

SHAKESPEARE'S INFLUENCE ON THE ENGLISH GOTHIC, 1791-1834:
THE CONFLICTS OF IDEOLOGIES

by

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DEDICATION

For Mikael, Elise, and Suzanna

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	7
INTRODUCTION.....	9
CHAPTER ONE: THE PRE-GOTHIC IN SHAKESPEARE.....	26
CHAPTER TWO TRANSGRESSING BOUNDARIES: ANN RADCLIFFE AND MATTHEW GREGORY LEWIS.....	56
CHAPTER THREE: P. B. SHELLEY: THE TYRANNY OF GENDER IN <i>ZASTROZZI</i> , <i>ST. IRVYNE</i> , AND <i>THE CENCI</i>	90
CHAPTER FOUR: THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS IN THE GOTHIC DRAMA OF JOANNA BAILLIE.....	136
EPILOGUE.....	173
WORKS CITED.....	186
WORKS CONSULTED.....	194

ABSTRACT

Shakespeare's Influence on the English Gothic, 1791-1834: The Conflicts of Ideologies examines why some of the most influential Gothic novels and playwrights of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries frequently alluded to Shakespeare. During a time of great conflict between changing views of religion, class systems, and gender roles, writers of the Gothic addressed these important issues by looking back to Shakespeare's treatment of the conflicted ideologies of his own time. This project begins by examining the links established between the horrors exposed in Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* and *The Mysterious Mother* and Shakespeare. Walpole's incorporation of unsettling scenes from Shakespeare sets the stage for other Gothic writers to allude to similar Shakespearean quandaries in their own works.

The first chapter establishes what is "pre-Gothic" about some of the conflicted ideologies hinted at in Shakespeare's darkest plays. The second chapter explores how Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Gregory Lewis incorporate Shakespearean epigraphs, quotations, and allusions into their own works to confront terrors of the 1790s. The third chapter reveals how P. B. Shelley, in his *Zastrozzi*, *St. Irvyne*, and *The Cenci* responds to worrying questions originally raised Shakespeare. Chapter four focuses on the Romantic era's most renowned female playwright, Joanna Baillie, and her use of Shakespeare to hint at the treatment to which women are still subject in England during her own time. Finally, this study concludes with a brief look at how the threatening implications of the Gothic continue to revisit the dramas of Shakespeare through major works of Gothic fiction from the past 200 years including Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Charlotte

Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*, and Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* series. Though the threats of the past might have changed, Shakespeare still plays an important role in speaking to the unresolved ideological conflicts that still haunt the consciousness of Western civilization.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most influential Gothic novelists of the eighteenth century, Matthew Gregory Lewis, begins *The Monk* (1796) with an epigraph from Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* (1604) to associate the hidden nature of Ambrosio, his title character, with Shakespeare's deputy Duke, Angelo, who condemns others for sexual indiscretions that he himself longs to commit:

Lord Angelo is precise;

Stands at a guard with envy; scarce confesses

That his blood flows, or that his appetite

Is more to bread than stone. (I.iii.50-53, qtd. in Lewis 39)

This epigraph sets the scene for a character full of religious and, especially, of sexual hypocrisy. Publically suppressing all the desires of his body, the deceptive Angelo is secretly full of lust, just as Lewis's pious Ambrosio will prove to be. Raised an Anglican Protestant, Lewis uses the allusion to Angelo, who "Though angel on the outward side" conceals demonic thoughts within (III.ii.272), to raise questions about temptation and hypocrisy in the Catholic Church. Lewis' monk supposedly possesses a character "perfectly without reproach, since he is a man who has passed the whole of his life within the walls of a convent, cannot have found the opportunity to be guilty, even were he possessed of the inclination" (Lewis 50). Yet Ambrosio both accepts and rejects religious tenets, tenets which, as a monk, should be central to his ideology. Ambrosio outwardly upholds the values of the church, as evidenced by his universal renown and popularity in Madrid, but, ironically, it is within the protective walls of the monastery

where he succumbs to the temptation offered by Matilda, and it is beneath the abbey itself where Lucifer finally appears to Ambrosio. Lewis suggests that people are capable of indulging in evil no matter what their circumstances, and even strict religious discipline or political control cannot eliminate misdeeds and harsh restrictions—and could even drive sin into deeper, though no less threatening, recesses. In fact, Lewis insinuates that stringent control might lead to greater desire to commit crimes or greater opportunity to sin. This problem is compounded by Lewis' sense of Catholicism as both demanding idolization and devotion while also forbidding, and even punishing, the very desire it also arouses.

Similarly, an ideological conflict over responsibility for sexual desire is raised by Shakespeare's Angelo upon realizing his lust for the would-be nun Isabella. He asks: "Is this her fault, or mine? / The tempter, or the tempted, who sins most, ha?" (II.ii.162-3). As one possessing an "angelic" character, Angelo wishes to place blame for his attraction on Isabella's enticing virtue. The idea that an honorable woman such as Isabella, by virtue of her blameless life, can accidentally seduce seemingly-virtuous men has troubling implications for expectations of female chastity. Alternately Angelo suggests that the devil might have orchestrated his all-consuming attraction to Isabella: "O cunning enemy, that to catch a saint, / With saints dost bait thy hook!" (II.ii.179-80). If Satan is responsible for placing Isabella within Angelo's grasp in this view, Angelo could be an unlucky victim of demonic conspiracies to cause his downfall rather than a man just as, if not more, spiritually and morally corrupt as ordinary men. Lewis makes use of Shakespeare's ideas in his Ambrosio's sexually charged attraction to a picture of the Virgin, which comes to be reflected in the beautiful countenance of the novice Rosario,

revealed to be Matilda, who is possibly a subordinate demon all along. Ambrosio arrogantly reassures himself: “Enter boldly into the world, to whose failings you are superior; reflect that you are now exempted from humanity’s defects, and defy all the arts of the spirits of darkness. They shall know you for what you are!” (Lewis 66). The revelation of the depravity beneath Ambrosio’s angelic façade, much like the shifting guise of Matilda or Lucifer’s transformation from a glorious apparition into a horrifying demon, makes all outward appearances suspect in Lewis’ novel. In this way, Matilda’s ambiguous identity leaves open the possibility that Ambrosio, like Shakespeare’s Angelo, is both the tempter and the tempted, the victim and the victimizer. Therefore, Lewis, like Shakespeare, raises questions about culpability for moral transgressions that cannot easily be answered if everything is disguised, uncertain, untrustworthy, or unstable.

The connection between Shakespeare and the Gothic novel has long been noted and discussed. But that link has been given new life recently as we see in two collections of scholarship, *Gothic Shakespeares* (2008) and *Shakespearean Gothic* (2009). These anthologies establish many ways in which early Gothic novelists used Shakespeare to further their own agendas, point out how Shakespeare’s works were adopted by Gothic writers, and seek to locate Gothic elements in Shakespeare. E. J. Clery best captures the far-reaching influence of Shakespeare on the Gothic genre as a whole:

It would be impossible to overestimate the importance of Shakespeare as touchstone and inspiration for the terror mode, even if we feel the offspring are unworthy of their parent. Scratch the surface of any Gothic fiction and the debt to Shakespeare will be there. (Clery 2002, 30)

Hence numerous critics have made it clear that Gothic writers of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries referenced, or even borrowed heavily from, Shakespeare's darkest plays, including *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, even as Lewis also adds the dark comedy *Measure for Measure*. But the reasons for this connection remain to be firmly established. For writers in the late 1700s, the medieval past, which stretched from the fall of the Roman Empire until the Renaissance, continued to fascinate, especially when contrasted with the "enlightened" logic and civility that supposedly formed the cornerstones of eighteenth century British society (Clery 2002, 21). Therefore, Shakespeare's language in eighteenth-century eyes captured a pleasing balance between outdated Middle English and the prosaic language of the Enlightenment (Clery 2002, 30). However, with the exception of the scholarship of Jeffery Cox and Stephen Behrendt, little has been written recently about the connection, beyond textual allusions, between the works of Shakespeare and the range of Gothic drama that looks back to the Bard as well as Horace Walpole's 1768 play (albeit unpublished), *The Mysterious Mother*. The degree to which Shakespearean influence manifests itself in Gothic works varies widely, but it is always present. Horace Walpole, the first Gothic novelist and playwright, took care to establish the links between his "Gothic Romance" and Shakespeare, and these are connections which later Gothic writers continued to develop.

Still, I want to argue that the basis of this connection goes deeper than just echoes. Jerrold Hogle has noted the conflicted ideologies inherent in the early Gothic for Walpole, Radcliffe, and Lewis who see

characters and readers as torn between the enticing call of aristocratic wealth and sensuous Catholic splendor, beckoning back toward the Middle Ages and the

Renaissance, on the one hand, and a desire to overthrow these past orders of authority in favor of a quasi-equality associated with the rising middle-class ideology of the self as self-made, on the other—but an ideology haunted by the Protestant bourgeois desire to *attain* the power of the older orders that the middle class wants to dethrone. (Hogle 2002, 4)

How is this tug-of-war between the old aristocratic interests and those Protestant desires in the Gothic bound up with its use of Shakespeare? Why do writers like Lewis use epigraphs from Shakespeare to suggest a link between their own characters and conflicted characters in his works? How and why did some of the most influential writers of the Gothic in the late 1700s and early 1800s use Shakespeare to respond to great social and political upheaval 200 years after Shakespeare wrote his most troubling plays?

In the preface to the second edition of *The Castle of Otranto* (1765), the first fiction to be called a “Gothic Story” on its title page, Horace Walpole establishes the influence of Shakespeare on the Gothic Romance when he acknowledges his indebtedness directly: “But I had higher authority than my own opinion for this conduct. The great master of nature, Shakespeare, was the model I copied” (Walpole 66-7). By the mid-1700s, after all, Shakespeare “played an important part in the [British] nationalist myth surrounding the reign of Elizabeth” and, as Clery observes, “the cult of the Immortal Bard intensified during the period of the Seven Years’ War, 1756-63” (Clery 2002, 30). Walpole therefore sums up the intentions of his project this way: “to shelter my own daring under the canon of the brightest genius this country, at least, has produced” (Walpole 70). By connecting his novel to the greatest English writer at that moment in the mid 1760s, Walpole allows Shakespeare’s plays to set a precedent for a

British tradition of literary freedom and “daring” that has come to be the Walpolean Gothic mode.

I want to argue that much more is going on in this relationship. The Gothic’s multitude of debts to Shakespeare and borrowings from his darkest works, especially *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, and *Measure for Measure*, reveal how the conflicts of ideologies in the Gothic are based on (while still differing from) the underlying conflict of ideologies in Shakespeare’s plays. Gothic writers, after all, re-visited the past and Shakespeare’s plays because they felt Shakespeare articulated human problems of ongoing concern. Writers of Gothic novels and plays in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were reacting to the conflicted ideologies of their own times, and these turn out to have been as contradictory and threatening as those of Shakespeare’s day. These conflicts in the late eighteenth century included those between the established aristocracy and the newly materializing middle class, struggles between the sexes as women’s roles changed in the home and workplace during the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, and even notions of gender itself due to a shift from what was understood as a one-sex system during Shakespeare’s time to a two-sex system, as Mary Wollstonecraft and others demanded by the end of the eighteenth century. Radcliffe, Lewis, Shelley, and Baillie all express the uncertainties of their own times, then, especially in regards to the changing social position of women, class tensions, and new perceptions of gender identity, by invoking the most conflicted and irresolvable scenes in Shakespeare, most particularly from his tragedies. Through their references to Shakespeare, these authors not only reveal tantalizing new quandaries in their culture prompted by social change, but also the intimate and disastrous conflicts those same social changes threatened to unleash. By

including epigraphs, quotations, or allusions to Shakespearean works, Gothic writers “indicate a tension between the receding past with its irrationalities and superstitions, and the rational, ‘realistic’ present” with its “political tensions, socio-cultural anxieties and uncertainties” (Drakakis 14). The conflict between the past and present is a vital element in Shakespeare that the Gothic seeks to incorporate in its exploration of human nature, as well as in its response to social and political threats. Gothic novels also use emotional responses, as inspired by Shakespeare and the ever-present uncertainty he acknowledges, to invoke or even to validate terror in readers. Therefore, madness and escape from traditional social structures, especially for women, became prominent features of the Gothic novel while on the stage playwrights evoked terror as well and revealed the affinity between Shakespeare and the Gothic through spectacle and suspense. As Shakespeare did by incorporating an established tradition of tropes associated with melancholy to reveal the truth about human nature and responses to tyranny, so Radcliffe, Lewis, Shelley, and Baillie look back to Shakespeare to provide a foundation for an exploration of ideological uncertainties affecting their own times. In his darkest and most complex explorations of human nature, Shakespeare creates tension-filled scenes and raises unsettling questions that have informed and shaped the Gothic from its beginnings in *The Castle of Otranto* all the way to the *Twilight* series of novels and films in the 2000s.

Hamlet (1599-1601) is the most influential of Shakespeare’s plays in Walpole’s “restaging” of Shakespeare in *The Castle of Otranto* (Hamm 675). Indeed there are allusions to *Hamlet* throughout *Otranto*, especially echoes of the ghost of Hamlet’s father (Walpole 81). Facing a different set of conflicting ideologies than Shakespeare

confronted, however, especially in regards to the religious aspects of *Hamlet*, in which some Catholic ideas might have been accepted, leads Walpole to deviate from the plot of *Hamlet* (Hogle 2008, 209). In the 150 years separating Walpole from Shakespeare's time, England intensified the shift (begun by Henry VIII) from aristocratic, Catholic leanings to a new Protestant middle class seeking to establish themselves politically and socially. But this betwixt-and-between quandary parallels what we see in *Hamlet* especially. It is just that kind of situation that is revealed when the title character in that play first faces the ghost of his father:

Angels and ministers of grace defend us!
 Be thou a spirit of health, or goblin damn'd,
 Bring with thee airs from heaven, or blasts from hell,
 Be thy intentions wicked, or charitable,
 Thou com'st in a such a questionable shape
 That I will speak to thee. I'll call thee Hamlet,
 King, father, royal Dane. O, answer me! (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* I.iv.39-45)

Hamlet's words upon first seeing the ghost are precursors of the Gothic, because in addition to reacting to a haunting that forecasts those in *The Castle of Otranto*, they reveal intense, tangled, and unresolved ideological conflicts. As Roland Mushat Frye adroitly illustrates, Hamlet's reaction to the ghost points to the conflicting attitudes expressed in the Protestant and Catholic doctrines of Shakespeare's own time. Hamlet's acknowledgment that the ghost could be either a demon or a "spirit of health" shows that decades of conflicts between Protestantism and Catholicism from the reign of Henry VIII to Queen Elizabeth have left politics and the church on shaky ground, therefore forcing

many individuals to separate public worship from private religious beliefs. The Protestant view, endorsed by the Church of England under the rule of Queen Elizabeth, usually demonized ghosts as harbingers of evil. According to Frye, “basic Protestant doctrine did not accept the possibility of legitimate ghosts of departed men or women. It was not denied that angels could appear like the dead, but it was not thought that they would wish or need to do so” (17). According to Protestant tenets, heaven and hell were final destinations that did not permit a return to earth, although the individualistic view of faith in Protestantism allowed for a looser interpretation of ghosts than was sanctioned by the church. The Catholic view, on the other hand, granted that ghosts could either be devils from hell or souls “granted temporary release from purgatory” (Frye 19).

However, Frye suggests that the idea of a ghost seeking retribution would be highly suspect to both Catholics and Protestants because the individual pursuit of revenge would violate the law of the kingdom (22). Williard Farnham also maintains that revenge belongs to God and therefore taking private vengeance is always sinful (Farnham 345). During Hamlet’s conversations with the ghost, Shakespeare intentionally complicates Hamlet’s spiritual views by showing him caught between conflicting ones. Ultimately, because of the intense conflict over religious and social creeds during his time, Shakespeare leaves the ghost’s exact nature and intentions shrouded in ambiguity, the same general betwixt-and-betweeness that we find in the *Hamlet*-influenced ghosts of *The Castle of Otranto*.

The ideological conflicts suggested by the spectres in *Otranto*, however, are both similar to and different from the ones we find in *Hamlet*. In a very theatrical encounter with a huge procession, in which the reactions of the silent knights are even included,

Manfred uses the third person to reiterate Hamlet's reaction to his initial sighting of the ghost— "Be thou a spirit of health, or goblin damn'd" (I.iv.40) — and declare: "Be these omens from heaven or hell, Manfred trusts to the righteousness of his cause and to the aid of saint Nicholas, who has ever protected his house" (Walpole 118). Like the prince of Denmark, the prince of Otranto faces the supernatural bravely in this scene, though any religious significance behind Manfred's words has been undermined and complicated by the apology in Walpole's first preface for including what are, by 1764-65, "exploded" "miracles, visions, necromancy, dreams, and other preternatural events" (Walpole 60). The result in *Otranto* is a series of hesitations between ideological positions. Though in the first preface Walpole insinuates that the work was discovered "in the library of an ancient Catholic family" and the events depict things "believed in the darkest ages of Christianity," he also points out that "the language and conduct have nothing that savors of that barbarism" (59). Walpole makes sure these ancient Catholic notions are incredible both in the senses of being unbelievable and of being marvelously alluring to his own audience in the Age of Enlightenment (60). Upon seeing a ghost, Walpole's Manfred questions whether he dreams, is being tricked by devils, or if the apparition is really his grandfather's spirit:

Do I dream? cried Manfred returning, or are the devils themselves in league against me? Speak, infernal spectre! Or, if thou art my grandsire, why dost thou too conspire against thy wretched descendant...the vision sighed again, and made a sign to Manfred to follow him. Lead on! cried Manfred; I will follow thee to the gulph of perdition. (Walpole 81)

Though some of the conflicts may have changed since Shakespeare's day, Manfred must answer some of the same questions about the ghost's motives with which Hamlet must deal before deciding whether to speak with or believe the ghost (*Hamlet* I.iv.69-74). In the first preface, Walpole also mentions that an author does not have to believe in the supernatural from the dark ages, "but he must represent his actors as believing them" (Walpole 60). By echoing the first appearance of the ghost in *Hamlet*, Walpole alludes to the uncertainty over the intentions of the ghost articulated by Shakespeare, expresses an ongoing struggle between logic and superstition (the old Catholic ways and the new middle-class Protestant ideals in the 1700s), and calls into question what can be believed if the characters and his readers have different belief-systems.

The influence of *The Castle of Otranto* on later Gothic works, especially those of the late 1700s, after all, was compounded by Walpole's play *The Mystrious Mother* (composed in 1768), partly because it was a drama and therefore even closer to Shakespeare's own medium in the influence it carries over from him: "If *Hamlet* is about the catching of the conscience of a guilt-ridden king and queen living in a castle haunted by a revenge-demanding ghost, *The Mystrious Mother* is Walpole's variation on this traumatic situation" (Frank 31). True, *The Mystrious Mother* does not include the direct appearance of ghosts or the supernatural. Yet the medieval setting, revelation of dark social transgressions, and echoes of Shakespearean language, especially of *Hamlet*, make the play decidedly Gothic. Though not widely circulated nor publically performed, *The Mystrious Mother* strongly influenced the Gothic novels of Ann Radcliffe, who included epigraphs from Walpole's play in both *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) and *The Italian* (1797), along with her own allusions to Shakespeare. In *The Mystrious Mother*,

Walpole imitates the language of Shakespeare and even appropriates some phrases, moods, or scenes. Though Walpole directly references *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* in his Prologue (1798), bed tricks—basic to *The Mysterious Mother's* most crucial premise—are also an important borrowing from Shakespeare, whose dark comedies *All's Well That Ends Well* and *Measure for Measure* contain famous substitutions of one female sexual partner for another. Both plays involve tricking a man into bedding a woman different from the one he expects and then entrapping him in marriage with her. Bertram in *All's Well That Ends Well* supposedly has a change of heart towards Helena when he claims if she can explain how she obtained his ring he will “love her dearly” (V.iii.316), but Angelo in *Measure for Measure* implores, “I crave death more willingly than mercy” after the Duke orders him to marry Mariana (V.i.476). Because marriages, in some cases, can be punishments worse than death for men, Shakespeare raises questions over the sexual motivations of women engaging in bed tricks to coerce men into a more permanent conjugal relationship. Walpole incorporates a bed trick to examine the lengths to which a woman will go to satisfy her lust: “What is disgusting about the play, what is mysterious about the mysterious mother, is the mother’s sexual desire, displaced onto the unknowing son; not the incest, but the deliberate, premeditated nature of the incest on her part” (Clery 2001). A woman orchestrating an incestuous bed trick out of pure desire is threatening to society, since she might become pregnant (as is indeed the case in *The Mysterious Mother*), which can lead to an accidental restructuring of the traditional family and unintentional incest in future generations. All of the mysterious mother’s guilt-ridden piety is not enough to undo the physical consequences of her passion. Thus, *The Mysterious Mother* builds on the threat of bed tricks in Shakespeare’s plays by

having a lustful woman use such a trick to secretly gratify her own desires, and, in doing so, shake the foundations of “civilized” society.

When Walpole’s Father Benedict, arguably the first malicious monk in Gothic fiction, repeats the words of Hamlet— “my prophetic soul” (*Hamlet* I.v.42) — to admonish the countess (Walpole I.v.56), Frederick S. Frank suggests that “Walpole intended to relate the sexual crime of the Countess to the concupiscence of Hamlet’s mother, Queen Gertrude” (Walpole 189n2). Connecting Gertrude to the Countess implies that Walpole takes up Shakespeare’s suggestions of Gertrude’s sexual misconduct in her swift marriage to her brother-in-law, expands her lust to apply to a relationship with her son, and then follows through with the unsettling consequences. After all, Walpole’s Countess has experienced the death of her sexual partner and her “storm of disappointed passions” has “fevered” her blood and caused her to substitute herself for her son’s would-be mistress (V.vi.50, 51). Similarly, Hamlet feels that Queen Gertrude has committed an act “that blurs the grace and blush of modesty” by marrying Claudius out of lust after the death of King Hamlet (III.iv.41). Writers of Gothic fiction, such as Walpole, then, resurrect the past through allusions to Shakespeare, only to reshape “its elements to represent a complex series of preoccupations and attitudes in the eighteenth-century present” (Drakakis 7). One of the concerns of the latter half of the eighteenth century was the place of women in the home and in society. E. J. Clery sees the late eighteenth century as “a moment of maximum contradiction between alternative models of femininity” (Clery 2001). Walpole draws attention to the threats of women’s sexual nature on the traditional family structure, since the countess fulfills almost every possible female role— “thy mother! mistress! / The mother of thy daughter, sister,

wife!”— and in so doing, turns herself into a “monster” (V.vi.11-12). Clery points out that incest caused by the mysterious mother’s lust destroys the entire family and traditional bonds of kinship (Clery 2001). In the mid-1700s there was a slow cultural shift occurring from the old one-sex model to a two-sex model of sexual difference. Under the one-sex model of gender, “because men had [the heat that] women lacked, women were thought to have a fundamental desire to copulate with men and obtain their hot, dry semen” (Shoemaker 61). Women supposedly had the frightening potential to lose themselves to passionate, uncontrollable lust, and female orgasm was considered by many to be an essential part of conception. Double standards of sexual morality existed to calm male fears of women’s overwhelming lust and ensure the paternity of their children. Therefore, men, who did not *need* intercourse the way women did, supposedly were allowed more sexual freedom than were women (Shoemaker 61-2). During the Enlightenment, new ideas of the two-sex model questioned whether female orgasm was necessary and, therefore, downplayed the importance of female passion (Shoemaker 62). Therefore, through its allusions to the ethically-questionable bed tricks of *All’s Well That Ends Well* and *Measure for Measure* and the lust of Queen Gertrude in *Hamlet*, Walpole’s *Mysterious Mother* reveals an ongoing preoccupation with threats to men and family ties that came from conflicting attitudes about women, first in Shakespeare’s time but particularly in Walpole’s.

The Gothic works chosen for this study best exemplify the relationship between works of Shakespeare and conflicted late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century views of gender and social issues. Taking into account past, current, and emerging studies of the critical influence of Shakespeare on the Gothic, the first chapter will provide a

historical background in pointing to some of the major fears of Shakespeare's time that were, as it turns out, pre-Gothic in their oscillations among different views. These unsettling issues included the question of succession regarding Queen's Elizabeth's refusal to marry and provide an heir for the throne, the threat of takeover in England by Scottish Catholics, Spaniards, or even the French, and the shifts between Catholicism and Protestantism as the national religion. In addition, the chapter identifies some of the major pre-Gothic elements of Shakespeare's plays most frequently referenced by Gothic novelists.

The second chapter focuses on Shakespeare's impact upon the writings of Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Gregory Lewis, both of whom use numerous epigraphs from his plays, re-imagine the past as a fantasy and escape from the difficulties of the present, yet all the while emphasizing the ever-present threats of the real world. Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) has been examined by numerous insightful critics, such as Anne Williams in *Art of Darkness* (1995), but, because less emphasis has been placed on the influence of Shakespeare on her *Romance of the Forest* (1791) or *The Italian* (1797), this chapter draws out those connections. Furthermore, this chapter examines Lewis' novel *The Monk* (1796), the most influential of the "horror" Gothic novels in English, to indicate the threats brought to light by the revolutions during Lewis' own time and how its echoes from Shakespeare highlight those conflicts. Because *The Monk* influenced Radcliffe's novel *The Italian*, *The Italian* will be discussed last in this chapter.

The third chapter focuses on the use of Shakespeare in Gothic works by Percy Bysshe Shelley, who wrote Gothic both early and late in his career while reading Shakespeare extensively. Writing over a decade after the French Revolution, in *Zastrozzi*

(1810), *St. Irvyne* (1811), and *The Cenci* (1819), Shelley moves beyond using direct quotations from Shakespeare in the form of epigraphs, as Radcliffe and Lewis did, to echoing whole scenes and conflicts expressed by Shakespeare. In the dual plots of *St. Irvyne*, for example, Shelley builds on ideological conflicts between the sexes identified by Shakespeare, as well as expanding anxieties over marriage and female sexual conduct hinted at in his earlier novel, *Zastrozzi*. Political oppression too was an ever-present threat during Shelley's own time with Napoleon controlling much of the European continent; therefore, Shelley's *The Cenci* questions the appropriateness of overthrowing tyrants or patriarchs who misuse their power by alluding to Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *King Lear* in particular.

The fourth chapter examines the impact Shakespeare had on several of Joanna Baillie's most Gothic plays during the Romantic era such as *De Monfort* (1798), *Orra* (1812), *The Dream* (1812), and *Witchcraft* (1836). As one of the most highly regarded dramatists of her day, Baillie appropriated Shakespearean language and themes in a way that carried great cultural weight. Baillie's works span a 38-year period and raise a variety of issues, especially relating to threats against women. Because Baillie wrote in the same genre as Shakespeare and because her exploration of "the passions" garnered her comparisons to Shakespeare at the time, in addition to the fact that her last play appeared in 1836, the chapter discusses her works after those of Radcliffe, Lewis, and Shelley.

Finally, the epilogue will point to echoes of Shakespeare that have appeared across the broad spectrum of more recent Gothic works to show that Shakespeare is still vital in attempts to work through deep-seated ideological conflicts in Western society.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), picks up on tensions over the duty of the creator towards his creation that Shakespeare hinted at in *The Tempest* even while suggesting new threats to humankind from technology of her own time. Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), with its illusion of disregarding class barriers between Rochester and Jane, alludes to the magic in the forest in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to insinuate unseen threats from a patriarchal system that devalues the rights of women. Though Shakespeare's Hamlet does mention drinking blood (III.ii.390) to increase his choler, he is not a vampire like those presented in Anne's Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976), or Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* series of novels (2005-8). Following the example of Hamlet and Macbeth, who question death and the meaning that does (or does not) lie behind it, Rice's vampires allude to Shakespeare to question: does an everlasting un-dead "life" offer more meaning than a mortal life that is subject to death? Meyer, on the other hand, connects the romance of Bella Swan and the vampire Edward Cullen and the struggles of teenage sexuality in her *Twilight* (2005) and *New Moon* (2006) to that of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. Thus, conflicts of ideologies hinted at in Shakespeare's works over science and magic, hidden threats towards women from a long-standing patriarchal system, the meaning of death (especially in connection with questions over Christianity), and teenage sexuality: all of these still resonate with a 21st century audience, even if the specific conflicts have changed or grown increasingly complex since the time of Shakespeare.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PRE-GOTHIC IN SHAKESPEARE

Unsettling pre-Gothic scenes abound in Shakespeare, even though the main conventions of Gothic literature were not firmly established until the late 1700s. Like the Gothic, his pre-Gothic invokes supernatural, inexplicable, and often illogical threats that create a feeling of unrest in the audience. In Renaissance theater, a tradition of melancholy born of the “dark ages” provided stock settings and imagery “connected with death and evil spirits, with night and graveyards” that reflected the guilt-ridden mindset of individuals conscious of their sins and self-doubts (Lyons 44). For instance, Shakespeare famously utilizes the gloomy setting of a graveyard to emphasize Hamlet’s troubled musings on what becomes of the dead in *Hamlet*. Hamlet encounters the skull of “poor Yorick” and, even though Yorick “hath bore [Hamlet] on his back a thousand times,” the prince now feels “how abhorr’d in my imagination it is! my gorge rises / at it” (V.i.184-8). Hamlet realizes the physical changes brought about by death are frightening and even nauseating. After all, by the end of the sixteenth century, gloomy images in literary works had become associated with a larger social malaise, as well as death-dealing disease, as Londoners grew increasingly dissatisfied with themselves and with authority figures (Lyons 17-18). In England the sixteenth century saw conflicts and oscillations between Catholicism and Protestantism which threatened society with rebellion by anyone thought to be a malcontent (Lyons 18). Shakespeare initially presents Hamlet as a melancholic dressed in an “inky cloak” and contemplating death, but after the supposed ghost of his father implores him to obtain revenge, the threat to the

new ruler of Denmark from Hamlet as a vengeful malcontent becomes more pronounced (I.ii.77,120-34). During the mid-to-late 1700s, the so-called “Age of Bardolatry,” Shakespeare was therefore widely recognized as perfectly capturing multifaceted human nature torn between conflicting points of view. The responses of Shakespeare’s most developed characters, such as prince Hamlet or Macbeth, to ideological uncertainties ultimately struck a chord with early Gothic writers especially, whose works explored the most horrifying possibilities and unresolved quandaries which threatened to emerge from the shadows during and after the Enlightenment. It is no wonder then that during the social and political disorder of the late eighteenth century, Gothic writers in Britain would turn to this older tradition of figures haunted by spectres of the unresolved, perfected in the most influential of Shakespeare’s characters such as Hamlet, to find words for their own ideological complexities.

Shakespeare uses the microcosm of the theater, as Walpole would use the “Gothic,” to reflect and deflect much of the unrest in his own era. The most distinctly pre-Gothic moments in Shakespeare generally include many instances in his plays where ideological uncertainty and conflict are prominent and very troubling. Though pre-Gothic instances can be found in a great many of Shakespeare’s plays, the ones most frequently quoted from or alluded to by early Gothic novelists such as Walpole, Lewis, and Radcliffe, are in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Measure for Measure*, *Macbeth*, and *Hamlet*. Jerrold Hogle points out one reason in the final chapter of *Gothic Shakespeares*:

The [later] literature of terror and horror reveals an interplay of contradictions very much *in* Shakespeare in partly similar and partly different ways. There is a tug-of-war at levels of both ideology and symbology in his plays that the Gothic

both repeats and transforms in its own variations on an ‘ancient-modern’ dialectic.

(Hogle 2008, 205-6)

These contradictions not only reveal conflicts of Shakespeare’s time; Gothic writers will also utilize the retrograde and emerging ideologies of their own times, and these turn out to be connected to the disquieting uncertainties that Shakespeare addresses in play after play, starting in the 1590s. Shakespeare’s darkest and most ideologically-conflicted plays resonate with early Gothic writers in search of the “glorious” literary past, represented by the works of the Bard, to the point they express the terrors and misgivings associated with the upheavals of their own day.

