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Monsters of History: Tyranny, Torture and the Gothic

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Abstract

The Gothic tyrant is a figure that not only plays a vital role in generating fear and manipulating the balance of power in Gothic fiction, but one that has survived throughout the mode's changing form. It is tyranny that frequently turns Gothic tales into narratives of oppression, persecution and torture; the violent excesses the mode has become known for. History, too, can be monstrous. It acts as a repository for dark practices, barbarity, and the fears of the present. Historical forces reshape the popular understanding of what a tyrant is, and what forms of cruelty are possible. Just as Horace Walpole, when writing *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), was attempting an impersonation of a type of romance so outdated and barbaric it came to be called 'Gothic', historical analogues call to the reader's mind genuine horrors of the past. The figure of the Gothic tyrant and the appropriation of historical periods and fears have worked in tandem throughout the continuum of the Gothic mode contributing to its mutation into other genres and forms of media. This thesis examines the Gothic tyrant across a backdrop of five historical backgrounds: the Spanish Inquisition, the French Revolution, Imperial expansion, the perseverance of Orientalism in the twentieth century and finally into the imaginative wastelands created after the Cold War. This thesis demonstrates how tyranny supports the essential functions of the Gothic mode, how the figure of the tyrant responds to historical stimulus, drawing parallels between tyrants of different eras, and emphasising how the re-enactment of historical excesses of violence, such as torture, are performances of tyranny. The Gothic tyrant is far from an incidental feature; such figures fulfil an essential role in maintaining and updating the Gothic mode, preserving its historical influences and performing the balance of pain and power that enables the Burkean sublime.

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Introduction: Sublimity, Pain, and Power

Any attempt to define and describe tyrants, to be useful, must deal not only with those *monsters of history* whose abuse of power is obvious and indisputable; it must also raise the cases of rulers who have achieved great things, who are justly admired for their achievements and qualities, and who have left an indelible mark on our world for better or worse. (Latey, 1969: 19) [Emphasis added]

There are few monsters as perpetually relevant, consistently watched for, as the tyrant.

Maurice Latey's study of tyranny, written in 1969, focuses on the tyrant as contemporary political threat. Despite stating that he lived 'in an age of tyrants' where 'scarcely a year passes without the appearance of some new dictator who may well become a tyrant' (Latey, 1969: 11), Latey also acknowledges tyranny is most often thought of as an historical phenomenon: a practice that belongs to the past. Not only does Latey refer to them as 'great beasts of history' but more romantically notes that 'they communicate with each other by a sort of telepathy across the centuries and the oceans' (Latey, 1969: 11). Latey's statement, quoted in the epigraph above, that tyranny does not consist solely of 'monsters of history' serves as a reminder that tyranny continues to surface anew. It is precisely these *monsters of history* that this thesis, and Gothic fiction, is chiefly concerned with. A better phrase could hardly be found: 'monsters of history' captures the exact attitude Gothic fiction displays towards the recurring figure, perhaps even trope, of the tyrant: they are monsters, as terrible and virulent as any other menace within the Gothic mode. History, too, can be monstrous. It acts as a repository for dark practices, barbarity, and the fears of the present. The *pastness* of the Gothic mode is key: historical analogues put the reader in mind of genuine horrors. It is easier to accept the horrors of the past than those of the present, allowing a pleasurable distancing which enables the Burkean sublime. The figure of the tyrant is a sublime one. Tyrants can be viewed with awe and, sometimes literal, majesty, but it is a position of immense power which frequently turns to pain (or the fearful apprehension of it). The figure of the tyrant in Gothic fiction inhabits not history as

we know it, but their own unique version of history: a historical period represented in a literary framework.

This thesis sets out to examine the literary equivalents of these ‘monsters of history’, and in doing so demonstrates that the Gothic tyrant plays a much more significant, if not vital, role in the Gothic mode than is often accounted for. Tyranny plays a key role within Gothic texts of all eras and the various different forms this can take. The Gothic is best understood as a mode rather than a specific genre as ‘the diffusion of Gothic forms and figures over more than two centuries make the definition of a homogenous generic category exceptionally difficult’ (Botting, 1996: 14). Rather than a defined genre, the Gothic mode operates with and within other genres, permeating them with its themes, anxieties and tropes. The Gothic tyrant shares this diffusion into widespread forms. Through an exploration of the multifarious uses of the Gothic tyrant this thesis aims to answer three key questions. How does tyranny support the essential functions of the Gothic mode, such as instilling fear in the reader? How does the figure of the tyrant respond to historical stimulus and what parallels can be drawn between tyrants of different eras? What role does the re-enactment of historical excesses of violence, such as torture, play in signposting tyranny to the reader?

The phrase ‘monsters of history’ was selected for the title of this thesis for two reasons. It emphasises how history, an underrated aspect of Gothic production plays a key role in informing changes to the mode – historical currents, and even real historical personages, allow contemporary concerns to be articulated in a manner enjoyable for the present. This is what has shaped the structure of this thesis. Secondly, supernatural ‘monsters’, particularly zombies and vampires, have become the most common association with Gothic and horror texts in the popular imagination eschewing the historical and political monstrosities that characterised early texts. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen in *Monster*

Theory: Reading Culture (1996) links the prominence of monsters at certain times due to their ‘ontological liminality’ and notes that ‘the monster notoriously appears at times of crisis as a kind of third term that problematizes the clash of extremes’ (Cohen, 1996: 6). Tyrants are monsters, whether in possession of otherworldly powers or not, and act as the chilling source of fear and powerlessness that echoes throughout Gothic literature and history itself. The tyrant is most often discussed in Gothic criticism through its inclusion in a list of recurring Gothic tropes. This presence is for good reason: the tyrant fulfils a role that is at the core of the Gothic mode. Through a negotiation of power the tyrant actively balances pleasure and pain for the reader, subjecting characters to a loss of control that becomes the frisson of fearful excitement. In short, enabling the Burkean sublime. Historical violence is by definition plausible – this plausibility accentuates the sublimity. Similarly, such extremes of violence constitute a performance of tyranny, a visible display of power that counters subjectivity: contemporary tyranny is a matter of opinion and opinions can divide as to whether or not a specific individual is a tyrant, an act of unsympathetic cruelty erodes this for the reader. Tyrannous cruelty can thus be read as performance.

Tyranny is a performative act; it needs to be demonstrated to be both believed and felt. The excesses of violence and horror that have become characteristic of the Gothic mode frequently fulfil this purpose. Judith Butler’s theory of performativity ‘draws a distinction between *performance* (which presupposes the existence of a subject) and *performativity* (which does not)’ (Salih, 2003: 45). While Butler’s theories do correspond to aspects of the performativity of tyranny, the violent displays that characterise tyranny can be both a performance and performative; not necessarily a conscious display but certainly enacted for its effect upon an audience. Butler’s exploration of performativity is instructive, finding that ‘performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual,

which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration' (Butler, 2004: 94). Equally Butler's understanding of the body as a medium for negotiating power resonates closely with the performance of violent displays, as 'Butler develops a view of the body following Nietzsche and Foucault as a construction, a product of the effects of power' (Jagger, 2008: 51). In describing tyranny as performative, then, it can be recognised as a role that only exists through either conscious or unconscious performance – but most visible, and effective, when staged in front of an 'audience'. Real-life tyrants use violent spectacle to communicate their power, but this is equally true with the placement of Gothic excesses within fiction. Arthur Conan Doyle, when discussing the creation of Sherlock Holmes' character, states that it came from a simple need to demonstrate the detective's intelligence: 'it is all very well to say that a man is clever, but the reader wants to see examples of it' (Doyle, 2007: 63). The same can only be truer of a character's tyrannical status. Even in fiction power must be displayed to be understood, and 'monstrosity depends on instant recognition' (Ingebretsen, 2001: 10). This recognition stems from the performative aspects of tyranny; scenes of torture are among the most painful in Gothic fiction, but they not only inform our knowledge of character, but push the Gothic mode to excess.

The question of the tyrant's 'Otherness' will be constantly addressed throughout this thesis. While tyrants are monstrous, they are also fascinating. As the very head of a nation or community the tyrant seems an unlikely victim of 'othering' – regarded as an external force yet most often the head of the national or political body. The often transgressive nature of Gothic literature requires a regime or something similar for the Gothic to transgress against. It is not always clear whether the tyrant is transgressed against, or the transgressor. The definition of the term 'Other', or 'Otherness', used in this thesis derives from Edward W. Said's *Orientalism* (2003). Said discusses how concepts

such as the Orient and the West do not have ‘any ontological stability; each is made up of human effort, partly affirmation, partly identification of the Other’ (Said, 2003: xii). It is this process of identifying an ‘Other’, rendering the foreign as characteristically monstrous, as fundamentally opposed to the familiar self that enables tyrannical behaviour – acting as a tyrant is therefore inherently an act of Othering. A tyrannical influence and the people they control and abuse form a binary opposition. In a chapter in *The Gothic Condition: Terror, History and the Psyche* (2016) David Punter discusses tyranny, acknowledging that ‘there can be no tyrant at all without the strange yet undeniable acclaim of the populace’ (Punter, 2016: 57). Tyranny is a side of ourselves we set apart and expel or project on to others.

At times tyranny seems akin to inhumanity, something reprehensibly alien to civilization. Whilst tyrants are frequently in the position of determining who is seen as ‘Other’ to their subordinates, inciting difference along racial, national or religious lines, the tyrant is themselves seen as inherently separate to those they rule. The application of the label of monster signifies this; ‘the term *monster* is often applied to human beings who have, by their own horrific actions, abdicated their humanity’ (Asma, 2009: 8).

Monstrosity is more complex than being regarded as inhuman, however. Edward J. Ingebreetsen’s *At Stake: Monsters and the Rhetoric of Fear in Public Culture* (2001), examines monstrosity and its social functions, but his arguments have a particular relevance to the figure of the tyrant: ‘for all the horror they inspire, monsters are obliquely sources of admiration [...] and amazement’ (Ingebreetsen, 2001: 2). Punter further speculates on the ‘appeal’ of tyrants:

Perhaps what we seek [...] is the sense that when a tyrant, an ordinary man in some sense of that phrase, is raised aloft, then there is at least the possibility that we – or some of us – will be raised with him, that we will find ourselves with some more uninfluential people on whom to feed. (Punter, 2016: 57)

This is the other main contradictory aspect of the tyrant that must be dealt with when exploring their role as ‘Other’. Whilst they are often active forces of social evil, reviled by the reader and the characters alike, they are also a source of fascination, particularly in contrast to often rather bland protagonists. Ingebretsen states that ‘the monster pleasures as well as polices’ (Ingebretsen, 2001: 3). For a tyrannical ruler this is more literal. Tyrants do whatever they want: ‘they get away with murder and that fascinates us. Monsters are supposed to do just what they desire, and that frightens us’ (Ingebretsen, 2001: 4). Gothic fiction displays these same attitudes with its depiction of the fearful in general; it may be despicable, but it maintains an allure that is difficult to resist.

The alluring aspect of villainous Gothic characters is often associated with the idea of the ‘Byronic hero’. Lord Byron, the Romantic poet, ‘introduced a unique character type, the “Byronic hero” whose trademarks lie in his broody, rebellious, often unsympathetic manner (Palfy, 2016: 161). Despite these qualities, the Byronic hero maintains a strong appeal to readers. Byron’s own biography corresponds to this image of immorality mixed with attractiveness.¹ After the publication of *Don Juan* (1819) reviewers were critical of ‘Byron’s immoral and impious retelling of the legendary libertine’s early sexual adventures [...] But Byron’s British readership did not dwindle; it changed’ (Rawes, 2007: 180). The diverging readership here reiterates a key aspect of the appeal of frightful figures: for everyone scared away, someone else is as likely to be drawn in. The most famous ‘Byronic hero’ is the typically menacing figure of Satan as represented by both John Milton and Dante Gabriel Rossetti:

Dante’s Satan is, in fact a *reductio ad absurdum* of the ‘Byronic hero’ of *Paradise Lost* [...] He is capable of pity for others, love for beauty and goodness, and noble

¹ Caroline Lamb has contributed to the conflation between Byron and the Byronic hero, not only through her characterisation of Byron directly but also in her own fiction. For instance, in her novel *Glenarvon* (1816), ‘The character of Glenarvon is not so much a malicious caricature of Byron as a hysterical projection of Byronism’ (Garver, 1980: 227).

sentiments as well as self-pity, jealousy, pride and hatred for God. (Paolucci, 1964: 148)

The Byronic Satan is not heroic in the traditional sense, but in his ambition and rebelliousness appeals more to readers than stereotypically 'moral' characters. This model of dark, brooding heroism has been closely linked with Gothic villains, particularly the domestic villains of Victorian novels. For Peter L. Thorslev Jr, though, for the Gothic villain 'to become a Romantic hero he must take on some of the characteristics of the Hero of Sensibility, and he must be able to enlist at least a portion of our sympathies in his rebellion against society' (Thorslev, 1962: 57). Gothic tyrants, or even villains, to use Thorslev's term, *do* possess a portion of the reader's sympathies – it is just that this sympathy is lost or continually challenged due to their actions. While Gothic tyrants are not Byronic heroes they are driven by similar forces – a freedom from restraint. A key difference, though, is that Byronic heroes are reliant on interiorised turmoil and emotions – tyrants are identified by visible acts of excess.

Deeds such as torture and execution turn Gothic novels into chronicles of acts of horror. As stated above tyranny can be subjective: 'one man's tyrant is another man's hero' (Latey, 1969: 13), so merely *stating*, by any means, that a character is a tyrant will always be ineffective. A readership needs to see, and if possible *feel*, a character's tyrannical status for itself. This is where torture, and similar acts, enter the remit of this thesis. A reader needs to be incensed against a tyrant, made fearful of their power. Torture is Gothic on its own terms. This can be seen clearly in contemporary attitudes as torture is regarded as a 'barbaric' or savage act – Gothic in the truest sense of the word. In torture, the strongest example of the repellent yet attractive lure of the Gothic is the definition of pleasurable pain. This thesis seeks to examine the role torture plays in Gothic texts; is it simply used for its lurid appeal, or does it have a deeper impact upon a readership, and a greater significance? Similarly, it will explore the differences between fictional and

historical torture, analysing whether they conform to the same rough principles; can fictional torture remain a means of negotiating and displaying power?

Most importantly this thesis aims to demonstrate that the figure of the tyrant unites many of the significant elements of the Gothic. The Gothic has been recognised as a mode built around conflicting ideas of control and freedom. Punter has stated ‘one of the perhaps more surprising principal signs of this battle between tyranny and freedom, as the later eighteenth century develops, is the Gothic’ (Punter, 2016: 51). For James Goho, writing on Ramsey Campbell, this same idea is expressed but with an additional focus on the *history* involved:

The prisons and hideous tortures of the Inquisition were real; the ravine between the rich and poor was unbridgeable. The European Gothic can be thought of as an expression of rebellion against the obscenities of perverse power. (Goho, 2014: 57)

The Gothic’s relationship with the past is crucial, and operates in manifold ways. These range from simply as a setting through to chronicling the fears of the past, and even a way of reforming or coming to terms with them. This thesis will examine how Gothic literary tyrants draw upon the present’s view of the past to give them power. Tyrants, too, interrogate, torture and often become ‘Other’ across a range of boundaries, not simply geographical foreignness. This thesis will also chart the variations of Gothic tyranny through a wide period of Gothic fiction, 1764-2018, from the archetypal lone tyrant, through to the equally barbaric regimes arising in post-apocalyptic wastelands.

Defining the Gothic

The Gothic is perhaps the only mode which so fundamentally addresses the terrible qualities of life and history. Gothic literature ‘dealt in the unspoken, the difficult, and the painful in ways no other form of art could do’ (Bloom, 2010: 4). Given that ‘the more advanced and civilized the society, the greater its need for apocalyptic outlets in the form of horror art’, the continuation of the Gothic form from its origins through to the present is

unsurprising (Frank, 1987: xxviii). Equally unsurprising is that its form has changed, and this seems to have created a certain difficulty in articulating in simple terms just what is meant by the word 'Gothic'. Critics have remarked on this fact, recognising that the Gothic is 'as difficult to define as any gothic ghost' and that it could well be that 'it is impossible to define a fixed set of conventions' (Kilgour, 1997: 3; Botting, 1996: 15). Instead of attempting a narrow definition, the classification that follows will highlight the aspects of the Gothic mode that are crucial to this thesis; what is implied when this thesis uses the term. This includes those characteristics acknowledged within the Gothic that apply to the texts under discussion, its chief features of interest, as well as the parts of other critics' conceptions of Gothic that are relevant when using the term. One of the quickest changes in the Gothic form was when 'The term lost all connotation of "medieval", and became a synonym for the grotesque, ghastly, and violently supernatural or superhuman in fiction' (Varma, 1987: 13). Horror became more commonplace, and it became that the 'Gothic signifies a writing of excess' (Botting, 1996: 1). This is important not only in terms of Burke's 'excessive' sublime, but in terms of the Gothic's excessive content and emotion, particularly when dealing with torture scenes. The excessive nature of the mode is obvious; the reader is meant to feel as much as possible.

At its most basic level an explanation of the Gothic mode consists of listing commonplace features, but even 'analysis of the form often devolves into a cataloguing of stock characters and devices' (Kilgour, 1997: 4). Frank notes that a Gothic text is, 'superficially, a tale of terror or horror with the action restricted or enclosed by haunted and partially ruined buildings' (Frank, 1987: 435). Whilst these Gothic tropes are often common to many early Gothic texts, there will always be numerous exceptions, and, importantly, many of them are drawn directly from *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). Such descriptions may not provide satisfactory criticism of the Gothic mode's form and

functions, but it communicates the most instantly recognisable features with a brevity and clarity hard to find elsewhere; it does not define the Gothic, but it identifies it. This function, in a form so hard to define, cannot be overestimated. These identifiable features are important aspects of the Gothic experience, however, and have crucial analytical impact. For example, one mainstay of most lists of Gothic devices is the castle, clearly of primary importance to *Otranto* and similarly named texts, and it is representative of two key aspects of the Gothic mode. Botting notes that ‘the major locus of Gothic plots, the castle, was gloomily predominant in early Gothic fiction’ (Botting, 1996: 2). The castle is most often recognised as part of a medieval setting, a trapping that signifies that the text is set in the past: ‘Old castles, knights and malevolent aristocrats seem to fit into an enlightenment pattern identifying all things Gothic with the tyranny and barbarity of feudal times’ (Botting, 1996: 5). The castle then is intrinsically linked with the Gothic’s inherent barbarity and concern with history and the past. Castles were not just the dwellings of rulers; they were the seats of power, authority and government. The Gothic mode is perhaps analogous to the Castle in many regards; whilst we recognise its sublime qualities and that it is reminiscent of a barbaric past it is easy to overlook that part of its sublimity arises from the fear of the authority that dwelt within. The castle, then, is also representative of power, most specifically that of its master. Devendra P. Varma’s analysis describes the castle as if it were itself a Gothic tyrant itself:

The element of terror is inseparably associated with the Gothic castle, which is an image of power, dark, isolated and impenetrable [...] it stands silent, lonely and sublime, frowning defiance on all who dare to invade its solitary reign. (Varma, 1987: 18)

Structures and institutions are closely bound with the tyrannical figures they confer power upon. *The Castle of Otranto* is an excellent example of this conflation and the two tropes that become codified into the Gothic mode as a result of its success. The tyrant is a castle personified, embodying the viewers’ reaction to an imposing structure.

One aspect of the Gothic mode this thesis will be stressing is the importance of history and the past in existing conceptions of the Gothic mode. This thesis will be drawing on the range of historical backgrounds and influences that have maintained the Gothic mode through to the present day. The most significant recognition of the importance of the past to the Gothic arises from the coining of the term itself. The term was initially used to describe a work as a throwback, as demonstrated by the preface of *The Castle of Otranto*. Walpole was playing with his readership; he published the book under a pseudonym, and purported the work to be a translation of a medieval text ‘found in the library of an ancient Catholic family in the north of England. It was printed at Naples, in the black letter, in the year 1529’ (*Otranto*: 5). The Gothic kept this connotation for a long time, invariably linked with Gothic literature’s choice of subject matter: ‘Even during the eighteenth century the term continued to be a synonym for the barbarous, and stood for ignorance, cruelty, and savageness’ (Varma, 1987: 11). The Gothic mode also had significant Norse influences, identified as a ‘significant oversight in the studies of the Gothic novel’ by Martin Arnold (Arnold, 2016: 14). Arnold explores ‘how much of the increasing fashion for Old Norse literature impressed itself on Horace Walpole’ in advance of *The Castle of Otranto* (Arnold, 2016: 25), finding that ‘Walpole regarded Strawberry Hill as a place where he was “always impatient to be back with my own Woden and Thor, my own Gothic lares” (Vol. 21: 433. To Horace Man, 28 August 1760)’ (quoted in Arnold, 2016: 25). Thus, the concern with the past existing at the form’s inception, has remained one of its most characteristic qualities. Catherine Spooner states that the ‘Gothic has adapted and changed with the times and it is unclear why this process should now end’ (Spooner, 2017: 10), with this thesis exploring the ways in which the Gothic reacts and responds to preceding historical events.

Not only is one of the functions of the Gothic ‘presenting pasts that the eighteenth century constructed as barbarous or uncivilised’, but ‘the pleasures of horror and terror came from the reappearance of figures long gone’ (Botting, 1996: 4, 3). The Gothic’s restaging of the past is not always straightforward. Often the past is seen as ‘other’ to the present, a period of barbarity and a source of terror and horror; ‘the revived past cannot be an alternate to the present for it is a nightmare version of it’ (Kilgour, 1997: 30). In some ways, however, the Gothic looks upon the past favourably. Varma’s statement that ‘Antiquity inspires us with veneration, almost with a religious awe, and the Gothic mind loves to brood over the hallowed glory of the past’ indicates that the Gothic mode also looks to the past as superior to the present (Varma, 1987: 17-18). The term’s connotation has not always been overwhelmingly negative: ‘While the term gothic could be used to demonise the past as a dark age of feudal tyranny, it could also be used equally to idealise it as a golden age of innocent liberty’ (Kilgour, 1997: 14). As Clive Bloom notes, ‘The Gothic represented all the barbarisms and taradiddles which swept away the classicism of Rome’ (Bloom, 2010: 11). This opposition to civilisation is often perceived as savagery and barbarism, but it also embodies the rejection of enlightened values and loss of the traditional sacred: ‘the gothic has been associated with a rebellion against a constraining neoclassical aesthetic ideal of order and unity, in order to recover a suppressed primitive and barbaric freedom’ (Kilgour, 1997: 3). This transgressive quality of the Gothic mode is another one of its central characteristics that will be explored through this thesis’ subject of the tyrant.

The Gothic has been recognised as having concerned itself with illegitimate powers: ‘Illegitimate power and violence is not only put on display but threatens to consume the world of civilised and domestic values’ (Botting, 1996: 4-5). Botting’s focus here is not the illegitimate power of the tyrant, but the binary opposition between civilisation and

violence; the transgression of one against the other. Also of importance is ‘the genre’s fearful fascination with otherness’ (Heller, 2003: 159). There is something of the ‘Other’ merely in identifying a tyrant: the label is rarely applied to a body that one is part of, and like any word of denunciation, is directed externally. In identifying a tyrannical body a text is establishing it as ‘Other’ to the self and to the legitimate. Furthermore, identifying ‘Otherness’ is a task frequently performed by a ruler or a tyrant. They define what is legitimate, in terms of laws, and illegitimate. They define who it is acceptable to execute and torture. The opposition between self and Other can be seen as a recognised part of the Gothic’s transgressive qualities:

The recurrent theme in Gothic fiction of the tension between the individual and society [...] can be cast as the tension between subaltern and dominant classes, between children and parental authorities, and between women and men. (Long Hoeveler, 2003: xi)

This tension is recognisable as both; as a further example of ‘Otherness’ implicated in the Gothic mode, as well as more instances in which the Gothic transgresses known standards, as Botting notes: ‘Gothic texts were also seen to be subverting the mores and manners on which good social behaviour rested’ (Botting, 1996: 4).

The transgressive elements of the Gothic, the way in which the Gothic challenges social standards, should inform our understanding of Gothic tyranny. Not only does the challenging of accepted norms require a prevailing set of standards, in essence challenging authority, but the very nature of a ruler being classified as tyrannical means in some way they are violating accepted social standards. The tyrant occupies a shifting space between self and ‘Other’. Its position of authority locates it as self, but its behaviour frequently reduces it to ‘Other’. Often a tyrant occupies both roles, depending largely on perspective. For example, a longstanding feature of the Gothic is its concern with religion and religious themes and has led to the coining of the term ‘Protestant Gothic’. Frequently ‘the

searchlight of Protestant rationalism is turned on Romish superstition' in Gothic texts (Sage, 1988: 148). The tyrant can portray both superstitious other and the condemning party as the great fear of Catholicism was not as an opposing religious ideal or alternative to Protestantism, but often fear of the perceived superstition of the European Catholic masses. Even so, 'the Gothic appears to be a transgressive rebellion against norms which yet ends up reinstating them' (Kilgour, 1997: 9). The return to normality, complete or partial, or the destruction of a tyrant, undermines the notion that the Gothic is about transgressing norms.

The tyrant remains a key aspect of the Gothic mode's vitality. Whilst critics are quick to point out the Gothic tyrant, or a similar figure, usually amidst a description of Gothic features, there is little or no in-depth discussion on the significant role they play within texts, or the Gothic mode as a whole. Partly the problem seems to be one of terminology, critics seem to refer to the phenomenon of the Gothic tyrant through different means. Varma recognises that 'a number of Gothic novels set their scenes in convents among the hills, governed by the Draconian rule of some proud abbess' (Varma, 1987: 18), whilst Maggie Kilgour makes references to 'a dynamic and tyrannical villain' (Kilgour, 1997: 4). The terminology for referring to a tyrant seems inexact, with aristocrat and villain frequently being used intermittently:

Gothic fictions since Walpole have often been about aspiring but middling [...] white people caught between the attractions or terrors of a past once controlled by overweening aristocrats that would reject such a past yet still remain held by aspects of it. (Hogle, 2002: 3)

Hogle's statement is undoubtedly correct, but does not comfortably represent the diverse amount of Gothic literature since Walpole.² Botting recognises the importance of tyrants to early Gothic, but states that they become less important as the form changes:

In nineteenth-century Gothic fiction the trappings of aristocracy, the castles and counts, give way to narratives whose action centres on urban, domestic, commercial and professional figures and locales. Aristocratic excess, though still in evidence, is generally replaced by other forms of threat. (Botting, 1996: 6)

This thesis seeks to challenge this point. Whilst it is true that with the departure of castles and aristocrats from more modern forms of Gothic, the tyrannous aspects of characters are less obvious. It would seem more correct to state that as the Gothic mode adapts, the role of the tyrant changes with it. The tyrant can take many forms: 'Interfering fathers, brutal in threats, oppress the hero or heroine into a loathed marriage; officials of the inquisition or the characters of abbots and abbesses are imbued with fiendish cruelty, often gloating in Gothic diabolism over their tortures' (Varma, 1987: 19). There does seem to be critical recognition indicative of the tyrant's pre-eminence amongst Gothic literature. One feature of the Gothic could be seen as when 'Evil seems stronger than good' and that 'Gothic novels present no restful shades of grey: the characters are mostly endowed with sombre, diabolical villainy or pure, angelic virtue' (Frank, 1987: 436; Varma, 1987: 19). This gives the impression that Gothic novels themselves are rife for tyrants to exert their wills, that satanic villains are as essential, and stronger, than their angelic counterparts. Kilgour states that 'with its simplistic black and white division of good and evil figures, the gothic seems to suggest that the reward of modern change is the emergence of a world made up of alienated obsessed individuals, who can relate to each other only as enemies' (Kilgour, 1997: 12). This viewing each other as enemies, as other, is the same binary force within the Gothic that puts forces in conflict. Often this conflict is between modern and past,

² This thesis engages with distinct, and diverse, elements with regard to both racial and class structures. Tyranny, as a term, directly engages with these struggles in a way aristocrat does not.

enlightened and savage, along race, class or gender lines, but this struggle for supremacy typically brings tyranny to the fore.

Defining Tyranny

Before defining what characterises a *Gothic* tyrant, the term ‘tyrant’ itself needs to be explored. When examining the fearful potential of obscurity Burke makes an example of ‘those despotic governments, which are founded on the passions of men, and principally on the passion of fear’ (Burke, 2004: 103). Burke here succinctly recognises the relationship between power and fear for a government. Whilst Burke uses the term ‘despotic’ the word that would most commonly be understood as descriptive of the form of government Burke describes is tyrannical.³ Despotism, particularly in this instance, is nearly synonymous with the word tyrant, defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as ‘an absolute ruler of a country; hence, by extension, any ruler who governs absolutely or tyrannically; any person who exercises tyrannical authority; a tyrant, an oppressor’ (OED, online: 1611). To anyone familiar with Gothic literature the figure should be a recognisable one. A tyrant is central to the Gothic experience, and as Burke demonstrates, integrally bound up with the experience of creating fear. The traditional definition offered by the *Oxford English Dictionary* is ‘One who seizes upon the sovereign power in a state without legal right; an absolute ruler; a usurper’ (OED, online: c1330). Later definitions include ‘any one who exercises power or authority oppressively, despotically, or cruelly’ (OED, online: 1751). This is the definition of the term that shall be used by this thesis. A tyrant, or tyrannical organisation, need not be an absolute ruler, nor necessarily an authority figure, but anyone who abuses the power they have under their control. Latey links the tyrant to a disregard for a nation’s accepted practices: ‘tyranny carries with it the

³ Burke is a major figure in understanding the Gothic tyrant, not only due to ‘A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful’ (1757) but *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) continues some of those ideas applied directly to the French Revolution (as will be explored in Chapter 2).

idea of being above the law or, if it works through laws, these are so drafted as to make possible every sort of arbitrary action on the part of the ruler or his agents' (Latey, 1969: 16). As a term of reproach the term has extended to 'any one who acts in a cruel, violent, or wicked manner' (OED, online: 1377). As Latey states, 'Any ruler one does not like is described as a tyrant' (Latey, 1969: 13). Clearly, such usage is without real meaning, and the term will not be used in this manner.

What these definitions agree on is the manner of behaviour. Despot, as a term, is close in meaning, but whereas tyranny now encompasses a range of regimes' abuses of powers, despotism remains closely aligned to principles of autocratic rule. The other term that requires differentiation is 'villain'. The most important difference between a tyrant and a villain is that, nefarious as they may often be, villains are less often cultivators of fear. The dictionary's definition was originally:

a low-born base-minded rustic; a man of ignoble ideas or instincts; in later use, an unprincipled or depraved scoundrel; a man naturally disposed to base or criminal actions, or deeply involved in the commission of disgraceful crimes. (OED, online: 1303)

Significantly, a villain is more often a recognised role: 'the character in a play, novel, etc., whose evil motives or actions form an important element in the plot' (OED, online: 1822).

The tyrant is not always in the figure of a person. In supernatural fiction it is sometimes the devil, a vampire or another manner of beast, but these all typically walk in the shape of a person. The real tyrannical 'beasts' come in the form of groups, 'The Regime', which loses none of the tyrant's ruthlessness through its collectivity. The last term that requires definition is the regime: 'a method or system of rule, governance, or control; a system of organization; a way of doing things [...] Chiefly with negative connotation' (OED, online: 1792). In the context of Gothic literature, regimes work like any other tyrant, they are organisations, either fictional or historical, that behave in a cruel and oppressive manner.

For example, the Spanish Inquisition, which shall be examined in the first chapter of this thesis.

While tyranny may act as a label in contemporary political discourse, within history and fiction it serves as a powerful symbol of injustice. While the Gothic tyrant has been identified as a monstrous other, this type of attitude towards a ‘tyrant’ suggests the role is also one of abjection. Kristeva speaks of abjection as being:

immoral, sinister, scheming, and shady: a terror that disassembles, a hatred that smiles, a passion that uses the body for barter instead of inflaming it, a debtor who sells you up, a friend who stabs you. (Kristeva, 1982: 4)

These primarily sound like the actions of a tyrant; abusing positions and breaching trust. Without wishing to engage in too much etymology it appears that over time the label has grown to encompass more people who exhibit symptoms of such behaviour. Whether or not this is the case in general use, it certainly seems to be in Gothic literature. *Otranto*’s tyrant, Manfred, conforms to the narrowest of these definitions; he is both an absolute ruler and a usurper. This model of tyrant, imitated as other features of the novel were, established not only an archetype for other texts to follow, but a basis for later writers to experiment with.

The First Gothic Tyrant: Manfred and *The Castle of Otranto*

It seems fitting to begin with Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764); this is nominally the earliest Gothic novel and served as a clear model for much of the fiction that followed.

Given the continuing dissemination of the Gothic mode, as well as critical study of this fact, *Otranto* remains increasingly important as a distilled, recognisable example of what is meant when a work is called *Gothic*. It is not merely *Otranto*’s position as the earliest example of the Gothic form that makes it important, but the fact it was so influential over the Gothic tales that followed it. Varma calls it ‘the parent of all goblin tales’, and says that it ‘opened the flood-gate of “Gothic” tales’ (Varma, 1987: 42, 13). Given the novel’s

unassailable position within the Gothic canon, the number of stock features attributed to it is unsurprising. Whatever *Otranto*'s shortcomings, Walpole's "machinery" and "motifs" quickly accumulated as conventions of the Gothic school' (Varma, 1987: 57). Among Walpole's most significant pieces of 'machinery' were the character types who, in subsequent years, have become recognisably standard, archetypal even, amongst Gothic fiction:

The chief characters of Walpole's romance, the usurping tyrant, the persecuted heroine [...] – all became stock properties of later Gothic novels. (Varma, 1987: 60)

'The usurping tyrant' is of course the novel's primary antagonist, Manfred, if such a label truly captures his role in the novel. Manfred's position as the archetypal tyrant of the archetypal Gothic novel makes him not only the supreme example of Gothic tyranny, and deserving of a detailed analysis, but also the starting point of Gothic tyrants, the blueprint from which later tyrants have been measured and, often, altered.

The character of Manfred is a repository of Gothic traits; some of which have become prominent amongst similar tyrants. The text itself furnishes us with a depiction of Manfred that shows he is not as two-dimensional as might be assumed:

Manfred was not one of those savage tyrants who wanton in cruelty unprovoked. The circumstances of his fortune had given an asperity to his temper, which was naturally humane, and his virtues were always ready to operate, when his passion did not obscure his reason. (*Otranto*: 33)

Manfred is not inherently monstrous, then; his monstrosity occurs when he 'obscures' his reason or loses his temper. Varma provides a detailed description of Manfred that echoes this understanding of his failings:

Manfred is presented as an embodiment of feudal tyranny, whose courage, art, and duplicity are true ingredients of the barbarous chieftain of dark ages. He can excite fear and pity when his pride is quelled and his rage extinguished. The touches of remorse and natural feeling in his character make him human and draw our sympathies. (Varma, 1987: 63)

The most obvious contradiction between these two portraits of Manfred seems to be whether they consider him a tyrant proper. The above quotation from the text may indicate otherwise, but much of the language of the text itself is more than clear on Manfred's tyrannical status, such as when the novel draws to a close it is hoped: 'this bloody record be a warning to future tyrants!' (*Otranto*: 113). The valiant stranger, Theodore, sees Manfred as a tyrant just as he sees himself in the role of hero: 'I value not my life, said the stranger; and it will be some comfort to lose it in trying to deliver you from his tyranny' (*Otranto*: 29-30). What the text's description does is disclaim Manfred from the levels of true Gothic barbarity; he is not 'savage' nor 'wanton' in his cruelty, that he is not two-dimensional, but as realistic a character as might be found in the present. This is emphasised elsewhere in the novel, such as when the narrator notes that 'Manfred's heart was capable of being touched' (*Otranto*: 57). The significance of this is two-fold, as it shows not only that Manfred was not beyond redemption, but equally it shows that one does not need to be an absolute and bloody oppressor to behave tyrannically.

Frank states that 'of necessity, the hero villains of Gothic romance are figures of religious or political authority similar in some respects to the "men of high estate" in ancient tragedy' (Frank, 1987: 439). 'Of necessity' does not seem a full enough explanation for why Gothic texts turn rulers and men of power into sources of terror so consistently. Manfred's authority over his family and his abuses as a patriarch are all that is essential for much of the plot's progression. Manfred's power stretches far beyond his family and servants, however, and his family line 'had been too powerful for the house of Vicenza to dispossess them' (*Otranto*: 62). Manfred is, after all, not just a man, but 'Manfred, prince of Otranto', or at least 'the usurper of Otranto' (*Otranto*: 17, 60). Manfred seems to embody the State within the novel, at least to himself, and says to those who would assist him with his schemes to continue his family's line that they 'have the

merit of saving the principality of Otranto from destruction' (*Otranto*: 50). Reinforcing this too is the novel's ending. Manfred's children are brutally punished, but he is not, and all seems to be restored to normality once 'Manfred signed his abdication of the principality' (*Otranto*: 115). That is all that was required of him, and no further punishment is necessary. Of course, the ending is also facilitated by the destruction of the castle. Varma's description of Gothic 'villains' stresses the relationship between the castle and its ruler:

While the passive agent of terror is the castle, the active agent of terror is the Gothic villain. He was born as adjunct to the ruinous castle, and his nature is dictated by his origin. His function is to frighten the heroines, to pursue them through the vaults and labyrinths of the castle, to harass them at every turn. (Varma, 1987: 19)

Like many Gothic novels Manfred's reign of terror over the course of the novel takes place almost entirely within his home. Castles are fairly standard in this respect, though they could easily be replaced by some other great structure, such as a great house or manor, or a monastery. After all, Varma is correct when he says that 'Besides the tyrant who inherited it, the primary source of terror was the ruin itself', and this thesis has to ask to what degree are the two of them linked. Structures are important to the Gothic, from formidable castles to imposing ruins, 'even when presented in decay, the castle is majestic and threatening' (Varma, 1987: 19, 18). Threatening structures are still capable of majesty – the awe-inspiring implications of displays of power again link tyrants to their homes and fortifications. Destruction only mitigates this somewhat, and a fallen tyrant does not stop them being instruments of apprehension.

The chief failing displayed by Manfred throughout the text seems to be his wrath. The text makes frequent references to 'the severe temper of Manfred' and 'the prince's fury' (*Otranto*: 20). Manfred's rage seems to be stressed to explain the gulf between his not wholly evil nature, and his sustained unreasonable actions. One moment reflective, the

next finds him ‘starting from his trance in a tempest of rage’ (*Otranto*: 20). Manfred seems to be aware of this side of his nature, asking other characters: ‘dost thou provoke my wrath?’ (*Otranto*: 31). This fearsome temper seems to be a strong part of what makes Manfred terrible in his own right. Even in the wake of the novel’s supernatural elements Manfred remains ‘less apprehensive than enraged’, and so continues on his destructive course (*Otranto*: 18). Manfred’s wrath, then, is responsible for his bravery as well as his poor judgement. More significantly, however, Manfred’s temper seems to be part of what made him an effective leader, or what allowed him to remain a leader, at least. Part of Manfred’s power emanates from his domestics’ fear. Other characters have no difficulty ‘apprehending the severity of their prince’s disposition’ (*Otranto*: 17). Manfred accomplishes acts of cruelty through his temper that later tyrants would perform in perfect calm, but he is cruel nonetheless, perhaps even with traces of sadism. In one fit of rage he behaves ‘as if he sought a subject on which to vent the tempest within him’ and characters are not safe until they are ‘out of reach of [Manfred’s] resentment’ (*Otranto*: 21, 32). This is the behaviour typical of the tyrant. Manfred’s decisions within the novel are mostly governed by his own personal passions and ambitions, whatever virtues he possesses but does not display, his rule of Otranto is vindictive, often illogical, and not for the needs of the many.

Manfred’s wrath may be the most prominent of his appetites, but his ambition and lust are the key failings expanded upon by subsequent Gothic novels. The question of tyrannical ambition is specifically raised in the novel’s preface. The preface refers to the text’s chief moral as ‘*the sins of fathers are visited on their children to the third and fourth generation*’, and wryly comments that ‘I doubt whether in [the author’s] time, any more than at present, ambition curbed its appetite of dominion from the dread of so remote a punishment’ (*Otranto*: 7). Whilst this is true of the novel, Manfred is certainly punished

for the actions of his immediate ancestors, and within the text it is Manfred's own actions that lead to his undoing. The most significant example is his slaying of his daughter, Matilda, the action for which Manfred seems most repentant as he is left 'desponding' (*Otranto*: 113). Not a calculated abuse of power in order to serve his ambition, but a fit of temper, is what serves to undo Manfred. Fear of Manfred's anger commands loyalty from his servants, even when commanding them to perform sinister actions. As Theodore states: 'through the ministers of a tyrant's wrath, to thee they are faithful, and but too willing to execute the orders which you unjustly imposed upon them' (*Otranto*: 31). The fact Manfred calls the loyalty of even his most obedient friends and servants into question speaks to the paranoia his passion has unearthed. This paranoia serves as a contributing factor to many of Manfred's more irrational and brutal decisions, as is recognised by characters within the novel: 'in vain did Manfred's friends encourage to divert him from this savage and ill-grounded resolution' (*Otranto*: 22). Kilgour sees this as part of Manfred's more generalised loss of control throughout the novel 'through the dynamics that will become typical of the gothic, the more Manfred tries to assert his individual control over fate, the more he loses control' (Kilgour, 1997: 19). *Otranto* is an untypical representation of the tyrant for this reason; the novel opens with the events that begin to unravel Manfred and begin his loss of power and control.

One aspect of the tyrant that seems to remain in constant use is the imagery of hell, and comparisons to Satan. For a Byronic reading of Manfred this comparison is apt – Thorslev specifically links Gothic villains with aspects of Satan:

By birth the Gothic Villain was always of the aristocracy, partly for the sense of power which his nobility confers, and partly for the air of the fallen angel, the air of Satanic greatness perverted. (Thorslev, 1962: 54)

This in turn comes full-circle with Milton's Satan anticipating the Byronic or Romantic hero, suggesting that the lasting legacy of the Gothic tyrant is still articulating these same

Romantic concerns. Manfred, like Satan, is partly positioned as anti-hero. Whilst comparisons to Satan or other devilish forces become commonplace for the tyrant, specific references in *Otranto* are rare, such as when one character states: ‘Satan himself I believe is in the great chamber next to the gallery’ when referring to Manfred’s whereabouts (*Otranto*: 34). The lack of Satanic presence could be due to what the preface recognises as ‘the piety that reigns throughout’ (*Otranto*: 7), but Manfred does maintain this hellish connection in other ways. This is more subtle than in later works, but the text leaves us in no doubt that Manfred stands in opposition to Heaven. Manfred knowingly states his opposition to the text’s supernatural forces: ‘Heaven nor hell shall impede my designs, said Manfred’ (*Otranto*: 26). It is not merely Manfred’s willingness to oppose heavenly forces, however, but Heaven’s agency in combating Manfred. Unusual for a Gothic text, the supernatural apparitions in the novel are essentially benevolent, with notable exceptions, such as the murder of Conrad. Essentially, though, their purpose is to end Manfred the usurper’s reign as prince. Once this is recognised by the benevolent knight, Frederic, in the novel, he withdraws his willingness to compromise with Manfred as he ‘had gathered enough from Bianca’s discourse to persuade him that Heaven declared itself against Manfred’ (*Otranto*: 97). One of the small cast of characters is Friar Jerome, a monk and chief representative of the church within the novel. Though initially respectful of the friar, Manfred later affords him no special privileges due to his holy office, as he states:

I pay due reverence to your holy profession; but I am sovereign here, and will allow no meddling priest to interfere in the affairs of my domestic. (*Otranto*: 48)

Manfred’s mistreatment of the monk, and failure to heed his advice, is one of the main ways he opposes Heaven. Manfred’s actions make it clear he recognises no authority other than his own. Father Jerome grows less passive in stating his opposition to Manfred’s actions. The monk’s earlier plea for Manfred to accept the judgement of Heaven, ‘If it is the will of the Most High that Manfred’s name must perish, resign yourself, my lord, to its

decrees; and thus deserve a crown that can never pass away', gives way to the much bolder warning of: 'the church despises thy menaces' (*Otranto*: 51, 97).

