire for spiritual succour when he substitutes the enjoyment of Antonia's physical self for the image of Heaven-rewarded virtue: 'He reflected that Antonia would be the reward of his daring: He inflamed his imagination by enumerating her charms' (M, p. 273). Ambrosio's sexual desire has thus rendered void his construction as a pattern of masculine virtue, and the desire to possess the feminine body, rather than to emulate feminine virtue, now drives Ambrosio's masculine experience. Ambrosio 'looked upon Antonia as already in his power' ((M, p. 279), but he has always been in hers.

Ambrosio's feminine characteristics diminish and he becomes increasingly male as his sexual desire intensifies; his masculinity, the social performance of control and restraint, disintegrates. He becomes aware that potent maleness is in conflict with authoritative masculinity. Matilda has recourse to the doctrine of primitive individualism rather than social responsibility to reassure him. She 'represented, that He had only availed himself of the rights which Nature allows to everyone, those of self-preservation' (M, p. 306). The sophistical removal from the world is accompanied by a physical one. Since Ambrosio's access to Antonia can only be contrived with recourse to the demonic underworld, its consummation must take place literally underground. Ambrosio craves this isolation and alienation, seeing it as manifestation rather than a negation of power: 'Antonia will be in my power!....I shall clasp Antonia in my arms, far from every prying eye, from every tormenting Intruder!'

(M, p. 329). His maleness destroys his sense of his social masculine self, and finally renders him, in his own view, powerless and weak. Gazing at Antonia after raping her, his remorse over his act of male aggression transforms Ambrosio into a feminine nurturer, ironically perverting the initial presentation of a man who perfectly conflates masculine power with feminine virtue. He finds her 'situation seemed so hopeless, so woe-begone as to baffle mortal power to relieve her. What could He do for her?' (M, p. 386) Ambrosio becomes the quintessential man of feeling, the chivalric observer, who has created sufficient feminine suffering to define his masculine virtue: 'He determined to leave the world persuaded of her death, and to retain her a captive in this gloomy prison: There he proposed to visit her every night, to bring her food, to profess his penitence, and mingle his tears with hers'(M, p. 387). This is the paradox of the masculine experience in the novel: Ambrosio is presented as the ideal male figure at the point where he appears to have internalised feminine signs of virtue, which is the same point that destroys his chance of functioning as a male in the outside world.

The point is that Ambrosio's process of re-masculinisation, of rediscovering his male desire and male power, actually diminishes him--he is divided and possessed by the feminine. Matilda and Antonia govern and direct his every thought. His masculine consciousness is captured and directed by the feminine. It is ultimately the quest to absorb rather than sanction a separate femininity that ruins him. Looking back, he blames the woman whom he first betrays in an effort to preserve his public image of unbending virtue for the sequence of events that destroy him: "Agnes!'....'I already feel thy curse!" (M, p. 68). The desire to assert his masculine selfhood leads Ambrosio to a similar transferral of responsibility when he shifts the force of his desire on to Antonia, and tries to initiate in her a reflection of himself and his desire for his own masculine selfhood. This is a masculine will to power which tries 'to establish the idea that desire gives birth to the human (from the male vantage point) world of perception and value in the same way that God gives birth to the universe...as a father who inseminates existence from nothingness'.[42] This 'entails a gender ideology which subtly denies the value of feminine difference'.[43] Ambrosio charges Antonia, 'while you fill every other heart with passion, is it possible that your own remains insensible and cold? It cannot be!....You love, Antonia, and in vain would hide it from me' (M, p. 261). When he believes that she has confessed a love for him, 'Ambrosio no longer possessed himself' (M, p. 262). He tries literally to incorporate her as he 'sucked in her pure delicious

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[42]. See Marlon Ross, The Contours of Masculine Desire: Romanticism and the Rise of Women's Poetry (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 46-49 (p. 47).
[43]. Mellor, p. 29.

breath' (M, p. 262), wanting to absorb the image of mutual desire that he has created, and thus absorb the feminine he has tried to deny.

When Ambrosio justifies his surrender to desire by translating that surrender into aggression, his gendered relationship to the question of virtue shifts once again. Outram has argued that the discourse surrounding sexual and public virtue which grew out of the revolution in France gendered passionate, reactive heroism female and stoic, restrained and rational heroism male.[44] In the post-revolutionary climate to which Lewis was extremely sensitive,[45] such a growing emphasis on female chastity as a public virtue and masculine physical restraint as the model for heroic conduct was absorbed in Britain through the romantic drive toward masculine self-sufficiency and the total elimination of the feminine in the quest for the perfect man. This is the final failed search for the heroic that Frankenstein brings to an end as the central focus of Gothic fiction. Lewis's Ambrosio operates as a figure replete with internal divisions and contradictions who demonstrates conclusively that no model of masculine virtue which excludes the existence of an external, autonomous feminine Other to inspire and satisfy male sexual desire, can support itself. A construction of social masculinity which occludes the feminine becomes uncontrollable and destructive; but one which attempts to subsume the feminine into a masculine vision of self-reflexive desire is equally unworkable.

Ambrosio's virtue is always conveyed as something not unmanly, but rather non-manly, in conflict with the natural performance of masculinity. Matilda challenges Ambrosio: 'Prove to me that you are no more than Man, and I quit you with disgust', avowing that, 'I love you for your virtues...I look upon you as a Saint' (M, p. 63). Ambrosio himself senses a difference in his masculinity when he compares himself with men Matilda has known. He is pleased 'at reflecting that He had unconsciously vanquished an heart which had resisted the attacks of Spain's noblest Cavaliers', a statement which contrasts his innovative performance of masculine virtue with the dominating tradition of male honour. Ambrosio's internalised masculinity, exhibited through manifest signs of feminine virtue, separates him from any existing tradition of masculine heroism. Nonetheless, this alternative model of heroic virtue crumbles under the force of sexual desire, whereas the other does not. When Ambrosio does, in the words of Matilda, prove himself 'no more than Man', and allows his sexual self to possess him, he paradoxically loses control of his performance of masculinity. Raymond and Lorenzo, however,

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44. Outram, The Body and the French Revolution, pp. 78-89, 125-126.
45. See Paulson, Representations of Revolution, pp. 219-222; Parreaux, pp. 81-86, 135-140.

governed and guided by the historical tradition of unfeminised masculinity, are able to maintain their performance, with regard to each other, throughout the novel. With regard to their success as figures of heroic chivalry, their achievement is less certain. Certainly, Agnes suffers for Raymond's possession by the ghost of the Bleeding Nun. Raymond is debilitated by his anxiety so that it is Theodore, and not his master, who finally establishes that Agnes lives. Lorenzo, longing to be a figure of romance and to live happily with Antonia, even in social and national exile, is unable to save her because he is fulfilling his chivalric obligations as the brother of Agnes and the friend of Raymond. The stresses of chivalric performance therefore threaten heroic success. Raymond must depend not on the inheritance of action and courage that the tradition of the Cavalier bequeaths, but rather on the loyalty of a servant for the successful rescue of Agnes. Lorenzo, forced into being loyal brother and friend, at the temporary expense of being a lover, pays with the life of Antonia. Raymond and Lorenzo are as possessed by the roles they have absorbed through the tradition of masculine experience which produced them, as Ambrosio is possessed by the desire to absorb the feminine--first in its signs of virtue, then in its physical form.

However, although Lorenzo and Raymond are variously deprived of the ability to act by the demands of chivalric discourse, and inadvertently destroy their lovers, Ambrosio's actions become increasingly destructive and violent, until he physically eliminates the female side of his life--his mother and sister. Chivalric discourse produces the pleasant linguistic illusion of feminine possession, a possession by an ideal, but Ambrosio's distorted, feminised, masculine experience becomes one of demonic possession. Lewis is, however, careful to emphasise that the artificiality of Ambrosio's virtue is no more unnatural than the historical tradition of honourable masculine performance as seen in the cavaliers. Their stylised exhibition of masculine chivalry is presented at the outset of the novel in the conversation of Lorenzo and Raymond. Their affected forms of address and their labelling of roles and performances reduce the love of Lorenzo for Antonia, and the friendship of the two men, to linguistic clichés, and themselves to caricatures of noble masculinity: 'Admirable! Courage, Don Lorenzo! Now the Man is all in a blaze. God grant, that Antonia may soften that fiery temper, or we shall certainly cut each other's throat before the Month is over! However, to prevent such a tragical Catastrophe for the present, I shall make a retreat and leave you Master of the field. Farewell, my Knight of Mount Aetna!' (M, p. 26).

However, Ambrosio's virtue and restraint emerge as equally artificial manifestations of masculinity. What separates Ambrosio from this tradition of public masculine performance is his feminised, and therefore implicitly internalised, virtue which has no code of active performance, but is rather a code of inaction and restraint. Whereas Raymond and Lorenzo occupy a historical tradition of performance and communicate in a discourse of shared public masculine responses--duels, flattery, chivalry, male friendship--which are consciously contrived to achieve feminine admiration, Ambrosio seeks always to maintain the image of masculinity transmitted through the absorption of feminine virtue that he first projected to Matilda and the outside world. As this objective becomes more obsessively necessary and practically difficult, Ambrosio's mania to possess the physical embodiment of feminine virtue, Antonia, drives him to further excess. He is increasingly possessed by the idea of the feminine and then by a need to possess, expel and destroy it. Antonia's simulated death, and her subsequent rape in the tombs of the convent are ample evidence of this. However, in the demonisation of Matilda the impossibility of such an idea is demonstrated. She is represented for the first time as a woman, beautiful, desirable and demure, but greater than Ambrosio, beyond his possession: 'She wore a female dress, at once elegant and splendid: a profusion of diamonds blazed upon her robes, and her hair was confined by a coronet of Roses....A lively expression of pleasure beamed upon her countenance; But still it was mingled with a wild, imperial majesty, which inspired the Monk with awe' (M, pp. 427-428). Ambrosio possesses neither such courage nor such resolution. He shows that maleness unmediated by feminine virtue is essentially weak, cowardly, and uncertain. It is apparent that Ambrosio's virtue is merely assumed and that the innate feminine virtue and integrity which he sought first to emulate and then to possess eludes him.

Evidently, The Monk contains many resonances of contemporary eighteenth-century reflections on the crisis of gendered virtue. This anxiety about the ramifications of distorted cultural meanings for heoric virtue intesifies in subsequent Gothic novels, including The Italian and Frankenstein, In addition, the focus in The Monk on a tormented masculine consciousness, expressed through a largely subjective narrative owes much to Godwin and Caleb Williams. The influence of this on Gothic fiction continues in Radcliffe's final Gothic novel. In The Italian she shows more affinity with Lewis and Godwin than with the school she is said to have founded. Although Radcliffe's The Italian is widely felt to be a response to Lewis's corruption of her Gothic sensibility,[46] it is also an engagement with the

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[46]. See for example, Conger, 'Sensibility Restored', pp. 129-145.

debate that Godwin had initiated in Caleb Williams, and which Lewis pursued in The Monk: what creates the masculine consciousness, and how that masculine consciousness impinges and draws on the social environment. In The Italian, she reduces Lewis's emphasis on the conflict between social masculinity and male sexual desire. Instead, she explores the irreconcilibility of a desire for power within a context of public masculinity with a desire for private or individual masculine authority.

Ann Radcliffe's The Italian and Masculine Desire: Private Authority as Public Power

Radcliffe's final foray into Gothic fiction is often read as a departure from her previous novels. Certainly, The Italian draws back from the excesses of sensibility and scenic description which characterised some of the subjectivity of The Mysteries of Udolpho.[47] However, as David Punter notes, although The Italian is 'a cogent response to' and a 'de-parodization of The Monk', it is also true that 'alongside the stylistic differences lies a considerable identity of thematic preoccupation'.[48] Radcliffe responds to Lewis's preoccupations with the complexity of constructing social masculine virtue and the destabilising effects of desire on that construction. In The Italian,, however, it is not sexual but social desire which disrupts the coherent performance of masculine virtue. Radcliffe inverts the internalised masculine narrative of Ambrosio so that her male protagonists are not torn by the opposition of public image and private desire, but rather are unable to distinguish between the two. Conflicting desires and emotions are mediated through formally structured and legally recognised realms of authority--the family, the church, the Inquisition. Masculine desire and authority are accustomed to operate within these hierarchical paradigms, but the structures of authority do not provide a community of shared desire. The desires of Vivaldi and Schedoni are transformed against the backdrop of the male community in the prisons of the Inquisition. This extreme example of male power over men serves an emblematic role, providing the male protagonists with a shared context and uniting them in a common desire--to impose their identities on the authority structure that negates them. Thus, Radcliffe's portrayal of the male experience in The Italian is one where masculine private desire, existing outside the acceptable bounds of social authority, can be achieved only by the subversion of those structures from within. When private desire is expressed as authority over the self, even when

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47. Coleridge 'Review of The Italian', Critical Review 23, (June 1798), pp. 166-169 (Repr. in Samual Taylor Coleridge, Shorter Works and Fragments, 2 vols ed by H. J. Jackson and J. R de J. Jackson, in Coleridge, The Collected Works, ed. by Kathleen Coburn, 16 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 16:i, pp. 79-82 (p. 79)). See also The Monthly Review, 22 (March 1797), pp. 282-284 and Mary Wollstonecraft's review of The Italian in The Analytical Review, 25 (May 1797), pp. 516-520.

48. Punter, p. 62.

seemingly trapped within the realms of public power, masculine experience is fulfilling and powerful; when public power determines private desire, there is an abnegation of private authority, and masculine experience is one of impotence.

Radcliffe's vision of masculinity in The Italian is, as it has consistently been, one of fragmented and ineffectual social performance. In this novel though, she links the destructive fragmentation explicitly with social structures and institutions. Public masculinity controls and private masculinity is controlled by those authority structures. Vivaldi is 'the only son' of 'a nobleman of one of the most ancient families of the kingdom of Naples, a favourite possessing an uncommon share of influence at Court, and a man still higher in power than in rank'.[49] This family background of power and influence constrains Vivaldi. His father reminds him that in the masculine world of family and honour, 'you belong to your family, not your family to you; that you are only a guardian of its honour, and not at liberty to dispose of yourself' (TI, p. 30). The family is the first structure of masculine authority which threatens to divide Vivaldi's masculine desire. For, 'though he maintained the independence of a man, he was equally anxious to preserve inviolate the duties of a son. But unfortunately the Marchese and Vivaldi differed in opinion concerning the limits of these duties....[Vivaldi] conceiving them to conclude at a point, wherein the happiness of an individual is so deeply concerned' (TI, p. 31). Vivaldi's conception of desire and duty distinguishes itself from his father's tradition of masculine desire by emphasising the fulfilment of personal happiness outside the structures of honour and authority established by patriarchal delineations of social desire. Yet within this paradigm of public masculine desire, Vivaldi is unable to fulfil his private desire without compromising his public masculinity, his family name and its honour. Of all Radcliffe's novels, The Italian comes closest to analysing the confusion, here gendered masculine, generated by the paradox of controlled autonomy. That is, the search for a model of masculine virtue, as expressed through the masculine consciousness, is rooted in contesting desires to be at once independent of masculine authority, but part of a masculine community.

Social representations of power--the family, Church and State--support a masculine relationship with social authority, but simultaneously isolate and nullify men's private relationships. While they exist in this isolation, men cannot fulfil any desire to independence. While literary heroes depend on women to redeem them from this isolation, the search for a complete model of masculine

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49. Ann Radcliffe, The Italian; Or, The Confessional of the Black Penitents (1797), ed. by Frederick Garber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968; repr. 1989), p. 7. All further citations from this edition will appear in brackets in the text.

virtue and power remains unfinished, and Radcliffe makes this clear in the conclusion to her novel. Vivaldi cannot free himself of his family nor can he remain an individual within it without the mediation of feminine virtue. It is Ellena's mother Olivia, who insists that 'it would be necessary to Vivaldi's success, not only that he, but that his father should be a suitor' for Ellena's hand. (TI, p. 410). Similarly, reabsorbed into his family after his moment of individual triumph in the Inquisition, Vivaldi shrinks in significance and power. He lives in 'fairy-land', where 'Ellena was, in every respect, the queen' (TI, pp. 412-413). Vivaldi, implicitly a product of the patriarchal structures which construct him, fails as a figure of desire. Even Paulo, the servant without family or social standing, can sing joyously of his liberty and good fortune, but Vivaldi, as a result of his reintegration into the structures and desires which he had struggled to escape--the family and the public manifestations of social masculinity--in the last few pages of celebration is virtually silent and distinctly secondary (TI, pp. 412-415).

Despite this relocation of emphasis, Radcliffe does not abandon the deconstruction of romance which her earlier novels had achieved with such success. Duncan believes her romances follow the pattern of 'transition between a series of cultural archetype, metamorphic displacements of one another' culminating in a 'husband new-modelled by romance who is the figure of the heroine's desire'.[50] In fact, her novels consistently undercut this pattern. The Italian clearly demonstrates that there is no successful metamorphosis without violence, and no new model of heroic virtue which can operate within existing paradigms of masculine social authority. The Italian follows Radcliffe's earlier novels by first engaging the reader in a construction of a model of the heroic, and then reinforcing the absence of the heroic in the novel itself. Schedoni achieves nobility and dignity through suffering, but dies, and Vivaldi comes to a brief moment of masculine integration of desire only to disappear from active participation in the novel's conclusion. As in the earlier novels, the heroine formulates the ideal of heroic virtue. Ellena characterises 'man' as her enemy, and can respond only through a negation of his power over her, rather than by imagining a suitably virtuous masculine hero who is outside the realms of public authority: 'How poor the boasted power of man...How would it avail them, that they were accoutred for battle, armed with all the instruments of destruction that human invention ever fashioned? Thus man, the giant who now held her in captivity, would shrink to the diminutiveness of a fairy; and she would experience, that his utmost force was unable to enchain her soul, or compel her to fear him,

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[50]. Duncan, p. 45.

while he was destitute of virtue' (TI, p. 91). The absence of masculine heroic virtue sensed by the heroine and the implicit impossibility of formulating any vision of masculine virtue within established structures of authority govern the novel's plot and thematics.