A Midsummer Night’s Dream (1594-96) includes two major pre-Gothic situations, which occur in Athens and in the mysterious woods outside of the city. The first is the threat of death or imprisonment in a convent for a young woman should she refuse to her father’s choice of a mate. In addition, the supernatural happenings that occur to two pairs of lovers and a troupe of would-be actors in the woods underneath the veil of night and magic are the most clearly pre-Gothic elements of the play. Puck describes the frightening realm of the fairies this way, after all:

Now the hungry lion roars,
 And the wolf behowls the moon;
 Whilst the heavy plowman snores,
 All with weary task foredone.
 Now the wasted brands do glow,
 Whilst the screech-owl, screeching loud,

Puts the wretch that lies in woe
 In remembrance of a shroud.
 Now it is the time of night
 That the graves, all gaping wide,
 Every one lets forth his sprite,
 In the church-way paths to glide.
 And we fairies, that do run
 By the triple Hecat's team
 From the presence of the sun,
 Following darkness like a dream,
 Now are frolic. (V.i.371-87)

Puck's description of the forest serves as a reminder of the dangers for humans that lurk in the midnight woods. Both terrestrial and supernatural threats such as wild beasts, death, ghosts and fairies, hold dominion after night falls just as they will in frightening scenes of the "terror sublime" in the eighteenth century. Yet Puck also interweaves this description of midnight terror with the freedom and gaiety in which the fairies indulge. Conflicts in ideological conceptions of fairies in the 1590s, after all, included the roles fairies could play in the household after dusk. In England, villagers believed more benevolent fairy types such as hobgoblins would help around the house, but only if the house was well kept, the fairies liked the inhabitants, or they had been pacified with a bowl of milk. On the other hand, all fairies supposedly enjoyed playing tricks and took offense easily. They often retaliated against humans by spilling pails of milk, pinching

untidy housewives black and blue while they slept, misleading travelers, destroying crops, killing livestock, and abducting infants (Papp and Kirkland 40-43).

The mischievous fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are caught between the two worlds. They are visible projections of hidden desires that are earthly and human, on the one hand, and “real” supernatural beings whose existence humans simultaneously wish for and fear, on the other. Puck’s speech identifies both the threats and possibilities for solving human relationship problems within the realm of the fairies. Some of the most unsettling ideological ambiguities evident in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, after all, center on shifting cultural views regarding love and courtship. Right from the start, the play raises questions about whether children should resist or obey the will of their parents in regards to choosing a spouse and whether love is an everlasting bond or a temporary state brought on by desiring the desired. The nocturnal woods represent a haven from the paternal law of Athens and a space where frightening magical occurrences can interfere with human relationships, but also where people are more inclined to fall back on their inconsistent “natures.”

The first major conflict of ideologies introduced in the play takes place in Athens when Hermia challenges the authority of her father and the Duke in refusing to marry Demetrius:

So I will grow, so live, so die, my lord,
Ere I will yield my virgin patent up
Unto his lordship whose unwished yoke
My soul consents not to give sovereignty. (I.i.79-84)

Hermia blames the desire of her soul rather than free will for her refusal to obey these patriarchs and raises the question about who has dominion over the soul, the self or the father/political leader. Her father complains that Lysander has stolen Hermia's obedience, which should be his property in his capacity as head of the family (I.i.37). According to Lawrence Stone, during Shakespeare's time, the right of the father to choose a spouse for his offspring "was the one major issue of conflict between parents and children," and children were "minimally consulted" about their choice of spouse (Stone 84, 88). During the sixteenth century, there was little distinction between marrying for money, status, power or for sexual attraction, love or companionship (70). If such a distinction did exist, "affect was of secondary importance to interest, while romantic love and lust were strongly condemned as ephemeral and irrational grounds for marriage" (70). Likewise, Gothic novelists in the 18th century will use a young woman's resistance to her guardian's choice of spouse as a major source of conflict. Hermia's resistance to her father's orders carries the threat of pre-Gothic consequences such as immediate death or a lifetime of chastity as a nun, while marrying Demetrius against her will could imply a threat of rape for the reluctant bride. By the end of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Hermia's disobedience to her father's will is rewarded because events in the forest, where such irresolutions can be "magically" resolved as they cannot be in the "real" world of Athens, change this potential tragedy into a comedy and seemingly resolve the marriage problem, allowing love and marriage to co-exist. The ending does not make it clear, however, as to whether all daughters should follow Hermia's example and resist patriarchal authority or whether free love is only possible in the extraordinary world outside of Athens caught between the natural and the supernatural.

Other spaces where ordinary rules do not always apply, such as the court, the theater, and poems, all suggest that love was a desirable, if not attainable state, for the upper class (81-82). Admittedly, life at court was different from life for the lower classes:

The presence at Elizabeth's Court of so many young and lusty men and women, usually with a lot of time on their hands, created a situation which might have got completely out of hand had not the consequences of the Queen's displeasure been less easy to avoid and more chilling to contemplate than the penalties of any court of law, Christian or secular. (Youings 365-66)

Queen Elizabeth took on the traditional role of the father in monitoring the sexual relationships of young people in her household, either granting approval for, or refusing to allow, her favorites to marry. Though love was a desirable state for some, Shakespeare consequently shows that love and choosing a spouse are complicated and conflicted issues. According to Elisabeth Bronfen writing on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, "Owing to the power of transformation enacted by the fairies, love objects come to be exchangeable in the nocturnal world of the wood, while desire remains mobile and, as such, not bound to a predetermined trajectory" (33). The impermanence of love presented in the play, in fact, is frightening, and the lovers endure a pre-Gothic experience in the forest under the cover of night and magic. Bronfen shows that the veil of darkness serves as just this kind of powerful force in the play: "The Gothic sensibility of Shakespeare may thus ultimately be located in the rhetorical closed circuit that thus unfolds. The nocturnal obscurity reveals and hides, endangers and protects" (41). For instance, we see the potential for violence that underlies the changeable affections of

Demetrius, who threatens to rape the adoring Helena as she follows him through the dark forest:

You do impeach your modesty too much
 To leave the city and commit yourself
 Into the hands of one that loves you not,
 To trust the opportunity of night
 And the ill counsel of a desert place
 With the rich worth of your virginity. (II.i.214-19)

Still, Helena's love for Demetrius makes her pursue him and disregard the danger afforded by the opportunity she provides for him to ravish her. Though Helena's persistence in chasing Demetrius is comical, his words remind the audience that perils await an un-chaperoned young woman. Novelists such as Radcliffe will later take up this pre-Gothic sexual threat to young virgins alone in the dark and unknown forest. Women pursued by an unwanted suitor suffer from an obvious sexual threat, but even women who choose their own suitors are not safe. Without a guardian, Hermia feels threatened by Lysander, and insists that he, "Lie further off, in humane modesty; / Such separation, as may well be said / Becomes a virtuous bachelor and a maid" (II.ii.57-9). Despite having defied her father by fleeing to the woods with Lysander, Hermia still wishes to avoid the hazard to her virginity and her reputation from her chosen lover, which implies a conflict between a romantic ideal of love and the reality of love, which is changeable and often irresolvable.

Like the human couples, the king and queen of the fairies in this play have a conflicted relationship with one another and have both carried on other love affairs with

humans, which shows there is no stable base for love relationships even among the leaders of the fairies. For instance, Oberon says:

How canst thou for shame, Titania,
 Glance at my credit with Hippolyta,
 Knowing I know thy love to Theseus? (II.i.76-78)

The relationship between the king and queen of the fairies is important because it shows the ever-changing feelings and attractions, both real and “magically” influenced, which drive love. The fairy king, after all, obtains a magical flower, on which Cupid’s arrow fell, whose nectar can force someone to fall in love:

I’ll watch Titania when she is asleep,
 And drop the liquor of it in her eyes;
 The next thing then she waking looks upon
 (Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull,
 On meddling monkey, or on busy ape),
 She shall pursue it with the soul of love. (II.i.177-79)

The idea that love can shift objects against one’s will is pre-Gothic, because like Hermia’s father choosing a spouse for his daughter, there is no self-determination for the individual in this view. Oberon’s suggestions for love objects are bestial and dangerous, which imply threats to the well-being of the spellbound queen. Even when Oberon has more noble intentions than harming or shaming his queen, the love potion can be misapplied:

What hast thou done? Thou hast mistaken quite,
 And laid the love-juice on some true-love’s sight.

Of thy misprision must perforce ensue

Some true love turn'd, and not a false turn'd true. (III.ii.88-91)

Love “revealed” in the darkness of the forest often turns out to be false, and even true love is not always powerful enough to overcome the effects of the fairy magic that clearly symbolizes the drifting of desire from object to object.

The threatening and supernatural space of the forest clearly allows Shakespeare to introduce ideological conflicts relating to the nature of love. The play raises the questions of whether love is unchanging, influenced by forces outside human control or based on fleeting attraction, and whether daughters should obey their father's will in choosing a spouse or take matters into their own hands. Stepping outside of the boundaries that govern ordinary life can either cause frightening chaos or allow for exciting outcomes that are not possible in a highly structured society. The supernatural intervention of the fairies intensifies the uncontrollable freedom and pre-Gothic threats that lurk outside of the city and under the veil of darkness. Consequently, by developing the implications in this play, many Gothic novelists in the late 1700s give strong symbolic significance to the darker threats of imprisonment, death or rape for disobedient women, and similarly emphasize the enchanting possibility of potentially chaotic autonomy in a cryptic wilderness.

Major pre-Gothic themes in *Measure for Measure* (1604), in turn, include disguise, deception, hypocrisy, potential abuses of power, and threats of rape and of death, all of which Matthew Gregory Lewis later uses in *The Monk* (1796), that, as we have seen, begins with an allusion to this very play. That allusion recalls the speech in

which Lucio explains to Isabella that the Duke has obscured his intentions and has left the austere Angelo in charge of upholding neglected laws:

His givings-out were of an infinite distance
 From his true-meant design. Upon his place,
 And with full line of his authority,
 Governs Lord Angelo, a man whose blood
 Is very snow broth....
 [Angelo] (to give fear to use and liberty,
 Which have for long run by the hideous law,
 As mice by lions) hath pick'd out an act
 Under whose heavy sense your brother's life
 Falls into forfeit; he arrests him on it,
 And follows close the rigor of the statute,
 To make him an example. (I.iv.54-8, 62-8)

When Angelo is to be appointed the Duke's deputy, Escalus gives his approbation: "If any in Vienna be of worth / To undergo such ample grace and honor, / It is Lord Angelo" (I.i.22-4). Ironically, though he seems moral and best fitted to govern Vienna, Angelo's concealed lust really dictates such actions. Consumed by passion, he declares, much like Lewis' priest Ambrosio, "And now I give my sensual race the rein" after seeing Isabella (II.iv.160). Angelo's virtuous exterior belies his licentious nature, but the Duke himself has a sinister side too. The Duke's disguise blurs the line between reality and invention and ultimately makes reality questionable because no one is certain how much power

Lord Angelo actually has or if he is just a pawn. Anne Barton claims the Duke's behavior is questionable because he

torments Isabella by withholding from her the information that her brother is really alive. Most baffling of all, he carefully arranges a bed-trick, the substitution of Mariana for Isabella, which is not only a sin in the eyes of the Church; in terms of Elizabethan common law, it represents a union considerably more dubious (even without taking into account the fraud involved) than the contract between Claudio and Juliet. (Barton 581)

The Duke also persecutes the pregnant Juliet by announcing that her lover Claudio will be executed, and to make matters worse, he does this while pretending to serve the church in the guise of a priest. A false friar hearing confession to discover secrets is a threatening and pre-Gothic misuse of power and sets up an implication of religious hypocrisy that Lewis later latches onto in *The Monk*.

The "angelic" Angelo's hypocrisy leads him to proposition Isabella with a morally ambiguous offer to commit a "sweet" sin for her brother's sake:

Which had you rather, that the most just law
Now took your brother's life, or, to redeem him,
Give up your body to such sweet uncleanness
As she that he hath stain'd? (II.iv.52-5)

Angelo's redemption-through-sin message becomes even more conflicted when he demands the exact same sexual transgression as atonement for the sin he condemns. Angelo avoids mentioning the ever-present danger of pregnancy, which threatens to disclose even the most secret tryst. The condemned Claudio uses the excuse that

committing a sin to save his life will transform his virgin sister's sacrifice from a transgression into a desirable quality:

Sweet sister, let me live.

What sin you do to save a brother's life,

Nature dispenses with the deed so far,

That it becomes a virtue. (III.i.131-4)

Isabella's vehement response, "Is't not a kind of incest, to take life / From thine own sister's shame" (III.i.138-9), shows that she sees no virtue in the misdeed her brother suggests. The sexual threat Isabella faces from the conniving Angelo and the morally ambiguous pleas from her brother set up an early version of a threatening situation Gothic novelists will adapt for their heroines in the 18th century.

A particularly conflicted ideology in the play appears in the troubled relationship between Isabella's brother Claudio and Juliet. In the world's eyes, making an oath in front of witnesses legally binds Juliet and Claudio, but the church and Lord Angelo hold that they are not legally wed without a church ceremony. Claudio defends his actions with "You know the lady; she is fast my wife, / Save that we do the denunciation lack / Of outward order" (I.ii.147-9). This raises the question of who determines when a marriage is valid: the church, the state, the couple, or God. Again in the words of Lawrence Stone, in Elizabethan England, "the one crime that was severely punished was not irregular sex itself, but its consequence. The production of a bastard child was likely to result in a drain on the financial resources of the parish and was, therefore, treated with exceptional severity" (324-25). Therefore, when it came to pre-marital sex, financial obligations, rather than moral or religious convictions, prompted laws and the

enforcement of them. Stone points out that, in general, Elizabethan England maintained lax views towards sexual aberrations, with the exception of bestiality and sodomy, in comparison with most of Europe (324). After a period of lax law-enforcement by the Duke, the harsh nature of Angelo's sanctions against Claudio therefore surprises the debauched citizens of Vienna.

It is not clear in the first act of *Measure for Measure*, whether, by transferring power to Angelo, the Duke is setting him up to expose his actual character or if he legitimately trusts Angelo, who initially appears to be able to govern his own desires better than anyone else in the dukedom can: "hence shall we see / If power change purpose: what our seemers be" (I.iii.53-54). The Duke insists that the laws have become too lax, yet, rather than enforcing laws himself, he wants Angelo do to it in his stead (I.iii). The Duke suddenly departs from his duties in Vienna and spreads rumors that he is going to Poland without any clear reason for doing so. Though Angelo's duplicitous nature distresses the Duke, it is arguable that the secretive Duke is as much a villain as Angelo. After all, the Duke hides behind his disguise as a friar to antagonize Juliet and Isabella and, by setting no boundaries for the power he confers on Angelo, the Duke encourages Angelo to misuse the authority he has been granted. The Duke initially claims that enforcing neglected laws would make him seem like a tyrant, but apparently, disguising himself as a friar, listening to confessions, and arranging a bed trick are acceptable uses of power.

The bed trick the Duke instigates also has dark undercurrents for women; it implies both that they are interchangeable and that men have to be tricked into being with a woman. The substitution of one woman for another in the bed trick "denies all

autonomy to the sphere of private relationships, rendered transparent in the eyes of the sovereign and the audience” (Moretti 60). There are pre-Gothic undertones here because individual choices are clearly degraded in a world where the male hierarchy prevails, especially for women who are subject to the decisions of others in their choice of life paths. For example, Isabella initially wants to become a nun but she is ultimately not permitted to follow even these desires. Instead, she ends up marrying the Duke, apparently only because he desires and orders it. This marriage as a reward for her good behavior or for catching the Duke’s eye is conflicted because, in handing out punishments for transgressions discovered while disguised, the Duke forces Lucio to marry a prostitute and Angelo to marry Mariana, both against their will, only to force Isabella into marrying him as well.

Barton suggests that the play has “a sense of dissatisfaction with its own dramatic mode, concentrated in its notoriously troublesome final scene, and a predominant harshness of tone, a savagery even in its clowning” (579). The dark mood of the play is full of pre-Gothic threats to virtue and to life itself. Barton identifies the

unresolved conflict between religious and secular law, between absolutes and anarchy, between a necessary but sterile order and a vigorous but suspect world of self-gratification and individualism. There is also a clash between fairytale and realism, the simplifications of plot and the horrifying complexities of character. (582)

These “horrifying complexities” are at once pre-Gothic and frightening in their implications, all because they manifestly reveal conflicting ideologies in this play and the haunting, secretive consequences of them. Angelo conceals his sins behind the mask of a

good reputation, just as the Duke conceals questionable actions behind his authority. Many of the plots of Gothic novels involve the reluctant heroine who refuses to marry until she can wed the man of her choice despite abuses of power and threats of rape on the part of the villain, and this problematic situation—as well as its many consequences— is quite forcefully prefigured in *Measure for Measure*.

In a blood-drenched play full of witches, murder, usurpation of the throne, and a ghost, pre-Gothic moments obviously abound in *Macbeth* (1606). By opening this play with a thunderstorm and three witches discussing their next reunion, Shakespeare shows that supernatural elements threaten to take precedence in the play. The witches chant “Fair is foul, and foul is fair / Hover through the fog and filthy air,” thereby introducing a seeming binary opposition of fairness and foulness where either can blur into the other and become interchangeable in the dirty fog that shrouds the scene (I.i.11-12). This literally unclear opening foreshadows greater irresolutions throughout the play in politics, individual responsibility for actions, and especially changeable gender roles.

The chaos surrounding the usurpation of the throne in the play by Macbeth echoes the political uncertainty that pervaded the very early 1600s at the beginning of the reign of James I—already James VI, king of Scotland— following the death of Queen Elizabeth in 1603. James wished to peacefully unite Scotland and England, yet “the ancient inbred English hatred of the Scots” and fears of Scots taking over the north of England frightened English citizens before and after 1603 (Edwards 257). The establishment of James of Scotland on the English throne becomes the tip of the iceberg of ideological conflict; as son of an executed enemy of the state, Mary, Queen of Scots,

was King James appointed by divine right, by election, or perhaps by the supposed witchcraft with which Mary was associated? After all, Mary was executed because of the threat she presented to England and because angry members of Parliament demanded that Queen Elizabeth “kill the witch” (Greenblatt 2004, 333). Though Shakespeare staged *Macbeth* in part to justify the rule of the Stuart line (Evans 4-6), it is not clear whether the witches in the play are able to predict the future, shaping coming events, or whether the power of their suggestion, interpreted in certain ways by the hero, sets the idea of usurping the throne in motion within Macbeth’s own thoughts. The witches’ suggestions and revelations are complicated by their omissions and their unknown intentions for divulging information. The fear of a sinister force, such as the trio of witches, exerting control over individual lives, as well as potentially shaping the future of the kingdom, is clearly pre-Gothic. Another frightening event that occurred just before *Macbeth* was first performed, the exposure of the Gunpowder Plot in late 1605, directly threatened the royal family and the entire court, but also terrified the common people who were “in great uncertainty” and feared mob violence at the hands of those with different religious or political ideologies (Greenblatt 2004, 337). In Shakespeare’s play, ominous violence and even the supernatural threaten the stability of the entire kingdom. Lady Macbeth goads Macbeth to overthrow the king, which temporarily brings him the position he covets but ultimately seals both their fates. Lewis will use this hesitation in this play between responsibility for one’s own actions or manipulation from mystical outside forces at the conclusion of *The Monk*. Macbeth’s possible lack of control over his own destiny and the undermining of his masculinity by his wife are also some of the most terrifying aspects of the play that prefigure Lewis’ reworking of it.

There are several pre-Gothic threats that come together during the banquet scene, including the revelation that the murder of Banquo haunts Macbeth psychologically and perhaps physically as well. During the banquet scene, it is not apparent if the ghost of Banquo is present or if Macbeth's intense guilt makes him imagine the apparition, especially because the ghost does not reveal itself to other characters. Macbeth begs the ghost:

Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves

Shall never tremble. Or be alive again,

And dare me to the desert with thy sword;

If trembling I inhabit then, protest me

The baby of a girl. Hence, horrible shadow!

Unreal mock'ry hence! Why, so; being gone,

I am a man again. (III.iv.101-7)

Macbeth claims he could withstand any other threat but the supernatural appearance of Banquo, which threatens to undo his masculinity as much as his wife has. What will become the Gothic problem of blurred boundaries of gender clearly declares itself in Shakespeare's "Scottish play." Though Lady Macbeth makes excuses for her husband's behavior in public, in private she calls his masculinity into question whenever Macbeth behaves in a way she does not consider befitting a man. For instance, she asks him, "Are you a man?" after he first sees the ghost and then questions if he has been "quite unmann'd in folly" (III.iv.57,73). Lady Macbeth highlights her expectations of masculinity to urge her husband to conceal his crime, thereby playing with cultural quandaries of the time over how the supposed features of masculinity should be defined

and distinguished from feminine ones, especially at a time when boys played the female roles on the English stage.

Lady Macbeth's frequent insults to Macbeth's manhood undermine his control of the family unit, a realm traditionally headed by the father. This irony likely alludes to the larger social issue of the ideological conflict produced by the former sovereign, Queen Elizabeth, fulfilling a traditionally male position as ruler over Britain:

While stalwart Elizabethan women were battling it out on the front lines of the household, Queen Elizabeth was proving that a woman was more than capable of mastering a kingdom—and showing herself to be an almighty exception to the rules that governed women's lives. (Papp and Kirkland 78)

To be a wife and queen at the same time, however, could cause the queen to lose power, though some “Protestant writers thought she could have it both ways—‘Why may not the woman be the husband's inferior in matters of wedlock, and his head in the guiding of the commonwealth?’” (Papp and Kirkland 79). Of course, Queen Elizabeth did not marry and put this theory to the test, but Lady Macbeth tries to have it both ways and be her husband's superior in domestic matters while encouraging him to seize control of the entire kingdom.

Another example of gender confusion in *Macbeth* is that group of “secret, black and midnight hags,” the Weïrd Sisters (IV.i.48). As neither definitely good nor definitely evil (I.iii.130), male or female, the witches embody many of the frightening uncertainties in the play. For instance, upon first seeing them, Banquo says, “You should be women, / And yet your beards forbid me to interpret / That you are so” (I.iii.45-47). The Weïrd Sisters have physical characteristics of traditional masculinity while, as queen, Elizabeth

saw “herself as an honorary man—a special instrument of God” (Edwards 207). Queen Elizabeth was an excellent actress who used the pageantry and “theater” of the court to construct her role as monarch, manipulating the influence her gender—sometimes articulated as masculine, sometimes feminine— would have on her position as sovereign (205). The Weird Sisters act in much the same way.

As in the conundrum of Queen Elizabeth’s “honorary manhood,” *Macbeth* raises questions about gender and whether it is temporary or permanent and if the distinction between men and women lies in appearance, behavior, mindset—or is even real. After all, Lady Macbeth invites a pre-Gothic demonic possession in exchange for an “unsexing” that will allow her to become malicious:

Come you spirits

That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me from the crown to the toe topful
Of direst cruelty! Make thick my blood,
Stop up th’ access and passage to remorse,
That no compunctious visitings of nature
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
Th’ effect and it! Come to my woman’s breasts,
And take my milk for gall, you murth’ring ministers,
Wherever in your sightless substances
You wait on nature’s mischief! Come thick night,
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,

Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark

To cry, "Hold, hold!" (I.v.40-54)

Lady Macbeth contemplates renouncing her female gender, but it is not clear if by doing so she takes on a male one consisting of violent and ambitious attributes that cannot be reconciled with femininity or if she is without gender at all after this point. It is also uncertain if demons control the actions of Lady Macbeth after her incantation or if she acts according to her own power-hungry desires. Macbeth swears that he "dare do all that may become a man; / Who dares do more is none" (I.vii.46-7). His wife, who could be man, woman, both genders, or without sex, replies:

When you durst do it, then you were a man;

And to be more than what you were, you would

Be so much more the man....

I have given suck, and know

How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me;

I would, while it was smiling in my face,

Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,

And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you

Have done to this. (I.vii.49-51,54-9)

Pressuring Macbeth to kill the king and declaring her "unnatural" willingness to commit infanticide shows that Lady Macbeth does not adhere to the mild and virtuous ideal of woman common during much of Shakespeare's time. It is fitting therefore that Lewis will use the idea of the "unsexed" Lady Macbeth as inspiration for the evil cross-dressing woman or demon Matilda in his *Monk* of the 1790s. This gray area between genders is a

source of ideological uncertainty, and Lady Macbeth blurs the boundaries as much as any Shakespearean character ever does, even though many of them do so.

Another obscuring of the boundaries between men and women occurs in the gender ambiguity of young male actors portraying women on Shakespeare's stage. As Stephen Greenblatt points out in *Shakespearean Negotiations* (1988), a Renaissance doctor and author, Jacques Duval, claimed that the predominant gender was never—or at least rarely—absolute, nor in the opinion of most, was it established in final and definitive form in the womb. On the contrary, virtually all males experienced a transition during childhood from a state close to that of females—indeed often called “effeminate”—to one befitting an adult man. (78)

Greenblatt reveals that gender is not fixed because there was thought to be a doubling of male and female, which made it somewhat appropriate for young men, during the so-called “effeminate period,” to portray women such as Lady Macbeth on the stage. However, shifting gender could raise pre-Gothic fears of a transformation to the “true gender” not taking place or perhaps of an involuntary and undesired change that blurs gender distinctions entirely.

In addition to gender itself, sexual orientation during Shakespeare's time was conflicted. For instance, King James was homosexual, though he married and fulfilled one of his duties as king by producing seven children with his wife Anne (Edwards 256). According to Lawrence Stone: “In sixteenth-century continental Europe, waves of prosecutions of homosexuals seem to be closely correlated with waves of persecutions of witches, both being regarded as dangerous deviants whose existence threatened the well-being of society” (Stone 309). However, in England attitudes towards sodomy and

witchcraft were not as harsh as elsewhere in Europe; in fact, members of restricted court circles openly practiced and discussed homosexuality during the reign of James I (Stone 338). At the time Shakespeare penned *Macbeth*, definitions of gender characteristics were inconsistent in part because the nobility had relative sexual freedom even though, among the poor, deviations of any sort signified societal collapse. Overall, the play illustrates that transgressing political, social or physical boundaries can have devastating, frightening, and far-reaching consequences, yet the possibility and appeal of those transgressions are rendered just as forcefully, making this tug-of-war quite pre-Gothic indeed.

Like *Macbeth*, *Hamlet* (as many have seen) includes numerous pre-Gothic elements, among them the aforementioned ghost of the former king, as well as fratricide, regicide, and both feigned and actual madness. The pre-Gothic appearance of the ghost sets all of the events of the play in motion and connects many of the ideological uncertainties ranging from the problem of allegiance under a new ruler and the disputed rules of succession to how much control Fortune or Providence have, whether revenge can and should be pursued, and whether acting reveals truth or deception, all of which cannot be entirely resolved—though sometimes they appear to be—in the world of the play.

From the opening of *Hamlet*, the prince cannot decide whether to prioritize loyalty to his family or to the state. Hamlet's first words of the play are expressed in an aside: "A little more than kin, and less / than kind" (I.ii.64-65). These words reveal his conflicted relationship with his uncle/stepfather/sovereign. The prince wants the security

of family ties remaining stable and unchanging, as he points out by hyphenating the kinship ties of the queen and new king, “my uncle-father and aunt-mother,” to show their changing relationship to him (II.ii.376). The pre-Gothic uncertainties of the sudden death of the sovereign raised in the play also mirror the concern Shakespeare’s contemporaries felt in 1599-1600 by the Tudor queen remaining unmarried and therefore not producing an heir. A vacant throne could invite political instability or tyrannical usurpation. When Queen Elizabeth herself took the throne in 1558,

England seemed beset by crises: a religious crisis occasioned by continual changes in belief and devotion; a dynastic crisis created by the claim of Mary Queen of Scots to the English throne; an international crisis engendered by the inherited war against France and the French presence in Scotland; and an economic and demographic crisis owing to a vicious bout of influenza that seems to have reduced the population quite substantially in the years after 1556.

(Edwards 203)

Though some of these problems seemed solved during her period of influence, by the end of Elizabeth’s nearly 45-year reign, rapid population growth led to unequally distributed wealth, food shortages, and questions regarding a former enemy, James of Scotland, becoming king. The political and social volatility in England gave rise to terrifying fears of future insecurity just as the sudden death of King Hamlet and the possibly illegitimate succession of Claudius show Hamlet that the path to the throne could be more complicated than simply a divine right.

Claudius becomes king by murdering the previous king, by marrying his “sometime sister,” and by election. He then proclaims that Hamlet is “most immediate”

to his throne, which further calls into question the legitimacy of succession in the kingdom and whether Danish kings are chosen by divine right, lineage, consent or conquest (I.ii.109). To complicate the problem of succession further, the Hamlet line dies without issue and a one-time enemy, Fortinbras, becomes king. According to Franco Moretti,

[T]he outcome of the clash between Claudius and Hamlet is the reign of Fortinbras, whom we have seen for a few minutes, of whom we are given varying opinions, and who has passed by Elsinore on his return to Norway by pure chance. The result of the conflict is thus blatantly [sic] *accidental*. (Moretti 63-64)

This implies that a frightening element of chance, or perhaps the hand of Fortune, influences regime changes and the outcome of the play rather than human will or choice.

The ideological conflict over Fortune versus divine or human responsibility was intense in England by the time of this play. When Polonius dies a death Hamlet intended for King Claudius, instead of showing remorse for his mistaken action, Hamlet suggests that Polonius deserved his ill fortune (III.iv.31-32). The goddess Fortune opposes the Christian idea of providence, a belief based on God's intervention in the lives of human beings, because Fortune reveals "instability, unpredictability, deceptiveness, and destructive potential" which "undermine and destabilize assumptions about the natural order and the beneficence of divine power" (Young 57). In accordance with the idea of providence, a limited, even myopic human perspective obscures the larger picture; as a consequence, people believe life treats them unjustly. From God's infallible point of view, by contrast, every human action falls into a larger design: "The argument of

Christianity was that ignorance of God's plan led humans to try to explain the inexplicable by creating a goddess whose primary quality and function was random change" (Thompson 8). However, the bible does sometimes point to predestination, a notion similar to the concept of Fortune in that it represents a source of adversity that can afflict anyone, which removes any personal choices from life and attributes every occurrence to God. For instance, in Paul's letter to the Romans, he states: "Moreover whome he predestinate, them also he called, and whome he called, them also he justified, and whome he justified, them he also glorified" (Rom. 8:30). Of course, predestination can present a paradox: if humans exercise free will but God maintains foreknowledge of all events, do humans actually exert any control over their destinies? During Shakespeare's time, Calvinists believed in double predestination, the idea that God fixed the salvation or damnation of each individual before his or her birth, while Catholics held on to the idea that one must repent of his or her sins to merit salvation. In his famous soliloquy, Hamlet speaks of Fortune as though accepting one's destiny is a matter of choice. While contemplating suicide, seemingly an act of free will, Hamlet wonders if it is better to endure "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" or to fight against Fortune and take control of his destiny (III.i.58). Hamlet might believe he can manipulate the indifferent goddess; however, because of the fickle nature of Fortune, no one can remain her favorite for long. Fortune is a pre-Gothic, potentially threatening metaphor for a chaotic world that denies the supremacy of human and even divine will because fortune cannot be controlled, predicted, or explained by logic or reason.

Madness, like fortune, is equally pre-Gothic because of its link to a lack of control over one's self. Insanity frees individuals from the yoke of reason and allows them to act

in unpredictable and socially unacceptable ways. For instance, Ophelia serves as a well-known example of a virginal “fair maid” who transforms into a singer of bawdy songs before drowning in a questionable accident. Madness remains an unresolved issue in *Hamlet* because, while Hamlet tries on the guise of madness to confuse and mislead others, there are some instances in the play where the audience could call his sanity into question. For example, in the closet scene Hamlet tells his mother that he is merely acting insane, yet his violent behavior still causes her to exclaim, “Thou wilt not murder me?” (III.iv.21). In addition, Hamlet stabs Polonius and, instead of showing regret over killing the wrong man, he says, “Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell! / I took thee for thy better. Take thy fortune” (III.iv.31-32). Then Hamlet, seeing the ghost reenter, “with th’ incorporal air [does] hold discourse,” which convinces Gertrude that her son is indeed mad (III.iv.118). Such madness, especially a hidden guilt manifesting itself as visibly irregular behavior, will later become a staple of Gothic tales.

Whether or not Hamlet ever momentarily lapses into madness, moreover, the prince is persuaded by a dubious witness, a ghost, to possibly commit a crime that goes against the law of the kingdom. In addition, as a son and loyal subject of the rightful former king, Hamlet chooses “the very witching time of night” as an appropriate time to take revenge for his father’s murder (III.ii.388). At midnight, the environment is at its most pre-Gothic; spirits apparently roam the earth, and a veil of darkness covers it. Though he is prepared to murder his uncle to avenge his father, Hamlet will not kill his uncle while the king is confessing. Sending Claudius to heaven instead of hell, to which killing him while he is praying could lead, would not fulfill the ghost’s injunction. There is a question about what will happen to Hamlet’s soul, though, because the church

believes vengeance belongs only to God. Even the revenge-seeking ghost of Hamlet's father reinforces this idea when he says to leave Gertrude "to heaven" and her own conscience (I.v.86). In the end, Hamlet kills Claudius—ostensibly for the poisoning of the queen rather than old king Hamlet— but Hamlet, Gertrude, and Laertes also die, and it is not strictly certain if revenge has been obtained, even as Providence, while hidden, seems to ensure that the most guilty parties in the play are rewarded with death.