Manfred, despite not being wholly *bad*, has little in the way of redeeming qualities. Varma states that in Manfred 'Walpole had anticipated the character types. The gloomy tyrant or Byronic hero is foreshadowed in Walpole's Manfred, imitated in Radcliffe's Montoni' (Varma, 1987: 60). There appears to be a contradiction between these two judgements of Manfred. Manfred is certainly a 'gloomy tyrant', but it is harder to recognise what qualities might make him a 'Byronic hero', particularly as he is so often described as a villain. The term hero is not applied alone by Varma, Frank also uses the word, though most commonly as 'satanic hero' or as a 'hero-villain' (Frank, 1987: 439). Frank's definition of a hero-villain is compelling, and does certainly seem to apply to a great number of Gothic tyrants:

[Hero-villains] are heroic in depraved ways and they possess divine gifts and great intellectual strengths which they use to demonic ends. (Frank, 1987: 439)

This applies to Manfred in part. It is unclear what divine gifts Manfred may have, as in displaying no particularly remarkable abilities within the novel, his position and power seem to be entirely confined within his role as prince. Manfred's pursuit of Isabella for his own 'demonic ends' may be more political than depraved, but it still reverberates throughout the genre into many instances of patriarchal and overbearing tyrants pursuing innocent heroines. Furthermore, Manfred is undoubtedly the main character. The novel's true hero, Theodore, is a relatively minor character, whose role is uncovered gradually, and whilst the reader may be expecting, even hoping for, his success and Manfred's failure, it is Manfred the text follows. Frank states that the 'objective of the satanic hero is the pursuit and seizure of the maiden preferably in an underground of no return', and though Manfred's 'unwarrantable designs' on Isabella are of a less sexual nature than others,

Manfred still establishes the strong precedent for pursuing innocent heroines through dungeons (Frank, 1987: 436; *Otranto*: 50).

The quality that many Gothic tyrants possess, and that Manfred shares, is his pursuit of his own desires, often at the expense of others. As this often involves pursuit of, or cruelty to, women, there is also an element of patriarchy present. Kilgour, simply referring to this figure as a Gothic villain, sees this characteristic as an integral function of the role, seeing it as an analogy for individuals contemporary to the writers: 'the gothic villain is frequently an example of the modern materialistic individual taken to an extreme, at which he becomes an egotistical wilful threat to social unity and order' (Kilgour, 1997: 12). Apart from his terrible temper, Manfred's other defining characteristic, and the quality for which the reader is first encouraged to dislike him, is his insensibility, or apparent inhumanity. Upon Conrad's death even the characters within the novel find him 'less attentive to his loss' and displaying signs of 'insensibility' (*Otranto*: 19). Whilst throughout the novel Manfred's behaviour is perhaps altered due to the 'prince's dread of seeing accomplished an ancient prophecy' we are told that he has 'never showed any symptoms of affection to Matilda' (*Otranto*: 17). Manfred's family's obedience to him is absolute. Even when the plot necessitates Matilda's disregard for Manfred's orders we are reminded that it is 'a fault she had never been guilty of before' (*Otranto*: 23). Manfred's plans to marry Isabella have a predictably terrifying effect on her. Isabella was already wary of Manfred, however, for he 'had imprinted her mind with terror, from his causeless rigour to such amiable princesses as Hippolita and Matilda' (*Otranto*: 20). If we are to take Manfred's family as a microcosm of the State, then his leadership has obvious flaws: his family are lawful and obedient, they are perfectly dutiful and beloved by others, yet he does not care for them or their happiness. In doing so, Manfred represents the model of a feudal tyrant, perceived as indifferent to those beneath him. This model does have its

modern connotations, however, with Kilgour finding that ‘that the feudal tyrant is really the modern egoist in modern dress’ (Kilgour, 1997: 30). Manfred’s insensibility is in effect callousness. The text may inform us that Manfred is capable of being touched, but this makes it all the more inexcusable on the many occasions when he fails to be so. This too is part of what allows Manfred to be terrible. Lacking empathy Manfred can perform tasks, or at least order them, that would chill the blood of others. One such instance is when Manfred boasts that ‘tortures shall force the truth from thee’ showing his willingness to resort to torture (*Otranto*: 31). Importantly, Manfred is the chief source of dread in the novel, not the supernatural elements. Isabella’s ‘dread of Manfred soon outweighed every other terror’ (*Otranto*: 28). This from just a mortal man, with no supernatural abilities, or even remarkable intelligence or strength, is what marks the Gothic tyrant a unique and interesting figure amongst the many sources of terror in the Gothic mode. The figure’s existence seems to acknowledge that power is terrible in its own right.

The Sublime and Power

The passions which belong to self-preservation, turn on pain and danger; they are simply painful when their causes immediately affect us; they are delightful when we have an idea of pain and danger, without actually being in such circumstances; this delight I have not called pleasure, because it turns on pain, and because it is different enough from any idea of positive pleasure. Whatever excites this delight, I call *sublime*. (Burke, 2004: 97)

The Burkean notion of the sublime is one of the key critical concepts of Gothic criticism. Quoted above, Burke makes plain some of the basic tenets of his conception of the sublime: that it is dependent on pain and danger, and even more reliant on having only an idea of them. The idea that pain at a sufficient distance becomes some form of pleasure remains one of the most compelling reasons for the prolonged popularity of the Gothic forms, from early literature to modern horror films. Even before Gothic forms achieved the popularity they have today, similar questions were being posed about the nature of enjoying pain: ‘It may seem strange, that horror of any kind should give pleasure. But the fact is certain.

Why do people run to see battles, executions, and shipwrecks?' (Reid, 1996: 185). Burke, then, was not alone in his analysis of the sublime, as other philosophers had recognised that the phenomena of the sublime could account for the seemingly paradoxical behaviour of finding pain pleasurable. Other conceptions of the sublime recognised the importance of sufficient distance between the role of pleasurable onlooker and painful victim, and explained it in a manner both more literal and straightforward than Burke:

It is for the same reason that we are delighted with the reflecting upon dangers that are past, or in looking on a precipice at a distance, which would fill us with a different kind of horror, if we saw it hanging over our heads. (Addison, 1996: 68)

The two elements most prominent in this quotation, that dangers can be made pleasurable by not only physical distance but also by being in the past, seem to speak directly to Gothic fiction, which frequently used either, or both, when determining its setting.

Geographical distance plays a key role in framing notions of 'Otherness'; the differences between a novel's 'exotic' or 'superstitious' setting and its 'ordinary' readership become exaggerated. In this way then the distancing that allows the perceived dangers to be enjoyable also alters the reception of the text in other ways; by allowing the readership to consider the characters as 'Other' to themselves. Having a sufficient distance with which to reflect on danger was not the only factor for the sublime, however, as sublimity for others is composed of multiple factors:

It is true, that Gothic buildings may be very sublime: witness the old Cathedral churches. But this is owing, rather to their vast magnitude, to the stamp of antiquity that is impressed on them. (Reid, 1996: 187)

What can be taken from this quotation is, in essence, an example of how sublimity works within Gothic fiction. Not only does it recognise the notable influence on Gothic fiction, namely architecture, was resplendent with a sublimity of its own, but traces them to three factors that became standard throughout early Gothic fiction. Vast objects or structures of any kind can cause sublime feelings, from castles through to the gigantic body parts in

Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*. This kind of magnitude, too, may be taken as being indicative of great power in general. Antiquity and the importance of the past, also important to *Otranto*, are stressed here. Lastly, not all structures thought of as Gothic were necessarily religious, but there is a strong religious element to many Gothic works. This religious aspect may also signify power, but a power much greater and less physical than the magnitude of a structure. Another conception of the sublime makes a requirement of it an exertion of great force, as Blair states that 'in general we may observe, that great power and force exerted always raise sublime ideas' (Blair, 1996: 213). Great power and great force always raising sublime ideas is a departure from Burke's finely worded balance of pain and pleasure, but this begins to demonstrate the need of power to the sublime and the fearful.

In justifying the need for a more prolonged examination of the Gothic tyrant it seems fitting to point to comments made elsewhere in Burke's argument; specifically the crucial aspect of power in the creation of the sublime: 'pain is always inflicted by a power in some way superior, because we never submit to pain willingly' (Burke, 2004: 108). Pain, then, and thus the sublime, is always subject to the whims of a superior. The role of the tyrant in Gothic fiction is thus an essential one. The following quotation from Burke recognises the strong link that exists between power, fear, and sublimity:

I know of nothing sublime which is not some modification of power. And this branch rises as the other two branches, from terror, the common stock of everything that is sublime. (Burke, 2004: 107)

It is the first of this trinity, power, that this thesis will chiefly concern itself with. As Burke states, some modicum of power is required to cause fear, and even more power is necessary to inflict pain. In Gothic fiction the wielder of this power is typically a tyrant, or some other tyrannical authority. For many of the commentators on the sublime, or similar phenomena, it is religious and divine powers that chiefly lead to the feeling of sublime

emotions, so that: ‘the greatest enthusiastic terror then must needs be derived from religious ideas’ (Dennis, 1996: 36). In the superlative, this is difficult to argue against, for it is difficult to disagree with the idea that ‘nothing is so terrible as the wrath of infinite power’ (Dennis, 1996: 38). An over-emphasis on the greatness of divine power does obscure the role of a tyrant on earth. Statements like these do help to bring the elements outside of mortal control, such as weather and mountain formations, that have a recognised sublime impact, back within a framework dependent on the presence of power: the fact we cannot see, let alone apprehend, the forces manipulating such grandeur does not necessarily mean it is not their *power* of which we are in awe. Dennis is not alone in finding the unseen powers to be among the greatest; ‘it is easy in this instance to discover that we are terrified and silenced into awe, at the *vestiges* we see of immense power’ (Usher, 1996: 148). The language of worship also returns us to power within a mortal setting: ‘the soul of men naturally pays homage to unseen power’ (Usher, 1996: 149). Further comments by Usher almost uncannily link the vestiges of unseen power capable of producing sublime emotions with what are tropes, if not clichés, of Gothic literature, even through to modern horror films:

Thunder, with broken bursts of lightning through black clouds; the view of a cataract, whose billows fling themselves down with eternal rage; or the unceasing sound of the falling waters by night; the howling of animals in the dark: all these produce the sublime, by the association of invisible immense power. (Usher, 1996: 149)

Whatever its source, whatever its purpose, power exerted is understood by viewers and readers alike to be a source of fear.

Fear often rests on those who wield power; authority. A further quotation from Burke links the sublimity of power more closely to rulers, institutions and tyrants: ‘the power which arises from institutions in Kings and commanders has the same connection

with terror. Sovereigns are frequently addressed with the title of *dread majesty*' (Burke, 2004: 110). Other philosophers have stated similar arguments:

The absolute authority of a master over his slaves, is a power nothing grand; yet the same authority in a prince is sublime. – But why? from his sway extending to multitudes, and from nations bowing to his commands. (Baillie, 1996: 93)

The act of ruling other men, then, has been seen in its own way as terrible, with the sublimity increasing with the size of a tyrant's power and influences, here again represented as the multitudes under his domination:

To the idea of *power* we join ideas of the good or evil it may produce, and of the multitudes which are subject to its control. (Priestley, 1996: 121)

Whilst for Priestley it is the power to produce good or evil that makes ruling sublime, for others it is only the ability to inflict pain. Burke states that 'the ideas of pain, and above all of death, are so very affecting, that whilst we remain in the presence of whatever is supposed to have the power of inflicting either, it is impossible to be perfectly free from terror' (Burke, 2004: 108). What this seems to say is that when in a tyrant's area of influence then all are subject to some degree of terror. Dennis, too, specifically links the sublimity of power with the ability to inflict hurt as things 'that are powerful, and likely to hurt, are the causes of common terror; and the more they are powerful and likely to hurt, the more they become the causes of terror' (Dennis, 1996: 36). Burke and Dennis share is a recognition that it is the capacity to inflict hurt, pain and death that fuels the machinery of terror. When linked to a ruler it becomes clear why tyranny remains an operating force within Gothic fiction; they possess power in greater quantities than other men, and as such, are capable of producing greater amounts of terror.

Burke's language supports viewing a tyrant as 'Other', for if a tyrant is inflicting pain on the self then that suggests it must be some form of 'Other'. Comments from

Addison that more directly support this thesis' theme of torture seem to contain similar elements of differentiation between 'self' and 'Other':

When we read of torments, wounds, deaths, and the like dismal accidents, our pleasure does not flow so properly from the grief which such melancholy descriptions give us, as from the secret comparison which we make between ourselves and the person who suffers. (Addison, 1996: 68)

As with geographical and historical distance, there seems to be a demarcation created between those in pain and those not. Whilst the 'Other' is in pain, it can be pleasurable for the 'self'. With regard to a tyrant, this could explain the attraction a readership feels for these characters, and not their subordinates. Dennis also links this to admiration:

For the ideas which produce terror, are necessarily accompanied with admiration, because everything that is terrible, is great to him to whom it is terrible. (Dennis, 1996: 37)

The significance of the tyrant is not merely in its status as a requirement for pain and sublime emotions. Just as history itself consistently produces new tyrannical figures and regimes, these figures become adapted into the contemporary literature. It is the influence of tyranny that frequently turns Gothic tales into narratives of oppression, persecution and torture.

The Performance of Torture

Few acts demonstrate power more fully than torture, immediately recognisable as a reprehensible act upon the body and mind. In modern society, torture seems to surface chiefly as a subject for ethical debate; *when* torture is acceptable, as much as *if*, for what purpose, and whether what is learned can be trusted. Real-life torture is a problem: something to appal. When viewed through the lens of fiction this changes. Like many aspects of the Gothic, Gothic torture is lurid yet fascinating, and its torture scenes both repulse and attract. Marie Mulvey-Roberts' *Dangerous Bodies: Historicising the Gothic Corporeal* (2016) states that 'all bodies, whether fictional or otherwise, are bearers of a politicised message' (Mulvey-Roberts, 2016: 4). Torture, then, can be seen creating

political messages, but equally as importantly signposts the tyrant's own monstrosity. When tyrants commit such acts they are demonstrating their power: 'Monstrosity derives in part from the Latin verb "*monstrare*" ("to show")' (Mulvey-Roberts, 2016: 9). Elaine Scarry's *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (1985) looks at pain in a wider context, finding 'the obsessive presence of pain in the rituals of large, widely shared religions' (Scarry, 1985: 34). One of the chief problems of pain, particularly in the nineteenth century, was 'how physical suffering could be reconciled to the idea of a loving God' (Bending, 2000: 6). Discourses on pain have varied widely throughout history, particularly before medical and scientific thought was capable of alleviating and understanding pain. Before this point, pain was often seen as in the hands of gods, which perhaps explains why pain was such a strong presence in many religious rituals.

Torture is another kind of ritual that is one of the chief weapons of the tyrant that this thesis will examine. For Scarry, the torture ritual is one of empowerment for the torturer and his regime: 'built on these repeated acts of display and having as its purpose the production of a fantastic illusion of power, torture is a grotesque piece of contemporary drama' (Scarry, 1985: 28). Scarry's language here recognises the performance aspect of torture. The phrase 'contemporary drama' in particular locates torture not only as a performative act of power, but an act that needs to be witnessed by an audience. Scarry's recognition that this 'drama' is one of shifting balances of power is one that inextricably links it to the figure of the tyrant. Simply, it seems that "'the larger the prisoner's pain, the larger the torturer's power'" (Scarry, 1985: 37). Pain can be also used by those in power in other ways:

Not only is pain open to changing cultural conditions, but it is also liable to be represented or misrepresented by powerful groups aiming to manipulate those with less power. (Bending, 2000: 81)

The deliberate staging of torture then, where it is shown, and who witnesses it, all become a reminder of the tyrant's power over their subordinates. Torture practised in public generates fear and power for the tyrant or regime upholding it. Victims of torture, however, generate sympathy, almost irrespective of their supposed crimes, hence the practice of torture deployed away from the public gaze. In reality these two variations are perhaps mutually exclusive; for the most part one or the other has to be practised. Whereas, in fiction, the staging of torture is rarely, if ever, *truly* secret because it is being presented explicitly for the reader. This in turn alters the display of power the torture represents; it becomes not staged for the effect on the characters, but for the impact on the readership. Thus the painful rituals of power are often conflated with drama and even melodrama. The act of torture also relates strongly to this thesis' central theme of 'Otherness'. Torture seems to be an act that depends on, perhaps even creates, a sense of 'Otherness' between the torturer and their victim. When one person is in pain, and the other is causing it, there is a vast gulf between the two that exceeds ordinary notions of foreignness. Scarry states that 'the distance separating the two is probably the greatest difference that can separate two human beings' (Scarry, 1985: 36). This can, however, only be appreciated by the torturer themselves, as Scarry also notes that pain has the 'power to end all aspects of self and world' and that 'world, self and voice are lost, or nearly lost' (Scarry, 1985: 34, 35). It seems unlikely the victim would be cognisant of self and Other. The reader of torture in fiction, though, can be all too aware.

As torture and pain operate differently through fiction than through first-hand experience Scarry's discussion only covers half of the argument. Within any work of torture fiction there are always *two* hands at work implementing torture. Within the bounds of the text the regime or tyrant in power is seen to torture their victims with their own motivations, but beyond the text there is the authorial hand, who just as deliberately has

reasoning for torture's inclusion and the shape that torture takes. Whilst the fictitious tyrant may be hoping to elicit pain from their victim or extract information, the author's 'victim' is the reader, whose response of pleasure or fascination is just as crucial. Understanding this is vital to understanding the relationship between tyrant, torture and power within a text, and how sociological discussions can only be of limited use. Firstly, there is a difficulty in truly capturing the experience of pain in fiction. Even Burke states that 'pain and pleasure are simple ideas, incapable of definition' (Burke, 2004: 80), whilst for Scarry 'intense pain is also language-destroying' (Scarry, 1985: 35). It seems fortunate that the sensation of being in pain cannot be captured by language, nor can language usually help us to comprehend the pain of others. Within Gothic fiction the failure to fully recreate torture through language enables the Burkean sublime; pleasurable pain will struggle to become truly painful. Bending disagrees with many of Scarry's points, finding that 'the root of the inability to find language lies here in the convention rather than in any incapacity of language or physical incapacity' (Bending, 2000: 97). Bending cites 'the Burkean convention of Gothic silence' and links it to an 'insistence on suffering in silence' (Bending, 2000: 97, 99). Bending notes the advantages of pain in fiction:

Pain became not a grossly unpleasant physical sensation too painful to write about, but rather a way of manipulating reactions to character or a source of enjoyment for the reader. (Bending, 2000: 96)

Bending also importantly discusses 'ways of inflicting and enduring pain provided an immediately understandable index to character' (Bending, 2000: 92). These suggest another aspect to the performativity of torture – that such scenes also reveal much about the victim. Whether such scenes are entertainment or even 'enjoyment' for the reader will to some extent depend on the victim, but regardless, taking pleasure in the pain of others wants further exploration.

The reasons for torture's literary allure are complex, with some of the most compelling rationales provided by ideas founded in the Burkean sublime. Steven Bruhm, whose *Gothic Bodies: The Politics of Pain in Romantic Fiction* (1994) goes into great depth on the subject of ambivalent feelings towards pain, states that 'we find the eighteenth century moving away from a distinction between pleasure and pain toward the beginnings of a pleasure *in* pain, and more problematically, toward an aesthetic pleasure in someone else's pain' (Bruhm, 1994: 2-3). If it is true that 'Burke's proclamation on the aesthetic pleasures of pain was part of a larger fascination with physical pain at the end of the eighteenth century' (Bruhm, 1994: 1), then it can be seen nowhere more clearly than throughout Gothic texts which not only feature torture and execution, but revel in them. The unjustifiable nature the acts these tyrants commit is not only part of what makes them tyrants, but also part of the torture's appeal. Critical theory related to pain and torture focuses on moral aspects, and about the plausibility of sharing pain, such as Susan Sontag's *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2004). Discussion of real-life pain frequently illustrates how accustomed people have become to the suffering of others. With regard to fiction, however, the implications of pain in fiction do not seem to have progressed much after Burke. Where this thesis differs is that it is looking for themes to supplement the Burkean sublime; other reasons why both tyrants and torture are appealing in literature, yet abhorrent in reality. Mulvey-Roberts' own analysis of these issues is suggestive of sublime effects:

Even when drawing on real-life horror, the non-realistic mode of the Gothic allows us to deflect or distance uncomfortable realities into a fictionalised imaginary 'safe' space and often at the cost of historical accuracy. (Mulvey-Roberts, 2016: 2)

The utilisation of historical violence, then, acts as a Burkean distancing technique that allows such horrors to be entertaining, rather than tragic. The 'cost of historical accuracy' is an interesting addition here, suggesting that inaccuracies make history *more* comfortable

even when attempting to craft a more Gothic narrative. Mulvey-Roberts notes that the effects of body horror do impact upon the reader as although it may distance us from ‘physicality, it can still have the power to put us in touch with our own corporeality’ (Mulvey Roberts, 2016: 9). Despite their often graphic content and chilling subject matter, horror works continue to be popular, even as they grow more gruesome, though as Jones points out ‘taboos are there to be transgressed’ (Jones, 2002: 7). When looking at a changing society, then, ‘it must be acknowledged that the appeal of the macabre is dependent in large measure on the way in which it violates decorum’ (Daniels, 1977: 9). As gruesome as modern body horror may strive to be, historical violence retains a unique shock factor.

Periods of Tyranny

This thesis will be set out in five chapters, each covering a different ‘period’ of Gothic tyranny. There is a distinct difference between history and representation of history. The rationale for selecting these particular periods is to provide a cross-section and variation of eras of Gothic history, not only in terms of when they were written, but also grouping several together by the era they depict. These groupings aim to cover key moments, at regular intervals, across the continuum of Gothic fiction, selecting the texts that give the clearest indication of the ways in which contemporary understandings of tyranny and power were articulated. This approach is intended to illustrate the general swathes of the Gothic’s appropriation of history, and vice versa, with the reader being able to imagine where any notable absences might fit into this general pattern.⁴ Notions of the past are

⁴ The absence of Ann Radcliffe is perhaps the most apparent omission. Not only did Radcliffe’s works not correspond to the historical framework this thesis utilised, but her preoccupation with feminine virtue threatened by male tyranny is already well-documented. Angela Wright’s chapter ‘The Gothic’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Women’s Writing in the Romantic Period*, for instance, makes this apparent. Wright acknowledges that for Radcliffe, and other female writers, terror ‘lies not in the supernatural, but in a tyrannical character (in this instance, a husband) who imprisons his wife’ (Wright, 2015: 66). Deborah Russell similarly notes how Radcliffe’s ‘rational, sociable heroines encounter her villains (representatives of oppressive, foreign and outdated feudal and religious power) in variations of old romance plots’ (Russell, 2016: 68). There is seemingly a critical consensus to this aspect of Radcliffe’s

prominent in British Gothic. These texts provide a recognisable but evolving picture of Gothic tyranny, and establish the early Gothic credentials of ‘regimes’, which remain significant in later chapters. Collectively, these five main chapters should demonstrate not only how central the figure of the tyrant, and tyranny itself, is through a wide range of Gothic literature, but explore some of the variations within the Gothic tyrant. Similarly, the periods chosen each demonstrate a key facet of the Gothic tyrant; from their empowerment through the performance of torture or melodrama, through to their ability to traverse the self-‘Other’ divide, their ability to capture colonial and reverse colonial anxieties, or their endurance after the power over a nation becomes dangerously close to power over an entire planet.

The first ‘period’ of Gothic tyranny that will be examined is the Spanish Inquisition. The Spanish Inquisition, though unlikely to be found on any list of Gothic features, does seem to be a staple of the Gothic mode’s chamber of horrors. The texts this chapter will chiefly deal with are Lewis’ *The Monk* (1796), Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) and Poe’s ‘The Pit and the Pendulum’ (1842). Whilst the Spanish Inquisition is what thematically links these texts many of them find other, more classical Gothic tyrants as main sources of threat. The Spanish Inquisition is, however, a pervasive force in these texts; a constant threat, always watching. The Spanish Inquisition are esteemed in fiction as great torturers and this chapter will look at how torture scenes are used not only to empower and characterise the vicious tyrants who wield it, but also to strengthen the claustrophobic Gothic atmosphere. The Spanish Inquisition provides an example of an extremely harmful and restrictive regime that is overwhelmingly portrayed as Gothic, frequently exercising religious authority in the place of political power. The Spanish Inquisition represents the British, Protestant conception of Catholicism: not only

work, with Robert Miles characterising ‘a heroine marrying against parental wishes’ as ‘a Radcliffean tale’ (Miles, 2002: 50).

cruel, but fuelled by an over indulgence in superstition. The Spanish Inquisition poses a clear example of not only a highly Gothic regime, but also of an unusual case of ‘Otherness’: the Inquisition is seen as an external force in these texts, hostile to the protagonists, yet acts as a function of society itself.⁵ In the Inquisition’s vaults, these divides confront one another through the ritual of torture.

The second chapter focuses on French Revolutionary tyranny. Like the Spanish Inquisition the French Revolution seems to have had a profound impact on the British imagination, and serves as an example of wider British attitudes towards Catholic Europe. The French Revolution’s impact on the Gothic sensibility will be acknowledged, but the chapter’s main attentions will be directed on fiction that documents the Revolutionary tyrant in itself; both the tyranny it was a reaction to, as well as the tyrant it became in itself. Themes of execution and persecution continue and can be seen clearly around the period known as ‘The Reign of Terror’. Key texts for this chapter are Dickens’s *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) and Baroness Orczy’s *The Scarlet Pimpernel* (1905). Not immediately recognisable as Gothic texts, but unquestionably with Gothic elements, these novels demonstrate an almost irrational climate of fear. Watts Phillips’ *The Dead Heart* (1859) is used to emphasise the importance of theatricality and melodrama in recreating the French Revolution in the Victorian era. Representations of the French Revolution and associated theatre highlight the theatricality, the performance aspects, of tyranny, staging them for an audience even as they re-enact the real horrors.

The third chapter examines texts and films that deal with colonial tyranny, frequently at the hands of the natives themselves. Three texts will be looked at: Kipling’s ‘The Man Who Would be King’ (1888), Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1902) and

⁵ While there is arguably an orientalist aspect to several of these texts, where the process of ‘Othering’ is confined solely within Western Europe I have refrained from overusing ‘Orientalism’. William Beckford’s *Vathek* (1786), for example, provides a clear example of these Gothic orientalist aspects.

Richard Marsh's *Joss: A Reversion* (1903). All of these texts present the colonising westerner as a Godly figure, or close to it, usually with terrible repercussions. At the close of the nineteenth century imperialism was at a peak, and due to *fin-de-siècle* anxieties and fears of reverse colonisation it was a subject that often received a Gothic treatment. These texts address not only the treatment of the 'Other' by supposedly civilised colonising hands, but just as often the abuse of the 'civilised' by the barbarous or savage. As the Gothic became one of the modes for questioning imperialism, as explored by Brantlinger's *Rule of Darkness* (1988), the role of the Gothic tyrant expanded, moving from something terrifying in a specific context into early notions of how they could become a threat on the global stage. What makes these three texts stand out and speak to each other is their shared motif of having a westerner become seen as a God-like figure, usually leading to an act of barbarism committed against them.

The fourth chapter looks at the representation of tyranny across a broader time period, from the nineteenth-century's *fin-de-siècle* through to how many of the same figures continue to be relevant as both sources of horror and attraction into the mid-twentieth century. After the height of the colonial period, the turn of the century saw popular anxiety become concerned with the loss of Empire. After examining the question of colonial tyranny from the civilising west, Stephen Arata's notions of reverse colonisation now become key as Britain is threatened by the foreign 'Other'. The core text for this chapter will be Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). The novel's eponymous Count has been much explored for his crucial role in the developing sub-genre of vampire fiction, but of primary importance here is the Count's position as a relic of a medieval, warlike past. Dracula's *pastness* is one of his most consistently undervalued qualities. A strong part of this *pastness* draws on the links between Dracula and the historical figure Vlad the Impaler, not only in terms of Dracula's ambition of barbarity, but in drawing upon the context of

Orientalism; in seeing Dracula as a threat from the East intent upon modernising himself. This type of figure again emerges from another novel in the twentieth-century, in Sax Rohmer's *The Mystery of Dr. Fu Manchu* (1913), which through fiction and film continues the same theme of a threat from the East into the mid-twentieth century.

The fifth chapter picks up the theme of tyranny during the Cold War, in the late twentieth century. Tyranny becomes a serious world issue as nuclear power and long range missiles extend the reach of influence beyond castle walls to a global scale. The threat of nuclear destruction and the possibility of reducing the world into one massive set of Gothic ruins is one that finds itself used frequently through Gothic and science fiction hybrids during and beyond this period. The central text to this chapter will be Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend* (1954). Following on from other vampire narratives, such as *Dracula*, *I Am Legend* consciously plays on the presumptions of self and 'Other' that are connected with tyranny. John Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids* (1951) follows characters in similar circumstances. As humans are challenged as the dominant species, they begin to combat the threatening 'Other'. However, the main sources of terror in the novel arise not from the titular triffids, but from other humans; from those who want to exert control over what remains of mankind. Unlike the texts in several of the previous chapters, which created a pleasurable distance for the readership by setting the anxieties of the present against a backdrop of the past, many of these texts achieve this distance by other means; imagining hypothetical situations or cataclysmic events arising in the future.

Chapter 1: Observing Bodies: The Spanish Inquisition

You must expect no romance-horrors, Sir, from my narrative. Perhaps a life like mine may revolt the taste that has feasted to fastidiousness; but truth sometimes gives full and dreadful compensation, in presenting us facts instead of images. (Maturin, *Melmoth the Wanderer*: 217)

The Spanish Inquisition demonstrates history's capacity to produce monsters. The above quotation, taken from Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) neatly addresses how facts alone are all that is necessary to create dreadful images. History provides vast quantities of genuine incidents to fuel romance-horrors, yet they are almost always embellished. The Spanish Inquisition still resonates through our culture as a regime to be feared – a bastion of tyrannical cruelty from a past age. To the modern reader it is but a shadow, perhaps symbolic of religious persecution, but too remote in time to capture the terrible aspect it once held. Its longevity as a fascination for horror literature is perhaps due to the fact that the Inquisition's authority transcends the political realm into the eternally relevant, permanently controversial, sphere of opposing religious forces. In the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century, nothing represented the perceived cruelty and superstition of Catholicism in the Protestant imagination better than the Spanish Inquisition. As Marie Mulvey-Roberts states, 'there is no better expression of Catholic horror than the Inquisition. With its torture dungeons and black-habited Dominicans, the Inquisition was a thing of darkness waiting for the instruments of Gothic terror' (Mulvey-Roberts, 2016: 15). As the quotation suggests, the Inquisition became an integral part of many prominent early Gothic novels, but it exerted its tyrannical influence in greater obscurity than the archetypal Gothic tyrant. For the duration of many of the texts under discussion, the Inquisition remains a background threat: an organisation thought to be watching, whose presence can be felt even while it is absent. Representations of the Spanish Inquisition add a terrifying religious or ideological zealotry to the concoction of the past's dark practices and power's tyrannical cruelty. Through texts like Matthew

Lewis' *The Monk* (1796) and Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* the Spanish Inquisition has become accepted as one of history's greatest monsters. Poe's short story, 'The Pit and the Pendulum' (1842), shows the longevity and global reach this image of the Spanish Inquisition as an all-powerful body has; with a Panopticon-like structure ensuring it sees all. The Spanish Inquisition helped early Gothic novels set a tone of fearful tyranny for a genre that not only features torture in a prominent position, but one that showcased how frightening an absolute authority ruled by perceived superstition could be. As a facet of many early Gothic novels, the Spanish Inquisition established strict doctrines of tyranny that would resurface across the mode; relentless observation, spectacles of violent power and an inhumane lack of sympathy.

The Spanish Inquisition became endowed with a reputation of surveillance and cruelty that made it more powerful, especially in the public imagination. In the evocatively-titled *Inquisition: Reign of Fear* (2007) Toby Green reiterates a common argument: 'these comparisons have led historians, both past and present, to claim that Spain has been the victim of a 'black legend' that paints the violence of its Inquisition and of Spain's conquest of America in the worst light possible while skating over similar or worse excesses elsewhere' (Green, 2007: 9). Henry Kamen's *The Spanish Inquisition: An Historical Revision* (1997) makes a similar point: 'Spain's championship of the Catholic cause, and the persecution of Protestants in Castile in 1559-62 gave birth to a number of writings that presented the Inquisition as a threat to the liberty of Western Europe' (Kamen, 1997: 305). The Inquisition's use of horror and torture were not an invention of fiction but an exaggerated reality that has grown almost to a myth. Even the Inquisition itself encouraged this fearful reputation: 'In order to enforce conformity with the official religious, political, and social model, the Holy Office chose to foster fear at all levels of the social body' (Bennassar, 1987: 178). Bennassar even cites an example of when 'a riot

erupted in Seville in 1652, the populace gained the streets by fighting and set free all prisoners except those in the jail of the Inquisition' (Bennassar, 1987: 179). This feeds directly into Gothic literature: 'In the pages of the Gothic we seem to encounter the unfinished business of the Reformation, where the deformities of Catholicism are held up to the reader for the purposes of Protestant delectation' (Miles, 2002: 84). However, the Inquisition was never a stranger to negative propaganda: 'from its very inception, the Inquisition in Spain provoked a war of words. Its opponents through the ages contributed to building up a powerful legend about its intentions and malign achievements. Their propaganda was so successful that even today it is difficult to separate fact from fiction' (Kamen, 197: 305). The 'black legend' of the Inquisition then is its defining cultural legacy, an inherently cruel body with totalitarian aims, but with bloody reputation that was consciously enhanced. This becomes immediately apparent when examining fiction.

In Gothic Literature, the Spanish Inquisition can be seen as engaging with the critical conception of 'Protestant Gothic' modes; fiction that presented the specific vision of Catholicism endorsed by opposing Protestant values. According to Victor Sage, in *Horror Fiction in the Protestant Tradition* (1988), the prevalence of anti-Catholicism in Protestant Gothic texts draws upon the Protestant idea of testimony:

The Protestant tradition of testimony by internalised conscience is a highly significant thread in the popular rhetoric of anti-Catholicism, and is often cited as the source of the popular horror of Roman superstition and arbitrary authority. (Sage, 1988: xix)

These texts perform very visible acts of 'othering' as by rendering 'the European Other as Catholic, superstitious, barbarous, irrational, chaotic, rooted in the past, the Gothic novel allowed a British audience conversely to identify itself as Protestant, rational, ordered, stable, and modern' (Jones, 2002: 9). Rather than simply participating in anti-Catholic sentiment, however, these texts summon a specific version of Catholicism to fill a textual

need – a superstitious, corrupt, hierarchical regime that could deploy a force like the Inquisition. Catholic settings themselves have since been identified as a staple of the Gothic mode, signalling still-older forms of tyranny such as the manner in which ‘Roman tyranny was subsequently identified with the Catholic Church’ (Botting, 1996: 5). *The Monk* is an often-cited example of this kind of horror literature with ‘the opening scenes of Matthew Lewis’ *The Monk* (1796) ring[ing] nearly every change in the repertoire of Protestant horror and disgust’ (Miles, 2002: 84). If we view the Gothic novel as ‘shoring up the British, Protestant identity of its readers chauvinistically, through its presentation of a catalogue of caricatured and untrustworthy foreigners’ then the chief criticisms are not specific to Catholicism – any unfair system of persecution or punishment could have served this purpose (Jones, 2002: 8). Similarly, whilst there are frequent examples of hostility towards religion, these texts also provide examples of benign or positive aspects of Catholicism – earnest believers or kindly figures. In such instances, a more nuanced reading of Catholicism and its institutions, rather than its totality, is required, as they indicate that it is these *specific aspects* of Catholic practice that the author seeks to criticise. The Spanish Inquisition represents a dark side of Catholicism, and any controlling organisation, by depicting how any authority sustains itself: through threats (of damnation), persecution, and self-policing for fear of suffering draconian punishments.

Summarising the three main stories this chapter will focus on, *The Monk*, *Melmoth the Wanderer* and ‘The Pit and the Pendulum’, showcases the extent to which these fictional representations of the Inquisition seem to be informed far more by their reputation than reality. The Spanish Inquisition is not the chief antagonist in either *The Monk* or *Melmoth the Wanderer*, but whilst the parts it plays in these plots are only minor their influence throughout the texts, and the impression inquisitors leave on the reader, are far greater. In *Melmoth the Wanderer*, one of the longest and continuous narratives is

delivered by the character of Alonzo, who is confiding to the youngest Melmoth his encounter with, and what he has heard of, Melmoth's ancient and infamous relative. Alonzo is of noble birth, but suspected of being conceived out of wedlock, and to assuage their own consciences he is persuaded by his parents to enter a monastery and the life of a monk. Though usually outwardly compliant he comes to hate his monastic prison, and after enduring a series of torments at the hands of the other monks, finally seeks to escape. Alonzo's escape quickly turns into a trap, and after losing consciousness outside the monastery walls, he reawakens to find himself a prisoner of the Inquisition.

The Monk, as the title would suggest, similarly engages directly with Catholicism throughout, but other than as a threatened presence, the Spanish Inquisition appears only near the novel's end. The novel follows several characters, with the core narrative focusing on a monastery in Madrid. Ambrosio is led astray by Rosario, a young monk who is revealed to be a woman, a sorceress, and later Satan. Ambrosio's fall takes the form of a pursuit of the righteous and naive Antonia, utilising trickery and occult means, and culminates in her rape and murder in the monastery catacombs. The other chief narrative thread concerns Isabella, a young nun who is reprimanded and condemned by Ambrosio and the Abbess for being the recipient of a note from a young man and being with child. Believed to be dead, Isabella emerges from a long and grim incarceration, also within the depths of the monastery's vaults. In both texts, the Inquisition's vaults are featured heavily as a setting, but both also feature a supernatural, possibly satanic, intervention too. 'The Pit and the Pendulum' is a short story, detailing the strange and implausible torture chamber the narrator finds himself in – featuring not only an immense pit, but an enormous, slowly descending bladed pendulum that seems as much a method of execution as torture. Here, though, the narrator is spared when the Inquisition are attacked. In all three texts fearful reputation is prioritised over historical reality.

The historical Inquisition drew on prevailing attitudes, but became increasingly outdated as time passed. When Lewis' *The Monk*, the earliest piece of fiction under examination in this chapter, was published in 1796 the Inquisition was still, technically, active. In reality though, it was far from the organisation as presented in Lewis' closing chapters. The Spanish Inquisition's great excesses were committed shortly after it was founded: 'after this initial fury the Spanish Inquisition became less bloodthirsty' (Green, 2007: 8). The Spanish Inquisition then, even in the period of the earlier texts under discussion, had ceased to be a real threat. As one might expect, Lewis was, in true Gothic style, actively drawing upon a more barbaric time, as well as a more 'barbaric' country, as a setting for his horror story. The historical background of the Spanish Inquisition is highly contested. The Spanish Inquisition arose from a period of slowly increasing religious tension and persecution. Henry Kamen, in *The Spanish Inquisition: A Historical Revision* (1997), explains the period in light of religious persecution and changing attitudes, stating not only that 'exclusivism was beginning to triumph', but also that 'the new rulers of Spain were willing to pursue an intolerant policy regardless of its economic consequences' (Kamen, 1997: 4). The fact that Kamen's book is subtitled *An Historical Revision* shows that there is a perception of the Inquisition he is setting out to challenge: 'Spain was not, as often imagined, a society dominated exclusively by zealots' (Kamen, 1997: 5), and that most people, prior to changes in the region, 'accepted the need to make compromises with the other faiths of the peninsula' (Kamen, 1997: 6). Angel Alcalá, in the introduction to *The Spanish Inquisition and the Inquisitorial Mind* (1987), states that 'The sensational and legendary anti-Inquisitorial historiography must certainly be abandoned' (Alcalá, 1987: 7). In reality it was not those of other faiths that worried the monarchy, but the sensitive position of those that had recently converted to Christianity, the 'conversos'; who could guarantee they would not convert back? It was this concern

that led to the Spanish Inquisition's formation as 'the monarchs became firmly convinced that a separation of Jews from Christians was the most effective answer to the situation, and in 1480 they set in motion a body whose entire concern was with Judaizers: The Inquisition' (Kamen, 1997: 17). Despite this, there seems to be a suggestion in Kamen that the Inquisition was as much a driving force in persecution as it was reactionary. The Monarchy 'appear to have been thoroughly convinced by the Inquisitor General Torquemada of the need for separation of Jews' and that 'the proposal to expel came in fact from the Inquisition' (Kamen, 1997: 19, 20). Already then, the Spanish Inquisition can be seen as a complex organisation, at once part of a wider cultural trend but at the same time out of place amidst practices of tolerance many people had held their entire lives.

Through censorship, prosecuting indiscriminately, and a deserved reputation for excessive cruelty, it is easy to justify the view that 'the Inquisition provided nothing less than the first seeds of totalitarian government, of institutionalized racial and sexual abuse' (Green, 2007: 8). In the context of violent excesses throughout the rest of the world, the Spanish Inquisition has been seen as typical in its means of control. Alcalá states that 'the Spanish Inquisition is like any other state system of repression and social control in its basic task' and highlights 'the relatively moderate procedures and penalties of the Holy Office, the small number of those sentenced to death in person or effigy, and its benevolence in comparison with the treatment of witchcraft in other "cultured" European countries' (Alcalá, 1987: 7, 8). Other sources agree with this surprisingly restrained Inquisition, where 'torture was in fact exceptional [...] it was practically never applied in cases of morality, blasphemy, or error', but acknowledge that the issue is still complex as 'some tribunals were [...] more rigorous than others' (Bennassar, 1987: 179). What is worrying about the Inquisition specifically then is not so much the violence it employed,

but *who* was wielding it, and *why*: ‘the main task of the tribunal [...] was to act not as a court of justice but as a disciplinary body called into existence to meet a national emergency’ (Kamen, 1997: 193). This was a body that served a nation and a religion legally torturing and executing in order to maintain control. Kamen implies that the Inquisition was a reaction to their time and place, like other tyrannical regimes it reflected and served prevailing opinions at the time. The Inquisition endured for a protracted period, however, and society’s attitudes changed faster than it did, literally becoming a Gothic body in an increasingly modern world.

The Spanish Inquisition best encompasses the torture scenes and tyrants at work in these texts because of the combined personal and religious nature of persecution and the emphasis placed on vaults and charges of heresy. The extremes of Catholicism are some of the most startling features that became Gothic staples for a reason. It is important that these early Gothic roots coincide so often with the Spanish Inquisition, providing what are perhaps the first examples of totalitarian Gothic tyranny – a frighteningly powerful authority whose own historical reputation helped conflate horror with pleasurable pain. The means the Spanish Inquisition employed in these texts contributes to the identification of these works as Gothic, but these same actions also communicate to the reader the Spanish Inquisition’s tyrannical status. The three chief weapons the Spanish Inquisition use are constant observation, displays of power through torture, and adherence to a strict doctrine that eliminated sympathy with its enemies. The following section will explore how observation, and the threat of it, created a tone of fear.