Nonetheless, in this later novel, Radcliffe shows a sophisticated engagement with the masculine consciousness of the absence of functional patterns of heroic conduct. In Vivaldi, the lover-hero, Radcliffe allows the predicament of the literary hero, caught in the space between private desire and public action, to occupy a more central role than in previous novels. In the monk Schedoni, Radcliffe chooses to portray a man in conflict with himself, rather than allowing her heroine to draw the image of her hero and villain. In Ellena, the object of Vivaldi's affections, Radcliffe shows a heroine more conscious than Emily St. Aubert of the limitations of existing patterns of literary heroism, and more inclined to construct, through the mother-figure of Olivia, alternatives to the romance figured through the paradigm of the hero.[51] Ellena's world is thus set somewhat in opposition to the world of Vivaldi and Schedoni. Their world is also one without heroes, but it is not the world of feminine pastoral which Olivia and Ellena inhabit. Theirs is a community where scenery and individuals blend together to create a soothing whole: the 'sun having sunk into the waves, all colouring was withdrawn, except an empurpling and reposing hue, which overspread the waters and the heavens, and blended in soft confusion every feature of the landscape', and the 'white drapery of the nuns rendered them conspicuous as they moved, but it was impossible to ascertain who were the individuals engaged in this bustle' (TI, p. 369). Their world blurs also the bonds of friendship and duty, the feminine performance of private and public desire, making them one: 'the virtues of Olivia, exerted in a general cause, had thus led her unconsciously to the happiness of saving her daughter' (TI, p. 384). The masculine anti-Utopia of the Inquisition, is, by contrast, a cruel and violent environment, destructive and threatening because masculine private desire is in perpetual conflict with public performance.

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51. For discussions of the relationship of Olivia and Ellena, see Susan G. Greenfield, 'Veiled Desire: Mother-Daughter Love and Sexual Imagery in Ann Radcliffe's The Italian', The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation, 33 (1992), 73-89; for readings of the maternal relationship in Radcliffe's other works, see Kahane, p. 338-339; Milbank, 'Introduction' to Ann Radcliffe, A Sicilian Romance, pp. xviii-xxviii; for other readings which centre on the feminine experience in the novel, see Jane Spencer, The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), pp. 193-201; Coral Ann Howells, 'The Pleasures of the Woman's Text: Ann Radcliffe's Subtle Transgressions in The Mysteries of Udolpho and The Italian', in Gothic Fiction Prohibition/Transgression, pp. 151-162; Conger, 'Sensibility Restored', pp. 113-119; Patricia Yaeger, 'Towards a Female Sublime', in Gender and Theory: Dialogues on Feminist Criticism, ed. by Linda Kaufman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 191-212; Cannon Schmitt, 'Techniques of Terror, Technologies of Nationality: Ann Radcliffe's The Italian', English Literary History, 61 (1994), 853-876.

The masculine consciousness that Radcliffe describes is also associated with a liberating violence. The male community of the Inquisition ironically facilitates the coming to self-awareness of the men, Schedoni, Vivaldi and the Marchese since they communicate here for the first time with each other directly. The social complications of feminine presence are removed, and the men share the bonds of masculine experience. Here is a blurring of the distinctions between the legal and the moral, the exercise of legitimate authority and the autonomy of the individual, masculine conflicts which each man is forced to resolve himself. This argument that the Inquisition reconciles conflicts of masculine desire in the novel, and encourages a coming to self-awareness within a specifically masculine context, differs from the view that in The Italian, heroes and heroines 'are faced with power structures, which though they may depend on societal illusions, are impervious to individual demystification'.[52] The ironic destruction of the influence of the Inquisition over individual desire is wholly achieved through individual demystification of the institution itself. As Vivaldi and Schedoni become more intimately involved with the Inquisition, they come closer to achieving masculine selfhood and the realisation of the masculine desire for the reconciliation of public with private virtue, and the affiliation of social with individual authority. The Inquisition does not become an arena of torture, unlike the outside world. Instead, it is a liberating and ennobling confrontation with and supercession of the dictates of public masculinity. An examination first of Vivaldi's coming to a consciousness of masculine virtue, and then of Schedoni's, will show that there is in The Italian an acceptance of the complex and often contradictory requirements of a new model of heroic virtue, and a willingness to confront the possibility of failure.

By fusing what is nearly contemporary history for Radcliffe, 'the year 1758', with the proceedings of the Inquisition, Radcliffe achieves the effect of disjunction and confused authority that the novel depends on (TI, p. 5). Vivaldi fantasises a role for himself, to 'defend the oppressed and glory in the virtue, which teaches...that it is the first duty of humanity to do so' (TI, p. 30). The Abate mocks him, 'You are a knight of chivalry, who would go about the earth fighting with everybody by way of proving your right to do good; it is unfortunate that you are born somewhat too late' (TI, p. 122). Vivaldi's desire to be a virtuous hero is shown to be based on outmoded and powerless models of heroic conduct. He must reformulate the parameters of his desire and radically reshape the patterns of

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52. Kim Ian Michasiw, 'Ann Radcliffe and the Terrors of Power', Eighteenth-Century Fiction, 6 (1994), 327-346 (p. 337).

authority and power to which he submits: 'Is power then...the infallible test of justice? Is it morality to obey where the command is criminal?', asks Vivaldi (TI, p. 121).

Radcliffe uses an epigraph from Walpole's melodrama The Mysterious Mother to head the first chapter, which introduces Vivaldi: 'What is this secret sin; this untold tale,/That art cannot extract, nor penance cleanse?' (TI, p. 5). The quotation refers to an incestuous relationship at the centre of Walpole's play, but its position in Radcliffe's novel suggests another reason for including it. In this chapter Vivaldi first sees Ellena, and first experiences that 'conflict of passions' which eventually compels him to 'sacrifice what he now considered as a delusive pride of birth' (TI, pp. 13-14). The secret sin and untold tale of Vivaldi are contained in the radical narrative of his own desires, his own formulation of masculine virtue, which will, however briefly, subvert the institutions of family, church and state which produced him. Vivaldi's ambitions originate not in the patriarchal structures of family and honour, the traditional external manifestations of masculine virtue, but in an image of himself as hero. He vows to 'defend the oppressed, and glory in the virtue, which teaches me, that it is the first duty of humanity to do so' (TI, p. 30). Vivaldi's desire lies outside the parameters of existing structures of masculine virtue and desire in the novel. There is no model of heroic virtue which can contain his private desire, and no public role which will allow for the expression of it. He says to Ellena, 'O! that I were an Emperor, that I might shew to all the world how much I love and honour you!' (TI, p. 183). His love for Ellena, and later his unofficial engagement and marriage by which he considers 'himself bound by ties not less sacred than those which the church confers', must still remain secret while he is uncertain of his own formulation of virtuous masculine conduct (TI, p. 39). His desires and actions threaten the public performance of masculine virtue as it is rendered through the institutions which control it.

Like Ambrosio, Vivaldi undergoes a process of masculinisation, losing his sensibility in favour of a hardened and more masculine stoicism. Initially Vivaldi's virtue is manifested through identifiably feminine expressions of the body--trembling and weakness. He is characterised by 'a respectful timidity' (TI, p. 5). Waiting to see Ellena, he is 'trembling with anxiety and sinking with disappointment' (TI, p. 6). He finds himself 'believing he should be unable to support himself in her presence' (TI, p. 24). He is distinguished by an inability to act decisively, 'not daring to form any plan as to his future conduct' (TI, p. 7), 'sometimes half resolved to seek her no more, and then shrinking from a conduct, which seemed to strike him with the force of despair' (TI, p. 12). He is 'perplexed and distracted with apprehension'

(TI, p. 14). Indeed, he assumes the characteristics of sensibility to such an extent, mingling them with the language of courtly love, as he speaks of 'a love so sacred as his' (TI, p. 14), that his friend Bonarmo mocks him for his 'romantic delicacy' (TI, p. 14). Vivaldi's expression of masculine virtue, then, appears at the outset as faintly ridiculous, ineffectual, perceived by his companions as anachronistic and unrealistic.

The process of masculinisation begins with the transferral of Vivaldi's desire from Ellena to his unknown rival. Vivaldi is then transformed by his encounter with arbitrary justice in the convent. This enables him to confront and surmount the challenges of masculine social power through the integrity of individual masculine desire in the chambers of the Inquisition. Warned away from the home of Ellena by a mysterious stranger, Vivaldi believes he has a rival. 'This belief discovered to him at once the extent of his passion', and from this moment his actions become more decisive: 'He resolved, at any event, to declare his love, and sue for the hand of Ellena' (TI, p. 13). When he is met by the stranger again, Vivaldi 'will tempt the worst at once', transformed from diffident weakness into aggressive strength by the intersection of his private masculine desire with the abstraction of public masculine performance. His desire is inflamed by another man sharing it, and his masculinity is confirmed through his ability to act against that man. Ironically, however, his attempts at active performance--'I will lurk in the shade of the ruin, and wait for him, though it be till death' (TI, p. 18)--are fruitless, as the intruder seems 'surely more than human' (TI, p. 19). Only when Vivaldi encounters the limits of individual masculine power, in the walls of the convent, does he modify his sensibility and his illusions of heroic virtue in an attempt to sculpt his own individual model of virtue, distinct from the images of social and public masculinity which distort his ideal of a virtuous masculine self.

Vivaldi enters the convent very much a man of sensibility, driven there by his love for Ellena and his illusions of heroic action. When he leaves, having encountered the sternness of the Abbess and the irresolute Friar, Vivaldi is more aware of the nature and hegemony of power. While fleeing the convent with Ellena, Vivaldi 'supported Ellena with one hand' but 'held his sword in the other' (TI, p. 137). He has learned to evaluate his relationship to the masculine world not entirely in terms of sensibility or 'romantic delicacy', but neither to succumb to the dictates of the performance of public masculine authority. As he leaves the convent, he is, quite literally, balancing both. He is beginning to learn self-restraint and through that, to gain control of his own actions and to discipline his own

performance of virtue: 'However compassionate Vivaldi might be to the sufferings of others, this was not a moment when he could indulge his disposition' (TI, p. 148).

The convent is a transitional encounter for Vivaldi. He passes through its hidden vaults, subverting and literally operating within the realms of an authority outside either moral or state sanction, and therefore almost invisible. As Paulo and Vivaldi approach the convent, Vivaldi asks, 'Do you perceive any walls or spires beyond the trees?' and Paulo replies, 'None Signor....a convent must be near, though we do not see it' (TI, p. 114). Metonymically, a convent speaks of retreat and removal from the world, a sanctuary, but metaphorically, this convent is so removed as to be disconnected from the operations of the public world. The Abbess, 'a stately figure', is masculinised through her robes of autocracy and religious and institutional power: 'dressed in pontifical robes, with the mitre on her head' (TI, p. 117). This presentation of the convent serves not only to emphasise the autocratic nature of its organisation, but also to draw attention to the trappings of power which are unquestionably masculine. The Abbess is clothed with the drapery of authority, but has no moral sanction, as Ellena's declaration 'that I am brought hither to pronounce vows which my heart disclaims' testifies (TI, p. 119). Paulo's comment that 'your Abbesses are as cunning as Inquisitors, and are so fond of governing, that they had rather, like them, send a man to the devil, than send him no where' (TI, p. 192), though humorous, serves a purpose in drawing a legitimate parallel between the amoral proceedings of the convent and the exercise of institutional cruelty in the Inquisition. Vivaldi is implicated, through his social status and his knowledge of the Inquisition, in its continued operation. After all, he 'had been no stranger to the existence of this tribunal, he had long understood the nature of the establishment, and had often received particular accounts of its customs and laws' (TI, p. 198). Paulo, free, through his powerless status as servant, from such a burden of participation in the exercise of power, can see the parallels which elude Vivaldi.[53] Prior to his imprisonment, despite being prepared for disillusionment by the convent, Vivaldi retains some illusions of universal justice within existing institutions of masculine authority.

The Father-Abate at the convent who challenges these convictions is compassionate but weak. He stands as a warning to the Vivaldi who first entered the convent, the trembling and hesitant figure of 'romantic delicacy'. The friar is unable to impose his moral vision on the authority structure which

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53. For a discussion of the role of Paulo, see Janet Todd, 'Posture and Imposture: The Role of the Gothic Manservant in Ann Radcliffe's The Italian', Women and Literature, 2 (1982), 25-38; for a more general discussion of class see Miles, The Great Enchantress, pp. 160-173.

controls him because he has no sense that 'the whole world have a claim on...the active fortitude of those who are placed as you are, between the alternative of confirming a wrong by your consent, or preventing it by your resistance' (TI, p. 121). He has drawn the boundaries of his own authority--'I never interfere in the authority of others' (TI, p. 121)--and the boundaries do not acknowledge any engagement with the outside world. Although he 'listened with patience; acknowledged the hardships of her situation', he was unable to act because Ellena 'does not come within my jurisdiction and I make it a rule never to encroach upon that of another person' (TI, p. 121). Feminised by his sensibility, the friar is a figure of impotent isolation, separated by his own actions from the world and its contaminating as well as redeeming possibilities. Vivaldi becomes aware at this point that the structures of power which dictate the public performance of masculine virtue are often, but not invariably, at odds with the exercise of private masculine virtue. Similarly, he comes to an understanding of the obligation that inheres to men, bred by patriarchy to impose their will, as well as to resist that imposition when it is morally right to do so.

In this way, Vivaldi, in a manner far different from Ambrosio's sexual awakening, loses the outward signs of feminised virtue and is masculinised. Previous to his assertion of selfhood in the convent, Vivaldi is in a constant state of torment. He is 'tortured by the remembrance of Ellena' (TI, p. 13); the taunting of the monk is 'beyond endurance'(TI, p. 15); Vivaldi suffers 'the tortures of suspence, respecting a rival' (TI, p. 23); he refers to his 'mysterious tormentor'; his life passes in a 'state of intolerable anxiety' as he wonders what 'motive could any human being have for thus tormenting me?' (TI, pp. 25, 73, 75); he suffers 'the tortures of suspense' with regard to the fate of Ellena (TI, p. 79) Vivaldi's inability to govern himself and his feelings always gives rise to his sense of being tortured: 'The more he yielded to his feelings, the more violent they became, till, at length, his ungovernable impatience and apprehensions arose almost to frenzy'. (TI, p. 79). After his encounter with the friar at the convent Vivaldi begins to control his feelings and to acquire a certain degree of authority over his own desires. The intensity of the vocabulary of torture and the diction of suffering are reduced accordingly. Only when Vivaldi is again possessed by desire, rather than controlling it, does it recur. Trying to persuade Ellena to marry him in secret, Vivaldi complains that the word 'gratitude' 'tortures me beyond all others'(TI, p. 152). In his masculine understanding of desire, gratitude is a formal, public, emotion, because it is 'so cold, so circumscribed, so dutiful'(TI, p. 152). Ellena underlines the distinction between this and the inclusive and united expression of feminine desire, where 'gratitude'

expresses 'all that is tender and generous in affection; and the sense of duty which...is one of the sweetest and most sacred feelings of the human heart' (TI, p. 152). Vivaldi's sense of being tortured, what Ellena calls his 'self-inflictions'(TI, p. 152), recurs at the moment when his desire for private authority through marriage and love seems to overcome the desire for public recognition through social integration in a masculine world; but his anxiety over the word gratitude betrays the fact that he has not sufficiently integrated his own desire with a degree of authority over his masculine self which permits independence from the established masculine world.

Through his encounters with manifestations of public masculine power, Vivaldi becomes increasingly aware of the necessity to achieve self-determination, and to make himself a model of masculine virtue independent of the images and manifestations around him. This process of coming to a masculine consciousness eventually allows him to unite with Ellena 'in the face of false or misleading social categories of identity'.[54] Nonetheless, Vivaldi is obliged to participate in these categories in order to succeed in designing his model of masculine virtue. He must delineate the parameters of his own sense of heroic conduct within that masculine world to survive. It is not sufficient for him to rely on the redemptive powers of Ellena's virtue, or on "true' affiliation [which] moves one inward, towards a realization of the authentic self'.[55] Instead Vivaldi is stimulated to differentiate his own emerging masculine consciousness from the traditions of patriarchal conduct through the actions and implications of masculine power made visible, the Inquisition. While one critic has argued that Vivaldi's subversion of the Inquisition is minimised, and the threat he poses to established patterns of patriarchy lessened because his imaginative reaction to the Inquisition 'confirms in him the presence of those masculine and public attributes' of active political construction,[56] it is more pertinent to this argument to point out that Vivaldi's assumption of self-control and self-command establishes the connection between his construction of his own self and model of heroic virtue, and the decentring of the masculine construction of the Inquisition as a means of social control and authority. Once Vivaldi redefines the nature of masculine virtue as standing outside the realm of the Inquisition, the Inquisition itself founders, and begins instead to follow Vivaldi's agenda.

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54. Gary Kelly, English Fiction of the Romantic Period, p. 26.
55. Rhonda Batchelor, 'The Rise and Fall of the Eighteenth Century's Authentic Woman's Voice', Eighteenth-Century Fiction, 6 (1994), 347-368 (p. 352).
56. Mona Scheuermann, Social Protest in the Eighteenth-Century English Novel (Columbus Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1985), p. 150.