During the play within a play, Shakespeare makes his audience aware they are watching a performance, while simultaneously showing that a play, clearly a work of fiction, can reveal the truth. Hamlet uses "The Mousetrap" to gauge the king's guilt:

The spirit that I have seen

May be a dev'l, and the dev'l hath power

T' assume a pleasing shape, yea, and perhaps...

Abuses me to damn me. I'll have grounds

More relative than this—the play's the thing

Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King. (II.ii.598-600,603-5)

Hamlet, an actor himself, tries to manipulate Claudius into revealing his crime. He is also aware of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's machinations and resolves to "delve one yard below their mines, / And blow them at the moon" (III.iv.208-9). Hamlet frequently plays a part, in other words, as when he appears in disheveled clothing before Ophelia, knowing that as an obedient daughter she will inform her father. Of course, the viewers of both "The Mousetrap" and *Hamlet* are observing everything that is taking place on stage. This raises the ideological quarrel of Shakespeare's time over how much of acting is deception and how much truth does acting reveal. When the players arrive at Elsinore,

Hamlet recites lines from a ballad and then points out that the importance of actors is that “they are the abstract and brief chronicles of the / time” (II.ii.524-25). Therefore, events in *Hamlet* can be viewed as carrying important messages about Shakespeare’s own era. Even more, such moments raise the pre-Gothic issue (again) of whether character is internally or externally determined.

Though early on in the play he contemplates suicide, Hamlet fears “the undiscovered country” not only because it is unknown and therefore frightening, but also because death equalizes everyone. Shakespeare’s “clowns” blur the line between ordinary man/gentleman, and Hamlet realizes even Alexander the Great looks like any other corpse after he died: “Dost thou think Alexander look’d a’ this fashion i’ th’ earth?” and “To what base uses we may return, Horatio! / Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander, till ‘a find it stopping a bunghole?” (V.i.197-8,202-4). Fears of being forgotten lead the dying Hamlet to instruct Horatio to tell his version of the story to Fortinbras so that he may live on in memory. In addition, Hamlet’s desire for Fortinbras to hear his story shows that, even with the complete destruction of the royal family, the political conflicts within the kingdom have not been resolved.

Pre-Gothic threats in the world of *Hamlet* reflect conflicts of around 1599-1600 between old and newer systems governing individuals, events, and even heads of state. Loyalty to one’s family or beliefs can compromise one’s allegiance to the current regime, especially if divine right no longer governs kingship. If God does not control events, should citizens use their own ambition to rise in the world, or does fortune unpredictably choose favorites? Can (and should) the insane be governed by the laws of the land, and when the dead return as ghosts, can they share hidden knowledge and redirect earthly

events? Nothing is certain in Shakespeare's Denmark, which is why *Hamlet* will prove so influential to Gothic novelists writing in their own times of political chaos and social uncertainty.

A Midsummer Night's Dream, *Measure for Measure*, *Macbeth*, and *Hamlet*, then, each use pre-Gothic themes to point out various issues of concern to Shakespeare's contemporaries. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* presents a mysterious space in which supernatural intervention can both confuse and clarify issues relating to love, while *Measure for Measure* uses disguise and concealment instead of the supernatural to manipulate those with less power while raising the problem of whether people have the ability to determine their own futures. *Macbeth* uses pre-Gothic elements to highlight national fears during the beginning of the reign of James I about political instability, the power of seen and unseen forces, and the transgression and blurring of gender roles, as well as shifting attitudes towards socially acceptable sexual behavior. Most pre-Gothic of all, *Hamlet* raises troubling questions about what or who is in control of one's life, how to respond to ever-changing social and political situations, and how to be remembered after death. Each of the aforementioned plays contains pre-Gothic elements in conjunction with the most irresolvable ideological conflicts of his time. Shakespeare has thus unquestionably set the scene for Gothic novelists to rework his tropes so as to load them with suggestions about the conflicts among beliefs in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

CHAPTER TWO

TRANSGRESSING BOUNDARIES:

ANN RADCLIFFE AND MATTHEW GREGORY LEWIS

During the 1790s in England, conflict with France “raised bardolatry to new patriotic heights” as Shakespeare was made by some to define Englishness itself in the face of foreign threats (Gamer and Miles 134). Because Shakespeare became an increasingly important symbol of English superiority then, among other reasons, Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Gregory Lewis adapted Shakespeare to negotiate hidden psychological and cultural labyrinths, both literal and figurative, as their characters search for identity. Their works reflect the conflicted ideologies of their own time connected with such tumultuous upheavals as the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution, and the rise of the middle class. Radcliffe and Lewis capture the fear and chaos of their time in their Gothic novels by disguising these unsettling ideas in the features of previous centuries. Consequently, this usage mirrors the conflict evident in Shakespeare’s plays when he was at his most pre-Gothic and was reacting to religious and social struggles that intensified towards the end of Queen Elizabeth’s reign and the beginning of King James’ rule.

In *The Romance of the Forest* (1791-92), Radcliffe employs direct quotations from *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *As You Like It*, *Othello*, *2 Henry IV*, *Julius Caesar*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and *King John*, to legitimize her Gothic novels because during the late eighteenth century the authority of the Bard was unquestioned, while the Gothic, and often the novel itself, was considered by many to be spurious or at least

controversial as a genre. Radcliffe's frequent and emphatic utilization of epigraphs demonstrates how vital Shakespeare is to this and her other novels. Her most frequent Shakespearean reference in *The Romance of the Forest* is to *Macbeth*, often in order to present ideological conflicts over whether outcomes are determined by a higher power, by social structure and gender expectations, or by individual choices. Like her other novels, *The Romance of the Forest* focuses on the heroine's search for identity in a patriarchal world and her experiences within sublime natural spaces that offer both freedom and threats of physical harm, much as Shakespeare does with the women in the forest of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *As You Like It*. Like Shakespeare's vision of the woods, where he makes the connection between an escape into a forest and an opportunity to temporarily change one's gender, one's social standing, or to search for one's self, Radcliffe's forest exists as both a threatening epicenter of uncertainty, on one hand, and as an asylum for women from the cruelty of the world, on the other. Great ideological conflict is a hallmark of Radcliffe's romances, and her inclusions of Shakespeare therefore build on the conflicts of the same sort in his plays.

Like Radcliffe and Walpole, Matthew Gregory Lewis also claims a right to rework Shakespeare, but in *The Monk* (1796) he uses the sinister undertones of the late comedies, as well as portions of *Macbeth* and other tragedies, to break through façades constructed by gender roles and the church and to mirror the cultural, religious, and individual confusion felt during the time of the French Revolution. He borrows Shakespeare's comedic structure to disguise the irrationality of security in an unstable world and uses allusions to Shakespeare's darkest tragedies to suggest the futility of creating self-identity in the midst of conflicted belief systems such as those surrounding

the ideas of fortune, predestination, and free will. In addition, Lewis develops sexual transgressions to which Shakespeare only alludes and follows them to their terrifying conclusions to comment on how secret misdeeds can cause disruptions to the entire social order.

In *The Italian* (1796-97), written partly in response to *The Monk*, Radcliffe responds to Lewis' dire worldview and returns to a modified Shakespearean comedic structure for her final chapters in an effort to resist the frightening issues of personal and social instability raised by *The Monk* itself. Radcliffe carefully chooses epigraphs from Shakespeare that reveal conflicted social and political ideologies of his time to suggest a positive connection to conflicts of her own era. In addition, Radcliffe desires to break down the old physical, emotional, and spiritual structures of Catholicism that imprison women, but also reveals a need to cling to some of them because to break entirely free from the old constructions might prove even more threatening. She uses religious figures and edifices, especially convents, which repress women, as Shakespeare's Isabella is repressed, yet she does so to release them from other obligations to offer a possibility of self-determination, altered gender roles, and new sexual possibilities resistant to the terrors and restrictions of the patriarchal world, yet she is not inclined to attack it head-on.

In *The Romance of the Forest*, Radcliffe portrays a search for individual identity in a rapidly changing world, even though not as much is at stake as will be the case in *The Italian*; hence the ideological conflicts in this earlier novel are not as pronounced as they will later become. Yet, as she will later show in *The Italian*, Radcliffe hints at the

problem of interpreting human behavior in the face of conflicting belief-systems and uses *Macbeth*, in this earlier novel especially, to question whether predestination, free will, or social restrictions are the most detrimental to human life and its quests for power. Noting similar fears and threats to those in the social order in Shakespeare, such as usurpation of power and changes in the traditional public and private roles of men and women, Radcliffe incorporates allusions to *As You Like It* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to build on Shakespeare's idea of leaving the urban world to discover secrets of the self. For Shakespeare the forest is never a paradise. Though some freedom can be experienced and the perils of the city can be temporarily forgotten there, the seasons still change, danger lurks in the shadows, cultural prejudices follow people into it, and no one can remain in the forest forever and survive as a civilized being. Escaping from the seemingly rigid boundaries of society can demonstrate that boundaries are not as well-defined or as firm as they seem to be. For example, Shakespeare's Rosalind can temporarily appear as a man, and she can provisionally enter the forest, yet she will eventually have to re-enter the civilized world and discard her alternate male identity in order to become Orlando's wife. In a similar vein, through the use of Shakespearean allusions and quotations, Radcliffe shows by way of a forest that women in her own time are still caught between social positions, so much so that conflicts over gender and gender roles can never entirely disappear.

The title page of *The Romance of the Forest*, which sets the tone for the entire novel, includes a quotation from *Macbeth* that highlights a major ideological conflict in the struggle to raise or secure one's social position. *Macbeth* poses the questions, first, of how much control individuals exert over their own decisions and their own futures and

second, whether an inability to better one's situation is a failing on the part of the self, a result of outside social forces, or even a consequence of fate. The Shakespearian passage used to open Radcliffe's *Romance*, from Act III of *Macbeth*, has ominous undertones as Macbeth tells Lady Macbeth that Banquo shall die:

Ere the bat hath flown

His cloistered flight; ere to black Hecate's summons

The shard-born beetle, with his drowsy hums,

Hath rung night a yawning peal, there shall be done

A deed of dreadful note. (III.ii.40-4)

Portents of evil such as the three-faced Greek goddess Hecate, who was closely associated with death, hell, and witchcraft, announce that alarming events will occur and raise expectations of both supernatural intervention and murder. This frightening imagery also raises an issue of control because, in Shakespeare's play, Hecate governs the Weird Sisters and prophesizes that Macbeth "shall spurn fate, scorn death, and bear / His hopes 'bove wisdom, grace and fear; / And you all know, security / Is mortals' chiefest enemy" (III.v.33-3). Hecate identifies an underlying problem with human nature: a sense of supposedly predestined security causes overconfidence and often leads to danger when insecurity is what underlies reality. In the case of Macbeth, his (mis)interpretation of the Weird Sisters' words initiates a chain of events that could have been predestined or preordained, or, feeling overconfident, he could have caused his own downfall by "hav[ing] almost forgot the taste of fears" (V.v.11). Consequently, questions over the fluidity of social position are raised: does Macbeth's interpretation of the Weird Sisters' advice alter his destiny, fulfill the witches' prophesy, or provide a convenient

excuse to give in to ambition? In *Romance of the Forest*, a similar quandary appears; Adeline's interpretation of a damaged manuscript augments her fears and creates additional insecurity over her situation:

Her imagination was now strongly impressed, and to her distempered senses the suggestions of a bewildered mind appeared with the force of reality. Again she started and listened, and thought she heard '*Here*' distinctly repeated by a whisper immediately behind her. (Radcliffe 1999, 132-3)

After looking at the manuscript, Adeline imagines additional terrors such as disembodied voices and ghosts in the chamber, yet the most frightening thing about the damaged manuscript is that it only offers hints of the truth, as the Weird Sisters do, and much of the important information remains obscured and uncertain. Though her position as a "fatherless" virgin hidden in a ruined abbey already threatens Adeline, perusing the manuscript adds mental terrors to her situation:

While she sat musing, her fancy, which now wandered in the regions of terror, gradually subdued reason....Her imagination refused any longer the controul [sic] of reason, and, turning her eyes, a figure, whose exact form she could not distinguish, appeared to pass along an obscure part of the chamber: a dreadful chillness came over her, and she sat fixed in her chair. (134)

Adeline does not have a false sense of security like Macbeth; she instead feels threatened by everything around her. Her insecurity stems from her lack of agency in her own life, from her vulnerable female body, and from her overactive imagination. Both Macbeth and Adeline could be victims of their own horrid imaginings (or of outside forces) since

the knowledge “revealed” to them also half-conceals information, forcing the recipient to draw his or her own conclusions.

Ambiguous spaces that are both sinister and liberating, the forests in Shakespeare’s *As You Like It* and in Radcliffe’s novel also lie outside of the traditional realm of governance. It is no accident that Radcliffe alludes to Shakespeare’s *As You Like It* in her initial description of the “melancholy boughs” that hang over the path as the La Mottes, Peter, and Adeline enter the woods (II.vii.112, qtd. in Radcliffe 1999, 14). A reference to the forest of Arden carries with it loaded meanings, especially relating to possibilities for women, because there Rosalind can adopt a masculine disguise and declare, “Now we go in content / To liberty, and not to banishment” as she and her cousin Celia enter the forest together (I.iii.137-8). During Shakespeare’s time, cross-dressing allowed women to avoid “unacceptable male behavior like rape and forced marriage” (Walen 45). Yet the “complex, contradictory cultural context” surrounding the disguised heroine “often ignored the homoerotic potential of the convention” (Walen 45), though Shakespeare actually offers homoerotic suggestions of the close bond shared by Celia and Rosalind: “Shall we be sund’red? shall we part, sweet girl? / No let my father seek another heir. / Therefore devise with me how we may fly” (I.iii.98-100). In the woods Rosalind can flee her male persecutor, look and behave like a man, continue her intimacy with Celia, and even gain a certain power to choose her own spouse, while Celia’s desire to have her father “seek another heir” implies relinquishing the role of her father’s daughter and perhaps even a refusal to marry and thus provide future heirs. When Adeline plans her first escape into the forest, though she does not shift genders or form a physical bond with another woman, she hides in a “frightful spot” in a dark and “gloomy

romantic part of the forest” (149). As forbidding as it is, Adeline says of her restrictive cell, “it is a palace” offering her greater freedom compared to the threat of marriage or rape she wants to escape (149). Radcliffe even refers to the forest in *As You Like It* in an epigraph to her third chapter to illustrate that the woods really can be freeing:

Are not these woods

‘More free from peril than the envious court?

Here feel we but the penalty of Adam,

The season’s difference, as the icy fang

And churlish chiding of the winter’s wind.’ (II.i.3-7 qtd. in Radcliffe 33)

Adeline shares the sentiments of Shakespeare’s banished Duke Senior in this passage and describes the contrast between being “condemned to perpetual imprisonment” within the convent compared to the “pleasant view of nature” provided by the forest (Radcliffe 36-7). The forest surrounding the abbey in *The Romance* at first affords safety for Adeline and the La Mottes, but later becomes a prison where Adeline must suffer unwanted male advances. The ruined abbey itself hints at the dual nature of Catholic religious establishments—from the author’s Protestant perspective—as both sanctuaries and as threats, as Radcliffe will make more explicit in *The Italian*. Even better than the woods surrounding the abbey, there is security and comparative freedom in the sublime southern woods, and Clara and Adeline are free to compose music and poetry. Radcliffe also includes the slightest hint of transgressive and intimate female relationships between the beautiful young women, Clara and Adeline, such as that shared by Shakespeare’s Rosaline and Celia, which she ultimately makes more explicit in *The Italian*.

Just as Rosalind temporarily leaves the male-governed world behind to explore another way of living, in other words, Adeline is caught between two worldviews in *Romance of the Forest*: that of the traditional roles for women and a more modern view that there are other possibilities for women besides just being an object in need of protection. As a woman without a male defender, Adeline's fate in a patriarchal world could be captivity or violation at the hands of men unless, like Rosalind, she can find a space where gender expectations are more relaxed. Early in her novel, Radcliffe offers a sexualized description of the anguished heroine that recalls the cliché of the medieval damsel in distress to depict the old and often Catholically-based ways that pretend to safeguard but really entrap women. Adeline's dress "shewed but did not adorn her figure: it was thrown open at the bosom, upon which part of her hair had fallen in disorder, while the light veil hastily thrown on, had, in her confusion, been suffered to fall back" (Radcliffe 1999, 7). George E. Haggerty explains that Catholicism and depraved sexuality were closely linked in the English imagination; hence it is no surprise to an English reader that a young girl fresh from a convent would be described in a sexual manner. Initially presented as a gendered object whose distress adds to her beauty, Adeline is at first a helpless maiden forced into the reluctant protection of the La Motte family. Her status as a daughter is conflicted from the beginning of the novel when her "father" abruptly removes Adeline from the safety and oppression of the convent and thrusts her into the world:

An orphan in this wide world—thrown upon the friendship of strangers for comfort, and upon their bounty for the very means of existence, what but evil have I to expect! Alas, my father! how could you thus abandon your child—how

leave her to the storms of life—to sink, perhaps beneath them?” (100-1)

Aware that her father has failed in his duty as protector, Adeline encounters La Motte, whose ambiguous social position makes it difficult for him to adopt a masculine role of guardian: “to be exposed to destruction by the illness of a girl, whom he did not know and who had actually been forced upon him, was a misfortune, to which La Motte had not philosophy enough to submit with composure” (12). Though La Motte grudgingly agrees to guard Adeline, Radcliffe shows the traditional system to be deeply flawed because Adeline’s imagined father rejects her and later Adeline’s uncle, the Marquis de Montalt, her supposed protector, seizes power from his brother and then plans to rape and murder his niece. Radcliffe calls the patriarchal system into question if Adeline’s only options are two: “On one side was her father, whose cruelty had already been too plainly manifested; and on the other, the Marquis pursuing her with insult and vicious passion” (123). Rosalind’s dilemmas on entering the Forest of Arden are here transformed into patriarchal alternatives facing middle-class women in the late eighteenth century.

Though she includes no direct quotations from *Hamlet*, in *Romance of the Forest* Radcliffe incorporates frightening uncertainty, a search for identity, and usurpation by a brother, which could reflect disruptions to a time-honored social order such as the French Revolution of her time even as it echoes English fears of Scottish Catholics taking over the country after the death of Queen Elizabeth in Shakespeare’s day. Even though King James I began his reign peacefully, “there were worries over Scotsmen flooding south and taking over England” (Edwards 257). During Radcliffe’s era, this social disorder could reveal apprehensions about the lower classes overthrowing the upper classes during the Revolution. When Adeline learns “that her father had been murdered—murdered in

the prime of his days—murdered by means of his brother, against whom she must now appear, and in punishing the destroyer of her parent doom her uncle to death” (Radcliffe 1999, 346), she faces a situation reminiscent of Hamlet’s. When Hamlet discovers that king Hamlet was murdered by his own brother, at first the prince is uncertain how to respond. The supposed ghost of his father demands revenge, but Hamlet first wants to ascertain the truth, given debates at the time about the nature of ghosts and how truthful they are, before carrying out the ghost’s injunction. To be sure, Adeline’s beyond-the-grave communication with her sire is not from his ghost but rather from a damaged manuscript penned by her imprisoned and soon-to-be-murdered father. Still taking the evidence recorded in the document as fact, Adeline declares that she will help convict her uncle: “‘O my father!’ she would exclaim, ‘your last wish is fulfilled—the pitying heart you wished might trace your sufferings shall avenge them’” (346). Granted, though Adeline believes in her uncle’s guilt, she is reluctant to testify against him because she suffers from ideological conflicts over disrupting the social order. She wants to see a wrongdoer punished without incurring any personal guilt for testifying against him:

Though justice demanded the life of the murderer, and though the tenderness and pity which the idea of her father called forth urged her to defend his death, she could not, without horror, consider herself as the instrument of dispensing that justice which would deprive a fellow being of existence; and there were times when she wished the secret of her birth had never been revealed. (347)

Adeline’s feelings echo those of Hamlet’s when he seeks revenge against his will: “O cursed spite / That ever I was born to set it right” (I.iv.197-8). Both Adeline and Hamlet need to punish an uncle for the sake of social justice and to save the reputation of their

respective fathers. In both cases, though, resorting to personal revenge could show a disruption to the social order because it could cause the person seeking retribution to commit the same crime as the one that he or she is punishing. These family conflicts disclose unsettling threats to the very structure of society but, through the conveniently timed suicide of the Marquis, Radcliffe hints that an optimistic resolution to social disorder might still be possible.

Through allusions to Shakespeare plays then, *The Romance of the Forest* suggests that traditional social positions only create an illusion of security, while characters (especially women) breaking free of social boundaries is simultaneously frightening and liberating. Female dependence on men for protection can be menacing, especially if women are trapped within a flawed or outdated social hierarchy. Despite concerns raised about traditional systems of governance, Radcliffe, like Shakespeare in his comedies, wraps up her work with convenient and abrupt marriages for most of the characters. These marriages and tidy endings prove disconcerting because Radcliffe, as Shakespeare often does, broaches threats and then masks them to pretend total order is restored, even if it clearly is not. *The Romance of the Forest* acts as Adeline's damaged manuscript writ large, half-concealing and half-exposing long-repressed individual and collective tensions, very much in the tradition of Shakespeare.

While Radcliffe brings *The Romance* to a tidy conclusion, like Shakespeare in his comedies, Lewis refuses to accept that such pat answers exist. The worldview that *The Monk* reveals involves characters searching for self-identity and clear ground on which to stand, yet they violate social boundaries such as gender roles and incest taboos because

nothing knowable to humankind is substantial or trustworthy. Hence, with deliberate irony, Lewis depicts sexual transgressions as symbols of the most inviolable earthly laws and of political and religious control. Though Lewis does not directly reference the French Revolution in *The Monk*, he suggests negative aspects of a group mentality such as mob violence. In the midst of the chaos and fear surrounding the French Revolution, Lewis even plays on a national dread regarding a lack of autonomy on a political level, no control over the world at large, and even a lack of personal independence because one's own actions might be controlled by outside forces. This disruption and dread could potentially drive individuals to rape and murder and thus, quite possibly, lead them to eternal damnation. On top of all this, according to Jerrold Hogle,

The Monk remains frightening, as well as Gothic, because it tells us so much about what we both want and want not to confront: the ways we desire and are kept from desiring in the modern capitalist world that had largely, if not completely, come into being by the end of the eighteenth century. (Hogle 2003)

The forces of capitalism and gaining social privilege through financial gain add another layer of complexity to fears of losing independence or new possibilities for personal advancement during the eighteenth century. During the so-called Age of Enlightenment, though thinkers sought greater insight and understanding regarding the world around them, social norms were shifting and the middle class was increasing, not just in size but in wealth and influence, in part because of an increasingly capitalist economy. Therefore, the England of the 1790s was caught between looking back to an idealized past and dealing with confusion over the turmoil of the present, in its own way like what English audiences faced in Shakespeare's time as the 1590s transitioned into the 1600s.

In addition to reacting to contemporary political issues, Lewis develops several ideas dramatized by Shakespeare, especially a major ideological conflict between predestination and free will, which underlies the actions of the principal characters in *Macbeth* and is brought to a head by the revelations of Lucifer at the end of *The Monk*. As Shakespeare does in *Macbeth*, Lewis leaves the reader with unanswered questions about how much of reality is shaped by individual choices and how much is caused by threatening and powerful forces external to any one individual. Moreover, Lewis appropriates a comedic structure from Shakespeare as an obviously questionable cover for the absurdity of any text attempting closure where none can really be found. He intersperses quotations from several Shakespearean comedies such as *Measure for Measure*, *Twelfth Night*, *As You Like It*, and *Two Gentleman of Verona* and includes even more overtly menacing allusions to *Cymbeline*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello*, *Hamlet*, and *Macbeth*, all the while showing that there are no clear-cut answers. For instance, is the monk Ambrosio acting on his own free will or in response to traps that have been laid for him? Was it pre-ordained by a higher—or lower— power that he would fall? Can Ambrosio believe anything Lucifer says, since his claims cannot be substantiated by evidence and Lucifer is infamous for subterfuge? These questions are unsettling to Lewis' audience, not only because of a crossing of social boundaries in the text but because, if there is no free will, humanity is reduced to the level of players on a stage being forced to go through actions without any knowledge of the script.

In addition to recalling the subversive potential of hidden hypocrisy in *Measure for Measure*, Lewis also recognizes the sexually charged nature of young male actors dressed as women disguised as men as they were in Shakespeare's comedies, and,

therefore, uses the cross-dressing Matilda to reveal the threat of the social and religious recriminations for misplaced, including homosexual, desire. By allowing female characters in comedies to adopt male attire, Shakespeare permits a temporary blurring of boundaries between the sexes. For instance, in *Twelfth Night* II.iv.106-20, to which Lewis alludes in Rosario's story of his "sister" (77), Viola, safely masquerading as a young man, tells the Duke, "My father had a daughter lov'd a man / As it might be perhaps, were I a woman, / I should your lordship" (II.iv.107-9). Thus Viola, disguised as Cesario, guardedly hints at her secret love of the Duke, which would otherwise appear blatantly homosexual if professed while in her disguise. As Stephen Greenblatt points out in *Shakespearean Negotiations* (1988), gender during the Renaissance was thought to be changeable over a transitional period because male and female elements were intermingled within the growing and adolescent body. For Shakespeare, the overlapping of gender identities can therefore lead to confusion and conflict, to characters nearly overstepping the bounds of social hierarchy by nearly engaging in an accidental coupling with someone of the same gender. A doubled or shifting gender in his day could also raise pre-Gothic fears of sexual maturation not taking place or perhaps of an involuntary and undesired change. Lewis takes advantage of these unsettling implications in the ambiguous gender of Matilda, who initially appears disguised as a young novice who goes by the name Rosario, echoing Shakespeare's Cesario, to whom Ambrosio is attracted because of his "feminine" features. Ambrosio later confesses his conflicted passions to Matilda: "From the moment in which I first beheld you, I perceived sensations in my bosom till then unknown to me" (79). Ambrosio does not know how to handle his newfound desire but Matilda, now revealed to be (or transformed into) a

woman, encourages him to indulge his lust. Through the allusion to Viola/Cesario, Matilda/Rosario embodies dangers of gender ambiguity in sexual attraction and a mixed message of sexual pleasure, which could convert to eternal torment if the relationship violates social and religious norms.

Lewis suggests a private breakdown of social values and rules, which implies a larger crumbling of social distinctions in the novel and the world at large. Blurring sexual and social boundaries even further, Lewis seizes on the sexual taboos Shakespeare only hints at in *Cymbeline* and makes them more explicit with the incestuous rapes Ambrosio commits. Lewis begins volume III, chapter VIII with an epigraph in which Shakespeare's Jachimo alludes to the famous rape of Lucrece (II.ii.11-16). During this unsettling scene, Jachimo emerges from a chest in the bedroom of the sleeping princess and records "natural notes" about Imogen's body, including details about a mole on her left breast, and then purloins her bracelet to pretend he has "picked the lock and ta'en / The treasure of her honor" (II.ii.41-2). Though he does not physically ravish Imogen's body, Jachimo steals intimate knowledge that should be reserved for her husband, violates her trust, and sullies her good name. Additionally, Shakespeare hints at an even more horrifying transgression of social boundaries when Cloten, "that irregulous devil" (IV.ii.315), plans to murder the husband of his step-sister Imogen and then insult, physically assault, and rape her (III.v.137-45). While disguised as an attractive boy to escape sexual threats from her step-brother, Imogen receives a mixed message from Polydore: "Were you a woman, youth, / I should woo hard" (III.vi.67-8). This cautious solicitation threatens taboos about homosexuality because a man implies he feels attraction for a boy, though he pretends he would not act on his feelings unless the youth

transformed into a woman. In addition, his comment jeopardizes incest taboos, because Polydore turns out to be Imogen's lost brother Guiderius in disguise. Shakespeare does not allow any of these potential sexual transgressions to actually be perpetrated, though intimations of violent sexual assault fill the play. Lewis uses a similar situation with the lust-filled Ambrosio actually committing incest to show the perils of disguising one's self or one's family connections: murder of his mother and rape of his sister. Lead by misplaced desire to engage in perverse, though unspecified, acts with Matilda, Ambrosio commits simulated or actual rape and murder of his female family members. George Haggerty points out that

when Ambrosio “rapes” and murders his mother Elvira for getting in the way of his desire for his sister Antonia—and in turn rapes and murders Antonia because she comes to represent the hideousness of his desires—he transcendently violates the most basic law of patriarchal culture. (Haggerty 12)

According to Haggerty, society tries to control desire, and incest, as a symbol of the most forbidden transgression, violates that control (12). Once a basic law has been violated, the façade of order threatens to break down entirely. In disregarding sexual boundaries, Ambrosio and Matilda's relationship exemplifies a breakdown of the social hierarchy within the novel and mirrors fears of a similar social breakdown during Shakespeare's time as well as Lewis' own.

Lewis could even be said to be inspired by the corrupt world of *Measure for Measure*, an epigraph from which, as I have noted, Lewis uses to open his novel. He is also inspired by the convent of St. Clare that Shakespeare's Isabella wishes to join, not to mention by the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution, as Lewis presents the

brutal murder of the prioress of his own convent of St. Clare by an enraged mob. While Shakespeare's play describes the contradiction inherent in allowing sin to flourish then arbitrarily enforcing laws, Lewis shows that the common people trying to redress a perceived wrong can unleash a widespread evil themselves: "The convent of St. Clare represents corruption, superstition, and repression, but its overthrowers, no more admirable than the tyrants, are capable of the same atrocities or worse" (Paulson 536). In retribution for the alleged crime of one prioress, who, in punishing the pregnant Agnes, sought to keep sin in check within the convent, the people end up destroying the entire edifice and killing many: "the roofs came tumbling down upon the rioters, and crushed many of them beneath their weight. Nothing was to be heard but shrieks and groans. The convent was wrapped in flames, and the whole presented a scene of devastation and horror" (Lewis 303). According to D. L. Macdonald and Kathleen Scherf, Lewis wrote the novel as "an escape from anxiety" over the horrors of the Revolution where he witnessed firsthand the slaughter of a man and young child (Macdonald and Scherf 9), the brutality of which is reflected in his novel in scenes such as the mob violence against the prioress, which leaves her as "no more than a mass of flesh, unsightly, shapeless, and disgusting" (Lewis 302). Like most of the events in the novel, the murder of the prioress is morally vague because she is dismembered by a depraved crowd as punishment for administering a truly harsh form of justice within her Catholic jurisdiction: "St. Clare's rules are severe: but grown antiquated and neglected, many of late years have either been forgotten, or changed by universal consent into milder punishments" (298). "Universal consent" has softened many harsh punishments administered by the church in the past, yet the "popular phrensy [sic]" ignores threats of facing the Inquisition in the desire for

“barbarous vengeance” or to satisfy their “impotent rage” (302). The social distress and feelings of powerlessness unleashed by the public mutilation of the prioress is even more destructive and far-reaching than the original crime and, as Shakespeare does with the dark themes of *Measure for Measure*, Lewis raises timely questions about the conflict between religious and secular laws in his own day.

In addition to exploring the corruption evident in *Measure for Measure*, Lewis expands on subversive and Gothic possibilities in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, especially in his suggestions about the supernatural or spiritual realm. He therefore echoes one of the most unsettling scenes in this play to point out that imagined terrors can be just as frightening as reality. Macbeth’s lines at that point are these:

Avaunt! and quit my sight! Let the earth hide thee!

Thy bones are marrowless; thy blood is cold;

Thou has no speculation in those eyes

Which thou dost glare with! Hence, horrible shadow!

Unreal mockery, hence! (III.iv.93-96,106-7 qtd. in Lewis 133)

In this passage, Macbeth’s terror at the sight of Banquo’s ghost, which could be a genuine apparition that is not visible to others or an imaginary manifestation of Macbeth’s guilt, is unmistakable. In the chapter beginning with this epigraph from *Macbeth*, Lewis introduces the “bleeding nun,” “a woman of more than human stature, clothed in the habit of some religious order....her dress in several places stained with the blood which trickled from a wound upon her bosom” (Lewis 140), a figure based on the “unquiet sister spirit” in an anti-Catholic German story called “The Elopement” (1782) by Johann Karl August Musäus (370). While alive, Lewis’ nun, Beatrice, participated in

“nocturnal riots” and “unbridled debauchery” until, “not satisfied with displaying the incontinence of a prostitute, she professed herself an atheist” (165, 166). Lewis’ nun, who in life was forced to take vows, alternates between repeating the Lord’s Prayer and then “howl[ing] out the most horrible blasphemies,” thus showing her internal conflict towards the belief system to which her society expects her to conform (140). The bleeding nun represents fears of female sexual depravity, taken to an extreme here where she murders her lover in hopes of a liaison with his brother, that even the Catholic Church is unable to control. Together, Agnes and Don Raymond plan to make a mockery of the delusions of others, and Don Raymond tries to spirit off Agnes disguised as the bleeding nun, yet ends up with the “real” bleeding nun who thereafter appears unbidden at his bedside every night. By connecting Macbeth’s alarming vision of Banquo’s bloody ghost to a chapter describing Catholicism making people “slaves to the grossest superstition,” Lewis implies that religion encourages invented horrors as a form of social control and suggests a larger English suspicion of the Catholic Church (134). After all, distrust of organized religion must have made the world seem “strange, unsettling, and dangerous” during Shakespeare’s time, at least according to Stephen Greenblatt:

within living memory, England had gone from a highly conservative Roman Catholicism...to Catholicism under the supreme leadership of the king; to a wary, tentative Protestantism; to a more radical Protestantism; to a renewed and militant Roman Catholicism; and then, with Elizabeth, to Protestantism once again. In none of these regimes was there a vision of religious tolerance. (Greenblatt 2004, 94)

Shifting religious ideals undermined the “Christian” beliefs supposedly endorsed by each faction, and many people thus disguised their true religious sentiments (Greenblatt 2004, 97). By echoing all this as Shakespeare manifests it, Lewis shows that terrors raised by a lack of faith in organized religion haunt the public consciousness in his time, much as they did during the early 1600s when Shakespeare wrote *Measure for Measure*.