The Panopticon and Observation

The role of the Inquisition within these texts is not always a direct one. Neither the Inquisition nor any specific inquisitor serves as the primary antagonist in these texts, instead it acts as an observing body that looks down and polices the Catholic hierarchy:

like a Panopticon. The Spanish Inquisition in Gothic literature is a body that constantly watches, that is constantly supposed to be watching, and that in turn is feared. These are the very same principles that Jeremy Bentham sought to apply to architecture in his 1791 book *Panopticon; or, The Inspection House*. The Panopticon was initially a pragmatic architectural principle, later infamously adopted by Foucault to describe a mode for social structures. Expressed through the prison mode, it meant that the prisoners could constantly be viewed from a central tower, with each cell open faced so the prisoner was always under watch by the ruling authorities. Practically, it ensured that minimum effort and resources would be expended to ensure adequate prisoner behaviour. Furthermore, it encouraged the perception of always being watched, that authority's gaze was always in the background, in order to alter behaviour accordingly. According to Bentham, the design of the Panopticon took advantage of 'the *apparent omnipresence* of the Inspector [...] combined with the extreme facility of his *real presence*' to ensure the prisoner was always behaving as if scrutinised (Bentham, 1791: 28). The Panopticon was not merely reserved for the watching of prisoners, however, as Bentham pointed out, another strength of the Panoptic-style of prison was that the workings of the prison would be immediately apparent to any visitor or inspector, with particular emphasis on ensuring that prison staff adhered to the rules in much the same way as the prisoners did:

In no instance could his subordinates either perform or depart from their duty, but he must know the time and degree and manner of their doing so. (Bentham, 1791: 29)¹

Despite the benefits of repeated and endless scrutiny, this attitude is inherently oppressive; it is tyrannical in its own right due to its controlling nature, and certainly tyrannical in abusive hands. Bentham offers up the standard response whenever invasions of privacy are challenged:

¹ The Panopticon, then, is the first example in this thesis of an 'invention' that was designed for the common good before becoming a tool of tyranny.

And who ever objects to such publicity where it is practicable, but those whose motives for objection afford the strongest reasons for it? (Bentham, 1791: 33)

These panoptic principles extend beyond architecture, and became a paradigm to reflect society as a whole. Later analysis by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975) would highlight many of the ways in which the inception of the Panopticon was typical of an increasingly disciplined society. Foucault indirectly links such an approach to an episode of historical tyranny: according to Foucault, Napoleon ‘wished to arrange around him a mechanism of power that would enable him to see the smallest event that occurred in the state he governed’ (Foucault, 1977: 41). Like Napoleon, then, the Spanish Inquisition may not have relied on a Panoptic-prison or similar structure – it did not have total physical control – but its desire to know every ‘crime’ committed is a definite continuation of these principles. Foucault’s statement that ‘the panoptic schema makes any apparatus of power more intense’ is just as apt – the idea that the Spanish Inquisition are always watching polices its population more effectively than its actual abilities to observe (Foucault, 1977: 206). In fiction, this is exaggerated to present the fear explicitly; in the Gothic imagination the Spanish Inquisition *are* always watching.

The Spanish Inquisition is seemingly omnipresent and all-knowing; like the Panopticon itself it combines capitalises on a ‘*real presence*’ to foster an ‘*apparent omnipresence*’ (Bentham, 1791: 28). This premise, combining extensive surveillance and informants, in conjunction with the Inquisition’s extensive ‘black legend’ and perceived omnipresence, should be recognised as of central importance to any authority.² Within Gothic fiction, this proves to be a potent combination, reinforcing the real and immediate dangers with the fear that the additional threat of the Inquisition could reveal itself at any

² This creation of a greater impression of power, frequently extended to divinity and omnipresence, seems to be a recurring feature of Gothic tyrants, and becomes a device often utilised with colonial tyrant figures as will be explored in the third chapter.

time. Everyone expects the Spanish Inquisition – especially the guilty. *The Monk* provides a clear example of this as Ambrosio is in constant fear of the Inquisition, and when committing his crimes ‘expected every moment to see the inquisitors arrive’ (*The Monk*: 334). The Panopticon is closely associated with power; as Foucault states, ‘the major effort of the Panopticon [is] to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power’ (Foucault, 1977: 201).

Foucault’s own conceptualisation and writings on power are relevant here. As McHoul states, ‘for Foucault, power is always a discursive *relation* rather than something which a person or group wields or bears’ (McHoul, 1995: 21). Whatever truth there is to this in philosophical terms, for the purposes of this thesis it is impractical. Certainly in Gothic fiction when speaking of power it is something that can be used or abused against another; wielded against them or used to shield them. It is this ability to *use* power that is often critical in identifying a tyrant. Where these two definitions of power do agree is with regard to the power inherent in certain techniques, whatever their application: ‘the point is that a *technique*, whatever its “content” or the polarity of its content, can be a technique of power in its own right’ (McHoul, 1995: 20). Wielding power recklessly, and particularly abusing it to cause harm to others, may be what attracts specific criticism in Gothic fiction, and mark a ruler as a tyrant, but it is the very existence of their power that is inherently fearful.

The exertion of power over the human body is the first step to dominating the mind; an idea endorsed in Gothic novels. An example is found in *Melmoth the Wanderer*: the dungeon masters seemingly control the prisoners not through sight but through silence, even ‘*coughing too loud*’ is to be ‘punished with the utmost severity’ (*Melmoth*: 218). The French Revolution and its influences are closely associated with *The Monk*, and it was during the period that followed that Napoleon attempted to create a panoptic model

of government. This section will explore the ways in which the Gothic version of the Spanish Inquisition can be likened to the Panopticon, as well as the ways in which it is inherently different. It is worth noting that according to Foucault:

Many disciplinary methods had long been in existence – in monasteries, armies, workshops. But in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the disciplines became general formulas of domination. (Foucault, 1977: 137)

This creates a framework for recognising many of the same effects of the Panopticon prior to its creation. Armies may have had to rely on discipline as a matter of course, but for monasteries, disobedience and deviation could have repercussions in the next life. Not unlike prisons, they were a much stricter, stationary, sedentary lifestyle. In *Melmoth the Wanderer* the prisons and monasteries are conflated in the Inquisition's dungeons, the strict rules prohibiting speech of any kind. Despite their severity, Alonzo discusses how effortlessly and quickly he adopts them:

However extraordinary these injunctions appeared, the manner in which they were issued was so imposing, peremptory, and *habitual*, - it seemed so little a thing of local contrivance and temporary display, - so much like the established language of an absolute and long-fixed system, that obedience to it seemed inevitable. (*Melmoth*: 218)

All of these factors are emphasised in Gothic fiction and among the tyrannical means used to achieve and maintain discipline and obedience are the same principles of observation and omnipresence that would later render the Panopticon so effective. As Foucault says, 'The human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it' (Foucault, 1977: 138). This is particularly apt for Gothic novels where this can be taken literally. The Spanish Inquisition in Gothic fiction enacts exactly this role, its 'black legend' frightening Catholics into obedience, and seizing upon and imprisoning those, such as Ambrosio, who still disobey.

Contrary to modern discourse surrounding surveillance as a recent addition to people's lives, such as debates surrounding the deployment of facial recognition

technology ‘labelled “Orwellian” by critics’ (*The Independent*, 2018: Online), within *The Monk* the significance of surveillance and the reputation it fosters are key features of Catholic life. The Spanish Inquisition naturally finds a basis for this behaviour in theology, the idea that God is always watching, but this focus on surveillance extends beyond simply knowing their sins. Foucault’s assertion that ‘our society is not one of spectacle, but of surveillance’ is ostensibly referring to how twentieth-century practice was to observe, rather than make grim spectacles of punishment (Foucault, 1977: 217). Even within societies where these spectacles were performed, surveillance still played a key role. In *The Monk*’s Madrid monastery, the Catholic hierarchy seems to operate as a one-way structure of surveillance. With God and his servants at the top of this structure, at the bottom are the congregation. As the opening of the novel makes clear, they are there for reasons typically involving seeing, or being seen:

The women came to show themselves, the men to see the women: some were attracted by curiosity to hear an orator so celebrated; some came because they had no better means of employing their time till the play began; some, from being assured that it would be impossible to find places in the church; and one half of Madrid was brought thither by expecting to meet the other half. (*Monk*: 11)

The congregation is watched not only by the entire superstructure of the Catholic religion but also watches itself. The next lowest rung in the Catholic hierarchy are the nuns. The novel’s central nun, Agnes, falls into danger one day simply by letting slip a piece of paper that is picked up by the friar Ambrosio. After Ambrosio’s eyes ‘involuntarily read the first words’ he is obliged to keep reading and, despite Agnes’ explanation and pleas for mercy, dutifully delivers it to the prioress (*Monk*: 43). The prioress’ outrage is not so much motivated by any religious feeling as by vanity:

What! such a crime committed in her convent, and made known to Ambrosio, to the idol of Madrid, to the man whom she was most anxious to impress with the opinion of the strictness and regularity of her house! (*Monk*: 45)

The prioress then is motivated by a desire to impress Ambrosio. Ambrosio, after making a feeble plea for mercy on Agnes' behalf, and being met only with the prioress' determination to make Agnes feel the full rigour of the law, consoles himself by saying "I have done my duty" (*Monk*: 47). The prioress takes enjoyment in the execution of strict discipline, whilst even Ambrosio, who at this point is not unmoved by the suffering of others, only complies out of duty. Ambrosio seemingly outranks the prioress, though is unaware of the extent of her crimes. Despite this focus on appearances and observation both the prioress and Ambrosio act hypocritically by committing crimes in secret – revealing the hollowness of their values of their 'strictness' and 'duty'. The authority they wield, then, is used unfairly – tyrannically.

In *Melmoth* the insights into the fictional version of the Inquisition showcase the *underhandedness* and outright trickery in securing 'evidence' – again aligning the revelation of secrets with diabolical means. When Melmoth's visits begin, Alonzo makes mention of the practice of 'obtaining, under a pretence of friendly communication, those secrets which even torture has failed to extort' (*Melmoth*: 228). Similarly, after he makes mention of his strange nocturnal visitor under examination, the reaction of the Inquisitors lead him to further consider if he is being tricked: 'I conceived it was something like the conspiracies so often occurring in the convent. I conceived that this might be an attempt to involve me in some plot against myself' (*Melmoth*: 231). This is not paranoia on the part of Alonzo, as much of what he fears was indeed practised by the Inquisition: 'There was method in the stringing out of Inquisitorial cases. The longer someone spent in prison, the more likely it was either that they would incriminate themselves to their fellow inmates, or that these inmates would become so desperate that they would invent stories about the other prisoners' (Green, 2007: 56). Green similarly details instances when prisoners had spies for cell mates, and on one occasion a prisoner's guilt is established

when ‘functionaries of Justice had crept through the jail’s secret passageways by candlelight to a hidden door to the cell’ (Green, 2007: 84). The character of the Inquisitors themselves is also revealed. One Inquisitor excuses himself after Alonzo repeats some of Melmoth’s heretical statements, and Alonzo later realises that ‘they interpreted this accidental circumstance in a manner the most extraordinary and unjust, and I felt the consequences of it at my next examination’ (*Melmoth*: 231). These passages can be read as an attempt to make the reader feel the weight of an unjust, and illogical, application of power and in turn make everyone an accomplice to what transpires.

Significantly, in both *The Monk* and *Melmoth*, this type of omnipotence, particularly when it comes to secrets, is reserved for characters associated with the devil. The Spanish Inquisition itself keeps watch over Ambrosio, but is no less responsible for every other component in this machine. The Inquisition fails to meet the standards of the ideal Panopticon, however. Whilst it eventually interrogates Ambrosio for his crimes, it is not the one to discover them. The person who does succeed in keeping watch over Ambrosio, his crimes and his passions, is Rosario: the devil. Just as Melmoth’s gaze seems to extend over everything, Rosario too seems to know everything that Ambrosio does and to some degree what he thinks or feels. Both Rosario and Melmoth are able to access the Inquisition’s vaults, further conflating this type of authority with the devil – their imprisonment puts them at his mercy. Furthermore, if what the devil tells Ambrosio is true, he was to be pardoned by the Inquisition despite his guilt. Whilst the Inquisition may aspire to omnipotence, it is the devil and his agents who, apart from the reader in most cases, seem to be the only truly all-knowing forces in tales of Gothic Inquisition.

This focus on observation is surprising, and contradictory, in a mode that relies on obscurity. As emphasised by Burke, ‘it is our ignorance of things that causes all our admiration, and chiefly excites our passions’ (Burke, 1958: 61). Here, however, the two

operate in tandem – the obscurity used by authority and the lack of it available to the masses rely on the same anxieties. Foucault links spectacles of punishment with gloom, with the move away from such spectacles characterised as progress toward a better disciplined society. Foucault states ‘by the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, the gloomy festival of punishment was dying out, though here and there it flickered momentarily into life’ (Foucault, 1977: 8). Importantly, this period of change coincides with the production of Gothic novels, including several Spanish Inquisition texts. It seems that during the period, the torture and wounds so prevalent in fiction started to become obscured from everyday life: ‘a few decades saw the disappearance of the tortured, dismembered, amputated body, symbolically branded on face or shoulder, exposed alive or dead to public view’ (Foucault, 1977: 8). The Panopticon, or a panoptic structure itself, can be contrasted with the Gothic dungeon, as Foucault states: ‘it reverses the principle of the dungeon; or rather of its three functions – to enclose, to deprive of light and to hide – it preserves only the first and eliminates the other two’ (Foucault, 1977: 200). Debates about punishment and the public gaze were taking place elsewhere in the world. Comments by Benjamin Rush, the ‘U.S founding father’, who, helped to found the U.S penitentiary movement’, frame this debate in a manner that directly invokes Gothic and horror fiction (Haslam, 2008: 268). Penitentiaries moved punishment away from the public gaze but ‘the spectacle would (and should, according to Rush) continue to exist – and have an impact on society – in publicly circulated narrative forms, including literature’ (Haslam, 2008: 269). A quotation from Rush emphasises this point:

Children will press upon the evening fire in listning [sic] to the tales that will spread from the abode of misery. Superstition will add to its horrors, and, romance will find in it ample materials for fiction. (Rush, Benjamin cited in Haslam, 2008: 271)

Prison houses, then, like many other panoptic structures, were not solely concerned with where people's gaze fell *inside* their walls. Prison walls isolated the inhabitants from the outside world as a means of punishment, but also kept this act of punishment away from the public's view. This American model of punishment is useful as it shows the same debate and anxieties were being articulated and explored outside of Europe. The dungeon is a useful device in Gothic fiction, as it is in reality, as Foucault says it is used primarily for the function of hiding and concealment. Whilst this has many practical values, such as keeping victims and their wounds from scrutiny and to prevent sympathy, in these texts the dungeon is a flawed model. Dungeons provide access for nefarious figures, or victims are abducted there to exploit their properties of concealment. It is while prisoners are hidden away in their cells that they are visited by Melmoth or Rosario, it is while in the security of his room in the monastery that Ambrosio plans his crimes, and again it is the ancient dungeons underneath that shield both his crimes and those of the prioress. In this manner, the dungeon can be linked to the unconscious mind – in Gothic novels it acts as an enabler for the most repressed urges, as the creators of the darkest secrets. In a true Panopticon, both parties would be observed at all times.

From seats of power, often in vast and imposing Gothic structures, Gothic tyrants can survey all but are seen by but a few, cloaked in obscurity, and with no one to answer to. Like the magnification of observation under the Panopticon – the idea that imagined surveillance enhances the actual – any public displays of cruelty are nothing compared to what may be happening behind closed doors.

Torture and Punishment

The Spanish Inquisition's significance is not only as a secretive, tyrannical regime, but one that has become fundamentally and permanently linked to the role of torturers in the popular imagination. The political landscape of the twenty-first century has made torture

a more pressing, and widely debated, topic than perhaps ever before. Vehement and widespread condemnation of torture remains the prevailing opinion in the West, as evidenced by a section at the start of Clucas, Johnstone and Ward's *Torture: Moral Absolutes and Ambiguities* (2009) that reads almost as if it is a disclaimer: 'it should be said at once that none of the contributors to this book disputes that torture, in the great majority of cases in which it is actually practiced, is morally abhorrent' (Clucas et al, 2009: 1).³ This disapproval often takes the form of condemning it as an uncivilised and cruel practice. Whilst for a Western readership torture is often regarded as a barbarous practice, in areas where it is still practised, people do not imagine 'it is logically incompatible with telephones, central heating, weddings, elections, and other occasions of modern life' (Rejali, 2007: xv). This is, after all, what informs many of the recently resurgent torture debates: it is an inherently horrific Gothic practice, something that should have been left in the past. This demonstrates how historical and cultural variables can effect what is regarded as Gothic. It was almost an essential feature of the Gothic that they be set back in perceived 'barbaric', more Gothic, epochs. The retrograded attitude towards torture in these texts is perhaps enough in itself to label them Gothic.⁴

One of the clearest depictions of the Spanish Inquisition is found in 'The Pit and the Pendulum'. The scarcity of plot details reinforces the perception that the Spanish Inquisition were torturers and nothing else. Not only does the text identify the Inquisitors as torturers unmatched, the cunning, intricate and ultimately diabolical nature of the torture device implies a great deal about the length Inquisitors are perceived to have gone

³ Clucas, Johnstone and Ward also speak of a 'significant shift in the terms of political and philosophical debate since 2001' (Clucas et al, 2009: 1). Changing attitudes give the impression that the torture debate focused on *when* torture can be justified, rather than *if*.

⁴ Older forms of social justice are sometimes associated with the Gothic, such as the practice of paying 'were gild' to curtail the amount of 'blood revenge' in early Germanic societies. This practice was in turn displaced by more traditional punishments, suggesting a loss of 'natural justice'. These attitudes are perhaps why 'terrors and horrors in Gothic writing become a powerful means to reassert the values of society, virtue and propriety' (Botting, 1996: 7).

to in the name of others' suffering: 'recollection [of] a thousand vague rumours of the horrors of Toledo' ('The Pit and the Pendulum': 255). This phrasing suggests the 'black legend' of the Inquisition: one supported as much by rumour as by deed. Despite loosely corroborating the ways in which the Inquisition did conduct itself, such as when the narrator ponders why he was not sent to an auto-de-fé as 'victims had been in immediate demand' ('Pit': 254), the text not only recognises the great amount of rumour and exaggeration that surrounds the Inquisition, but even adds to it. This can be seen when the narrator states that 'the death [he] just avoided was of that very character which [he] had regarded as fabulous and frivolous in the tales respecting the Inquisition' ('Pit': 257). Terror can sometimes verge on the ludicrous: 'his drama occasionally slips into melodrama, as in "The Pit and the Pendulum" when the walls of the dungeon are brought together mechanically to force the prisoner into the abyss' (Buranelli, 1961: 79). First published in 1842, later than many of the texts examined in this chapter, it unsurprisingly draws on themes established in early Spanish Inquisition Gothic. What makes it interesting, however, is that it can be read as directly engaging with debates on panopticism and prison reform.

'The Pit and the Pendulum' presents an unbelievable terror of torture that takes place behind closed doors – in opposition to most spectacles of punishment. This links to contemporary American debates on public displays of punishment which, it was thought, contributed towards 'making average people not only unconcerned for fellow citizens, but also more likely to commit crimes themselves' (Haslam, 2008: 271). A lack of concern for others seems likely to be an intended consequence of such actions – through 'Othering' this lack of sympathy is directed to a tyrant's enemies. More significantly, Rush recognises that this effectively allowed the public license to imagine far greater horrors so "'tales" from the "abode of misery" becomes a site of exaggeration and

magnification; these narratives create an imaginative excess of spectacle that the reality of public punishments cannot contain or effect' (Haslam, 2008: 273). The idea is that the imagination takes hold of what transpires in the obscure houses of punishment, undeterred by the realities of any public punishment. Consequently, this causes embellishment and sublime fears surrounding punishment, reflecting the way Gothic literature appropriates the past in general. Whatever barbarity is practised in public, one must assume what transpires in private is worse. Rush may have been speaking about prisons and the potential benefits to society, but these 'tales from the abode of misery' expose a potential flaw in the panoptic model that has been exploited greatly by Gothic tyrants.

Torture is characterised as an inherently Gothic act – it is thought of as a practice that can only be barbaric. It is not just attitudes towards torture that have changed over time; the processes of inflicting pain, the justification for it, and what it is hoped will be achieved have also undergone significant alteration. Modern torture seems to most commonly be applied as an aspect of ongoing warfare and 'torture has become a matter not merely of debate, but of actual practice not just by U.S-backed and trained regimes as in the 1970s, but by the U.S itself and its core allies, including some British forces in Iraq' (Clucas, 2009: 5). Naturally, this is a vastly different approach to the Spanish Inquisition, as Rejali notes:

The Russians and the Chinese used clean tortures as the Spanish Inquisition would. They wanted to produce *false* confessions, and they did not mind using slow tortures to achieve this purpose. They did not share the concern of many modern torturers: to produce *accurate* intelligence with speed. (Rejali, 2007: 119)

Gothic torture, then, has characteristics anachronistic to modern torture. Modern torture methods aim to be 'clean' - to not leave any wounds on the victim. Ambrosio recognises that he is 'a prisoner of the Holy Office, and probably doomed to perish in tortures the

most severe' (*The Monk*: 360). Interestingly, considering how severe his crimes were, there does seem to be some pathos created for Ambrosio in these scenes. This can be seen when it is learned that the Inquisition is 'determined to make him confess not only the crimes which he had committed, but those also of which he was innocent' (*The Monk*: 362). Even with a guilty person before them, the Inquisition is still represented as desiring to persecute imagined offences, torturing victims for confessions accordingly. Again, there does seem to be some genuine knowledge of how the Inquisition was conducted: 'In these trials neither the accusation is mentioned, nor the name of the accuser. The prisoners are only asked, whether they will confess' (*The Monk*: 361). Gothic torture does indeed seek confessions, false or otherwise, but commonly these are omitted. Elaine Scarry talks of the 'covert disdain for confession' (Scarry, 1985: 29): the withdrawal of sympathy from a victim once they have confessed, either because they have ratified their guilt and thus justified the torture, or because they have become complicit in the torturer's ritual. By omitting these confessions, Gothic novels not only allow the reader to sympathise with the victim without obstacle, but also praise defiance against authority.⁵

Gothic literature does not practise clean torture, however, with victims sustaining barbaric injuries. Such barbarisms are frequently mapped onto geographical distance, with Catholic Spain being used as a sight for such cruel practices. Whatever uncertain moral ground surrounds theoretical applications the persecution, injustice and pointlessness of medieval torture make many recent ethical and sociological arguments on the subject irrelevant. Spanish Inquisition torture falls into a different pattern, a ritual of power and religion constantly re-enacted:

Classical torturers marked their victims' bodies as religion or custom required. They often branded or scarred in public, using bodies to advertise state power and

⁵ Even if the reader knows of a character's guilt, such as Ambrosio, their torture is still likely to elicit sympathy.

deter others from similar behaviour. By contrast, modern torturers favour pains that intimidate the prisoner alone. (Rejali, 2007: 35)

The classic Gothic scenes set amongst subterranean dungeons are the immediate ancestors of the passages detailing incarceration and interrogation within bleak Inquisitorial vaults. The torture scenes that follow lay the foundations for many literary descendants; both for the figure of the tyrant and the effectiveness of acts of torture in identifying them. In the texts under discussion, the Spanish Inquisition practice torture in a manner that seems wholly unjustifiable, and entirely Gothic. The close relationship between tyranny and torture becomes self-evident when the narrative turns to torture: the Inquisition are essentially all-powerful, and in complete mastery over their victims who have been classed as 'Other'. As David Punter points out, 'it is a terror which has to do with persecution' (Punter, 1996: 117). In *The Monk* there is little good that arises from religion. It chiefly empowers the wicked and 'to Melmoth, all religions are equally delusory; the only reality behind religion is divine vengeance' (Punter, 1996: 126). The Inquisition, through various minor roles in these texts, demonstrate how often religion can be grounds for causing others harm. It is not the specific religions themselves that are held to account, but the often Gothic forces of suspicion and fear that drive them, as well as the rendering of different individuals as 'Other' to the perceived Catholic norm. Historically, there is much to imply that the Spanish Inquisition's methods and reputation have influenced regimes that followed, but *textually* this is far less evident than would be expected as the Inquisition's exposure in this tale is often contained in small portions of the text as a whole. Despite this, the Spanish Inquisition's involvement remains a threatened presence throughout the texts, and the scenes that do describe them and their actions are amongst the most memorable. The most harrowing passages in Gothic texts not only help determine the tone throughout the novel, but are also the most sublime as they violate the most taboos: 'the appeal of the macabre is dependent in large measure on

the way in which it violates decorum' (Daniels, 1977: 9). The 'Otherness' of Catholicism in these Protestant Gothic tales is part of what fuels them, but it is also the 'Otherness' perceived by the Inquisition that allowed them to commit tortures.

Torture is included in Gothic novels by the author for specific purposes, effectively making them a torturer themselves serving up second-hand pain for their audience's enjoyment. This point is echoed in a quotation from Alonzo's jailer in *Melmoth the Wanderer*, as he discusses his desire to view others being victimised; he addresses the following to Alonzo: "You will call this cruelty, I call it curiosity,— that curiosity that brings thousands to witness a tragedy, and makes the most delicate female feast on groans and agonies'" (*Melmoth*: 211). The quotation directly addresses the audience as 'feasting' on the 'groans and agonies' of their victims. For the author, it is the readership's reaction to torture and pain in general that is the primary interest. This can be linked to a 'shift in focus from mind to body [that] characterizes a shift in Gothic and Romantic fiction from contemplation of suffering to the experience of suffering' (Bruhm, 1994: 3). It is not merely the experience of pain that could be evoked by reading about fictional pain, however, as 'sensibility exploited the experience of suffering to induce in readers a proper sentiment; pity for the victim whose body is in distress' (Bruhm, 1994: 3). This process can only be emphasized in the case of torture. As Scarry states 'torture, which contains specific acts of inflicting pain, is also itself a demonstration and magnification of the felt experience on pain' (Scarry, 1985: 27). Returning to the jailer and *Melmoth the Wanderer* the text's clearest depiction of torture shows the psychological effects of torture, as well as a focus on the victims' bodies, in a scene where two lovers are locked in a cell to die of hunger. In their distress, the two start 'rapidly becoming objects of hostility of each other'

(*Melmoth*: 212).⁶ In a disturbing passage ‘her lover, in the agony of hunger, had fastened his teeth in her shoulder; - that bosom on which he had so often luxuriated became a meal to him now’ (*Melmoth*: 212/213). The two are fundamentally transformed; broken down by the experiences they have endured at the hands of a power they cannot hope to resist.

Edgar Allan Poe is closely linked to the dark themes of his work; his life is often read in Gothic terms. To speak of Poe as a torturer, writing fiction so shocking it is sublime in itself would not be too out of character. These nightmarish aspects of Poe’s work have attracted critical attention, being actively employed by the text, and is something the reader must strain to understand:

It is only natural that the central body of Poe’s work should be a tissue of nightmares – a literary fabric shot with disease, madness, death, hideous murders, ghastly exhumations, shrieks in the night. It is only natural that the sanity of the author should become suspect. (Buranelli, 1961: 17)

A milder statement by Buranelli reinforces Poe’s role as the literary equivalent of a master torturer: ‘Poe’s handling of his subjects has a different, more tangible quality [...] His superiority is more than a matter of art, for there is a violent realism in his macabre writings unequalled by the other Americans in the same genre’ (Buranelli, 1961: 29). In a genre that relies heavily on the creation of pain, and the sublime’s ability to make this pleasurable, there is a clear role for torture as a supreme force in Gothic fiction. As Scarry states: ‘Nowhere is the sadistic potential of a language built on an agency so visible as in torture’ (Scarry, 1985: 27). The use of sadistic here is key, as the Marquis de Sade’s views are informative. Sade, in *Juliette* (1797), has a character state: ‘it is beyond all question preferable that the commotion produced in our nervous system [...] be crafted by pain rather than by pleasure’ (Quoted in Phillips, 2005: 21). Sade has limitations, however, and his writings have been criticised for the imbalanced way they represent the

⁶ This seems remarkably similar to the results of confinement and interrogation in Orwell’s *1984* (1949), which coaxes the victim to turn on their loved ones.

balance of power: ‘the one constant to all Sade’s monstrous orgies is that the whip hand is always the hand with the real political power and the victim is a person who has little or no power at all’ (Carter, 1997: 24). Sade may advocate pleasurable pain, but this mostly seems to be derived from a position of power and thus only has limited applications with regard to an exploration of torture, whose victims seem to derive only pain. In order to overcome the inability to transmit pain, Gothic writers often, knowingly or otherwise, incorporate techniques expressive or symbolic of pain. One of the most potent of these is the symbolism of the torture device.

Torture in fiction has its own limitations and implications, particularly when it comes to the communication of pain through language. Partly, of course, it could be this inability to *feel* someone else’s pain that makes it much less objectionable in literature or other forms, as Stephen Bruhm states in *Gothic Bodies: The Politics of Pain in Romantic Fiction* (1994) that ‘the pleasure we derive from someone else’s pain became the foundation of much of the literature of Sensibility in the mid- to late eighteenth century’ (Bruhm, 1994: 3). Elaine Scarry’s *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (1985) details how difficult it is to truly transmit the feeling of pain to others, noting: ‘to have pain is to have *certainty*; to hear about pain is to have *doubt*’ (Scarry, 1985: 13). Pain, then, is recognised as being difficult to express verbally, or even truly appreciated when seen in person. This can even be reflected in the clinical approach to pain, with patient’s language only providing limited information: ‘pain is typically assessed as a unidimensional construct, using self-report of numerical and verbal descriptor scales’ (Craig and Versloot, 2010: 27). Surprisingly, then, pain has formed into an important subject for literature, again quoting Bruhm:

the major Romantic authors share with their Gothic cousins a fascination with physical pain, and much Romantic production concerns itself with the implications of physical pain on the transcendent consciousness. (Bruhm, 1994: xvi)

Authors have broached these difficulties in numerous ways, utilising varied techniques to allow their readership to understand the pain being inflicted to some extent.

This failure of language to adequately capture pain is reflected in Gothic novels, which typically try and leave the details to the reader's imagination. Scarry's notion that 'physical pain does not simply resist language but actively destroys it' finds weight when Alonzo is at the mercy of the Inquisition in the vaults (Scarry, 1985: 4). Rather than a horrifying account of torture, we are met with the announcement that: 'I am forbidden, by an oath which I shall never break, to disclose the circumstances of my imprisonment or examination' (Melmoth: 226-227). Maturin thus frees himself of the burden of the torturer for this scene; he is not forced to wring out suffering or pleasurable pains from his readership. Instead, he can let their own imaginations run wild; create their own personal horrors in the Inquisition's vaults. The one exception occurs in a dream Alonzo has before his final condemning interview, here Alonzo describes the sensations of being burnt alive:

My feet were scorched to a cinder, - my muscles cracked, my blood and marrow hissed, my flesh consumed like shrinking leather, - the bones of my legs hung two black withering and moveless sticks caught in the ascending blaze; it ascended, caught my hair, - I was crowned with fire. (*Melmoth*: 236)

This dream sequence provides Gothic *frisson* by adding horrific scenes to what would otherwise be a relatively dry chapter, underwhelming certainly for an account of a prisoner of the Inquisition. The dream also enables Maturin provide this without compromising historical realism, particularly as the narrative framework makes Alonzo's escape inevitable. While a factual description may not adequately reflect the sensation of pain, encouraging the reader to imagine their own is an effective substitute here.

Wounds and weapons are used to transmit the idea of bodily pain. The guilty Ambrosio's experiences in the Inquisition's vault correspond roughly to those of Alonzo,

the innocent monk from *Melmoth the Wanderer*. There are, however, two chief differences between the two. Ambrosio is known to be guilty by the reader, so his ill-treatment is met with much less sympathy. Secondly, Ambrosio's Inquisition scene is positioned at the very end of the novel like an epilogue: making it less climactic, and escape far less likely.

As short as Ambrosio's imprisonment is, in three very clear ways it conforms to the expectations of a torture scene and the act of sympathising with pain. Firstly, it deals with the failure of language to describe pain, as with Alonzo, we are spared the specific details of Ambrosio's torture process initially, being told only that 'Ambrosio suffered the most excruciating pangs that were ever invented by human cruelty' (*The Monk*: 362). Secondly, after his examination a description of his injuries gives a much clearer impression of what he has undergone:

His dislocated limbs, the nails torn from his hands and feet, and his fingers mashed and broken by the pressure of screws, were far surpassed in anguish by the agitation of his soul and vehemence of his terrors. (*The Monk*: 362)

This corresponds to one of the ways Scarry describes as a means of overcoming the failure of language: 'seeing' the wound can create a greater understanding than trying to describe the pain itself: 'the point here is not just that pain can be apprehended in the image of the weapon (or wound) but that it almost cannot be comprehended without it' (Scarry, 1985: 16). Finally, it is the weapon of torture itself that comes to symbolise the Inquisition's power over Ambrosio, as well as speaking volumes of his suffering. 'What assists the conversion of absolute pain into the fiction of absolute power is an obsessive, self-conscious display of agency', for example, and as in this case, 'being made to stare at the weapon' (Scarry, 1985: 27). Though less gory than preceding passages the quotation below finds a way to be equally chilling:

As his eye glanced downwards, he perceived various iron instruments lying scattered upon the floor. Their forms were unknown to him, but apprehension immediately guessed them to be engines of torture. (*The Monk*: 360)

This focus on the unfamiliar forms of weaponry not only suggests an exoticism and variety of devices that is in itself unpleasant, but in allowing the reader's imagination to fill in the details creates an appropriately terrifying scenario without relying on gore. The effect is a dialogue between description and the reader's imagination that demonstrates the tyrant's ability to inflict pain.

The torture in 'The Pit and the Pendulum' is a display of power; the torturer poses no questions of the prisoner and the device is designed to make the prisoner suffer before an inevitable death. This purposelessness only adds to their horror. The only motivation can be found in the fact that the torturers are the Inquisition, and in the hellish nature of the torment: '*the pit*, typical of hell and regarded by rumour as the Ultima Thule of all their punishments' ('Pit': 260). A later passage is an even more vivid example: 'Demon eyes, of a wild and ghastly vivacity, glared upon me in a thousand directions, where none had been visible before, and gleamed with the lurid lustre of a fire that I could not force my imagination to regard as unreal' ('Pit': 265).⁷ Domination of the body leads to control of the mind, and here Gothicised language can be seen as creating a monstrous body – in form and acts of torture. The simulation of Hell's pit is a fitting punishment for religious crime, with which the Inquisition charged many, but here the punishment not only humiliates and disempowers the victim, but reinforces the torturers as the holders of supreme, religious authority. The relationship between power and purpose is crucial to the depiction of torture, not only because it establishes whether or not an authority is a tyrant, but any depiction of torture changes the status of the power using it, be it weakening it or

⁷ The description of these eyes bears hallmarks of Gothic descriptions of voluminous rats, such as in Stoker's 'The Burial of the Rats' (1896), and could be read this way in the story. Given the fantastical nature of the Pit, however, being interpreted as figurative demons seems correct.

strengthening it. Were it not for the victim's rescue at the story's ending, it would indeed serve to further empower the torturers themselves. Scarry notes that 'in torture, it is in part the obsessive display of agency that permits one person's body to be translated into another person's voice, that allows real human pain to be converted into a regime's fiction of power' (Scarry, 1985: 18). The victim's body in 'The Pit and the Pendulum' thus becomes a means for voicing this power. The justification of torture in these texts marks the difference between wanton cruelty and enemy of the state, with an immense impact on readership sympathy and the roles of protagonist and antagonist. With regard to the reformative aspects of punishment, it appears that Haslam was correct in recognising that the text suggests 'that such narratives lead only to more terror and violence, and that the penitentiary's reform is simply a reinvention of earlier punishments, the newly formed self-surveilling interiority merely a secondary effect of an ever-extant spectacle of torture' (Haslam, 2008: 276). For 'The Pit and the Pendulum' the issue is moot, the intense suffering seems pointless and we recognise the victims' rescuers as heroes. With regard to tyrants, however, there is no one figure who stands out, the only tyranny on show is the regime: shadowy figures that are most often out of sight. In this instance, the Inquisition is a discernibly Gothic tyrannical regime, *literally* controlling and supporting an elaborate mechanism of torture, cruelty and execution.

In 'The Pit and the Pendulum' an elaborate torture chamber emphasises the psychological aspects of torture. Haslam's article, 'Pits, Pendulums, and Penitentiaries: Reframing the Detained Subject' (2008), views the story as reflecting the contemporary debates, mentioned earlier, surrounding the establishment in the United States of penitentiaries 'fram[ing] detention as a means of reformation' (Haslam, 2008: 268). These penitentiaries eschewed public spectacle in order to encourage reflectivity in prisoners – like Foucault's analysis of the Panopticon they sought internal change in their

detainees. According to Haslam, ‘the text’s material metaphors for prison technologies continually restrict the narrator’s movement: if the pendulum allegorizes the prisoner’s “time-served” and other “counted” punishments, then the pit is a literal *mise-en-abyme* of isolation’ (Haslam, 2008: 275). Gothic torture does not seem to concern itself with justification. ‘The Pit and the Pendulum’ is a recognisable attempt to make the reader suffer the victim’s pangs, or at least try to relate to them, and the reader’s reaction to the tale is a lot more important than the characters’. Unlike the villainous and bewitched Ambrosio, or the terrorised Alonzo, “The Pit and the Pendulum” has for its central figure a man who is no psychopath, but rather one whose sanity is a necessary ingredient of the plot. Because his mind is whole and his sense keen, he feels sweating terror as he watched the dreadful pendulum descending toward him from the ceiling’ (Buranelli, 1961: 76). Poe then is the prime torturer for this text, seeking to exert a chilling effect, even a little genuine horror, on his readership. The story is an account of the process of torture, and attempted execution, at the hands of the Inquisition’s apparatus. The psychological aspect of Poe’s story is intrinsically linked to the physical suffering – both are delirious to force compliance. Both the prisoner and the reader, to a degree, are subjected to psychological as well as physical torture, and usually with fatal implications.

What sets ‘The Pit and the Pendulum’ apart from *Melmoth* and *The Monk* is that it focuses entirely on a prolonged torture scene; both of the older novels avowedly avoid going into details of torture.⁸ Every aspect of the torture chamber is designed to make the victim feel powerless. Initially the victim, as we must call him as no other personality is afforded him, states: ‘I longed, yet dared not, to employ my vision’ (‘Pit’: 253). Again, controlling the mind and controlling the body are linked here. The victim’s lack of

⁸ ‘The Pit and the Pendulum’ has been adapted into film several times. The films have invented plots, the chief inheritance from the Poe story being the name and the use of the giant bladed pendulum in climactic scenes. Like the text as a whole, the nature of these ‘adaptations’ speaks to the fetishism and iconography surrounding torture.

characterisation speaks to his powerlessness in itself, but so afraid is he of finally knowing what fate is to be his he is reduced to the state of even being unwilling to open his eyes. The victim does not even have the chance to face or confront his persecutors. Finally working up the courage, he opens his eyes: ‘my worst thoughts, then, were confirmed. The blackness of eternal night encompassed me’ (‘Pit’: 254). The darkness not only acts as psychological torture but hides the deep pit for which the story is named. The psychological elements of torture reflect the ‘shift in the discourses of punishment from bodily torture and public suffering to narratives of mental and ideological control’ (Haslam, 2008: 270). The central theme that connects torture to the role of the tyrant is typically power, and just as in the preceding texts the embodiments of power are everywhere. The torture does not merely take place in the chamber; the chamber *itself* is the torture device: ‘the entire surface of this metallic enclosure was rudely daubed in all the hideous and repulsive devices to which the charnel superstition of the monks has given rise’ (‘Pit’: 258). As we have seen before, with torture the weapon is crucial, and can become a potent symbol as ‘both weapon (whether actual or imagined) and wound (whether actual or imagined) may be used associatively to express pain’ (Scarry, 1985: 16). Buildings too can often be taken as symbols of the tyrant’s power, but for this text structures and torture are conflated.

The pendulum is the second great horror of the story, not because of the means of death, but due to the time the victim is forced to spend slowly watching it descend, an act he suggests might have taken days: ‘Inch by inch – line by line – with a descent only appreciable at intervals that seemed ages – down and still down it came!’ (‘Pit’: 260). Here too can be seen the totalitarian aspect of the Inquisition: the torture chamber forms a model for the outside world as every aspect of it is under their control. Each time the

narrator thwarts this control by escaping death, a more horrible means of death awaits him as punishment:

Then as the walls begin to close in, he realizes that he had been destined by his tormentors for the pit in the first place and that all his luck, all his cunning, and all his regained rationality have, ironically, trapped him into self-torment and increased his agony. (Thompson, 1973: 172)

‘The Pit and the Pendulum’ not only compounds the external displays of power and the torture apparatus with the psychological harm, but in doing so begins to form an examination of how and why these methods might be employed. The victim in the story experiences nothing but suffering and indignation; he may be close to breaking down but his narrative does not repent, nor does he confess to any sins, beg for forgiveness or give up the names of his accomplices. Whatever reason the Inquisition has for torturing him, it has to be considered a failure. The inescapable nature of the Inquisition makes victims wish to submit to their regime. Punishment is a means of control and the purview of the tyrant in this text, whether trapped in a cell or facing a giant, descending pendulum, there seems to be nothing to benefit the character or spiritual wellbeing of the prisoner.

The Tyranny of Conformity and Belief

In *Melmoth*, religious fervour is identified as a major cause for lacking empathy. As in *The Monk*, the novel finds aspects of tyranny within Catholic priests and monks. One tale in the text concerns a family’s prolonged starvation and related woes due to extreme poverty, described in gritty, realistic horror as they begin to turn on one another, and even lose their minds. The cause of all this suffering is a wealthy relative’s confessor, whose lies and forgery deprived them of the inheritance they were rightly entitled to. Whilst one could read this stereotypical, negative portrayal of a religious figure as merely indicative anti-Catholicism, it is in fact part of a more complex criticism. For all Maturin’s anti-Catholicism, these wicked monks and priests are, perhaps only slightly, balanced out by goodly and kindly figures – though often these are shown as acting against the Church’s

wishes. This seems to be part of a broader trend that shows *institutions* as bad, not necessarily particular beliefs or faiths. Maria Purves, in *The Gothic and Catholicism: Religion, Cultural Exchange and the Popular Novel, 1785-1829*, states that Lewis' 'intention, critics argue, was to satirize the Roman church, to expose its hypocrisies and attack its foundations' (Purves, 2009: 93). Purves goes on to comment on 'Gothic's serious didactic [...] religious side' (Purves, 2009: 208) reiterating that the Gothic is neither specifically amoral, nor hostile, towards religion in principle. In exposing Catholicism's 'hypocrisies' the target is not the Church as such, but these hypocritical behaviours: the tyrannical behaviours that are out of step with benevolent core beliefs. The tyrannical monk figure is one example of this.

The wayward monk is a tyrannical archetype amongst Spanish Inquisition Gothic. Cruel monks, with or without the Church's backing, abuse their control over people; forcing them through religious indoctrination and threats of damnation into suffering, or inflicting suffering on others. Crucially, it is necessary not to interpret this trope as a condemnation of monks in general. Though 'Maturin's *Melmoth* may present us with what seems to be a familiar, Protestant, rogue's gallery of Catholic chicanery [...] to understand it fully one has to place it within a wider context' (Miles, 2002: 101). Instead, there seems to be a broader characterisation of fanatical devotion leading to callousness and ultimately abuse. Ambrosio is the most recognisable and easily defined of these archetypes, but there is no *single* monk figure to act as a self-willed tyrant in *Melmoth* – it is the rigid structures that make the Church so terrifying. Condemnation of the Church or clergy thus seems a stronger motivation, due to the lack of an individual's failings. One important scene occurs later in the text as part of an inset narrative, as Immalee looks from her island and sees religious rituals of disturbing cruelty: 'Immalee is deeply affected by the bloody ceremony, yet remains unable to take her gaze away from it – a

situation that corresponds precisely to that of the reader of Gothic literature, who is often forced to adopt the position of a voyeur' (Curbet, 2002: 170).⁹ This is an interesting way of looking at the religious cruelty depicted in *Melmoth*, a mixture of pleasure and pain, with the recipient of the feeling dependent on their role in the ritual. *Melmoth* can be seen as having a broader tendency to 'push the exploration of the subjective position to the point of sadism; always showcasing the participation of the subject in the ritual and the exaltation of instincts in the consummation of sacrifice' (Curbet, 2002: 171). The issue with the Church leading to abuse, even torture, is not because it is *Catholic*, but that as an authority it is entirely inflexible.