The vocabulary of torture disappears as the narrative recounts the encounter with the Inquisition. The torments Vivaldi suffers previous to his arrest by the Inquisition are self-inflicted and, paradoxically, a result of his lack of control and power over his actions and desires. Once a prisoner, Vivaldi 'lost every selfish consideration in astonishment and indignation of...the frenzied wickedness of man prepares for man, who...insults his victim with assertions of the justice and necessity of such' (TI, p. 198). He delineates his relationship to public justice and private virtue through a rejection and subversion of the operations of the Inquisition. The authority which he thus gains through his experience of the Inquisition is the authority of individual masculine action and assertion within a masculine context, but not dictated by its conventions: 'His passions, thus restrained, seemed to become virtues, and to display themselves in the energy of his courage and his fortitude' (TI, p. 198). The implied violence and force of the surroundings mirror exactly the force and implied violence of Vivaldi's passions. The Inquisition is the only setting where the implied violence and agony of the exterior setting match those of the interior states of the men in the novel, and is therefore, ironically, the only context in which they achieve a full integration of private virtue with public performance.

The course of the Inquisitorial process is ultimately directed by personal action. The operation of virtuous public masculine authority is thus shown to be intricately interwoven with the expression of private masculine desire. Vivaldi deflects his own examination by giving an account of a personal visit by an unknown monk (TI, pp. 330-333). This results in the suspension of his trial while Schedoni is arrested. Schedoni's trial is then derailed from its intended course by the intervention of Fathers Ansaldo and Nicola (TI, pp. 336-350). Vivaldi's arrest had been initially contrived by Schedoni, who was at pains later 'positively to make further efforts for the liberation of Vivaldi' when he is prevented by his own arrest following 'what had transpired at the last examination of Vivaldi' (TI, p. 334). This interruption and redirection of narrative action is characteristic of Radcliffean fiction, since it questions the very viability of the idea of heroic virtue, and hence 'radically challenges the hegemony of order itself'.[57]

The power of the Inquisition to reconcile the expression of public and private masculine virtue is rendered through the consistently personal interruptions to what ought to be the unstoppable course of impersonal violence. It becomes the setting for the resolution of conflicts and rivalries which are exclusively masculine and born of the conflict between private and public masculine desire. Because its

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57. Spacks, 'Female Orders of Narrative', p. 171.

discourse is one of confession, guilt and innocence, the Inquisition has a language of privacy and intimacy which is gendered masculine by the power, violence and authority which surround it. The conflation of private desire with public action is, therefore, almost inevitable, but because, in Radcliffe's novel, private masculine virtue can subvert public masculine authority, the outcome is unpredictable and ironic. 'Vivaldi thus saw his innocence vindicated by the very man who had thrown him among the perils of the Inquisition' (TI, p. 395). The Inquisition permits the public exorcism of private guilt, and the private acceptance of public duty. Schedoni 'appeared almost to writhe under the agony, which his mind inflicted upon him, and it was only by strong effort, that he sustained his spirit so far as to go through with the interrogations he had judged it necessary to put', and having established the innocence of Ellena, he proceeds to 'an ample confession of the arts he had practised against Vivaldi' (TI, p. 394). Schedoni's efforts to separate private guilt from public existence fail as well; they are brought together under the auspices of the Inquisition. He attempts to conceal his whereabouts from the mercenary Spalatro, 'little foreseeing that the very artifice, which should send this man in search of him to Rome, instead of Naples, would be the means of bringing his crimes before the public' (TI, p. 362). Vivaldi is reconciled with his father, as a result of being re-presented to the Marchese as a victim of ill-applied oppression. Particularly frightening in Radcliffe's novel, though, is not the universal fact of the Inquisition or its manipulation of and by individuals, but rather, the implication that individual men are only truly free to act out a form of integrated public and private desire within the cloistered violence of the unjust system of justice they themselves sustain and perpetuate.

Schedoni's experience of masculinity is in contrast to the gradual coming to self-consciousness of Vivaldi. Schedoni is introduced to the reader through the vocabulary of the masculine sublime. His history is wrapped in obscurity, since there is 'an impenetrable veil over his origin'. Like Milton's Satan he is an awesome and mysterious figure. Aspects of his physical and mental superiority are listed in terms of enigma and secrecy. His 'spirit...seemed lofty'. His 'severe reserve and unconquerable silence, his solitary habits and frequent penances' are grounds for speculation in the monastery. Although his 'figure was striking, but not so from grace...there was something terrible in its air; something almost super-human' (TI, pp. 34-35). Schedoni operates in a world characteristic of the masculine sublime, where expressions of power are directed at other men through the elimination of the feminine. Schedoni's driving ambition is 'to accomplish the revenge he had long meditated against Vivaldi', through the murder of Ellena (TI, p. 166). His logic is amoral. Although Schedoni, like Vivaldi in the

prisons of the Inquisition, links private action with public justice, his is the logic of a man who makes no distinctions between private masculine desire and public masculine power: 'For instance, though the law of justice demands the death of this girl, yet because the law of the land forbears to enforce it, you, my daughter, even you! though possessed of a man's spirit, and his clear perceptions, would think that virtue bade her live, when it was only fear!' (TI, p. 168). Schedoni's private desire is exclusively for public power: 'He had not that true loftiness of soul, which is ambitious of true grandeur. On the contrary, he was satisfied with an ostentatious display of pleasures and of power' (TI, p. 226).

Schedoni, like Vivaldi in the convent, and, earlier, Ambrosio, undergoes a modification of his gendered behaviour. Schedoni defines his masculine ambition against feminine weakness: 'Behold, what is woman!...The slave of her passions, the dupe of her senses! When pride and revenge speak in her breast, she defies obstacles, and laughs at her crimes! Assail but her senses...and lo! all her perceptions change:--she shrinks from the act she had but an instant before believed meritorious, yields to some new emotion, and sinks...O, weak and contemptible being!" (TI, pp. 177-178). Schedoni's self-defined feminine weakness is clearly sublimated in his later masculine re-creation of himself. Previous to his appearance as the monk Schedoni, his confession as Count di Marinella to the murder of his brother apparently opened with the words, 'I have been through life...the slave of my passions' (TI, p. 339). Schedoni's experience of masculine performance is one of rewriting his own history (TI, pp. 361-362), and of recreating himself in another image--one of public austerity (TI, p. 34). However, it is the secret knowledge of himself as biological, private father that determines his performance of courage and integrity in the Inquisition, rather than a sense of family honour or public image.

For Schedoni, the process of developing a consciousness of the relationship between private and public manifestations of masculine virtue are contained in his perception of himself as 'father'. While operating under the denominations 'father', 'good father' and 'holy father' to the Marchesa, he can, as a representative of the Church and therefore of authority and virtue, happily contemplate the murder of Ellena within intellectualised definitions of virtue and justice (TI, pp. 167-171). However, despite the fact that his public masculine identity depends upon it-- 'Do I not feel the necessity of this act?...does not my consequence depend upon the execution of it?' (TI, p. 234)--he refrains from murdering Ellena. Indeed, Schedoni's consequence and, contingently, his person, are radically transformed by the non-execution of the act: 'the stern Schedoni, wept and sighed!' (TI, p. 236). Since

he 'shrinks from the act...but an instant before believed meritorious', thereby absorbing to himself the feminine characteristics he earlier decried, Schedoni is emasculated by the discovery of his fatherhood.

Schedoni's public role as 'holy father' is subsequently subsumed under the private role of father, which Ellena readily accepts as one of protector. 'Did you come to warn me of danger', she asks, easily occluding the evidence of intended violence in her quest for a father.[58] Schedoni is equally ready to create himself a role of protector in his hurry to assume the role of father. Together, they maintain a fiction of family life during a journey which forces Schedoni literally to face up to his past (TI, pp. 259-285). The image of himself as paternal rather than institutional father supports Schedoni through the rigours of the Inquisition. Having confronted the limits of his ambition, much as Vivaldi confronted the limits of his subservience to authority, Schedoni is prepared to establish his own identity, distinct from the public image of masculine austerity he had been at pains to construct, and therefore also separate from the tainted justice of the court of the Inquisition to which it is allied. He is similarly concerned to demonstrate his commitment to his role as Ellena's father, and to integrate the private virtue which impels him to action from that source with the public duty which frames him finally as accuser rather than accused (TI, p 401). He dies nobly, vindicating what he believes to be the name of his daughter (TI, p.392). The Inquisition, while it does not redeem or forgive Schedoni's murder of his brother, or his torment of Vivaldi, allows Schedoni to reclaim his masculine identity. It is possible for both public and private masculine virtue to be reconciled in Schedoni only through the Inquisition. The exclusively masculine community it creates allows for the conflation of public and private masculine experience without immediately threatening the exercise of masculine authority.

The complexity of Schedoni's masculine identity is represented in the ambiguity of his name. Although his true name is a matter of some argument (TI, pp. 347, 360), his titular identity as Confessor remains constant. The dual purpose of this eponym, jointly implying the taker and maker of confessions, suitably encompasses the gendered complexity of Schedoni at the end of the novel. His own definition of his masculinity, constructed against the weakness of feminine susceptibility to passion, fails him, when it is proven that he was in his early life governed by what he has defined as feminine weakness. Softened into emotional fragility and indecision by the discovery of his daughter, he is strengthened by that knowledge in the face of the Inquisition. Destroyed as a figure of public

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58. See Spacks, 'Female Orders of Narrative', pp. 168-169; also Spacks, Desire and Truth, pp. 152-156, 162-166.

masculine virtue, he is ennobled by his suicide and his unwavering belief in himself as Ellena's father, and would seem to have transcended the powers of earthly, masculine authority.[59] The masculine anti-Utopia of the Inquisition is thus a unique environment where each man can create an image of integrated masculine virtue ironically made possible, sustained and supported by the atmosphere of tension, torment, and antithetical displays of power and impotence which surround them. This context of masculine conflict reflects the inner torment and conflict of the men who are imprisoned, literally and metaphorically by their patriarchal legacy.

While it is very much the case that Radcliffe presents the Inquisition as a harsh vision of the only possible masculine community, an anti-Utopia, and suggests that individual masculine heroic identity emerging from violence and torment is a preferable to existing false ideals of social masculine identity, it is also true that the Inquisition is not wholly vindicated as an arena for moral distinction. Radcliffe's debt to the thematics of Godwin is clear in Vivaldi's echo of Caleb Williams, early in his imprisonment, that 'these regions of horror...had condemned alike the tortured and the torturer'. (TI, p. 309). Later, he comments that 'to be a guard over prisoners was nearly as miserable as being a prisoner...I see no difference between them...except that a prisoner watches on one side of the door, and the centinel on the other' (TI, p. 387). The process of torture demeans ideals of justice, confusing ideas of innocence and guilt: an Inquisitor, 'mistaking innocence for obstinacy, persevered in his inflictions, and it frequently happened that he compelled the innocent to become criminal' (TI, p. 200). Moulding heroic virtue from a world which so casually permeates the boundaries between power and powerlessness, and blurs distinctions between power and justice, and confuses virtue with authority, is an alarming origin for a potential new age of literary heroism.

Radcliffe's compelling insight in her last Gothic novel is that heroic virtue implicitly originates in and draws strength from an environment which is exclusively male, is formed by contact with structures of masculine authority, and produces men who are weakened by contact with the feminine. It is also a vision which must end in a nightmare of heroic inversion--the ultimate and destructive conflation of male creator and created masculine virtue. In this way, The Italian looks forward to Mary Shelley's Frankenstein.

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59. See Michasiw, pp. 340-342; also Kenneth Burke, A Rhetoric of Motives (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), pp. 324-325.

Chapter Five: Mary Shelley's Frankenstein: Mythologies of Heroic Desire

Frankenstein; Or the Modern Prometheus has undoubtedly become something of a modern myth.[1] This chapter intends to examine the novel as a literalisation of the cultural mythologising of masculine heroic virtue. Frankenstein takes the primary concern of eighteenth-century Gothic fiction, the deconstruction and the futile attempts at reconstruction, of literary heroism, to its logical conclusion. Each first-person narrative of heroic desire flows into and feeds another, creating a contiguous and contingent pattern, replicating the complex production of cultural mythologies. This novelistic structure stresses male virtue as a masculine-produced ideal, transmitted through gendered literature, historical experience and social organisation. The levels of interdependence in the narratives also literalise Walpole's Gothic theme of visiting the sins of the fathers upon the sons.[2] Furthermore, the three narratives in themselves feature as phases in the mythologising process: Walton's narrative operates as a history of masculine desire, expressing imaginative emptiness and longing for a model of heroic virtue; Frankenstein's narrative presents models produced in the male imagination by that desire, the scientist as hero, the artist as hero, the poet as hero; the Creature's narrative, at the centre of the three, is the figural embodiment of myth, which fills the empty space created by the contrast between heroic desire and reality. The Creature's history offers a possible reconciliation of masculine performance with male virtue. However, the Creature's distorted form is confused with the content of his narrative, and the fatal, and quintessentially Gothic, paradox of mythologised male virtue is thus represented: that its outward form, as men conceive it, is so fundamentally hideous, that its potential is lost in the fear it arouses.

Frankenstein has attracted a wealth of scholarship from a variety of perspectives.[3] Yet few critical readings have connected the mythic structure of the novel with its Gothic content, and no

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1. Chris Baldick, In Frankenstein's Shadow: Myth, Monstrosity and Nineteenth-Century Writing (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), pp. 30-62.
2. Walpole, 'Preface to the First Edition', in Otranto, p. 5.
3. For historical and contextual readings, see, for example, Jane Blumberg, Mary Shelley's Early Novels (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993), pp. 30-56; Anne K. Mellor, Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters (New York: Routledge, 1988), pp. 71-114; Ronald Paulson, Representations of Revolution, pp. 239-247; Mary Poovey, "My Hideous Progeny': Mary Shelley and the Feminization of Romanticism', PMLA, 95 (1980), 332-347 (repr. in Poovey, The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1984), pp. 114-142); psychoanalytic readings include, Fred Botting, Making Monstrous: Frankenstein, Criticism, Theory (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993); Botting, 'Reflections of Excess: Frankenstein, the French Revolution, and Monstrosity', in Reflections of Revolution: Images of Romanticism, ed. by Alison Yarrington and Kelvin Everest (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 26-38; Colleen Hobbs, 'Reading the Symptoms: An Explanation of Repression and Hysteria in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein', Studies in the Novel, 25 (1993), 152-169; Paul Sherwin, 'Frankenstein: Creation as Catastrophe', PMLA 96 (1981), 883-903; Marc A. Rubenstein, 'My Accursed Origin': The Search for the Mother in Frankenstein', Studies in

interpretations explain the Gothic thematics as the logical terminus of the eighteenth-century Gothic tradition. Readings of Frankenstein by some feminist critics have argued that by circumventing the female in the act of reproduction, Frankenstein achieves the ultimate masculinist fantasy.[4] These readings largely fail to recognise the Gothic elements present in the premise that Frankenstein is created by a patriarchal upbringing which failed him, but he is nonetheless consciously attempting to create a specifically male hero from this series of failed paradigms of masculine virtue. Moreover, some critics who suggest that Gothic fiction arises primarily as a response to and representation of the French Revolution seem to imply that Frankenstein has moved beyond the Gothic romance, whereas the novel, though it points the way past the confines of eighteenth-century Gothic fiction, also internalises many of its themes and motifs.[5] In fact, Frankenstein stands as the logical culmination of the structural necessity which informs eighteenth-century Gothic fiction.

Since Gothic fiction illuminates the emptiness of ideals of masculine power and virtue, it cannot strictly be argued that Frankenstein is 'a central metaphor for the gothic genre as it thematises, and ultimately demonises, its own creation'.[6] Despite the historically-specific images suggested by the character of the Creature, the novel's elaboration of the broad cultural-historical process of reproducing anti-social mythologies of masculine virtue suggests wider resonances.[7] I suggest that Frankenstein can be read as a literal representation of processes of creating masculine mythologies, elaborating the Gothic theme of the terrifying absence of heroic virtue by fusing form with content. Any shift of

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Romanticism 15 (Spring, 1976), 165-194; G.D. Hirsch, 'The Monster Was A Lady: On the Psychology of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein', Hartford Studies in Literature, 7 (1975), 116-153; Harold Bloom, 'Frankenstein, or the New Prometheus' Partisan Review, 32 (1965), 611-18 (repr. in The Ringers in the Tower (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1971), pp. 119-125). For collections of critical views, see, for example, Frankenstein: Mary Shelley, ed. by Botting (New York: St. Martin's, 1995); Frankenstein: Creation and Monstrosity, ed. by Stephen Bann (London: Reaktion Books, 1994); Mary Shelley: Critical Perspectives, ed. by Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1985); The Endurance of Frankenstein: Essays on Mary Shelley's Novel, ed. by George Levine and U. C. Knoepflmacher (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

4. See for example, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Between Men: Homosocial Desire in English Literature (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), pp. 83-117 (pp. 91, 116); Mary Jacobus, 'Is There a Woman in this Text?', New Literary History, 14 (1982), 117-141 (repr. in Reading Woman: Essays in Feminist Criticism (New York: Columbia University Press), pp. 83-109); Barbara Frey Waxman, 'Victor Frankenstein's Romantic Fate: The Tragedy of the Promethean Overreacher as Woman', Papers on Language and Literature, 23 (1987), 14-26; Morton Kaplan and Robert Klass, 'Fantasy of Paternity and the Doppelgänger: Mary Shelley's Frankenstein', in The Unspoken Motive: A Guide to Psychoanalytic Criticism (New York: Free Press, 1973), pp. 119-145.