Besides showing a breakdown of social order, *The Monk* also raises questions about Ambrosio’s free will and destiny that draw upon the same complicated matter of social control that *Measure for Measure* raises. Shakespeare’s Angelo thinks he has been granted complete control over the law in Vienna by the Duke, yet the Duke never really leaves or fully relinquishes his power. The disguised Duke, though never hinted to be superhuman, discovers the secrets of Angelo’s corrupt heart, takes away his illusion of power, and forces him to marry Mariana. Therefore, Shakespeare’s Duke occupies a hidden, but controlling, position analogous to Lucifer’s at the end of Lewis’ *The Monk*. The tantalizing possibility of escaping punishment for one’s sins that leads Angelo, believing himself appointed “the voice of the recorded law” by the Duke, to attempt to sleep with Isabella is similar to the opportunity to be rescued from the inquisition Lucifer suggests to Ambrosio (II.iv.61). Lucifer states: “Scarcely could I propose crimes so quick as you performed them” and “[I] rejoiced in deceiving the deceiver” to imply that Ambrosio did not have the free will he believed he had (Lewis 362). However, since he is a fallen angel lacking credibility, nothing Lucifer claims can be verified. Elvira and Antonia are dead, and Matilda, who knew Ambrosio’s secret passions, is conveniently absent, so Lucifer mocks Ambrosio: “Had you resisted me one minute longer, you had saved your body and soul. The guards whom you heard at your prison-door came to

signify your pardon. But I had already triumphed: my plots had already succeeded” because Ambrosio already signed away his soul and will suffer the consequences (362). This questionable speech not only adds to Ambrosio’s presumed guilt; Lucifer also claims to have seen through Ambrosio’s pious façade into his secret feelings: “Know, vain man! that I have long marked you for my prey: I watched the movements of your heart; I saw that you were virtuous from vanity, not principle, and I seized the fit moment of seduction” (361). All along Ambrosio thought he controlled his own destiny or at least that the secrets of his soul remained private and that he was the active seducer, only to discover he might be a pawn of a higher (or lower) power. Lewis leaves open multiple possibilities for reading Ambrosio; he is either the active lust-filled perpetrator of evil or the passive victim of the machinations of Lucifer as the Catholic Church saw him in the 1500s and the 1700s. Of course it is also possible that like Shakespeare’s Angelo, Ambrosio embodies both of these possibilities simultaneously as Angelo does in actively losing self-control and being manipulated by the hidden Duke.

By thus playing out the influence on him of Shakespeare’s comedies, romances, and tragedies in *The Monk*, Lewis unmaskes real and imagined threats to the social order deeply feared in 1796. For instance, if even a seemingly flawless monk like Ambrosio can indulge in the most grievous of sins, what does it say about the likelihood of ordinary people committing such heinous crimes? In addition, if gender can be so easily manipulated and disguised, then presumably social hierarchies could be even more easily turned upside down. Parentage could be uncertain and convoluted, so much so that mistakes can be made such as sons murdering mothers and raping their own sisters without knowing that these relationships existed.

In *The Italian* (1796-97), Radcliffe uses a mixture of Shakespeare's comedies, histories, and tragedies to comment on the world-view of Lewis that everything is deceptive and therefore there can be no solid grounds of identity for human beings. To this end, even more than in *The Romance of the Forest*, Radcliffe draws from a larger range of Shakespearean plays than does any other Gothic novelist of her time, in part to present both fears of and an attraction to Catholicism, especially for women in the late 1700s feeling oppressed by male dominance in public and private life. In *Ann Radcliffe: The Great Enchantress*, Robert Miles argues that the "1790s were another period of vigorous questioning and evident transition, where accustomed models of identity could no longer, apparently, be instinctively relied upon" (Miles 5). In *The Italian* Radcliffe incorporates epigraphs from *Twelfth Night*, *Julius Caesar*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *King John*, *Richard III*, *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *As You Like It*, and *King Lear* to strongly connect Shakespeare's responses to times of political or social transition to her own view of a world pulled between different conceptions of social order and human value. Miles claims that Radcliffe's works "remain on transgressive borders without crossing them, to hold the excesses of desire in sight without being explicit" (Miles 55). Nowhere is a desire to present transgressive borders, but not cross them, more apparent than in Radcliffe's treatment of gender and sexuality. While hinting at ideological conflicts from her own time about gender, Radcliffe shows what can happen to unobserved women within the walls of Catholic religious establishments both unrestrained by and un-confined by male-dominated society. Though critics have long described Radcliffe's novels as anti-Catholic, *The Italian* is actually her "most engaged

and complex treatment of religion,” and she presents various possibilities for women, within even Catholicism, potentials both traditional and new (Clery 2008, xv). After all, as Miles says, “Radcliffe’s visionary art—her teasing use of the spectral—created a blurring across a set of boundaries: between inside and outside, nature and self, life and death” (Miles 15). This blurring of boundaries, or broadening the range of social and individual behaviors and identities, is especially evident in her treatment of Catholicism in relation to women. Within the walls of Radcliffe’s convents, women can experience both greater liberty and greater subjugation than in the outside world. Depending on the values of the abbess, the inhabitants of the convent might view the structures of religion and the buildings themselves as sanctuaries or as prisons. On one hand, cloistered nuns are free from the gaze and expectations of men and may form intimate bonds with each other, yet, on the other hand, abbesses and priests (as in *The Monk*) unchecked by the laws of the outside world wield the power to closet women in solitary chambers from which only death will release them.

While Lewis made many of Ambrosio’s sexual and religious transgressions blatant, Radcliffe in *The Italian* prefers to imply many of the same dark issues with her hero Vivaldi’s mother, the Marchesa di Vivaldi, in the ways she echoes Shakespeare’s Lady Macbeth. Radcliffe begins volume II, chapter IX, with an epigraph from *Macbeth* itself: “I am settled, and bend up / Each corporal agent to this terrible feat” (I.vii.79-80), which is spoken when Macbeth resolves to obey his wife’s murderous injunctions. Like Macbeth, the priest Schedoni has been encouraged by a woman to commit murder. In Schedoni’s case, in fact, the Marchesa di Vivaldi all but urges him to murder Ellena on her behalf so as to keep this apparently lower-class young woman from marrying her son.

There is an ideological conflict relating to gender brought out by both Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth and Radcliffe's Marchesa di Vivaldi, though, and readers are inclined to question if the Marchesa's willingness to commit murder is a symptom of her social position rather than her own evil nature. Even as she makes frequent use of her confessor, the Marchesa does not reside in a convent and, as a married woman, she is subject to the authority of her husband. When the Marchesa plots to kill Ellena, Schedoni points out that she is "possessed of a man's spirit," —which is similar to, though does not go as far as, Lady Macbeth's call for her own "unsexing" from demons— and the Marchesa adds, "You shall find I have a man's courage too" (Radcliffe 2008, 168). Later she backtracks and says, "My mind has not yet attained sufficient strength to encounter them; some woman's weakness still lingers at my heart" (169). The Marchesa's "woman's weakness" prevents her from declaring that she wants Ellena dead; she must drop hints and hope that Schedoni will make her wishes explicit instead. Frustrated, Schedoni admonishes her by saying "'you said you had a man's courage. Alas! you have a woman's heart'" (177). Lady Macbeth commits murder but she still feels guilt as evidenced by her sleepwalking: "Here's the smell of the blood still. All / the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand" (V.ii.50). Though she is "unsexed," references to perfumes and her "little hand" still connect Lady Macbeth to the feminine, and indeed her remorse is so great as to lead to her death. Radcliffe's rendering of the Marchesa in *The Italian* takes this inconsistency in *Macbeth* and transforms it into an eighteenth-century conflict between options available to women. During the late 1700s when Radcliffe was writing there was, as it happens, a conflicted ideological debate over the status of the feminine: "Women were...simultaneously, thought of as ethereal and

animal; in touch with emotional nuance perhaps, but it was a ‘touch’ which, by its very irrationality, could degenerate into gross physicality” (Miles 31). The Marchesa’s inability to completely rid herself of traditional female attributes even though her “heart was possessed by evil passions, and all her perceptions were distorted and discoloured by them,” thus echoes Lady Macbeth’s conflicting gender associations (Radcliffe 2008, 291). Radcliffe does not permit the Marchesa to descend into the gross physicality of lust exemplified by Matilda or the Abbess of St. Clare in *The Monk*, yet Radcliffe still endorses the frightening possibility presented in *Macbeth* that gender roles can change or overlap within a single woman.

Though gender roles might shift, threats specifically aimed at women, such as those Shakespeare uses in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, still play a role in *The Italian*. The options the abbess offers Ellena, to become a nun or to marry a man the Marchesa di Vivaldi has chosen for her (83), echo the undesirable choices Hermia is given in the beginning of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*: to become a nun against her will or to marry a man her father wants her to marry. Hermia is also given the option of death, and later Ellena will be threatened with the chamber from which no nun returns alive, which also references Lewis’ secret dungeon where Agnes suffers her greatest horrors in *The Monk*. Instead of Shakespeare’s mysterious forest, which offers temporary freedom while also retaining or even increasing the sexual threat from men, *The Italian* uses religious establishments to free or confine Ellena, who spends much of the novel enclosed by walls either voluntarily or against her will: “Of the walls that enclosed her, [Vivaldi] scarcely ever lost sight....evening found him still pacing slowly beneath the shade of those melancholy boundaries that concealed his Ellena” (181). Ellena initially wants to find

sanctuary in the secure enclosure of a nearby convent after the death of her guardian, but she is kidnapped and held within the walls of a different convent where the abbess mistreats her. Ellena, in solitude, considers the means of prevailing with the Confessor

to allow her to return either to Altieri, or to the neighbouring cloister of '*Our Lady of Pity*' ...[otherwise] it appeared like a second banishment to San Stefano, and every abbess, except that of the *Santa della Pieta*, came to her imagination in the portraiture of an inexorable jailor. (Radcliffe 2008, 286)

Without a guardian protecting her in Altieri, the most comforting refuge is not the outside world but rather a separate convent of her choice where governance is less oppressive, though all convents remain threatening prisons. Radcliffe, like Shakespeare, uses the confines of a specific space to point out conflicts in society's need to confine women to protect them from male threat or to keep them from creating social chaos by exercising their liberty and free will.

Radcliffe even includes an epigraph from a scene in *Twelfth Night* when Shakespeare's Viola, disguised as a young man, first meets Olivia. After Olivia unveils and reveals her beauty, Viola explains what she would do if she felt unrequited love for Olivia:

Olivia. Why what would you?

Viola. Make me a willow cabin at your gate,

And call upon my soul within the house;

Write loyal cantos of contemned love,

And sing them loud even in the dead of night:

Halloo your name to the reverberate hills,

And make the babbling gossip of the air

Cry out, Olivia! O! you should not rest

Between the elements of air and earth,

But you should pity me. (I.v.271-80 qtd. in Radcliffe 2008, 23)

In a soliloquy following this passage in *The Italian*, Olivia admits a sudden attraction to the effeminate young man, Viola in disguise, who has appeared on her doorstep. By including this loaded passage, Radcliffe suggests Ellena's hidden conflicts about marriage. In one chapter, Radcliffe describes Vivaldi falling for Ellena, yet "the opinions of [Ellena] were found less ductile than had been expected. She was shocked at the idea of entering clandestinely the family of Vivaldi" (32). Though warmly encouraged by her ambitious aunt, Ellena refuses to marry Vivaldi without the approval of his family. As alluded to with the unreciprocated love Viola imagines between herself and Olivia, Ellena might want her virginity and reputation to remain safe from a potential sexual relationship with Vivaldi and also have the freedom to enjoy the company of other women within the walls of a convent. Therefore, Radcliffe presents a conflicted view of the convent as an alternative to marriage; after all, marriage is one of the threatening choices given to Ellena by the abbess:

Of the three evils, which were placed before her, that of confinement, with all its melancholy accompaniments, appeared considerably less severe, than either the threatened marriage, or a formal renunciation of the world; either of which would devote her, during life, to misery, and that by her own act. (85)

Prior to meeting Vivaldi, Ellena has lived in self-imposed confinement with only female companions at Altieri and rejected all suitors "who had hitherto discovered her within the

shade of her retirement” (36). Given the choice between marriage and becoming a nun, Ellena’s desire to seek permanent sanctuary in a nunnery rather than in marriage with Vivaldi is shown in her “accidental” decision to wear a nun’s veil to their clandestine wedding and her ready acceptance of a nun’s habit as a disguise when fleeing San Stefano. Towards the end of the novel, Ellena is on the verge of taking the veil, but only if it is her own choice: “To Ellena, the magnificent scenes of the *Santa della Pieta* seemed to open a secure, and, perhaps, a last asylum; for in her present circumstances, she could not avoid perceiving how menacing and various were the objections to her marriage with Vivaldi” (302). The attraction of convents might not be limited to the safety provided by the walls because Radcliffe’s quotation from *Twelfth Night* serves as an early indicator that sexual attraction for Ellena might include more than just the heterosexual enticement of marriage.

Walls, such as those surrounding convents, can hold things in or keep things out and thus can exemplify a conflicted ideology of transgressing or remaining within social boundaries and therefore, like Shakespeare with Olivia in *Twelfth Night*, Radcliffe uses a character named Olivia to hint the possibility (though only that) of a same-sex attraction. Despite her apparent misery confined within the convent of San Stefano, Ellena is cheered by meeting the melancholy nun Olivia, to whom she is immediately drawn. The attraction Ellena feels towards the alluring nun hints at first at a homoerotic interest, and because the nun later is revealed to be her mother, also a veiled incestuous desire. As George E. Haggerty points out, in *The Italian*, “doubly transgressive female-female desire resides at the heart of the novel and gives its structure” (Haggerty 15). Clearly then, the relationship between Ellena and her mother raises key issues in the novel much

as Shakespeare did with same-sex attraction in *Twelfth Night*. According to Greenblatt, *Twelfth Night* is a play that

continually tantalized its audience with the spectacle of homoerotic desire:

Cesario in love with “his” master Orsino, Orsino evidently drawn toward Cesario, Antonio passionately in love with Sebastian, Olivia aroused by a page whose effeminacy everyone remarks. (Greenblatt 1988, 67)

Though Shakespeare ends the play with traditional marriages, the play also concludes with “a homoerotically constructed passion, for Olivia is aware in the concluding scene that Viola is a woman and still endeavors to establish a lasting relationship” (Walen 60). Shakespeare’s substitution of one twin for another, who appear identical except for their presumed anatomical differences, and the ease with which characters switch their affections from one gender to the other: both make viewers question the fluidity of desire. As Pauline Kiernan points out, “that Olivia is instantly attracted to a young man who looks like a young woman carries a coded suggestion of lesbianism” (Kiernan 168). By using the name Olivia in *The Italian*, Radcliffe likewise invokes this veiled lesbianism amongst the nuns. Ellena, whose heart has already been touched and spirit elevated by the solemn service (85), admires Olivia’s passionate singing and is further captivated when she sees the look of “sublime enthusiasm” on Olivia’s mature but still beautiful countenance (86). Ellena’s senses have been aroused by the older nun’s singing, and she “was not only soothed, but in some degree comforted, while she gazed upon her... [and] she thus knew there was one human being, at least, in the convent, who must be capable of feeling pity, and willing to administer consolation” (87). Ellena yearns for the comfort she is certain only Olivia can give her, and when she returns to her chamber she feels that

the “regard of this nun was not only delightful, but seemed necessary to her heart, and she dwelt, with fond perseverance, on the smile that had expressed so much, and which threw one gleam of comfort, even through the bars of her prison” (88). While at the convent, Vivaldi even comes to fear Ellena’s feelings towards him have been supplanted by thoughts of Olivia. The passionate parting between the two women exemplifies their feelings towards one another: “The fears of Ellena now gave way to affectionate sorrow, as weeping on the bosom of the nun, she said ‘farewel [sic]! O farewel, my dear, my tender friend! I must never, never see you more, but I shall always love you’” (135). Observing all this, Vivaldi “gently disengage[s]” the two women and then asks Ellena, “do I then hold only the second place in your heart?” which suggests that the mutual attraction between Ellena and Olivia threatens him. Before quitting the garden, Ellena looks back, “that she might see Olivia once again” until the “gentle violence of Vivaldi withdrew her from the spot” (135). Vivaldi must forcefully separate Ellena from Olivia before he can remove her from the religious establishment. In addition, to reach Ellena, Vivaldi must cross a garden, be admitted “within the walls,” enter the “outer parlour,” and finally the “inner apartment,” which suggests vaginal imagery (124). Vivaldi’s behavior suggests that lesbianism threatens the traditional social order unless it is kept concealed within the walls of a convent. Radcliffe sublimates the homoerotic attraction between the women by substituting a mother/daughter bond for sexual interest between Olivia and Ellena and therefore channels desire into a socially acceptable relationship, as Shakespeare did with Olivia’s willingness to accept Viola as a sister-in-law instead of a husband.

In addition to raising fears of lesbian relationships, another threatening aspect of life in the convent is the opportunity for religious hypocrisy, especially because the power wielded by a mother abbess does not fall under the direct jurisdiction of secular law. Radcliffe includes an epigraph from *Romeo and Juliet* to intimate a lingering distrust of Catholics and fears of their hypocrisy: “What if it be a poison, which the friar / Subtly hath ministered?—” (IV.iii.24-25 qtd. in Radcliffe 2008, 54). Friar Lawrence has been loyal to Juliet and even secretly married her to Romeo in Shakespeare’s play, yet Juliet still fears that he might murder her lest the clandestine marriage should “dishonor” him (IV.iii.26). Though Radcliffe uses this quotation to highlight the likelihood that the monk Schedoni has poisoned Ellena’s aunt Bianchi, this allusion also suggests a cultural mistrust of Catholics, though for Radcliffe this fear is coupled with an attraction to the seclusion of the convent (or to the women who reside within its walls) that she carries throughout the novel. Though nuns and the mother superior should ideally share a mother/daughter relationship, the abbess of Olivia’s convent of San Stefano is presented as a religious hypocrite, and Ellena reproaches her:

“It is only when the Superior ceases to respect the precepts of that holy religion, the precepts which teach her justice and benevolence, that she herself is no longer respected. The very sentiment which bids us revere its mild and beneficent laws, bids us also reject the violators of them: when you command me to reverence my religion, you urge me to condemn yourself.” (Radcliffe 2008, 84-5)

Radcliffe suggests that true religious faith may not be possible in the current Catholic system; therefore she includes the character of the austere abbess who vows punishment rather than forgiveness. On the other hand, Radcliffe holds up the distinct abbess of the

Santa della Pieta as a model of the ideal leader of a convent. The mother superior's views on Catholicism sound similar to Radcliffe's middle-class Protestantism:

Her religion was neither gloomy, nor bigoted; it was the sentiment of a grateful heart offering itself up to a Deity, who delights in the happiness of his creatures; and she conformed to the customs of the Roman church, without supposing a faith in all of them to be necessary to salvation. (299)

Radcliffe implies that Catholic religious institutions could adapt themselves to fit into a Protestant worldview by ignoring or by not taking seriously some practices. According to E. J. Clery, Radcliffe brings the presumably Protestant reader "into a curious empathy with the Catholic Other" (Clery 2008, xxi). Not only does the abbess of the Santa della Pieta secretly reject some tenets of the Catholic church that would be objectionable to Protestants; Radcliffe also introduces a just inquisitor, a device which may seem incomprehensible. Clery remarks that

This bizarre invention serves no direct purpose in the plot. It can most readily be interpreted as a symptom of the collective loss of nerve among the Protestant elite in Britain: confidence in the progress of a secular society must falter according to plan, and any religious institution now deserved a second look. (Clery 2008, xxiii)

By incorporating a reference to *Romeo and Juliet*, then, Radcliffe shows that evil and goodness are not necessarily fixed to certain stereotypes. Even though Juliet might briefly suspect friar Lawrence of poisoning her, the monk also shows sympathy for her situation and provides assistance to Juliet when no one else will. Therefore, Radcliffe includes the stereotypical ruthless inquisitors and cruel abbesses in *The Italian*, but her

echoing of Shakespeare also allows for unexpected possibilities of compassion within a notoriously (at least to eighteenth century British Protestants) corrupt Catholic institution.

Throughout her writing career, then, Radcliffe looks to Shakespeare to model responses to threats of his time in order for her to address English Protestant and female fears during the late 1700s. *The Italian* shows the past and present intermingled—for example, the ancient monasteries and cloisters in which the heroine takes shelter hearken back to the past—yet because Ellena is not permitted to escape the world forever, it indicates an irresolvability between the pulls of the past and the present that may extend into the future. Catholicism enforces coded lesbianism, though this is not necessarily negative in Radcliffe's view, as long as same-sex desire remains hidden or is re-routed into a more socially acceptable relationship, as in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. Ellena's attempt to escape from entrenched ideologies of the past shows that the present is just as bound up in confusion, with notions of identity being pulled in conflicting directions amidst anxiety over a changing world. There is a certain optimism in Radcliffe's ending to *The Italian* in that it echoes the message from Shakespeare's comedies that somehow all confusion can be cleared up, or at least veiled, that evil will destroy itself, and that order can be restored to society. But much of the ideological irresolution of her time remains, especially in *The Italian's* allusions to Shakespeare and their ways of sometimes confirming and sometimes challenging *The Monk*.

CHAPTER THREE

P. B. SHELLEY: THE TYRANNY OF GENDER IN

ZASTROZZI, ST. IRVYNE, AND THE CENCI

Percy Bysshe Shelley also responds to Shakespeare throughout his career, even in his early Gothic novels, *Zastrozzi* (1810) and *St. Irvyne* (1811), and certainly in his more mature Gothic tragedy, *The Cenci* (1819). Though Shelley imitates some passages and ideas from Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya* (1806), Lewis' *The Monk* (1796), Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), William Godwin's *St. Leon* (1799) and even Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Julie or the New Heloise* (1761), he moves beyond these immediate imitations by using Shakespeare to a greater extent than do any of these sources save Radcliffe. Responding to *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *Measure for Measure*, *Othello*, and *Romeo and Juliet* in particular allows Shelley to reveal conflicted ideologies on several fronts: the place of women in a society still reacting to the growth of manufacture and increasing consumerism, the destabilization resulting from the Industrial Revolution, and the early agitation for greater equality between the sexes as expressed by Mary Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) the mother of the Mary who became Shelley's wife. Writing after the French Revolution, in his novels *Zastrozzi* and *St. Irvyne*, Shelley uses Shakespearean epigraphs, allusions, and plot similarities then, to hint at British anxieties of his own time, especially in relation to liberty from oppression and the constraints of outdated gender roles. The horrors associated with social restructuring are also reflected in the dark and threatening world of these novels, often in their allusions to Shakespeare.

In his only completed play, *The Cenci: A Tragedy, in Five Acts*, Shelley further incorporates scenes that echo several of Shakespeare's greatest tragedies including *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, and *King Lear*. Moving beyond just similarities in speech-patterns, Shelley explores questions raised by Shakespeare about the roles of fathers and daughters in a patriarchal society and questions who can (and should) put a stop to tyranny while making "apparent some of the most dark and secret caverns of the human heart" (Shelley "Preface" 2002a, 239). In doing so, Shelley also alludes to issues raised in Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594), though Shakespeare composed it prior to the events described in *Relation of the Death of the Family of the Cenci* (1599), Shelley's primary source. Shelley, in his *Cenci*, revisits the time of Shakespeare to describe a historical tyrant overthrown by his long-oppressed family to subtly raise questions about responses to tyranny in the early 1800s. By these means, taken together, Shelley's Gothic works point to the way social disorder obscures or destroys established hierarchies while questioning what can be done to restore or establish comforting beliefs in an uncertain world.

In *Zastrozzi*, to begin with, Shelley questions changing gender expectations of his own time, building on Dacre's *Zofloya*, by creating a sexually aggressive female character who pushes the ideological boundaries of femininity in surprising ways. Though Shelley's primary models for his "Matilda" were Dacre's Victoria and Lewis' Matilda, he also uses the model of Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth to imply the political and social ramifications of women taking over traditional male roles and actively seeking power. The sexually charged Gertrude in *Hamlet* also contributes to Shelley's characterization of his Matilda. He contrasts this model with the passive Julia of

Zastrozzi, who channels Ophelia to suggest that this submissive female archetype is not sustainable. Shelley even insinuates that his Verezzi shares characteristics with Macbeth. By combining various echoes of Shakespeare, Shelley points out very unsettling issues of his own time indeed.

Shelley relies heavily on Shakespeare's depictions of Lady Macbeth to suggest that Matilda, when confronted with a man who is afraid to act, might aggressively take control and usurp his social position. By building on Shakespeare's reversals of traditional gender expectations, Shelley can thus point out both frightening and exciting possibilities of breaking down preconceived boundaries between the sexes. Shelley includes two epigraphs from *Macbeth*, which bring to mind Lady Macbeth's schemes for power, and connects them with the lustful Matilda's designs on Verezzi. For instance, in one epigraph, Lady Macbeth mocks her husband's inaction:

Art thou afraid

To be the same in thine own act and valour

As thou art in desire? Wouldst thou have that

Which thou esteemest the ornament of life,

Or live a coward in thine own esteem,

Letting *I dare not* wait upon *I would?* (I.vii.39-45, qtd. in Shelley 2002a, 100)

Lady Macbeth suggests that if men hesitate too long or fail to take action, women might be waiting in the wings, eager to seize control or follow their own suppressed desires. Shelley alludes to these mounting fears in *Macbeth* and uses the loaded Gothic word "horror" to describe Verezzi's reaction at the critical moment when Matilda is unmasked as a would-be villain who covers Verezzi's "motionless" hand with "a thousand burning

kisses” (99) then passionately embraces his prostrate body. When Verezzi awakens and discovers Matilda’s arms around him, “His whole frame trembled with chilly horror, and he could scarcely withhold himself from again fainting” (Shelley 2002a, 100). Shelley implies that Matilda desires to physically take advantage of her insensible victim, even though, with the exception of Dacre’s character Victoria in her *Zofloya*, rape is typically the prerogative of male Gothic villains. As Macbeth’s fear provides an opening for Lady Macbeth to take charge, Verezzi’s frequent fainting provides an opportunity for Matilda to act on her sexual desires.

Other epigraphs from *Macbeth* allow Shelley to firmly solidify the connection between Lady Macbeth and Matilda, both of whom disrupt established gender boundaries in their eagerness to fulfill their own ambitions. Shelley includes the speech from Lady Macbeth after she invites demonic possession and vows that Duncan must die:

That no compunctious visitings of nature
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
The effect and it. Come to my woman’s breasts,
And take my milk for gall, ye murd’ring ministers,
Whatever, in your sightless substances,
Ye wait on nature’s mischief. (I.v.45-50, qtd. in Shelley 2002a, 140)

This epigraph shows Lady Macbeth exchanging the nurturing part of her female nature for passion and action, which are character traits traditionally more appropriate for men than for women (“World of Shakespeare’s Humors”). After intentionally and irrevocably discarding her female nature, Lady Macbeth instructs Macbeth to take the passive role of feigning innocence and leave the plotting to her (I.v.75-86). Shelley includes this

epigraph at a key moment when the hot-headed Matilda gains the devotion of Verezzi, only to have the apparition of Julia destroy “her visions of air-built ecstasy” (Shelley 2002b, 141). Gazing at the bloody corpse of Verezzi, Matilda undergoes a transformation and becomes filled with choler: “Revenge, direst revenge, swallowed up every other feeling. Her eyes scintillated with a fiend-like expression” (142). Echoing Lady Macbeth, the “fiend-like queen” (V.viii.82), Shelley presents Matilda as an equally “fiend-like” woman who renounces male dominance and embodies that terrifying possibility of female liberty gone wrong. Together, Lady Macbeth and Matilda conjure up a horrifying portrait of a woman refusing to be controlled by the mandates of society. After Verezzi’s suicide, Matilda’s desires are thwarted and her wrath is fully unleashed, ushering in the climax of the novel when she oversteps gender boundaries completely and brutally murders Julia.

Shelley uses both the trepidations of his own time of revolutionary power shifts and the transgressive female behavior Shakespeare elucidates in the behavior of Lady Macbeth to shape the character of Matilda. Lady Macbeth commits murder, but not before first taking a stab at Macbeth’s masculinity, crying “Infirm of purpose! / Give me the daggers. The sleeping and the dead / Are but as pictures; ‘tis the eye of childhood / That fears a painted devil” (II.ii.49-50). By pointing out her husband’s inability to follow the precepts of masculinity, Lady Macbeth highlights her own deviance from typical female behavior. The earlier Gothic tradition associates women mostly with victimization, passivity, and an inability to act. Indeed, most Gothic novels include “the young women who are the perennial victims of a variety of cruelties and whose situations in the novels—like the legal and social situation of women in England at the time—are

such that they are in continual *jeopardy*” (Behrendt 16). Shelley’s sexualized description of Matilda joyfully penetrating her female victim with a dagger suggests a frightening defiance of traditional gender boundaries. After making sure that her rival is conscious and can fully experience pain,

the ferocious Matilda seized Julia’s floating hair, and holding her back with a fiend-like strength, stabbed her in a thousand places; and, with exulting pleasure, again and again buried the dagger to the hilt in her body, even after all remains of life were annihilated. (Shelley 2002b, 142)

The repeated burying of the dagger up to the hilt in Julia’s immobilized body hints at a sort of violent rape that continues even after the victim is dead. Not only does Matilda slaughter Julia, but the obvious pleasure she takes in penetrating the body of another woman implies rejecting the constraints of her gender and even the role of the beleaguered Gothic heroine. Matilda responds to the ever present threat of victimization by preemptively becoming the aggressor and victimizing others.

While the majority of Shelley’s predecessors describe the plight of the repressed and defenseless Gothic heroine, Shelley follows the example of Dacre’s Victoria in *Zofloya* and Lewis’ Matilda in *The Monk* by concentrating on lustful and powerful women. Dacre’s Victoria relies on the supernatural assistance of Zofloya to commit murder while Lewis’ Matilda, according to Lucifer in *The Monk*, is actually a demon. Shelley, in turn, adds allusions to Shakespeare’s Lady Macbeth, who actively invites demonic possession to accomplish her ends, to show that, in a world with shifting views of women’s roles, as women gain prestige, men become vulnerable to persecution and may, like Macbeth, even model behavior traditionally associated with women. Shelley’s

portrayal of Verezzi shows the frightening possibility that men can not only lapse into feminine behavior when confronted with unforeseen events, inexplicable apparitions, or even social upheaval, but may never recover their masculinity. In *Macbeth*, when Macbeth sees, or thinks he sees, the ghost of Banquo, he is “unmanned in folly” until the ghost departs and Macbeth can declare “I am a man again” (III.iv.72, 107). For Macbeth, his “unmanning” proves to be temporary, though suggestions of his physical and political impotence are carried throughout the play by his wife’s insinuations (Townshend 193). In *Zastrozzi*, Shelley echoes the established Radcliffean Gothic plot of an innocent heroine pursued by a lustful, malevolent villain but also opens with the male “hero” powerless, weak, and restrained by other men: “Not long did the hapless victim of unmerited persecution enjoy an oblivion which deprived him of a knowledge of his horrible situation. He awoke—and overcome by excess of terror, started violently from the ruffians’ arms” (Shelley 2002b, 62). The restoration of the “victim’s” consciousness and his entrapment in the arms of ruffians echo the treatment to which heroines are subject in many 1790s Gothic novels, such as the works of Radcliffe, in which heroines remain passive while a male character frees her from the bondage of villainous men. Every time Verezzi is presented with a frightening obstacle, he swoons or loses consciousness rather than face conflict: “Coma—death—is the only way out” for him (Chesser 26). Unlike Macbeth’s temporary “unmanning,” Verezzi turns to suicide as the only way of coping with unending emasculation. Haggerty sees Verezzi’s suicide as “a fantasy of male passivity that finally withdraws into itself. This passive, weakened male can never realize desire in any other form but that of loss” (Haggerty 43). Verezzi’s

suicide captures a threat of social destabilization hinted at by Macbeth's temporary unmanning and shows frightening possibilities if men become permanently weakened.