Callousness is specifically identified in *Melmoth* as a cause of suffering. Alonzo, prior to his detention in the Inquisition's vaults, suffers greatly during his imprisonment within the monastery. Within this story, several minor religious figures assume the role of tyrant: the head-abbot who enacts cruel tortures on the monk once he resolves to quit the monastery; his brother monks who help enact these tortures; his mother's priest who coerced her into this course in the first place, and the traitorous murderer who later becomes a jailer of the Inquisition. The jailer is the cruellest character in the novel, and is representative of one attitude towards the Catholic faith. The Church sanctions the jailer's cruelty to others as he states in his own words: 'If I persecute and torment the enemies of God, must I not be the friend of God?' (*Melmoth*: 224). Referring back to the scene of the two lovers locked in a dungeon to die of starvation, the jailer recounts that he enjoyed his role to such an extent that he 'actually lived on the famine that was devouring them' (*Melmoth*: 211):

⁹ Considering Alonzo's suffering endured as a man of God, the language used to describe this ritual almost applies to Catholicism: 'those mingled features of magnificence and horror, - of joy and suffering, - of crushed flowers and mangled bodies, - of magnificence calling on torture for its triumph, - and the stream of blood and the incense of the rose, inhaled at once by the triumphant nostrils of an incarnate demon, who rode amid the wrecks of nature and the spoils of the heart!' (*Melmoth*: 293).

It was my penance (no, - my delight) to watch at the door, under the pretence of precluding the possibility of their escape, (of which they knew there was no possibility); but, in reality, [...] of teaching me that callosity of heart, and induration of nerve, and stubbornness of eye, and apathy of ear, that were best suited to my office. (*Melmoth*: 211)

The jailer then has not only the capacity to watch torture but takes great delight in being its voyeur. Taken in isolation, the character may be a disturbing one, but the trajectory of the jailer within the novel eventually sees him working for the Inquisition. The sadist, then, has found a Gothic institution where his inhumanity is useful. These are key quotations for understanding the role of the Church in these texts, with the Catholic jailer performing that role. Neither religion nor mercy is part of the jailer's task. He is callous, stubborn, apathetic and inflexible; the chief traits that enable tyrants to commit torture – along with the actively delighting in the failings and sufferings of others.

The Church similarly enables Ambrosio's egotism rather than encouraging benevolent religious devotion, when the self-obsessed form his beliefs take is identified as a reason for his later crimes. As *The Monk* opens, before the readership is introduced to either tyrant or victim, there is an introduction to a depiction of Catholicism as it stood in Madrid:

Do not encourage the idea, that the crowd was assembled either from motives of piety or thirst of information. But very few were influenced by those reasons; and in a city where superstition reigns with such despotic sway as Madrid, to seek for true devotion would be a fruitless attempt. (*Monk*: 11)

Ambrosio can be seen as a typical product of this kind of religion. Ambrosio is the novel's most tyrannical figure, the primary cause of suffering, but he wields only limited power because he does not rule over any lands, nor is he even in charge of the monastery. However, what the novel's opening makes clear is Ambrosio is in possession of an unblemished reputation and is famed not only for his eloquence but for his purity: 'such was Ambrosio, abbot of the Capuchins, and surnamed "The Man of Holiness"' (*Monk*: 20). Ambrosio possesses an unusual influence and privileged position for a monk, as can

be particularly seen when he addresses the crowds at the start of the novel: ‘all found their attention irresistibly attracted while he spoke’ and ‘few could sustain the glance of his eye, at once fiery and penetrating’ (*Monk*: 20). It may not be enforced by law or doctrine, but Ambrosio certainly has power. It is this power he abuses over the course of the novel, becoming a tyrant in the most literal sense. Ambrosio is at fault from the very start of the novel, severe and cruel in his piousness. Yet he himself succumbs to temptation and sin during the course of the novel, goaded and encouraged in his downfall by the sorceress Matilda. Ambrosio’s apex of tyranny and abuse occurs with his abduction and rape of Antonia in the vault. Instantly the text starts to regard him as a savage; he handled her with ‘brutality’ and ‘treated her with the rudeness of an unprincipled barbarian’ (*Monk*: 328). Here Ambrosio has his own goals, satisfying his long-repressed lust, and despite his savagery, his villainy is emphasised as: ‘heedless of her tears, cries and entreaties, he gradually made himself master of her person, and desisted not from his prey, till he had accomplished his crime and the dishonour of Antonia’ (*Monk*: 328). Power again comes to the forefront of his abuses; he is ‘master of her person’, just as she is equally helpless in the subterranean prison. Once Ambrosio’s lust is satisfied power becomes his chief objective; not allowing the girl to reveal his vile acts to the world, and ‘he enforced her silence by means the most horrible and inhuman’ (*Monk*: 334). Whilst the Inquisition flaunts their reputation to encourage obedience, Ambrosio must conceal his crimes and his silencing of Antonia is done so as to ‘insure the abbot’s safety’ (*Monk*: 331). Ambrosio’s concern with reputation, then, is a direct influence over his most violent act: his singlemindedness, hypocrisy and preoccupation with appearing pious having led him down this route.

Inhumane conduct occurs in *The Monk* due to a pre-occupation with reputation and Church hierarchy, instead of true religious spirit. Ambrosio is not alone as a Catholic

turned tyrant; he is joined by the Prioress who is similarly shown to be a callous hypocrite who uses her authority over Agnes and the other nuns to commit an outrageous cruelty. The Prioress is a more typical tyrant than Ambrosio; she is a minor character and as such we know little of her background or motivation. As a result, we have to ascribe her terrifying treatment of Agnes to inhumane severity in the execution of her duties. Like many fictional Gothic tyrants, she goes too far and sympathises too little. The most shocking, and memorable, image of abuse in *The Monk* is of Agnes in the vault, where she was hidden unknown to even Ambrosio. Despite being only a minor character, then, the Prioress is perhaps the cruellest tyrant. Agnes' torture scenes arrive penultimately in the text, arriving after the revelation that she is not dead as previously thought. The scene where she is discovered reveals much about her treatment, and provides a unique scene of horror. Lorenzo, in the sepulchre on other business, almost by chance comes across the miserable enclosure that had been Agnes' prison, and finds her 'so wretched, so emaciated, so pale, that he doubted to think her woman' (*Monk*: 316). Lorenzo's reaction is not only to be 'petrified with horror', but he also 'trembled at the spectacle' and lost his strength (*Monk*: 317). The 'spectacle' elicits the same reaction in the text as it is intended to create in its readership. Lorenzo here, too, enjoys the one way vision of the Panopticon as 'the wall concealed Lorenzo, and she observed him not' (*Monk*: 317). One facet of this scene is that it specifically associates the violence and horror with the Catholic Church. The dungeon may be sparsely furnished but it is noted that a 'large rosary lay near her: opposite to her was a crucifix, on which she bent her sunk eyes fixedly' (*Monk*: 317). Perhaps the most disturbing element of her miserable existence is 'the bundle, which lay upon her breast' (*Monk* 317): the corpse of her dead baby. The dead baby too becomes a symbol of torture that Agnes intends to utilise to emphasise this Catholic hypocrisy: 'I will bear it away: it will convince the world how dreadful are the abodes so falsely termed

religious' (*Monk*: 319). Agnes' own cries solidify this relationship, crying out in askance: 'And they are God's servants that would make me suffer thus! - They think themselves holy, while they torture me like fiends!' (*Monk*: 318). Again Catholic intent is being shown as being corrupted into an act associated with demons.

The Spanish Inquisition, as depicted by both of these texts, is a symptom of deeper deficiencies of humanity and sympathy in society. Melmoth essentially says as much within the novel, telling Immalee that her own Christian family would sing 'hallelujahs to your dying screams of torture' because (*Melmoth*: 344):

the Christianity of these countries is diametrically opposite to the Christianity of that world of which you caught a gleam, and which you may see recorded in the pages of your Bible. (*Melmoth*: 344)

Melmoth then is undeniably a monster, but so too are the abusive authorities in the text that harm when they should be protecting. One occasion when he does exacerbate Alonzo's problems is his troubling appearance in the Inquisition's vaults. Not only do Alonzo's reports of these conversations ensure his guilt in the eyes of the Inquisitors, but at the pronouncement of his sentence Alonzo makes a startling discovery: 'as I was led near the table, this person flashed a look of recognition on me, - he was my dreaded companion, - he was an official now of the Inquisition' (*Melmoth*: 238). The devil then is shown as having as much influence on the Inquisition as true religious spirit.

Not only has the Catholic Church sanctioned the Inquisition in *The Monk*, but the wider church behaves in much the same way as the popular idea of the Inquisition: simultaneously outdoing its cruelties, and eventually falling prey to them. The Inquisition and the dread effect it holds over Ambrosio is telling, and their facelessness in their duty marks them out as similar to later regimes, but compared to the devil himself, and Ambrosio, inquisitors are not even minor characters, let alone antagonists. The Catholic Church as a whole though, for all its merciful individuals, assumes the aspect of a

totalitarian Gothic regime: Ambrosio and the Inquisition are mere aspects of it, even the devil assumes the mantle, hidden away behind monastery walls. The secret plots and the willingness of the members to do evil in the service of their superiors is what makes the novel chilling. Not only are the individual ‘tyrants’ punished, but the institution that put them in power is burned down. The hierarchy of power and the constant observation of the monastery gives the church the appearance of omnipotence. When both of these fail there remains the Spanish Inquisition, to torture and persecute the Church’s enemies as a display of power.

Conclusion: An Almost Fanatical Devotion

The Spanish Inquisition of Gothic literature counts amongst its chief weapons three facets that would become recognisable throughout most of literature’s, and history’s, tyrannical regimes: its ever-watchful gaze, its spectacle of torture, and its lack of compassion. The Spanish Inquisition, then, is an excellent example of how authors at the close of the eighteenth century and beyond drew upon the history and myths circulating around a bygone regime to render one of the first great ‘monsters of history’. In their characterisation of the Inquisition, *The Monk*, *Melmoth the Wanderer* and ‘The Pit and the Pendulum’ emphasise the aspects that make any authority tyrannical. The Spanish Inquisition acts as a terrible institution of persecution and extreme punishment: a Gothic body that was compared with the devil himself, always watching, and willing to match his cruelty. The re-enactment of historical excesses of violence, such as the torture in the Inquisition’s vaults, is the clearest indication in these texts that our sympathies should not just lie with those we are told to obey – authority can be unjust and should be resisted. A passage from *Melmoth the Wanderer*, directed at a prisoner of the Inquisition, demonstrates much of what was discussed in this chapter:

You escape from a convent! *You* defy a power that has defied sovereigns! A power whose influence is unlimited, indefinable, and unknown, even to those who exercise

it, as their mansions are so vast, that their inmates, to their last hour, have never visited all the apartments; – a power whose operation is like its motto – one and indivisible. (*Melmoth*: 219/220)

The very conception of the Spanish Inquisition and the Catholic Church here is aimed at making it seem terrible, not in *moral* or even in superstitious terms, but in its raw power. What is equally striking is that it refers to the historical Inquisition as much as the fictional.

This is how the Spanish Inquisition's tyranny supports the essential functions of the Gothic mode – it combines Gothic excess and exaggerates historical reality to create situations that are both frightening and plausible. The reader is instructed to fear such institutions not because of what they *might* do, but because they possess the authority to do it and an absence of mercy to stop. In these texts, the inquisitors are largely faceless, anonymous, fulfilling a role but with little ethics. The Spanish Inquisition primarily make their presence felt through action; in line with the regime model people are only aware of them once there are consequences. In *The Monk*, the Inquisition scene contains as much horror as the majority of the text, even with the villainous Ambrosio, their cruelty evokes some sense of pity. Though the Inquisition are mostly represented as unsympathetic in *The Monk*, there is a suggestion that it is not as cruel as usually depicted. After Ambrosio's supposed 'rescue' by the devil he is informed, as a twist, that the figures he heard approaching his cell were about to pardon him. This seems unlikely, given what we've seen so far of his interview and his obvious guilt, and even if we take the devil at his word, it does little to rescue the Inquisition's character: releasing a sinister figure the readership and most of Madrid know to be guilty of terrible crimes.

That the Spanish Inquisition were a feature of early Gothic novels makes them instructive in the development of the genre and exposes a trend of the Gothic to respond to historical stimulus, reoccurring in later intervals. What makes the Inquisition itself such

a 'monster of history' is that these are the primary features of the tyrannical bodies of 'Spanish Inquisition' Gothic, and many of these were handed down to future Gothic tyrants and tyrannical organisations. If the writers of Gothic fiction were using the horrors of the Inquisition and the superstition of Spain as an allegory for the horrors of their own time, it was not long before future Gothic writers began to use the times they had sought to escape in their fiction to craft Gothic horrors of their own. The next chapter will follow these themes into fiction confronting the French Revolution, with this same inhumane lack of sympathy displayed to those of different social classes; be they peasant or aristocrat, both turn tyrannical with power.

Chapter 2: Tyranny Takes Centre Stage: The French Revolution

But now all is to be changed. All the pleasing illusions, which made power gentle, and obedience liberal, which harmonized the different shades of life, and which, by a bland simulation, incorporated into politics the sentiments which beautify and soften private society, are to be dissolved by this new conquering empire of light and reason. (Burke, 1955: 87)

At the close of the eighteenth century an essentially feudal France became the stage for a struggle for supremacy between ‘Gothic’ medievalism and an equally violent modernity that would seize hold of the Romantic imagination.¹ The writings of Edmund Burke, quoted above, reflect the strong contemporary opinions of the British people that viewed the Revolution as a fundamental mistake. Burke also demonstrates the extent to which the Revolution centred on the way leaders were characterised, describing it as destroying the ‘pleasing illusions’ that stopped rulers from appearing tyrannical. The quantity of fiction and theatre set during the French Revolution that was written during the Victorian period suggests a surge of interest in the Revolution. Considering the extremes of historical violence that took place it is not surprising that this impact was, in so many cases, recognised as being Gothic. However, the Revolution was more than just a period of brutality; it questioned both the role and nature of ruling over others. Whilst the French Revolution was ostensibly against ‘a system of tyranny or despotism, in which all power was monopolized by a single man, the King’, history quickly began to recognise that this ‘characterization of the Old Regime monarchy as a despotism is greatly exaggerated’ (Popkin, 2010: 1, 3). For many, the French Revolution was seen as a rejection of the very models of tyranny demonstrated in *The Castle of Otranto* and *The Monk*, yet the Revolution itself became a bloodthirsty and despotic regime in its own right. The idea of

¹ The numerous ways in which pre-Revolutionary France could still be seen as feudal included an outdated ‘cumbersome and inefficient system of tax collection’ that allowed tax collectors to squeeze the population ‘while forwarding as little as possible to Versailles’ (Popkin, 2010: 6), and the highly privileged status enjoyed by the clergy and nobles, many of whom enjoyed additional rights as *seigneurs* (Popkin, 2010: 9).

victims becoming perpetrators of violence is reflected in works of fiction and theatre set during the Revolution. The changing of sympathy and pathos within these texts inhibits the ‘othering’ of tyranny – inhumanity is displayed by all factions, rejecting its characterisation as a purely external force. The fiction of the French Revolution is able to confront inhumanity and cruelty directly, as relationships between individuals and the masses, between tyrants, regimes and their victims, are played out on blood-soaked pages.

This chapter focuses on the French Revolution as portrayed in fiction and theatre over a period of sixty years, from Dickens’ *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), which masterfully conceptualises the Revolution in Gothic terms, through Watts Phillips’ play *The Dead Heart* (1859), to *The Scarlet Pimpernel* (1905). This chapter aims to demonstrate how French Revolutionary Gothic fiction provides integral examples of the developing Gothic tyrant. Many of these texts feature villains of the Ancien Régime, cruel and selfish examples of classic Gothic tyrants. Such tyrants lack subtlety or nuance and are portrayed as fundamentally evil characters, but are destroyed early in these texts. Unlike classic Gothic fiction, the removal of a tyrant does not re-order society; it creates further disorder. These texts all feature strong theatrical links, with melodrama in particular being a key influence. This can be seen through the device of ‘La Guillotine’, the beheading machine created for the Revolution that was viewed as feminine and even sometimes called ‘Madame Guillotine’. The Guillotine became a figure in its own right, symbolic of the Revolution’s bloodshed. La Guillotine began as a means of providing an equal and efficient means of execution but became imbued with its own tyrannical status, representative of the wider, out of control, Revolutionary machinery that needed to be constantly supplied with victims. For theatrical works, La Guillotine provided a dramatic spectacle; just like tyrants it provided a demonstration of power. The staging of melodramatic plays and the use of melodramatic devices in prose emphasise not only the

excessive emotionality and terrible nature of the Revolution, but the importance of the role of tyrant itself. Like Gothic novels themselves in this period, there was a deliberate cultivation of fear during the period known as ‘The Terror’, or more significantly, ‘The Reign of Terror’. Despite the many candidates for the role of tyrant it seems to be terror itself which has the ultimate command. The burden of the Gothic tyrant role is shared between the aristocracy and the people, either in the form of a terrible mob or one of its representatives. These works of fiction and theatre depict an era torn between the tyrannical individual and the tyranny of the masses.

Doubling is a recurring theme within fiction of the French Revolution, from Gothic doubles to split identities. Many of these texts feature characters that knowingly assume a role, from impersonating someone else on the scaffold to the creation of an heroic alter-ego, but most important is the assumption of the role of tyrant post-Revolution. *The Dead Heart* and *A Tale of Two Cities* consciously engage with this concept of role-playing: both depict victims who become elevated to the role of merciless tyrant. The depiction of the era through metaphor gives it a distinctly Gothic tone. These metaphors are used concurrently to convey contradicting aspects of extreme violence; that it is a barbarous, Gothic throwback yet at the same time anticipated in the future – an inevitability. Whilst many lives were being severed between the shoulders and head, in fiction, lives were being split in other ways. The proliferation of these doubles throughout Revolution fiction is interesting in itself, but what makes them useful for a study of the tyrant are the issues they raise. Not only does the loss of a recognised tyrant figure, and its replacement with a body that is supposedly representative of the third estate, cause a crisis of identity, but for writers reflecting on the period the era itself was doubled; the Revolution’s lofty goals contrasting with its perceptible climate of fear.

Uncanny doubling features prominently in Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*. The novel begins in earnest just before the Revolution, in France, as Doctor Manette is released from an unjust sentence in the Bastille to his daughter, Lucie, his banker, Mr Lorry, and Defarge, his old servant. Defarge and his wife run a wine shop that is a centre for Revolutionary activity. The Manettes and Mr Lorry become acquainted with French émigré, Charles Darnay, né Evrémonde, and his solicitor, Sydney Carton, during Darnay's trial for treason against the British. Darnay is innocent, and is found not guilty partly due to his resemblance to Carton. Darnay marries Lucie, whilst Carton is content to have his love unrequited. After the Revolution takes place, Darnay returns to France to attempt to save the life of one of his servants and is locked up in the Bastille due to being an Evrémonde – a family famous for its tyranny. Though Manette's reputation is able to save them, it is short-lived as an old document sheds light on why Manette was imprisoned in the first place: to ensure his silence after treating some of Evrémonde's victims – Madame Defarge's siblings – who had suffered a brutal attack. The novel closes as Carton switches places with Darnay, sacrificing himself for those he loves.

The Dead Heart was a popular play by Watts Phillips that is now little known. The plot of *The Dead Heart* takes place over several decades, and emphasises how tyranny continues after the Revolution has begun. Robert Landry is imprisoned in the Bastille due to the machinations of a scheming priest and noble. Eighteen years later, at the fall of the Bastille, he is freed and returned to the friends who thought him deceased. Landry's heart is metaphorically dead and he devotes himself to revenge. Five more years pass and Landry has become an important official in the Revolution, who is in charge of a prison and the executions held there. As his revenge against his hated enemy's son is about to be realised, the news that his enemy had tried to free him just weeks into his

Bastille sentence, only to be told of Landry's death, restores life to Landry's heart, and he sacrifices himself in the place of the boy.

The third text featured in this chapter is Baroness Orczy's *The Scarlet Pimpernel* (1905), which utilises doubles in quite a different way, providing an early example of secret identities in literature. The novel was popular and led to a long-spanning series, originally performed as a play prior to publication. Set against a backdrop of persecuted French aristocrats, the eponymous hero undertakes daring rescue missions – often relying on disguises and alter-egos – to spirit would-be victims safely out of France. Meanwhile, the French authorities – in particular the sinister Citizen Chauvelin – are attempting to learn the Pimpernel's other identity: Sir Percy Blakeney. Blakeney acts as a lazy, slow-witted dandy in public – even to his wife Marguerite – but this is a ruse to ensure he is not suspected as being the Pimpernel. By threatening Marguerite's brother, Chauvelin coerces her into hunting the Pimpernel. After passing on useful information, Marguerite learns the truth about Blakeney, and after another successful mission both renew their love.

Just as an historic spectacle is turned into a dramatic convention, the conventions of Gothic tyranny are updated with new features. Architecture, for instance, acts less as a symbol of power; the tyrants of the Ancien Régime possess castles and manors in the old model of tyranny, yet the regimes that supplant them often have no such holdings. The great prison – the Bastille, for one example – acts as a repository for enemies of the Ancien Régime and suffers a symbolic destruction. Instead, Bentham's panoptic principles can be seen in the informing and accusing that takes place during the reign of terror. Factors like public executions, double and even secret identities, and shifting sympathies are what tie the models of literary Gothic tyranny propounded in French Revolution Gothic texts to not only their descendants, but also their immediate ancestors. These texts demonstrate how the early Gothic tyrant survives, if not thrives, through an

era where solitary rulers, be they Kings or aristocrats, gave way to a republic, and in doing so addresses the corrupting nature of power: becoming a tyrant could be seen as an inevitability. This chapter will explore how one of the defining moments in European history and melodramatic retellings of it combine to showcase how its two sets of Gothic tyrants articulate concerns regarding powerlessness and the concept of being ruled. In both historical fiction and fact inherently Gothic language is used to codify the period as one that hinges on abuses of power and excessive violence.

Gothic Historical Fiction: Restaging the Past

The French Revolution is a widely recognised influence on Gothic and Romantic fiction. While this chapter seeks to examine Gothic fiction *set* during the Revolution, most commonly it is fiction *written* during the Revolution that is discussed with this influence in mind. James Whitlark explores how Lewis' *The Monk* (1796) confronts issues central to the Revolution despite being set in the past:

Written near the height of the French de Christianization, *The Monk* embodies this tension, but set in Spain, as was broadly assumed, Catholic authoritarianism was the precondition of the Terror, what better way to study that tyranny than where it was most notorious – the Spanish Inquisition. (Whitlark, 1997: 8)

Authoritarianism and debates around Catholicism were not the only ways in which the Revolution can be seen in *The Monk*. The novel's climax as the crowd suddenly turns violent, attacking nuns and burning the monastery, can be seen as a reflection of the French mob's activity during the Revolution: 'this is the way that the continent was seeming more and more to the British as the French spread, attacking religion and destroying one another' (Whitlark, 1997: 20). *The Monk*, then, is one example of how the French Revolution fuelled the Gothic, providing the anxieties and fears that could be recognised in the medieval past and offered up to modern readerships. Or, as Whitlark puts it, *The Monk* is 'a confection of the Revolution baked in medieval hellfire' (Whitlark, 1997: 20). The Gothic feeds on this relationship with the past to sustain itself. *The Monk*

demonstrates one way in which the Revolution contributed to the Gothic mode. *A Tale of Two Cities* demonstrates another: ‘by focusing on France under the Ancien Régime, Dickens implies that the epoch that witnessed the emergence of the Gothic novel was “Gothic” in its own right’ (Mighall, 1999: 110). It is not surprising that later writers used the Revolution as the setting for their own tales that drew upon contemporary issues, and it is the tales set *during* the Revolution that are of primary interest to this chapter.

The fiction that directly confronts the great demons of the Revolution is designated ‘historical fiction’ more than it is recognised for its Gothic credentials. Gothic and historical texts share a fascination with the past, and though the two forms are not mutually exclusive, they are rarely conflated. The prolific and successful writer of historical fiction, Harrison Ainsworth, wrote with a distinctly Gothic flair. Ainsworth was a friend of Dickens, and Andrew Sanders notes that ‘it is possible that Dickens was encouraged to continue his own scheme for an historical novel by the evident popularity of Ainsworth’s work’ (Sanders, 1978: 38). In the preface to one of his works, Ainsworth identifies – perhaps controversially – a kinship between historical and Gothic writers by identifying the formula they used.

Modified by the German and French writers – by Hoffmann, Tieck, Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas, Balzac, Paul Lacroix – the structure commenced in our own land by Horace Walpole, Monk Lewis, Mrs Radcliffe, and Maturin, but left imperfect and inharmonious, requires, now that the rubbish which choked up its approach is removed, only the hand of the skilful architect to its entire renovation and perfection. (Ainsworth, quoted in Bragg, 2016: 117)

It would be easy to take issue with this analysis, but coming from a successful writer who produced both Gothic and historical fiction, the fact that Ainsworth conflates the two, perhaps even sees them as the same form, is instructive. Similarly, when discussing the ancestors of the historical novel as it is now known, Jerome De Groot speaks of the Gothic’s use of the past, and *The Castle of Otranto* in particular. Walpole’s initial

attempts to make the text seem genuinely medieval make it similar to later historical fiction: ‘an historical document itself, with all the mystery and partiality associated with the archive [...] Walpole here articulates a sense of historical characterisation and authenticity that would be developed by Scott’ (De Groot, 2010: 15). Sharing a common ancestor, then, there is much to be said for the similarities of the two forms. The foremost similarity between the two is the overwhelming concern with the past. Sanders points out that ‘historical fiction had a particular appeal to a progressive age, though its roots lay deep in the history of European literature and civilisation’ (Sanders, 1978: 2). This same appeal is common to Gothic literature as, like historical fiction, they are set in the past. Even when this is not the case, history can be represented by a threat returning from the past, and locations themselves can be perceived as Gothic settings ‘if the location in question is perceived to harbour unreasonable, uncivilized, and unprogressive customs or tendencies’ (Mighall, 1999: xviii). The reason for this may have been unwittingly hinted at, as Walter Scott, regarded as the most eminent writer of historical fiction, ‘suggested that for the majority of his readers it was easier to accept the foreignness of a backward and distant country than that of another age’ (Sanders, 1978: 30-31). Despite this, both genres are equally concerned with the present. According to Sanders, ‘history added a vital dimension to the proper concerns of the present’ and notes that even Scott ‘alerted his readers to history and [...] made them aware of the vital links between the past and the present’ (Sanders, 1978: x, ix). History, whether in historical fiction or Gothic fiction, is positioned as informing or challenging contemporary ideas of progress.

The differences between historical and Gothic fiction are key, with Gothic novels’ main distinction lying in the sensational version of history it could convey, rather than just the facts. Even whilst discussing their confused heritage, De Groot reiterates the commonplace assertions about the difference between the two forms: ‘the historical novel,

then, is similar to other forms of novel-writing in that it shares a concern with realism, development of character, authenticity' (De Groot, 2010: 4). Gothic novels, however, 'fetishised European history. They were often set during the medieval period, and their interest in this past was a fascination with savagery and mystery' (De Groot, 2010: 14). The chief difference seems to be that in traditional historical fiction 'the past reinforced rather than undermined the present' (Sanders, 1978: 31). Gothic forms, despite their political agenda, were seen as entertainment, preying on the past's relevance to spur fears or other sensationalism. As De Groot remarks of *Otranto*, 'the historical novel is here a vehicle for expressing terror and fear, a repository of horror [...] not a repository of pastness but a site where history might attack the visitor' (De Groot, 2010: 16). The term *historical* fiction implies that the former is more important than the latter, yet many of these texts use the Revolution as a backdrop for sensationalism. Despite its historical episodes, what drives both the plot and characters of *A Tale of Two Cities* is that it is 'obsessed with unwelcome legacies, vestiges, and curses' and consequently 'has a more legitimate claim to be considered "Gothic" than Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818)' (Mighall, 1999: xix). It does not seem controversial to suggest, then, that Romance has a more pronounced influence on these texts than instruction. The Gothic can be seen as rendering the past lurid, terrifying, and threatening to the present. Importantly, and as this chapter will demonstrate, this is the function these Revolutionary novels perform: like most Gothic novels, they are meant to make us afraid.

Gothic Historical Fact: Setting the Scene

History, even for the Victorians, looked upon the French Revolution with ambivalence. The paradoxical opening to Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* summarises the contrasting contemporary views of the Revolution: 'it was the best of times, it was the worst of times' (*Tale*: 5). Not only can the conflict be seen escalating for years before key events – with

the resulting tumult lingering for decades afterwards – the biggest difficulty is working out how to view it: as a ‘season of Light’ or a ‘season of Darkness’ (*Tale*: 5). That both historians and authors have been unable to comfortably situate one side as entirely deserving of our sympathy, and the other to abjectly despise, speaks to the Revolution’s incompatibility with simple labels. For modern historians, the distancing of time affords not only a clarity of events but an isolation from the sense of threat that troubled contemporary – and even Victorian – writers. Whilst modern historians’ work will be used for clarity of events, the two most useful texts for understanding the history of the Revolution in relation to historical novels are Burke’s *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) and Carlyle’s *A History of the French Revolution* (1837). Carlyle’s history is particularly useful as it was widely read and influential, not least because it was the text Dickens referred to when writing *A Tale of Two Cities*.² Sanders comments on how Carlyle viewed history: ‘to Carlyle history moved in cycles, each one moved into the next by the Hero, representative of the will of the times’ (Sanders, 1978: 1). Who is deemed a ‘Hero’ is a matter of perspective; many have an equal claim to being tyrants. Not only does Carlyle’s conception of history emphasise the importance of individual figures and their ability to impact on an entire age, it also crucially ties this to the will of the times, effectively marking events as unavoidable. Whereas Carlyle demonstrates some ambivalence to the Revolution, Burke’s text takes a rare stance of being wholly critical, even hostile, towards it. *Reflections* is the only text under discussion in this chapter that is contemporary to the Revolution, and forms the background for Anglo-centric study of the conflict; one of Burke’s chief concerns when writing was that a similar event should not

² See Oddie’s *Dickens and Carlyle: The Question of Influence* (London: The Centenary Press, 1972), which acknowledges not only Carlyle’s influence on Dickens, but provides an analysis of the two texts demonstrating similarities between key passages.

take place in Britain. In essence, then, the Revolution was the cause of fear. The history of the Revolution may be a history of *two* Revolutions; the one of the optimists who viewed it as progress towards Enlightenment and a triumph of the common people, and the Revolution of those who watched senseless bloodshed and piteous tales of an aristocracy persecuted with inhuman fanaticism. It is this darker Revolution, the one propounded by Burke, Carlyle and others, that formed the source material for later works of fiction. This is one of the primary themes of this thesis; that history's relationship to the Gothic is not merely a means of distancing a text from the present, or providing a romantic setting, but that the horrors of history directly inform the Gothic mode.

The language used by historians to describe the period is itself Gothic-inflected, and characterises the period with distinctly Gothic overtones. Not long before the Revolution, Louis XVI reasserted absolutism 'which revived the fear of an all-powerful despotism' (Popkin, 2010: 24). This fear, as well as suspicion, led to a radical decision by the third estate – the people; they convened without the nobles and the clergy, and renamed themselves the National Assembly. In July 1789, hostility towards aristocrats and suspicion of military intervention led crowds to attack Paris arsenals, leading to the most symbolic action of the Revolution: the fall of the Bastille. Carlyle here dispenses with ambivalence, describing the pre-Revolutionary Government as tyrannical and placing the future of France in the hands of its people: 'tyranny impends in red wrath: help for you is none, if not in your own right hands. This day ye must do or die' (Carlyle, 1920: 185). Importantly, and more so over time, the storming of the Bastille became an 'immediate symbol' of the Revolution and characteristic of its bloodshed, as it was 'accompanied by the killing of several officials of the Old Regime, showing how quickly popular action could turn to violence' (Popkin, 2010: 32). The Bastille was itself symbolic of tyranny: 'let the whole accursed Edifice sink thither, and Tyranny be

swallowed up forever!’ (Carlyle, 1920: 189). The use of ‘accursed’ here is typical of the language used to describe the Bastille; Carlyle also refers to its ‘eight grim Towers’ and calls it ‘a labyrinthic mass’, making it plain that the Bastille was a *Gothic* structure (Carlyle, 1920: 189); ‘an imposing medieval fortress that had become a symbol of despotic authority’ (Popkin, 2010: 32). The aftermath of the Bastille’s fall was great; according to Carlyle it ‘may be said to have shaken all France to the deepest foundations of its existence’ (Carlyle, 1920: 202). However, the more optimistic Revolutionaries thought a great victory had been won and that ‘with what rubs soever, shall the Bastille be abolished from our Earth; and with it, Feudalism, Despotism; and, one hopes, scoundrelism generally, and all hard usage of man by his brother man’ (Carlyle, 1920: 206, 207). This was not to be the case, as the Bastille’s fall was followed by the ‘Great Fear’ as rumours spread of brigands in aristocratic employ devastating crops, followed by a wave of peasant violence. Popkin argues ‘the violence that had resulted in the lynchings after the storming of the Bastille and the wave of peasant revolts in the countryside showed that the revolutionary process could easily get out of the Assembly’s control’ (Popkin, 2010: 36). There is a reason that the fiction of this period does not end with the fall of the Bastille: the spreading chaos was a sign of further violence to come.

The Revolutionaries themselves organised governments that have been recognised as equally tyrannical. In September 1792, the National Convention convened for the first time – the body that ruled for three of the most bloodthirsty years of the Revolution, and the period crucial to many historical novels.³ The Convention influenced later tyrannical governments and has been described by historians not only as ‘a violent and destructive regime comparable to the totalitarian dictatorships of the twentieth century’, but also as a model that was later imitated: ‘the revolutionary regime established a precedent that

³ Once Revolutionary France had been at war ‘opposition to any aspect of the Revolution now looked like treason and merited the harshest possible punishment’ (Popkin, 2010: 63).

would be copied extensively in the wars and revolutions of the twentieth century' (Popkin, 2010: 71, 79). In April 1793, a 'consolidation of revolutionary dictatorship' saw the Committee of Public Safety established, and replaced moderates with Montagnard leaders, including Robespierre (Popkin, 2010: 79). When, on 5th September 1793, an armed crowd demanded the Convention make 'terror the order of the day' the period called 'The Terror' began in earnest: 'for the next ten months, France lived under a full-fledged revolutionary dictatorship, in which almost all individual rights were suspended', a "law of suspects" enabled surveillance committees and censorship was imposed' (Popkin, 2010: 79, 80). The Revolution itself was turning full-circle. Like any tyrant, the Revolution continued to need victims so 'the Montagnard leaders engaged in a constantly intensifying hunt for hidden conspirators whose activities they blamed for the Revolution's continuing difficulties' (Popkin, 2010: 86). Robespierre himself admitted that the Revolution had become a dictatorship in his speech on 25th December 1793, arguing that 'a temporary dictatorship was the only way to achieve the constitutional freedoms that had been the original object of the Revolution' (Popkin, 2010: 81). When Robespierre was arrested in July 1794, followed by his beheading at the guillotine, the Revolution can be seen to have completed another rotation as the previous leaders became the victims of the next. These same cycles of violence are visible in *A Tale of Two Cities* and *The Dead Heart*.

The Dead Heart: An Introduction to Revolutionary Melodrama

The similarities between the Gothic melodramas of the French Revolution showcase the strength of the underlying themes as key subjects, motifs and even scenes are repeated in different works. Watts Phillips' *The Dead Heart* rose to the forefront of Victorian society on a wave of controversy. The play was first staged at the Adelphi in 1859, as *A Tale of Two Cities* was being serialised in *All The Year Round*. As both texts dealt with the

Revolution and contained some strikingly similar scenes, in particular a prisoner being released from the Bastille with overtones of resurrection and an act of sacrifice and substitution before the guillotine, comparison was inevitable. Contemporary comment went beyond comparison, however, and detractors were quick to point out perceived similarities to other works, and *A Tale of Two Cities* in particular. The debate raged and ‘in the newspaper this was freely commented on’, with Benjamin Webster’s own appeal to the press on the play’s originality not settling the issue (Watts Phillips, 1891: 48). Given Watts Phillips’ obscurity and Dickens’ popularity the reaction of the public is unsurprising; even understandable. As Watts Phillips’ sister points out, Dickens was ‘the most popular story teller of the day, who had his many thousands of readers’ (Watts Phillips, 1891: 48). Despite this controversy, or perhaps even because of it, the play did well: ‘the success was great, even exceeding the expectations of the manager. The play attracted large audiences’ (Watts Phillips, 1891: 42). With hindsight it seems unlikely that either writer was unduly influenced by the other; Watts Phillips’ play had been written some years before it was staged, and at the very least it must have been noted that ‘the number in which [Dickens’] *dénouement* was developed did not appear until after the play had been produced’ (Watts Phillips, 1891: 47). Despite suggestions that Dickens may have heard an early reading of the play by Webster amongst friends in Brighton, Emma Watts Phillips concludes the issue by remarking: ‘the more likely explanation is that there is a legitimate development of a dramatic subject which is almost certain to be worked out by capable writers in the same way’ (Watts Phillips, 1891: 49, 47). This is the interpretation that makes the most sense, endorsed by the fact that many of their comparable features are not unique to these two texts. One further point that may explain some of the similarities concerns their source material; both seem to have drawn upon Carlyle’s history. Dickens’ use of Carlyle is well-documented, whereas Watts Phillips is

quoted as acknowledging his influence in one specific scene: ‘my only borrowing was from an incident related in Carlyle’s history [...] in which an old man, the Marquis de Something, answers to the roll-call in place of his son’ (Watts Phillips, 1891: 44). The controversy surrounding the play not only brings the Revolution to the forefront of the popular imagination and discussion, but it also demonstrates the degree to which French Revolutionary Gothic texts hit upon the same devices and motifs. That both works were created in close proximity showcases the importance of not only melodrama as a means for articulating historical violence, but equally to the characterisation of the Revolution’s tyrannical figures across fiction and theatre.

Melodrama, as a theatrical form, places much importance on its villains. *The Dead Heart* was Watts Phillips’ first major success and the play is quite typical of the theatre commonplace when it was produced. The theatre at the time was ‘usually an exciting melodrama of a poignant, touching interest, and French pattern’ (Watts Phillips, 1891: 32). Watts Phillips’ sister, in her book about her brother and his works, observes that ‘an “Adelphi drama” became a special type’ noting exaggerated villainy and a strong comic element amongst its features (Watts Phillips, 1891: 32). This is typical of the melodrama, a popular theatrical form throughout the nineteenth century that ‘evolved with an uneducated audience in mind, thus offering an ideal aesthetic template through which to reach those often excluded from serious literature’ (John, 2009: 2). To give a definition, theatrical melodrama was ‘an intensely emotional genre, in which passion felt is passion expressed’ (John, 2009: 4). One of its most characteristic features ‘was a frank appeal for the emotional involvement of the audience by presenting the spectacle of Virtue threatened by Vice and then redeemed, triumphant’ and has been called ‘anything but subtle, dealing as it did in the grand gesture and the brilliant hue rather than in the almost

imperceptible motion and the finely shaded nuance' (Worth, 1978: 1). In short, melodrama was a genre perfectly suited for performative tyranny.

Melodrama is not a subtle medium; it is one through which audiences' emotions are directly appealed to. Melodrama can often be understood in terms of analogy, with a deeper meaning than is often recognised: 'to the melodramatic imagination, significant things and gestures are necessarily metaphoric in nature because they must refer to and speak of something else' (Brooks, 1976: 10). The connection between the French Revolution and melodrama can be traced to melodrama's origins. Brooks states that 'the origins of the melodrama can be accurately located within the context of the French Revolution and its aftermath' (Brooks, 1976: 14). This is true on several levels. The Revolution has a direct relationship with melodramatic theatre, as John points out: 'the first recorded use of 'le mélodrame' was in 1772' and amongst the earliest proponents was Guilbert de Pixérécourt who created 'melodramas about the French Revolution' (John, 2009: 2). Importantly, for Brooks, the Revolution 'marks the final liquidation of the traditional Sacred and its representative institutions (Church and Monarch)' (Brooks, 1976: 15). This in turn leads to the rise of melodrama as a means of replacing it: 'melodrama becomes the principal mode for uncovering, demonstrating, and making operative the essential moral universe in a post-sacred era' (Brooks, 1976: 15). It is this function of demonstrating a 'moral universe', a conflict between good and evil, which makes melodrama so useful to a study of literary tyranny:

The polarization of good and evil works toward revealing their presence and operation as real forces in the world. Their conflict suggests the need to recognize and confront evil, to combat and expel it, to purge the social order. (Brooks, 1976: 13)

The confrontation of evil in the vast majority of cases required the presence of a melodramatic villain. A villain is not necessarily a tyrant, but the two share many similar

qualities: ‘the villain of Gothic melodrama, for instance, is excessively passionate, and comparatively “honest” about his evil nature’ (John, 2001: 11). The genre of melodrama was often blended with the Gothic.⁴ One of their more significant areas of common ground is that the Gothic ‘shares the preoccupation with evil as a real, irreducible force in the world, constantly menacing outburst’ (Brooks, 1976: 20). The aristocratic villains of Revolutionary melodrama bear much similarity to the classic Gothic villains and are therefore easily recognisable to readers and viewers as tyrants. The villainous characters who are *not* aristocrats typically hold a rank in the Revolutionary government and wield that authority tyrannically. Unlike many other texts, the toppling of a tyrant does not end the destruction; Revolutionary tyrants soon take their place, and evil is more irreducible here than elsewhere.

The strength of *The Dead Heart* lies in its capacity to balance its melodramatic flair with nuanced readings of characters and situations, demonstrated by the play’s longevity. By the last decade of the nineteenth century Watts Phillips’ plays had ‘been for so long unacted in London’ (Watts Phillips, 1891: v), but the play was revived in 1889 with a new production at the Lyceum Theatre starring Henry Irving, the most eminent actor of his day, which commenced on 28th September. The staging of a melodrama thirty years out of fashion was not without its problems. Clement Scott’s review of the performance is favourable, noting that ‘the old play is there, but in a new dress’, but also recognises the difficulty of selecting *The Dead Heart* for production: ‘Mr. Walter H. Pollock has been called in to revise the text of Watts Phillips, exposed to thirty years torture of burlesqued melodrama’ (Scott, 1897: 308). Watts Phillips’ sister, Emma Watts Phillips, however, is less vague about the play’s ‘splendid revival’ which she claimed ‘proved that Watts

⁴ Juliet John lists the Gothic among subgenres of melodrama in her article ‘Melodrama and its Criticism: An Essay in Memory of Sally Ledger’ in *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, Vol 8, 2009.

Phillips's name was not lost in oblivion' (Watts Phillips, 1891: v).⁵ Part of the play's appeal for Irving seems to be the character of Robert Landry, 'unquestionably a character after his own heart' (Scott, 1897: 309). Eschewing the wider perspective of the times that Dickens aims to capture, the play individualises the revolution within a single character:

In Robert Landry is exhibited no less than four contrasted phases of the character: the gay, hopeful young artist; the terribly metamorphosed prisoner of nearly twenty years; the recently delivered man, newly restored to the enjoyment of life; and lastly, the composed revolutionary chief full of his stern purpose of vengeance. (Watts Phillips, 1891: 57)

The Dead Heart focuses on a much smaller cast of characters, and a far more restricted view of events. Even the differences in titles emphasise this; whilst Dickens aims to give us a picture of life in two cities, Watts Phillips depicts what lies in one man's breast. The title highlights the emotionality so central to compelling melodrama: it is, after all, Landry's *emotional* heart that is dead. Landry's shifting roles embody in one being what Dickens' does through a whole cast of characters. Landry serves to represent all of mankind. Not only is he a victim, but his pursuit of vengeance makes him a tyrant.