5. See for example, Jeffrey N. Cox, 'Romantic Drama and the French Revolution', in Revolution and English Romanticism: Politics and Rhetoric, ed. by Keith Hanley and Raman Selden (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester, 1990), pp. 241-260; cf. Paulson, Representations of Revolution, pp. 239-247.

6. Kilgour, p. 190.

7. See for example, Franco Morretti, Signs Taken for Wonders (London: Verso, 1983), pp. 83-108; Baldick, In Frankenstein's Shadow, pp. 10-29.

critical focus away from the novel's presentation of the process of creating cultural masculinity denies the central importance of specifically masculine alienation produced by a legacy of heroic mythologies. Mary Shelley's epigraph and dedication suggest the significance of the masculine duality of creator and created in a socio-literary context, as the cultural production and reproduction of destructive heroic masculine identities. By invoking both Milton and Godwin, she offers at once a comment on the myth of creation and on the process of myth-creation based on the existence of male virtue as it appears in Milton's Paradise Lost, and on the potential of masculine virtue twisted by social production and expectation presented in Godwin's Caleb Williams. These two works are voyeuristic narratives of male experience, in which private masculine torment is offered as narrative spectacle. While Gothic fiction generically invites a multitude of reworkings of former patterns of masculine experience, Mary Shelley's vision in Frankenstein extends beyond the bounds of Gothic fiction to suggest the effects of a male culture seeking deliberately to recreate itself. In addition, Frankenstein's engagement with heroic paradigms of scientist, artist and author looks forward to the Romantic idealisation of creativity as a form of virtue. This is expressed as an ongoing conflict between the public expression of creativity, descended from a historical experience of masculinity, which seeks not to integrate but to control and transform the world, seen in Walton and Frankenstein, and the Creature's investigative preoccupation with nature and the world, seeking integration with society's emerging structure of (female-dependent) nuclear families.

This tension connects the interlocking narratives. As already stated, the investigation of masculine experience is realised in Frankenstein through the threefold narrative structure. These intersecting histories uncover manifold overlapping strata which support cultural ideals of masculine heroism. At the core of these narratives is the story of the Creature, a grand manifestation of the heroic imagination, who, however, has no socially assimilable existence. Thus, with the most culturally isolated narrative at the centre of the novel, form and content replicate at once the hollowness of masculine heroic virtue, and also the culpability of masculine desire in manufacturing the history of its own destruction. Moreover, the intense relationship between the three male figures in the novel emphasises the debilitating absence of masculine sympathy and community in the broader social world of family or public life. As Walton's history seeks a new vision of heroism, only to be absorbed by Frankenstein's greater and wilder vision, so Frankenstein's history of an attempt to design a new representation of masculine virtue formulated from elements of existing but dysfunctional and

antisocial models is absorbed into the Creature's history. The Creature's history, an emotional indictment of distorted masculinity, produces, in turn, the deflation of Frankenstein's discursive power, as the reader's scepticism increases. As Frankenstein's narrative loses power, Walton is left alone. His history no longer looks outward toward imaginative masculine experience and his nightmare ends as he turns back to the sister whose feminine silence functions as the alpha and omega of heroic experience.

With Walton's sister framing the tales of heroic endeavour, and Mary Shelley as author, the reader is reminded that, as with Radcliffe's heroine's, the feminine imagination draws the limits of heroic desire. Therefore, the concept of masculine desire for an identifiably male heroic virtue is invalidated, and the experience of power and creation is from the outset delusory. This adds another dimension to the observation that the 'threefold structure enacts a series of heroic quests which invalidate the possibilities of heroism'.[8] In fact, the three overlapping narratives replicate the reproduction of destructive ideals of masculine virtue and the conception of a virtuous man therefore becomes increasingly problematic. This invitation to the reader to break the narratives down into heroic fragments underscores the threefold division of Frankenstein--the novel is built on separation and the alienation of masculine experience, illuminating great cracks in the containing structure of a controlling cultural narrative of heroic desire.

There is a consensus of contemporary nineteenth-century opinion that Frankenstein belongs to the Gothic tradition, and a recognition of the novel's debt to Godwin.[9] For, as in Caleb Williams, the tripartite structure of the novel presents a layered version of narrative history for the reader's evaluation; as in St. Leon, Frankenstein explores the tension inherent in the changing conceptions of masculine virtue, and takes as its subject the impossibility of arbitrarily creating a man, without the defining presence of feminine virtue. In view of this, the absence of discussion about the nature of the heroic in the novel is striking. Only the Gentleman's Magazine refers to '[t]he Hero of the Tale' who '[i]n the pride of Science...presumes to take on the structure of a human being'.[10] The reviews confine themselves largely to questions of genre, morality, and technique, and, unusually, decline to discuss

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8. Clemit, p. 159.
9. For Frankenstein's Gothic lineage, see, for example, Mrs. Piozzi to Madame D'Arblay, October 1820 in R. G. Grylls, Mary Shelley: A Biography (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), pp. 315-316; Monthly Review; Or, Literary Journal, n.s. 85 (April, 1818), p. 439; Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle, no. 88 (April 1818), pp. 334-335; Blackwood's, pp. 619-620. For the affiliation with Godwin, see, for example, Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 2, (March 1818), pp. 613-620; Quarterly Review 18 (January 1818), pp. 379-385; Edinburgh [Scots] Magazine, n.s. 2 (March 1818), pp. 249-253.
10. Gentleman's Magazine, no. 88 (April 1818), pp. 334-335.

either the villain or the hero. There is, then, scope for suggesting that even in the minds of the novel's first readers there was some confusion over the identification of the hero, and the nature of heroic conduct. As each narrative appears to conjure up the next, the reader is caught up in the cycle of myth-making until confronted with the physical production of the Creature, who, in its physical deformity, shows the grotesquely distorted form of the heroic ideal. Each narrative history exposes the social paralysis and individual despair which result from the failure of masculine heroism, employing social, cultural and political constructs to encourage the reader's participation in the formulation of a heroic ideal. Ironically, the act of reading then becomes a projection of heroic ideals through the internalising of literary models of heroic virtue presented in the narratives. The first of these narratives, Walton's, expresses the longing for masculine heroic virtue, and sets up the expectation of heroic success, which the subsequent narratives fail to satisfy.

Walton's Quest

Robert Walton's opening letter home to his sister establishes an opposition of private and public masculine desire. Walton's sister is the focus for his heroic accounts, and he defines his heroic quest against her silent, feminine, domestic existence. Moreover, his final words, which also end the novel, are addressed to his sister, whose feminine existence, although absent, thus circumscribes Walton's heroic quest, and the other narratives which his, in turn, circumscribes. Without her, the heroic histories would have no audience, no shape, and no purpose. Walton's overt intention is thus immediately subverted, as his quest to carve a new model of masculine virtue is shown immediately to depend for validation, redemption and direction on feminine presence.

A letter is a notoriously subjective and unreliable narrative device, and the collection of four letters, followed by the edited journal entries, establish an intense inward-turn of concentric narratives.[11] As Frankenstein assists with the editing of the journals, Walton's private account is transformed into a historical document, and what had been his firsthand, empirically gathered knowledge, becomes secondary, hearsay evidence, testifying to the collusive process of manufacturing male mythologies. Thus, Walton's chosen form of relating his heroic quest generically links the boundaries of public and private existence but at the same time it blurs them. In effecting this blurring, the narrative acts as a literary representation of the transitional state of masculine virtue, which exists

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[11]. For a useful discussion of the unreliability of letters in Frankenstein, see Mary A. Favret, Romantic Correspondence: Women, Politics, and the Fiction of Letters (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 176-196 (p. 194).

neither wholly in the public realm of history, as Walton feels it once did, nor wholly in the private space of letters, more readily associated with feminine intimacy. Walton's opening letter recalls the epistolary revelations of Sir Charles Grandison, an icon of literary masculine virtue, whose struggle to establish himself as a new man of honour through the internalising of feminine virtues also failed. Walton's letters thus introduce an area of established literary ambiguity--the presentation of a private masculine virtue through public masculine desire. The letters also initiate an engagement with Godwinian formulations of a new form of social heroism, involving the interdependence between public and private masculine existence.[12] As such, the letters operate as a bridge between public masculine desire and private virtue, and illuminate the desirability of reconciling the two, while demonstrating, in Walton's physical and emotional isolation, the impossibility of integrating them.

Frankenstein investigates the potential for such social heroism in a culture where men produce radically anti-social mythologies of masculine heroic virtue. The cultural production of these patterns of male identity implicates every reader in their failure. In evaluating the narratives, the reader's role replicates the cultural sanction that is required for heroic desire, heroic failure, and heroic redemption. Thus the novel makes available structures of myth and romance to resolve the narrative uncertainty, but refuses to validate any social constructions of masculine virtue. Although Walton writes to his sister, his letter still gives the effect of masculine-ordered history, perceived and conveyed through a masculine consciousness. However, the ordered teleology which a masculine epistolary narrative encourages the reader to expect ends ironically in total social breakdown, with the image of two men locked in pursuit among the ice floes.

The letters fill a vacuum of heroic reality for Walton, making them a literalisation of his desire and a substitution, through written representation, for an actual heroic legacy. In the second letter this incompleteness of masculine heroic inheritance is underlined by Walton's incomplete identity. He lacks masculine empathy: 'I have one want which I have never yet been able to satisfy....I have no friend'.[13] He is dimly aware of the isolation to which his heroic fantasy condemns him, and its consequences. He is similarly tentatively appreciative of the inadequacy and fragility of language as a means of reducing that isolation and thereby creating a bond between his private existence and a political and social

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12. Godwin, The Enquirer, Political and Philosophical Writings, v, p. 79.
13. Mary Shelley, Frankenstein; Or the Modern Prometheus (1818), ed. by Nora Crook, in The Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley, ed. by Nora Crook with Pamela Clemit, 8 vols (London: Pickering, 1996), i, p. 12. All further quotations from this edition appear in brackets in the text.

existence: 'I shall commit my thoughts to paper...but that is a poor medium for the communication of feeling' (Fr, p. 13). Evidently, Walton can imagine only one means of reconciling his private fantasy with its public performance: the mediation of another man. He dreams of perfect sympathy mediated through a shared vision of heroism: 'a man who could sympathize with me; whose eyes would reply to mine. You may deem me romantic....How would such a friend repair the faults of your poor brother!' (Fr, p. 13). The fusion of his narrative with Frankenstein's reproduces this fantasy in literary form as Walton's identity and narrative voice are almost immediately subsumed by his interest in Frankenstein: 'My thoughts, and every feeling of my soul, have been drunk up by the interest for my guest' (Fr, p. 160). The effect is of narrative welding of two men into one. They become indistinguishable participants in a discourse of masculine identity based on a quest for heroic virtue, thereby ironically negating the possibility of establishing their individual identities through their independent quests for heroic achievement. Their mutual contingency--Walton's letters and the force of his desire seem to conjure the presence of Frankenstein in a manner similar to the evocation of their lovers by Radcliffe's heroines--underscore the fact that heroic virtue, and the desire which effects its presence, are implicitly fantastical and delusional. Walton's history therefore serves to establish that masculine community and intimacy are thus based on illusion and the ideal of heroic virtue on a multiplication of heroic delusions.

To encourage the sceptical acceptance of Frankenstein as part man and part vision, Walton's first letter suggests a questionable subjectivity by opening the novel in a setting reminiscent of Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan':[14]

> It was a miracle of rare device
> A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice (35-36)

This is echoed in Walton's vision of 'icy climes' which are a 'region of beauty and delight. There...the sun is forever visible; its broad disk just skirting the horizon, and diffusing a perpetual splendour' (Fr, p. 9). Coleridge's poem concludes with the vivid image of Xanadu's poet:

> His flashing eyes, his floating hair
> Weave a circle round him thrice
> And close your eyes with holy dread
> For he on honey-dew hath fed
> And drunk the milk of Paradise. (49-54)

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[14]. For evidence that Mary Shelley was reading Coleridge in the years of composing Frankenstein, see Mary Shelley, The Journals of Mary Shelley 1814-1844, ed. by Paula R. Feldman and Diana Scott-Kilvert, 2 vols (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), ii, p. 642.

Similarly, into Walton's vision comes Frankenstein: 'I never saw a more interesting Creature: his eyes have generally an expression of wildness, and even madness; but there are moments when, if any performs an act of kindness towards him...his whole countenance is lighted up, as it were, with a beam of benevolence' (Fr, p. 17). Like Coleridge's Ancient Mariner who fixes the Wedding Guest with his 'glittering eye', Frankenstein compels attention, Frankenstein tells a similar tale of a failed masculine quest. The dangers of private fantasy which are implicit in the invoking of Coleridge are thus underscored with heavy irony. The reader is prepared for an examination of the debilitating effects of private impulses to heroism on public existence, which is gendered masculine, and the impact of public ideals of masculine heroism on emerging conceptions of private masculine virtue. As the scene is set in the language of Coleridge's fantasy, the Gothic potential of the novel becomes clear: Walton is proceeding towards complete mental and physical isolation from the world. He sees himself almost deified, 'with an enthusiasm which elevates me to heaven', at the same time as he dreams of 'the inestimable benefit which I shall confer on all mankind to the last generation' (Fr, p. 10). As proof of his mental isolation, Walton is avowedly unable to reconcile reality with his heroic desire: 'my day dreams become more fervent and vivid' and he cannot 'be persuaded that the pole is the seat of frost and desolation' (Fr, p. 9). This disjunction propels his desire, and feeds the reader's scepticism about his reliability as either a producer or a consumer of a tradition of masculine heroic virtue.

In part this dissociation from what social existence requires of a man and what men require of social existence is blamed on Walton's education. He is isolated from the world, having read 'those poets whose effusions entranced my soul and lifted it to heaven', so that Walton 'also became a poet, and for one year lived in a Paradise of my own creation' (Fr, pp. 11). Adapting masculine poetic history to create a imaginative world gives Walton the philosophical foundations for a transcendental vision of heroic endeavour. Walton's masculine literary heritage allows him the dual role of a created being and a creator: 'I lived in a Paradise of my own creation; I imagined that I also might obtain a niche in the temple where the names of Homer and Shakespeare are consecrated' (Fr, p. 11). Here, Walton's longing foreshadows Frankenstein's action. The aesthetic philosophy which allows Walton to conceive, and Frankenstein to act, descends from a tradition of theorists in the eighteenth century, from Shaftesbury through Reynolds, who, rather than necessarily creating 'new' art, were prepared to conceive of perfection and artistic integrity through the study of classical tradition. Thus Walton's narrative prepares the reader for a cultural context of hierarchically received ideals, and situates the

ideal of heroic virtue in a particular class, in a particular ideological context, and forcefully genders the production of the myth of heroic virtue male. Nonetheless, received ideals of masculine heroic endeavour, enacted as private fantasy, are presented as emphatically detached from the social requirements of the public masculine world.

Walton's narrative initiates an examination of the destabilising effects of isolated education which runs through all three narratives. Walton's reiteration of his solitary education recalls Godwin's warning in The Enquirer that '[m]any of the self-educated study themselves into a sort of insanity. They are not only wild and incoherent in their language: often they adopt opinions the most unequivocally visionary, and talk a language, not merely unintelligible to others, but which is put together in so fantastic and mystical a way, that it is impossible that it should be the representative of wisdom in themselves'.[15] In these terms, Walton's first letter anticipates Frankenstein's distorted vision of social responsibility as well as preparing the reader for Walton's biased reading of Frankenstein's encircling, 'unequivocally visionary', narrative. The language of fantasy and alienation set the tone of the novel's portrayal of the drive to masculine heroism.

Walton further contributes to the sense of destabilised identity as he experiments with the invention of a self by using a different signature to conclude each letter. He signs himself R. Walton, Robert Walton, R.W., emphasising his own uncertainty as to the reconciliation between his private self, in the letters home, and his public self, reflected in their content. His concern about the presentation of his identity again suggests an inherent instability in masculine heroic desire. With narrative authority in the novel undermined by Walton's fractured identity and self-delusory letters, the impulse of the novel is then firmly located in the search for an integrated masculine identity. This is shown to be impossible when formulated through the quest for a male hero. When he meets Frankenstein, Walton emphasises their bond and its uniqueness, using the verb 'to possess' and the language of sensibility to underscore their spiritual unity: 'I have found a man who...I should have been happy to possess as the brother of my heart'. To Walton, Frankenstein is a 'glorious spirit' by whom he is possessed and whose voice speaks through him to the world (Fr., p. 186). There is integration of a sort here, but Walton's identity is so completely integrated with Frankenstein's that it is lost, and Frankenstein's heroic virtue so forceful that it defies social assimilation.

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15. Godwin, The Enquirer, Political and Philosophical Writings, v, p. 232.

Walton's history, much like the cultural history of masculine heroism, is a chronicle of private fantasy willed on to the outside world. In contrast to his attempt to immortalise Frankenstein's heroism in his chronicle, Mary Shelley employs images of voyages, journeys and bleak barren landscapes to evoke the impermanence of masculine endeavour. She manipulates recurring images as figurative representations of artificially reanimated heroic models. For example, Frankenstein is resuscitated in Walton's presence in a manner that is echoed later in Frankenstein's own story of his monstrous creation (Fr, p. 17). Then, as Frankenstein struggles, near death across the tundra, the Creature sustains him with refreshing food and warmth (Fr, p. 174). This reinforces the extent to which the male heroic figure is a masculine creation perpetuated by men and designed to reproduce culturally destructive heroic ideals: Walton's journal records Frankenstein's gratitude to Walton who 'benevolently restored me to life' after Frankenstein is rescued and 'restored...to animation' by the sailors (Fr, p. 17). In Frankenstein's words, Walton takes on the role of animator and restorer of the dead. Frankenstein then gives new life and energy to Walton's narrative of heroic endeavour by absorbing it into his own. In this world of masculine reproduction, the animation of another man always gives rise to a greater and more horrifying will to heroism.