In this fashion, Shelley indirectly addresses concerns over the strength of men and women raised by Shakespeare in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, but he does so in the wake of the issues raised by Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* in 1792.

Wollstonecraft describes the villainy of male-dominated society, which constrains women's intellects and exploits their economic power, often through allusions to the works of Shakespeare as social commentary on the roles of men and women. After all, Hamlet compares himself to women who are lowest in social class and thus the least able to change their social situation. Hamlet questions if he is "pigeon-livered" and lacks the choler to take action and instead "Must like a whore unpack my heart with words / And fall a-cursing, like a very drab" (II.ii.509, 518-9). Thus Hamlet suggests that men have physical actions while women have only words. However, Wollstonecraft points out that men such as Shakespeare possessed both: "Shakespeare never grasped the airy dagger with a nerveless hand" (Wollstonecraft 52), alluding to the "air drawn dagger" Lady Macbeth says is the vision of Macbeth's fear (*Macbeth* III.iv.61). Wollstonecraft implies that women in her own time are at a disadvantage compared to men because of the mental and physical degradation placed on and expected of women. Shelley echoes Wollstonecraft in Verezzi's lack of virility and inability to control a phallic object: "The nerveless fingers of Verezzi dropped the pencil" (91). Though Verezzi controls only a pencil instead of a dagger, his "nerveless" condition connects him with women and by association makes him unsuitable for active, masculine endeavors such as seizing power or controlling other people. Shelley uses Verezzi to ask: if women's appendages are

traditionally “nerveless,” i.e. lacking energy, weak, listless, or limp (OED), then if a man lacks nerve, what active role can he play in society?

As he does with the frequently swooning Verezzi, Shelley also portrays Verezzi’s “true” love interest, Julia, to be feeble. Shelley shows that the traditional female archetype, informed by Ophelia and then represented by the majority of Gothic heroines—a figure who is passive, obedient, and dependent on men— might not be able to survive in a world in which men are reluctant, or even unable, to support women. Rather than being surprising or offensive to most of Shelley’s contemporaries, Julia’s weakness embodies a cultivation of female debility that had become too much the ideal by the early nineteenth century. Lawrence Stone points out that women of quality by Shelley’s time were expected to languish physically and even emotionally, and so women “became identified with both physical and psychological delicacy and debility— defects in fact artificially induced in the interests of conformity to the current ideal of beauty” (283). Attaining this high level of weakness exaggerated the need for female dependence on men at a time when social changes were upsetting the traditional roles of both sexes (Brody xxxv). The portrayal of a woman who needs rescuing reflects the socially, economically, and politically repressed state of women in the late 1700s. After all, Wollstonecraft vividly describes fragile women of her time who respond to the “most trifling dangers” by clinging to men “with parasitical tenacity” and then questions: “In the name of reason, and even common sense, what can save such beings from contempt; even though they be soft and fair?” (Wollstonecraft 80). Verezzi therefore contrasts his idealization of the frail and feminine Julia with Matilda:

Never had he beheld those dark shades in her character, which, if developed,

could excite nothing but horror and detestation...but still could he not help observing a comparison between her and Julia, whose feminine delicacy shrunk from the slightest suspicion, even of indecorum. Her fragile form, her mild heavenly countenance, was contrasted with all the partiality of love, to the scintillating eye, the commanding countenance, the bold expressive gaze, of Matilda. (Shelley 2002b, 84)

Verezzi believes that the feminine, delicate, and unattainable Julia should be the ideal according to society. However, the late eighteenth century was a time when “remnants of medievalism and harbingers of industrialization [sic]—confusingly overlapped” (Miles 67), especially in the proper role for women. Shelley models Julia after women like Ophelia, proper medieval daughters who obey their supposedly all-knowing and controlling father figures. Yet Shakespeare through Ophelia indicates troubling consequences for women’s dependence on men, which Shelley echoes in the quick dispatch of Julia by Matilda, a woman who disregards the traditional limitations of her gender.

Matilda not only rejects the passive female role of Ophelia and subverts gender roles; she also shares the menacing sexual urges of Hamlet’s mother, Gertrude, which Shelley uses to point out similarities between sexual and murderous excesses. Hamlet expresses his fear of his mother’s transgressive sexuality with, “O, most wicked speed, to post / With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!” (I.ii.156-7). Suggesting that “frailty” is gendered female, Hamlet’s mother, according to her son, is worse than a “beast, that wants discourse of reason” for eschewing the norms of matrimony (I.ii.146, 150). By making allusions to Gertrude’s sex life, Shelley expands upon ideas about women’s

threatening sexuality suggested by Shakespeare. For instance Shelley mentions the “warring soul” of Matilda to allude to the “fighting soul” of Gertrude during the closet scene in *Hamlet* and to reveal that women have conflicted feelings about subduing their desires because their souls, or even bodies, might rebel in threatening ways (Shakespeare III.iv.113). According to Hamlet’s view, Gertrude gives in to her lust in marrying Claudius a month after her husband’s death. Likewise, Matilda’s lust is the catalyst for her misdeeds. She works herself into a frenzy when she imagines Julia intimately holding Verezzi: “[Matilda’s] bosom heaved with throbbing palpitations; and, whilst describing the success of her rival, her warring soul shone apparent from her scintillating eyes” (Shelley 2002b, 101). Matilda tries to supplant her adversary by overthrowing her, much as detractors of the French Revolution feared that women might want to throw off the restraints placed upon them by dependence on men (Brody xix). Shelley echoes this fear through Matilda’s frenzied stabbing of Julia. Shelley suggests that like Hamlet, Verezzi and men in general feel threatened by animalistic and uncontrollable female lust, which can lead to greater social transgressions of violating incest taboos or even committing murder.

In addition to recognizing the threat from female lust in *Hamlet*, Shelley’s vagueness about the menace or promise of an afterlife in *Zastrozzi* follows Shakespeare’s example in *Hamlet* during Hamlet’s famous “to be or not to be” speech where he questions whether he should commit suicide or battle “outrageous fortune” (III.i.55-9). Hamlet also contemplates the mystery of death and the “undiscovered country” that remains an enigma to the living (III.i.78). Shelley, whose well-known personal sentiments about organized religion were published in *The Necessity of Atheism* (1811),

complicates Hamlet's "dread of something after death" (III.i.79) by retaining Shakespeare's ambiguities and even questioning if an afterlife exists (Cameron 23). At the conclusion of *Zastrozzi*, Shelley leaves Matilda's fate unknown to the reader though she clings to religion and hope of salvation, which she previously spurned:

The guilty Matilda shrunk at death—she let fall the upraised dagger—her soul had caught a glimpse of the misery which awaits the wicked hereafter, and, spite of her contempt of religion—spite of her, till now, too firm dependence on the doctrines of atheism, she trembled at futurity; and a voice from within, which whispers, "thou shalt never die!" spoke daggers to Matilda's soul. (Shelley 2002b, 143)

Echoing Hamlet's desire to chastise his mother by "speaking daggers," Matilda's change of heart about her beliefs suggests that uncertainty regarding the afterlife or even the idea of eternal life itself could pose a threat. Writing after the French Revolution, which considerably diminished the power of the church in France, Shelley sets Matilda's last-ditch effort to return to religious views against *Zastrozzi*'s intentional rejection of religion. *Zastrozzi* denies God without hesitation and welcomes death: "Am I not convinced of the non-existence of a Deity? am [sic] I not convinced that death will but render this soul more free, more unfettered? Why need I then shudder at death?" (Shelley 2002b, 153). Though *Zastrozzi* will receive harsh earthly punishment for his wrongdoings, he maintains he will "experience with some degree of satisfaction the arrival of death" and, in fact, *Zastrozzi* concludes with the scornful villain giving "a wild, convulsive laugh of exulting revenge" as he dies (156). While Matilda, like Hamlet, rejects suicide in case there might be eternal consequences, *Zastrozzi* sees death as

liberating. By presenting two opposing viewpoints, Shelley, aided by echoes of *Hamlet*, leaves open the opposing possibilities of death as liberation of the soul or eternal condemnation for one's sins.

Zastrozzi, after all, alludes to Shakespeare's texts that depict regime change or challenge traditional social hierarchies to demonstrate the political implications of supporting revolutionary ideas and the threats or even liberating possibilities of reimagining traditional social roles. This early novel most directly refers to *Macbeth*, which presents a disrupted balance of power in marriage at a time when men were expected to exert full control over their wives, in order to show that women can fulfill roles previously reserved for men or men can display behavior associated with women, with both leading to potentially disastrous results. Allusions to *Hamlet* allow Shelley to show fears about women's ungoverned sexuality and potential for violence. In addition to pointing out threats of remaining passive, Shelley opens up possibilities for new social opportunities for women and a reevaluation of morality. He reveals that the issue of a balance of power, especially between the sexes, remains unresolved at his time—and it grows even more conflicted in his slightly later *St. Irvyne*.

Whereas Shelley incorporates epigraphs from Shakespeare in *Zastrozzi*, in *St. Irvyne*, he relies on broader allusions or thematic similarities to make a connection between the most proto-Gothic works of Shakespeare and elements of the novel. "The Gothic universe is very much a tragic one," according to Stephen C. Behrendt; therefore, it is no surprise that Shelley incorporates ideas from Shakespeare's tragedies such as *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*, and even his dark comedy, *Measure for*

Measure, in *St. Irvyne*. Here Shelley builds on Shakespeare's treatments in these works of socially constructed masculinity and femininity, marriage, and expectations for female behavior. Though earlier Gothic sources inspire much of the novel, especially Friedrich Schiller's drama *The Robbers* (1781), Matthew Gregory Lewis' *The Monk*, and William Godwin's *St. Leon* (1799), Shelley explores all-consuming desires for freedom and women's places in a changing world and takes anxiety over sexual control even further in this Gothic novel than he does in *Zastrozzi*. Shakespeare's depictions of disguises and façades complicate relationships between the sexes depicted in *St. Irvyne*. Of course, Shelley owes a debt to Rousseau's novel *Julie, or the New Heloise* (1762) with the character of Eloise, but the marriage of Fitzeustace and Eloise in Shelley's novel also expands on revolutionary ideas about relationships put forward by Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, in which she frequently cites *Macbeth* and *Othello* to expose limitations society places on women. During Shelley's time, political unrest following the French Revolutionary Wars, combined with a threat of Napoleonic invasion, lead to questions of national and personal liberty and identity, questions that Shelley complicates in *St. Irvyne*'s treatment of freedom. Ultimately, ideological quandaries such as how much autonomy should be granted to individuals, how much secret knowledge should be revealed, and threats to men from women's changing social position are all played out by *St. Irvyne*, albeit as issues that cannot be easily resolved.

St. Irvyne, it turns out, echoes and then disrupts Shakespeare's portrayal of male characters in *Othello* and *Hamlet* who strive to be certain about who they are (or are not). An uncertain social position or even sexual insecurity can lead to men's need to deny or disguise their identity. In *Othello*, Iago does not merely disguise his identity; he negates

it entirely when he claims, “I am not what I am” (I.i.65). Wolfstein alludes to the scheming Iago with “I am not what I seem” and addresses identity as a social construct necessary to maintain a semblance of propriety (Shelley 2002b, 173). Later in the novel, Ginotti repeats Wolfstein’s words, “I am not what I seem,” and indicates that someday his true nature shall be revealed (195). The change from “am” to “seems” opens the door to an illusion of identity or a façade of “seeming.” The idea of “seeming” to relate to an outward show of masculine grief is rejected by both Hamlet and Laertes. Hamlet negates “seeming” altogether in his “Nay it is, I know not ‘seems’” (I.ii.76), while Claudius tests Laertes’ outward display of grief. Laertes proves he is not “like the painting of a sorrow, / A face without a heart,” since he genuinely wants revenge for his father’s death (IV.vii.108-9). Shakespeare therefore shows that “seeming” is not as important as “being.” Shelley, on the other hand, allows for the possibility of a mask of social identity for male characters such as Wolfstein and Ginotti. If men’s collective social positions are in jeopardy during Shelley’s time, the obscuring of one’s public identity could be a reaction to fears of losing power at several levels of society.

Shelley builds on Shakespeare’s depiction of Iago’s jealousy and fears about his masculine identity to reveal how infidelity threatens one’s identity. After all, the primal male fear is that his children are not really his; a wife’s fidelity to the marriage bed is the only means of assuring a husband’s paternity. Near the end of *Othello*, Iago stabs Emilia, but not before labeling her a “villainous whore” (V.ii.229). Applying this label to his wife could be Iago’s means of justifying her murder; society might accept that a harlot deserves death for betraying her husband, that Emilia could be a “whore” for not upholding her husband’s masquerade, or that Iago genuinely suspects her chastity, as he

claims in the opening of the play (I.iii.366, 386). Regardless of the actual cause, Emilia threatens Iago's constructed masculinity, since she refuses to be governed by him. Whether Emilia *is* a whore or only *seems* to be one, Iago's suspicions are enough to condemn her. Shelley substitutes the female for the male to show that the unchecked desires of women based on their social insecurities can also lead to tragedy. As a sexually active, unmarried woman, Megalena in *St. Irvyne* responds to her complicated social position and lack of prestige by, like Matilda in *Zastrozzi*, seeking to dominate Wolfstein (in this case). When Megalena suspects that Olympia threatens her sexual relationship with Wolfstein, she declares that only the lethal penetration of her perceived rival will prove that Wolfstein loves her. To further extend her control and challenge the traditional social hierarchy, the unarmed Wolfstein must even repeatedly demand that Megalena provide him with a dagger: "Give me a dagger, which may sweep off from the face of the earth, one who is hateful to thee! Adored creature, give me the dagger, and I will restore it to thee dripping with Olympia's hated blood; it shall have first been buried in her heart" (203). Megalena's words also echo Lady Macbeth when she demands the knives from Macbeth, another of Shakespeare's characters whose masculinity is in question, because he is too "infirm of purpose" to return to the scene of Duncan's murder (II.ii.49-50). In *St. Irvyne* Wolfstein's position in the relationship is in question, since he is not married to Megalena. As a husband, Wolfstein might experience greater pressure to exert his socially accepted authority, govern his wife, and control the dagger himself, as Iago does.

The theme of sexual jealousy undermining social position in *Othello* also plays itself out in *St. Irvyne*. For example, Wolfstein standing over Olympia's bed and trying

to decide whether to murder her is reminiscent of Othello's confusion over whether or not to kill the sleeping Desdemona (Shakespeare, *Othello* V.ii). Though Othello believes his wife to be unfaithful because of Iago's insinuations, Shakespeare uses the purity of Desdemona's skin to imply her innocence and make Othello's choice even more difficult. Dagger in hand, Othello soliloquizes, "Yet I'll not shed her blood, / Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow, / And smooth as monumental alabaster, / Yet she must die, else she'll betray more men" (V.ii.3-6). Othello does not want to mar Desdemona's fair skin with blood, yet his own insecurities about his delicately constructed social and racial position convince him to destroy a woman who, as he claims, may potentially harm other innocent men by cuckolding them. Othello praises his own sword by claiming, "A better never did itself sustain / Upon a soldier's thigh" (V.ii.260-61). Though Othello is sure of his weapon, a symbol of masculinity, Shakespeare suggests that Othello's reputation as a soldier, as a husband, and even as a man is at stake if his wife has been unfaithful. Shelley deemphasizes the racial dimensions of the issue in *Othello* and in *St. Irvyne* focuses on the construction of masculine identity as Wolfstein tries to go against his conscience and force himself to murder Olympia: "Again he stifled the stings of rebelling conscience... he raised high the dagger, and, drawing aside the covering which veiled her alabaster bosom, paused an instant" (Shelley 2002b, 204). As with Othello, Wolfstein's social position is in flux. As an outcast, Wolfstein must create his own version of masculinity, which crumbles when the supposed damsel in distress, Megalena, undermines his authority.

The initial view of the beautiful Megalena is in keeping with the idealized woman of Shelley's time; however, Megalena, again like Matilda in *Zastrozzi*, pointedly defies

the passive female role society expects. If women are dependent on men for protection, men must prove they can offer security to women. As the owner of the dagger, Megalena could personally destroy her rival just as Matilda murders Julia in *Zastrozzi*; instead she derives more satisfaction in commanding a man to commit murder on her behalf and, therefore, subtly exerts her control in the relationship. Through Megalena's metamorphosis, Shelley points out that if the social position of women at his own time is changing, then some women might no longer depend on the security provided by men. Liberated women may, consequently, seek to control men (the more subtle the control, the more disturbing it is) and, because Megalena begins the novel as a traditional Gothic heroine, beautiful, frail, and in need of male protection, the threat in her sudden desire to demand man's obedience is frightening. Shelley transforms this Gothic stereotype, "the almost lifeless form of a female, whose light symmetrical figure, as it leant on the muscular frame of the robber who supported it, afforded a most striking contrast," into a fit companion for the morally conflicted Wolfstein (166). Though Shelley does not suggest that Megalena communes with demons, renounces her gender, or is willing to murder her own infant as Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth is, she does willfully undergo a sinister transformation when "a smile of exquisitely gratified malice illumined her features with terrific flame" (Shelley 2002b, 207). Like Lady Macbeth's rejection of her feminine attributes, the change in Megalena is permanent and conflicts with the usual male expectations of female subservience.

On the masculine side, Shelley introduces Wolfstein amongst the "conflicting elements" during a thunderstorm and indicates he suffers from the same unsettled

thoughts and desire for freedom from the horrors of the world that Shakespeare's Hamlet expresses:

[Wolfstein] cursed his wayward destiny, and implored the Almighty of Heaven to permit the thunderbolt, with crash terrific and exterminating, to descend on his head, that a being useless to himself and to society might no longer, by his existence, mock Him who ne'er made aught in vain. (Shelley 2002b, 159)

By alluding to Hamlet's conflicting thoughts about a lack of agency in his introduction of Wolfstein, Shelley comments on the political situation of his own time and hints that complacently accepting a role that denies personal liberty can have disastrous effects. After all, even before he learns of the ghost, the melancholy Hamlet laments that "the Everlasting [] fixed / His canon 'gainst self-slaughter" because death seems like an appealing way to put an end to earthly suffering (I.ii.131-2). In a similar vein, unwilling or unable to kill himself, and thereby take his destiny into his own hands and free himself from "the galling chain of existence," Wolfstein eventually is "conquered by the conflicting passions of his soul" (161). At this moment death offers a tantalizing evasion of worldly suffering for Wolfstein, though, as Hamlet realizes, the mystery of the afterlife "puzzles the will, / And makes us rather bear those ills we have / Than fly to others that we know not of" (III.i.81-3). Wolfstein ponders suicide and "soliloquize[s]," "'and by one rash act endanger, perhaps eternal happiness;—deliver myself up, perhaps, to the anticipation and experience of never-ending torments?'" (Shelley 2002b, 161). The lack of control over his own future makes Hamlet feel confined by his situation and even by life itself. As a result, he considers Denmark "one o' the worst" prisons in a world full of "confines, wards, and dungeons" (II.ii.233-4). Like Shakespeare, who refers to "God"

(I.ii.132), “fate” (I.v.81), and “outrageous fortune” (*Hamlet* III.i.59), similarly, Shelley in *St. Irvyne* intermingles references to “wayward destiny,” “the Almighty of Heaven,” “God,” “the Creator of the Universe,” and “fate” to show Wolfstein’s confusion over who, or what, is in ultimate command (Shelley 2002b, 159-60). Shelley frequently points out that Wolfstein’s discontent lingers even after he joins the bandits reminiscent of Schiller’s *Robbers* because he still has “a mind eagerly panting for liberty and independence” (165). Even Wolfstein’s crime of murdering the bandit leader is attributed to his longing for freedom: “The soul of Wolfstein too, insatiable in its desires, and panting for liberty, ill could brook the confinement of idea, which the cavern of the bandits must necessarily induce” (175-6). Therefore, Shelley connects the mental and physical restrictions that Hamlet suffers to those endured by Wolfstein to hint at the negative consequences of passively accepting oppression, either literal or figurative, set against the social or personal destruction which could result from overthrowing authority.

Meanwhile, though, Shelley extends allusions to Ophelia and feelings of entrapment to Megalena to show that women were also experiencing the effects of social changes and tension between increased female freedom or long-standing restrictions. Megalena resembles Ophelia in that both young women are finally “liberated” from male control. Ophelia responds to the loss of support from Hamlet, Laertes, and Polonius—and also asserts some independence—by going mad. The outpouring of repressed sensuality in her songs reveals an ideological conflict of Shakespeare’s day. For example, she sings: “Young men will do ’t, if they come to ’t; / By Cock, they are to blame” (IV.v.61-2). Though young men “will do ’t” and have a role in society regardless of their marital status, upper-class virgins and widows suffer from melancholy because of

a lack of social purpose conferred by marriage or having children (Paster and Brown). Shakespeare implies that women cannot handle freedom, but Shelley is writing after Wollstonecraft has declared that only free women can be virtuous: “Liberty is the mother of virtue, and if women be, by their very constitution, slaves, and not allowed to breathe the sharp invigorating air of freedom, they must ever languish like exotics, and be reckoned beautiful flaws in nature” (Wollstonecraft 49). Rather than lapsing into madness or melancholy, Shelley’s Megalena frequently addresses a desire “to defy the arrows of a vengeful destiny,” yet the extremes to which she goes to obtain freedom suggest that with independence come new possibilities and new threats to the social order (Shelley 2002b, 188). The words that describe Megalena’s desire for freedom during her physical confinement by the bandits border on the sexual: “Still, though veiled beneath the most artful dissimulation, did the fair Megalena pant ardently for liberty—for, oh! liberty is sweet, sweeter even than all the other pleasures of life” (170). Words such as “ardently” and “pleasures” enhance Megalena’s connection to her own perceived animalistic nature, which is fitting because women were typically associated with “irrationality, silence, nature, and body, while men are situated on the side of reason, discourse, culture, and mind” (Showalter 3-4). Shelley suggests potential problems with women gaining personal freedom because Megalena transforms from an innocent and Ophelia-like woman in need of rescue to “a woman capable of the most shocking enormities; since, without any adequate temptation to vice, she had become sufficiently depraved to consider an inconsequent crime the wilful [sic] and premeditated destruction of a fellow creature” (Shelley 2002b, 221). Megalena desires personal freedom, which

Shelley partially celebrates, but her alteration suggests that women gaining liberty to excess might threaten not only social norms, but the lives of others.

In addition to using themes of sexual power-struggles from *Othello*, *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*, Shelley uses thematic similarities introduced in *Romeo and Juliet*, such as rebellion against gender norms with underlying sexual implications, to comment on his character Olympia. After defying her father, Juliet suggests to Friar Lawrence that if she is forced to marry she will commit suicide by stabbing herself:

If in thy wisdom thou canst give no help,
Do thou but call my resolution wise,
And with this knife I'll help it presently....
Be not so long to speak, I long to die,

If what thou speak'st speak not of remedy. (IV.i.52-4, 66-7)

Shakespeare allows a representative of the church to aid in deceit to prevent Juliet from committing the mortal sin of suicide with a knife, after she is denied the sexual relationship she desires. In *St. Irvyne* Shelley largely ignores the religious undertones of *Romeo and Juliet* regarding the governing of women, but he still uses parallels to Juliet to suggest available options for a sexually frustrated woman who wants to establish a relationship on her own grounds. Shelley's Olympia awakens to the man she ardently desires standing over her bed only to realize she cannot have the sexual relationship she craves. Therefore, like Juliet and her "happy dagger," Olympia kills herself with Wolfstein's fallen dagger since she cannot be with the man she has chosen. Smiling, she plunges the dagger into her own bosom and "expired in torments, which her fine, her expressive features declared that she gloried in" (Shelley 2002b, 206). Wolfstein fails to

perform either sexually or by carrying out murder, therefore “leaving Olympia lethally to penetrate herself because he would not give her the sexual satisfaction she craves” (Finch 42). Lust consumes Olympia and, rather than face potential rejection, she dramatically takes control of the weapon and her own body and “glories in” her action, substituting suicide for *le petit mort*. Shelley allows for the possibility, partly by way of Juliet, that self-inflicted death could be a satisfying or liberating option for a sexually frustrated woman. Olympia, like Megalena, was ready to forgo the convention of marriage in order to satisfy her desires even though the social ramifications might have been severe.

References to *Macbeth* in *St. Irvyne*, meanwhile, allow Shelley to point out the socially constructed nature of female guilt over sexual relationships outside of marriage. When Eloise finally gives in to her seducer, Nempere, and sleeps with him, she feels the remorse that Macbeth suffers after the murder of Banquo: “‘Tis done; and amidst the vows of a transitory delirium of pleasure, regret, horror, and misery, arise! they shake their Gorgon locks at Eloise! appalled she shudders with affright, and shrinks from the contemplation of the consequences of her imprudence” (Shelley 2002b, 233). By using the phrase “shake their Gorgon locks,” Shelley calls to mind the guilt-ridden Macbeth, who sees the ghost of Banquo sitting in his place during the banquet and says, “Thou canst not say I did it; never shake / Thy gory locks at me” (III.iv.49-50). Shelley changes Shakespeare’s “gory” into “Gorgon,” which evokes the dreadful Medusa and her sisters from ancient Greek mythology. A female monster whose very name means “terrible” connected with Banquo’s ghost suggests the gravity of female guilt over being “ruined.” The Gorgon omens suggesting the unchaste behavior Eloise must admit condition her to feel terrible guilt. Eloise clearly succumbs to pressure from Nempere to disregard sexual

restrictions placed on women to avoid premarital sex, but in her innocence she places the blame on her own “imprudence” rather than the wiles of Nempere. Shakespeare’s Macbeth, on the other hand, wishes to deny his role in the murder of Banquo, yet, as evidenced by the apparition only he can see, suffers from remorse for violating a cultural taboo against murder. Though her society condemned unchaste women, Wollstonecraft writes passionately about the plight of innocent women, such as Eloise, who are seduced by men:

I cannot avoid feeling the most lively compassion for those unfortunate females who are broken off from society, and by one error torn from all those affections and relationships that improve the heart and mind. It does not frequently even deserve the name of error; for many innocent girls become the dupes of a sincere, affectionate heart, and still more are, as it may emphatically be termed, *ruined* before they know the difference between virtue and vice. (91)

Shelley echoes Wollstonecraft’s sentiments that a lack of knowledge about the world should not condemn a girl with a pure soul. The narrator in *St. Irvyne* places blame for the ruin of these young women on men and even suggests that such seducers have fewer morals than do fiends:

I should scarce suppose even a demon would act so, were there not many with hearts more depraved even than those of fiends, who first have torn some unsophisticated soul from the pinnacle of excellence, on which it sat smiling, and then triumphed in their hellish victory when it writhed in agonized remorse, and strove to hide its unavailing regret in the dust from which the fabric of her virtues had arisen. (225)

The punishment of her guilt is imposed on Eloise because society permits men to dupe innocent women into depravity and, therefore, Shelley connects her with the guilt of Macbeth rather than the wiles of Lady Macbeth.

In addition to referring to the remorse Macbeth experiences, Shelley draws on ideas expressed in *Hamlet* and *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* to suggest that society and a lack of knowledge must bear most of the blame for women's sexual misconduct. A misguided system of female education, which focuses on cultivating sentiment rather than seeking knowledge, is all too socially accepted and, therefore, in his characterization of Eloise, Shelley takes care to point out that

Every accomplishment, it is true, she enjoyed in the highest excellence; and the very convent at which she was educated, which afforded the adventitious advantages so highly esteemed by the world, prevented her mind from obtaining that degree of expansiveness and excellence which, otherwise, might have rendered Eloise nearer approaching to perfection; the very routine of a convent education gave a false and pernicious bias to the ideas...which, had they been allowed to take the turn which nature intended, would have become coadjutors of virtue, and strengtheners of that mind, which now they had rendered *comparatively* imbecile. (Shelley 2002b, 215)

Eloise's convent education, though prized by society, effectively prepares her to become a victim of Nempere. Shelley shows the failure not only of her education, but also of women's traditional safeguards, her religious practices, and the advice of her mother, none of which protect her from the threat of sexual misdeeds. Perhaps Nempere uses supernatural means to gain control over Eloise. However, Shelley makes it clear that her

own and also society's shortcomings are also to blame. Rather than condemn Eloise for her lack of chastity though, Fitzeustace, an Irish poet with lofty romantic ideals, including a distrust of the institution of marriage, readily forgives his beloved for "having been another's" because Eloise belonged to Nempere physically but not spiritually (247). In fact, Shelley's portrayal of Eloise as a victim and Fitzeustace as a liberal poet shows that some men hold a sympathetic view of women and do not judge them exclusively according to supposed moral shortcomings, but attribute their "ruin" in part to a social failure to provide adequate educational opportunities. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* sets up traditional expectations for female behavior when Polonius lectures Ophelia and contrasts Hamlet's situation with that of her own: "For Lord Hamlet, / Believe so much in him that he is young, / And with a larger tether may he walk / Than may be given you" (I.iii.124-7). Polonius makes clear the expectations of male-dominated medieval society, that men are permitted more freedom than are women. Polonius also expects Ophelia to obey unconditionally, which makes her entirely dependent on male judgment. Wollstonecraft nearly two centuries later takes issue with this idea of blind obedience and asserts that

The grand source of female folly and vice has ever appeared to me to arise from narrowness of mind; and the very constitution of civil governments has put almost insuperable obstacles in the way to prevent the cultivation of the female understanding: — yet virtue can be built on no other foundation! (Shelley 2002b, 71)

Ophelia and Eloise are, by these standards, both victims of a society that denies even education about the larger world to women.

Not only is female education, or lack thereof, problematic, but an overall lack of social purpose leads to the downfall of many women, as *St. Irvyne* shows in the wake of Wollstonecraft. Even with Olympia, Shelley is careful to point out that her passions stem from her own misguided education. Upper class women must be educated in what is real and what is not or else they become victims like Ophelia:

A false system of education, and a wrong expansion of ideas, as they became formed, had been put in practice with respect to [Olympia's] youthful mind; and indulgence strengthened the passions which it behoved [sic] restraint to keep within proper bounds, and which might have unfolded themselves as coadjutors of virtue and not as promoters of vicious and illicit love. (Shelley 2002b, 197)

Olympia has nothing better to occupy her time than indulging her passions, and therefore she kills herself because her education tragically failed to prepare her to control her own impulses. Wollstonecraft takes issue with the overarching futility of women's lives in late eighteenth century society and invokes Shakespeare to ask, "Were [women], indeed, only created to flutter our hour out and die [?]" (Wollstonecraft 116). Wollstonecraft applies Shakespeare's commentary on death and fleeting recognition for actors — "Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player / that struts and frets his hour upon the stage / And then is heard no more" (*Macbeth* V.v.24-6) — to the uselessness of women's lives and the trivial social and economic value placed upon them. Both young virgins, Ophelia and Olympia therefore share similar names by Shelley's design, suggesting repressed sexuality that threatens to break out, and as members of the upper class, they share a lack of social usefulness besides getting married and bearing children. By echoing Ophelia's

situation but allowing Olympia to act on her sexual desire, Shelley points out that social change needs to occur, especially in regards to women's roles.

As shown by *St. Irvyne* and its similarities to issues raised by Shakespeare, women abandoning or complicating customary roles are not always seen as effecting positive social change; in fact, horrors can be unleashed upon society by women seeking personal freedom and stepping outside of long established gender boundaries. The three women in the novel, Megalena, Olympia, and Eloise de St. Irvyne, all begin on relatively equal footing and all commit, or in the case of Olympia desire to commit, the same sexual transgression; however, the results of each woman's choices offer distinct warnings or possibilities and represent conflicting views of upper class women's new sexual liberty during Shelley's time. The example of foreign, especially French, behavior, "the decay of religion, permissive education with too much stress on 'ornament of the body' for girls, marriages for money or sexual passion rather than settled affection and the infidelity of husbands": all these were thought to be contributing factors in the rise of female licentiousness towards the latter half of the eighteenth century (Stone 330). Shelley shows Megalena engaging in a sexual relationship with a man who is not her husband and then out of jealousy encouraging him to murder while a young virgin, Olympia, burns with unsatisfied lust and then kills herself as a substitute for sexual satisfaction. Eloise, on the other hand, is excused for the inadequate education she receives in a convent (Shelley 2002b, 215), and the sexual relationship in which she engages with Nempere is even forgiven by Fitzeustace because she did not emotionally or spiritually belong to her betrayer (247). Though Fitzeustace and Eloise, like Wollstonecraft herself, oppose the institution of marriage, the couple eventually yields to

the prejudices of society and marries (250), as had Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin in the later 1790s. Shelley's novel suggests a limited acceptance of female sexual indiscretions, as long as those transgressions are caused by a lack of education or socialization and are coupled with remorse.