The Dead Heart demonstrates the simplicity of melodramatic villainy, its role, and how it fulfils it, but also serves as an example of how quickly this idea of a villain can become complicated. As with other texts, *The Dead Heart* provides examples of tyrants of the Ancien Régime; in this instance the villainous and scheming Abbé Latour. Latour is not an enemy of the people in the same way as the Marquis Evrémonde, however. His schemes are more reminiscent of the monks of classic Gothic works, such as *The Monk's* Ambrosio, because he pursues his own ends and ambitions. Melodramatic language is rife throughout *The Dead Heart*. Latour is identified quickly in the play as 'the most accomplished scoundrel in Paris' and is soon performing the role of the typical villain and tyrant by threatening female virtue (*Dead Heart*: 8) – as the heroine says: 'you propose to

⁵ As Watts Phillips' sister, Emma Watts Phillips was perhaps biased in her brother's favour, and her opinion needs to be treated accordingly.

buy my love by threatening the ruin of my son' (*Dead Heart*: 29). Latour dies before the end of the play, losing a sword fight to Landry, arranged by the latter so he can taste revenge. Landry is himself a tyrant in the text, as well as a victim of tyranny, like Madame Defarge, though unlike her he is eventually able to relinquish his quest for revenge. The doubling made explicit in other texts is here interiorised. When discussing the Dickensian melodramatic villain, John notes how the discipline of psychoanalysis 'shifted the emphasis away from action to motivation, and, in doing so, muddied the moral absolutes' affirming that 'the figure of the villain met its nemesis with the advent of realism' (John, 2001: 10). Landry, and the Revolutionary tyrant figures like him, challenges this notion: a lack of psychology does not require villains to be one-dimensional. Landry's release from the Bastille sees him as a very different character from the young man of the play's prologue: 'they plucked me from the tomb, a living man, but -with a dead heart!' (*Dead Heart*: 35). Again, the language and tone here are distinctly melodramatic. Landry's heart is figuratively dead – it makes him merciless, with only revenge left to him: 'revenge! my prison flower; I nourished it, watered it, loved it!' (*Dead Heart*: 36). We are reminded of Landry's transformation several times, told that 'he's as cold as marble and as true as steel', and at one point he even touches his own chest and finds 'not a throb, still, calm, inflexible as death' (*Dead Heart*: 42, 46).

Again, as in the previous chapter, it is a lack of feeling that is propounded as the primary cause of tyrannical behaviour and the willingness to participate in historical violence. In this instance it is explicitly shown that Landry's own exposure to tyrannical cruelty, wanton imprisonment at the hands of the Ancien Régime, is what leads him down a path of vengeance. It is at the very end of the play, at the point of executing his former lover's son out of this vengeance, that he learns the man whom he had hated was in fact blameless. On the point of committing the tyrannous act of murder, he instead offers

himself up as sacrifice. The scene is enhanced by a 'ticking clock'; we know the victim is to be executed as number thirty and in the background we hear the numbers leading up to it called in swift succession. Landry, and many of the tyrannical revolutionaries that will be discussed, manage to be melodramatic without conforming to the stereotype that 'evil is villainy; it is a swarthy, cape-enveloped man with a deep voice' (Brooks, 1976: 17). Brooks states that melodramatists 'seemed to place their characters at the point of intersection of primal ethical forces' (Brooks, 1976: ix). The French Revolution, in the melodramatic imagination, is one such intersection. It is the nature of the Revolutionary setting that allows for these complexities of tyranny to exist.

A Tale of Two Cities: Recasting Tyranny

A Tale of Two Cities addresses Revolutionary tyranny quickly and thoroughly through its opening, as Dickens presents us with contrasting images of London and France that show the Gothic appetites of both cities. London seems overcome with crime and murder and has its own craving for capital punishment as 'the hangman, ever busy and worse than useless, was in constant requisition' (*Tale*: 7). Not only is the hangman busy, but his constant business and the amount of crime shows that he is 'worse than useless' (*Tale*: 7). Even so, compared to its French counterpart, this seems relatively tame: '[France] entertained herself, besides, with such humane achievements as sentencing a youth to have his hands cut off, his tongue torn out with pincers, and his body burned alive, because he had not kneeled down in the rain to do honour to a dirty procession of monks which passed within his view' (*Tale*: 6). Everything about that sentence frames France as Gothic: the violence is a spectacle; horrific, cruel and merciless. Such violence is nevertheless recognised as being an entertainment for France; its laws seem backward and foolish. Even the figure of the monk helps give the impression this is like a medieval scene from a Gothic novel. The description ends with the knowing suggestion that 'that

things in general were settled for ever’, hinting at the disturbance of this Gothic status quo (*Tale*: 5). Only after this description does the narrative shift to the characters and events that comprise the plot of the novel. *A Tale of Two Cities* is one of only two historical novels by Dickens – the other being *Barnaby Rudge* (1841) – and it is far from typical historical fiction:

It includes no well-known historical figures amongst its characters, and, as its title suggests, it considers phenomena which are common to both London and Paris, even though it shows that the Parisian inheritance of hatred and disorder is the more disastrous. (Sanders, 1978: 18)

It is *how* the text shows the disastrous consequences of hatred and disorder that is important: through some distinctly Gothic rhetoric. Remarking on the novel’s Gothic character is by no means original. From the memorable opening lines to the close, the novel depicts an abusive cycle of murder by those in control. Mighall considers that like ‘the first Gothic novels, [*A Tale of Two Cities*] is set in the past, in an epoch that is associated with political abuses, and, in part, a country still labouring under a moribund “feudal” order’ (Mighall, 1999: 110). Dickens’ historical fiction is atypical, then, because of its reliance on the Gothicism of the period and a specific portrayal of inherent medievalism. This stark Gothic depiction is reflected in both the novel’s aristocratic and Revolutionary tyrants.

The plot of the novel highlights one of Dickens’ other key influences: melodrama. Kurt Tetzeli von Rosador identifies three common themes of metaphor used to describe the French Revolution: classic literature and art of antiquity, catastrophic natural images, and most significantly metaphors of stage and theatre. The theme is a persistent one, equally important to works such as Sabatini’s *Scaramouche* (1921) and Orczy’s *The Scarlet Pimpernel* (1905), which both use a character playing a part as its central device.⁶

⁶ Even Russell Thorndike’s ‘Dr Syn’ series combined the disguise motif with the French Revolution, setting *The Shadow of Doctor Syn* (1944) alongside it.

While *The Dead Heart* is immediately recognisable as a piece of melodramatic theatre, *A Tale of Two Cities* instead utilises a range of theatrical and melodramatic elements within the novel format. For Kucich, ‘the serious uses of melodrama in the novel must be stressed if we are to understand its aesthetic wholeness’ (Kucich, 1987: 57). Though most recognisable in their theatrical form, it is these features that are also noticeable in melodramatic prose: ‘prose fiction can, and in the case of Dickens often does, do much to incorporate the *language* peculiar to stage melodrama’ (Worth, 1978: 7). In many ways, as with the Gothic, it seems melodrama can be defined by its excesses; excesses of emotion, language, and plot.

Dickens is recognised as a melodramatic writer, with George Worth’s *Dickensian Melodrama* (1978) giving examples from across Dickens’ oeuvre. With *A Tale of Two Cities*, however, Worth has relatively little to say, citing the text as an example of a late work by Dickens that makes only ‘sparing use of melodramatic devices’ (Worth, 1978: 129). Discussing Carton’s final guillotine scene, for example, Worth states that Dickens was unable to make it ‘conventionally melodramatic but nevertheless endow[es] it with stunning force’ (Worth, 1978: 26). Worth, though, does argue that there are some melodramatic elements to *A Tale of Two Cities* and other later works: ‘Dickens has not abandoned melodrama in his late work [...] he has kept it under careful control, tailoring it at virtually all times to serve, in conjunction with other devices, the artistic ends he is trying to achieve’ (Worth, 1978: 146). In recognising that Carton’s demise is not ‘conventionally’ melodramatic, there is an implication that it is melodramatic in an unconventional sense. As John’s essay ‘Melodrama and its Criticism: An Essay in Memory in Sally Ledger’ makes clear, the critical assessment of melodrama has only recently improved and continues to do so. In this context, *A Tale of Two Cities*’ melodramatic potential could be reconsidered in the light of changing conventions. Whilst

it generally applies to a great many works of fiction, Worth's definition of a melodramatic situation seems perfectly suited to *A Tale of Two Cities*: 'A melodramatic situation arises when virtuous and vicious characters are locked in a vicious struggle against each other, with the latter acting as aggressors against the former' (Worth, 1978: 16). *A Tale of Two Cities* complicates this by having many of the initially virtuous characters struggling under the vicious aristocracy becoming the representatives of the equally vicious Revolutionary machinery threatening the virtuous Darnay family. Such a situation can only be more melodramatic. Worth similarly seems to recognise the importance of excessive emotions to the progression of *A Tale of Two Cities*' plot: 'passion runs amuck and finds powerful expression as various articulate individuals are swept up in the circumstances leading to the French Revolution and in the Terror' (Worth, 1978: 136). *A Tale of Two Cities*, then, is melodramatic in a different way compared to many of Dickens' other novels, with melodrama serving to enhance the characterisation of the Revolution as senseless violence.

The two most recognisably melodramatic characters are the two tyrants of the Ancien Régime. Darnay's father, the Marquis Evrémonde, and Darnay's uncle, who becomes the Marquis after his father's death, are the only two aristocratic villains in the novel: neither of whom dies on the guillotine. Unlike the Revolutionary villains, they lack motivation and sympathy. They are examples of tyranny, nothing more, or as their victims describe them, they are 'the worst of a bad race' (*Tale*: 336). The younger Marquis Evrémonde's callousness is made explicit in the chapter 'Monsieur the Marquis in Town'; not only does he look upon the townspeople 'as if they had been mere rats come out of their holes' (*Tale*: 115), but we learn that it is 'rather agreeable to him to see the common people dispersed before his horses, and often barely escaping being run down' (*Tale*: 113). As with classic Gothic tyrants, architecture acts as both a symbol of

power and a means of bestowing it: the Marquis can ride through the streets unconcerned with who he might injure as he returns to the safety of a secure chateau. Melodrama ‘depends on an externalised aesthetics which simplifies and externalises that which is normally invisible or hidden’ (John, 2009: 3), which explains the unlikely way in which compressions at the top of each nostril on the younger Marquis give ‘a look of treachery, and cruelty, to the whole countenance’ (*Tale*: 113): he looks like a villain. We learn of the elder Marquis’ crimes from Doctor Manette’s recovered papers. Darnay’s father seems to share his brother’s lack of feeling as he is ‘quite incapable of any compassionate feeling about the boy’ he has mortally wounded (*Tale*: 336). Enacting the tyranny of their class, the two aristocrats force their rights over the peasants, from ‘quieting the frogs, in order that their noble sleep may not be disturbed’ to ‘their shameful rights’ over ‘the modesty and virtue’ of the local girls (*Tale*: 337, 336). Not only are these two figures Gothic tyrants in the classic mould, ruling over the peasants with disdain, but their lack of depth makes them melodramatic: they are there to play the role of stage villain. What makes them interesting is that they are not presented as isolated or exceptional figures, but as representative of their class: examples to demonstrate the justness of the Revolution against them.

Depictions of the storming of the Bastille, when the Revolutionaries seized power, are among the most dramatic, but in *A Tale of Two Cities* this scene too is used to emphasise the cyclical nature of cruelty. As the Bastille is besieged the people are compared to ‘a whirlpool of boiling waters [...] sucked towards the vortex’ that is Defarge’s command, before ‘the living sea rose, wave on wave, depth on depth, and overflowed the city to that point’ (*Tale*: 223). There is something terrible and sublime about these metaphors of natural catastrophe that are not uncommon in *A Tale of Two Cities*. Such use of language emphasises the Revolution’s terrible qualities but

simultaneously elicits awe, rendering it sublime in character and further aligning it with the Gothic. For Tetzeli von Rosador:

What governs a revolution metamorphosed into a catastrophist natural history and carried out by bestialized man is the law that governs all natural history, the law of cyclical inevitability and eternal recurrence. (Tetzeli von Rosador, 1988: 18)

These metaphors heighten the emotional response to events, and consequently its melodramatic status. This brutal inevitability of nature can be seen in other metaphors, such as ‘the blood-smearred grindstone on which the revolutionaries whet their murderous arms that serves as emblem of the essence of a revolutionary natural history, its brutalizing inevitability, in all its horror’ (Tetzeli von Rosador, 1988: 18). The cyclical nature of violence displayed in the text is emphasised clearly in the novel’s concluding paragraph, as Carton gazes into the future seeing ‘long ranks of the new oppressors who have risen on the destruction of the old, perishing by this retributive instrument’ (*Tale*: 389). This reference to the guillotine as *retributive* is intriguing, demonstrating how quickly revenge can become a chain of violence.⁷ Whilst for Burke the Revolution was avoidable, a sense of inevitability is unavoidable when dealing with an historical novel.⁸ With something akin to dramatic irony, the reader knows the results of the Marquis’ cruelty and how the Revolution will unfold, and knowing how great the peril is only heightens the tension. The first chapter of the novel sets out the predetermined nature of the novel’s events as it describes them setting off on particular paths: ‘Thus did the year one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five conduct their Greatnesses, and myriads of smaller creatures – the creatures of this chronicle among the rest – along the roads that lay before them’ (*Tale*: 7). History labours on the characters, fated to arrive at the novel’s end

⁷ Retribution is an aspect of justice that is perhaps itself Gothic – taking revenge is seen as a just act in Gothic fiction, despite the violence involved. In this instance, though, the violence is depicted as going beyond revenge, starting a new cycle of slaughter.

⁸ Burke used *Reflections on the Revolution in France* to criticise the errors the revolutionaries were still making: ‘you chose to act as if you had never been molded into a civil society and had everything to begin anew’ (Burke, 1955: 40).

point: Carton on the guillotine. For Rignall, this traumatic ending can be felt throughout the entire novel: 'it is not surprising that the most remembered scene in *A Tale of Two Cities* is the last, for the novel is dominated, even haunted, by its ending' (Rignall, 1987: 121). The characterisation of the aristocracy plays a vital role in this conceptualisation of history as a cycle of violence in *A Tale of Two Cities*; not only does the inhumanity of the aristocratic tyrants justify the revolt against them, but makes it seem inevitable.

Nowhere is the characterisation of either the aristocrats or the revolutionaries as tyrannical more apparent than when they are directly compared to Satan. A theme of metaphor not examined by Tetzeli von Rosador is one that is used to indicate the sinister, even diabolical, nature of characters: infernal imagery. This line of metaphor is used throughout *A Tale of Two Cities*, from the early recognition that 'we were all going direct the other way', a clause that stands out as it effectively ends the pattern of contradicting clauses within the first sentence, to Lorry referring to the bloodthirsty revolutionaries as 'devils' and a description of the guillotine as 'like a toy-puzzle for a young Devil' (*Tale*: 5, 273, 284). The satanic theme can also be noticed elsewhere. In Carlyle's history of the Revolution the theme is clearer: France is described as 'a dark contentious Hell-on-Earth!' and 'a whole Satan's invisible world displayed [...] the smoke of its torment going up for ever!' (Carlyle, 1920: 57). Even for Burke, this demonic imagery seems to be relevant: 'amidst the horrid yells, and shrilling screams, and frantic dances, and infamous contumelies, and all the unutterable abominations of the fumes of hell in the abused shape of the vilest women' (Burke, 1955: 82). Carlyle's use of demonic imagery echoes Dickens' use of natural catastrophe metaphors and the bloodied grindstone as he notes that as 'Innovation and Conservation wage their perpetual conflict' there is a chance that man's "'daemonic element" [...] get vent!' (Carlyle, 1920: 40). Carlyle makes a similar declaration earlier in his history, noting how 'the whole *daemonic* nature of man

will remain, hurled forth to rage blindly without rule or rein; savage itself, yet with all the tools and weapons of civilisation: a spectacle new in History' (Carlyle, 1920: 16).

Carlyle's citing of man's savage nature *despite* its civilised status denotes indications of the Gothic, just as how 'Innovation and Conservation' identifies the Revolution as a conflict between the future and the past. The recognition that it causes a 'spectacle', something to be viewed, in his case from across the channel, is also crucial in exploring how his emotive history is but a narrow margin away from being a Dickensian melodrama, and contributed to it to being framed as one. The Revolution then was a stage as well as a spectacle, and what the 'demonic' examples quoted above make clear is that by identifying groups and individuals as devils they were also being cast in the melodramatic role as the villains of the piece. The conventions of melodrama are used to bring out the sinister aspect of the Revolutionaries as they were to heighten the villainy of the aristocracy. Not only that, but it characterises the Revolution as a struggle between good and evil characters, and more generally between order and chaos. The conflation between the realities of an historical period and the dramatic, excessive evil of Hell gives the clearest example of the way in which the French Revolution has become characterised as Gothic across many types of text.

Masquerade and the Gothic Double

Doubling is a common theme within Gothic literature, being an effective way to juxtapose two contrasting elements of a single person. The most recognisable example of this is the eponymous pairing of Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886). The respectable Dr Jekyll is doubled by his own monstrous side, the violent and savage Mr Hyde.⁹ The idea that a respectable doctor by day could by night be a vicious and deranged killer was to find itself at the forefront of popular fears when just a few

⁹ Gothic literature is steeped in these 'dark sides' from figures such as werewolves, to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), whose portrait serves as his double.

years after Stevenson's novella was published 'Jack the Ripper' claimed his first victim. In *Modern Gothic and Literary Doubles: Stevenson, Wilde and Wells* (2003), Linda Dryden explains the theme of the double in these late Victorian texts, using the examples mentioned above among others. For Dryden, the double is reflective of the duality of the period. What makes this conception of the Gothic double relevant to *A Tale of Two Cities* can be seen in the following quotation:

Many of the fictions under discussion present conflicting images of the metropolis as a place of pleasure and entertainment, and a place of dark terrors and horrible human transformations. Oppositions like day and night, light and dark, upper worlds and lower worlds, wealth and poverty, beauty and ugliness mark these narratives as tales of Gothic duality. (Dryden, 2003: 17)

The same binary pairings offered up by Dickens as symbolic of the duality of the period he describes, then, is recognisable a century later. Even before the *fin de siècle* gave vent to these anxieties they can be recognised in *A Tale of Two Cities*. Through the opening passages 'Dickens establishes the "twoness" of everything to follow: characters are twinned and doubled and paired; the setting is doubled [...] the historical perspective is divided between an eighteenth-century event and its nineteenth century apprehensions' (Hutter, 1987: 50). It is this 'twoness' that Victorian Gothic Revolutionary fiction continually returns to. Dickens is not the only writer who used duality, doubles, or concealed identities to examine the French Revolution, however; Baroness Orczy's *The Scarlet Pimpernel* uses the masquerade of its central character, Sir Percy Blakeney, for a far more theatrical example of a double life. What marks this example of the double as different is that neither party is evil, which suggests other anxieties are being played out through the same trope.

The opening chapter of *A Tale of Two Cities* draws attention to the potential of a double life by specifically noting the fear that 'the highwayman in the dark was a City tradesman in the light' (*Tale*: 6). The second chapter, 'The Mail', uses this fear to create

tension as a horse draws near to the coach Mr Lorry is travelling in; even after Mr Lorry asserts recognition of Jerry the coachman, he has his doubts: (“I don’t like Jerry’s voice, if it is Jerry,” growled the guard to himself. “He’s hoarser than suits me, is Jerry”’) (*Tale*: 11). The same theme is revisited later on in the chapter ‘The Honest Tradesman’, calling back to the phrase from the opening, in which Jerry spends his evenings as a ‘Resurrection Man’, grave robbing. Whilst his double life later turns out to be of use to the main characters, as he provides the vital knowledge that the spy Roger Cly was still alive, there remains a sense that at least some of the novel’s main characters are entirely unsuspecting of his nocturnal habits. The opening, then, once we learn of Jerry’s darker side, becomes an example of dramatic irony, particularly in the scene where Mr Lorry selects Jerry as his bodyguard, asserting that ‘nobody will suspect Jerry of being anything but an English bulldog’ (*Tale*: 246). Observation and panoptic principles resurface as a theme here as the inability to know what individuals are doing all the time becomes a major source of anxiety, with the motif of the double serving to emphasise the fear and suspicion embedded in these texts. If the manner in which both aristocrat and revolutionary are shown to be tyrannical prevents the creation of a comforting ‘Other’ to displace blame on to, then the recurring use of double lives suggests paranoia. People are suspected of being an enemy because there is no unified group to denounce. There is not only the suspicion of the Terror, but also the suspicion that those we perceive to be honest could become another Revolutionary mob.

The major example of doubling in *A Tale of Two Cities* is that of Carton and Darnay’s uncanny resemblance, an occurrence that is drawing on an older melodramatic idea of a villainous double, or as it is most often discussed, an evil twin. Dickens is known for creating pairs of characters and doubles within his fiction, where ‘villains and deviants are often twinned with doubles or alter egos at the opposite end of the emotional

scale to themselves' (John, 2001: 9). Direct physical doubling, particularly when it is unaccounted for, is altogether different – though this surfaces in other melodramatic works of the period. Charles Reade's 1854 play *The Courier of Lyon*, revised for Irving in 1877 as *The Lyons Mail* is one example that is set during the Revolutionary period. In this play, 'in many respects a very typical Victorian melodrama', the virtuous and prosperous Lesurques returns to his father's inn on the same night the villain Dubosc robs the Lyons mail (Rowell, 1969: v). The two men look so similar that Lesurques' own father mistakes the criminal for his son and denounces him. Lesurques' friends and fiancée manage to capture Dubosc, narrowly saving Lesurques from the guillotine. As with the 'doubling' of Darnay and Carton the similarity is unexplained; coincidental. A key difference in *A Tale of Two Cities* is that the resemblance is actually of *benefit* to Darnay, not harm. The likeness between the two is of vital importance to the plot: 'Carton's role, both as a "double" to the hero and as a melodramatic scapegoat at the close, develops the dual conflicts of the novel' (Hutter, 1987: 52). Dryden states that 'the double is a threat to the integrity of the self, and frequently evidence of a Gothic, supernatural force at large that brings with it death and destruction' (Dryden, 2003: 38). Darnay indirectly becomes a threat to Carton: 'the doppelgänger of Gothic fiction reflects this inescapable anxiety through a malevolent "other" who destabilizes the cohesion of the self' (Dryden, 2003: 39). Whilst he sacrifices himself of his own free will, it is the existence of his double that ensures he must do it: 'as with other tales of duality, the only release is death' (Dryden, 2003: 39).¹⁰ Darnay is the one whose family is cursed, yet he seems to delegate this task to his double: 'Charles Darnay, descendant of the Evrémondes, must die in the place of the Revolution, if only vicariously, through his double. Nobody gets off scot-free from the encounter with history' (Alter, 1987: 21). The double here, then, is used to thwart

¹⁰ Poe's short story 'William Wilson' (1839) is an example of this fatality, producing a much more recognisably Gothic impact. Unlike *A Tale of Two Cities* the revelation at the end of the story, with a mirror, explains the resemblance of the characters.

tyranny: Carton denies the Revolutionary machine the sacrifice it demands. For Carton, who is forced through his love of Lucie to compare himself to Darnay, Darnay represents the person he might have been, and the person he becomes through his final act of sacrifice and redemption: ‘this sequence suggests that, as the hero’s double internalizes paternal authority and willingly sacrifices himself to it, the innocent hero may be reborn’ (Hutter, 1987: 44). Carton and Darnay are not tyrannous doubles, but they seem to be the result of it. As Darnay languishes in jail anticipating his execution he becomes feminised; literally sleeping like a baby as Carton assumes his place. Carton, conversely, seems to have awoken from his sleepiness after Darnay’s incarceration.

The Scarlet Pimpernel embodies the same duality as Darnay and Carton: while the Pimpernel is energetic and active, his secret identity, Sir Percy Blakeney, appears to be the opposite. Few would suspect the lazy, silly, English aristocrat of possessing the cunning, strength and bravery to achieve the feats that the Pimpernel is famous for: ‘he would have been called unusually good-looking, but for a certain lazy expression in his deep-set blue eyes, and that perpetual inane laugh which seemed to disfigure his strong, clearly-cut mouth’ (*Scarlet Pimpernel*: 44). The passage quoted also does a remarkable job of making it clear just how handsome Blakeney is, even whilst denying it. What makes this duality particularly interesting is that it is the persona of Blakeney that is the ruse; he hides his intelligence and courage, making the Scarlet Pimpernel more real: ‘in Sir Percy Blakeney, Orczy created a double-faceted aristocratic hero, whose almost feminine pose of foppish indolence and dandified love of fine clothes masks a “masculine” brain and limitless physical courage’ (Wallace, 2005: 22). As sure signs of his feminised status we are told that ‘his hand looked almost femininely white’ and that he possesses ‘foppish ways’ (*Scarlet Pimpernel*: 48). The Pimpernel, in contrast, performs feats attributable to ‘sheer supernatural agency’ (*Scarlet Pimpernel*: 6) and on

several occasions Revolutionary France wonders whether it is confronting ‘the devil himself’ (*Scarlet Pimpernel*: 7).¹¹ This presents a crisis of identity on several levels, which creates much of the tension in the novel – both for the Pimpernel’s heroics and for Blakeney’s personal life. This is typical of the Gothic double: ‘the literature of duality is, at its most obvious level, a literature about identity, or even lack of identity’ (Dryden, 2003: 39). As with Darnay and Carton, this fractured identity is here a result of Revolutionary tyranny, albeit far more theatrical. Like countless others, both as the Pimpernel and as himself, Sir Percy is an actor upon the Revolutionary stage.

The sustained use of the trope of the Gothic double throughout French Revolution fiction makes the ambivalence of later periods towards the violent period, and tyrannical rulers, into a physical phenomenon. The divisions are especially pronounced across the English Channel. *A Tale of Two Cities* gives the divisions between London and Paris the superlative position through its title, but Anglo-French tension is much more pronounced in *The Scarlet Pimpernel* than other texts. The narrator informs us early on, as the Pimpernel effects another impossible escape, that ‘truly that Englishman must be the devil himself’ (*Scarlet Pimpernel*: 8). It is not enough, then, that the Revolutionaries fear demonic or supernatural agency, they also seem to be assured that the enemy is *English*, even conflating the two. In Dover the English are no kinder, taking a harsh view of the revolutionaries, calling them ‘murderin’ devils’, and more significantly, ‘Frenchy devils’ (*Scarlet Pimpernel*: 17, 18). A particular anxiety seems to be akin to corruption, with the landlord Mr Jellyband being worried that Frenchmen ‘have come over here o’ purpose to make us Englishmen agree with their murderin’ ways’ (*Scarlet Pimpernel*: 19). The

¹¹ Blakeney contrasts with his enemy Chauvelin who we instantly recognise as ‘a clever, shrewd-looking personality, with a curious fox-like expression in the deep, sunken eyes’ (*Scarlet Pimpernel*: 65). Chauvelin, too, has formed a disguise, though one not nearly as well developed: ‘he found the taking of snuff a convenient veil for disguising the quick, shrewd glances with which he strove to read the very souls of those with whom he came in contact’ (*Scarlet Pimpernel*: 67).

characters in the novel best embody this Anglo-French mutual suspicion – particularly the aristocracy. Blakeney is in sharp contrast to French aristocrats in novels of this type,¹² partly due to his British identity: ‘this English gentleman is the product of a history which is represented as having evolved gradually, rather than having been shaped by bloody class revolutions’ (Wallace, 2005: 29). Whilst Blakeney and the other British nobles who help are held up as examples, they are not without criticism; Blakeney’s description as ‘the sleepest, dullest, most British Britisher’ implies a negative connotation to the term (*Scarlet Pimpernel*: 44). A statement made elsewhere in the novel provides a much more instructive example of English characteristics: ‘an Englishman has always felt somewhat ashamed of his own emotion and his own sympathy’ (*Scarlet Pimpernel*: 32). The statement not only explains Blakeney’s feigned indifference to his wife, but offers an explanation as to why he disguises himself to rescue the French: he is ashamed of his sympathy. The characterisation of English male reserve of emotion and sympathy could also be recognised in the division between Darnay and Carton. The systemic comparisons between English and British with French in these texts reinforce an important national pairing, finding comfort in the ‘othering’ of France, but equally viewing events there with suspicion and fear. The tyrannical ruthlessness of the French Revolution can be seen as supporting the essential functions of the Gothic mode – the use of the double shows conflicted feelings, uncertain of any movement that led to such violence.

La Guillotine: Scaffold Drama

One of the most symbolic acts of the Revolution was the King’s execution – an act of violence that offended British sensibilities and caused the Revolutionaries to be viewed as tyrants more than any other. For Carlyle and Burke this execution was a marked injustice. Whilst Carlyle wryly points out that ‘Sansculottism made prisoner its King’ (Carlyle,

¹² Alexander Dumas’ *The Knight of Maison Rouge* (1845) and Rafael Sabatini’s *Scaramouche* (1921), for example, both use the motif of the secret identity, and both feature French aristocrats as antagonists.

1920: 280), Burke comments with outrage and disbelief: ‘they have seen the French rebel against a mild and lawful monarch with more fury, outrage, and insult than ever any people has been known to rise against the most illegal usurper or the most sanguinary tyrant’ (Burke, 1955: 44). For the King, ‘the Montagnards and the sans-culotte leaders contended that no trial was necessary: the King’s guilt was obvious, and he should be executed forthwith’ (Popkin, 2010: 72). A trial took place, and a narrow majority favoured execution. Execution has an inherent drama that incarceration lacks, so when the Queen and symbols of the 1789 liberal revolution were executed, it was not merely punitive: it ‘dramatized the revolutionary government’s determination to eliminate all potential opposition’ (Popkin, 2010: 80). These executions provided a drama drawn upon by writers for years to come. A spectacle was made of the Royals’ deaths, as Burke complains: ‘they had been made to taste, drop by drop, more than the bitterness of death in the slow torture of a journey of twelve miles, protracted to six hours’ (Burke, 1955: 82). Carlyle comments that Louis’ last march through Paris was ‘not ludicrous nor ignominious, but serious, nay sublime’ (Carlyle, 1920: 285). Carlyle’s use of ‘sublime’ is informative, depicting the Gothic inflection of even this solemn occasion, but is further echoed by another remark by Burke that the reason for this harsh treatment was that ‘the sufferings of monarchs make a delicious repast to some sort of palates’ (Burke, 1955: 83). The King’s end was for an audience, the pinnacle of scaffold drama, and unlike in the past, the King’s beheading was not facilitated by an executioner with sword or axe, but a machine that could extend the courtesy of beheading to all: the guillotine.

The guillotine, despite how it came to be characterised, was egalitarian in aim – it was a solution to a problem of providing an equal standard of death for all. Previously, beheadings had been associated with, if not reserved for, the aristocracy, especially sovereigns. During the Revolution this changed as the new criminal code of 1791

‘decreed that decollation would henceforward be the punishment in all capital crimes’ (Janes, 2005: 75). It may sound a strange interpretation of equal and fair treatment, but it was seen as progressive that ‘now all citizens would be treated to an equal and honorable [sic] death’ (Janes, 2005: 75). Like so much during the Revolution, the role of the Guillotine changed, and what began as an anti-tyrannical device became, by the nineteenth century, a monster in its own right. This is not the only way in which the guillotine was a paradox. The guillotine embodied the same tension between enlightenment progressiveness, and Gothic barbarity as the Revolution itself:

Through the little national window of the guillotine, one kind looked toward our own time and the technological perfection of impersonal violence. Aloft on pikes, the other looked back a much longer way. (Janes, 2005: 67)

This is what makes the guillotine both frightening and fascinating.¹³ What makes it of importance to both the tyrant and Gothic literature is the spectacle it provides. During the historical Revolution, the spectacle was part of a bloody obsession. In fiction, however, it has become invested with other qualities.

The guillotine is a vital feature to the endings of both *A Tale of Two Cities* and *The Dead Heart* as it provided a strong effect at the climax – particularly important for the staging of *The Dead Heart*. Some reviews of the guillotine scene at the 1859 staging were unfavourable, with criticisms including *The Literary Gazette* considering its inclusion ‘a grave fault’ as it ‘destroys the natural effect of the acting’, making the play ‘terminate unnaturally, and even absurdly’ (Watts Phillips, 1891: 42, 43). The use of the guillotine was more shocking than the critics would have liked. The spectacle of Landry mounting the scaffold is sensation enough, but the play was criticised for going further, with critics

¹³ A key theme in the attitudes towards ‘frightening’ technology is its utilitarian approach, characterising efficiency as cold and inhumane. The epigraph from Burke that opened this chapter echoes these concerns by criticising the loss of ‘all the pleasing illusions’ (Burke, 1955: 87). This theme is particularly pronounced in the post-apocalyptic fiction of chapter five, where survival seemingly endorses ruthlessness.

complaining that ‘this does not satisfy Mr. Watts Phillips’ (quoted in Watts Phillips, 1891: 42). Irving’s 1889 production went to even greater lengths, and even greater realism, sparing no expense: ‘to make the play’s final scene as realistic as possible, a copy was made of the guillotine in Madame Tussaud’s collection’ (Tetens, 2005: 44). The spectacle here was even more pronounced, with the guillotine conclusion providing an occasion for special effects:

A misty vision if seen behind, of the tumbrel moving on the guillotine, and the admirably-posed figure of Landry standing erect [...] But what followed was a true surprise [...] the background seemed to dissolve [...] figures began to grow and multiply, a sort of lurid tone came over all, and there was revealed the whole scene of the scaffold, with – most effective of all – the long row of revolutionary soldiers ranged, their backs to the audience. (Watts Phillips, 1891: 60)

The ending of *A Tale of Two Cities* centres on the same spectacle of execution, but for a discernibly different effect. The very same piece of courtroom theatrics that spared Darnay’s life is again invoked. Instead of a courtroom, however, this time Carton’s stage is that of the scaffold drama, as he takes Darnay’s place before the guillotine. By the novel’s conclusion, Madame Defarge is dead and Carton’s final confrontation is with only the guillotine. *A Tale of Two Cities* makes superb use of the scaffold drama for its memorable finale, not a spectacle of horror, but a sublime, theatrical soliloquy, left unspoken, as Carton sacrifices his life: ‘what makes this ending melodramatic is not simply Carton’s death, but his undisguised *desire* for death’ (Kucich, 1987: 72). Even to the audience watching him, Carton ‘looked sublime and prophetic’ (*Tale*: 389). The two pieces of capital theatrics are reconciled: ‘Carton helps to elevate our own fascination with violent extremity: rather than watching his death pruriently as the vulgar mob had watched Darnay’s trial, we share in the condemned woman’s religious awe’ (Kucich, 1987: 71). As a reader, then, we are able to witness Carton’s death as culmination of violence that the novel has been building towards.

Whilst the guillotine may provide a melodramatic spectacle for fiction, its chief function is as a provider of death and an altar of horror. The guillotine as a spectacle of horror is notable in *A Tale of Two Cities* and *The Dead Heart*. Even as a devoted republican, Landry notes the irony of using such a terrible device as a symbol: ‘and with this grim scaffold they would regenerate mankind! With this ghastly emblem of the madness of the time!’ (*Dead Heart*: 51). It is this type of ‘progress’ that so horrified Burke’s conservatism. In *The Dead Heart* the guillotine is referred to as ‘Mother Guillotine’, with a later line offering an explanation: ‘Mother Guillotine cannot provide for you all at once – you’ll each have your turn in time’ (*Dead Heart*: 40). The nickname is one of many that feminised the guillotine. The guillotine is equally part of the retributive circle. The aristocrats’

ancestors had oppressed the people, had crushed them under the scarlet heels of their dainty buckled shoes, and now the people had become the rulers of France and crushed their former masters – not beneath their heel, for they went shoeless mostly in these days –but beneath a more effective weight, the knife of the guillotine. (*Scarlet Pimpernel*: 4)

This specific reference to the guillotine not only as a means of revenge, but a revenge more excessive, ‘more effective’ than the tyranny they have suffered can be seen in *A Tale of Two Cities*. Madame Defarge has frequently been associated with the guillotine. Like Madame Defarge, La Guillotine is a ‘sharp female’ (*Tale*: 262). The lack of sympathy afforded to La Guillotine’s victims is another weapon of Madame Defarge’s arsenal. Carton tells Lorry that he must take the others from Paris after Darnay’s scheduled execution because: ‘it is a capital crime, to mourn for, or sympathise with, a victim of the Guillotine’, and as Carton correctly assumes Madame Defarge plots to use this to continue her revenge against Darnay’s family (*Tale*: 358). It is worth noting that the two are conflated further as in this case the victims of Madame Defarge and La Guillotine are one and the same. When Madame Defarge announces her intention to

totally destroy Darnay's family, the announcement is so without mercy that it could easily be coming from the Guillotine itself: 'for other crimes as tyrants and oppressors, I have this race a long time on my register, doomed to destruction and extermination' (*Tale*: 353). This conception of the guillotine stands in total opposition with its stated purpose of killing the new state's enemies quickly and humanely. The guillotine is clearly positioned in these texts as something employed maliciously.

The guillotine is more than just a weapon of retribution; however, it becomes a vital part of the Revolutionary machinery. The opening lines of *The Scarlet Pimpernel* are devoted to characterising the revolutionary crowds as inhuman: 'a surging, seething, murmuring crowd, of beings that are human only in name, for to the eye and ear they seem naught but savage creatures, animated by vile passions and by the lust of vengeance and hate' (*Scarlet Pimpernel*: 3). The same function is performed in *A Tale of Two Cities*, particularly by the narration. Tetzeli von Rosador states that:

What the narrator by all the rhetorical and metaphorical means of his craft and the Revolution in real, terrible earnest are doing is to crush humanity out of shape [...] Deindividualization is a first step towards this goal. Hence revolutionary humanity is robbed of its name and the nobility is reduced to type. (Tetzeli von Rosador, 1988: 16)

This is what makes the guillotine a more suitable symbol of the Revolution's tyranny than any of the figureheads who met their end on it; in the popular imagination it acquires a life of its own. *The Scarlet Pimpernel* again makes early mention of the guillotine, speaking of it like an irreducible force:

And daily, hourly, the hideous instrument of torture claimed its many victims – old men, young women, tiny children, even until the day when it would finally demand the head of a King and of a beautiful young Queen. (*Scarlet Pimpernel*: 4)

The horror of the machine is not resigned to its inhumanity or its lack of feeling at selecting victims, but to its inevitably and assumed agency: 'it would finally demand', not the people, or the Revolution. Here, the guillotine itself is not just symbolic of the

Revolution, but can be seen as its entirety. The guillotine may be a simple structure, but it embodies many of the same traits as other architecture. For the French Revolution the guillotine is the ultimate symbol of tyranny. Its purpose is clear from a glance, it is highly visible, vastly symbolic, had to many taken on its own personality; it is not only a tool of tyranny but also a means of supporting it. The guillotine has reason enough to be considered a tyrant in its own right, but it stands as a symbol of the violence and tyranny from an era that history is ambivalent towards.

Conclusion: Final Curtain

Even amongst swathes of historical injustices the actions of individuals, both good and bad, are weighed heavily in these texts. Tyrants, both Revolutionary and aristocratic, are held to account not only for their actions but for encouraging and endorsing the barbarity of the era. *A Tale of Two Cities* drew upon Carlylean influences, amongst others, in portraying the Revolution as a melodramatic stage – a stage the rest of Europe was paying attention to:

Certainly the early Gothic writers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were aware of the possibility of ‘regimes of terror’: in Europe it was necessary only to look at how the early hopes and political ambitions represented in the French revolution had been changed, perverted into a system of oppression, an increasingly silenced world that showed signs of spreading to engulf other nations, other states. (Punter, 2016: 1-2)

The combined history and fiction of the Revolution merge in the popular imagination, but what both make explicit is the haunting and inescapable nature of violence. The stock-melodramatic villains of the Ancien Régime are killed, first murdered as Evrémonde is in retribution, before the Revolution starts looking for more victims to make symbols of its vengeance. Unlike preceding works that featured Gothic tyrants, these works show the reader that what follows the removal of a ‘tyrant’ from the seat of power is not always necessarily order.

From the imprisoning of innocent people in the Bastille, to the beheading of aristocrat sympathisers, these texts make it plain that the Reign of Terror was a fitting name for a historical period of pronounced fear and horror. From the Victorian perspective there is a detectable tone that such atrocities are *Gothic* – they could not happen in modern Britain, whether due to historical progress or geographical distance. From Carton’s prophetic vision, to Irving’s decision to stage *The Dead Heart*, it becomes clear that the terror of the Revolution still had resonance for new audiences. The French Revolution remains a fascination of popular culture, the early years of this fascination are clearly visible within the Victorian plays and novels, and works of factual history that continued to explore and analyse it. Where they both converge and agree is that they depict it as an era of great and terrible spectacle. The re-enactment of these historical excesses of violence makes it apparent that such tyranny is not a special class – all it takes to emerge is a dead heart. The culture of suspicion and persecution is a crucial aspect of the Revolution of Gothic historical novels: when the innocent are being executed *everyone* has something to be afraid of.

The historical reality of the Revolution reshaped the Gothic tyrant in several ways that can be seen in models of tyranny going forward. In linking the melodrama of the guillotine to the larger cycles of violence that tyrants ride to power a clear image is presented of how quickly sympathies can be lost. The changing nature of the Revolution is something picked up on by Victorian writers, such as Dickens and Watts Phillips, who contrast the early, optimistic stages – such as the siege of the Bastille – with the terrible machinery of accusation and execution put into place. The emphasis on vengeance in *A Tale of Two Cities* and *The Dead Heart*, and the lack of feeling required to carry it out, make clear judgements on the universal harm such actions cause. Landry’s sacrifice, like that of Carton, and the Pimpernel’s efforts to save others, constitutes the only true

opposition to tyranny in these texts. Even here, though, this can be seen as submitting to it as mortal sacrifices are demanded. The Pimpernel emerges here as an archetype of a masked hero, someone that would be of great influence and much imitated. A figure who stands in binary opposition to the equally dedicated tyrants. Like the figures at the head of the Revolution, the Pimpernel also belongs to a group, a league, who can all take his place – he is legion. This is what makes both of them so difficult to defeat. Unlike a single tyrannical ruler, like *Otranto*'s Manfred, or a corrupt point of contact for an institution, like Ambrosio in *The Monk*, the historical reality of the French Revolution creates abuses of power that cannot be 'defeated' or 'removed' – only escaped. Both *Pimpernel*'s Blakeney and *A Tale of Two Cities*' Carton flee back to the safety of Britain. This is significant as it shows an understanding of history as something that must be endured, that cannot be challenged, even when it is terrifying – violence is a fire that must burn itself out. The Gothic tyrant is equally different in this situation. In earlier fiction, the reader was given a sense that it is the tyrant's cruelty that creates dreadful periods – here it is established that dreadful periods enable, even reveal, the tyrannical side of otherwise ordinary people.

The French Revolution's final legacy to the understanding of tyrants is that it led directly to the rise of Napoleon, who in the popular imagination is perhaps the first of the modern dictators and a ruler who must have seemed at one point to have stood a real chance of conquering most of Europe. As France sought to expand its influence within Europe, it was also taking steps toward becoming a colonial power – in the later nineteenth century the nature of ruling indigenous people would also become a ground for exploring unjust rules and abuses of power. The next chapter picks up this idea of colonial tyranny at the close of the nineteenth century and immediately after it – when Britain's colonial powers were approaching their peak. As with the French Revolution,

the fictional representation of the undertakings of these colonising missions emphasises the darkness already present in people's hearts.