Walton's voice intrudes on the reader directly again only at the time of Frankenstein's death. The paradox of being simultaneously isolated stories and components of a narrative of shared masculine participation in the creation of heroic identity, looks back to the narratives of masculine experience in earlier Gothic fiction, where isolation and integration are problematic concepts related to literary precedents of masculine heroism. Walton explicitly reminds the reader of this Gothic heritage when he resumes his narration: 'You have read this strange and terrific story...do you not feel your blood congealed with horror, like that which even now curdles mine?' (Fr, p. 159). He describes Frankenstein's narrative as broken and fragmentary, akin to Gothic: 'Sometimes, seized with sudden agony, he could not continue his tale; at others, his voice broken, yet piercing, uttered with difficulty the words so replete with agony'(Fr, p. 159). As he recasts Frankenstein's story into a specifically Gothic mould, Walton reminds the reader of its implausibility: 'I own to you that the letters of Felix and Safie, which he shewed me, and the apparition of the monster, seen from our ship, brought me a greater conviction of the truth of his narrative than his asseverations, however earnest' (Fr, p. 160). This insight reminds the reader of the link to fantasy and self-delusion which animates all narratives of heroic desire. However, Walton's credence reinforces not the truth of Frankenstein's account but the

strength of the mutual fantasy, as the reader is left to evaluate what even Walton himself could not initially believe.

Significantly, only once the narrative is removed from the oppressive and distorting intensity of shared masculine longing, as Frankenstein dies, does Walton feel the need for supplementary evidence. Free of Frankenstein's controlling presence, the force of heroic desire is reduced and its integrity shaken. Walton's moment of doubt allows him the chance of social reintegration. His commitment to the cause of unmediated masculine virtue is diminished, and after Frankenstein's death his certainty in the power of masculinity to replicate and constantly improve the masculine experience diminishes rapidly. It is as if Frankenstein's death contrives the death of Walton's desire, and, conversely, once the impelling discourse of masculine heroic identity produced from cultural models perishes, its figurative embodiment, Frankenstein, inevitably also dies. The epistemological experience thus parallels the experience of heroism: it is self-produced and self-negating. Denied his quest by a sailors' mutiny, Walton is defeated by a masculine community who do not share his vision, and the contrast between social utility and heroic desire bewilders him. The existence of masculine community in social classes who have, in Walton's understanding, no right to community and authority, symbolically defeats the old order of aristocratic prerogative whose privilege it was to lead, and whose responsibility it was to define virtue. His quest is a failure, not because his endeavour has not succeeded, but because even after hearing the narratives of Frankenstein and the Creature, 'I come back ignorant and disappointed' (Fr, p. 164). His hermeneutical ability is insufficient to extract a new understanding of the potential of masculine virtue from what he has heard: 'Thus are my hopes blasted....It requires more philosophy than I possess, to bear this injustice with patience' (Fr, p. 164).

Later, however, he modifies his tone, moving through the loss of his ideal, ironically expressed in the Godwinian terms it negates--'I have lost my hopes of utility and glory'--to a Burkean return to family and nation: 'I journey toward England, and I may there find consolation' (Fr, p. 164). The return home acknowledges the impotence of solitary masculinity. The community of sailors who do not subscribe to the former models of heroic virtue are the new hope, the link to feminine virtue. Ironically, in returning home, Walton redirects his inward spiral of heroic disappointment outward, to the public, political and social world, from which his search for masculine identity first propelled him. The notional reconciliation with his sister's world of domesticity therefore suggests the future of masculine heroism.

The sailors defeat the destructive potential inherent in the assertion of invalid forms of masculine heroic virtue through the opposite of heroic action: resistance and inaction. Thus the suspense and drama of the novel collapse into an ironic stasis. The sailors negate a masculine community built on heroic endeavour through collective action--the united resistance of men determined to preserve their aggregate identity, rather than the nihilistic will to supremacy that paradoxically binds Frankenstein and Walton. The refusal of the sailors to succumb to Frankenstein's delusional rhetoric of heroic virtue demonstrates the class restrictions placed on access to visions of masculine heroic virtue. This strengthens the suggestion in the novel that outmoded models of masculine virtue are not only personally but socially destructive, symptomatic not only of personal delusion, but of social madness. For the sailors, feminised modes of resistance--refusal and intransigence--idealised through Clarissa and her literary progeny, form their assertion of independence. The horror of the novel therefore recedes with Walton's surrender of his search for an heroic identity and his affiliation with feminine virtue. At this point of crisis Frankenstein employs the full rhetoric of persuasion, invoking discourses of sentiment, reason and philosophy. Walton implicitly reinforces the encircling vulnerability of men to seduction by ideals of heroic virtue when he acknowledges that Frankenstein's 'eloquence is forcible and touching' immediately after Frankenstein's warning to him that the monster is 'eloquent and persuasive' (Fr, pp. 160, 159). Frankenstein encourages the sailors to continue their expedition in an echo of Dante's Ulysses, who is found in the circle of deceivers in Inferno (Fr, p. 163), implying the emptiness and fraudulence of the ideals he is trying to revive.[16] The sailors' rejection of Frankenstein's ideals shows the search for heroic identity to be an invention of privilege, out of place in the world of genuine masculine community. The resolution of the sailors and Walton dramatises a version of Godwinian political justice where society's preservation depends on the removal of self-interest, in the form of traditionally received models of masculine heroic desire.[17] Significantly, Walton here addresses his sister directly, thereby once again including the feminine in his heroic fantasy. This points to a masculine experience which can include the feminine without being subsumed by it, unlike his relationship with the masculinity of Frankenstein.

Frankenstein's History

Like the Genevan magistrate who "heard [Frankenstein's] story with that half kind of belief that is given

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16. Dante, Inferno, XXVI, 118ff. See James Rieger, The Mutiny Within: The Heresies of Percy Bysshe Shelley (New York: Braziller, 1967), p. 88. See also Clemit, pp. 163-164.
17. Philp, p. 52.

to a tale of spirits and supernatural events; but when he was called upon to act officially in consequence the whole tide of his incredulity returned' (Fr, p. 153), the reader is invited to accept or reject Frankenstein's history and the models of heroic virtue it contains. Implicit in Frankenstein's tale of the failure of masculine desire is the injunction to the reader either to abandon existing models of heroic virtue, or to fashion new ones to replace the existing ones which fail him. Within Frankenstein's narrative three distinct models of heroic virtue emerge: the scientist as hero, the artist as hero, and finally the author as hero. These models operate as possible points of transition in the process of mythologising male virtue. However, Frankenstein's failure to sustain any of them leaves his narrative empty and ultimately ineffective when he finds himself unable to persuade the sailors to continue.

Frankenstein tries to transform his narrative of experience into myth when he appeals to the reader to rise above the impartial reason of the magistrate, and to participate in his anachronistic and self-justified sense of martyrdom, thus reverting to an older, more mysterious diction of heroic virtue. In order to complicate further the reader's task of evaluation, he confesses that the external manifestations of heroic discourse are akin to madness: '[T]here was a phrenzy in my manner, and something, I doubt not, of that haughty fierceness, which the martyrs of old are said to have possessed. But to a Genevan magistrate, whose mind was occupied by far other ideas than those of devotion and heroism, this elevation of mind had much the appearance of madness' (Fr, p.153). Frankenstein's remarks serve a triple purpose: they equate his heroic pursuit through scientific knowledge with the certainty of religious martyrs, thereby linking him with an established mode of culturally accepted heroic conduct; they mock the rational response of the magistrate in order to privilege heroic endeavour, which he admits is irrational, and thereby invalidate the possibility of a cultural sanction of rational heroism; finally Frankenstein's remarks paradoxically invite the reader to accept his actions as credible and meritorious only by a concession to irrationality, which assists the translation of his quest into myth. If the reader accepts Frankenstein's heroic discourse as rational and virtuous, the reader's sympathy then effects a modification in Frankenstein's final alienation, since he acts with the reader's apparent blessing and not in isolation. This sanctions Frankenstein's quest, and contributes to the process of mythologising masculine heroism. If, however, the reader remains unconvinced, Frankenstein's virtue is safely transmogrified into madness and his alienation and heroic failure are complete, but the reader remains untouched. If, as the narrative encourages, the reader is persuaded by

Frankenstein, only to re-evaluate this conviction as the narrative progresses, the reader is drawn into the process of redefining masculine virtue.

Frankenstein's virtue is based on the exercise of social and intellectual privilege, not on socially responsible goodness. His solipsism is physically represented in the Creature, whose grotesque exterior is the result of Frankenstein's distorted heroic desire. Together, he and the Creature expose the vulnerability of a society which sanctions such obsessive and self-absorbed behaviour amongst its leaders. The pair replicate the cultural construction of masculine heroism, whereby models are inspired by absence and desire, erected through icons, myths and images, and absorbed into social utility.

The model of masculinity first presented for translation into cultural icon is the scientist-creator. Frankenstein seeks, he argues, to reconcile demands of private virtue with the dictates of public desire. This requires positing internalised imaginative heroism as the appropriate exercise of male virtue. In Frankenstein's narrative science initially replaces chivalry as a method of codifying his virtue. Whereas the discourse of chivalry allows men access to feminine virtue through a code of honour which asserts that female weakness and passivity stand in constant need of male protection and therefore pose no threat to masculine potency, Frankenstein's science acknowledges female control over reproduction, and hence over the family, the emerging unit of social control, but offers a noble means of overcoming that threat. When Frankenstein abdicates the traditional role of protector and father, encoded in the discourse of chivalry, by failing to prevent the deaths of Justine, Elizabeth, and Clerval, he does so in the name of scientific integrity. By taking on not only the fantasy of a male-generated family, but the fantasy of a self-generated 'new species' (Fr, p. 37), Frankenstein lays on science the task of reinventing maleness and eliminating limits to its potency. The eighteenth-century science invoked by Frankenstein through image and diction in his narrative as a discourse for heroic virtue, has, then, a subtext of male fantasy which Frankenstein's education and contemporary scientific investigations initially sanction.

Recent criticism has turned to an examination of the science behind Frankenstein.[18] Frankenstein's acquisition of scientific knowledge is his strategy for coping with 'a mentality of

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[18]. See for example, Butler, 'Introduction' to Frankenstein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) pp.xiv-li; Hindle, 'Vital Matter: Mary Shelley's Frankenstein and Romantic Science', Critical Survey 2 (1990), 29-35; Mellor, Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters, pp. 89-114; Laura Crouch, 'Davy, A Discourse: A Possible Source for Frankenstein', Keats-Shelley Journal 27(1978), 35-44; Roger Sharrock, 'The Chemist and the Poet: Davy and the Preface to the Lyrical Ballads', Notes and Records of the Royal Society, 17 (1962), 57-76; for more general discussions of the intersection of science and literature see, for example, Jan Golinski, Science As Public Culture: Chemistry and Enlightenment in Britain 1760-1820. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 188-203, 236-237; Desmond King-Hele, Erasmus Darwin and the Romantic Poets (London: Macmillan, 1986); Adrian Desmond, The Politics of Evolution (Chicago: University of

iconoclasm' dominant in eighteenth-century aesthetics.[19] Frankenstein trusts that science will reformulate the heroic discourse he has learnt through his masculine-generated education, but cannot use in a female-defined social context. Science, for Frankenstein, thus emerges as a means of mediating between his male ideological inheritance and a feminised future dependant on control of the family. However, he is so restricted by the models of masculine conduct available to him, and so enclosed in his masculine scientific imagination, that his vision is limited to reanimating old models of masculinity--literally digging up the dead.

Science offers a means of transforming the monstrosity of masculine impotence into a beautiful representation of male power, a new creation. It is necessary that the Creature be male in order for him to be emblematic of Frankenstein's heroism, to represent the lingering patriarchal ideal of handing onto another male the tradition of heroism, and also to demonstrate Frankenstein's failure to do justice to genuinely liberating, forward-thinking scientific vision which incorporates femininity and social utility.

The greatest proponent of this view of science and the scientist as 'the public face of genius' was Humphry Davy, whose public lectures and experiments in galvanism were undoubtedly known to Mary Shelley.[20] However, means of reducing male vulnerability to the variability, as well as the sovereignty, of female reproduction were a source of attraction not only to scientists like Aldini and Davy who were performing experiments in galvanism. Erasmus Darwin, for example, believed that the imagination of a man at the point of conception could determine the sex of his child, even suggesting that men longed for female children who 'might charm and cherish their expected brood',[21] thereby simultaneously achieving control of reproductive choice, and abdicating responsibility and the role of nurturer. This scientific quest for male reproductive authority offers an imaginative context for Frankenstein's attempt, through science, to reconcile the masculine and feminine realms of social experience.[22] Nonetheless, his inward-looking science betrays the principles that contemporary

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Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 117-121; King-Hele, Doctor of Revolution: The Life and Genius of Erasmus Darwin (London: Faber, 1977), pp. 181-208, 285-295, 301-6.

19. Paulson, Breaking and Remaking, p. 7.

20. Golinski, p. 188; For Davy and galvanism, see, for example, Ronald King, Humphry Davy, (London: Royal Institution of Great Britain, 1978), pp. 14-15; Golinski, pp. 203-218; for Davy and Mary Shelley, see, for example, Laura Crouch, 'Davy, A Discourse: A Possible Source for Frankenstein', Keats-Shelley Journal, 27 (1978), 35-44; Marilyn Butler, 'Introduction', pp. xxx-xxxi.

21. Erasmus Darwin, The Temple of Nature; Or, The Origins of Society, A Poem. With Philosophical Notes (London: 1803), II, lines 114-122 (line 116), cited in 'Appendix B' to Frankenstein (1818), ed. by D. L. Macdonald and Kathleen Scherf (Peterborough ON: Broadview, 1994), p. 275.

22. For Mary Shelley's intersection with the scientific discourse surrounding her, see Butler, xii-xxi, xli-xlv; Mary Shelley, 'Introduction to the 1831 Edition', Frankenstein, p. 179.

scientists were heralding as necessary to the promulgation of scientific knowledge and incumbent social progress. Davy was the most articulate of his scientific contemporaries in the cause of scientific heroism. Significantly, however, Davy, unlike Frankenstein, addresses a female audience, who represent the 'standard of civilisation', and objects to the 'small circles of self interest' which most scientists inhabit.[23] Frankenstein's implicitly male arrogance, his masculine-inspired will to supremacy, and his myopic, self-centred and obsessive secrecy undermine Davy's vision of science as the source 'of the most refined enjoyments and delicate pleasures of civilised society'--a socially useful heroic endeavour.[24] Davy proposes science as a new mode of masculine heroic quest which might play not only an aggressive intrusive role, but also a useful, nurturing one, since the scientist can transform mere utility into 'instruments of comfort and enjoyment' as well as 'of terror and destruction'.[25] There is certainly sufficient internal evidence in Frankenstein of a similar conflict between male-oriented scientific pursuit of glory and feminine scientific utility to suggest that Mary Shelley, in addition to being familiar with the works of Lawrence and Darwin,[26] was also keenly aware of the tension Davy exposes. Davy's rhetoric recalls Burke's gendered separation of the comfortingly feminine beautiful and the alarmingly masculine sublime. But for Davy, Burke's notion of the beautiful turns into a version of social utility, rather than the 'immortality and power' of Frankenstein and the alchemists (Fr. p. 32).

The study of science, then, appears very much a route to the possible assumption of heroic virtue. In addition, the intersection of poetry and science in the writings of Davy and Darwin offers an emblematic language for the translation of scientists into figures of myth.[27] These writings frequently employ images from classical mythology they aim to replace, which results in a consecration of a new canon of heroes. For example, Darwin's poetry transposes new scientific heroes onto a mythological canvas. In his Economy of Vegetation he presents Benjamin Franklin as Cupid:

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23. Sir Humphrey Davy, The Collected Works of Sir Humphrey Davy, ed. by John Davy, 9 vols (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1839), viii, p. 354; Day, MSS, cited in Golinski, p. 194.
24. Davy, Works, viii, p. 87.
25. Davy, Discourse, in Macdonald and Scherf, p. 277.
26. See notes 18, 19, 22, above.
27. See Erasmus Darwin, The Temple of Nature (1802); Darwin, The Botanic Garden; A Poem, in Two Parts. Part I containing The Economy of Vegetation. Part II the Loves of the Plants. With Philosophical Notes (London: 1791); Davy, Sons of Genius (1799) in The Annual Anthology, ed. by Robert Southey, 1 (1799); for discussions of Davy's Romanticism, see, for example, David Knight, Humphry Davy: Science and Power (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 18-19, 38, 101, 134; Knight, 'The Physical Sciences and the Romantic Movement', History of Science, 9 (1970), 54-75; Sharrock, 'The Chemist and the Poet', pp. 65-71; Knight, 'The Scientist as Sage', Studies in Romanticism, 6 (1967), 65-88; Harold Hartley, Humphry Davy (London: Thomas Nelson, 1966), pp. 22-5, 41-3.

> Thus when on wanton wings intrepid LOVE
> Snatched the raised lightning from the arm of JOVE;
> (The Economy of Vegetation I, 383-390).