In addition to hinting at the consequences of abandoning established gender roles, Shelley uses Shakespeare and even William Godwin to explore the key Gothic issue that there is some knowledge too powerful and frightening for humans, even men, to possess. Godwin uses a reference to *Hamlet* in a key passage in *St. Leon*: "I might unfold the secrets of my prison-house, but that I will not" (Godwin 331). Godwin alludes to *Hamlet* with "secrets of the prison-house" because purgatory (to which the *Hamlet* ghost refers) is the ultimate prison, and the secret of the philosopher's stone offers an eternal prison—life that cannot be ended. While the ghost in *Hamlet* states that he cannot reveal these secrets (I.v.13-4), St. Leon refuses to provide details in fear that he might drive his readers "mad with horror" (Godwin 331). Shelley similarly alludes to the ghost in *Hamlet* in *St. Irvyne* when he mentions that Ginotti has discovered the secret to immortality: "It would unfold a tale of too much horror to trace" (Shelley 2002b, 238). Shelley follows the example of Shakespeare in hinting at, though refusing to fully divulge, horrifying secrets (I.v.15). Therefore, *St. Irvyne* remains vague when Ginotti, a character reminiscent of the mysterious man who imparts knowledge of the philosopher's stone to St. Leon, tells Wolfstein how to obtain immortality: "To you I bequeath the secret; but first you must swear that if —— you wish God may ——" (238). Shelley takes a cue from Godwin and leaves frightening knowledge about the workings of the universe, and possible divine punishment for sharing those secrets, to the imagination.

Ginotti even gives Wolfstein a disquieting hint about his lack of autonomy (as does Lucifer in *The Monk*): “Let it be sufficient for you to know, that every event in your life has not only been known to me, but has occurred under my particular machinations” (Shelley 2002b, 224). Shelley therefore makes Ginotti into an alarming figure who offers the ultimate liberty or ultimate prison because, with the possession of his secret information, death is no longer a possible means of escape from one’s mistakes and personal liberty may not even exist—only the semblance of freedom. Using the example of the ghost in *Hamlet*, who even after death is subject to horrors (I.v.9-22), Shelley suggests that the possession of too much knowledge about human’s lack of free will can be dangerous, not just for individuals but for society as a whole.

The social problems raised by Shakespeare in his tragedies such as *Romeo and Juliet* are generally too large to be fully worked out within the context of the play. In much the same way, the issues surrounding personal autonomy by 1810-11 are too considerable to be resolved within *St. Irvyne* or even in the progression of events during Shelley’s own time. Therefore, Shelley might be intentionally following the example of Shakespeare’s apparently “tied up,” yet deeply unsettling, endings to reveal a larger ideological complexity. Though Romeo knows upon entering the vault that he would discover Juliet’s corpse, her lifelike appearance makes him resolve to remain with her lest “unsubstantial Death is amorous, / And [] the lean abhorred monster keeps / Thee here in dark to be his paramour” (V.iii.103-5). Romeo then embraces and kisses Juliet as he kills himself. Shelley’s brief conclusion to *St. Irvyne* echoes *Romeo and Juliet* as Wolfstein begins to enter “the vaults” and falls “on a body which appeared motionless and without life” (Shelley 2002b, 251). Wolfstein’s reaction to finding Megalena dead without

visible cause borders on insanity: “Wolfstein dashed the body convulsively on the earth, and, wildered by the suscitated energies of his soul almost to madness, rushed into the vaults” (251). The skeletal Ginotti Wolfstein meets in the tomb is a living image of death, which echoes, in an unsettling way, Shakespeare’s Juliet as a living corpse and the supposed “paramour” of death. Through new echoes of the final scenes of *Romeo and Juliet*, Shelley raises the unresolved question for him of the individual’s agency over his or her life (and death).

It also could be that Shelley’s linking of his two disparate plots only at the end of *St. Irvyne* follows Shakespeare’s example of orderly tying up of loose ends in order to make a moral point as the Prince does in *Romeo and Juliet*:

Go hence to have more talk of these sad things;
Some shall be pardon’d, and some punished:
For never was a story of more woe
Than this of Juliet and her Romeo. (V.iii.307-10)

Though Shakespeare’s Prince is a comparatively benevolent figure who suggests that justice shall be served, Shelley includes the sudden apparition of “the frightful prince of terror” who condemns Ginotti: “Yes, endless existence is thine, Ginotti—a dateless and hopeless eternity of horror” (Shelley 2002b, 252). In another similarity to *Romeo and Juliet*, Shelley’s final sentence in *St. Irvyne* also sounds like an epilogue:

Let then the memory of these victims to hell and malice live in the remembrance
of those who can pity the wanderings of error; let remorse and repentance expiate
the offences which arise from the delusion of the passions, and let endless life be
sought from Him who alone can give an eternity of happiness. (252)

Stephen C. Behrendt points out that, refusing to allow two different narrative threads to connect to one another

or to ‘solve’ the problems raised by one another is entirely in keeping with one of the paradoxically neglected aspects of Gothic fiction generally, the unwillingness fully to ‘resolve’ the myriad contradictions—narrative and ideological—that make up the Gothic universe. (Behrendt 13)

Not only does the “problematic” ending of *St. Irvyne* speak to the Gothic tradition as pointed out by Behrendt; it also fits in with pointedly artificial endings in some Shakespeare plays—typified most famously by *Measure for Measure*— where a political leader shows up to put everything to rights while ideological conflicts actually remain. For Shelley there is an implication of occult, secret knowledge linking his story lines that is left deliberately opaque. Much like the Prince inviting further talk of the bloody happenings in *Romeo and Juliet*, Shelley adds a short concluding paragraph that adds a moral to heighten the ambiguity of the behavior of the main characters and, because of the minimal emphasis on a divine power throughout the novel, leaves in question exactly who judges human actions (Shelley 2002b, 252).

The Cenci, which Shelley composed much later than his adolescent novels, was praised as “the most magnificent tragedy of modern times” when it was published (qtd. in Curran 21) and critics immediately noted that lines and entire scenes resembled passages from Shakespeare, especially *Macbeth* (Curran 37). One of the most important of these echoes is the strong parallel to the murder of the sleeping Duncan in *Macbeth* when Shelley’s Cenci is similarly dispatched. Patricide and regicide, among the worst of all

possible crimes in a patriarchal society, are closely intertwined in *The Cenci* and *Macbeth*. Through allusions to *Macbeth*, *The Cenci* raises questions as to whether overthrowing a patriarch, even a tyrant who misuses his power, can ever be justified. In *The Cenci*, while Beatrice and Lucretia await news of Cenci's death, one of the would-be murderers, Olimpio, returns and declares:

We dare not kill an old and sleeping man;
His thin grey hair, his stern and reverent brow,
His veined hands crossed on his heaving breast,
And the calm innocent sleep in which he lay,
Quelled me. Indeed, indeed, I cannot do it. (Shelley 2002a, IV.iii.9-13)

The indicators of age and authority such as Cenci's "stern and reverent brow" when added to his "calm innocent sleep" make Olimpio fear killing him. In *Macbeth*, Lady Macbeth is similarly confounded by Duncan's resemblance to her own father as he slumbers (II.ii.12-3). Lady Macbeth goes as far as stating that, had he not reminded her of her father, she would have murdered Duncan herself. Cenci's other would-be murderer, Marzio, when confronted with the drugged Cenci, also struggles with the idea of killing his own father though he observes more than a physical resemblance:

when the old man
Stirred in his sleep, and said, "God! hear, O, hear,
A father's curse! What, art thou not our father?"
And then he laughed. I knew it was the ghost
Of my dead father speaking through his lips,
And could not kill him. (Shelley 2002a, IV.iii.17-22)

Marzio hints that a father is inescapable, even after he is dead. Ignoring their reluctance to kill a vulnerable-looking father figure, Beatrice reprimands the hired assassins and calls them “miserable slaves,” “base palterers,” and “cowards and traitors” (IV.iii.23, 25, 26). Her belittling of the murderers is reminiscent of Lady Macbeth, who tells Macbeth he is “infirm of purpose” when he fears to return to the corpse of Duncan (II.ii.49-50). In addition to chastising them, Shelley’s Beatrice must threaten the assassins with a knife before they agree to return and murder Cenci. When she insists on the death of her father contrary to every social expectation of filial obedience, Beatrice rejects the role of a victimized daughter and tries to remove herself from the patriarchal system. This allows Beatrice to declare, “I am more innocent of parricide / Than is a child born fatherless” (IV.iv.112-3). In her refusal to submit to the traditional female roles expected of her, Beatrice also echoes Lady Macbeth’s unsexing (I.iv.48). These allusions to *Macbeth*, therefore, reveal ongoing conflicts over obligations to a father / ruler and women’s roles in a patriarchy.

Another problematic issue in Shakespeare’s time that Shelley also raises in *The Cenci* was contradictory feelings towards Catholicism. For many people in England, there was a sense of Catholicism of being inherently duplicitous on every level during Shakespeare’s lifetime when King James I was on the throne:

in Jacobean society equivocation was popularly linked to the issue of Roman Catholicism, and it offered believers, and particularly priests, the chance to lie in furtherance of their faith. Not only was this encouraged by their church, it also marked a Catholic’s ‘double’ allegiance: to their own king, and then, on a higher level, to the Pope. (Hawkes 225)

Shelley's view of Catholicism, and indeed his feelings about religion in general, were conflicted, especially with Pope Pious VII (1740-1823) employing "spies, secret police and assassins, torture, execution, slavery in the galleys, and exile" during the time Shelley was in Italy (Shelley 2002a, 195n9). Furthermore, Shelley sees a problem with Catholicism as he describes in the preface to *The Cenci*: "Religion [in Italy] pervades intensely the whole frame of society, and is according to the temper of the mind which it inhabits, a passion, a persuasion, an excuse, a refuge; never a check" (Shelley 2002a, 143). For instance, Cenci commits horrific crimes, but still believes in God. Beatrice, however, has a complicated relationship with religion, as, indeed, she does with her own father. As a Catholic, Beatrice, in defying her abusive father, also unveils an inner conflict over her acceptance of God as her spiritual father. Though Hamlet's religious beliefs are never confirmed as either Catholic or Protestant (as discussed in my introduction), he initially is conflicted over whether he should kill his king/uncle/stepfather or if, by doing so, he will damn himself (I.iii.40-2). Beatrice alternates between a conviction that her heavenly father is watching out for her and envisioning an afterlife in which she is endlessly tortured by her earthly father:

If sometimes, as a shape more like himself,
 Even the form which tortured me on earth,
 Masked in grey hairs and wrinkles, he should come
 And wind me in his hellish arms, and fix
 His eyes on mine, and drag me down, down, down! (V.iv.63-7)

Beatrice's vision of hell is eternal torture by her father who was "omnipotent / On earth, and ever present" (V.iv.68-9). Even killing her father might not be enough to eradicate

him from her life if there is no God, as Beatrice secretly fears (V.iv.57-9). However, by murdering her father, Beatrice might become deserving of hell, and what more horrifying divine punishment could there be than to endlessly suffer the same torments that caused her to have her father killed in the first place? Through raising a similar religious ambiguity to the kind Shakespeare raises in *Hamlet*, Shelley emphasizes questions about the eternal tyranny of a patriarch.

In *The Cenci* the afterlife and death itself are unknowable, threatening, and intriguing realms, much as they are in *Hamlet*. After Beatrice is accused of the murder, she laments, “I thought to die; but a religious awe / Restrains me, and the dread lest death itself / Might be no refuge” (III.i.148-50). The question is this: would death offer Beatrice the sanctuary of heaven or could it be a continuation of the earthly horrors she has suffered? Hamlet has such conflicted feelings about death in his famous “to be or not to be” soliloquy but he also realizes that, if he kills Claudius when he is confessing, Hamlet will send him to heaven instead of hell:

Now might I do it pat, now 'a is a-praying;
 And now I'll do't—and so 'a goes to heaven,
 And so am I reveng'd. That would be scann'd:
 A villain kills my father, and for that
 I, his sole son, do this same villain send
 To heaven.

Why, this is hire and salary, not revenge. (III.iii.73-9)

The very timing of a murder might make all the difference in whether the victim is assured of salvation, is damned forever, or is caught in-between like the ghost of

Hamlet's father. As a Catholic, Shelley's Beatrice should be able to confess the murder of her father and eventually go to heaven, but her spiritual beliefs waver throughout the play. Early on, she blames God for ignoring her suffering: "I have knelt down through the long sleepless nights / And lifted up to God, the father of all, / Passionate prayers: and when these were not heard / I have still borne" (I.iii.117-20). After Lucretia declares that his death alone can free her and Beatrice from the tyrant, Beatrice muses: "Death! Death! Our law and our religion call thee / A punishment and a reward...Oh, which / Have I deserved?" (III.i.117-9). Beatrice considers that ridding her family, or even Rome, of a tyrant could be an act deserving compensation or recognition. However, it remains questionable whether Cenci's tyrannical behavior is even deserving of punishment, since the patriarchal society in which he lives permits him complete authority over his family and even the Pope looks the other way when he commits crimes, so as long as he pays a heavy fine. Before she is put to death, Beatrice tells her stepmother, "You do well telling me to trust in God, / I hope I do trust in him. In whom else / Can any trust? And yet my heart is cold" (V.vi.87-9). God is Beatrice's only hope for justice in the afterlife since on earth she did not obtain the treatment she felt she deserved, but her "cold heart" shows that she, like Hamlet, has a "dread of something after death" that might prove worse than death itself (*Hamlet* III.i.77).

The Cenci is also concerned with questions raised in *King Lear*, another play with conflicted parent/child relationships. Lear has overthrown himself as patriarch and as king by giving away his kingdom to his daughters Goneril and Regan and their husbands. In spite of his mistakes, during the thunderstorm the former king famously declares: "I am a man / More sinned against than sinning" (III.ii.59-60). Therefore, another question

Shelley raises in *The Cenci* is this one: as a daughter abused by her father, but also a conspirator in his murder, is Beatrice more sinned against than sinning? Beatrice describes her sufferings at the hands of her father thus: “I have borne much, and kissed the sacred hand / Which crushed us to the earth, and thought its stroke / Was perhaps some paternal chastisement!” (I.iii.111-4). Beatrice sees her father as a tyrant and herself as the oppressed, but, after all she has suffered, Beatrice refuses to confess her part in the murder of her father: “Which is or is not what men call a crime, / Which either I have done, or have not done; / Say what you will, I shall deny no more” (V.iii.84-6). Beatrice sees herself as a victim who has been greatly sinned against, but her society puts her to death as a terrible sinner for having her father assassinated. The conflicted ideology over Beatrice’s mixture of guilt and victimization echoes the declaration of Shakespeare’s King Lear that he has suffered greatly for his misdeeds.

Another of Shelley’s significant borrowings from Shakespeare is in retelling and politicizing a distressing historical rape in the distant past to suggest ideological conflicts of his own time, given that an account of a contemporary event might become too politically charged. During the early 1590s in Shakespeare’s day, political tensions with Spain and Scotland as well as fears of disease and of violence, threatened England. The plague closed the theaters in late 1592, and a supposed assassination plot against Queen Elizabeth was uncovered in 1594. In his poem *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594)—unquestionably influential on the rape in *The Cenci*—Shakespeare recounts the story of Sextus Tarquinius raping Lucretia, the virtuous wife of his friend Collatinus. During this verse narrative, Shakespeare looks back to the ancient story of the last tyrannical ruling family of Rome, the Tarquins, whose misdeeds, culminating in the rape of Lucrece by the

son of the king, justified their banishment from Rome and the establishment of the Roman Republic. Shakespeare raises questions over the most fitting response Lucrece can make to the violation of her person. The rape, politicized by references to Lucrece as an innocent town overthrown by a tyrant, is beyond the help of the justice system, yet should Lucrece use her powerful rhetoric to defend her remaining honor, kill herself, murder her oppressor, or hope that her husband will avenge the loss of her wifely chastity? Shakespeare's equally hyperbolic play *Titus Andronicus*, composed at about the same time as *The Rape of Lucrece*, is also set in Rome and includes a horrific historical rape (of Lavinia). In both works Shakespeare politicizes the rapes, which connect individual violation to the vulnerabilities of his own country with an heirless, virgin queen on the throne. Because treason was a major fear in England during the 1590s and the person of the queen symbolized the entire country, rapes, such as those depicted by Shakespeare in *The Rape of Lucrece* and *Titus Andronicus* equated to an especially traumatic and personal form of treason. Instead of looking back to ancient Rome in the exact way Shakespeare did over 200 years previously, however, in *The Cenci* Shelley takes inspiration from the historical account of conflicts within one of the most prominent families in Rome in 1599 itself. For Shelley, Cenci represents the perversion of Romantic values, as in the way he shifts his individuality of vision towards egotistical self-absorption (Curran 75). Shelley chooses an event from Renaissance Rome to show a distortion of values during the time of Shakespeare while holding a mirror up to his own time when there were frequent demonstrations of popular dissatisfaction and unrest in England, especially between 1811 and 1819 (Black et al. xliii). *The Cenci* exposes deep-seated male fears over loss of social control in a world

where traditional social systems were slowly losing their power and rulers were losing respect, as exemplified by the insanity of George III and the financially irresponsible Prince Regent (later George IV) over-indulging in lust and gluttony (Black et al. xlv). Shelley's *Cenci* does not "search for the means by which the self and society can be reintegrated"; instead he tries to "exert his power over the social order, recreating the self at the expense of society" (Curran 75). Therefore, *Cenci*'s self-serving and despotic behavior reveals anxieties of the Romantic era much as Tarquin's rape of Lucrece echoes some fears of England during Shakespeare's time.

For Shakespeare, social threats are brought out through pre-Gothic elements of horror which abound *The Rape of Lucrece*:

Imagine her as one in dead of night
 From forth dull sleep by dreadful fancy waking,
 That thinks she hath beheld some ghastly sprite,
 Whose grim aspect sets every joint a-shaking;
 What terror 'tis! but she in worsen taking,
 From sleep disturbed, heedfully doth view
 The sight which makes supposed terror true. (449-55)

For Lucrece, the horrors of her imagination suddenly give way to the dreadfulness of her reality. In *The Cenci*, Shelley similarly expresses the conflicted ideologies in his own society, the horror of tyranny that cannot be redressed by any legal means because the entire hierarchy is corrupt and the "paternal power in this play [that] is almost mystical, a direct reflection of God's authority and the Pope's" (Curran 67) even though the England

of 1819 claimed to devalue the power of the papacy. Therefore, Gothic threats abound in *The Cenci*, especially in Cenci's eagerness to torment others:

All men delight in sensual luxury,
 All men enjoy revenge; and most exult
 Over the tortures they can never feel—
 Flattering their secret peace with other's pain.
 But I delight in nothing else. (Shelley 2002a, I.i.77-81)

Cenci believes that “all men” enjoy lechery and violence, but in his old age, he wants to destroy the spirits of others rather than just their bodies. In doing so, he asserts his masculinity, but there is a self-destructive side to his egotism in that he destroys his own family as well. When contemplating the rape of his daughter, Cenci realizes the possibility of fathering a grandchild, but hopes the child will be as monstrous as the act he forced on his daughter. Shelley uses Gothic threats reminiscent of Shakespeare to comment on the horrors of the world in which Beatrice lives, in which men like her father and the Pope, like Shakespeare's Tarquin, disregard social norms to gain power and pleasure for themselves, no matter what the cost.

In *The Rape of Lucrece* and *The Cenci*, systematic political oppression and gender struggles are reflected in the act of rape in which the female body is subject to male domination. To make the political connections clear, Shakespeare's Tarquin is repeatedly described as a tyrant and usurper, while Lucrece is portrayed as a king's throne, a castle, or a city under siege. For instance, Tarquin, “like a foul usurper went about / From this fair throne to heave the owner out” (412-3). Lucrece's innocence, distress, and physical helplessness only add to his desire to conquer: “This moves in him

more rage and lesser pity / To make the breach and enter this sweet city” (468-9). As a woman in her society, Lucrece is an unfortified town who, since her husband is away, has no physical or even legal protection from violation. Lucrece bemoans that being a good hostess, as was expected of her as a virtuous wife, led to her rape: “Yet I am guilty of thy honor’s wrack / Yet for thy honor did I entertain him” (841-2). Shelley’s Beatrice, both in echo and by contrast, speaks out at her father’s banquet against the acceptance of tyranny, such as she must endure as a daughter. She reveals what Lucrece can only show in her victimization: that the guests, like the church and the law, will not support justice for those oppressed by a wealthy patriarch:

I do entreat you, go not, noble guests;
 What although tyranny, and impious hate
 Stand sheltered by a father’s hoary hair?
 What, if ’tis he who clothed us in these limbs
 Who tortures them, and triumphs? What, if we,
 The desolate and the dead, were his own flesh,
 His children and his wife, whom he is bound
 To love and shelter? Shall we therefore find
 No refuge in this merciless wide world? (Shelley 2002a, I.iii.99-107)

In response to her rape and lack of social support from the “merciless wide world,” finally unlike Lucrece, Beatrice acts with the help of her stepmother and brother and has her father killed. The ideological conflict over her response to the tyranny she has suffered is complicated by her lengthy speech defending her innocence, the result of which is her punishment of death for her father’s murder. Beatrice tries to counter her

victimization by obtaining personal justice and revenge according to an inner moral light when it is denied her by the corrupt government and religious system under which she lives. Taking a cue from *The Rape of Lucrece*, Shelley shows that women are not just subject to physical violation, but when the larger social system, which should protect them, is flawed, *The Cenci* questions, and refuses to give a clear answer to, what the correct response should be.

Shakespeare and Shelley raise questions over what is the appropriate course of action in a case when the law will not or cannot set things to rights. Shakespeare's Lucrece determines that her suicide would eradicate her shame and give her honor new life (1190), so her husband can then take "Revenge on him that made me stop my breath" (1180). She sees her suicide as the ultimate catalyst for her husband to avenge her rape. However, Shakespeare raises a moral question over the proper act Lucrece should have taken to redress her wrong. Brutus in Shakespeare's poem confides to Collatinus, "Thy wretched wife mistook the matter so, / To slay herself, that should have slain her foe" (1826-7). It is never clear which course of action would have brought about the desired result for Lucrece, or even if any action could have helped her who was without protection. Beatrice's words after her rape in Shelley's play— "In this mortal world / There is no vindication and no law / Which can adjudge and execute the doom / Of that which I suffer" (Shelley 2002a, III.i.134-7)—are reminiscent of Shakespeare's Lucrece after her own rape when she decides that words are useless and she must take action: "For me, I force not argument a straw, / Since that my case is past the help of law" (1021-2). Shelley's Lucretia, the stepmother of Beatrice, also comments about how justice in Rome has become perverted: "For the jealous laws / Would punish us with death and infamy /

For that which it became themselves to do” (III.i.229-31). In both cases, the justice system is of no benefit to women who have been wronged by all-powerful men who create and disregard the law.

Shelley’s count Cenci, by contrast to Shakespeare’s Tarquin, does not go through a loss of power; instead, after raping his daughter, Cenci gloats, “I do not feel as if I were a man, / But like a fiend appointed to chastise / The offenses of some unremembered world” (Shelley 2002a, IV.i.160-2). Cenci wants to commit his biggest crime, the defilement of his daughter, as “an everlasting symbol of [his] potency” and to show that, though old, he is still a man and still rules his household (Curran 79). His masculinity has been transformed into a demonic sense of power, yet, because it is his own family he seeks to destroy, in a sense he is also harming himself and his legacy. The use of force by Shakespeare’s Tarquin leads to his family’s expulsion from Rome while Cenci’s act emboldens his family to have him killed. Thus Shelley, like Shakespeare in *The Rape of Lucrece*, questions whether tyrannical force might lead to the downfall of the despot as the oppressed people stand up for themselves and whether rape can be concealed by the patriarchal system which sanctions and seems to encourage it.

Shakespeare’s Tarquin and Shelley’s Cenci both lack self-control and glory in the idea of corrupting and polluting others. In a patriarchal society men, when given absolute power, sometimes turn tyrant, though women themselves are not immune to such behavior: “I shall not go back to the remote annals of antiquity to trace the history of woman; it is sufficient to allow that she has always been either a slave, or a despot” (Wollstonecraft 71). Two hundred years after Shakespeare, Wollstonecraft sees control over the self, rather than social coercion, as a means of bettering society: “I do not wish

[women] to have power over men; but over ourselves” (Wollstonecraft 81). Shelley’s Beatrice has her foe slain, yet she is put to death for her act and transformed from a slavish victim of her father to a criminal as her father’s murderer. However, when she is put to death by an unjust government—recalling that Lucrece was likened to a kingdom by Shakespeare—she becomes a symbol of the victimization all oppressed citizens of Rome are suffering. Shelley’s Camillo summarizes the Pope’s fears of rebellion against patriarchal society:

Parricide grows so rife

That soon, for some just cause no doubt, the young

Will strangle us all, dozing in our chairs.

Authority, and power, and hoary hair

Are grown crimes capital. (Shelley 2002a, V.iv.20-4)

Even if the cause might be just, rulers believe these social transgressions must be put down, even at the cost of personal liberty. As Shakespeare, Shelley, and Wollstonecraft point out in various ways, there is a struggle between personal liberty, on the one hand, and, on the other, fears of society descending into chaos without strict rules and harsh punishment for violating those rules. Both Shakespeare and Shelley’s *Cenci*, then, explore and confront the ideological conflict between the rights of individual agency and the imperatives of social order.

The influence of Shakespeare, then, can be felt in *Zastrozzi* and *St. Irvyne*, the most in key passages when a character challenges overly restrictive and socially constructed roles of masculinity and femininity. By presenting female characters ranging

from the passive Julia to the domineering Matilda, through the influence of Wollstonecraft, Shelley shows a lingering conflict over women disregarding gender boundaries and gaining power. Social change allowing women more active roles in society could be beneficial and even necessary, but the result of women obtaining unlimited power could be threatening, not just to men but to the very fabric of society. Morally conflicted characters such as Wolfstein and Megalena present the comingled threats and opportunities the overthrow of long-established collective roles can have on society as a whole and the question that follows from that: can and should individuals be granted physical and mental freedom? As in *Macbeth* or *King Lear*, that question remains unanswerable to a considerable degree. Shelley's use of Shakespeare also allows him to ask profound questions about both individual and national identity. If secret knowledge and constructed identities are possible for men, what would happen if women were allowed this freedom, or even the semblance of it? Ultimately Shelley's novels show that, despite sweeping social changes and the influence of Wollstonecraft supporting improved education and social equality for women, the idea of women donning masks and choosing their own roles on the public stage would still be deeply unsettling. *The Cenci* eight years later offers politicized issues of gender, religious beliefs, and tyranny to build upon both Shelley's earlier prose with fears of a social emasculation of men and ideas about victimization Shakespeare raised in *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, and *The Rape of Lucrece*. By using these echoes as he does, Shelley questions when or if the oppressed should overthrow a tyrannical individual or an oppressive government by violence *and* if or when there should be a double allegiance to the government and to the self.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS IN THE GOTHIC DRAMA OF JOANNA BAILLIE

Joanna Baillie's frequently Gothic plays *De Monfort* (1798), *The Dream* (1812), *Orra* (1812), and *Witchcraft* (1836), in turn, also echo the language of Shakespeare and incorporate allusions to Shakespeare's tragedies, especially *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Measure for Measure*, and *King Lear*. In addition, Baillie joins Percy Bysshe Shelley in building on Mary Wollstonecraft's ideas in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792). *De Monfort*, to begin with, provides a Gothic exploration of the hidden recesses of human nature and raises concerns about masculinity voiced by Shakespeare in *Macbeth*, while exposing conflicts over the changing social hierarchy during Baillie's own time. In *The Dream*, rather than focusing on anxieties about gender roles, Baillie centers the action of the play in a medieval monastery and incorporates ideas from *Macbeth* and *Measure for Measure* to raise concerns about the larger social threat of buried religious or political corruption. Alluding to the madness of Ophelia in *Hamlet* and elements of *King Lear* allows Baillie in her *Orra* to suggest the limited options for women and base-born men who are ostracized by the patriarchal system in which they are entrapped. *Witchcraft* alludes to the trio of witches in *Macbeth* to show the mixed results of efforts by women, especially lower-class women, to change the social order that oppresses or ignores them. These plays recall the terrifying undercurrents of many of Shakespeare's tragedies as they deal with the roles of women and draw attention to how social class influences having a voice in society. Incorporating frightening conflicts over blood as it privileges or

condemns one's social position, madness as a response to injustice, and witchcraft as a reaction to social tyranny, Baillie's darkest plays use allusions to Shakespeare to point out and question shifting social structures and attitudes of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

More so than other dramatists of her time, Baillie builds on ideas presented by Shakespeare to speak to frightening social changes at her moment and subtly press for a reconsideration of gender roles, especially the roles of women in society. Christine A. Colón suggests why the Gothic in particular serves as a vehicle for Baillie's social messages:

The Gothic...provides a perfect means for Baillie to enact her theories of moral reform by combining the audience's fascination with terror and interest in the workings of the mind. The Gothic also allows Baillie to explore the tremendous social changes that occurred during her lifetime. (Colón xxiv)

Though inspired by Gothic novels such those of Ann Radcliffe, Baillie tries to distance herself from dramatic works that merely play off the theatrical use of gore or shock factors popularized by other playwrights of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries just for the sake of frightening viewers. Her audience, in her view, should be more willing to accept a serious message combined with Gothic elements because her plays emulate Shakespearean language, characters, or themes and because Shakespeare by now enjoyed such a respected place in the canon of British literature. A closer examination of how Baillie incorporates Shakespearean allusions and references reveals why her work is distinctive within Gothic drama in identifying troubling passages or

themes in Shakespeare and then genuinely advocating for serious social change in the ways by which she develops these allusions.

In her most Gothic plays, in fact, Baillie challenges underlying social assumptions that women cannot reason as men can and, by using the darkest works of Shakespeare as models, she reveals the conflicts over social inequality during her own time.

Subversively, one could say, Baillie uses the masculine power of Shakespeare and tragedy, a genre often claimed exclusively by men, in her reimagining of gender relationships (Colón xv). Shakespeare's theater was masculine not only because the actors were exclusively male, but also because men claimed authority over producing dramatic works. After a cultural shift and renewal of the English theater during and after the Restoration, by the Romantic Era the theater was more often gendered feminine "as both the object of the male specular gaze and the arena of vulgar spectacle or display," and many of the most noted actors and playwrights of the time were women (Mellor 561). Anne Mellor even argues that Baillie "consciously used the theater to re-stage and revise the social construction of gender" (561). Upon their anonymous publication in 1798, the *Plays on the Passions* "caused something of a sensation in literary circles. The author—first assumed to be male—was declared the inheritor of William Shakespeare" (Strand). In fact, the greatest interest in Baillie's first collection of plays was generated when it was thought to have been authored by a man. The revelation of her gender served as a blow to the image of men as possessors of an exclusively male genius and also to the critical reception of her plays. Baillie lamented her decision to reveal her authorship because "John any-body would have stood higher with the critics than Joanna Baillie" (qtd. in Slagle 75). Though the authority of her work was challenged during her

time by assumptions about women's limited abilities, Baillie echoes Shakespearean tragedy to raise awareness regarding important social concerns, the unequal treatment of the different genders being the most prominent among them.

Published in 1798 with *Plays on the Passions*, *De Monfort* is the closest of Baillie's Gothic plays in time to the brutality of the Reign of Terror and, therefore, she takes cues from Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *Measure for Measure* and frequently mentions blood, both literal and figurative. Blood is a quintessential element of physical human life, and its historical connection to the four humors links it to emotions and health. Representing ties of kinship or justifying possession of power or wealth by hereditary right, blood also forms a foundation of social identity, especially for men. In addition, bloodshed and violence were both issues of immediate concern to Baillie's society, which was reeling from the ongoing consequences of the French Revolution and from the mass executions of The Terror, which lasted from June 1793 to July 1794. Baillie captures the intermixed fascination and repulsion aroused by public execution in her "Introductory Discourse" to *Plays on the Passions* (1798): "To see a human being...struggling with the terrible apprehensions which such a situation impresses, must be the powerful incentive that makes us press forward to behold what we shrink from, and wait with trembling expectation for what we dread" (Baillie 2002, 11). The attraction to blood as an indicator of prestige and the fear of a loss of literal or figurative blood weighs heavily on the Gothic imagination beginning with Walpole's depiction of Manfred's only son and heir "dashed to pieces" beneath a terrifying helmet in *The Castle of Otranto* (Walpole 74). Using already-Gothicized blood as a trope to draw out all its conflicted meanings suggested by *Macbeth*, *Measure for Measure*, and *King Lear* allows

Baillie to question aristocratic blood as the only indicator of social privilege.

Furthermore, she uses this trope to question the expectation that women and clergy should uphold old social values in a world forever changed by the Enlightenment, as well as by social and political revolutions.