Chapter 3: Idols of Barbarity: The Colonial Tyrant

‘He came to them with thunder and lightning, you know – and they had never seen anything like it – and very terrible. He could be very terrible. You can’t judge Mr Kurtz as you would an ordinary man’. (*Heart of Darkness*: 56)

At the end of the nineteenth century a new archetype of Gothic tyranny began to emerge: the Empire. As the above quotation from Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1902) suggests, colonial authorities are often represented as being, in one way or another, above ‘ordinary’ men. It also acknowledges the capacity of colonial authorities to do terrible things. The idea of ‘Empire’ reflects this definition, with two key characteristics about the dictionary definition of empire that are worthy of note: as ‘an extensive group of states or countries ruled over by a single monarch, an oligarchy, or a sovereign state’ an empire is an organisation of great size and, despite this, is ruled by a single figure (OED, online: 1350). The concept of empires has become anachronous to modern democratic principles, and is largely viewed now in negative terms. In film and fiction ‘the evil Empire’ has become a trope in its own right, closely associating ideas of Empire with domination – ‘the Empire’ could even be considered as a recognisable shorthand for *the bad guy*.¹ Colonial models were frequently explored through fiction, both during periods of imperial expansion and after. Most often such works have been characterised as ‘Quest Romances’; a form Robert Fraser argues only existed in its purest form from about 1880-1920 (Fraser, 1998: 2). Fraser goes on to say that the Quest Romance has ‘much to do with the way in which the male Victorian mind adjusted both to the pressures of colonial experience, and to various stresses within British society itself’ (Fraser, 1998: 2). This chapter will explore how the anxieties of loss or displacement of Empire were articulated

¹ The *Star Wars* series is perhaps the most prominent example of this – the heroes are perpetually positioned as rebels against a largely faceless, fascist, and well-resourced organisation. This is found earlier in Frank Herbert’s *Dune* (1965), but has become widely recreated across diverse media platforms.

in Gothic terms; like Kurtz the colonial experience was seen by writers as being ‘very terrible’ in every sense. Whilst this Gothic response manifested itself through a variety of channels, breeding new monsters and prejudices, one of the most overlooked is the updated model of Gothic tyranny. Whilst abuses of native populations and fears of foreign, invasive monsters have endorsed an opinion that ‘what distinguishes Imperial Gothic is its often pro-imperial subtext’ the often horrifying events of these texts make the colonial experience seem a mutually damaging one (Höglund, 2018: 19). As with the Quest Romance, the Gothic fiction focusing on this period draws on the disparity between the ideals of colonisation and the reality, and the monstrous impact that could have on the mind. As the Gothic became one of the modes for questioning imperialism, as explored by Brantlinger’s *Rule of Darkness* (1988), the role of the Gothic tyrant became expanded; moving from not just a corrupt or illegitimate ruler of *your own* people but to subjugating and commodifying other people recognised as inferior. The falling into tyrannical habits is identified as a weakness anyone might succumb to – a lacking of fortitude and endurance.

Colonial texts in this time concern themselves with rulers who held power, not only over their own people, but over other races; often designated as ‘primitive’. Whilst in the historical periods detailed in previous chapters ‘Otherness’ has been a strong informing theme, it is here brought to the fore. ‘Otherness’, as previously discussed, was an invaluable tool to the tyrant as it provided a justification for cruel acts, targeting those perceived to be subversive, heretical or often merely different. When this ‘Otherness’ occurred across the invisible lines of religion and class a tyrant needed to instil it in the population’s minds; within the colonial sphere these distinctions were drawn across the highly visible lines of race. Said’s discussion of Orientalism addresses writers who ‘accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate

theories, epics, novels' (Said, 1996: 21). This had led to a characterisation of the East that bears little resemblance to reality – instead serving the purpose of endorsing the West's own stereotypes and ideas of superiority.² This powerful separation of East and West, in the minds of the West, extended to race as 'Orientals were viewed in a framework constructed out of biological determinism and moral-political admonishment' (Said, 1996: 35). Fiction plays a strong role in this process as 'the Orient is constructed in a representation that is then transmitted from text to text, with the result that Orientalist writing always reproduces an unchanging stereotype of an unchanging Orient' (Young, 2001: 388). Said later states that 'the line separating Occident from Orient [...] is less a fact of nature than it is a fact of human production, which [he has] called imaginative geography' (Said, 1997: 128). This 'imaginative geography' is clearly on display within Gothic fiction, where the strange and different is deliberately rendered fearful for a readership who had likely not encountered it. These ideas naturally light upon the Gothic tyrant to create a threatening figure who crosses from the East to terrorize the West.

A key concept aligned with these anxieties of 'Otherness' is 'reverse-colonisation'. The term, coined by Stephen D. Arata, refers to the anxiety surrounding the ensuing multiculturalism resultant from Britain's colonial expansion. More specifically, as Arata states: 'the fear is that what has been represented as the "civilized" world is on the point of being colonized by "primitive" forces' (Arata, 1990: 623). The fear of being colonized by a more 'primitive' race, the 'Other' in this instance, was made more pressing as it coincided with general concerns over the strength of the British empire and its culture. At the end of the nineteenth century, as might be expected during the *fin de siècle*, it appeared to the popular imagination that the entire nation was 'in irretrievable decline' (Arata, 1990: 622). Concerns of Empire were no longer simply the domain of government

² William Beckford's *Vathek* (1786) is perhaps the clearest example of this in Gothic literature, using clichéd ideas of Arabian exoticism as a source for Gothic horror.

and business as the exotic provided a new source of fear for those living in Britain. Arata points to these factors converging as a symptom of cultural panic:

the decay of British global influence [...] increasing unrest in British colonies and possessions, the growing domestic uneasiness over the morality of imperialism – all combined to erode Victorian confidence in the inevitability of British progress and hegemony. (Arata, 1990: 622)

More significantly, Arata notes that reverse-colonisation narratives ‘are also responses to cultural guilt’ (Arata, 1990: 623). Not merely a cultural phenomenon in its own right, then, Arata links the concept of reverse-colonisation to the guilt, presumably, of subjugating other races and expanding British interests at the expense of others. Reverse-colonisation links together fears of atavism and decline with concern about tyranny; at its core it is a concern that other races will treat the weakened British state as tyrannically as they have been treated.

The four texts this chapter will focus on all explore many of the same themes as reverse-colonisation, as well as showing the limitations of this critical concept. Kipling’s ‘The Man Who Would Be King’ (1888) is the tale of two former soldiers, Peachey Carnehan and Daniel Dravot, who depart from India for the isolated Kafiristan in order to use their imperial soldiering knowledge and modern weapons to establish themselves as kings. Peachey, disfigured and crippled, returns to tell the narrator, a newsman, of both their initial success and ultimate failure. Dravot’s ambition had increased, and, reneging on their contract forbidding alcohol and women, had taken a wife; an act that proved to be a fatal mistake as the native population stopped regarding him as a god. Dravot was beheaded, Peachey was tortured then released, before returning to India with Dravot’s head, and losing his sanity. The text consciously, as the title suggests, depicts the desire to rule over others, and how quickly this dream can become tainted. A second Kipling short story, ‘The Mark of the Beast’ (1890), recounts how the drunkard Fleete defaces an idol

of the Hindu god Hannuman and encounters a leper, who leaves him with a strange mark. Fleete awakes the next day to gradually become more and more wolf-like. Eventually his friends trap the leper and force him through torture to lift the curse.

The third text is an often overlooked *fin-de-siècle* novel by Richard Marsh called *The Joss: A Reversion* (1903). Marsh is most famous for his novel *The Beetle* (1897), which uses many of the same ideas of Orientalism and reverse-colonisation. Marsh's *The Joss: A Reversion* uses multiple narrators to tell the tale of Benjamin Batters; a less than reputable Englishman who is disfigured into a living idol, the titular 'Joss', on Great Ke Island. A desperate ship's Captain, Max Lander, smuggles Batters and his treasure off the island, before Batters and accomplices damage the engine and escape with the treasure. Returning to England, Batters writes solicitor Frank Paine a letter, feigning his death and giving his inheritance to his niece, Pollie, albeit with some singular conditions. Despite being warned and threatened by both Lander's crew and the frightening natives of Great Ke Island, pursuing Batters, Pollie accepts the inheritance. Pollie must inhabit a suspicious house, blocked off from the outside world and natural light, filled with rats, and told never to stay out of doors at night. Taking her companion, Emily, Pollie is immediately met with the sensation that someone is hiding in the house's locked rooms, whilst that night Emily talks with a mysterious foreign girl: Batters' daughter. At the novel's denouement, Paine and Lander realise Batters is hiding in the house, breaking in as Batters dies, an act that terrifies his former worshippers.

Lastly, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902) has been chosen as it is the pinnacle novel of the colonial experience, yet one with distinct Gothic inflections. Marlow is sent to retrieve Kurtz, an enigmatic figure in charge of one of the company's most profitable stations. As Marlow journeys into the heart of darkest Africa his curiosity about Kurtz grows along with his discomfort with the colonial experience, which he

views as largely exploitative. When Kurtz is recovered he is mad, worshipped by the natives, hesitant to leave, and has decorated his camp with severed heads. Kurtz dies on the return journey, his final words being ‘the horror’ (*Heart of Darkness*: 69).

Characterising Imperial Gothic as *utilising* the Gothic mode in order to voice the colonial anxieties prevalent in *fin-de-siècle* society has limited uses. Instead, colonisation could be viewed as an opportunity to better explore the Gothic’s core themes. As the concerns around tyranny and the negotiation of power have remained relatively constant throughout the continuum of Gothic fiction it could be argued that confronting these themes is of primary importance, and the colonial mission provided an ideal imaginative space for doing so. That is not to denigrate the role of reverse-colonisation and ‘Otherness’ in these texts, as their importance cannot be overestimated, but to demonstrate that the texts under discussion are essentially another battlefield for many of the same conflicts that have been waging since the Gothic mode’s inception. As with other periods of writing, the tyrant himself is highly visible, exposed to the same constant Panopticon-like gaze they exert on their subjects. In the colonial space this is taken a step further; in the texts under discussion the coloniser exploits the difference between himself and his subjects and their subjects to rule as a god, or represent one as a living idol. This emphasis on idols comes both in the form of religious idols and idols of power, which are often conflated. What all these idols share is that the Western characters rarely show them respect, looking upon them only as a sign of barbarity and savagery. As with previous chapters, these texts throw a pessimistic light upon both the ability to rule as well as the supposed right to attempt to do so. These texts are all a continuation of the Gothic’s theme of power and abuse, and whilst they all feature tyrants who attempt to wield authority over the native population they all emphasise that the colonial experience is an injurious one. Real harm, both mental and bodily, is inflicted upon both the coloniser and

the colonised. These tyrants are mirrored by the idols and totems revered by the colonial 'Other'. Torture, and bodily mutilation, play a role that is more symbolic than in previous Gothic chapters. While torture does surface, providing a Gothic frisson of pleasurable pain still, it becomes better understood as an external indicator of interior damage and degeneration. Tyranny is again demonstrated to be a vital function of the Gothic mode, albeit more subtly. The descent into tyranny is as fearful as any particular threat within these texts. The colonial experience provides clear examples of how models of Gothic tyranny have continued – a lack of compassion fuelled by 'Othering' and a lack of restraint can make even the initially well-meaning into a monstrous tyrant. Rather than exposure to the savagery of the East, it is engaging in the colonial mission that shows how savage the West already is.

Idols of Otherness

One of the chief strengths of *Heart of Darkness* is how quickly and comprehensively it engages with not only the theme of colonisation, but the recognition of how transient the definitions of civilization and savagery can be: 'We live in the flicker – may it last as long as the old earth keeps rolling! But darkness was here yesterday' (*HoD*: 6). Conrad cites London as an example of a perceived repository of civilization that was once, too, a place of 'darkness'. It is this thought from Marlow, who is recounting the story amongst his peers, that initiates the tale proper, as he abruptly begins with the remark: "“And this also,” said Marlow suddenly, “has been one of the dark places of the earth”" (*HoD*: 5). The 'and' in isolation from any prior discussion suggests that Marlow has already been deep in thought, likely dwelling on the tale he then feels compelled to tell, indicating he has been contemplating the darkness of the African river where his story takes place. The pervasive nostalgia for the ability to chart unexplored lands is inherent in this text and others, but at the same time bringing the civilising light was the excuse made for these

excursions in the first place. Colonialism was more likely to be criticised when it was being conducted by other nations, which *Heart of Darkness* contributed towards as ‘Conrad’s text helped to add credibility to the consistent attacks against Continental imperialism’ (Connolly, 2016: 93). Marlow’s own attitudes to the colonial mission show this deep conflict. Marlow’s aunt looks upon him like he is ‘something like an emissary of light, something like a lower sort of apostle’ and seemingly accepts his mission of “weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid ways” on his aunt’s behalf (*HoD*: 12). Yet at the same time Marlow recognises how false this premise is, wryly referring to it as ‘the great cause of these high and just proceedings’ and referring to the fact that ‘a queer feeling came to me that I was an imposter’ (*HoD*: 16, 13). Marlow here is directly articulating what the entirety of Imperial Gothic suggests: the potential realisation that the colonisers are not fit for the task they have undertaken.³ This in turn could mean that any cruel actions performed were not ‘weaning those ignorant millions’ but were unjustified acts of self-interested tyranny.

The contradicting attitudes toward colonial progress are not unique to fiction. Even in non-fiction writing of the period these ideas can be seen. In a book by the naturalist A. S. Meek, *A Naturalist in Cannibal Land* (1913), there is both a heavy dose of condescension towards the natives combined with the recognition that what the West was exporting to them was ultimately harmful:

A little war, a little cannibalism, accentuated rather than broke the routine of indolent peace. Now the South Seas become like the rest of our world with the march of civilisation, carrying its blessings of work and wages, and disease and drabness of fettered life. (Meek, 1913: xiv)

³ There seems to be something Byronic about figure of the tyrant here; ‘he survives only as a solitary and sensitive sufferer: with the loss of his titanic passions, his pride, and his certainty of self-identity, he loses also his status as hero’ (Thorslev, 1962: 187). The cult of celebrity requires such a figure to be put on a pedestal, contributing to their burdens.

Meek's seeming deprecation for 'fettered life' speaks to the appeal of colonialism for many. Exiting civilization allowed a release, a freedom from their own rigid societies – to act according to their own whims in one of the remaining 'dark' places. James Johnston's account of his travels in Africa, the authoritatively titled *Reality Versus Romance in South Central Africa* (1893), similarly displays this same ambivalence. Acting as a missionary Johnston is enthusiastic to inform the reader that:

He went among the fiercest tribes, not as a conqueror and master, but as a friend, and seeking to leave a trail behind him not of blood and hate, but of peace and good-will.⁴ (Johnston, 1893: 6-7)

Johnston's purpose was actually less benevolent than mere good-will, though, and the veneer of friendship distracts from his self-interested goals. Johnston is travelling in Africa to demonstrate that 'black men from Jamaica [...] could be advantageously employed for the Christianization and civilization of the African savage tribes' (Johnston, 1893: 7). If we are to take these examples as typical of historical colonial travellers, then a clear picture of the hypocrisy that informs the Imperial Gothic is formed – one that also directly influences Gothic tyranny. The colonial mission provided a justification to leave civilization and act 'unfettered'; according to one's own whims.

The 'Othering' of the native population played a key role in facilitating the exertion of colonial power. *The Joss* quickly establishes a strong, and comprehensive, link between 'otherness', Orientalism and the Gothic mode. Natives in colonial fiction are often heavily stereotyped, relying on popular conceptions rather than accurate research. Thus, Johan Höglund notes that 'the anxieties that *The Joss* plays on are [...] grounded in stereotypical imagery of the non-European' (Höglund, 2018: 17). *The Joss* takes the 'Othering' of foreigners further than most. When Pollie is approached by a foreigner, the

⁴ It is perhaps unsurprising that Johnston seems to stretch the definition of friend to a large degree in this text, employing violence on several occasions with familiar justifications: 'my only alternative was to make them feel. Laying hold of a stick that was handy, I applied it with some vigor [sic] across the shoulders of the cowardly villains' (Johnston, 1893: 40).

text forges strong connections with several monsters familiar to Gothic fiction. Firstly, there is a connection to mummies, noting of the figure's clothing that 'it was wrapped round and round him, as, I am told, it is round mummies' (*Joss*: 11). This is just the beginning, however, and Pollie continues, stating that he seemed 'nothing less than a walking skeleton' but also refers to him as 'the lunatic, or whatever the creature was' (*Joss*: 11). There is even a suggestion of vampirism, as when the figure draws near to Emily, Pollie thinks 'he put his face so close to hers that I thought he was going to bite her, or something awful' (*Joss*: 11). In one short paragraph, then, a figure of 'Otherness' is associated with the majority of Gothic monsters. It is worth emphasising that this figure does not have any supernatural credentials, nor is thought to perform any; all of these fears on Pollie's part arise simply by virtue of his status as an oriental 'Other'.

The Joss asserts the same tone of both fearfulness and hostility towards exotic foreigners common to novels of this type and era, and that marks these figures as unmistakably 'Other'. According to Marta Puxan-Oliva:

Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim* deploys the stereotypes in its narrative in order to adopt an ambivalent stand with regards to late-Victorian imperialism that reflects the intense crisis of legitimacy the British Empire went through at the turn of the twentieth century. (Puxan-Oliva, 2015: 339)

This ambivalence is detectable across all of the texts under discussion, though the deployment of stereotypes in *The Joss* does not seem to serve this purpose. *The Joss*'s London cast of characters make frequent reference to the Great Ke islanders that denote their status as 'Other', and they are specifically mentioned collectively as 'orientals' (*Joss*: 183). For instance, one is described as having:

a round face; almond shaped eyes which looked out of narrow slits; a flat nose; a mouth which seemed to reach from ear to ear. There was no mistaking that this was a case of another ugly foreigner. (*Joss*: 15)

This 'ugliness' is used to differentiate between self and 'Other', but is more commonly addressed in these texts as fear. Pollie goes on to inform the reader in her belief that the 'hideous, hollow-cheeked, saffron-hued face would haunt me in my dreams' and that even 'the consciousness that he was near made me shudder' (*Joss*: 12,15). This negative attitude is not something only exhibited by the frightened heroines, however, as even Frank Paine notes the resemblance between one native and 'a monstrously attenuated monkey' (*Joss*: 146). Paine's criticism draws on Darwinian evolution and *fin-de-siècle* anxieties; the native 'Other' is seen to be not only less civilised, but less developed. As would be expected, then, the characters in these texts display reactions ranging between disgust, hostility and fear towards those they recognise, through their physical features, as 'Other' to themselves. *The Joss* then deploys strong negative stereotypes and racist attitudes to make the violence employed by these natives elsewhere in the text seem more plausible.

The act of differentiating the 'Oriental' or 'Other' from the self is not simply about denigrating it, it is often about reaffirming the self. What incenses Frank Paine most about the foreigners is that 'they had shown no respect for a woman', binding and gagging Emily with no special regard for her gender (*Joss*: 182). What Paine's indignation emphasises is not necessarily the 'Other's ill treatment of a woman, but the contrasting respect an Englishman would show. Paine takes his condemnation of the natives' cruelty even further. The 'othering' in *The Joss*, and the stereotyping of the natives, serves the purpose of reaffirming *English* values. As Victoria Margree notes, the text 'finds an ideological solution to anxiety by displacing all the threat onto the archaic and foreign Other, against which a revitalised masculine and nationalistic virility can be pitted' (Margree, 2007: 79). As with the act of identifying an 'Other', the physical features of the natives are shown to be a demarcation of their inherent cruelty:

If I ever saw cruelty written on a human countenance it was on the faces of those three gentlemen. Theirs was the love of it for its own sake. Their faces were rather inhuman masks, expressionless, impassive, unfeeling. (*Joss*: 185)

The word ‘inhuman’ here is particularly telling, as again, it is used to emphasise the characteristics Paine does not want to be associated with, as well as those he perceives the ‘Other’ as lacking. A further quotation from Paine indicates this cruelty is thought to be related to geography, wryly suggesting that ‘perhaps in that genial portion of the world from which they came, such butcheries were the everyday events of their lives’ (*Joss*: 193). The contrast here with Paine’s own English standards of behaviour is a key facet of the Self/’Other’ divide in novels of this type.

The Self/’Other’ divide evokes a strong concern over nationality. Paine, when describing one of the Great Ke natives, states that he ‘took him for a Chinaman, though he was darker than I imagine Chinamen are want to be’ (*Joss*: 143). This statement reflects wider concerns about the failure to be able to distinguish between nationalities based on physical appearance and therefore being incapable of diagnosing the differentiation between self and ‘Other’. This anxiety is most often expressed with regard to white skin or English nationality. Batters’ daughter recognises the value in this, asserting not only that because of her father she is English, not a native, but telling Emily that ‘to be white I would give all that I am, all that I have’ (*Joss*: 109).⁵ The link between skin colour and perceived racial traits is again highlighted through another quotation from Batters’ daughter, who seems genuinely confused by another character’s white skin and lack of intelligence, asking them how it is that ‘although you’re white, you’re stupid?’ (*Joss*: 114). The text recognises, then, not only the failure of stereotyping qualities, but that they can be applied to both sides of the Self/’Other’ divide; albeit in this instance the negativity remains constantly on the side of the ‘Other’. In ‘The Man Who Would Be

⁵ The titular character in Marsh’s better-known Gothic novel, *The Beetle* (1897), similarly expresses desire to have white skin: ““What I would not give for skin as white as that”” (*The Beetle*: 55).

King', when Peachey and Dravot are researching Kafiristan, they make a discovery about the natives: 'this book here says they think they're related to us English' ('King': 119). This fact fuels Dravot's colonial ambitions, founding his complicated plans to make his country a modern nation on the fact that 'these men aren't niggers; they're English!' ('King': 131). The Kafiristan that Dravot rules are excluded from the 'Othering' process; the reader is explicitly told they are the same. This becomes a driving force behind Imperial Gothic; the idea that difference could be explicitly mapped onto geographical boundaries.

Adventure fiction relies on new and unusual locales. Unfamiliar places not only aid a readership's suspension of disbelief, but make it easier to accept the strange and supernatural events that happen there. Chiefly, this is accomplished by using fictional locations, such as *The Joss's* Great Ke Island, or regions that would be less familiar to the readerships, such as 'The Man Who Would Be King's' 'Kafiristan' ('King': 118).⁶ It is equally true that it was the real expanse of Empire that made it so easy to accept these unheard of places. Ultimately, it makes little difference to Gothic fiction whether the regions they confront exist, as Weaver-Hightower notes: 'we are fascinated with islands, both real and imaginary' (Weaver-Hightower, 2006: ix). The 'dark places', the areas where the power of the 'Gods and Devils' still held sway, were in swift decline. Kipling's 'The Man Who Would Be King' says of Asian states: 'they are the dark places of the earth, full of unimaginable cruelty, touching the Railway and the Telegraph on one side, and, on the other, the days of Harun-al-Raschid' ('King': 113-114).⁷ This description makes apparent the tension perceived by the West; between the burgeoning civilization the West saw itself as having brought to the places it colonised and the inherent savagery

⁶ 'In Arabaic the word "kafir" means infidel' (Fraser, 1998: 51).

⁷ Harun-Al-Raschid is best known as the leader 'who ruled Islam at the zenith of its empire' and became memorialized in *The Thousand and One Nights* (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*: online).

and cruelty it found. These states are not mutually exclusive; it is the conflict between the existence of modern technology and ancient practices and beliefs that makes these places effectively expressed through Gothic terms. The Imperial colonial instinct constantly requires new territories to explore. Dravot and Peachey's assertion that 'India isn't big enough for such as us' speaks to not only their own ambitions, but for the need to find and colonise new territories – to expand the empire ('King': 117). Dravot may lack Marlow's awareness of the failures of colonialism, but the premise of the story makes this clear. Meyers has recognised that Peachey and Dravot's attempt at 'such calculated and brutal forms of conquest, combined with an insatiable desire to rob the land of its wealth, represent the very worst kind of colonialism' (Meyers, 1973: 9). What 'The Man Who Would Be King' makes clear is that Peachey and Dravot's excursion is not only fuelled by the Victorian colonial experience, but seeks in turn to fuel it further still. Dravot tells the narrator that: 'Peachey and me know the road. We was there with Roberts' Army' ('King': 118). It is their participation in the Imperial army that gives Peachey and Dravot the expertise to undertake their colonising mission. Colonisation here becomes self-sustaining; participation only fuels the desire for further expansion.

The colonial mission in these texts can also be viewed as an exercise in an ego run rampant. The adoration of his colonial subjects goes to Dravot's head in 'The Man Who Would Be King', with his ambition soon expanding from mere profiteering to fulfil a greater need, in line with the historical rationale: 'as historians have noted, colonization endured longer than simple profitability justified' (Weaver-Hightower, 2006: xiv). Dravot seems to emulate Britain's own colonial enterprise: "I won't make a Nation", says he. "I'll make an Empire!" ('King': 131). Peachey's confusion about whether he was a King also suggests he is contributing towards an Empire, not the head of one. Not long after telling the narrator 'Kings we were, with crowns upon our heads' he contradicts himself:

“I wasn’t King”, said Carnehan. “Dravot he was the King” (King: 123, 126). This is not mere greed on Dravot’s part, as he makes it clear he is not seeking to work against Britain’s own empire; he plans to become part of the empire in order to aid it: ‘Two hundred and fifty thousand men, ready to cut in on Russia’s right flank when she tries for India!’ (‘King’: 131). The rule of Dravot and Peachey is thus established as being part of the wider context of legitimate rule, a reflection of the British Empire and not something in opposition to it. Critic Robert Hampson finds some of these themes common to Kipling’s other works. Hampson states that:

the attempt to assert a military model of masculinity is constantly subverted from within by traces of homoeroticism within the homosocial bondings, disquieting elements of sadism, and the haunting sense that male separateness might be a limitation rather than a strength. (Hampson, 2018: 7)

Limitation forms a key aspect of many of the characters within these texts as it becomes clear that it is their personal failings, rather than any specific ‘native’ influence, that informs their tyrannical behaviour. While Dravot’s plan may initially be meticulously calculated it becomes clear that it is his own ego that transforms him into a more ambitious tyrannical figure; intending to remain in Kafiristan to rule, abuse his position as a god and take a wife. It seems as though it is the reverence of the people who regard him as a god that makes his judgement become questionable, incapable of managing the idolisation he faces. Interiority therefore becomes a more recognisable aspect of the Gothic tyrant, with the mode making fearful the realisation that the Self not so different from the ‘Other’ as previously thought.

Idols of Religion

One of the most common tropes arising in texts of colonial tyranny is the westerner being viewed as a god or god-like figure. This again links to a Byronic reading of these figures – to the attractiveness of power and even evil. The Byronic image of sympathetic Satan typified this, as readers could ‘see in Dante’s Satan the extreme expression of that self-

love, the true nature of freedom which has cut itself off from the source of life. In the light of his vision of God' (Paolucci, 1964: 148). Gods and devils may be tyrannical, even evil, but they were liberated. On the surface this seems to be enacting a western power fantasy and endorsing the stereotype of the credulous, primitive native. Indeed, it does seem to be true that 'it was a common observation in anthropological texts of the time that "primitive" peoples were hopelessly in thrall to their deities and idols' (Youngs, 2013: 99). For the 'gods' in these texts, however, the pretence becomes disastrous, leading to acts of barbarism and torture being committed against them. These texts, then, address not only the treatment of the 'Other' by supposedly civilised colonising hands, but just as often the abuse of the 'civilised' by the barbarous or savage. Part of the reason for the intolerance displayed towards native belief systems was their incompatibility with Christian belief. The opposition of religions mapped onto geographical boundaries becomes explicit in 'The Mark of the Beast' and effectively reinforces notions of 'otherness': 'East of Suez, some hold, the direct control of Providence ceases; man being there handed over to the power of the Gods and Devils of Asia' ('Mark': 191). A key factor in this dismissal, even hostility, draws on Christian opinions of idolatry. Idols were common signifiers of belief, but to the colonisers 'idolatry, or the worship of idols, is the act of ascribing to persons and things, properties which belong exclusively to God' (Berg, 1838: 7). Idolatry was tantamount to devil worship to some Christians as 'the prime instigator of all sin, and therefore of idolatry, is Satan, the arch-enemy of God' (Berg, 1838: 12). This is important as the earnestness with which colonisers disregarded other belief systems was not simply out of ignorance, but because they believed the natives were committing 'the moral error of listening to demons who inhabited religious images' (MacCormack, 2006: 631). In these texts idols become representative of a host of threats to the contemporary colonial mind-set 'suggesting the late-nineteenth century English

fears of an angry wave of Indian anti-colonial insurgency’ and more broadly being utilised to ‘embody the Western tensions surrounding industrialization and colonialism’ (Bhattacharjee, 2018: 67). The manner in which the coloniser becomes idolised is an apt continuation of this idea; denouncing the absence of any Western god on one hand and on the other reaffirming notions of their innate cultural superiority. The potential to live as a god among natives was a compelling idea, taking Gothic tyranny to its peak, though the Gothic fiction that used this trope presents it as a damaging experience, not a reaffirming one.

The Westerner as god trope was not confined to the Victorian period, as it lasted into the twentieth century.⁸ One of the most widely known examples of factual articulations of the phenomenon is the ‘cargo cult’. When some native populations first encountered Westerners they interpreted the goods the Westerners possessed, the ‘cargo’, as being sent by deities and began cults based around wanting more of these goods. Glynn Cochrane’s monograph explores the challenges caused by the arrival of Europeans on Elema, the island where the ‘cult’ took hold’:

Confusion existed among the Elema as to what kind of men the Europeans were. Could they be the spirits of the dead, as was first supposed, or were they simply more powerful versions of the traditional ‘big man’? (Cochrane, 1970: 50)

For Cochrane much of the coverage surrounding the cult was misunderstood. Instead of an overreaction to Europeans, the strange actions were in fact in-line with pre-existing hierarchies of wealth, power and authority:

There is no evidence to suggest a cult of cargo. Rituals associated with these movements were designed to acquire recognition of existing indigenous concepts of status, not cargo alone. (Cochrane, 1970: 157)

⁸ More broadly the idea of being worshipped by natives has been rearticulated throughout countless media, such as in *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man’s Chest* (2006).

It becomes clear then the popularity and longevity of this trope exists not only to emphasise the credulity of ‘othered’ peoples, but also to highlight the disparity between the ‘savage’ and their own, developed, civilization. Native rituals similarly became a fixation for the coloniser that became a repository of ‘otherness’ and differentiation in the popular imagination. Alongside the occasions of life familiar to Westerners, there were aspects of native life where the supernatural played a role:

The most widely recurring features of ritual life indigenous to Papua New Guinea include initiations and fertility rites, funerals, divinations and séances, puberty rites, weddings, magical rites, sorcery. (Whitehouse, 2000: 19)

Whereas the Western understanding of idolatry was based on prejudice, there does seem to be a factual basis for the shocking nature of some rituals, with Harvey Whitehouse continuing that ‘It would not be unduly fanciful to describe many initiatory practices in Papua New Guinea as “rites of terror”’ (Whitehouse, 2000: 21). While the examples shift both geographically and chronologically, the trait seems to play the same basic role: it draws the coloniser in with its own ideas of superiority, but just as often leaves them as trapped and powerless as those they would abuse.

Heart of Darkness places the coloniser-as-god trope in a far more grounded context than other texts. This theme is first encountered early in the novella through the character of Marlow’s predecessor, Fresteven. Marlow is ‘told that Fresteven was the gentlest, quietest creature that ever walked on two legs’ prior to his own involvement in the colonial mission (*HoD*: 9). Fresteven succumbs the same way Kurtz does, and after a disagreement with a native Marlow states that Fresteven ‘whacked the old nigger mercilessly while a big crowd of his people watched him’ (*HoD*: 9). Fresteven also seems to have taken on the same reverence as Kurtz would in the eyes of the natives; even after the natives kill him, ‘the whole population cleared into the forest expecting all kinds of calamities to happen’ and months later when Marlow finds his body ‘the supernatural

being had not been touched after he fell' (*HoD*: 9). In Fresteven, then, we have a figure who also turned to excessive cruelty as a result of his experiences, but unlike Kurtz is killed by the natives. The treatment of his body shows the great fear of him and how he has been regarded as a 'supernatural being'. The station manager forms an interesting comparison with Fresteven. The station manager seems to be something of a tyrant in his own way, able to 'make his glance fall on one as trenchant and heavy as an ace' (*HoD*: 21). Unlike Kurtz, however, the station manager seems to only elicit obedience, and little else: 'he was obeyed, yet he inspired neither love nor fear, nor even respect. He inspired uneasiness. That was it!' (*HoD*: 21). Even so, Marlow seems to hold him in some form of reverence: 'he was great. He was great by this little thing that it was impossible to tell what could control such a man' (*HoD*: 22). This makes for an interesting comparison with Kurtz, as presumably the station manager is more closely aligned to the Romans of the novella's opening in that he is perfectly suited for the colonial mission, more suited than Marlow or even Kurtz.

Marlow unknowingly makes the connection between Kurtz, idolatry and divine (or demonic) figures early in the novel prior to meeting Kurtz, as he contemplates what Kurtz's name actually means to him: 'somehow it didn't bring any image with it – no more than if I had been told an angel or a fiend was in there' (*HoD*: 27). Once Marlow is at Kurtz's camp he sees just how accurate he had been in his thoughts, as one of Kurtz's most horrific acts is a rite enacted to honour him. These occasions:

caused him to preside at certain midnight dances ending with unspeakable rites, which, as far as I reluctantly gathered from what I heard at various times – were offered up to him – do you understand – to Mr Kurtz himself. (*HoD*: 50)

A more chilling sentence is made by Marlow when he states that Kurtz 'had taken a high seat amongst the devils of the land – I mean literally' (*HoD*: 49). Kurtz is a more fitting devil than he is a god, as he seems to rule through fear and terror, interspersed with

cruelty. Kurtz's loss of Christian beliefs is another point of difficulty for Marlow as he 'had to deal with a being to whom I could not appeal in the name of anything high or low' (*HoD*: 66). Kurtz, then, is beyond reason, and Marlow finds he cannot make any kind of threat to appeal to Kurtz's better nature. This seems an extension of merely appearing to be god-like to the natives, such as the fact the coloniser 'must necessarily appear to them [savages] in the nature of supernatural beings – we approach them with the might of a deity' (*HoD*: 50). Unlike the Joss and Dravot, Kurtz's 'deity' behaviour extends beyond acting like a god, because he starts to believe in his own divinity. Kurtz, however, has no romance to fuel this desire, no fictional kingdom to rule through contrivance nor any unlikely rendering to turn him in to a human idol: what allows Kurtz to accept his belief in divinity is his absence from other authority and the darkness in his own heart. Unlike in 'The Man Who Would Be King' there is no explicit explanation of what led the natives to think of Kurtz, or even Fresteven, as a god. Fresteven is killed yet they still seem to fear his body, just as the natives revere Kurtz even as he is dying of illness. The fact that the natives fear the ship's steam whistle speaks to their fear of Western technology, but it is not something the text truly explores. Instead, Kurtz draws his godly status from 'the wilderness' instead of from the natives' worship. The role of the environment is emphasised by Marlow as being what leads him towards Kurtz, and not Kurtz's character in itself: "I had turned to the wilderness really, not to Mr. Kurtz who, I was ready to admit, was as good as buried" (*HoD*: 62). It is as if the wilderness is responsible for changing the minds of the characters and the alteration that takes place goes unnoticed back in Europe. The doctor who inspects Marlow before his departure believes the change in mentality could be reflected physically, so he has taken to measuring the heads of those going (*HoD*: 11). The doctor also notes that "the changes take place inside, you know" (*HoD*: 11). This seems to be true in Kurtz's case: 'the wilderness [...] had taken him,

loved him, embraced him, got into his veins, consumed his flesh, and sealed his soul to its own by the inconceivable ceremonies of some devilish initiation' (*HoD*: 48). For some critics isolation is not enough to explain Kurtz' breakdown, describing it as 'nonsense to think Kurtz is isolated and so cannot engage in real work' (Brudney, 2003: 330). Instead, isolation can be seen as being a contributing factor, with the most harmful aspects being the work Kurtz performed as 'in *Heart of Darkness*, we see a representation of state-sponsored terrorism and political horror being born from the conventions of the literary Gothic' (Singh, 2007: 214). The pseudo-religious imagery, and the reiteration that there is something devilish about Kurtz, reiterates not only the idea that being away from civilization has allowed him to embrace his sinister side but adds condemnation to the cruel uses his power has been put to.

A strong factor in Kurtz's tyranny is that he is beyond the reach of civilization, and thus its standards. The fact that the reader is told that it is a 'God forsaken wilderness' is also important; it emphasises that it is not just the absence of civilization's brick-and-mortar institutions that are felt, but it is reiterated at several points that the characters no longer seem to worry about their Western gods (*HoD*: 13). The primary recipient of worship in the novel seems to be profit and commercialism, most commonly represented through the imagery of ivory: 'the word "ivory" rang in the air, was whispered, was sighed. You would think they were praying to it' (*HoD*: 23). It is the pursuit of ivory that drives many of the novel's despicable acts, motivating both the general manager's quest to retrieve Kurtz as well as being what Kurtz seems to have committed many of his excesses in the pursuit of. Material acquisition seems to be partly what fuels Kurtz's megalomania: 'Everything belonged to him – but that was a trifle. The thing was to know where he belonged to, how many powers of darkness claimed him for their own' (*HoD*: 48). This conception of Kurtz as wishing to possess everything is not Marlow's fancy

alone, nor is Kurtz merely the recipient of the same curious treatment by the natives as Freesteven: the image of power and godhood seems to be something he cultivates. It is worth noting that Kurtz is not only worshipped by the natives; he has his own disciples amongst the Westerners in Africa, as well as back in Europe. As Devlin notes of Kurtz's godhood:

The position he takes within the last of these cultural practices [...] has a certain seamless logic to it, given his ongoing concern with reputation. The perspective he seeks recognition from has merely shifted its locus, moving from the invisible gaze of the European Council to the more immediate and perceivable I/eyes of an African tribe. (Devlin, 1994: 731-732)

As with Cochrane's analysis of the cargo cults then, the Westerner becoming revered as a god is not nearly as exotic as it sounds. Rather than a unique phenomenon it is existing power structures that encourage such tyranny.

These texts share a condescension towards the religious values of the East. This same attitude is displayed in *The Joss* where 'a similar antagonistic binary is pitched [...] where the Oriental idol ("the Great Joss") is compared unfavourably with English gods and exposed as a falsity' (Bhattacharjee, 2018: 78). *The Joss* uses the Great Ke islanders' beliefs as its central premise, defining a joss as one of the 'well known deities, which are used as household gods, on some of the Pacific coasts' (*Joss*: 36). After this key term has been explained to the reader, however, the subject of the natives' deities is discussed by the characters with distinctly negative connotations. According to Bhattacharjee:

the novels embed the power of the invasive idol, of the insurgent colonial presence in general, and of a deeper introspective ethicality ultimately – all of this coming at the time of the *fin de siècle*'s ruthless cultural strides into 'progress'. (Bhattacharjee, 2018: 84)

Idols, then, act as important focal points in these Imperial Gothic fictions, and are contested sites between the power of 'progress' and the colonial gods they represented. For instance, when examining the small joss idol one character says: 'I believe it's meant

for one of those heathen gods who are supposed to live on babies, and that kind of thing' (*Joss*: 58). To the outsiders, the 'heathen temple' where the 'Great Joss' resides is a site of fear (*Joss*: 209), not religious piety. Of the hall full of idols they consider that 'they were monsters' (*Joss*: 210). The description of natives' gods as heathen is a recurring one, with a similar phrase being used in 'The Man Who Would Be King': 'they have two-and-thirty heathen idols there, and we'll be the thirty-third and fourth' ('King': 118). These dismissive attitudes toward other belief systems fulfil several key purposes; making the natives seem superstitious reinforces Western notions of superiority, but equally in emphasising the 'falsity' or ridiculing *their* religion it sets up the acceptance of the Westerner as a religious idol.

In another story by Kipling, 'The Mark of the Beast', the contrast in attitudes towards native culture forms the basis of the action. There is a stark contrast between the offensive Fleete and his companions. Fleete seems much less interested, and comfortable with, the native culture in general, experiencing 'difficulties of the language' and possessing only 'limited [...] knowledge of the natives' ('Mark': 191). The narrator seems possessed of a liberal attitude towards the native religion, acting respectfully towards Hanuman and is 'kind to his people' ('Mark': 193), as well as being open minded about other beliefs, informing the reader that 'all gods have good points, just as have all priests' ('Mark': 193). Strickland too we are told has a 'weakness for going among the natives' ('Mark': 193). Fleete's error then is not simply limited to the fact he is drunk; the text identifies him as wilfully ignorant and disrespectful towards the native culture. Fleete's defacing of the idol is somewhat protracted, as the priests and his friends catch him 'gravely grinding the ashes of his cigar-butt into the forehead of the red, stone image of Hanuman' ('Mark': 193). The outcome of his action is foreseeable: 'Strickland, who knew what came of polluting gods, said that things may occur' ('Mark': 193). Fleete's

tale then is rather straightforward; he has adopted a position of cultural superiority towards the natives, both belittling and underestimating their religion. Fleete is therefore justifiably punished: “take your friend away. He has done with Hanuman but Hanuman has not done with him” (‘Mark’: 193). This statement, spoken by a priest, even suggests his punishment originates from Hanuman himself. That in-fiction endorsement of the validity of the native religion stands as a counter-point to the wider attitudes on display.

The figure of power is effectively subjected to a Panopticon, as explored in chapter one, remaining visible at all times. Part of the difficulty of the Joss’ situation is that ‘there’s eyes on him all the time’ (*Joss*: 203), something shared by Peachey and Dravot. As mentioned previously, whilst Peachey and Dravot are exiled and killed respectively, the Joss seeks to escape his bondage as a monstrous idol: ‘having had enough of being a Joss he wants to get back to his native land’ (*Joss*: 202). Whilst Batters’ godly status was forced upon him, it is something Peachey and Dravot seek to cultivate. The idea they could be recognised as gods is seeded early on in Peachey’s tale, reflecting how they arrived at the first village ‘without any trouble, just as though we had tumbled from the skies’ (‘King’: 126). Whilst Dravot and Peachey initially treat the development with surprise, “they think we’re Gods” (‘King’: 126), they quickly recognise the utility of it, playing up to the role: ‘a thundering big Chief comes across the snow with kettle-drums and horns twanging, because he heard there was a new God kicking about’ (‘King’: 127). It is not long before performing this role goes to their heads. After the natives rebel against them, Peachey realises ‘Dan started to go mad in his head from that hour. He stared up and down like a stuck pig’ (‘King’: 136). Batters too is thought to be mad by many of the characters in the novel, something reinforced by how poorly explained his actions are upon returning to England: ‘he’s a bit off his chump, poor chap’ (*Joss*: 215). More subtly, both seem to adopt a vehement belief in their own rule and influence.

Dravot's exclamation to Peachey, though not necessarily something he believes, displays not only his ambition but suggests he is becoming more out of touch and intoxicated by his own illusion: "I am the son of Alexander by Queen Semiramis, and you're my younger brother and a God too!" ('King': 128). Batters makes similar exclamations when coming across those who will not submit to his will: "Stop, you fool, stop! I'm the Joss – The Great Joss; the greatest god this country's ever known. In my presence all men fall upon their knees and worship me" (*Joss*: 214). Batters himself seems to believe greatly in his own godhood, or at the very least uses suitably melodramatic phrases to suit his image. For instance, when laying out the draconic terms of his will Batters threatens that, should his niece break the terms: 'may my curse light upon her' (*Joss*: 44). These phrases quickly move beyond Batters' belief in his own ability to disperse curses, however, and it is through his own excessive imagery the reader can glimpse his tyrannical nature, warning Pollie that: 'if you lose the key [...] may the gods burn up the marrow in your bones. And they will' (*Joss*: 47). The 'and they will' again presumably references his own belief in his godly status. While Batters' mental deterioration and descent into tyranny could be largely a result of his bodily trauma, for Peachey and Dravot it should have posed an obvious risk: this is what they set out to do. Batters' mutilation and the suffering of Peachey and Dravot to come can be seen as an exterior representation of the mental harm performing this role has done.