The ready fusion of the new discourse of material science with the patriarchal classical inheritance which constitutes the cultural matrix of an educated man's ideas reinforces the place of the scientist-hero in the tradition of masculinist mythology. In this way, Frankenstein's attempt to mythologise his endeavour reflects the vision science projects for itself at the close of the eighteenth century. The mythological parallel breaks down in Frankenstein's narrative, however, not because science fails to produce life worth living--life is produced from death--but rather because the novel diffuses its vision of the failure of masculine models of social experience through the failure of the scientist as hero. Thus the social and cultural forces which produce the figure of the scientist as hero are shown to fail in their formulation of a modern ethos of masculine virtue. As Frankenstein's ideals of scientific heroism, absorbed through his reading and formal education, lull his reader into initial admiration for his scientific enthusiasm and ambitious rationalism, this cultural failure is replicated in Frankenstein's narrative: it reproduces the social process of heroic fashioning. His inspiration was 'a volume of the works of Cornelius Agrippa', the sixteenth-century alchemist (Fr, p. 25). This fact undermines his apparently forward-looking scientific heroism by demonstrating that modern investigative desire is mobilised by ancient means. Agrippa's historically-sealed world does not intersect with Frankenstein's modern science, but rather is emblematic of a legacy of heroic virtue, part of a mythology of masculine desire. By his own admission, Frankenstein's 'dreams were...undisturbed by reality' (Fr, p. 26). In this sense, the myth of heroic virtue, transmitted through science, is not eternal, but ahistorical, belonging nowhere.

In addition to the legacy of Agrippa, Frankenstein's relationship to his father demonstrates how ideals are passed from man to man, becoming increasingly antisocial at each degree of isolation from feminine virtue as they approach more closely to the point of masculine creation and recreation. The dangerous foundations of Frankenstein's masculinist fantasy can be seen in the misguided fusion of private virtue with public desire which characterises his heroic desire. He clearly bases his identity on his social and civic status: 'I am by birth a Genevese; and my family is one of the most distinguished' (Fr, p. 21). There is a definite appropriation of private existence for public glory in Frankenstein's family. The family becomes a microcosm of the public world in which the elder Frankenstein was accustomed to exert his influence, and Frankenstein was simply the traditionally patrilineal means of

'bestowing on the state sons who might carry his virtues and his name down to posterity' (Fr, p. 21). It is a short step from this to Frankenstein's vision of fathering a race. The potential for destruction in the pursuit of a male experience which does not seek to internalise, but rather to overpower feminine domesticity by reformulating the family as a masculine-generated phenomenon is underscored in this ideological inheritance. The vision is one in which men exist independently of women and family, as creators and sustainers of social and political virtue, gods and lords. Frankenstein inherits a patriarchal legacy of gendered isolation, a vision increased in intensity over generations, until he is destroyed by its grotesque realisation.

Frankenstein introduces the image of creator when he introduces the artist as hero as the second model in his narrative. Frankenstein's glorious ambition may be to father a race, thereby achieving the ultimate conflation of domesticity with masculinity, but his actual endeavour is to produce a man out of nothing, out of context. Since Frankenstein's history is introduced through Walton's parallel overwhelming desire for a male soulmate to share his dreams of virtue, the narrative is fundamentally, and at all levels, the production of masculine-generated desire, but also of masculine isolation. The act of isolating a male Creature, as Frankenstein does, is a microcosm of social masculine experience, and it predictably distorts his sense of self. The act also registers an emerging aesthetic of creativity. The conceptualisation of the Creature, which is so markedly different from his realisation, dramatises a shift in aesthetic theory from the associationism of the early eighteenth century to the perceptual imagination of Blake and Coleridge. Similarly, Frankenstein's authority as both creative instigator and maker of the Creature shows a movement from Shaftesbury's hierarchical theory of the idea of art being distinct and superior to the production of art.[28] Instead, Frankenstein's artistic vision of the Creature parodies Coleridge's 'secondary imagination', that faculty which, 'dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create: or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify'.[29] Similarly, Schiller's identification of the poet who 'has entered into a state of culture' as unable to achieve complete harmony with nature, but 'as someone

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[28]. For a discussion of this aspect of eighteenth-century aesthetics, see Paulson, Breaking and Remaking, pp. 2-4.

[29]. Coleridge, Biographia Literaria (1817), ed. by James Engell and Walter Jackson Bate, 2 vols in The Collected Works ed. by Kathleen Coburn, 14 vols to date (London: Routledge, 1983), vol. 7:i, ch. xiii

striving for unity'[30] facilitates an interpretation of Frankenstein as the embodiment of the male imagination trying to form a legacy from the fragments of a patriarchal past.

Ironically, however, Frankenstein's misreading of masculine experience causes him to fail as an embodiment of heroic artistic imagination. The reanimation of his male creation is not the beautiful thing envisaged by his imagination. Incapable of conceptualising the destructive heritage of masculine experience, Frankenstein realises it: he dreams not of something beyond himself, but rather of himself. Frankenstein's dream was to create another self, 'a being like myself' (Fr, p. 37), only better: bigger and more beautiful. From 'the unhallowed damps of the grave' Frankenstein had 'selected his features as beautiful' and intended the Creature to be of heroic size, 'to make the being of gigantic stature' (Fr, pp. 39, 37). This being, in all its physical and representative stature, would fill the space left by the overthrow of traditional patterns of patriarchal thought. The beauty of it would have its source in the imagination of the maker, 'the magnitude and complexity of my plan' (Fr, p. 37), rather than in the outcome. Frankenstein fails as creator because his imagination fails to transcend his masculine inheritance, in a macabre rendering of Erasmus Darwin's tenet of the inheritance of acquired characteristics, and this illustrates the distorted evolutionary inheritance of masculine heroic mythology. Erasmus Darwin's theory, with its stress on the volition of an organism to survive, was misread by the Romantics as a route to transcendence.[31] However, in assembling a whole from beautiful parts, rather than making a redemptive whole from ugly parts, Frankenstein not only distorts this theory, and inverts the eighteenth-century aesthetic of material iconoclasm,[32] but he violates what Shaftesbury describes as the method of the true artist. He who 'deserves the name of poet...can...give to an action its just body and proportion....Like that sovereign artist or universal plastic nature, he forms a whole, coherent and proportioned in itself'.[33]

The Creature is intended to make Frankenstein a hero and to represent Frankenstein's success as a man, but in fact it eventually embodies centuries of anti-social failure. Read in this way, Frankenstein turns perpetually on the reciprocal creation of men. In a tradition of male Gothic characters like Charles in St. Leon, who aspired to be 'the author of his own existence', Frankenstein

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30. Friedrich Schiller, On the Naive and Sentimental in Literature (1795), trans. by Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly (Manchester: Carcanet, 1981), p. 39.
31. On Erasmus Darwin and his contributionto evolution theory, see, for example, Loren Eiseley, Darwin's Century: Evolution and the Men who Discovered It (New York: Anchor, 1961), pp. 47-48, 51-52.
32. Paulson, Breaking and Remaking, pp. 2-14.
33. Shaftesbury, Characteristics, i, p. 135.

fantasises about breaking free from the masculine culture that has produced him and to be a self-created being.[34] Frankenstein distorts the fantasy of self-creation, however, by confusing the creation of self with the creation of other men. The complexity of masculine production, masculine reproduction, and cultural constructions of heroism, invoked in the powerful imagery of creation myths, is suggested in the combination of the dedication to Godwin with the epigraph from Paradise Lost:

> Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay
> To mould Me man? Did I solicit thee
> From darkness to promote me?--
> (PL, x. 743-5)

This epigraph was dropped from the 1831 edition, but its earlier inclusion suggests a firm commitment to engage with dominant literary expressions of both the Christian myth of creation, and, more notably, the ambiguity of received notions of male heroism. The quotation from Paradise Lost challenges the reader to reassess culturally weighted portrayals of heroic virtue and to redefine the meaning of creation. The words are spoken by Adam as he faces expulsion from Eden. Adam's position as hero is problematic. He speaks wryly of the injunction to 'increase and multiply, asking 'what can I increase/Or multiply, but curses on my head?' (PL, x, 731-732). He represents himself at once as a victim of a greater power, and as the source of a future race, one plagued by unhappiness. The epigraph thus casts doubt on both the nature and function of models of heroic virtue. Adam's virtue is not self-defined, and he protests against 'Thy terms too hard, by which I was to hold/The good I sought not' (PL, x, 751-752). It is an indication that Adam is forced to subscribe to a code of heroic conduct, and becomes part of a process of creating traditions of heroic virtue whereby the demands imposed on masculine performance by external forces exceed the power of male characters to uphold. To confirm the emphasis on the manufacture and omnipresence of mythologies of male virtue, the subtitle, The Modern Prometheus, looks to another received tradition of heroic formulation, the classical canon, equally rooted in patriarchal and hierarchical traditions of a masculine, classical, inheritance, which turn on a male saviour to bring light to humanity. The subtitle also engages ironically with Shaftesbury's theory of the artist. He refers to the artist as 'a second *Maker*; a just Promethean under Jove', who envisages, and then can remodel a lost Eden from what he has to hand. In this fashion, the epigraph also calls to mind some mythologies of male virtue contemporary with Mary Shelley such as Napoleon and Rousseau.

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[34]. Godwin, Novels and Memoirs, iv, p. 162.

Frankenstein's history tries and fails to look back to a rhetoric of masculine authority, and to reconstruct it. This strategy blends the emerging Romantic conception of the artist-creator as hero with the tradition of author as heroic voice. In adopting a rhetorical strategy similar to Burke's in the Reflections, Frankenstein uses the language of feeling and empathy to substitute for, or even to create, masculine community where only isolation really exists. Burke dramatises his assertion in the Enquiry that 'it is one thing to make an idea clear, and another to make it *affecting* to the imagination'[35] in the Reflections by using heightened emotive diction. Burke's rhetorical strategy is to make the reader *feel*, through an emotional wisdom, rather than to elucidate the real implications of a world bereft of custom, heredity, and social order, 'to create in the midst of modern desolation the possibility of a moral community sustained by that very wisdom and tradition', in fact 'creating anew the world whose disappearance it laments'.[36] When Frankenstein turns to the magistrate and invites him to overlook his madness, when he writes initially that '[n]o one can conceive the variety of feelings which bore me onwards, like a hurricane....I should...pour a torrent of light onto a dark world', (Fr, p. 37) he writes with the fluidity of Burkean rhetoric. He transforms himself from a journalistic conveyor of facts into a verbal image-maker and thus assumes the mantle of an author-hero who can translate history into myth, reduce violence, ugliness and injustice to rhetorical anomalies, and inflate virtue, through heroic desire, to a moral imperative.

Frankenstein's efforts as author-hero are directed very much at evoking a lost world through the diction of heroic endeavour. This diction dominates his rhetoric, even as the narrative fragments into periods of insanity or self-absorption. However, Frankenstein fails to convince his reader because he fails to establish a community of feeling. Frankenstein's emotional boundaries are defined by the discourse of heroic endeavour which demands that he subordinate affection to glory. He is thus trapped in a rhetorical paradox handed down to him by the tradition of male virtue: male heroic desire is reinforced by a masculine community of performance artificially created through the evocation of heroic desire in the language of feeling--which ultimately debilitates heroic action.

In those moments where Frankenstein is immersed in scenic appreciation there is a sense of infinite connection: 'the valley through which we wound, and which was formed by the river Arve, whose course we followed, closed in upon us by degrees; and when the sun had set, we beheld immense

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35. Burke, Origins, p. 60.
36. William C. Dowling, 'Burke and the Age of Chivalry', Yearbook of English Studies 12 (1982), 108-124 (pp. 122, 123).

mountains and precipices overhanging us on every side, and heard the sound of the river raging among rocks' (Fr, p.70). The scenes suggest a surface of natural integration which the subtext of Frankenstein's desperate alienation highlights as fundamentally false in the context of his narrative. More subtly, although his uneven and isolating narrative style misreads the scientific and literary theory of Erasmus Darwin, Frankenstein's brutal juxtaposition of his scientific endeavour--the Creature--with his scenic appreciation recalls, through its failure, Darwin's more successful reconciliation of science and community. Erasmus Darwin wrote,

> Whence drew the enlighten'd Sage the moral plan,
> That man should ever be the friend of man;
> Should eye with tenderness all living forms,
> His brother-emmets, and his sister worms.
>
> (Darwin, Temple of Nature, IV, 383-386)

Frankenstein's narrative tries to capture this synchronic social virtue, but fails. Hence, he fails for the third time as a model of new heroic virtue, having already failed to erect either scientist or artist as a new mythic hero.

Clerval's seemingly innocuous interest in tales of chivalry and romance introduces the complicating presence of the existing discourse of socially virtuous masculinity and offers a counterbalancing rhetoric of traditional heroic desire (Fr, p. 24) to compensate for the failure of Frankenstein's new modes. Gradually, Burke's rhetoric of chivalric desire infiltrates Frankenstein's narrative, demonstrating that no discourse of masculine heroism is ever be free of another. The introduction of the idea of chivalry immediately recalls Burke's invocation of 'antient chivalry' in Reflections.[37] Burkean readings of Frankenstein rightly discuss Mary Shelley's engagement with Burke in terms of her politics and her Godwinian heritage.[38] Nonetheless, there is also scope to read in Frankenstein's history an engagement with Burke's reification of chivalric sentimentalism specifically in terms of his use of the language of sensibility to transpose an anachronistic mode of behaviour to a contemporary context. As a model for socially responsible masculine virtue, Burke's view of chivalry appears to offer historical and literary precedents for a code of heroic conduct which identifies men as men, yet allows them to participate in a feminine discourse of virtue rooted in passivity.[39] On the one

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37. Edmund Burke, Reflections, p. 127.
38. For discussions of Frankenstein as essentially Burkean in outlook, see Mellor, Mary Shelley, pp. 71-88; Lee Sterrenberg, 'Mary Shelley's Monster: Politics and Psyche in Frankenstein', in The Endurance of Frankenstein, pp. 143-171.
39. Burke, Reflections, p. 127.

hand, Burke's notion of chivalry seems to offer mediation between the violent and antisocial discourse of honour and the passively ineffectual man of sentiment. On the other hand, Burkean masculine experience encourages feminising, civilizing access to learning, while it accepts the more brutal modernising economic necessities of trade.[40] However, Burkean masculine experience is dependent on an anachronistic context which presupposes the performance of masculine virtue can take place without internalising feminine virtue. Indeed, it requires, as in his passage about the attack on Marie Antoinette, that feminine virtue be visibly outside masculine performance.[41] Clerval's reading and Frankenstein's rhetoric underscore this fallacy, which Burke's impassioned diction occludes, that masculine experience based on these traditions of reproduction is 'a condition precarious and full of terror' (Fr, p. 128): men who aim only to duplicate a masculine tradition of virtue can expect alienation and isolation, not the community of men Burke envisages. Burkean rhetoric animates the language of masculine violence and separation with feeling and desire for inclusion; Frankenstein's narrative illuminates the impossibility either of separating a man from men's history, or of existing as a man only within that history.

Frankenstein fails as a heroic author because he neglects to participate in his rhetorical community. He aims not to include the reader in his vision, but to impose his vision on the reader, and from the outset, his authorial strategy confuses intent with expression. He says to Walton, 'I thank you for your sympathy...but it is useless' (Fr, p. 20). Evidently, he lacks the insight of Byron's pilgrim who asks in Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, 'Is it not better, then, to be alone/And love earth only for its earthly sake?' and answers himself in terms of natural communion, 'I live not in myself, but I become/Portion of that around me' (III, lxxi, lxxii). However, Frankenstein is far more a product of crisis in the masculine psyche than a producer of solutions to masculinity in crisis. His failure to exemplify heroic stature as an author appears to be the failure of centuries of masculine experience to embody private virtue within the language of public performance that formulates masculine desire. For Frankenstein's masculine cultural heritage distances his heroic purpose from his social environment and thus deprives him of the language of community to fuse his private self with his public desire. Frankenstein's narrative world, over which he so desperately wants sovereignty, is ludicrously invaded by the other male 'authors' who are, ironically, eternally but unwillingly portions of each other, as each figures in another's narrative. Their connection is not sympathetic or natural, and does not form a community of

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40. Ibid, pp. 130-131.
41. Ibid, pp. 121-122.

men, but rather is artificially inspired by their shared isolation within a discourse of outdated gendered heroic desire.

The dwindling power of an imposed discourse of heroic virtue rooted in masculine hierarchical authority is demonstrated in the ability of his creation to divert Frankenstein's narrative by taking him 'beyond expression' (Fr, p. 75). Ambiguously, however, this victory of the Creature over Frankenstein's attempt to posit himself as an author-hero also recalls Burke's vision of apocalyptic loss of social cohesion in the wake of the French Revolution.[42] The violence which precedes the Creature's interruption fragments Frankenstein's narrative and contributes to the effect of instability. Rhetorically, Frankenstein's heroic model of an author privileged by learning and discursive authority shatters. In this way, Frankenstein's switch to the language of aversion underlines his alienation from his subject-matter, his separation from his history, and his failure to exert heroic narrative authority. In language reminiscent of Burke's, Frankenstein 'saw that filthy mass that moved and talked', his 'heart sickened' and 'his feelings were altered to those of horror and hatred' (Fr, p. 110). Burke's insistence on images of the body and of physicians to associate revolutionary enthusiasm with disease in his writing[43] is recalled through Frankenstein's visceral rejection of the physical embodiment of his desire.