Baillie's allusions to Shakespeare, especially to *Macbeth* with its frequent descriptions of flowing blood, strengthen the power of the matters of gender and social conflict that she raises in *De Monfort*. Blood can be linked to violence, unrest, and inner turmoil just by this connection: "Of all Shakespeare's tragedies, *Macbeth* is not only the most bloody, but also the play in which blood assumes the most important medical, historical, ideological and metaphorical meanings" (Townshend 178). For example, the second scene in *Macbeth* opens with the question, "What bloody man is that?" (I.ii.1). The query sets "up a system of equivalences between blood, military valour and masculinity" because the bloody man has visibly demonstrated his masculinity by protecting Malcolm during a battle (Townshend 186). Shakespeare's Ross explains what it takes to achieve a death befitting a true man in the warrior society of *Macbeth*:

He only lived but till he was a man,
The which no sooner had his prowess confirmed
In the unshrinking station where he fought,
But like a man he died. (V.viii.45-48)

Boldly facing death on the battlefield assures one dies a manly death in Macbeth's world but for Baillie's characters, who are not always living in a warrior society, demonstrating masculinity becomes more complex. Rezenvelt insults De Monfort in Baillie's play by asserting:

He's form'd with such antipathy, by nature,
 To all infliction of corporeal pain,
 To wounding life, e'en to the sight of blood,

He cannot [murder] if he would. (*De Monfort* in Baillie 2007, IV.i)

Though the opportunities to spill blood might be fewer than they were in Macbeth's blood-soaked kingdom, Rezenvelt indicates that a willingness to inflict pain, or even just to view blood, might still be important aspects of one's masculinity. By attributing De Monfort's perceived weakness to his antipathy to pain, the German Rezenvelt raises a question over what qualities are desirable for a man in the 1790s. He insinuates that De Monfort, and possibly the typical upper-class British man of Baillie's time, lacks an instinctive masculine quality that men in a warrior society, such as that of *Macbeth*, would have exhibited. Thus, long-standing gender categories are being asserted by a character and put in question by the playwright.

Along with blood spilled in public to affirm one's masculinity, Baillie addresses the guilt associated with secret bloodshed throughout *Macbeth*. Macbeth himself references blood in a negative manner and stresses that "blood will have blood" and the "secret'st man of blood" will be revealed (III.iv.151, 156). Macbeth even asserts that "we but teach / Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return / To plague th' inventor" (I.vii.8-10). Likewise, when De Monfort secretly commits murder, the bloody stains that remain establish his guilt instead of declaring his manliness and his "bloody hands / Do witness horrid things" (V.ii). Baillie's reference to bloody hands also conjures up a comparison to the sleepwalking Lady Macbeth of Shakespeare trying to wash her hands

of her guilt. The punishment for furtive murder becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy for the Macbeths and even De Monfort's secret deed results in his own bloody end:

Remorse and dark despair o'erwhelm'd his soul:

And, from the violent working of his mind,

Some stream of life within his breast has burst;

For many a time, within a little space,

The ruddy tide has rush'd into his mouth. (*De Monfort* in Baillie 2007, V.v)

Drowning De Monfort in his own noble blood after he kills Rezenvelt seems to be Baillie's subtle judgment of De Monfort's pride in his bloodline. When Baillie's character Bernard announces "Behold the man of blood" (V.ii), there is an allusion to the bloody man in *Macbeth*, but De Monfort is not just literally covered in blood from committing murder; he is also a "man of blood" as part of the aristocracy. With thousands of French aristocrats being guillotined across the channel during the "Terror of Robespierre" (1793-4), the British, especially those in the upper class, felt lingering unease over their own positions (Wolfson and Manning 15). Through the connection to Shakespeare, Baillie raises the ideological conflict of her time over which should be dominant in establishing the highest ranking members of society: their individual choices and actions, their class-based wealth, or their "noble" blood?

Recognizing that masculinity is tied to social class in *Macbeth*, Baillie raises the social issue of bloodlines and hereditary right in her allusions to blood in *De Monfort*. The warrior society of *Macbeth* implies that only the most masculine of men deserve to rule the kingdom (I.v.15-33). Macduff, who ultimately slays Macbeth on the battlefield, is far removed from doubt over his masculinity. In fact, Macduff is so separated from the

stigma of femininity that he is not even of woman born, but was “from his mother’s womb / Untimely ripped” (V.viii.19-20). As a nobleman in the middle ages, Macduff’s social superiority and ability to fight go hand in hand. However, Baillie’s highborn De Montfort is troubled by his “inability to enact a socially correct definition of masculinity in a world that no longer recognizes worth simply through [rigidly defined] class status” (Colón xxvi). Partly as a result of Rezenvelt’s sudden acquisition of wealth, power, and prestige, De Montfort murders him. Pure, unspotted bloodlines should ensure social standing for noblemen but Rezenvelt’s rise in social class results from good fortune, which calls older standards of masculinity into question, since power is more dependent on sheer financial status than it used to be. For instance, the witty Rezenvelt asks:

What, think you, Freberg, the same powerful spell
Of transformation reigns o’er all to-night?
Or that De Montfort is a woman turn’d,—
So widely from his native self to swerve,
As grace my folly with a smile of his? (II.i)

Rezenvelt pricks at the wounded pride of De Montfort because the latter’s superior social rank has been usurped by his lower-class tormentor. Though the play is supposedly set in Germany, it raises questions about the gradual rise of the middle class in England during the rise of the industrial revolution. If class boundaries become easily penetrable and are determined by wealth rather than by the hereditary right of “superior” bloodlines, then upper class male identity can be undermined or disenfranchised. Therefore, as *Macbeth* implies, Rezenvelt also suggests that demonstrations of masculinity, though perhaps with

slightly less spilling of blood, are, for many, still an essential part of maintaining one's social status.

In addition to the gory issues raised in *Macbeth*, *De Monfort* alludes to the discontented characters in *Measure for Measure* and their fear of social change and of the bloody punishment that pervades the play. Blood's connection to the physical body, to lust, and to the bond between siblings in *Measure for Measure* is therefore echoed by Baillie at several points in this play. In a personal letter, after all, Baillie describes entertaining her family by enacting the emotional scene where Isabella pleads for the life of her brother Claudio: "First when we began, [the audience] all laughed without restraint at our strange appearance but, as I proceeded in my part, they became grave and ended by shedding [sic] tears, and this was a great triumph for me" (qtd. in Slagle 53). Baillie echoes Shakespeare's Claudio-Isabella scene in the relationship between Jane De Monfort and her brother, especially when Jane pleads with her brother to prevent him from harming Rezenvelt. Baillie's Jane echoes Shakespeare's Isabella in wanting her brother to retain his "noble" nature (III.i.87-88) when she begs De Monfort, "Call up thy noble spirit" (II.ii). Jane's version of femininity is especially significant in the context of Baillie's play: "For a society that was gradually beginning to depend more and more on the influence of domestic women to maintain moral standards, Jane De Monfort's failure to save her brother is both surprising and disturbing" (Colón xxvii). This "failure" raises a question of whether placing moral responsibility on women is appropriate for the benefit of society. Though unable to prevent her brother from sinning, Jane's values continue to inspire or frighten him so that on his deathbed De Monfort vows,

But for thy sake I'll rouse my manhood up,

And meet it bravely; no unseemly weakness,

I feel my rising strength, shall blot my end,

To clothe thy cheek with shame. (V.iv)

Though he is already a confessed murderer, De Monfort does not wish to further tarnish the family name by his lack of manliness. Jane remains reasonable and calm in comparison to her passionate brother, and after his bloody death, she takes control of the action of the play (Cox 55-6). In her rendering of Jane, Jeffery N. Cox suggests, “Baillie imagines here a female character freed from the masculine gaze and beginning to define herself beyond the roles offered by a male-centered social system” (56). Indeed Jane’s response builds on that of Shakespeare’s Isabella, who faces a choice over how to respond to her brother’s sexual misdeed. Isabella staunchly refuses to bleed through sacrificing her virginity and her morals by committing the same sexual sin as he has to save her brother. She upholds her personal and social morals at the potential cost of her brother’s life, which is hard to view in an entirely positive light. By putting Jane in a position that echoes that of Isabella, Baillie questions whether women should have the predominant burden of upholding moral respectability. Jane’s influence is not enough to save De Monfort, but it poses questions to her audience during a time of revolution and social change: could an expectation of enforcing moral rules be an opportunity for women to exert greater social influence? Or are women socially disenfranchised and subject to a patriarchal system where men are held to a lesser moral standard than are women?

To make matters even more challenging, Baillie reveals threatening hints of incestuous love and tainted blood in *De Monfort* much as Shakespeare’s Isabella does in

Measure for Measure. Blood ties make for close bonds between siblings, but taboos prohibit relatives from breaching social boundaries and making familial relationships *too* intimate. In *Measure for Measure*, Isabella's brother has already violated a social taboo against sex outside of marriage when the play begins, and she refuses to save him from an arbitrarily enforced death sentence. Isabella unleashes her fury on Claudio when he hypocritically encourages her to sacrifice her virginity to preserve his life:

Wilt thou be made a man out of my vice?

Is't not a kind of incest, to take life

From thine own sister's shame? (III.i.137-9)

Isabella goes so far as to suggest that Claudio must be a bastard because a brother with such a disregard for morals could not have issued from *her* father's noble blood (III.i.142). Isabella maintains her refusal to sacrifice her body for her brother and states: "Then Isabel [sic], live chaste, and, brother, die; / More than our brother is our chastity" (II.iv.184-5). To Isabella, virginity is more valuable than even a close blood-relative because she fears the social stigma of giving birth to a bastard, especially if that illegitimate child resulted from a sexual encounter encouraged by her brother (III.i.191). Continuing Shakespeare's theme of improper sexual relationships, especially those between siblings, Baillie makes De Monfort jealous over his sister's possible attraction to Rezenvelt because he wants to be the only man with whom she shares an intimate bond:

Oh! I did love her with such pride of soul!

When other men, in gayest pursuit of love,

Each beauty follow'd, by her side I stay'd;

Far prouder of a brother's station there,

Than all the favours favour'd lovers boast. (III.iii)

De Monfort's pride in his sister is like that of a lover, which, in part, spurs him into spilling the blood of Rezenvelt, his supposed rival for his sister's affection. Alluding to the bond between Claudio and his sister Isabella allows Baillie to suggest that, with such value placed on the purity of blood as a traditional organizing principle, social transgressions are both forbidden and secretly encouraged by society.

Indeed, *De Monfort* presents many complicated explorations of blood and its relationship to masculinity, to guilt, and even to Christianity, again through allusions to *Measure for Measure*. In *Measure for Measure* itself, blood represents passion and the very essence of humanity that Angelo tries in vain to deny and suppress. In public Angelo "scarce confesses / That his blood flows" (I.iii.51-2) and his "blood / Is very snow-broth" (I.iv.56-7). However, in private Angelo admits, "Blood, thou are blood" (II.iv.15) and questions, "why does my blood thus muster to my heart" when he lusts after Isabella (II.iv.20). Shakespeare shows that the exterior of an angel hides the soul of an ordinary, sinful man. Though Baillie's De Monfort is not presented as an angel, he commits murder in an attempt to prevent his sister from feeling lust for Rezenvelt (V.iv). Despite his passionate "sin of blood," De Monfort hopes to gain admission to heaven (V.iv). Baillie's play, like the other plays published with it, focuses on passion, which in Christianity specifically refers to the suffering of Christ before his crucifixion. Yet the human passion Baillie describes in *De Monfort* is hatred rather than the love for sinful humanity professed by Jesus. Compassion for others is a central part of Christian beliefs and should be part of the ideology of the monks and nuns presented in Baillie's play. However, her nuns hope for divine vengeance for murder: "The blood so near this holy

convent shed / For threefold vengeance calls” (V.ii) while the monk Bernard paints a frightening portrait of an omniscient and judgmental God

who knows

The soul of man: before whose awful presence

Th’ unsceptred tyrant stands despoil’d and helpless,

Like an unclothed babe. (V.v)

Though Bernard orders other monks to pray for the “blood-stained soul” of De Monfort and exclaims, “May heaven have mercy on him!” he does not seem hopeful that there is any salvation for De Monfort (V.v). For Christians, blood can symbolize redemption, such as Christ’s blood shed on the cross, but Baillie’s religious characters—biased by her Gothic anti-Catholicism— shift this connection and focus onto the punishment for spilling blood rather than on forgiveness. Shakespeare’s Duke passes off the duty of judging sinners to Angelo, then disguises himself as a monk, while the monks presented by Baillie seem doubtful of any forgiveness for a sinner. Thus, like the Duke’s desire to have Angelo spill blood on his behalf and administer justice in the beginning of *Measure for Measure*, Baillie’s religious characters’ rejection of fundamental Christian connections to blood calls into question what this playwright sees as basic religious values.

Rather than including as many direct quotations from Shakespeare as Radcliffe and Lewis did, Baillie echoes him more generally to raise social issues of importance to her own audience, such as the need for re-evaluation of the nobility in light of the Industrial Revolution and the burden or opportunity for women of her time to uphold moral respectability. To do so she uses thematic similarities to Shakespeare and, like

him, does not provide clear answers, but rather inspires her audience to reconsider social problems connected to blood, the norms of masculinity, a hereditary right to rule, the connection between siblings, incest, the interconnected sins of lust and murder, and the morals of religious role models. Through similarities to *Measure for Measure* in particular, Baillie raises questions about how Christian teachings are actually applied by supposedly religious practitioners, such as the nuns, monks, and abbess who discover the crime of De Monfort and judge him—a theme she will explore more fully in *The Dream*.

The Dream, not surprisingly, invokes *Measure for Measure*'s exposure of underlying moral contagion caused by the hypocrisy of those in leadership roles. The influence of the melancholy Prince Hamlet's musings on death are also important for Baillie in conveying the idea that "something rotten" is at the heart of the community. In addition, *The Dream* explores the roles of soldiers and monks, exposes the actual values of the church, and reveals secret diseases at the heart of society that threaten to break free of the monastery and infect the public weal. The troubled world of Baillie's drama reflects English fears of the early 1800s, with King George III suffering from permanent insanity and his over-indulged and morally lax son being made Prince Regent (Black et al. xlv), though she sets the action of the play in Switzerland in the fourteenth century. Britain still prided itself on its dominance of the sea, but by 1811 Napoleon Bonaparte's imperial reach was at its height and his empire stretched across most of the European continent (Asprey xviii). The British feared a hostile takeover by Napoleon, and Baillie consequently uses the dark and threatening world Shakespeare presents in *Measure for*

Measure to hint at early nineteenth century fears of political and social conquest and destabilization.

The Dream alludes, from the start, to the social issues at the heart of *Measure for Measure*, which is famous for commenting on disease and punishments for sin within its conflicting ideas regarding Christianity. The combined social ills of lax laws and inadequate religious governance are reflected in the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and moral decay in Shakespeare's vision of Vienna (*Measure*, I.ii.31-59), which closely resembles the brothel-filled area surrounding London during Shakespeare's time (Greenblatt 2004, 176). The pious Isabella opposes the general acceptance of immorality when she wishes for "a more strict restraint / Upon the sisterhood, the votarists of Saint Clare" whom she wishes to join (*Measure*, I.iv.4-5). Isabella's statement could indicate that, in the debauched environs of Vienna, even the nuns are not following the austere rules of their order. Disease and sin also underlie the community in Baillie's *The Dream*. For example, a pestilence rages among the peasants while, within the monastery, some of the monks commune with the devil: "If thou hadst not revealed thy dream to him, he would have slept sound enough, or, at worst, have but flown over the pinnacles with his old mate the horned serpent, as usual" (*The Dream* in Baillie 2007, II.ii). Monks who serve the devil rather than God show a world turned on its head. In Baillie's play, even many of those monks who are not known companions of Satan refuse to fulfill their proper roles in the community. For instance, Jerome repulses the pleas of the impoverished peasants waiting for benefactions. He cites their threat of infectious disease— "here is death and contagion in every one of them" (I.i) — showing that it is his own fear of death that underlies his dismissal of their claims. When a woman in the

castle, the inhabitants of which are important benefactors to the monastery, takes ill, the monks make excuses not to go. One monk claims, “there is a sickness come over my heart, o’ the sudden, that makes me unfit for the office” (II.iii). Publically professing a faith they inwardly lack, Baillie’s monks secretly fear death rather than seeing it as a gateway to salvation. Though he should be comforting the dying, Jerome expresses doubt over his own safety: “it is presumptuous to tempt danger” (I.i). Ironically, Jerome might be jeopardizing his immortal soul through his disregard for the religious teachings he is supposed to uphold. With the supposed enforcers of moral codes straying so far from their proscribed roles and hints of the same sort of hypocrisy infecting the inhabitants of the religious community that blights the citizens of Vienna in *Measure for Measure*, Baillie reveals misguided and conflicted religious views as a source of cultural fear and uncertainty.

In *Measure for Measure* Shakespeare shows how political disorganization affects the entire social hierarchy, especially when the leader carries out his own agenda instead of guiding the people. Baillie echoes this issue within the narrow world of the monastery to reflect larger political fears during Napoleon’s heyday. Shakespeare’s Duke has “let slip” enforcing the laws for over a decade and, therefore, disguises himself as a friar to observe what happens when the rules are finally administered (I.iii.21). Since he is the leader of the community, blame should fall on him for allowing “evil deeds [to] have their permissive pass” (I.iii.38). The Duke wants to learn just enough about religion to exhibit the outward appearance of “a true friar” without the expectation of following any spiritual teachings (I.iii.46-8). Baillie’s “true” prior shepherds a group of monks in *his* priestly stance, yet his lack of faith and obsession with revenge undermine his spiritual

authority. The prior actually advocates a harsh view of eternal judgment, claiming that “heaven, sooner or later, will visit the man of blood with its terrors” because he can “think of nothing but revenge” for his brother’s murder (II.ii). The prior is “woefully inadequate” as a religious leader, and Baillie exposes “the truth of a world in which the secular values of revenge and rivalry have come to replace Christian love and forgiveness” (Colón xxix). In the dark and threatening microcosm of the monastery, the prior oversteps the boundaries of his profession so far as to order Osterloo killed, unless the monks can devise a torture even worse than death (II.ii). Baillie thus hints at political threats of her time since the Prince Regent’s lechery, gluttony, and outrageous debts have brought into question his ability to rule the kingdom and he has become “a figure of increasing public contempt” (Black et al., xlv). As a reflection of threats within the kingdom, the world of Baillie’s play, like that in *Measure for Measure*, lacks spiritual or secular leaders who fulfill their appropriate roles, which leaves the disordered general populace vulnerable to the consequences of their superiors’ misdeeds.

To show the effects of fear on a personal and political level, Baillie also connects *The Dream* to pre-Gothic moments in *Hamlet*, where the inhabitants of the palace are filled with fear and confusion. *Hamlet* opens with darkness, uncertainty, and a discussion of “this dreaded sight twice seen” by the distraught guards (I.i.25). Baillie’s *The Dream* captures the same fear of the unknown by beginning with Jerome’s soliloquy: “Twice in one night the same awful vision repeated! And Paul also terrified with a similar visitation!” (I.i). Though Jerome’s vision is fabricated, Baillie follows Shakespeare’s example in having a ghost-figure expose a murder that must be revenged. Shakespeare’s ghost explains to Hamlet that he did not have time to confess his sins before he was

murdered: “No reckoning made, but sent to my account / With all my imperfections on my head. O, horrible, O, horrible, most horrible!” (I.v.78-80). Likewise, Osterloo laments his own lack of preparedness for death: “not even the light of another sun, to one so ill prepared for the awful and tremendous state into which you would thrust him! this is inhuman! it is horrible!” (II.iii). Baillie echoes the “horrible” consequences of death with all one’s sins on one’s head that the ghost expresses, but she puts the words in the mouth of the murderer rather than the victim to make the killer somewhat sympathetic to her audience. To complicate the compassion which the audience might feel for Osterloo, his death results from his personal terrors and guilt rather than victimization from the vengeful monks. Osterloo claims that he suffers worse than the man he killed because he endures the guilt of murder on his conscience. The unknown horrors associated with the afterlife expressed in *Hamlet* appear in *The Dream* more immediately as Osterloo delivers a soliloquy reminiscent of Hamlet’s musings on death: “An unseen world surrounds us; spirits and powers, and the invisible dead hover near us.... Any thing, that can be endured here, is mercy compared to the dreadful abiding of what may be hereafter” (II.iii). Hamlet’s beliefs regarding the afterlife are not clearly Protestant or Catholic but, through Osterloo’s terrors, Baillie shows the universal fear of death created by the lack of any stable belief system. She does offer one honest monk, but overall, Baillie presents a world in which there is nothing clear to believe in. If even the monks have no faith in religion, what hope is there for the common people?

In addition, Baillie provides representatives of both the upper and lower classes so as to paint a picture of social injustices that permeate all the social strata, as Shakespeare does in both *Hamlet* and *Measure for Measure*. Much of *Hamlet* portrays the inner

workings of the court, but the gravedigger scene allows the audience a glimpse into the feelings of those living outside Elsinore castle. For example, the gravediggers imply that if Ophelia was not a noblewoman, she would have not been allowed a Christian burial because the accidental nature of her death was “doubtful” (V.i.1-25). The first clown states, “the more pity / that great folk should have count’nance in this world to / drown or hang themselves, more than their even- / Christen” (V.i.26-9). By using the phrase “even-Christen,” the clown implies that if they are all fellow Christians, the poor and the aristocracy should be judged the same (Shakespeare 1226n28-9). Baillie shows the poor retaining their faith in religion and in the healing the monks could theoretically provide: “Saint Maurice will take care of his own; there is no fear of you, Fathers” (I.i).

Shakespeare uses the humorous comments of the gravediggers to question the fairness of religious and secular laws, while Baillie includes the voice of the common people to provide a critical and jaundiced view of ideological conflicts over upper class entitlements after the horrors of the French Revolution.

In *The Dream*, Baillie uses allusions and similarities to *Measure for Measure* and *Hamlet* to show conflicted ideologies of a Christian viewpoint that advocates equality for all while a threat from hostile takeover by Catholic forces on the Continent threatens the British way of life. During Shakespeare’s time there was some moral outrage over the brothels outside the jurisdiction of the city of London, yet the existence of so many illicit establishments also attested to their widespread popularity. *Measure for Measure* raises the question of whether strict punishment for sin is a distraction created by political leaders to cover their own depravity. Baillie thus models her egotistical Prior on the Duke in *Measure for Measure* to mirror threats from self-indulgent and inadequate

leaders such as the Prince Regent governing Britain during her own time. The diseases of fear and hypocrisy, especially within the church, undermine the stability of society, and using references to Shakespeare, Baillie shows that there are far-reaching social implications for this instability, which she goes on to explore on an individual level in *Orra*, also first published in 1812.

Orra, in its turn, though, addresses more of the social causes of female insanity and the sometimes violent or misguided treatment men inflict on women, all by way of allusions to these very issues in *Hamlet* and *King Lear*. The Gothic, since the *Castle of Otranto*, has dealt with the problem of men as potential rapists and women as victims, and—as if echoing Walpole’s *The Mysterious Mother* directly—Baillie suggests that if society denies the dignity of base-born people, or encourages men to oppress women rather than empower them, madness might be the only recourse a woman has. Insanity was a controversial subject in Britain during the reign of “mad” king George III, especially any portrayal of the madness of great ones on stage:

This was partly because King George III began to show signs of mental instability in 1788 and 1789, and *King Lear* was tactfully dropped from the theatrical repertoire. Two attempts to assassinate the king by alleged lunatics only served to give madness more prominence. (Sales)

King George III was declared permanently insane in 1810, and it was in 1811 when his eldest son became Regent, so it is no surprise that Gothic threats or even possibilities of madness were a very timely subject for Baillie in 1811-12. Unpredictable, inexplicable, and frightening, madness is thus a key component of *Orra*. In England during the early

1800s, madness had especially strong connections to women because their very nature was perceived as different from men's:

Even when both men and women had similar symptoms of mental disorder, psychiatry differentiated between an English malady, associated with the intellectual and economic pressures on highly civilized men, and a female malady, associated with the sexuality and essential nature of women. (Showalter 7)

Through allusions to Shakespeare's Ophelia, Baillie plays out this distinction, but she implies more specifically that women's minds can be misshapen by intellectual restraint or by sexual threats, in addition to the influence of their innate female natures.

The chaste maiden who becomes temporarily liberated during her madness was a troubling character during the Age of Reason, but the Romantics embraced Ophelia and were enchanted by her emotion and unrestrained sexuality (Showalter 11). Baillie chooses to reimagine the role of the female lunatic, the various conventions of which were often inspired by Ophelia (Showalter 10), by giving greater importance to the excesses of male control that Ophelia mentions briefly during her madness. Baillie reinterprets and reassigns meaning to traditional cultural narratives about female madness, such as madness resulting from unrequited love. Moreover, Baillie makes connections to Ophelia to show a social aspect of lunacy, building on what *Hamlet* suggests: that patriarchal society must share the responsibility for driving women to madness instead of dismissing madness as a symptom of women's weak nature. Women's subjugation by men is thus implied by Baillie to be a persistent cause of madness.

Ophelia, after all, does not face the threat of rape, but her brother and father do advise her to keep her “chaste treasure” shut against Hamlet’s “unmast’red importunity” (I.ii.31-2). Remaining obedient to the patriarchal system, Ophelia becomes insane when the death of her father and the absence of her brother remove male governance and protection from her life and shatters the image of Hamlet that she has built up in her mind. As is the case for Ophelia, men possess all the power in Orra’s world, so it is no wonder that death or madness become her only options. Treated as an object for men to wrangle over, Baillie’s Orra has no say in determining who should get the privilege of marrying and/or deflowering her. A depraved man is far more frightening than any supernatural threats women can face, according to Orra:

Can spirit from the tomb, or fiend from hell,
 More hateful, more malignant be than man—
 Than villanous [sic] man? Although to look on such,
 Yea, even the very thought of looking on them,
 Makes natural blood to curdle in the veins,
 And loosen’d limbs to shake.... (*Orra* in Baillie 2007, III.ii)

The terrors of the Gothic were already well known by the early nineteenth century, hence Baillie uses the sexual threats Orra experiences—by here echoing Horatio in the first scene of *Hamlet* (I.i.113-28)—which she explains as Gothic terrors, to point out that men, as society has allowed them to behave, are the real hazard to women’s safety and even sanity. In the late 1700s Wollstonecraft writes that men are permitted or even encouraged by society to indulge in debauchery, wherein man becomes “the slave of his appetites” (Wollstonecraft 62). Baillie recognizes problems created by social

permissiveness for men during her time, and Orra tries to challenge this trend. To defy the social order, Orra dares to directly refuse her male guardian when Hughobert sternly questions, “Orra of Aldenbert, wilt thou obey me?” Politely, yet defiantly, Orra replies, “Count of that noble house, with all respect, / Again I say I will not” (II.iii). The abject posture Orra adopts in her madness when she kneels to Hartman, curiously “queen-like,” is not natural to her, or, as Baillie implies, perhaps should not be accepted as natural to any woman (V.ii). Orra’s efforts to thwart the social order of her world prove ineffective and she, like Ophelia, succumbs to madness because, as Baillie suggests, the cause of female insanity often lies in women’s overly-restrictive social roles and their resistance to them, not in women per se.

The long association, since Shakespeare’s time, between Ophelia and her flowers allows Baillie to address the stereotype that, though they might be beautiful, women are naturally frail and, therefore, in need of constant masculine protection. On stage during the Romantic era, the mad Ophelia usually would have often been depicted in a white dress with her hair down and perhaps even bedecked with garlands of wildflowers (Showalter 10). Her appearance violates the standard of a “sane” noblewoman who was bound by propriety to be restrained in her speech, behavior, and dress. The men in Baillie’s play are divided over how to treat Orra’s insanity when it takes such a form, and the imagery of flowers further cements her connection to Ophelia, whom Laertes calls a “Rose of May” while she utters her “mad” speeches (IV.v.161). Gazing at Orra, submissive in her madness, Baillie’s Theobald remarks,

No, rise thou stately flower with rude blasts rent:

As honour’d art thou with thy broken stem,

And leaflets strew'd, as in thy summer's pride. (V.ii)

Theobald still treats Orra with the same respect he granted her prior to her madness, since the “rude blasts” are responsible for her plight. The use of flowers in connection to Shakespeare’s Ophelia, who even drowns surrounded by flowers she has gathered, hints at a change during the Romantic period in how both women and madness are viewed. During the 1700s those labeled insane were thought of as animalistic brutes in need of harsh restraint. By the end of the eighteenth century, an ideological shift in the consideration of and treatment of the mentally ill was occurring, and the mad were increasingly thought of as ill human beings in need of assistance (Showalter 8), setting up an ideological conflict between older and newer views of madness that becomes basic to *Orra*. Theobald’s friend Hartman retains the earlier eighteenth-century view of strict restraint over madness, and consequently advocates “O’er such wild ravings / There must be some control” (V.ii). Theobald, on the other hand, feels compassion for Orra’s plight and does not wish to restrain her: “Thinkst thou I’ll suffer o’er her wretched state / The slightest shadow of a base control?My noble Orra! / Wander where’er thou wilt” (V.ii). This scene recalls how King Claudius in *Hamlet* sets a watch on Ophelia, but does not have her imprisoned: “Follow her close, give her good watch, I pray you” (IV.v.74), which allows her enough liberty to drown accidentally or commit suicide, an option which would have been denied to her restrained eighteenth-century counterpart. In *Orra*, Theobald and Hartman represent opposing views towards dealing with madness and female freedom during a time when society was slowly reevaluating these subjects. Even in her madness Orra is still described in the stage directions as having “an air of grandeur and defiance” to show that she still resists the patriarchal system that has entrapped her

and driven her to madness (V.ii.). When Theobald declares that she should be watched over with love instead of confined, Orra “gazes on him with a look, / Subsidings gradually to softer sadness” to imply that his ideas are preferable to the “restraint” suggested by Hartman. Thus, *Orra* advocates a return to a more liberal treatment of madwomen, who, if they are compared with flowers, should be allowed to be freer wildflowers such as those Ophelia gathers while mad.

Meanwhile, though the treatment of insane individuals is an important theme in both *King Lear* and *Orra*, the issue of socially disenfranchised bastards in Shakespeare’s play also links *Orra* to another longstanding social issue in need of reconsideration. After all, *King Lear* begins with a discussion of the social stigma surrounding the illegitimate Edmund, just as Baillie’s “villainous” Rudigere admits to being the “son of a degraded mother” (*Orra* in Baillie 2007, III.iii). Shakespeare’s Edmund questions the labels “bastard” and “base” when he is physically and mentally the equal of his legitimately-conceived peers: “When my dimensions are as well compact, / My mind as generous, and my shape as true, / As honest madam’s issue?” (I.ii.7-9). The stigma surrounding illegitimacy that Edmund contests remained a powerful social force during the Romantic era. Though *Orra* is set towards the end of the fourteenth century, the number of illegitimate children in Britain was increasing during the early nineteenth century due to

a collapse of resistance by more young women to full premarital intercourse due to a rise of the proportion of the property-less with no economic stake in the value of their virginity, and a rise in the proportion of men removed from the pressures

of family, community and priest which previously would have contrived to force them into marriage. (Stone 403)

Rudigere and Orra share a “common grandsire,” yet Orra is considered a noblewoman while Rudigere’s illegitimacy prevents him from enjoying the privileges of the aristocracy (III.ii). Lamenting the social changes that confine him to the lower class, Rudigere responds to Orra’s attendant Cathrina: “Ay, and dost thou reproach my bastardy to make more base the man who conquer’d thee” (III.iii). Rudigere implies that, as his mistress, Cathrina has fallen to a social status even lower than her master’s. His bastardry and subsequent exclusion from the entitlements of other noblemen provide the motivation for his attempts to subdue women and raise the question of whether Rudigere is a victim of the social circumstances of his birth or whether, like Shakespeare’s Iago in *Othello*, he is “naturally” a villain. Alluding to the theme of bastards who become villains in *King Lear*, Baillie thus promotes awareness of how enforced and restrictive social rankings might prohibit a man, or even women, from fulfilling a role that contributes positively to society.

While women can try to stand up for themselves as Orra does, because men, even those restricted by social stigma, continue to possess more social power than do women, women trapped in the patriarchal world of *Orra* still do not have any real opportunities. Orra seems superior to Rudigere, yet they are both victims of a system that punishes them for their birth, for being born female, or for being born to an unmarried woman. With the character of Orra, Baillie also suggests a reevaluation of the social causes of female madness by invoking Ophelia in a different way from the common Romantic view of a

sexually liberated young maiden and instead seeing her as caught in an outdated system of male dominance.