At the close of 'The Man Who Would Be King' the godly status of the main characters begins to be questioned. Naturally, Dravot's subjects realise that he is 'neither God nor Devil but a man!' ('King': 136), but the interesting addition here is not the recognition that he is a man, but the concern he might be a devil. The term is also used slightly early, as Dravot's advisors express worry over his wedding plans: "How can daughters of men marry Gods or Devils? It's not proper" ('King': 134). What makes this

particularly insightful is that they do not take action on the concern their 'Gods' may be Devils, only that they might be mere men. As with many tyrants then, power is what allows absolute rule. This slight difference between God and Devil is shared in *The Joss*. Batters elicits a different response on board Lander's ship. Whilst the natives of Great Ke Island treat Batters like a god, the ship's crew 'took him for the devil, and shrank from him as such' (*Joss*: 225). The issue is explored further when one crewmember, the engineer, openly asks Captain Lander "'is it the devil that we've took aboard?'" (*Joss*: 227). Lander's answer is informative: "'It's not. But it's something that's seen the devil face to face, and tasted of hell fire'" (*Joss*: 227). Sympathy then can be elicited for Batters, when he is not threatening others. Throughout the Gothic mode comparisons with Satan are used to emphasise tyrannical behaviour, emphasising a continuum of Gothic tyranny. What marks out Imperial Gothic as distinct, however, is the fear derived from this comparison is often achieved at the realisation Western superiority is not as secure as often thought. Importantly, Batters' status as a 'devil' is a direct result of his enduring the cruelty of others.

Idols of Torture

Arata links reverse-colonisation to punishment: 'these narratives provide an opportunity to atone for imperial sins, since reverse-colonisation is often represented as deserved punishment' (Arata, 1990: 623). Punishment does seem to suit some of these texts, in particular 'The Mark of the Beast' clearly punishes a drunkard for his cultural insensitivity, but the story ends with the sense that Fleete's companions, who had to both control and cure him, have learned a lot more than Fleete himself. Similarly, Dravot in 'The Man Who Would be King' faces retribution from his people not for masquerading as a god but for violating his pact with Peachey and trying to take a wife. Not only is the reasoning for some of these characters' punishments problematic, but these are isolated

examples of personal punishment; they do not constitute a wider cultural punishment, a threat to the home-state, in the way Haggard's *She* (1887) or Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), two of Arata's chief examples, do. There is no retaliation, no re-using occidental methods:

Just as *Dracula's* vampirism mirrors the domestic practices of Victorian patriarchs, so his invasion of London in order to 'batten on the helpless' natives there mirrors British imperial activities abroad. (Arata, 1990: 633)

Instead, the reverse-colonisation present in these texts seems mostly localised to the body: 'horror arises not because *Dracula* destroys bodies, but because he appropriates and transforms them' (Arata, 1990: 630). This is the crucial sentiment that marks these texts as an embodiment of reverse-colonisation; they all depict a transformation of some kind, either physical or mental. Unlike *Dracula's* bite, however, these transformations are not always an attempt to attack the West, as it is the attempt at colonisation that in some cases ultimately leads to physical deformity or mental breakdown. Through physical torture and mental harm the colonial experience has a way of scarring Westerners. Torture is chiefly characterised as a tool of the tyrant; and indeed in Gothic literature that is where it is most often deployed. Conversely, for Gothic texts set at the height of Victorian Imperialism, there is a trend for the colonising Westerner to become the victim of excessive torture and mutilation.

Kipling's 'The Mark of the Beast' features a torture scene of a native that seems at odds with its generally more culturally sensitive message. The story was noted for its shocking content, alluding to its inclusion of torture. Contemporary examples include the fact that 'the *Pall Mall Gazette* said that "as a tale of sheer terror" it "could not easily be surpassed"; but the *Athenaeum* felt that the author had stepped over "the bounds of decorum"' (Page, 1984: 106). The Gothic torture scene in 'The Mark of the Beast' is mostly typical, represented primarily by omissions and vague remarks. For instance, the

reader is told that ‘several other things happened also, but they cannot be put down here’ (‘Mark’: 202). Even one of the torturers seeks to shield himself from the sight of what is happening: ‘Strickland shaded his eyes with his hands for a moment and we got to work. This part is not to be printed’ (‘Mark’: 202). The Silver Man’s torture is more horrific than Fleete’s suffering, and he has committed no crime, particularly not towards the two torturers who disapproved of Fleete’s actions from the outset. This strange ambivalence reaches its peak with a statement by the narrator:

I understood then how men and women and little children can endure to see a witch burnt alive [...] you could see horrible feelings passing through the slab that took its place, exactly as waves of heat play across red-hot iron. (‘Mark’: 202)

The sentiment is paradoxical; despite being able to see ‘horrible feelings’ on their victim, the torturer now understands how even little children could endure viewing a public burning. Despite their initial stance of criticising Fleete, their loyalty lies in race and not morality, as they become active participants in a severe abuse of a native.

This torture of an innocent native lies in contrast with the informative manner in which Fleete himself has been punished. Not only does Fleete undergo a transformation, but his skin is marked in a way analogous to how he defaced the temple: ‘a mark, the perfect double of the black rosettes – the five or six irregular blotches arranged in a circle – on a leopard’s hide’ (‘Mark’: 195). Fleete suffers a degeneration akin to the cultural degeneration society was so anxious about. Fleete loses the habits of civilized society. The narrator recounts symptoms detailing this regression including how ‘he made beast noises in the back of his throat’ and ‘he ate his food like a beast’ (‘Mark’: 199, 196). Even whilst experiencing this degeneration, Fleete affords the reader an insight into the high-minded Imperial outlook: ‘he said the smells of the bazaar were overpowering, and he wondered why slaughter-houses were permitted so near English residences’ (‘Mark’: 194). Not only does Fleete mentally transform into a werewolf over the course of the day, but

he seemingly loses his spiritual superiority as well: 'Fleete could not speak, he could only snarl, and his snarls were those of a wolf, not of a man. The human spirit must have been giving way all day and have died out with the twilight' ('Mark': 199). Fleete's punishment then is fitting and justified; far less sensational than the torture the innocent Silver Man undergoes. Even in a story where a native god enacts vengeance, the well-meaning colonisers are shown to be the most tyrannical characters.

Violence by natives destroys the Self/'Other' divide. In *The Joss*, the result of Batters' prolonged torture calls into question his assumed racial or national superiority; effectively degenerating him: 'It was hard to believe that such a creature could be human. And English! The sight of him filled me with a sense of nausea' (*Joss*: 230). When Peachey returns in 'The Man Who Would Be King' the narrator is approached by 'what was left of a man. He was bent into a circle, his head was sunk between his shoulders, and he moved his feet one over the other like a bear' ('King': 123). This passage reiterates not only the doubt as to whether or not 'what was left' of Peachey can be called a man, but that the tortures he has suffered have left him with some resemblances to an animal. Peachey's scars and mutilation into an unfamiliar shape are inextricably linked: 'he dropped one hand upon the table and I grasped it by the wrist. It was twisted like a bird's claw, and upon the back was a ragged red diamond shaped scar' ('King': 123). Like Batters, their status as human beings is called into question – rendering them visibly monstrous. Batters' less flattering comparisons put him worse off than either god or devil. Batters' status as a human being comes in to question: 'It depends on what you call a man' (*Joss*: 178). There is a suggestion that the mutilation Batters has suffered has made him more bestial, as his voice is described as 'a deep rumbling bass, which was more like a growl than a human voice' (*Joss*: 124). The process of 'othering' has been turned on its

head – the colonial presumption that natives are savage has been inverted, as one of its participants is reduced to something monstrous and bestial.

Native cruelty, unsurprisingly, formed another fixation within colonial fiction. Seemingly without irony Johnston criticises ‘the government of autocratic chiefs, who maintain their claims over immense territory by sheer force of arms, and gratify their pride of savage power by a reign of terror and cruelty’ (Johnston, 1893: 92). Western authority could easily be characterised by pride, and certainly relies on ‘sheer force of arms’, yet Johnston in true Orientalist style ignores these things to endorse a sense of ‘othering’ and a tone of condemnation.⁹ These same attitudes likely inform the extensive mutilation Batters undergoes in *The Joss*. Whilst there is no explicit narrative covering the period of Batters’ torture and mutilation, nor indeed his arrival on the island, the text does not draw a veil over how he became the Joss, usually voicing the procedure through Batters: “‘they made me the thing you see, cut me to pieces, boiled, burned, and baked me; skinned me alive. Then they dip me in a paint-pot and made me a god’” (*Joss*: 217). The text does allow for the reader’s imagination, keeping some aspects of torture vague: Batters has “‘been cut to pieces, stewed in oil, and I don’t know what’” (*Joss*: 215). A conflation of the incredible endurance Batters showed with some mundane language makes this more apparent through juxtaposition: “‘I can’t stand being pulled about with red-hot pincers like I used to’” (*Joss*: 217). Similarly, Peachey does not provide an exhaustive account of the tortures he had undergone. Primarily he complains of the crucifixion, but adds to his list of injuries that his “‘head isn’t as good as it might be. They drove nails through it to make me hear better how Dravot died’” (‘King’: 125). It seems interesting, too, that torture renders the *coloniser* powerless here as the power

⁹ Similarly, when discussing a native Queen he undermines her authority with a description that portrays her as petty and jealous, claiming she is known for ‘avenging herself particularly on those who are in any way the objects of her jealousy’ (Johnson, 1893: 169).

dynamics of colonisation habitually subjugate the natives. Discussing castaway narratives Weaver-Hightower asserts that: ‘the island could mirror perceptions of a human body bounded by skin and could thus enable writers and readers to fantasize about naturally ruling and owning land as one would one’s own body’ (Weaver-Hightower, 2006: xix). For Batters, and to a lesser degree Peachey and Dravot, their failure to master their own bodies, even during the mutilation of their physical forms, seems to go hand in hand with their powerlessness or loss of rule. Batters was completely helpless to escape on his own, requiring outside assistance from his own Nation: “‘I haven’t stayed here all this time because I wanted, I had to’” (*Joss*: 217). Power forms a cyclical series of abuse, articulated here in two different ways – while Peachey receives punishment for his colonial egomania, Batters’ suffering turns him into a threatening tyrannical presence even when back in Britain.

At the novel’s conclusion the issue of Batters’ Godhood is raised again, this time in more practical terms, echoing the ideas of immortality raised in ‘The Man Who Would Be King’. The natives of Great Ke Island, who had pursued Batters across the globe, react with surprise to his death, while Frank Paine notes that ‘I had a sort of notion that they had supposed him to be immortal, and that he couldn’t die’ (*Joss*: 261). A further remark links this immortality to the cruelty and mutilation Batters had received at the natives’ own hands: ‘to what prolonged and hideous tortures the man must have been subjected [...] it might very well have been incomprehensible to them why, if he could die, he hadn’t died’ (*Joss*: 262). This raises several unanswerable questions about Batters’ interment as a Joss; chiefly, was he intended to be so from the start, or was it his survival of the tortures that made him a Joss in their eyes? More chillingly perhaps, how many Westerners had undergone similar treatment and not survived? The torture of a pseudo-deity is a feature of literature of this theme and genre, with a similar occurrence

transpiring in 'The Man Who Would Be King'. Dravot had been beheaded by the natives once they realise he is not a god, but Peachey is subjected to torture:

They crucified him, sir, as Peachey's hands will show. They used wooden pegs for his hands and feet; and he didn't die. He hung there and he screamed, and they took him down the next day, and said it was a miracle that he wasn't dead. ('King': 138)

Like Batters then, it is Peachey's ability to withstand supposedly fatal tortures that makes him seem God-like in the eyes of the natives, though in this instance Peachey is spared and made to leave, rather than being kept prisoner to be worshipped.

Despite the text and characters seeming to conform to the view that torture and cruelty were the purview of the native, and therefore something that the civilised West would have no part in, there is a point when a Western character states their own willingness to participate in the cruelty they had previously deplored. Captain Max Lander, essentially robbed and ruined by Luke, states his regret at being unable to find him:

I would willingly have made a Joss of Luke if I had only had a chance. To have boiled, burned, and skinned him would have been a pleasure. He should not only have been legless, he should have been armless too. (*Joss*: 246)

The last line is informative as it not only reiterates Lander's capability to indulge in excesses of violence, but states that he would be willing to go further than even the native, removing Luke's arms as well as his legs. Dravot, too, in mortal peril after suffering betrayal by his people makes a vow to do excessive cruelty in return, swearing "when I come back here again I'll sweep the valley so there isn't a bug in a blanket left!" ('King': 137). Dravot's statement can be taken as either worse or preferable to Lander's; it is more thorough, indicating intended genocide rather than personal revenge, yet it is also less literal, striking of exaggeration and thus harder to take seriously. Of course, Dravot is killed and is never given the chance to practise any kind of revenge,

whilst Luke is eventually in Lander's power, and the text gives no indication that Lander took revenge of any sort.

The Joss is not solely about exotic forms of cruelty and tyranny, however, and its early chapters' realist description of the grinding life working at a drapers forms a stark contrast with the romantic horrors of most of the novel. For the working classes, industrialised London was no less perilous, and Pollie and Emily are on the verge of being thrown out into destitution before ever becoming involved with the Joss. The tyrant of the early chapters is the appropriately, and melodramatically, named Mr. Slaughter: 'He was a thorough man of business, without a grain of feeling in him. We all felt that he looked on us assistants as if we were so many inferior cattle' (*Joss*: 29). Pollie also observes that Slaughter 'had a way of speaking as if he would like to bite you', again invoking vampire imagery, as well as of carnivores generally (*Joss*: 29). This is just another means by which the text challenges the notion that cruelty is the weapon of the 'Other'. Such examples emphasise that it is the cruelty that colonisers took abroad with them that is of primary importance in these fictions; re-enacting violence that elsewhere in the Gothic mode is more conveniently displaced onto the 'Other'. The assumption that it is the natives alone that are barbarous is consistently challenged as again and again the reader is reminded not only of the tyranny at home, but of how that tyranny came to be exported overseas.

Idols of Wilderness and Manliness

The utter savageness had closed round him – all the mysterious life of the wilderness that stirs in the forest, in the jungles, in the hearts of wild men. There's no initiation either into such mysteries. He has to live in the midst of the incomprehensible which is also detestable. And it has a fascination too, that goes to work upon him. (*HoD*: 6)

The above quotation from *Heart of Darkness* constitutes foreshadowing early in the novella as Marlow prefigures the processes by which he and Kurtz are damaged by their

colonial experiences. It suggests that a force, be it darkness, savageness, or wilderness, starts to influence or harm them. The idea that isolated islands and the African wilderness could provide an ‘unfettered’ existence is one that *Heart of Darkness* itself confronts, albeit in an essentially cynical manner. The ‘darkness’ is more than a reference to its unexplored status; Marlow states his boyhood obsession with exploring the ‘blank spaces on the earth’, yet directly contrasts the darkness he sees in certain places with the blank or ‘whiteness’ of a lack of exploration, noting that by adulthood Africa ‘had ceased to be a blank space of delightful mystery – a white patch for a boy to dream gloriously over. It had become a place of darkness’ (*HoD*: 8). This darkness is central to the novel, as it is implied to be the force that unravels both Kurtz and, to a lesser degree, Marlow. This can be seen through an extended metaphor as Marlow begins contemplating a ‘decent young citizen in a toga’ from Rome, colonising Britain as it was now colonising others. All of these texts similarly describe men faced with difficult decisions and an overwhelming task. Whilst traditional Imperial Romances, by writers like Haggard, feature heroes whose manliness and masculinity are endorsed by the colonial experience, here, however, the characters are unmanned by it. Frances B Singh recognises not only Kurtz’ declining condition, but links it to tyrants from earlier Gothic literature:

Then there is Kurtz himself, specter-thin by the time we meet him, a mangled mind in a wasted body. The basis for his characterization as a terror-inspiring figure is the criminally evil and morally degraded protagonist common in Gothic literature. (Singh, 2007: 208)

Ravaged both physically and mentally, often with their sanity left highly questionable, the cracks forming in the minds of men placed in positions of power, but also positions of vulnerability, are clearly on display. The questions and advice the doctor gives Marlow are indicative of the effect the colonial experience has on the men being sent out there: “‘ever any madness in your family?’”, and, “‘avoid irritation more than exposure to the sun’” (*HoD*: 12). The experience of Marlow and Kurtz, of Dravot and Peachey, and of

Batters, is not one individual to their psyches. It is an established pattern, a predictable outcome of the circumstances they are being placed in. Tyranny, therefore, is embraced as not only a job, but a performance – a role that they must perform.

The idea of the wilderness has a powerful resonance in Imperial Gothic, symbolizing (and literally facilitating), these characters' removal from civilization. Both wilderness and savagery are heavily implicated here in being facets of the darkness that are harmful to the coloniser, and 'most critics see Kurtz as the morally hollow man who, kicking his feet loose from the earth, utterly loses his soul in Africa' (Anderson, 1988: 404), but this process is not as straightforward as it initially seems. Wilderness and savagery speak to a removal from civilization, being away from something so inherent to modern life, something familiar, and instead being surrounded by something so alien, so 'other', as to be 'incomprehensible'. In a discussion of necroecology, Thakur states that 'humans are driven by nonhumans toward the unexpected recognition that they are capable of unimaginable crimes and bewildering behaviours [sic], and these take place against a colonial backdrop of death, decay, and madness' (Thakur, 2016: 206). The wilderness itself seems to be in possession of its own dark heart: 'the sunlit face of the land a treacherous appeal to the lurking death, to the hidden evil, to the profound darkness of its heart' (*HoD*: 33). The novella is not only an exploration in geography but the 'savagery' of Africa is emphasised to such a degree that it becomes tantamount to going backwards in time. Even chronological order is challenged through Marlow's storytelling, as on several occasions the results of a series of events are revealed to the reader before the events themselves have finished being described: 'what we afterwards alluded to as an attack was really an attempt at repulse' and later he cuts into his own narration with the remark 'of course I was wrong. The privilege was waiting for me' (*HoD*: 43, 48). At times travelling further along the river is equated with time travel as 'going up that river

was like travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were kings' (*HoD*: 33). The conflation between trees and kings here is another suggestion that the wilderness and forces of nature are partly what rule the novella. When one of the natives draws their attention along the banks of the river, Marlow notes that 'the prehistoric man was cursing us, praying to us, welcoming us – who could tell?' (*HoD*: 35). The use of the word prehistoric instead of merely savage is an even bigger confirmation that Marlow is seeing his journey in to the wilderness as a return to ancient times, to the pre-Roman London hinted at in the novel's opening, or anywhere before the hand of man tamed the wilds. One of the most potent sentences in the novella is a description of the wilderness and its effect on Marlow: 'the earth seemed unearthly. We are accustomed to look upon the shackled form of a conquered monster, but there – there you could look at a thing monstrous and free' (*HoD*: 36). The wilderness is a monster. Marlow and Kurtz are used to seeing the earth restrained by civilization, mastered by the hands of men, but in the depths of the jungle it holds mastery over them.

The natives are conflated with the environment in *Heart of Darkness*. When Marlow's boat is under attack the reader is told 'the bush was swarming with human limbs in movement' (*HoD*: 45). Fanon's exploration of the dehumanizing effects of colonisation initially seems to align rather well with the processes Conrad is describing:

As if to show the totalitarian character of colonial exploitation the settler paints the native as a sort of quintessence of evil [...] He is, let us dare to admit, the enemy of values, and in this sense he is the absolute evil. He is the corrosive element, destroying all that comes near him. (Fanon, 1963: 41)

For those who see *Heart of Darkness* as a reverse-colonization text, one whereby Kurtz goes 'native' and is infected by the savagery of those around him, this analysis is incredibly fitting. The wilderness is characterised as a monster, but *Heart of Darkness* suggests that monstrosity is actually something the coloniser brought with them –

something they have to actively resist indulging in. Marlow's contemplation of the Roman coloniser seemingly shares this idea, acknowledging how dangerous being away from civilized beings, and their rules, can be. Marlow says that the young Roman "did it very well too, no doubt, and without thinking much about it either, except afterwards to brag of what he had gone through in his time, perhaps. They were men enough to face the darkness" (*HoD*: 6). 'Thinking about it' is then also implicated as something a coloniser should avoid, but it is the last short sentence that is the most intriguing. Manliness is something that can hold the darkness at bay, yet in stating that the Romans had it there is some vague questioning as to whether or not his contemporaries do. This is crucial to understanding the function of Gothic tyranny in fiction of this type – it explicitly acknowledges the capacity for abuse scarcely held in check by civilization. According to McClure:

In Conrad's fiction the colonizer does not 'revert to savagery' or 'go native' in the sense of taking on the traits of the people he conquers. His fall is the product of his own desires and the license he gains by being white, owning weapons, and living beyond the borders of his own community. (McClure, 1981: 92)

Whatever traits Kurtz acquires while in 'the darkness', the real harmful forces are those that came with him. To use a particularly pointed phrase, in a superficial reading of Imperial tyranny, one cannot see the wood for the trees. The wilderness may form a fixation for Western writers, but its mastery over people is exaggerated – it merely proved insufficient in keeping Westerners in check the same way their own society did.

Weakness is consistently identified in the colonial tyrant. *Heart of Darkness* emphasises the complete gulf between the perceived Western values and those of the natives, who are rendered fully 'other' compared to the Western values represented by Marlow's aunt. However, Marlow's own questioning of his aunt's opinions, as well as the fact that the novella devotes a great deal more emphasis to the effect of the wilderness on

the Westerners than the natives themselves, suggests that what Conrad attempts is in fact much more complicated than citing the savage natives as a 'corrosive' force. The drums emerging unattached from the forest seem to not only distance their influence from any specific natives, but draw parallels between similar Western beliefs: 'perhaps on some quiet night the tremor of far-off drums, sinking, swelling, a tremor vast, faint; a sound weird, appealing, suggestive and wild – and perhaps with as profound a meaning as the sound of bells in a Christian country' (*HoD*: 20). It is implied at several points that Kurtz's downfall is due to a weakness present in him before he even left Europe, such as this sentence that states that 'the wilderness had found him out early, and had taken on him a terrible vengeance for the fantastic invasion' (*HoD*: 57). The language here is clear; the wilderness does not change Kurtz by itself, instead it 'finds him out'. Marlow's consideration of Kurtz's severed heads on spikes makes this point even clearer:

there was nothing exactly profitable in those heads being there. They only showed that Mr Kurtz lacked restraint in the gratification of his various lusts, that there was something wanting in him. (*HoD*: 57)

The brutality of Kurtz's actions is not due to an infectious savagery in his being, rather to a lack of something still wanting in him, a lack of restraint, and perhaps even the manliness Marlow saw in the young Romans of the novella's opening. Kurtz's severed heads as a sign of weakness has been explored by other critics, such as Devlin, who sees them as part of Kurtz's need to sustain his sense of self. The heads:

are all turned towards Kurtz's abode, creating, on the one hand, a symbolic field of conquered and enthralled subjects. On the other hand, however, this field simultaneously reveals its metaphysically enthralled core: its visual centre and focus, Kurtz himself, in need of numerous others to support and sustain his sense of self. (Devlin, 1994: 732)

Kurtz's weakness can be read in characters throughout these Gothic texts, particularly in 'The Man Who Would Be King'.

Both Conrad and Marlow seem under no pretence of just what the colonising missions of the nineteenth century really were, offering up a brutal and unflinching description that ‘it was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale, and men going at it blind – as is very proper for those who tackle a darkness’ (*HoD*: 7). Similarly, the trait of blindness is emphasised, though whether blindness is being offered up as an advantageous characteristic to possess, like not thinking, or if it is being condemned as typical fault of the colonial mentality is left to the reader to decide. Again, even in non-fiction these same influences have been discussed as being detrimental: ‘the geographical explorer’s identity could be fragile [...] the charge of self-promotion and sensationalism was potentially damaging’ (Lawrence, 2016: 155). The recognition from critics that ‘the optimistic Victorians were very aware of the gothic terrors haunting their energetic endeavours’ makes such readings of these texts more compelling (Jones, 2011: 80). Conrad in particular is known to have opposed imperial expansion and rejected its myth of benevolence:

Of Conrad’s fundamental opposition to imperialism there can be no doubt. As he portrays it, imperialism is basically an expansion of capitalist or autocratic drives beyond national boundaries. The nature of these drives is aggressive and exploitative, and their effect is to destroy what is most human in people and their communities. (McClure, 1981: 94)

Heart of Darkness reflects the colonial efforts in a different light from other texts by exploring the mentality of the coloniser and how it can so easily run to excess.

Heart of Darkness turns this character flaw into a mysterious and brooding menace that disfigures the souls of those who undertake the colonial mission. It is not only to Kipling that Conrad’s work can be compared, however, as one of the functions of the text is to rewrite the imperial romance into a more Gothic style. Stephen E. Tabachnick compares the text to Haggard’s *She* and has noted that ‘if we place *She* against *Heart of Darkness*, we find both cases an identical adaptation of the basic Gothic

adventure plot, suitably geared to late-nineteenth-century tastes' (Tabachnick, 2013: 192). This comparison is most appropriate for a study of tyranny as the villainess of *She* is typical of the supernatural beings that best personify the reverse-colonisation narrative of Imperial Gothic. What unites these figures along with Kurtz is that 'neither Kurtz's soul nor Ayesha's knows any restraint and both "yearn for power"' (Tabachnick, 2013: 190). In this way Conrad can be seen as writing a less supernatural horror novel; one in which the central monster has no need to resort to otherworldly powers to accomplish horrific acts, the machinery of colonialism has placed all the powers he needs at his disposal. Again, as Tabachnick notes: 'in Conrad's case, Gothicism is used not to create a physically striking creature but rather to tell us something unique and dark indeed' (Tabachnick, 2013: 197). The absence of laws and restraints is something noticed and commented on by others besides Kurtz. Kurtz's disciple, the Russian trader, states that "there was nothing on earth to prevent [Kurtz] killing whom he jolly well pleased. And it was true too" whereas the general manager similar comments that "anything – anything can be done in this country" (*HoD*: 56, 32). These texts, then, exhibit not only distinctly Gothic characteristics, but pose important questions about the validity of ruling over others – just as the Spanish Inquisition and French Revolution fiction does. The hypocrisy of the colonial mission allows for an indulgence in tyranny that situates the wilderness as essentially a playground – a place where restraints were not required and rulers could govern unfettered.

Conclusion: Men Who Should Not Be King

The colonial tyrant stands as a true idol of barbarity. Throughout these texts 'Otherness' is articulated on a much grander scale than previous historical periods discussed in this thesis, but it is done so with ambivalence. The repeated motif of being worshipped as a God initially seems to be endorsing Western superiority, and may repeat some prejudices,

but stands to showcase how unfit the colonial tyrant actually is. The acts of torture committed against native populations communicates this unsuitability of the government to the reader, while bodily harm rendered to the Imperial subject indicated their own internal degeneration. While the wilderness initially seems to be at fault for infecting honest, Christian attempts at colonisation, a sustained exploration of these Imperial Gothic texts shows the extent to which the truly monstrous practices continue, practices not only begun in the West, but which have much in common with earlier tyrannical models.

Heart of Darkness explores many of the same themes as ‘The Man Who Would Be King’ but is much more forthright in its emphasis on interiority.¹⁰ The flaws of Kurtz and Dravot are essentially the same, too much ambition with nothing to hold them in check. While ‘the [Men who would be] “kings” fail because they do not possess the moral authority requisite for enlightened imperial rule’ it seems logical to question whether anyone does (Meyers, 1973: 1). The fiction of the colonial tyrant provides the clearest examples that savagery not kept in check remains a constant possibility. The Gothic tyrant has, as earlier chapters have shown, a longstanding function of revealing how ‘uncivilised’ rulers, and even the masses, can be. The conscious restaging of pseudo-medieval abuses of power in Imperial fiction, however, adds in to the Gothic mode the fear that civilisation itself may be a myth. As with much romantic fiction, too, these concerns over Western cruelty have been deliberately displaced into other realms – made exotic when they are just as relevant to the mentality of those at home. The next chapter will explore how these same *fin-de-siècle* ideas are built upon into the twentieth century, turning Victorian and Edwardian symbols of tyranny into recurring menaces that lasted well into the twenty-first century.

¹⁰ Even the film version, *The Man Who Would Be King* (1975), has been called a ‘superb action narrative and at the same time rich in reflection’ (Jameson, 1980: 56).

Chapter 4: From Transylvania to Transmission: The Transformation and Popularisation of Arch-Tyrants across the Twentieth Century

So he came to London to invade a new land. He was beaten, and when all hope of success was lost, and his existence in danger, he fled back over the sea to his home; just as formerly he had fled back over the Danube from Turkey Land. (*Dracula*: 296)

There is perhaps no more iconic a Gothic villain than Dracula. Literary criticism has made much of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) and the novel itself has become a veritable repository for every fear and anxiety of the late-nineteenth century. The novel, too, has been adapted continuously over the course of more than a century – transformed into various film personalities, ranging from the comedic to the bestial. Through this process the Dracula that is an anachronistic medieval tyrant has been side-lined. Dracula was not only a tyrannical aristocrat but, as the quotation above emphasises, a warlord in the latent battle between East and West in the popular imagination. Dracula also draws directly upon his Gothic tyrant forbears – literally a medieval ruler still rampaging in the nineteenth century. This chapter will explore how one of the most recognisable characters of the twentieth century draws on its historical and Orientalist roots and went on to influence models of tyranny across film and television. This is not merely a Victorian attitude however, as world politics have once again returned to Orientalist ideas throughout the twentieth century. This can be seen in the American 'War on Terror' as it has been noted that 'since September 11, 2001, the Bush administration has taken on an Orientalist discourse for its foreign policy' (Ling, 2004: 377). The very manner in which international relations have returned to discussing the East and the West as a binary opposition stands as a prime example of the way Orientalism has continued through the twentieth century and in to the twenty-first. Together with other distinctly Eastern tyrants, Dracula demonstrates the extent to which Orientalist Eastern arch-tyrants have held a lasting influence on those within twentieth century popular culture.

One of the most significant recurring tyrants of the twentieth century, after Dracula, is Doctor Fu Manchu, first appearing in Sax Rohmer's *The Mystery of Dr Fu Manchu* (1913).¹ *The Mystery of Dr Fu Manchu* is narrated by Dr Petrie, who teams up with his friend, the brilliant detective Nayland Smith, who has recently returned from Burma in pursuit of Dr Fu Manchu. The novel follows these two characters as they unravel different mysteries that are invariably resultant of the machinations of Dr Fu Manchu. Fu Manchu is invading from even further East than Dracula, but continues to endorse the idea of an Eastern and Western racial conflict beyond the *fin de siècle* and into the twentieth century. Rohmer wrote thirteen Fu Manchu novels prior to his death, the last of which was published in 1959.² In another similarity with *Dracula* the series has also been excessively filmed. Fu Manchu was the subject of a silent film as early as 1923, but productions continued in one form or another until the 1970s.³ Fu Manchu is a prominent example of a specific type of Orientalist discourse referred to in contemporary language as 'the yellow peril' – essentially an offensive term that captured the fear of the perceived threat from Asia, particularly China. This classification of fiction and film expresses all the same concerns as Victorian racial paranoia, transferred into the Asian continent. Professor Sir Christopher Frayling's *The Yellow Peril: Dr Fu Manchu and the Rise of Chinaphobia* (2014) asks an important question of Fu Manchu: 'Has Dr Fu Manchu remained the ultimate personification of exotic villainy, in an age which still likes to give a single face to diffuse terrorist threats?' (Frayling, 2014: 13). That Frayling awards this role to Fu Manchu shows the extent to which Dracula is no longer considered

¹ Rohmer may be writing considerably later than Stoker, but his subject matter and writing style read much like the nineteenth-century writers – therefore it seems justified in referring to his works as part of the 'long' nineteenth-century.

² The series has continued, but with a posthumous collection of stories and more recently 'authorised' sequels by other writers.

³ Most productions star white actors in Asian make-up making them inherently offensive, even without the source material's Orientalism. This seems a compelling reason why Fu Manchu films suddenly stop with *The Castle of Fu Manchu* (1969) and a parody *The Fiendish Plot of Dr Fu Manchu* (1980), which was a commercial and critical disaster.

exotic, but more importantly it acknowledges the impact of figures like this in creating enduring archetypes. This chapter will follow this line of discussion to demonstrate the ability of Dracula and Fu Manchu to, borrowing Frayling's phrase, each appear as a 'single face' of Gothic tyranny – an 'ultimate personification' of malign values and fearful uses of power.

Victorian attitudes had an informing influence on both of these texts' approaches as seeing the Easterner as unfamiliar and threatening. British imperialism peaked at the *fin de siècle*, as discussed in the previous chapter, leading to a marked period of fear of the racial other. A prominent example of a character regarded as being a product of these attitudes is Svengali from George du Maurier's *Trilby* (1894).⁴ Svengali is a sinister hypnotist who enthralls a young singer, making her perform under a trance for his own ends. The character has been read as plainly anti-Semitic by Ken Gelder in *Reading the Vampire* (1994), who refers to it as 'du Maurier's explicitly anti-Semitic novel' (Gelder, 1994: 14).⁵ Svengali, then, can be seen as an important figure, forming part of the era's Orientalist discourse as 'Svengali' has become a term for type of tyrannical figure in its own right. The Oxford English Dictionary states that the term is used 'allusively to designate a person who exercises a controlling or mesmeric influence on another, [frequently] for some sinister purpose' (OED, online: 1914). The cultural adoption of this term to signify controlling mesmeric tyranny indicates not only how such models have been adopted for a longstanding purpose, but how such archetypes can outlast and move beyond their specific racial discourses.

⁴ Svengali has been identified as sharing similarities with earlier sensation fiction characters: 'Svengali recalls for us Count Fosco in Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1860), whose "voracious vanity" and mesmeric ability matches Svengali's own' (Gracombe, 2003: 104).

⁵ This is somewhat of a recurring motif in du Maurier's work, who Gracombe finds to be 'almost fixated on Jews and Jewishness' (Gracombe, 2003: 89).

Both Dracula and Fu Manchu have much in common with Svengali. First of all, like Dracula and Fu Manchu, ‘Svengali is now so much more famous than the novel itself, so detached from the text that engendered him that his origins are not commonly remembered’ (Bienstock, 2005: 99). As with Fu Manchu, Svengali is inseparable from his race as his ‘ethnicity is his primary identifying feature throughout the novel’ (Bienstock, 2005: 101). Gelder notes both Svengali and Dracula are ‘similarly described’ and both ‘identified with animals’ (Gelder, 1994: 15). This similarity extends to their strange, almost Byronic attractiveness as ‘in his paradoxical seductiveness, Svengali recalls the hero-villain of the Gothic’ (Bienstock, 2005: 114). Both Svengali and Dracula share similar powers that prey on similar cultural anxieties. Hughes describes Svengali in such a way as that he might be talking about Dracula, listing ‘his ability to control a subject, dubious sexual motives, mysterious or foreign origins and those peculiarities of diction’ (Hughes, 2015: 210). Some of these abilities, too, can be read in an explicitly racial way as ‘du Maurier utilizes a long tradition in which Jews were thought to have “special powers” – be they musical, mesmeric, medicinal, poisonous, or all of the above’ (Gracombe, 2003: 102). This is a characteristic emphasised by other critics, who find Svengali’s characterisation draws on contemporary ideas as well as the traditional: ‘du Maurier also draws on the contemporary association of the Jew with mesmerism and music, which expresses the cultural fears of Jewish control infiltrating the mind’ (Bienstock, 2005: 106). Since these traditions and anxieties made Svengali racially coded, then the implication is that Dracula too can be considered a Jewish figure, as he embodies such traits.⁶ Like Svengali, Dracula has been read as an anti-semitic character, but Svengali’s mesmerism and the manner with which he exerts it over women also seems likely to have had some bearing on the way Dracula has been adapted for stage and screen.

⁶ The association of Jewishness with special powers is best found in the character of the Wandering Jew, a figure doomed to walk the earth. The figure is also a clear influence on Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820).

Svengali, then, acts a blueprint for characters that followed in his footsteps – not only in terms of establishing a specific type of amoral, conniving tyrant with racial overtones, but how such characters could become better known than the novel they are from.

The twentieth century saw the popularisation of genre stock characters such as the super-villain and the criminal mastermind that developed out of the Gothic tyrant. Such figures are, however, directly influenced by Gothic tyrants who originally embodied late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth century Orientalist anxieties. This chapter will explore these links by analysing texts, films and their wider acceptance by society. Firstly, there will be a discussion of Fu Manchu, his nineteenth century links, how Rohmer revolutionised the formula of the Gothic tyrant and why the character is worthy of further study by Gothicists. Secondly, a case will be built for why Dracula could be considered a Gothic tyrant, fulfilling the requirements of an Eastern warlord. Next an extended exploration of Dracula's origins and Stoker's familiarity with historical drama will demonstrate how the character is able to embody historical conflict while remaining easy to transplant into different eras. Finally an overview of Dracula's cultural afterlife, with reference to Fu Manchu's similar treatment, will explore how the character has been softened and transfigured into other genres. Incorporating material related to the novel's innumerable adaptations will demonstrate not only how Dracula became an all-encompassing figure of a terror that thrives to this day, but how the Gothic tyrant changed alongside him. One cannot deny that Dracula has lingered in the popular consciousness longer and far more strongly than Fu Manchu; however, while Dracula may have arrived first and be the most notorious now, Fu Manchu arrived and prospered before Dracula's great popularising in film. This chapter will show that the two are more closely intertwined than it would first appear, by addressing the connotation of these figures, together, as a unitary archetype that greatly informed the twentieth century understanding

of a tyrant. A quotation from Frayling indicates the extent to which these characters' influences have been recognised:

Dr Fu Manchu, progenitor of Ming and Dr No, lingers in the popular consciousness more than any other twentieth-century villain – whether or not the generation of 2000 can actually put a name to him. (Frayling, 2014: 13)

That these figures are seen as progenitors demonstrates their role in rearticulating older modes of tyranny with newer figures that followed. Between them, Dracula and Fu Manchu express a new mode of terror in which entire regimes can be represented by lone men. Powerful, undefeatable, and constantly returning for sequels, they finalise the Gothic tyrant's transformation from domestic cruelty into full global threats.

The Transgressive East: Fu Manchu as the West's Arch-Enemy

The Fu Manchu series is explicitly about East versus West. Race and 'Otherness'

continued to be seen not merely as a line of demarcation between self and 'Other', but as a sign of allegiance in some wider multi-cultural war. The first book in the series, *The Mystery of Doctor Fu Manchu* was published in 1913, with sequels published regularly into the 1950s, and is the core Fu Manchu work under discussion. Rohmer's works seem to be part of a wave of paranoia over racial conflict that became more visible after the first Fu Manchu book was published. Two books published in the early twentieth-century show the popularity of these notions of racial conflict; Madison Grant's *The Passing of the Great Race* (1918), first published in 1916 and, just two years later, Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West* (1926-8). Grant presents his racial reading of history as fact, citing the 'inferior races among our immigrants' such as 'the Polish Jew, whose dwarf stature, peculiar mentality and ruthless concentration on self-interest are being engrafted upon the stock of the nation' (Grant, 1918: 17, 16).⁷ Spengler more directly

⁷ Amongst the other lines of thought Grant advocates is a belief that no progress can be made with a democracy: 'True aristocracy or a true republic is government by the wisest and best, always a small minority in any population' (Grant, 1918: 7). It is this type of thinking that links Orientalism and tyranny so often.

articulates the perceived superiority of the Western race over others: ‘we men of the Western Culture are, with our historical sense, an exception and not a rule. World-history is *our* world picture and not all mankind’s’ (Spengler, 1926: 15). This idea of racial conflict is specifically alluded to as such in the text. Unlike *Dracula*, which seems to, for the most part, embody non-specific notions of invasion and Orientalism, Dr Fu Manchu speaks to a specific cultural context. According to Frayling, ‘[in] Britain and the rest of Europe, however, the repertoire of “Chinese characteristics” also reflected anxieties about the decline of Empire and the rising dragon’ (Frayling, 2014: 10). It is important to note that this characterisation of the novel’s events as a battle between, and for, Western and Eastern dominance, is mostly realised through the speech of the novel’s hero, Nayland Smith, not Fu Manchu himself. Smith’s melodramatic explanation early in the novel creates the impression that the world is on a tipping point of Eastern control:

“Is there a man who would arouse the West to a sense of the awakening of the East, who would teach the deaf to hear, the blind to see, that the millions only wait their leader? He will die. And this is only one phase of the devilish campaign”. (*Fu Manchu*: 25)

The importance of leadership being stressed, as well as the ‘devilish’ imagery used are also significant and bring instantly to mind the modes of Gothic tyranny that have been examined so far. Smith, and the novel, make it clear that Fu Manchu’s role is as a terrible leader in this struggle for Eastern dominance. The quotation above also makes it clear that Fu Manchu’s methods are carefully selected with this goal in mind. Smith also emphasises the secrecy with which this ‘war’ is being conducted: ‘China today is not the China of ‘98. It is a huge secret machine’ (*Fu Manchu*: 71). There is, similarly, a suggestion of tyranny in the idea that China employs unscrupulous means of either enforcing compliance, or ensuring productivity: ‘And the futurist group in China knows how to *make* men work!’ (*Fu Manchu*: 222). As with the opening of *A Tale of Two Cities*, a specific characterisation of a country is being evoked, with exactly the same type of

‘othering’ taking place. This extends beyond an Orientalist reading of the character, as the reader acts as a stand-in for the assumed Western race, and is incited to view Fu Manchu as a direct threat to them and their way of life.

Fu Manchu has a heavy emphasis on torture and imprisonment, which has a distinct early Gothic tone. Much of the structure of the novel is created by Smith and Petrie’s encountering and escaping increasingly fiendish, and often distinctly *Oriental*, contrivances for death. The most apparent of these is Fu Manchu’s ability to obtain and unleash exotic beasts. This is established early in the novel as Petrie examines one of Smith’s wounds, poisoned by hamadryad (King Cobra) venom: ‘a shudder I could not repress ran coldly through me at mention of that most deadly of all the reptiles of the East’ (*Fu Manchu*: 11). The theme is not uncommon in sensation fiction, notably used by Conan Doyle in several Sherlock Holmes stories, but here the animals used are even more unusual.⁸ The first murder Smith and Petrie investigate is perpetrated by an unusual poisonous centipede:

It was an insect, full six inches long, and of a vivid, venomous red colour! [...] it was a giant centipede, apparently of the *scolopendra* group, but of a form quite new to me.⁹ (*Fu Manchu*: 32-33)

The real cunning and cruelty shown by Fu Manchu is demonstrated more clearly in some of the traps he uses to stay ahead of Petrie and Smith. In one chapter Petrie plummets into a water-filled chamber through a trap door. Petrie is gathering his strength to launch himself at the one visible beam higher in the well just before Smith arrives to pull him to safety, warning him ‘For God’s sake *don’t touch the beam!*’ (*Fu Manchu*: 61). As he is being lifted to safety Petrie sees just how cruel the trap he was in really was as he sees

⁸ The Sherlock Holmes story ‘The Speckled Band’ (1892), for instance, uses a trained snake as a murder weapon.

⁹ For a modern reader such an insect has communist connotations, both for its red colour, and many legs, which are reminiscent of collectivism. Though the Xinhai Revolution of 1911 does predate the publication of Rohmer’s novel, only *Re-Enter Dr. Fu Manchu* (1957) and *Emperor Fu Manchu* (1959) postdate the Communist Revolution.

from above that the beam was ‘striated with light two sword blades, riveted, edges up, along the top of the beam which I had striven to reach’ (*Fu Manchu*: 62). Fu Manchu, then, is shown to exhibit an almost sadistic level of cruelty exhibited by the performance of torture in this scene.