However, unlike Burke, the language of disgust marks Frankenstein's loss of authorial focus. Frankenstein's narrative is not a vindication of Burke, nor a dramatisation of the Reflections. Frankenstein attempts, like Burke, to erect a fantasy of heroic community through rhetoric. However, Burke constructs his putative community of men by invoking images of a historical mode of masculinity to inspire his readers to participate emotionally in a community consisting only of imaginative empathy. In this way, Burke successfully masculinises emotional discourse. In contrast, Frankenstein emasculates himself in his history by affiliating his rhetorical strategies with the feminine, and then failing to control his narrative. As he loses his authority over narrative direction, he resorts to the feminine ciphers of temporary vulnerability--madness, delirium, and exile.[44] He fails utterly to articulate a new mode of male authority. The language of aversion, powerful in Burke, is here transformed into a liturgy of weakness, demonstrating again that, as in the other masculine mythologies

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42. Ibid, pp. 127-129, 173.
43. James T. Boulton, The Language of Politics in the Age of Wilkes and Burke (London: Routledge, 1963), pp. 117-119.
44. See, Doody, 'Deserts, Ruins, and Troubled Waters', pp. 531-544.

he has tried to erect, without effective absorption of the feminine discourse of virtue, masculine desire breaks down.

Frankenstein appears initially to manipulate the standard teleology of legends of masculine quest, giving his personal history and education, then identifying his purpose, 'the search for the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life' (Fr, p. 26). However, his rhetoric quickly moves from the distanced narrator of history, to assume the logic of sentimentality. By introducing a rhetorical structure which appeals to the universal by introducing an image of the ideal--of the perfect race of beings, the perfect scientist, the perfect, amoral, unbiased history--then representing the collision of that ideal with the real--the anomaly of the Creature, the madness of the scientist, the emotional, unreliable history--the ideal and the real dissolve in a flood of tears, regret, or madness. This dialectical structure of sentimental discourse is seen in individual paragraphs where, for example, Frankenstein sets himself up as a universal sufferer: In one paragraph, he opens by asserting that '[n]othing is more painful to the human mind', then progresses through the drive to an ideal--I had begun life with benevolent intentions'--only to be thwarted by the realities of life--'Now all was blasted'--and then moves through tears and powerlessness, to the possibility for self-knowledge: 'I was seized by remorse and the sense of guilt, which hurried me away to a hell of intense tortures' (Fr, p. 67). This sentimental logic, combined with the coping strategies of refuge in tears, madness, sarcasm, or fainting, absence, or illness makes his rhetorical strategy more feminine than masculine.[45] This is clear as upon bringing the Creature to life, Frankenstein is '[u]nable to endure the aspect of the being [he] had created' (Fr, p.40). Frankenstein then cannot contain, within masculine rhetorical strategies, the power of embodied masculine desire. Once he is faced with the Creature, the representation of his distorted desire, Frankenstein's masculine narrative breaks down. The inadequacy of existing discourses of male virtue becomes apparent as the narrative becomes increasingly disconnected, incoherent and disjointed: Frankenstein 'raved incessantly...Doubtless my words' appeared 'to be the wanderings of [a] disturbed imagination', and later again 'my ravings...were frightful' (Fr, pp. 43, 136). The cycle of deceptive heroic rhetoric is broken, however, when Frankenstein's inherited rhetoric of community confronts a genuine masculine community, the sailors, built on more than poetic images.

As an author, Frankenstein fails to convince the reader of the unity of his heroic vision. For example, he remains with his family, in the exaggerated language of myth, lest his 'base desertion leave

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[45]. Spacks, The Female Imagination, pp. 24-8, 46-58.

them exposed and unprotected from the malice of the fiend whom I had let loose', but they die nonetheless. Although, in the diction of sentiment, he 'wished...only that I might afford them consolation and happiness' (Fr, p. 68), he is interrupted by visions of the Creature, and loses his narrative focus. The diction reverts to the highly masculinised rhetoric of violence and revenge untempered by mercy, compassion, or justice: 'I ardently wished to extinguish that life which I had so thoughtlessly bestowed. When I reflected on his crimes and malice, my hatred and revenge burst all bounds of moderation' (Fr, p. 69). The narrative strategies are so jarringly juxtaposed that the reader is disturbed by the force of Frankenstein's rage rather than touched by his filial affection, and affected not by his passion but by his instability. Anxiety over his powerlessness removes him from the social world--'solitude was my only consolation--deep, dark, death-like solitude' (Fr, p. 67)--which increases his impotence with regard to imposing his vision of self and heroic virtue on the outside world. Attempts to assert his omnipotence as androgynous creator through the mingling of discourses of reason and feeling in his narrative lead to an increasingly hysterical tone detached from social reality, which, following Burke's polarity, is gendered feminine. Frankenstein's distorted masculine education prevents, rather than facilitates, his access to a realm of feminised virtue, and also therefore to a new discourse of heroic virtue. Unfamiliar with any discourse that might soften the isolating extremes of power and impotence between which he travels, Frankenstein exists in a paradoxical narrative context in which he tries to recount the defeat of the limits of his sex, but is defeated by the social limitations of gender.

The paradox thus generated--that the social production of masculine desire generates alienation, and that this can work itself out only in moments of sympathetic communion--controls Frankenstein's failure to establish a new model of heroic virtue. Fearing the Creature, and the possibility of revenge, forever lost to him, Frankenstein sees the Creature, alive, and therefore capable still of being murdered. Frankenstein remembers, '[I] uttered a wild cry of ecstacy when I distinguished a sledge, and the distorted proportions of a well-known form within. Oh! with what a burning gush did hope revisit my heart! warm tears filled my eyes' (Fr, p. 158). The disturbing bifurcation between the alienated, solitary, powerful yet powerless experience of masculinity, inspired by the image of the two locked in a struggle of mutual destruction, and the expression of their emotional connection and sympathetic bond, undermines the integrity of masculine power once again. This dissonance underscores the inherent irreconcilability of public masculine desire and private masculine virtue.

The Creature's Story

The Creature is the incarnation of the myth of masculine virtue. His history is, therefore, the final stage in the threefold narrative production of a myth of masculine virtue, but also the final phase of Frankenstein's ironic demythologising of male virtue. Frye characterises myth as 'the imitation of actions near or at the conceivable limits of desire'.[46] As the embodiment of Frankenstein's cultural masculine desire, the Creature is hideously formed and wholly unassimilable. However, his story is mythical in structure, thereby making the Creature a wholly assimilable figure, in terms of cultural meaning. The Creature figures the inherent uncertainty of masculine virtue, and his history relates the divisiveness of masculine desire which is at once the terrifyingly aggressive formulation of a will to power, and the elegiac mourning and search for recovery of a lost community and integration into an increasingly feminine-ordered social organisation. However, once the Creature learns the cultural history which has governed his production, he takes on the literary dimensions of a god into whose consciousness centuries of history, education and injustice can be poured and reconstituted as redemptive myth. The Creature's final speech to Walton represents his idiosyncratic heroic vision--a potential resolution for masculine heroic virtue. His vision is one of empirically, rather than institutionally-filtered, ideals of merit founded on reasoned emotion expressed through compassion and inclusion rather than self-interest and exclusion. His implied death redeems Frankenstein and Walton for their misguided ideas, and saves the reader from the consequences of Frankenstein's ill advised heroic action. Thus, the Creature's story takes on the features of, in Frye's terms a Dionysiac myth, where the Creature suffers as a dying god, matching Christ's 'Why hast thou forsaken me?' with his own 'Cursed creator! Why did you form a monster so hideous that even you turned from me in disgust?' (Fr, p. 97).[47]

At the same time, though, the Creature's history negotiates erratically between the ideal and the real. The sharp disjunction between his form and the sympathetic content of his narrative distorts his mythic wholeness. The Creature, therefore, divided and separated by Frankenstein's art, looks toward reunifying himself through an idealised vision of heroism which invokes a feminised discourse of affective understanding, but which is still derived from masculine history. His history thus points toward an inclusive version of masculine desire, but nonetheless indicates that there is an ineradicable

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46. Frye, Anatomy, p. 136.
47. Frye, Anatomy, p. 36.

dissonance between mythologies of masculine heroism and discourses of sympathetic community.

Particular features of the Creature's narrative assist this reading. First, the gradual identification with Frankenstein and the integration of the Creature's narrative with the rest of the novel suggest the mythic world which Frye describes as 'apocalyptic, in the sense of...a world of total metaphor, in which everything is potentially identical with everything else, as though it were all inside a single infinite body'.[48] Certainly, the Creature and Frankenstein live increasingly intertwined lives, and their narratives contain examples of almost exact duplication. For example, reflecting on his own condition, Frankenstein says, 'I had begun life with benevolent intentions...Now all was blasted'(Fr, p. 69). The Creature adjures Frankenstein that, 'I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend' (Fr, p. 74). This overlap of experience addresses the cultural process of submerging of individual identities into a conglomerate of heroic models. The Creature thus also demonstrates Frye's theory of a *pharmakos,* the cultural scapegoat whose innocence is greater than his punishment warrants, but whose guilt is determined by his status as a member of a guilty society. Frye argues that as myth becomes ironic, literature reflects 'how the god of one person is the *pharmakos* of another' .[49] Through a cultural education he ceases to represent the embodiment of myth, and instead becomes an ironic parody of the myth of heroism. Devoted to the cause of learning, to the dissemination of knowledge, to the promotion of compassionate justice, the Creature is ironically transformed from the mythic representation of virtue, into an incomprehensible--in the sense both of being uncontainable and incapable of being understood--form, and hence eternally on the outside of social or cultural existence. In this, the Creature's narrative is feminine. The Creature's gendered divisiveness is reflected in the divergence between his narrative presentation and his physical representation, which challenges the reader's conceptions of male virtue. Finally, and most significantly, although the Creature's narrative and the experiences he relates are very much a product of his masculine education and his male-produced existence, the essence of his experiences is more feminine in that his tale is a chronicle of marginalisation, an existence on the edges of language, education and power.

This gender fluidity forcefully illustrates both the points of intersection and the irreconcilable elements of feminine and masculine heroic desire. The Creature's mythical status now becomes deeply problematic, since to figure a mythic figure as powerfully feminine contradicts the masculine history of heroism which has produced it, yet to figure the Creature as a male saviour forces the conclusion that

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48. Ibid, p. 136.
49. Ibid, pp. 41-43.

masculine heroic desire produces grotesque distortions of maleness. The disjunction between the literary realisation of the history and the physical presentation of the Creature requires the reader to invest heavily in evaluative tools. Since the Creature aims toward an ideal throughout his history, the reader is asked to proceed, through reflections on the Creature's history, itself the product of reflection, beyond the natural representation of his form to a reflective consideration of his tale. This ought to bring the reader to share the vision of the ideal. However, the representation of ideal male virtue through the distorted form of the Creature is highly ambiguous because identification of a space between the ideal and the real serves, as Rajan points out, to emphasise the disparity rather than to achieve an approximation.[50] As the Creature takes on increasingly the idioms of cultural expectation, he identifies contradictions in presentations of male heroism: 'Was man, indeed, so powerful, so virtuous, and magnificent, yet so vicious and base?' (Fr, p. 89)

Since the Creature was intended not to exist as a hero but to create a hero, it is the product of self-interest, and therefore, according to much eighteenth-century thinking from Shaftesbury through to Godwin and Kant, cannot represent a virtuous action, or, by extension, virtue itself. However, as the mythologised embodiment of masculine desire for virtue, the Creature must contain, within his distorted form, the potential for male virtue. The Creature's solitariness and his uniqueness contribute to his mythological existence as an inhuman being, but his potential for a reconciliation of the masculine and feminine heroic vision lies, nonetheless, in the fact that he is very much of humanity, a product and an emblem of human existence. De Lacey's words to the Creature stress the incompatibility of self-interest and social virtue, while they emphasise the value of community to the achievement of human happiness: 'To be friendless is indeed to be unfortunate; but the hearts of men, when unprejudiced by any obvious self-interest, are full of brotherly love and charity' (Fr, p.100). The ambivalent status of the Creature is here identified as a product of the collision between self-interest and sympathetic community, or, in other words, a replication of the clash between public glory and domestic affection, masculine and feminine heroic desire.

The Creature's story, placed at the centre of Frankenstein, is also at the core of the examination of any possible coexistence between sympathy and masculine virtue as derived from models of heroic masculine endeavour. Despite his presence as masculine desire manifest, the Creature's narrative

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50. Tilottama Rajan, The Dark Interpreter: The Discourse of Romanticism (London: Cornell University Press, 1980), p. 30.

allegorises feminine exclusion from masculine cultural heritage. This realisation of feminine experience is in contrast to the method of Frankenstein's narrative which exposes his effeminacy through his hysterical adherence to masculine fantasy. The Creature demonstrates that feminine experiences of history and culture contribute to a particular and valid interpretation of the social meaning of virtue. Combined with the Creature's undoubted physical strength, and his masculine will to power, this approach could have been stimulating, effective and socially valuable. The inclusion of femininity within a discourse of male desire recalls Wollstonecraft's vision of gender--a masculinity that has the strength to include women and not subject or be subjected by their femininity. Therefore, although the Creature's final ostracism is a pessimistic end, less immediately apparent, but equally forceful, is the lingering effect of his rational but emotive persuasion which leaves room for optimism. His narrative energy topples Frankenstein's precarious heroic logic, and, as Frankenstein becomes increasingly unreliable, the reader is emotionally distanced from the discourse of heroic virtue that Frankenstein employs. The Creature's narrative of social ostracism couched in feminised language of intelligent sensibility is therefore an ironic commentary on Frankenstein's illusory fantasies of assembling the perfect male Creature.

In this context, the appeal to sympathy which flows through the Creature's language is significant. His rhetorical strategy, consisting of emotive language, but clear solid diction, rooted in concepts of natural justice, contrasts sharply with Frankenstein's heavy use of obscure images. Frankenstein complains, 'I was possessed by a kind of nightmare; I felt the fiend's grasp at my neck, and could not free myself' and resorts to secrecy--'You expect to be informed of the secret...that cannot be'--until he finally surrenders to the inadequacy of language--'How can I describe my emotions?' (Fr, pp.). In contrast, the Creature's control of language mocks Frankenstein's illusion of coherent heroic discourse and of unifying ideals of heroic virtue. He appeals lucidly not to reason alone, but to pity and compassion: 'How can I move thee? Will no entreaties cause thee to turn a favourable eye upon thy Creature, who implores thy goodness and compassion'(Fr, p. 78).He urges not only the reader's sympathy, but his empathy. This presupposes the reader, of either sex, is able to feel the Creature's isolation, and to sympathise with his exclusion from a hegemony of heroic discourses. This bond undercuts the model of heroic virtue which created him and appears to control the novel's direction. That performance of masculine virtue requires heroic endeavour to stretch beyond social boundaries,

and upward to a region of elitist transcendence, whereas the Creature seeks social acceptance and integration.

The Creature continues to offer an alternative vision of masculine virtue based on the feminised model of the family. He represents the 'misery that wanders, in hideous forms, around the world from the negligence of parents'.[51] This vision recalls Wollstonecraft's advocacy of parenthood as the modern route to heroic virtue[52] and the Creature offers Frankenstein an opportunity to remodel his heroic performance. By invoking the twin pillars of duty and affection, the Creature fuses discourses of honour with those of familial connection and presents a new, rationalist, sympathetic discourse of heroic virtue. The Creature's attempt to move Frankenstein to pity postulates exactly that community which Frankenstein's heroic model forces him to deny. In consequence, Frankenstein rejects the Creature and tries to weaken their bond of empathy in order to re-establish the discourse of heroic virtue within which he operates. He therefore recasts the relationship in terms of masculine conflict, rather than sympathetic understanding, recalling the discourse of honour and chivalry: 'There can be no community between you and me;....Begone, or let us try our strength in a fight in which one of us must fall' (Fr, p. 74). Yet the Creature's vision of virtuous conduct, although transmitted through a prism of rational affective understanding, includes the same social authority and responsibility which constitute Frankenstein's public performance of masculine virtue. The natural exercise of heroic virtue is thereby rendered ironically impossible without compassionate participation in a masculine community which its performance, in the tradition Frankenstein articulates, nullifies. Frankenstein cannot emerge as the hero he imagined, *and* be just to his creation. He says to the Creature, 'You have made me wretched beyond description. You have left me no power to consider whether I am just to you or not' (Fr, p. 75).

The Creature's community-based model of heroic virtue is in rhetoric, logic, and context, largely feminine. He formulates this model by reversing the paradigm that Frankenstein employs. While he and Frankenstein, and by implication, the reader, share a cultural education, the Creature is open, and diffuses his learning through his narrative whereas Frankenstein keeps his knowledge secret and hidden from Walton and the reader. However, this reinforces the cycle of masculine alienation, rather than breaking it. The Creature's narrative is a history of experience and learning directed toward social integration, in contrast to Frankenstein's narrative of learning directed at achieving social dominance at

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51. Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, Works, v, p. 225.
52. Ibid, p. 216.

the cost of integration. The Creature's history thus presents an alternative vision of the power of learning and culture, stressing their ability to enlighten when unencumbered by inherited layers of masculine heroic desire. For example, as the Creature tells of his encounter with the De Laceys, and his introduction to language and ideas, the account appears to extend the parallel impulse to heroism between Frankenstein and his creation. Not only are they both scientists, the one applying his learning in a laboratory, the other instinctively experimenting, classifying, and analysing, but like Frankenstein, the Creature envisions to himself a changed world, dependent on his re-creation of himself through his learning. However, the Creature does not envisage the changed world worshipping him in gratitude, like Frankenstein does, but like Radcliffe's heroines, he is dependant on his imagination for his male heroic models: 'I formed in my imagination a thousand pictures of presenting myself to them, and their reception of me. I imagined that they would be disgusted, until, by my gentle demeanour and conciliating words, I should first win their favour, and afterwards their love' (Fr, pp. 85-86). Again, as with Radcliffe's heroines prior to their surrender to a reality void of heroic virtue, the Creature's efforts to reformulate masculine virtue end in his own ostracism, and leave him only with memories of a fantasy. He concludes, 'once I falsely hoped to meet with beings, who, pardoning my outward form, would love me for the excellent qualities which I was capable of bringing forth. I was nourished with high thoughts of honour and devotion' (Fr, p. 168). Thus the cycle of masculine alienation, rooted in Frankenstein's established cultural models of masculine virtue, produces repetitions of heroic endeavours which are anti-social and alienating in shape, and force a retreat into the highly Gothicised and feminised world of a heroic imagination.