By bringing forward the limited options available to women in Shakespeare's plays, especially *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, and *Measure for Measure*, Baillie suggests that the roles available to women of her own time should be expanded, reconsidered, or reevaluated. Men regulate the entire world of her late play *Witchcraft*, so Baillie here takes a cue from *Macbeth* to create a trio of would-be female witches potentially more powerful than men. They frighten the entire community, yet Baillie's "witches" lack any real power and, as impoverished and unmarried women, are even denied basic necessities by society. Because accused witches in England were almost exclusively female (Newman 55) and madness was increasingly associated with women during the late 1700s and early 1800s, Baillie examines in this play how notions of gender impact views of both witchcraft and female insanity. All the women presented in *Witchcraft* are in some way marginalized, denied resources, agency, or support. But, as Baillie's play suggests, poor women face more impediments than do wealthy ones. Accusations of witchcraft were a real social issue during Shakespeare's time, and to deny the existence of witches would be to lay oneself open to charges of atheism (Hole 21) because the bible specifically mentions a witch, the witch of Endor (1 Sam. 28:7). Charges of witchcraft were primarily directed toward women who were elderly, reclusive, impoverished, or otherwise on the fringes of society. People seeking to place blame for disasters large or small or looking for a way to deal with those who did not outwardly conform to social norms might find witches to be convenient scapegoats. Writing in the early 1800s,

Baillie suggests that poor women lack social power in just these ways, especially when they try to take matters into their own hands. In Baillie's view, accusations of witchcraft could be a form of social disruption conveniently employed as a label to limit the power of the poor. In addition to the "witches," Violet is another of Baillie's characters stigmatized by events beyond her control. Violet invites comparisons, once more, to Shakespeare's Ophelia and the symbolism of violets to which Ophelia is connected. In addition, referring to issues of the treatment of women raised at the end of *Measure for Measure* permits Baillie to show how female voices can be silenced by implications of madness and how men can step in to make things worse by taking control without addressing the root cause of social problems that ostracize women.

When Shakespeare included the Weïrd Sisters in *Macbeth*, recognizing and dealing with witchcraft was a very current issue, though it was "only part of a larger animus against all women which [was] displaced onto the poor, aged, and helpless" (Newman 57). Secular and legal ramifications for witches first came into being during Queen Elizabeth's time for political reasons because Protestants feared for the life of the queen, and witchcraft suddenly became the worst of crimes, with Catholics being the most suspected practitioners (Notestein 25). This mythology was part of a larger Catholic-versus-Protestant issue because previously the Catholic Church, which felt witchcraft was a sin and not a crime, sentenced accused witches and was historically lenient compared to the council of Protestant Queen Elizabeth (Notestein 5-27). In Early Modern England, Karen Newman suggests, cultural anxieties about women were aggravated no doubt by a virgin queen without an heir. Historically the consequence was a rise in witchcraft persecutions, presentments for scolding,

shrewishness, and bastardy; or to put it differently, the consequence was the criminalization of women, the labeling of old behaviors in new ways. (Newman 57-8)

When King James I took the throne in England, his book *Daemonologie* revealed the new ruler's fears and interests, and it gave royal sanction to accusations of witchcraft, which he viewed as a crime to be punished to the harshest extent of the law (Notestein 97-101). Even though witchcraft was no longer such an important issue during Baillie's time, social class and social stigma were still important in determining who might be suspected of witchcraft, and Grizeld Bane in *Witchcraft* is called "the blackest, chiefest hag o' them a'"(V.ii). Though most witches were assumed to be "always old and poor," desiring revenge despite her wealth, Baillie's Annabella claims, "We have read of witches who have been neither old nor poor" (III.ii). Annabella tries to incriminate Violet, though her words also implicate herself and show that, regardless of social position, women who have been marginalized by a patriarchal society still desire power. Shakespeare's "secret, black, and midnight hags" (IV.i.48) provide inspiration for Baillie's revelation of ongoing discrimination against British women.

Though one of her influences for *Witchcraft* was the three old women in Walter Scott's novel *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819) who wish to become witches (Colón xxxiii), Baillie adds to her exploration of women seeking power in a patriarchal society by incorporating allusions to Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. The Weïrd Sisters are outside of society altogether, and their motivations cannot be divined by their brief visitations. They stir up trouble by mixing intriguing hints of power for Macbeth along with their

more unpalatable concoctions (I.iii.51-3). In Shakespeare's play, Banquo captures the contradictions and mystery of the witches:

What are these,
 So withered, and so wild in their attire,
 That look not like th' inhabitants o' th' earth
 And yet are on 't?—Live you? Or are you aught
 That man can question? (I.iii.40-4)

The "withered" and "wild" Weir Sisters fit stereotypes of witches as old and poor and, though Macbeth suggests they are "prophet-like," their motivations and natures remain unknown (III.i.64). Baillie's supposed witches, on their side, seek revenge for the injustice of the society in which they live, but they also desire food and money, which is clearly due to their social and economic positions. Murrey, pretending to be the devil, makes the women declare what kind of authority they would prefer: "Power over goods and chattels, or power over bodies and spirits?" (I.iii). The women are divided over which they would choose, with Mary Macmurren and Elspy Low choosing goods because a lack of economic power is clearly their concern, while Grizeld Bane, who seeks revenge, wants control over bodies and spirits. As their choices suggest, would-be witches might see witchcraft as "an opportunity to deploy the powers of representation to which they were often denied access" (Newman 68). This group of women makes others, men included, fear them, yet they are unable to gain the true social power they seek: control over their own lives, resources, and opportunities. By alluding to the mysterious trio of witches in *Macbeth*, Baillie thus questions more than Shakespeare does the

interests of poor, unmarried women, a group historically denied political agency and access to resources.

Baillie's poor women are motivated by a lack of resources to engage in witchcraft, but even the upper-class Annabella shares similarities with Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth, who has her own connections to witchcraft. Any female resistance to the status quo could be labeled as witchcraft during the Early Modern era (Newman 67), but Lady Macbeth actively invokes "ministering spirits" to unsex her and fill her with a masculine desire for revenge. Lady Macbeth also has a connection to witchcraft through her breasts, as nursing familiars was an important aspect of witchcraft at Shakespeare's time. When Lady Macbeth invites spirits to, "come to my woman's breasts and take my milk for gall," her call could be an invitation for dark forces to nurse as her familiars and feed on the bile of her anger (I.v.54-55). After all, one of the ways to identify a witch during Shakespeare's time was to search a supposed witch for any extra nipples used to suckle demons who could then carry out her wishes (Newman 53). Through Lady Macbeth, the female body is therefore connected unquestionably to nourishing evil. Baillie's Annabella in *Witchcraft*, too, like Lady Macbeth, actively desires supernatural assistance to gain power and revenge and is willing to chance damnation if she could have her earthly desires fulfilled (I.i). Annabella even shares the gender ambiguity of Lady Macbeth (after her unsexing) when Dungarren says he will tolerate her as he would an "evil spirit" because she lacks "the soul of a woman within her" (I.i). Historically, all "behaviors transgressing traditional gender codes were conflated" and "witches were regularly accused of sexual misconduct" among a mixture of evils (Newman 56-7). Annabella's crime of unrequited lust for Dungarren is therefore labelled unfeminine, as is

her willingness to see Violet burn at the stake. Though Lady Macbeth's transgressions are not sexual per se, she serves as a model for Baillie's Annabella who embodies the threat of upper-class women turning to supernatural assistance when they desire active control over their situation.

In addition to the importance of women seeking power raised by *Macbeth*, it is the possibility for social injustices against women living in a patriarchy hinted at in the conclusion of *Measure for Measure* that pave the way for Baillie's ending in *Witchcraft*. Though Isabella spends the first four acts of Shakespeare's play eloquently condemning her brother's lack of chastity and defending her own virginity and desire to become a nun, she loses her voice towards the end of Act V and presumably accepts the Duke's sudden offer of marriage without saying anything. Shakespeare's Duke throws off the disguise of a "holy father," then reassumes the fatherly roles of judging, distributing punishments, and regaining control. He temporarily permits Angelo to label Isabella insane, after which the Duke dismisses her pleas and sentences her to prison before revealing his elaborate subterfuge (V.i.33,121). In *Witchcraft*, Fatheringham's very name implies his patriarchal control and his capacity to resolve disputes. He disregards the murderous excitement of the crowd and produces a seemingly rational explanation for Grizeld Bane's behavior: she is a "miserable woman whose husband was hanged for murder, at Inverness, some years ago, and who thereupon became distracted. She was, when I left that country, kept in close custody" (V.ii). Fatheringham does not delve into underlying causes of her madness, such as who and why her husband murdered or if it was his crime or his death that caused Grizeld Bane to become "distracted." Without a male provider, presumably Grizeld Bane would have little or no income, so financial

constraints could become an issue, as could her desire for revenge on those who put her husband to death. Grizeld Bane's views and motivations, like Isabella's at the end of *Measure for Measure*, are ignored by the learned man who shows up to resolve everything. Though Grizeld Bane continues to defy submission to the men who arrest her, the group of men, clearly the ones who control the law, ignore her "ravings." Presumably she will be returned to a confinement of some sort, as Fotheringham suggests, to conveniently disregard any of her grievances against the patriarchal system. Baillie's lower-class Grizeld is dismissed as a lunatic, as Angelo tries to dismiss Isabella's accusations against him by claiming she is insane in Act V of *Measure for Measure*. If Shakespeare's Isabella marries the Duke, as is implied by Shakespeare's controversial ending, she loses her opportunity to be distanced from patriarchal governance as a nun. Building on the threats to Isabella's freedoms allows Baillie to point out problems with women's limited opportunities in a male-dominated world.

In addition to describing the situation of Grizeld Bane, Baillie further explores the plight of Violet, who has fallen in social class and now dwells, literally and figuratively, on the fringes of society, by again making allusions to Shakespeare's Ophelia. In doing so, Baillie hints at further conflicted ideologies about the options of young women in the society of her day. The very name "Violet" conjures up not only the flower but an associated meaning of "faithfulness." In Shakespeare, Laertes instructs Ophelia to think of Hamlet's favor as

A violet in the youth of primy nature,
Forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting,
The perfume and suppliance of a minute—

No more. (I.iii.7-10)

Symbolically associated with women for centuries, flowers and their fleeting beauty are a metaphor Laertes expects that his sister will understand. Yet, in her madness Ophelia states, “I would give you / some violets, but they withered all when my father died,” indicating the lack of fidelity she experiences, not only from Hamlet but from everyone expected to support her (IV.v.183-4). The mad Ophelia’s mention of the lack of violets in the Danish court reproaches Laertes, the king, and queen for failing to prevent her father’s death and even for personal neglect. Violets were not only important symbolically at the time *Hamlet* was staged, since women were considered to be closer to nature and consequently to madness, but violets were used in treating physical disorders as well:

The healing powers of violets...were well known to Shakespeare’s contemporaries. Madness of the kind Ophelia suffers after her father's death and Hamlet’s rejection of her would have been understood as a drying and overheating of the brain. The cooling properties of violets and their sweet scent—what we would call aromatherapy—would have been prescribed in her case.

(Paster and Brown)

Furthering her association with this very flower, after Ophelia’s death, Laertes says “Lay her i’ th’ earth, / And from her fair and unpolluted flesh / May violets spring!” (V.i.194-6). Laertes connects his sister’s virginity and purity with violets, while Baillie’s Violet embodies innocence and faithfulness to her father and to her lover, Dungareen. Her chief occupation even seems to be nurturing flowers, to which her beauty is connected, around her cottage: “The lily, and the rose, and the gillyflower; things the most beautiful in

nature, planted and cherished by a hand as fair and as delicate as themselves” (II.ii). However, Ophelia’s father is killed, and Violet’s father supposedly commits murder. Therefore, Violet, like Ophelia, is left without male protection, which complicates her social status. The community ostracizes Violet because she is “the orphan of a murderer—a man disgraced, who died in a pit and was buried in a moor” (I.i). Clearly Violet’s reputation and social status have been greatly impaired by her father’s supposed crime and her lack of a guardian, and, if she did not have the secret support of Dungareen, Violet would be an ideal candidate for being thought a witch. Through Violet’s connections to Ophelia, Baillie suggests there is fine line between women in a patriarchal society becoming victims or being accused of disrupting the social order through madness or witchcraft.

Baillie’s treatment of witchcraft as an illusory temptation for women who seek power is in keeping with ideas of educated people in her time, but the hasty conclusion of her 1836 play, like the conclusion of *Measure for Measure*, raises many social questions that are not resolved. The poor women try to invite demons but are unsuccessful, compared to Lady Macbeth, who succeeds in her invitation only to later go mad with guilt and die. Grizeld Bane tries to empower other women in the community to gain the respect or power that they are craving until her plans are thwarted by patriarchal authority. Whether Grizeld Bane believes she has invited demons or if she just convinces others that she has, she still threatens the community with disruption. The social issues presented in the play of women desiring additional social power are not removed by Baillie’s conclusion. Annabella, rather than obtaining revenge through framing Violet as a witch, instead is strangled to death by Grizeld Bane. The male “protection” provided

removes Grizeld Bane, now a murderer and presumed lunatic, from an active role in the community, but no other help is suggested by patriarchal society for the plight of the poor or insane. The impoverished in general, who have little control over their own lives, fear the supernatural threat of witches, while the educated, exclusively male lawmakers, represented by Fotheringham, retain no belief in the old ways. Even though Baillie is writing nearly 200 years after Shakespeare's time, many of the same social issues, especially those relating to the treatment of women, have not been redressed. The desire on the part of women such as Lady Macbeth or Isabella for control over their own lives is still present in the early nineteenth century, and Baillie wants her audience to reconsider the social possibilities available for women in a direct comparison to—and echo of—what Shakespeare presents.

In her most Gothic plays, then, Baillie uses thematic allusions to Shakespeare to identify a lack of opportunities for women in patriarchal society, but also to draw attention to conflicted ideologies such as disenfranchisement due to changes in social hierarchies and roles during her own time. Using inspiration from some of Shakespeare's bloodiest works, Baillie incorporates blood as a possible indicator of masculinity or if spilled secretly, a lack of control over oneself. Blood also indicates social status, yet through *De Monfort*, Baillie questions the social benefit of a strict adherence to aristocratic male bloodlines. For Baillie in *The Dream*, in turn, social corruption and religious hypocrisy go hand and hand. By alluding to Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* there, Baillie suggests that either religious insincerity needs to be eradicated or religious organizations, which might be corrupt, should exert less social control. In *Orra*, Baillie then takes on madness as one of the most prominent issues of her time, alludes to

Shakespeare's Ophelia, and reveals madness can be connected to the oppression of women by patriarchal society. In *Witchcraft*, finally, Baillie hints at reasons that women of her time, like the Weird Sisters in *Macbeth*, might seek power they have been historically denied by society. By these means, in some of her most Gothic plays, Baillie points out threatening ideological conflicts, raised originally (if not always in the exact same ways) by Shakespeare, that have become even more complicated and are still in need of reconsideration in Britain during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

EPILOGUE

The connection between Shakespeare and the Gothic, as established by Walpole and continued by Radcliffe, Lewis, Shelley, and Baillie, among others, has remained a persuasive feature of the genre from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) through the recent *Twilight* series of novels (2005-08) by Stephanie Meyer. According to the different fears and conflicts each generation experiences, the amount of Shakespeare in the Gothic varies from work to work. Consequently, many Gothic texts during and after the time of the authors discussed here react to Shakespeare directly and in their own ways. For example: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), Anne's Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976), and Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* (2005), *New Moon* (2006), and *Breaking Dawn* (2008) all include allusions to Shakespeare, in various forms and to various degrees, and so continue his foundational links to the Gothic novel. They also continue the tendency of using Gothic recollections of Shakespeare to suggest deep-seated conflicts among ideologies during the times at which each new work appears.

In the preface to the 1818 edition of *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley mentions that Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* were of particular importance to her in her determination to "preserve the truth of the elementary principles of human nature" in her novel (Mary Shelley 5). Prospero and Caliban in their roles of master and servant are especially apt to illustrate part of the complex dynamic between Victor Frankenstein and his creation. Caliban, alternately labelled the "poor monster," "abominable monster," "servant-monster," "man-monster," and "ignorant monster" in

The Tempest, provides elements of the rational, yet threatening, creature Frankenstein creates (II.ii.8-9, III.ii.3,12,25). Shakespeare also presents an unresolved ideological conflict over Prospero's degree of responsibility for Caliban, since the former eventually admits, "this thing of darkness I / Acknowledge mine" (V.i.275-6). Prospero has shaped Caliban and his acknowledgment that Caliban is *his* begs the question: can one create something without being responsible for what it does? Frankenstein's self-aware creation is caught in between as a rational creature who recognizes both the monstrosity within himself and the monstrousness of Frankenstein's abandonment of him (Mary Shelley 81). Though the creature sees himself as an abomination, he realizes that the creation of him remains intimately connected to its creator, who should play a parental role in guiding and nurturing its development and understanding. Frankenstein belatedly realizes this duality after the creature kills several people Frankenstein loves: "Clerval, my friend and dearest companion, had fallen a victim to me and the monster of my creation" (Mary Shelley 127). Like Prospero until the very end of *The Tempest*, Frankenstein is reluctant to acknowledge the monster is his and to take responsibility for its actions, as well as to revisit his own questionable decision to create it in the first place.

In *The Tempest* and in *Frankenstein* there is an additional threat that the creation will no longer be subject to the control of its master if it begins to reproduce. Early on in *The Tempest*, Prospero realizes the threat of Caliban's reproductive potential after Caliban tries to rape his daughter, Miranda. Prospero denounces Caliban's action this way: "I have us'd thee / (Filth as thou art) with human care, and lodg'd thee / In mine own cell, till thou didst seek to violate / The honor of my child" (I.ii.345-8). Caliban then expresses that it was his intention to "people" "This isle with Calibans" (I.ii.351).

Frankenstein recognizes the same threat Prospero saw in Caliban when his creature pleads with Frankenstein to create a mate for him:

Even if they were to leave Europe, and inhabit the deserts of the new world, yet one of the first results of those sympathies for which the dæmon thirsted would be children, and a race of devils would be propagated upon the earth, who might make the very existence of the species of man a condition precarious and full of terror. (Mary Shelley 114)

With a male and female monster, their reproductive ability would become completely independent of the creator or master. The creature's superhuman strength combined with his ability to reason enables him, and potentially others like him, to easily overpower humans. Frankenstein has already been troubled with the creature's challenge to his authority: "You are my creator, but I am your master;—obey!" (Mary Shelley 116).

Additionally, one of the social issues at play is Frankenstein and the reader's attraction to and fear of the old "science" of alchemy—like Prospero's "magic"—alongside the new science of biochemistry with a new set of possibilities and threats. Shelley continues to raise some of the same frightening and unanswerable questions Shakespeare brings up in *The Tempest*, and these quandaries had become even more threatening with rapid advances in scientific knowledge and mechanical technology during Shelley's day, all of which made the creation of a monstrous being, without a woman giving birth to it, seem increasingly possible. In *The Tempest* and *Frankenstein*, then, the question remains: where does the responsibility lie for the actions of a "creature" that remains an extension of his creator?

In Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, a central ideological conflict conveys the title character's biggest problem: if she marries Rochester, she could potentially transform into the next "monstrous" Bertha, hidden away in the attic by her dissatisfied husband. Though there are numerous allusions to Shakespeare in *Jane Eyre*, the novel's pointed connection to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* becomes most evident after Rochester proposes to Jane. Clear vision is obscured by the darkness of the forest and the magic of the fairies concealed within Shakespeare's play. Like the fairy king or Puck in Shakespeare's woods, starting in the woods of his own estate, Rochester misleads Jane, even after her midnight confrontation with Bertha. In Athens, as it is presented by Shakespeare, Hermia's father threatens her with a forced marriage, joining a convent, or death. While the dark forest holds a chance for Hermia to escape the tyrannical rule of her father, it also introduces additional terrors of rape, murder, or vision-clouding magic. For Brontë, Jane Eyre faces an arduous struggle to escape from patriarchal society through flight, as opposed to death through starvation, or the most frightening and Gothic option, madness (Gilbert and Gubar 341). Jane first realizes the possibility of madness as escape when she has a fit in the red room (presided over by the portrait of the dead patriarch of the Reed family) and later during her encounter with Bertha, who, with deep symbolism, rends Jane's wedding veil after she views herself with it on in Jane's mirror (Brontë 250). Following Rochester's proposal, Jane undergoes a transformation and no longer seems so plain. In a key allusion to Shakespeare, Rochester then labels her "Mustardseed," one of the fairies commanded by Titania from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. He calls Jane "blooming, and smiling, and pretty" and asks, "Is this my pale, little elf? Is this my mustardseed?" (Brontë 226). The engagement between Jane and Rochester, like the

enchantments in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, is a deceptive or illusory fairytale.

Rochester announces, "I will myself put the diamond chain around your neck, and the circlet on your forehead...and I will clasp the bracelets on these fine wrists, and load these fairy-like fingers with rings" (Brontë 227). There is a threat of male control in Rochester's desire to weigh down his fairy with jewels that sound suspiciously like shackles.

The relationship between Rochester and his betrothed, in fact, echoes the dysfunctional relationship between the fairy King and Queen in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Shakespeare's Oberon obscures Titania's vision with juice from a flower to make her fall in love with whatever creature she sees so that he can steal her precious changeling boy, the son of her dead friend, from her (II.i). Rochester's motivations for tricking Jane into a bigamous relationship appear equally selfish and questionable. After his engagement to Jane, Rochester perpetrates the illusion that the differences in their classes has disappeared: "You glowed in the cool moonlight last night, when you mutinied against fate, and claimed your rank as my equal" says Rochester (Brontë 230). The role of the Victorian governess was always conflicted because she was caught between being a family member and being a servant, but Jane's position is even more conflicted during Rochester's attempt make her become his second wife, while concealing the existence of his first wife (Brontë's dark equivalent of Shakespeare's "monstrous" Bottom) within the same isolated house (Gilbert and Gubar 350). After his wedding to Jane is broken up in the middle of ceremony, Rochester finally admits to Bertha's existence: "You shall see what sort of being I was cheated into espousing, and judge whether I had a right to break the compact, and seek sympathy with something at

least human” (257). Rochester’s desire for a “human” partner is contrasted with Jane’s vision of Bertha as “the foul German spectre—the Vampyre” (250). Thus the veil is permanently removed from Jane’s eyes and she sees how close she came to escaping patriarchal terrors through madness—or being caught up in a spell like that created by Shakespeare’s fairy king—if she had married Rochester as he was at Thornfield.

Almost 80 years after Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897), also quite allusive to Shakespeare as we can see in the essays collected by Margret L. Carter in *Dracula: The Vampire and the Critics*, Anne Rice has built upon the mythology of the vampire, especially with her first *Vampire Chronicles* novel, *Interview with the Vampire*. Rice’s novel intersperses the dialogue of her vampires with allusions and theatrical references, especially to Shakespeare’s bloody *Macbeth*. One of the key conflicts for vampires that Rice emphasizes is their relationship with death: their physical bodies have died, but as undead they must feed upon the blood of the living. Though no longer living humans themselves, they can often still pass for human. Dramatic situations and themes underlie Rice’s entire novel, but the vampire Lestat’s obsession with the theater suggests the pertinence of issues brought up by Shakespeare, especially with the dark views of the value of human existence expressed at the end of *Macbeth*. Louis finds his maker’s passion for Shakespeare surprising, but, of all Shakespeare’s plays, it should not be unexpected that the bloody *Macbeth*, in which the supernatural plays a large part, is Lestat’s favorite (Rice 98). Louis says,

We went to every performance [of *Macbeth*], even those by amateurs, and Lestat would stride home afterwards, repeating the lines to me and even shouting out to passers-by with an outstretched finger, “Tomorrow and tomorrow and

tomorrow!” until they skirted him as if he were drunk. (Rice 126-7)

Coming from a vampire acting like a human, Macbeth’s speech in which he realizes human existence is brief and possibly meaningless takes on new meanings. In Shakespeare’s play, after finding out that Lady Macbeth is dead, Macbeth ponders death:

She should have died hereafter;
 There would have been a time for such a word.
 To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
 Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
 To the last syllable of recorded time;
 And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
 The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
 Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player,
 That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
 And then is heard no more. It is a tale
 Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
 Signifying nothing. (V.v.17-28)

Macbeth’s speech emphasizes the hollowness and falseness of human life. As a vampire, Lestat snuffs out several human lives each night and, echoing this speech, mocks mortals with their own frailty and the short duration of their lives. However, Lestat’s reference to *Macbeth* raises questions of the significance of a vampire’s own existence. Is a vampire’s immortal life-in-death full of endless tomorrows any more meaningful than the brief life of a mortal? The physical bodies of vampires have already died, yet they are not able to move on to heaven or hell, assuming that an afterlife awaits the dead.

In *Interview with a Vampire*, vampires are stuck in an endless death with no hope for an afterlife beyond their vampire existence, because they are already living their own “heaven” or “hell.” After committing several murders, Shakespeare’s Macbeth communes with a trio of witches to find out his future and if he “Shall live the lease of nature, pay his breath / To time and mortal custom” (IV.i.99-100). Though his “lease of nature” has already ended in Rice’s *Interview*, Louis is deeply troubled by Claudia’s supposed murder of Lestat (138). Louis then has an illuminating and disturbing vision while sitting in a cathedral:

God did not live in this church; these statues gave an image to nothingness. *I* was the supernatural in this cathedral.... The cathedral crumbled in my vision; the saints listed and fell....the candlesticks fell and rolled on the slime-covered stones. And I remained standing. Untouched. Undead. (142)

Through Louis, Rice questions if immortality as a vampire is a blessing or a curse. After all, even Shakespeare’s ambitious Macbeth reaches the point where he wishes for an end to life, which, though it might “signify nothing,” at least does not last forever. Louis has always been reluctant to fully engage in his part as a vampire in the theater of the world. For instance, in reacting to the death of his human body, Louis refers to one Hamlet’s soliloquies: “I was acting too much as if the ‘mortal coil’ had not been shaken off” (Rice 31). Later, Louis imagines himself as a member of the audience instead of an actor: “And I watched the tragedy finally as one might from a theater balcony, moved from time to time, but never significantly to jump the railing and join the players on stage” (Rice 129). In another echo of Macbeth among several in Rice’s novels, vampires’ “lives” are

still only “walking shadows” and “poor players” in the eternal world of their un-dead condition.

The first of Meyer’s recent vampire novels, *Twilight*, also mentions *Macbeth* several times as the play Bella is reading and writing about in school, though thematic similarities connect the whole *Twilight* series more strongly to the star-crossed lovers in *Romeo and Juliet*. The ideology of romantic love and the sexual anxiety that comes with it, for teenagers in the early twenty-first century at least, is connected to Romeo and Juliet’s tragic story, as Glennis Byron points out. Meyer’s second novel, *New Moon*, emphasizes the conflicts in *Romeo and Juliet* to an even greater extent than *Twilight* does, as we shall see. While the third novel in the series, *Eclipse* (2007) alludes more to *Wuthering Heights*, the fourth novel, *Breaking Dawn*, returns to Shakespeare, even including an epigraph to Book Two from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Though Gothic writers have been finding inspiration from Shakespeare since Walpole wrote *The Castle of Otranto*, and later writers moved from quotation to appropriation of the Bard’s works, the *Twilight* series reveals new implications of Shakespeare in the Gothic, not just in the central love story, but in the way the main character superimposes herself into *Romeo and Juliet*. To do so, Bella must reimagine Shakespeare’s plot and flesh out characters such as Paris, though ultimately she realizes that Shakespeare’s original works will not bear her plot changes (though of course Meyer changes her predecessor’s plot to achieve a happy ending—since the Juliet-like Bella dies into eternal vampire life—even as she does not adhere strictly to the plot of *Romeo and Juliet*, in any case). Overall, Meyer’s *Twilight* series makes connections to Shakespeare in ways that move beyond just using epigraphs or quotations from his plays.

New Moon begins with an epigraph from *Romeo and Juliet*, with which Meyer hearkens back to earlier Gothic writers such as Ann Radcliffe, who frequently began chapters with Shakespearean quotations. Meyer includes the advice of Friar Lawrence to Romeo when he chides him to love Juliet in moderation:

These violent delights have violent ends
And in their triumph die, like fire and powder,
Which, as they kiss, consume. (II.vi.9-11)

Like Radcliffe, Meyer wants readers to keep Shakespeare's play in mind as they read to make links between the relationship of Bella and Edward to that of Romeo and Juliet. However, Meyer's use of Shakespeare goes farther than older Gothic works in that she makes the main character, Bella, actively imagine herself as Juliet, with Edward as Romeo and Jacob as Paris. She reimagines Shakespeare's play in terms of her own situation and wants to rewrite the character of Paris so that he becomes a close friend of Juliet (Meyer 2006, 369-71). *Romeo and Juliet* is also mentioned at the beginning of the novel when Bella and Edward watch the 1968 Franco Zeffirelli film version of *Romeo and Juliet*, in which the teen-age lovers were actually played by teenagers, and Edward expresses his antipathy towards the character of Romeo because he switched his love interest from Rosaline to Juliet so quickly (Meyer 2006, 17). Teenagers are conflicted about romantic love, idealizing it as the all-consuming passion about which Friar Lawrence warns Romeo. Bella shares this view but the (much) older and more mature Edward, who has spent almost a century trapped in the body of a teenager, sees desire as a steady and slow-burning fire, unlike the quick passion expressed by Romeo. After spending so many decades as an undead vampire, Edward envies Romeo and Juliet the

ease of their suicides (18). True love, Meyer suggests, is not as straightforward a concept as it might initially “appear, and the ‘Twilight’ series appropriates *Romeo and Juliet* in order to negotiate, primarily through the body of the vampire, competing ideologies of love for the teenager of the modern world” (Byron 168-9). Bella’s awareness of Shakespeare’s play and application of it to her own life make for a new twist in the long-standing Gothic relationship with Shakespeare. Shakespearean epigraphs can speak for both the medieval-to-Renaissance world and more modern situations, but *Twilight* has a twenty-first century heroine who can respond to the plays of Shakespeare, very much as these stories have been appropriated by contemporary culture.

Book Two in this series, *Breaking Dawn*, which is from the point of view of Jacob, a Native American and disguised werewolf who turns out to be a shape-shifter in this novel, begins with an epigraph from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*: “And yet, to say the truth, reason / and love keep little company together nowadays” (III.i.143-4). These words, spoken by Shakespeare’s ass-headed Bottom upon Titania declaring her love for him, begins a book which ends with Jacob imprinting on a newborn who is half-vampire, half-human. Another connection between imprinting and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is made clear when Bella points out the kind of magic in *Breaking Dawn* that puts mismatched lovers to rights: “‘Edward told me once what it was like—your imprinting thing. He said it was like *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, like magic. You’ll find who you’re really looking for, Jacob, and maybe then all of this will make sense’” (Meyer 2008, 189). Shakespeare sets a precedent for magic clearing up the confusion of lovers falling for the wrong partner, but also provides an opportunity for alternative (not socially acceptable) love matches, such as between members of different races or religions. Bella

chooses to remain in the magical forest forever when she marries Edward, becomes a vampire, and lives with the Cullen “family,” yet she refuses to completely cut herself off from her biological father. Trying to have it both ways, the life Bella has chosen has elements of the supernatural (such as hunting mountain lions) and the mundane (the endless repetition of high school) (Crawford 173-4). The awareness by characters of the semi-Shakespearean roles they are playing increases from *Frankenstein*, where the monster’s hopes of seeming human enough are dashed, to *Twilight* where Bella can become the very monster she admires and even give birth to a monster, which turns out not to be not so monstrous after all. The irregular sexual desires expressed in early Gothic novels such as Lewis’ *The Monk* are presented within older works as outside of normal behavior parameters. But in *Twilight*, “Bella recounts her desires and decisions in an entirely matter-of-fact tone, with no suggestion that she views them as being in any way questionable or strange” (Crawford 173). In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, which is recalled at such moments, after all, any sort of love match becomes conceivable, even between a fairy queen and a simpleton with the head of an ass. However, Shakespeare’s play only allowed for the possibility of people temporarily re-shaping themselves, voluntarily or against their will, within the forest, because ultimately they must be returned to the “real” world. Joseph Crawford recognizes that “part of the appeal of much successful vampire romance fiction has lain in its ability to bridge gaps which, in reality, remain uncrossable, and *Twilight* merely takes this process to new extremes” (Crawford 177). At the end of *Twilight*, problems for young women with sexual attractions outside of the norm are left unresolved with Bella’s transformation into the

vampire she has longed to become, even as she refuses to completely renounce her human existence.

The monsters that resonate with each era's audiences vary because of social fears and concerns of their times, but the works of Shakespeare, though often transformed or manipulated to fit with different expectations of different times, still speak to deep conflicts in our conception of human nature. People long to find a link between the tangible, visible world and the supernatural or spiritual realm outside of human control so as to find possible meanings to their existence, whether in Shakespeare, the Gothic, or modern fiction. Since the rise of the modern era with its increasingly rapid development of new technology, we *need* the Gothic to half-reveal and half-disguise the ideological quandaries still present in our society, yet frequently these still hearken back to Shakespeare, the author who most bridges the gaps between the late-medieval and early-modern worlds.

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