As a result of this feminised imagination, the Creature's reconstruction of heroic precedents from a perspective of one who is excluded from the experience of hegemony produces vastly different readings of cultural history. Using materials which form part of Frankenstein's education, the Creature assembles a new heroic model from the component parts of older ones to discover the element Frankenstein excludes: a community of sympathetic masculine understanding. The Creature 's 'fancy was soothed with dreams of virtue, of fame, and of enjoyment' (Fr, p. 168), but it is apparent that the three elements are irreconcilable within existing forms of masculine experience. The Creature's instinctive acts of kindness stem from an inborn sense of community which Frankenstein's science ought to emphasise but instead destroys. This sense of shared evolution is lost in the cultural misapprehension of what constitutes heroic identity. Thus the conflicts of gendered heroic desire are

represented in the clash between the social requirements of heroic virtue and its traditional imaginative manifestations. The result is that in the space between the masculinised heroic imagination and the Creature's feminised heroic performance cultural imagination falters and has recourse to the supernatural. For example, the cottagers are mystified by the favours the Creature performs. The Creature 'found that these labours, performed by an invisible hand, greatly astonished them; and once or twice I heard them, on these occasions, utter the words *good spirit, wonderful*' (Fr, p. 85). In the abstract, the cottagers can conceive of the Creature's actions only in these terms rather than in terms of human heroic endeavour. When the young De Laceys reject the Creature, they reject not his model of heroic conduct--that they had previously described as wonderful--but his heroic appearance. It does not conform to any recognisable description of heroic virtue, and is therefore unrecognisable as such. Unable to disguise himself as either fable or reality, the Creature appears as he was conceived: the form of naked masculine heroic desire.

The Creature's will to virtue is invisible because it has no heroic myth to clothe it. Claudia Johnson rightly argues that clothing and drapery, for 'many radical writers of the 1790s...becomes a metonymy for all the trappings of a court society'.[53] Burke refers to the 'decent drapery of life' while Wollstonecraft speaks of the 'deformity' that drapery disguises.[54] The Creature's natural nakedness exposes his hideous disproportional form. Without a recognisable form of received heroic identity to clothe it, masculinity has no access to virtuous performance, for, as the Creature discovers, there is no culturally acceptable expression of the non-heroic man, nor is there room for the unmediated shape of heroic desire. Both are too horrible to contemplate. The full impact of society's guilt is exposed in the rejection of the Creature by the De Laceys. Like Charles in St.Leon who was also disillusioned with his paternal inheritance and who depended for his self-creation on 'the restless eagerness of my spirit...to surmount the obstacles of external appearance',[55] the Creature 'persuaded myself that when they should become acquainted with my admiration of their virtues, they would compassionate me, and overlook my personal deformity. Could they turn from their door one, however monstrous, who solicited their compassion and friendship?'(Fr, p. 98).The Creature is transformed by this rejection. His experience is still one of exclusion, but his narrative now assumes the full rhetoric of masculine desire: 'from that moment I declared everlasting war against my enemies' (Fr, p.102). While he remained, in

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53. Claudia Johnson, p. 44.
54. Burke, Reflections, p. 128; Wollstonecraft, Works, v, p. 86.
55. Godwin, Novels and Memoirs, iv, p. 161.

his imagination, potentially powerful and independent but capable of social utility, he was outside any cultural or historical context, but stood as an alternative heroic mode. Having succumbed to a masculine rhetoric of supremacy, the Creature finds that the language of feminised virtue is misplaced, and his vision ceases to have a social purpose.

Observing the cottagers as possible heroic models, the Creature muses ironically on his own, rather than the De Lacey's, failure to recognise the chance at social redemption his heroic vision represents: 'I thought (foolish wretch!) that it might be in my power to restore happiness to these deserving people' (Fr, p. 85). Volney's Ruins adds historical scope to the Creature's own observations. Volney constructs a dialectic of slavery and tyranny which expands outward from private masculine authority to public.[56] It originates in 'cet esprit constant d'egoisme et d'usurpation'[57]and his account of misdirected human self-love produces the twin effects of social divisiveness and autocracy.[58] The integration of Volney's text into a narrative which posits a new hermeneutics of heroic virtue suggests a particular epistemology of cultural heroism. In Volney, the tendency is for human egoism to replicate itself, and for the cycle of tyrannies to continue until it is broken by reasoned discussion. The Creature therefore is placed in the situation of intertextualising his own experience He offers the reader not only his shape and origin as emblems of his mythologised status, but in his role as reasoned arbiter of cultural myths, he can figuratively insert himself into Volney's sweeping history of mythologies of heroic conduct and potentially break the destructive cycle. Again, his experience replicates a feminine tradition derived from historical exclusion from established traditions of male egoism. Despite his participation in a masculine dialectic of power and impotence, the Creature has access to radically different readings of culturally significant myths of heroic virtue through his feminised discourse and his feminine experience of marginalisation.

Through his readings of Paradise Lost, The Sorrows of Werther, Plutarch's Lives, and through his understanding of Volney's Ruins, the Creature acquires a sense of human potential. Like Frankenstein who had so admired 'the ancient teachers of science' and 'the manly and heroical poetry of Greece and Rome', the Creature 'learnt to love the heroes of past ages' (Fr, pp. 32, 49). However, his natural sympathy and desire for acceptance and integration, reinterpret these works as means to social integration rather than social elitism. He 'felt the greatest ardour for virtue rise within me', which

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56. Volney, Les Ruines (1791), ed. by Jean Tulard (Paris: 1822; repr. Geneva: Slatkine, 1979), p. 47.
57. Ibid, p. 50.
58. Ibid, 51.

fed his 'desire to become an actor in the busy scene where so many admirable qualities were called forth and displayed' (Fr, pp. 96, 95). The systematic dismantling of a universal myth of masculine virtue, and therefore of his own existence as an emblem of mythologised desire, is the context for the Creature's introduction to Plutarch and Milton. When the Creature's education encompasses Milton, Plutarch and Goethe, it encroaches on the reader's own cultural experience, and invites a questioning not only of the truth of the Creature's narrative, but of discourses of received heroic virtue. After having been introduced to Volney, the Creature is prepared for the multiplicity of myths that postulate divine, superhuman, and heroic individuals. Plutarch's Lives opens by inviting scepticism when he excuses his reversion to the prehistory of Romulus. 'Beyond this, there is nothing but prodigies and fictions, the only inhabitants are the poets and the inventors of fables, there is no credit, or any certainty' and goes on, '[l]et us hope that Fable may, in what shall follow, so submit to the purifying processes of reason as to take the character of exact history'.[59] The permeability of boundaries between literary heroism and extra-literary truth is extended when the Creature says of Paradise Lost, 'I read it...as a true history. It moved every feeling of wonder and awe'(Fr, p. 96). Plutarch's suggestion that fable can be transmogrified into historical truth through reason, absolves the Creature from facile misinterpretation. The confusion in the Creature's mind as to the distinction between true history and literary accounts of it contributes to the narrative uncertainty about the nature and truth of heroic identity. The Creature himself is shown to be only one mythologised figure among many who are culturally produced, sanctioned, and replicated. The reader's own sense of the heroic is therefore at stake as the Creature's aggressive intellectual repossession of cultural myths from their entrenched cultural contexts threatens the very existence of any idea of heroic virtue. The act of reading becomes, in the language of the Creature's narrative, a means of acquiring, or, more appropriately, losing, a sense of heroic identity.

Having established the conflict between feminised desire for social heroic virtue and the anti-social manifestation of masculine heroic desire, Frankenstein sweeps through alpine vistas and frozen tundra to evoke the chilling nihilism of contemporary discourses of masculine heroic virtue. Mary Shelley's breadth of vision, and density of narrative construction and allusion open the history of cultural models of heroic virtue to examination. However, in terms of the history of Gothic fiction,

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59. Plutarch, Lives and Writings, trans. and ed. A. H. Clough, 5 vols (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, n.d.), i, pp. 1, 2.

Frankenstein is deeply significant. For one thing, the Creature, an animated reconstruction of dead parts, is the literal representation of eighteenth-century Gothic vision which sought to dramatise the absence of heroism. Significantly, also, Gothic fiction changed and diffused through other literary forms after Frankenstein, in undeniable response to its textured complexity and the unquestionable social resonances centred on the erection and deconstruction of mythologies of masculine heroism. Frankenstein transcends much of the terror, fear, suspense and horror accruing to the absence of heroic virtue in Gothic fiction. Instead, the reader's desire fluctuates, alternating between a longing for the victory of the Creature's compassion, and hoping for his extermination. Such confusion over the legitimate form of masculine heroic virtue presupposes the continuation of the cycle of masculine alienation, and leaves the reader haunted by the potential for destruction in the false images which fill the cultural void of male virtue. This sense is reinforced through the certainty expressed by the structure of interwoven histories that the cycle remains unbroken. Whatever else it facilitates, Frankenstein emphatically contains, concentrates and magnifies the vision of eighteenth-century Gothic--the latent dangers of a failure of masculine heroic desire--to such a degree that Gothic fiction was forced afterwards to look in new directions. The Gothic mode of necessity transforms itself after Frankenstein but does not cease to reinforce the incipient dangers of social confusion over the meaning of male virtue.

Conclusion

In summary, I have argued that from the initial linkage of a change in masculine roles with intense fear and a sense of impending doom in the novels of Leland and Walpole, the eighteenth-century Gothic novel explores the crisis in masculine experience with increasing intensity. This pattern of development culminates in a supreme demonstration of the negative impact of ideals of masculine heroic virtue in Frankenstein. The articulation of such a masculine-centred interpretation of the function of the Gothic mode does not preclude the emergence of strong feminine subjectivity. Rather, the approach of this thesis offers a different method of reading Gothic so that the absence of masculine authority can be reconciled successfully with the extraordinary aura of masculine power in the novels. I would suggest that such a critical approach, examining gender through masculine divisions and the torments of male characters in a work, offers great scope for achieving deeper understanding of currents of thought on gender, sex and class in literary texts.

This particular critical approach, using access to currents of masculine instability in a variety of texts develops through the thesis, which traced instability in presentations of male virtue in cultural and literary contexts in early Gothic fiction: Leland's Longsword, Walpole's Otranto, Reeve's The Old English Baron, and Lee's The Recess. In the course of these readings it was possible to develop a formula to illustrate the absence of a crucial variable in the equation of masculine identity--heroic virtue. Following the example of Richardson in Sir Charles Grandison, who demonstrates the difficulty of creating a virtuous hero, and Smollett's history of masculine self-invention in Fathom, Leland first explicitly connects the tension between the old code of masculine honour and the assumption of domestic virtue by men with the threat of social chaos. Walpole's 'Gothic story' synthesises these diverse trends into a formal pattern. The theatrical melodrama of Otranto confirms the Gothic's emphasis on performance and illusion. The exaggerated supernatural devices highlight Manfred's diminished masculine authority. Clara Reeve and Sophia Lee both seek to modify Walpole's extravagance, but Lee, more particularly refines his attenuation of terror. The Recess explores the affiliation of cultural history and literary romance with dangerously misleading models of

masculine heroism. Much more than Walpole, Lee stresses the alienation and isolation of culturally acceptable masculine virtue.

Radcliffe adopts Lee's example of the heroine's subjectivity as the paradigmatic expression of the fear of masculine failure. Radcliffe identifies romance as the mode most generically dependant on a literary idealisation of masculinity. She subverts the certainties of the formulae of romance through the use of Gothic devices to produce disorienting fear in the reader and heroine. For example, in The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne Radcliffe reverses the gendered roles of hero and victim so that Mary is strong and active while Osbert is weak and imprisoned; in A Sicilian Romance Julia and Cornelia write their own romances in the absence of Hippolitus and Angelo; Adeline takes over from La Motte as hero in The Romance of the Forest until she is able to reincorporate Theodore into the body of the plot, and Emily St. Aubert's extraordinary imagination supplies The Mysteries of Udolpho with a villain, in Montoni, and a hero, in Valancourt, each more dynamic and powerful in her fantasy than in the reality of the plot. This pressure of imaginary masculinity, authoritative and effective, crushes the male characters into fallible figures of ambivalence in the novels, and nearly renders them invisible. The contrast between configurations of fantasy in the female imagination and narrative insubstantiality centres the fear in Gothic fiction on the torment of masculine experience.

Godwin transfers the heroine's imagined fear of divided and unpredictable masculinity to the hero's real fear of heroic failure. Thus Godwin exposes the drapery of cultural heroic virtue to be a façade. This reveals the masculine fear of a void of heroic certainty and the social cost of imposed heroic performance. Lewis and Radcliffe incorporate some of the various possibilities suggested by Godwin's innovations. In The Monk and The Italian the inward spiral of the narratives turns on the fragmentation of the male protagonist's self-image, rather than the female protagonist's fantasy of masculine identity. The engagement with contemporary controversies over the sex of virtue emphasises the absence of identifiable male virtue. The male protagonist in novels from Caleb Williams onwards is more insistently tormented than his Radcliffean predecessors by the Gothic devices of imprisonment, secret passages, impending capture, and hidden identities. The emphasis of Gothic fiction is here

seen to be moving inward from Godwin's dramatisation of the social costs of artificial masculine virtue presented in Caleb Williams to the individual psychological and private cost of adhering to those models of artificial masculine virtue as shown in St. Leon.

The social and individual costs of destructive ideals of male virtue are dramatically rendered in Frankenstein's sweeping indictment of a cultural will to heroism. Frankenstein's bleak representation of self-replicating masculine heroic myths confirms the Gothic inevitability of divided masculine experience. The novel integrates the thematic preoccupation of the eighteenth-century Gothic tradition into its expansive range of allusion and perspective. The original and perceptive infusion of cultural forces into the construction of literary masculine heroic identity in Frankenstein points toward possible new directions for Gothic explorations of divided, anguished, and unsuitable manifestations of masculine heroic virtue.

After Frankenstein, the Gothic vision diffuses. It is less restricted by the external machinery of formula. However, Frankenstein also straddles the intimations of Romanticism. The Romantics' complex presentations of divided identity find both echoes and inspiration in Mary Shelley's novel. For example, the efforts of some of the subsequent writings of the Romantics to reformulate ideals of identity, imagination, heroic virtue, and to animate old models with new meaning draw heavily on the Gothic of Frankenstein, while in such poems as Percy Shelley's earlier Alastor there is evidence of changing focus toward an idealised heroism. Similarly, the thrust of Coleridge's later articulation of difference between fancy and imagination is to struggle with the space between the ideal and the real and the pastoral vision of Wordsworth's post-revolutionary poetry suggests a new naturalised individual heroic virtue. There is no longer the urgent, insistent eighteenth-century Gothic fear of heroic absence.

The rather confusing sense of a prevailing absence gradually dominates the consciousness of the reader of eighteenth-century Gothic fiction. The eerie claustrophobia of Gothic which insists on the omnipresence of the past in the present, on the futility of resistance to fate, on the irresistible force of formula also torments the reader with a continuous invitation to deny the pressure of fear, to evade the predictability, to break free of the restraints of the form by invoking an imaginative resolution. That resolution invariably depends supplying the figure of the absent hero. Anxieties surrounding a changing dynamic of masculine experience

are deeply entrenched in the Gothic mode. This sense of profound crisis characterises the form from its origin through its most coherent and vibrant period in the 1790s, through its mutation and expansion in the nineteenth century and beyond. Yet the Gothic persistently refuses to fill the void it so insistently exposes. Although lingering visions of a code of masculine honour filter through the Gothic, the past that code represents never sufficiently impresses itself on the action of the novel to succeed as a heroic discourse. Similarly, visions of the heroic couched in discourses of romance or sublimity fail, as do attempts to fuse masculine experience with feminine virtue. The absence of the hero haunts the Gothic novels with a persistence that is not only unmistakable, but deliberately frightening. Thus, Gothic fiction identifies masculine torment as one of the most destabilising and frightening aspects of social change. In doing so, Gothic fiction invokes a cultural consciousness of a discrepancy between masculine literary experience and masculine social desire.

With Frankenstein, therefore, I have argued that the classic eighteenth-century Gothic novel's preoccupation with the crisis in cultural masculinity comes to a logical end. Mary Shelley's pivotal novel suggests a wide range of possibilities for subsequent examinations of the disintegration of the male psyche, and offers potential for literary investigations of an individual man's torment in a masculine-ordered world. However, in uncovering such scope for new approaches to the central concern of Gothic fiction, Frankenstein also, paradoxically, narrows the eighteenth-century's vision of a shared literary consciousness of generic heroism as it is reflected, for example, in Radcliffe's use of romance, and in Godwin's invocations of history. Instead, Mary Shelley indicates feasible models for compelling narratives of individual masculine heroic ambivalence. This allows a central feature of Gothic fiction to continue to animate dramatisations of the threat posed by the social uncertainty over male virtue.

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