Fu Manchu is not only supremely sinister, but is also shown to be incredibly intelligent and formidable. Within the timescales of the series, Smith has long been in pursuit of Fu Manchu, but the reader most closely identifies with the narrator, Petrie, who sees a glimpse of Fu Manchu shortly before falling into the above trap:

Of his face, as it looked at me over the dirty table, I despair of writing convincingly. It was that of an archangel of evil, and it was wholly dominated by the most uncanny eyes that ever reflected a human soul, for they were narrow and long, very slightly oblique, and of a brilliant green.¹⁰ (*Fu Manchu*: 58)

Petrie’s own acknowledgement that he cannot fully capture Fu Manchu’s evilness through his description again returns to the Burkean sublime, as well as making use of the Freudian uncanny – both staples of Gothic criticism. Petrie’s description is an effective attempt at trying to communicate how villainous and sinister Fu Manchu appears, without resorting to the melodramatic or superlatives like Smith does. For Smith, ‘this man, whether a fanatic, or a duly appointed agent, is, unquestionably, the most malign and formidable personality existing in the known world today’ (*Fu Manchu*: 24-25). A further comment that Fu Manchu possesses ‘a brow like Shakespeare and a face like Satan’ again returns us to the satanic comparisons that have been so consistent throughout this thesis when describing Gothic tyranny (*Fu Manchu*: 25). A term often associated with Fu Manchu and the racial archetype he represents is ‘inscrutable’. Often understood as a negative term today, possibly because of this racial connotation, the term actually has positive aspects that speak to Fu Manchu’s appeal. The ‘blank expression’ can be

¹⁰ The description of Fu Manchu’s eyes is a focal point for racial ‘othering’, as well as a motif in Gothic fiction.

understood to be mysterious, impenetrable and even enigmatic – this contributes to a reading of Fu Manchu that is close to Byronic (OED, online: 1450). This is combined with Orientalist discourse to describe Fu Manchu as having ‘all the cruel cunning of an entire Eastern race’, which again helps to endorse not just Fu Manchu but the East in general as crueller and more cunning than the West (*Fu Manchu*: 25).¹¹ Petrie’s narration of Fu Manchu’s physical appearance is similarly problematic, and focuses on skin colour: ‘he wore a plain yellow robe, of a hue almost identical with that of his smooth, hairless countenance’ (*Fu Manchu*: 58).¹² Most alarming is Smith’s description of Fu Manchu, which, like Dracula, paints him as threatening because he is not just a master of ancient, Eastern arts, but because he is also a master of all of Western science and culture:

He is a linguist who speaks with almost equal facility in any of the civilized languages, and in most of the barbaric. He is adept in all the arts and sciences which a great university could teach him. He is also an adept in certain obscure arts and sciences which *no* university of today can teach. (*Fu Manchu*: 25)

Fu Manchu’s knowledge is not only associated with the barbaric, then, but also the civilised. This is genuine praise for Fu Manchu as a bastion of knowledge and wisdom, though it is worth noting it also suggests a Faustian figure. Fu Manchu’s redeeming qualities help to situate him as taking part in an orchestrated campaign. Frayling lists examples of some of Fu Manchu’s better qualities, such as the way ‘[he] always keeps his word, to the letter. He bears no personal grudges’ (Frayling, 2014: 15). Fu Manchu may be cruel, but his crimes are not senseless or even selfish – he is conducting a rationally orchestrated campaign of terror against the West. This is what makes the character so fascinating to a readership: the narrative does not focus on the hero and denigrate its villain. Fu Manchu stays one step ahead of Petrie and Smith throughout, with the

¹¹ Despite how the text encourages the reader to see Fu Manchu as overwhelmingly negative, his character is a lot more nuanced than the stereotype that has grown up around him, and Frayling even cites that ‘some young Chinese scholars working in Britain today are beginning to consider reclamation’ (Frayling, 2014: 15).

¹² Contrastingly, just two sentences later the description states his brow was ‘crowned with spare, neutral-coloured hair’ that makes his hairless countenance deeply questionable (*Fu Manchu*: 58).

construction of the text acknowledging that Fu Manchu is more interesting than the detectives. If Byronic man ‘manipulated standard behaviours and plot outcomes’ as part of his appeal, then Fu Manchu does the same (Palfy, 2016: 161). Whereas previous serials had focused on the world’s greatest detectives, in focusing on the world’s greatest criminal Fu Manchu crafted an archetype of Gothic tyranny that could sustain an entire series.

Much of Fu Manchu’s appeal, and later popularity across different media, drew on his nineteenth-century influences. Both the Imperialism of the Victorian era and the melodrama that defined much of its theatre have been seen as key elements to the novel’s success:

Rohmer’s race-inflected melodrama appeals effortlessly to a middle-class readership accustomed to and complicit with the late-Victorian onslaught of Imperial propaganda. (Seshagiri, 2006: 175)

Fu Manchu, then, can be seen as combining many of the core elements explored in earlier chapters. The biggest influence from the Victorian era comes from its similarity to Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes stories with the novel’s debt immediately apparent as Holmes’ ‘fictional universe figures so evidently as a model for the design of Fu Manchu’s empire’ (Mayer, 2014: 9). It is the changes to Conan Doyle’s formulae, even improvements upon it, which make Fu Manchu interesting. One of the best known Sherlock Holmes short stories, ‘The Final Problem’ (1893) pits Holmes against Professor Moriarty, a villainous figure who finally appears to present a challenge to Holmes, and whom Holmes must sacrifice himself to defeat. It is important to note that this story was written purposefully to kill Sherlock Holmes as Conan Doyle wished to move on to write other types of fiction.¹³ The character of Moriarty was created then, not just to challenge Holmes, but to

¹³ Conan Doyle worried about being ‘entirely identified with what I regarded as a lower stratum of literary achievement’ before deciding to ‘end the life of [his] hero’ in his autobiography (Conan Doyle, 2007: 84).

defeat him. Conan Doyle's subsequent rewriting of these events to make Holmes survive changed this, however, and in the Holmes canon Moriarty is essentially a one-time villain.¹⁴ The limitations of this can be seen in adaptation; Moriarty is a recurring villain in several television series, and is the antagonist in most films. Moriarty's nickname, 'The Napoleon of Crime', speaks to a great network and organisation of criminality that the Holmes stories never fully realise.¹⁵ Adaptations recognised the melodramatic potential that a powerful and recurring presence could provide. The greatest innovation Rohmer provided, then, is recognising the importance of a returning and formidable villain. The literary Fu Manchu prefigures the filmic Dracula in providing a menace that can never fully be conquered. The text reframes the dichotomy of good and evil that had been set in place since the inception of the Gothic and reinforced through melodramatic productions: good would not necessarily conquer evil. In order to maintain prolonged tension, and to generate sequels, not all foes can be overcome. In focusing on the tyrant, *Fu Manchu* shows recognition that tyrannical villains were potentially *more* interesting than heroes – and no character personifies this better across the twentieth century than Dracula.

Transnational Tyranny: Dracula as Eastern Warlord

The demonisation of the East is self-evident in *Fu Manchu*, but in *Dracula* it is more subtle and overshadowed by supernatural elements. An exception to this can be seen in the 1922 silent film *Nosferatu*. F. W. Murnau's *Nosferatu*, an adaptation of *Dracula* produced without securing the rights and subsequently withdrawn, presents a more bestial, inhumane and monstrous version of the Count. *Nosferatu* is most commonly discussed today for its anti-Semitic imagery, particularly in the context of the film's historical and

¹⁴ Moriarty is referenced elsewhere, such as in *The Valley of Fear* (1915), but has undoubtedly grown to prominence primarily through repeated appearances in adaptations.

¹⁵ I would also argue that, in finding in the villain a much richer source of inspiration than the hero, Rohmer also prefigures the great deal of pastiches that centre around Moriarty that have been produced in recent years. These include Kim Newman's *Professor Moriarty: The Hound of the D'Urbervilles* (2011), Anthony Horowitz's *Moriarty* (2014) and Daniel Corey's Image Comic Books series *Moriarty* (2011-12).

geographical origins in Germany between the two world wars.¹⁶ *Nosferatu* may make this racialisation of Dracula immediately apparent, but it does in fact highlight a subtext of Stoker's novel. Gelder sees *Dracula* as connecting vampirism and being Jewish with a link between 'representations of the "Jew" and Dracula [...] extended in Stoker's novel by showing the vampire to be a hoarder of money and gold' (Gelder, 1994: 14). In this reading, Gelder points to the concerns of the period that the Jewish population moved internationally and thus drained capital from a nation's economy – a concern that applies equally to Dracula:¹⁷

The Jews – and the vampire – are located as the 'source' of this movement; they must themselves be restricted [...] to enable nations to imagine that the flow of capital is still theirs to control. (Gelder, 1994: 17)

A reading of *Dracula* as anti-Semitic due to economics is not entirely convincing, but demonstrates another way in which Dracula has been read as aligning with perceived Eastern threats. While ideas of exploitative figures preying upon the poor have focused on vampire and vampire-like figures generally, it is the *power* of Dracula to action these threats that makes him much more intimidating. These ideas of Eastern Otherness were prevalent at the time, particularly amongst vampire fiction. Mary Elizabeth Braddon's 'Good Lady Ducayne', for example, has similarly been associated with anti-Semitic portrayals, being recognised by one critic as 'a parodic revision of the myth of the wandering Jew' (Tomaiuolo, 2010: 69). The chief difference here, however, is that Dracula can realise the threat he presents. Lady Ducayne is elderly and slight, dependent on others, and relies purely on the degree to which she fed late-Victorian anxieties to

¹⁶ Not all copies of the film actually managed to be destroyed. Kane notes: 'an unabridged copy of the movie survived Florence Stoker's death warrant and was restored and screened at Berlin's Film Festival in 1984' (Kane, 2006: 10). Kane's study argues that *Nosferatu* 'carries little weight when the historical exhibition of the film is considered. The film was exhibited for a short time in Germany and Budapest during 1922 through 1925' (Kane, 2006: 10).

¹⁷ This is a simplification of a complex issue. Gelder goes into more detail on this subject: 'the mobility of the foreign Jew was both admirable (since they accumulated capital) and the source of national anxiety (since they drained capital by moving it elsewhere)' (Gelder, 1994: 14).

generate fear, dealing with concerns of modernization and women's changing place in society (Hatter, 2015: 29). Dracula, on the other hand, is powerful, and whilst still speaking to the same anxieties he is able to conduct a campaign of terror against Victorian England. Read as a character representing Jewishness, and endowed with superhuman abilities posing a widespread threat to society, Dracula can be understood as the same type of figure as Fu Manchu – a manifestation of a demonic East out to take over the West.

The act of telling vampire tales involves creating or spreading an unflattering, even superstitious, image of Eastern Europe as 'vampire fiction as it intermittently appeared at this time was heavily indebted to perceptions of Transylvania made available in particular through travel narratives' (Gelder, 1994: 2). It is here that the novel's fascination with the East can be seen, as the telling of an Eastern myth involves invoking certain imagery of that region. The success of *Dracula* has made this connection even stronger. Marius-Mircea Crişan's monograph, *The Birth of the Dracula Myth: Bram Stoker's Transylvania* (2013), states that the contrast between East and West is central to the novel:

One of the main ideas developed in *Dracula* is the difference between England and Transylvania, a report which can be extended into an imaginary division between the West and the East of Europe. (Crişan, 2013: 55)

It is hardly surprising, then, that 'the association of Transylvania with English literature has a spontaneous effect: the first name one thinks about is Dracula' (Crişan, 2013: 11).¹⁸ Transylvania's proximity to the West has been considered as crucial as its being Eastern: 'Its place in Europe, at the border between West and East is very significant' (Crişan, 2013: 12). Unlike threats from the Far East, Dracula's menace is closer at hand. This was particularly significant in 1878 when Romania sided with Russia in the Russo-Turkish war, winning its independence, but meaning it was henceforth viewed as siding with the

¹⁸ *Dracula's Death* (1921), also known as *Drakula halála*, is among the first versions of Dracula produced and it originated in Hungary – a country closely associated with Dracula and Vlad the Impaler.

East. Stoker's writing reproduces prejudices not only from his source reading but also, according to Matthew Gibson, from the prevailing attitudes of his time:

Whether motivated by Turcophilia or Russophobia, Stoker's condemnation of the enemies of Turkey and Austria-Hungary stems less from a well thought-out political position than simply from general and long-held prejudices. (Gibson, 2017: 102)

It is not difficult, therefore, to see *Dracula's* origins emerging from this liminal space.

This unflattering portrayal stands in a stark contrast with the presiding image of the West.

Crişan points out that 'many elements in British travel literature which preceded this novel were synthesised in Stoker's narrative' (Crişan, 2013: 11). In terms of its Orientalist leanings, then, *Dracula* is a product of its time and embodies perceived contemporary threats – captured by Stoker and made into the basis for compelling Gothic tyranny.

Stoker met the leading men in a variety of fields whilst working at the Lyceum theatre.¹⁹ One source Stoker incorporated into his novel comes from a person he met in this capacity, Armenius Vambery, a 'famous Hungarian orientalist scholar and traveller' (Gelder, 1994: 9). Vambery is specifically listed among the Lyceum's guests in Stoker's *Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving* (1906), but Gelder states that they met on multiple occasions: 'Stoker and Vambery had apparently met several times at the Lyceum club in London' (Gelder, 1994: 9). This acquaintanceship seems to be directly transferred to Van Helsing in the novel: 'I have asked my friend Arminius, of Buda-Pesth University, to make his record' (*Dracula*: 212). Gelder also notes that Stoker 'never having visited Transylvania, relied heavily on the travelogue description' and lists works Stoker is

¹⁹ Stoker devotes pages 315-323 of *Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving* (1906) to lists of notable guests to the Lyceum's 'Beefsteak' room (Stoker, 1906: 315-323).

known to have consulted (Gelder, 1994: 3).²⁰ The travelogue is evoked specifically through Stoker's own opening passages. This is evidenced in numerous ways, not least the manner in which Harker reports the minutiae of his trip, such as when he discusses his food: 'I had for dinner, or rather supper, a chicken done up some way with red pepper, which was very good but thirsty' (*Dracula*: 9). A more telling example demonstrates not only Harker's inherent tourism, but his staunchly Western perspective, as he remarks in his journal: 'It seems to me that the further east you go the more unpunctual are the trains' (*Dracula*: 11). Having researched his trip in the British library, Harker even indulges in a little ethnography of the region, and in doing so emphasises its barbaric and warlike past: 'I am going among the [Szekelys], who claim to be descended from Attila and the Huns' (*Dracula*: 10). In painting the East as fearful and regressive, Stoker draws not only on superstition and myth, but also the region's warlike past.

Dracula is specifically characterised as a medieval Gothic tyrant – testimony to the Eastern barbarity the West feared. One of Harker's early diary entries posits Dracula as both primarily a warrior figure and a figure of absolute authority – the very essence of a Gothic tyrant.

In his speaking of things and people, and especially of battles, he spoke as if he had been present at them all. This he afterwards explained by saying that to a boyar the pride of his house and name is his own pride, that their glory is his glory, that their fate is his fate. Whenever he spoke of his house he always said 'we', and spoke almost in the plural, like a king speaking. (*Dracula*: 33)

This gives the reader the strongest indication of Dracula's Orientalism - in using 'we' Dracula speaks not just for himself but as the monolithic 'Other' race. This passage also gives suggestions of Dracula's longevity, implying he was present at all the battles he describes to Harker. Dracula's interest in describing these battles to Harker, and reliving

²⁰ Gelder lists Charles Boner's *Transylvania* (1865), Major E.C Johnson's *On the Track of the Crescent* (1885), Emily de Laszowska Gerard's *The Land Beyond the Forest* (1888) and 'Transylvanian Superstitions' published in *The Nineteenth Century* (volume 28, July 1885) (Gelder, 1994: 3).

past glories, is fundamental to understanding his motives throughout the novel – Dracula’s attack on England is conducted like a military campaign. Dracula’s own sense of regency is also highlighted – both through the aggrandisement of his own ‘house’, but even Harker recognises him speaking as a king would speak. This is a theme revisited several times through Dracula’s own discourse. In comparing himself to Attila the Hun, he again invokes images of battlefield conquests, Gothic barbarism, and the building of Eastern empires: “‘Fools, fools! What devil or what witch was ever so great as Attila, whose blood is in these veins?’” He held up his arms. “‘Is it a wonder that we were a conquering race?’” (*Dracula*: 34). The reference to Attila the Hun is equally informative – as a nomadic people the Huns acted as a vaguely defined threat that could be understood as an interchangeable other: the horde. Dracula, too, recognises the value of leadership, but at the same time has little respect for those under his command. One remark that speaks to this depiction is: “‘Bah! What good are peasants without a leader? Where ends the war without a brain and heart to conduct it?’” (*Dracula*: 35). In placing on leaders not only all of the burden for military victory, but also all of the glory, Dracula reinforces his role as tyrant – armies are extensions of personal power, and peasants are not to be sympathised with.

One area worthy of further discussion is the link between Stoker’s fictional Count and the historical figure ‘Vlad the Impaler’. The text itself makes the connection, although in much vaguer terms than later adaptations would prefer, stating that Dracula ‘must, indeed, have been that Voivode Dracula who won his name against the Turk, over the great river on the very frontier of Turkey-land’ (*Dracula*: 212). Elizabeth Miller refers to the ‘commonplace assumption [...] Stoker deliberately modelled his Count Dracula on the historical figure’ (Miller, 1999: 189). The comparison is a fruitful one, as even the name Vlad the Impaler itself is resplendent with Gothic connotations. The underpinning

of Stoker's supernatural count with an historical figure of cruelty and excess, and which prefigures later associations made with Jack the Ripper and Elizabeth Bathory, raises further issues of the need to intermingle history with horror to produce the most chilling effects. The novel is ultimately ambiguous with regard to Dracula and his relationship to Vlad the Impaler, as at other times in the novel Van Helsing talks about the Draculas as a plural, as a family, and as a race.²¹ A further statement credited to 'Arminius' is an excellent example of this:

The Draculas were, says Arminius, a great and noble race, though now and again were scions who were held by their coevals to have had dealings with the Evil One. They learned his secrets in the Scholomance, amongst the mountains over Lake Hermanstadt, where the devil claims the tenth scholar as his due.²² (*Dracula*: 212)

This must allow for the possibility that the two are merely related, either by blood or in disposition, but does not detract from the specific historic or geographical influences Stoker drew on. Stoker took the name Dracula from 'a book that he borrowed from the Whitby Public Library in the summer of 1890, *An Account of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia* (1820)' (Miller, 1999: 190). Regardless of to what degree Dracula is supposed to be Vlad the Impaler by Stoker's intent, it can hardly be denied that Dracula has almost become synonymous with the historical figure of Vlad the Impaler. Situating Dracula within a specific historic-geographical context, and attributing all of Vlad's factual atrocities to him, speaks again to the Burkean sublime: he is more frightening as a historical figure.

The identification of Dracula with Vlad has led to some of the most compelling readings of the Count as a figure of tyranny. Indeed, this historical basis for the Count has become more emphasised in recent years through adaptations and other pastiches, with

²¹ The connotations shared by by Vlad Tepes and Dracula with being either the son of a dragon, or the son of the devil, speak to this.

²² Like Fu Manchu's knowledge, this also seems highly Faustian. There also seems to be a strong implication here that Dracula has learned black magic, which is rarely highlighted in criticism or adaptations.

the two frequently being conflated in film.²³ Dacre Stoker and Ian Holt's recent 'official sequel' to the novel, *Dracula: The Un-Dead* (2009), situates the Count as a re-emergence of Vlad, even instigating scenes where characters are impaled on large spikes: 'a forty-foot-long wooden pole' is discovered on which 'a naked man had been impaled through the fundament' (*Dracula: The Un-Dead*: 119, 120). Whilst for many this issue of Dracula's immediate historical situation may be paramount, for the purposes of this discussion the conflation of Dracula, both Stoker's depiction and later adaptations', with a medieval warlord is more important. These comparisons solidify the image of Dracula as a powerful military figure in the text, and the later appropriations that make use of it are the rare examples of when this characterisation of Dracula is preserved. Returning to literary appropriations, Kim Newman's *Anno Dracula* (1992) operates as a form of alternate-history novel, essentially presenting a Victorian society in which Dracula was victorious and has married Queen Victoria to cement his power. Dracula is mostly absent from the novel, the society he has built speaking for his terror by itself, but in one of the closing chapters the heroes find themselves at the palace to be honoured. Newman's description of Dracula is that of an emperor, possessing both massive amounts of state power and physical strength, but also bloated, opulent and disgusting:

Prince Dracula sat upon his throne, massive as a commemorative statue, his enormously bloated face a rich red under withered grey. Moustaches stiff with recent blood hung to his chest, his thick hair was loose about his shoulders, and his black-stubbed chin was dotted with the gravy of his last feeding. His left hand loosely held the orb of office, which in his grip seemed the size of a tennis ball. (*Anno Dracula*: 410)

Newman's recreation of a victorious Dracula is in line with Stoker's in terms of presenting Dracula as the disgusting, barbaric face of Gothic tyranny; a threat to Victorian rationality and morality. Other adaptations have been less consistent in maintaining

²³ For instance, *Dracula Untold* (2014) and Netflix's *Castlevania* (2017) both rely on a historical reading of Dracula as Vlad the Impaler to inform the characterisation.

Dracula's authority amidst the embellishment of his romantic, Byronic appeal – charm and mesmerism replace physical power and intimidation as his chief weapons. Dracula, then, embodies the continuum of Gothic tyranny in a single figure. The Count has been transformed from a literal medieval warlord, to supernatural reverse-coloniser, a Victorian Svengali and across into untold forms.

Transhistoricism and Dracula's Theatrical Influences

Dracula is established in the novel as a figure that combined the nineteenth century with the ancient, with Harker's own words referring to 'the old centuries' having 'powers of their own which mere "modernity" cannot kill' (*Dracula*: 40-1). Dracula's 'timeless' quality then is not just a factor produced by his longevity and constant reimagining through film – it seems to be something present at his inception. Stoker imbues his novel about a warlord who is hundreds of years old with some distinctly Victorian qualities. It seems almost certain that many of his Victorian characteristics drew upon Stoker's own experiences working as a business manager at one of Victorian London's most prestigious theatres, the Lyceum. As Catherine Wynne has argued in *Bram Stoker, Dracula and the Victorian Gothic Stage* (2013) 'Stoker's Gothic output responds to, and engages with [...] the Lyceum's melodramatic and Gothic stage' (Wynne, 2013: 3). Crişan also links this creation of a specific 'setting' for Dracula's tyranny with Stoker's theatrical lifestyle: 'the theatre manager whose hobby was writing needed a good scene on which the action which was in his mind would be staged [...] and it happened to be Transylvania' (Crişan, 2013: 32). Stoker addresses the mixing of history and horror in *Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving* when describing Laurence Irving's play about Peter the Great. The play had not been a great success as the violence and horror were not to the audience's taste (Stoker, 1906: 267). Stoker, however, states that this was:

not the fault of the dramatist, but of the originals. History is history and has to be adhered to – in some measure at any rate [...] the history of the time lent itself to horrors.²⁴ (Stoker, 1906: 267)

This is an interesting insight into Stoker's views on historical violence. It is not just horror that made the staging of a historical tyrant problematic. Stoker also quotes famous melodramatic playwright Dion Boucicault, known for his Gothic and vampire plays, in *Personal Reminiscences*: 'the rayson why historical plays so seldom succeed is because a normal audience doesn't go into the thayatre with its politics in its breeches pockets!' (Stoker, 1906: 138). The fact that he mentions Boucicault, a figure of importance to both vampire and French Revolution theatre, is perhaps significant in itself, but the quotation, and Stoker's own agreement with it, shows Stoker's recognition of the divisive nature of politics on an audience. Stoker's understanding of the challenges of historical drama seems to have influenced the Count; a Gothic tyrant threatening historical violence in the present.

An influence little discussed in the creation of *Dracula* is the vast number of French Revolutionary plays that the Lyceum had staged in the years preceding the novel's publication. 1889 had marked the centenary of the first major events of the revolution, which was commemorated by London's theatres, including the Lyceum, which was 'then perhaps the most famous stage in the empire' (Tetens, 2005: 37). Not only did the Lyceum stage plays that dealt with the French Revolution, but Stoker would have met with many French actors and playwrights as 'Irving was a central figure in late-Victorian Anglo-French cultural relations' (Tetens, 2005: 37). Whilst a recognised influence on Gothic and Romantic sensibilities generally, there is evidence demonstrating the extent Stoker himself specifically dealt with the Revolution: what is *Dracula*, after all, if not a

²⁴ Stoker goes in to more detail by describing how they had tried to adapt the play: 'on the first night in one scene where one of the conspirators who had been tortured – off the stage, but whose screams were heard – was brought in pale and bloody, the effect was too great for some of the audience, who rose quickly and left their seats' (Stoker, 1906: 267). This scene, and others, was omitted the following nights of the play.

story about a lawyer who wishes to behead an aristocrat? Stoker's own letters show he had at one point attempted to write his own play set during the French Revolution:

in the mid-1870s, encouraged by the American actress Geneviève Ward, he was enthusiastically researching and drafting a play set in revolutionary France based on the life and loves of French Girondist Madame Roland. But this seems to have come to nothing. (Glover, 1996: 7)

Given that Stoker's newly published Dublin Journal has been recognised by its editor, Elizabeth Miller, as having 'foreshadowings of *Dracula*' (Stoker, 2012: 2), as it contains fragments that could have made their way into the novel years later, it seems unlikely that something Stoker had once so enthusiastically researched would not have been used in any capacity. An early episode in Stoker's *Personal Reminiscences* concerns not only the Revolution, but its grim and theatrical potential:

An actor *never* forgets a hiss! Collot d'Herbois was once hissed at Lyons. Did *he* forget? Read history for the effect it had on him – and on others – in the massacre of Brumaire in the Year II of the Republic (November 1793). (Stoker, 1906: 18)

Stoker's example here demonstrates the combination of historical forces with personal vendetta; illustrating the ability to recognise abuse of authority. The chapter of Stoker's *Personal Reminiscences* entitled 'Art and Hazard' details Irving's staging of two plays set during the French Revolution.²⁵ Whilst these theatrical influences are often overlooked in criticism, much is made of Stoker's relationship with his employer. Wynne notes that Irving 'is enshrined in literary and biographical studies pertaining to Stoker as a metaphorical vampire. In such narratives Irving becomes the blood sucking Dracula' (Wynne, 2013: 8). Whilst reading *Dracula* as essentially based on Irving is perhaps too convenient, the plays he staged and the roles he filled undoubtedly had some impact on Stoker. Irving was famous for portraying many enigmatic figures, including appealing villains that embodied the notion of the Byronic hero as 'irredeemably alienated, but

²⁵ Both plays were staged too late to have been a direct input on *Dracula*; instead this comparison is using the parallels for what they reveal of Stoker's own attitudes towards the terrifying spectacle of history.

highly seductive' (Rawes, 2007: 179). Irving frequently performed in works of sensation fiction or melodrama and his 'roles oscillated between sinners and saints' (Wynne, 2013: 10). Two historical figures that Irving seems to have taken a strong interest in bear some similarities with Dracula.

Madame Sans-Gêne was first staged at the Lyceum on the night of 10th April, 1897 – just a month before *Dracula* was published. The play, written in 1893 by Victorien Sardou and Émile Moreau, had been successful, and Irving had bought the British rights to the play. The play can be noted for its concurrence with *Dracula*: the play was being performed shortly before *Dracula* was published, and the reading of the novel Stoker staged to retain theatrical copyright drew its cast from those 'appearing in the Lyceum's current production of *Madame Sans-Gêne*' (Miller, 2005: 349).²⁶ This, then, establishes a strange textual link between the two, and more importantly between *Dracula* and the French Revolution. The immediate parallels that can be drawn between the two are only slight, as Stoker himself says: 'after all *Madame Sans-Gêne* is a comedy though the authors were a little clumsy in changing it to a melodrama at the end' (Stoker, 1906: 264). The significant aspect of the production, and one Stoker makes a great deal out of, is the fact that *Madame Sans-Gêne* enabled Irving to fulfil his ambition of playing Napoleon Bonaparte. It has become commonplace to identify Irving, to some degree, with Count Dracula, and 'in Stokerian biography Irving often emerges as the model for the Count' (Wynne, 2012: x). Whilst this is by no means certain, it makes it yet more interesting that Irving himself 'had always been interested in Napoleon' (Stoker, 1906: 260). Irving, Dracula and Napoleon begin to conflate here.

²⁶ An account of the staging of *Madame Sans-Gêne*, with images of actors, as well as the cast list for Stoker's *Dracula* reading can be found on 'The Bela Lugosi Blog' (The Bela Lugosi Blog: Online).

Dracula and Irving's Napoleon exhibit similar traits. Dracula is characterised early in the novel as a regal military figure of great success. This is revealed in the scene where Harker is told by the Count of various military campaigns 'like a king speaking', 'the whirlpool of European races' and those 'whose warlike fury had swept the earth like a living flame' (*Dracula*: 33, 34). Stoker's description of Irving's Napoleon, notes:

the ruthless dominance; the quick blaze of passion which recalled to our memory the whirlwind rush at Lodi; [...] the conscious acting of a part to gain his end; the typical attack on Nipperg. (Stoker, 1906: 263)

Both of these figures are hereby defined by their actions in battle. It is not only the importance of past battles, or the blazing passion that finds itself curiously resembled in *Dracula*, but the 'acting of a part' is again part of the Count's own deadly arsenal. The icily friendly greeting he gives to Harker upon arrival marks a serious contrast with his sinister intentions: "Welcome to my house. Come freely. Go safely; and leave something of the happiness you bring!" (*Dracula*: 22). Irving's acting recreates Napoleon for Stoker, creating impressions 'so vivid that through the mist of their swirling memory loomed the very identity of Napoleon himself' (Stoker, 1906: 263). Dracula accomplishes a similar feat for the benefit of Harker:

I asked him a few questions on Transylvanian history, and he warmed up to the subject wonderfully. In his speaking of things and people, and especially battles, he spoke as if he had been present at them all. (*Dracula*: 33)

Both Dracula and Irving's Napoleon are able to make their own particular pasts once again threatening. More than that, however, they are both anachronisms in Victorian society:

It is true that he and his time were chosen, because of his absolutism and his personal character; he is a glorified *deus ex machina*, whose word is law and is to be accepted as ruling life and death. (Stoker, 1906: 264)

Napoleon in this description embodies an old type of tyrant, ruling with the full force of absolutism. That Stoker saw Napoleon this way seems a strong analogy with Dracula, an anachronistic character that rules life and death in his own way.

Irving's next play of the French Revolution, again written by Sardou (though this time specifically commissioned by Irving), concerned the Revolution far more directly, and the newer type of tyrant embodied by the play's main character, Robespierre.

Robespierre was first staged at the Lyceum on 15th April, 1899. As with Napoleon, Stoker does not shy away from commenting on the authenticity of the historical figure in question: 'Here was Robespierre shown in his true light: A doctrinaire, a self-seeking politician; vain, arrogant, remorseless; something of a poet; a little of an artist; an intriguer without scruple' (Stoker, 1906: 270). Again, in Stoker's depiction of a tyrant some of the same qualities he gave to Dracula surface. Unlike Dracula, and Napoleon, Robespierre was neither a general nor a warlord; there is no recollection of his great battles to stir him to the minds of readers. Instead it is a different characteristic that drew Irving to Robespierre:

[Irving] had read somewhere of Robespierre shaving himself whilst listening to a matter of life and death for many people and all the time turning to spit. This was a grim streak of character which fastened on his imagination. (Stoker, 1906: 268)

This callous, cold-blooded attitude contrasts with the 'the quick blaze of passion' exhibited by Irving's Napoleon. The difference between the two could perhaps again be likened to Dracula's own updating of his medieval tactics, as he himself acknowledges that 'the warlike days are over. Blood is too precious a thing in these days of dishonourable peace; and the glories of the great races are as a tale that is told' (*Dracula*: 35). Dracula's own invasion of England, by taking over the masses, could be likened to a revolution instead of a military campaign. *Robespierre* was an elaborate production, featuring two hundred and fifty 'supers', non-speaking parts, to create terrifying crowd

scenes: 'press and audience were responding not to the turns of the melodramatic plot, but to the drama of a terrifying crowd turning on the creator of the Terror; of a demagogue silenced by the popular voice' (Chothia: 2008, 30). Stoker's own comments seem to confirm this view: 'in the scene of the Convention, in which Robespierre is overthrown, much of the effect depends on the rush of deputies across the floor of the house, and the series of fights for the tribune' (Stoker, 1906: 269). Stoker also attributes the play's success down to Irving's acting, particularly how he managed to change the audience's response to Robespierre from hatred to sympathy: 'all the time the face was growing refined and more marked with human kindness, till in the last act he seemed to be a saintly man full of noble and generous feelings, a patriot and a martyr' (Stoker, 1906: 270). The change that takes place over Robespierre, and the changing attitudes towards him, is more revisionist than the other examples of historical plays discussed, but still creates an image of history as something terrifying and Gothic. The audience's reaction to Robespierre may be softened, but there is the new horror of the Revolutionary crowd, and the 'Terror' he had himself created.

Through comparison with these historical figures and Irving, Stoker's employer and the most famous actor of his day, a specific image of Dracula takes shape. According to Catherine Wynne 'late Victorians were obsessed by what lies beneath the veneer of respectability' (Wynne, 2013: 10), most visible in works like *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) and *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886). Irving's portrayals of Robespierre and Napoleon reflect this fascination with hidden villainy and it is not difficult to see these influences reflected in the character of Dracula, who lures Harker to his castle under the guise of legitimate business. Whether or not one accepts the idea that Stoker based Dracula on Irving, his traces can be felt through these theatrical influences. Dracula is not just an Eastern Medieval warlord, but he contains strands of the different

episodes of historical violence and notable personages Stoker was exposed to at the Lyceum. All of these are crucial to understand Dracula as an ‘ultimate personification’ of tyranny – and why the character has such resonance across time and place. It is when Dracula’s theatricality is combined with his barbarism that he becomes the timeless figure that has persevered long outside of the Victorian era. In Stoker’s *Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving* are evidenced many of the same fears and attitudes displayed by Stoker in *Dracula*. Not only does Stoker exhibit the same attitudes towards French Revolutionary tyrants, as well as recognising their appeal to an audience, but identifies them as being representative of history, and indivisible from it – crucial aspects of *Dracula*’s Gothic character. Stoker’s own familiarity with the stage shows he recognised not only the importance of creating the *right* amount of horror for your audience, but as importantly that whilst history was a powerful and emotive dramatic tool, politics was divisive and problematic. It seems apt that Stoker’s own greatest creation is entirely emblematic of a bloody medieval past, but transported without any political issues to complicate matters. It is perhaps this non-specificity that has allowed Dracula to be so successfully moved in time and place to become the cultural phenomenon he is today.

Transcending Orientalist Origins: Dracula in Film

The process by which Dracula became well known is also the one that seems to have softened his image. There can be little doubt that it is due to the text’s cultural afterlife that the Count is such a recognisable figure across every kind of media: *Dracula* may be a *nineteenth*-century novel but it is a *twentieth*-century phenomenon.²⁷ For many critics it would appear Dracula’s rise to power began with Hamilton Deane’s 1924 theatrical adaptation which, with many revisions to the source material, finally realised Stoker’s

²⁷ Dracula’s expansion into other media is prolific, not only abounding in literature and film but can also be found in television series, comic books and graphic novels, such as Marvel’s long-running *Tomb of Dracula* series that started in 1972, as well as video games, featuring prominently in the *Castlevania* series that began in 1986 and saw its most recent instalment in 2014.

own vision of putting *Dracula* on the stage. Recognising the Count's potential it is scarcely surprising that in 1931 Universal Studios produced a film based on the play, simply called *Dracula*, and secured the Count's place as a cinematic icon. According to Crişan 'insufficient critical attention was paid to the text until the 1950s', and '*Dracula* was seen as a popular, commercial book which inspired a film industry' (Crişan, 2013: 17). Universal's *Dracula* has provided one of the most longstanding caricatures of Dracula of all time, with Bela Lugosi's demeanour, Hungarian accent and costume being re-used across films and parodies. Dracula was unmistakably still a Gothic villain, though. Kane discusses these films as part of what he terms the 'Malignant Cycle' of 1931-48 and notes that 'The role of the vampire is always one of villainy. Most of the screen time is devoted to the human heroes who do battle with this invading monster. The vampire is always elegant and aristocratic, often dressed in fine clothes' (Kane, 2006: 21). Like Svengali, Lugosi's performance focused on mesmeric trances, vulnerable women and a keenly apparent Eastern European origin. Film adaptations of *Dracula* have continued to be produced ever since, elevating the character to prominence in popular culture, but at the same time changing his nature as tyrant.

For many Dracula is a character from film, not literature. As Stacey Abbott states in *Celluloid Vampires: Life After Death in the Modern World* (2007) it is now the case that 'more people are familiar with the vampire genre through film and television than through classic literature' (Abbott, 2007: 1). Film versions of the Count focus on him almost entirely, whilst in the novel the Count's presence may be felt but he is primarily absent as the heroes are chiefly on his trail. At the same time the heroic characters are interchangeable in many adaptations; Lucy and Mina are often conflated, and Arthur or Quincey may not appear. That so many Dracula films that have been produced can be seen as a testament to the character's status as, according to Sanders, in some situations

‘adaptation becomes a veritable marker of canonical status; citation infers authority’ (Sanders, 2006: 9). Films, then, far more than the novel, rely on Dracula’s presence and threat posed. The transformation of the vampire is reflected in the changing image of Dracula; seemingly softening as it approaches modernity. As Kane remarks, ‘the expectation for the vampire in horror cinema has evolved from Bela Lugosi in *Dracula* to Kate Beckinsale in *Underworld*, from villain to hero’ (Kane, 2006: 3). Through the vast amount of romanticising, pastiches, and vampire literature that followed, Dracula has been transformed into a more attractive figure, like a Byronic hero. Looking at one of the most notable series of Dracula films of the twentieth century gives some insight into not only how Dracula has been updated, but how he became less menacing. Dracula remains a recognisable figure of tyranny over a hundred years after his debut because of this prolonged period of updating and transformation that has distanced the Count from his Oriental origins.

Hammer movies have a recognisable status in British culture, particularly the phrase ‘Hammer Horror’, but are perhaps regarded overall as kitsch b-movies. Despite this, the studio’s ‘films have been perceived as “quality”, both retrospectively [...] and at the time of their initial release’ (Hutchings, 2003: 35).²⁸ Limited budgets and tight schedules did not prevent the studio from making films that can be highly regarded on their own terms. Denis Meikle, in his book *A History of Horrors: The Rise and Fall of the House of Hammer* (2009), calls Hammer’s first *Dracula* (1958) a ‘Gothic Grand Guignol of a very high order’ (Meikle, 2009: 54), which emphasises that a modest budget does not exclude grandeur. The Grand Guignol is characterised as a theatre of excess: ‘sheer *spectacle*’ that ‘titillated Parisian audiences with one act performances of murder, mayhem and revenge’ (Jones, 1997: 109). Hammer entered into a deal with Universal that allowed them to

²⁸ A crucial element to Hammer’s early success was the fact they were film makers of the ‘old school’ which meant both ‘professionalism and quality’ (Hutchings, 2003: 31).

remake their old monster movies; a ‘remarkable acknowledgement by a major American studio that this small British company had a kind of ownership of period horror’ (Hutchings, 2003: 33). Hammer’s *Dracula* was viewed by an audience who were still recovering from the horrors of World War Two. It was followed over the next fifteen years by six direct sequels, all starring Christopher Lee, to say nothing of related or similar productions. Many of the films Hammer produced, but particularly those in its *Dracula* series, are typical of a different vision of period production, lacking the style and detail of their higher budget and more recent cousins, but in place of these offered up familiar characters and concerns, and visceral ground for horror. Appearing as Dracula for Hammer seven times, Christopher Lee became one of the most iconic Draculas of the twentieth century.²⁹ Lee went on to play some of screen’s most memorable villains and brought elements of Dracula with him, such as Star Wars’ Count Dooku and Middle-Earth’s Saruman,³⁰ and in doing so played a vital and under-examined role in establishing the concept of a tyrant in the popular imagination.

Producing an effective update or remake is not as simple as recreating the original. Instead, a successful act of reproduction requires one to perform the ‘more demanding task of crafting work as good as everyone *remembers* the original being’ (Moore, 2008: 113). In his introduction to a collected volume of Mike Mignola’s *Hellboy Library Edition Volume 1* (2008) the novelist and author Alan Moore muses on the art of recreating a style from the past, remarking that ‘It’s not enough merely to reproduce the past. Instead we have to blend it artfully with how we see things now and with our visions

²⁹ Hammer made two *Dracula* films without Lee, *The Brides of Dracula* (1960) and *The Legend of the 7 Golden Vampires* (1974), but Lee also appeared as Dracula in several unrelated productions.

³⁰ Lee first played Count Dooku in *Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones* (2002), and Saruman in Peter Jackson’s *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, beginning with *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* in 2001.

for the future' (Moore, 2008: 113).³¹ It is not difficult to see how this could apply to *Dracula*, or any number of similar Gothic texts. The need for updating of content to continue to shock modern tastes can be seen clearly in the way Hammer's films and their reputations have aged. The blood and sex that seemed so controversial in the sixties is incredibly tame by modern standards, just as what was shocking for a conservative Victorian readership would go unremarked upon by a modern one.³² This is a part of the adaptive process – an escalation of controversial material to remain shocking in subsequent eras seems only natural.³³ *Dracula* arrived at a point when these issues were still hotly debated, with Hammer's ongoing struggles with the censors well documented.³⁴ More importantly, the wider cultural context of when these films were produced needs to be considered as 'at the time of *Dracula*'s release, the arts were in the throes of a sexual awakening that would culminate in the sensational obscenity trial of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*' (Meikle, 2009:63). In upscaling the sex and violence of Stoker's novel, Hammer made a potent contribution to the Count's cultural legacy, ensuring the Count had the impact of the original novel, which the *Lincolnshire Echo* called 'the most blood-curdling novel of the paralysed century' (*Lincolnshire Echo*, 1897: 2). Hammer was successful in creating a version of *Dracula* that replicated the sensational reaction the original novel was met with. Hutchings is quick in pointing out the film's 'initial disreputability', 'shifting critical fortunes' and that it was met with overblown rage and disgust (Hutchings, 2003:79). Disreputability should not be surprising for a film that is recognisably Gothic.

³¹ Alan Moore is famous for resurrecting and repurposing Victorian themes and texts, such as his exploration of Lovecraft's work in *Neonomicon* (2010) and most famously *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* (1999), which brilliantly reconstructs a variety of *fin-de-siècle* characters.

³² Similarly, the special effects of Hammer's older films leave a lot to be desired. The period settings however are some saving grace; the films set in the nineteenth century feel much less dated than the two set in the 1970s.

³³ One need only look at the standards of gore and sexual content in the modern horror film, and the term 'torture porn' often levied at them, to see that this has become the standard practice for much of the horror movie industry.

³⁴ Some of the footage removed by censors was lost and is still being appealed for (*BBC News*: Online).

A quotation from Meikle makes this point perfectly, aligning the reaction to *Dracula* with another classic Gothic masterpiece:

Critics at the time hated everything Hammer did and stood for. When it introduced blood into its films, they complained about the blood; when it introduced sex, they complained about the sex. And when – unpalatably – it mixed the two, then the end of civilization as we knew it was deemed to be at hand. It was the same reaction that greeted Matthew Gregory Lewis’s Gothic splatter-piece *The Monk* some 160 years before. (Meikle, 2009: xiii)

Such criticism may have caused Hammer consternation at the time, but when viewed retrospectively it is essentially praise for a work of Gothic fiction – Hammer were triggering the same cultural anxieties and prompting similar reactions in the twentieth century as Lewis did in the eighteenth. A further point raised by Glover suggests that Stoker’s *Dracula* was at least spared this level of moral hysteria by some critics: ‘we know, for example, that *Dracula* was read as a moral tract by some of the author’s peers and acclaimed for its high moral tone in several newspaper editorials’ (Glover, 1996: 4). The novel was clearly respectable enough by the late fifties for Hammer to be seen as apparently lowering the tone with a descent into gore and sex: elements present in the original text to begin with. The key point here, then, is that these films were right for the moment of their release, responding to and feeding contemporary debates on sexuality, especially female sexual desire, and censorship. At the same time, the film managed to bring Stoker’s characters and themes, if not his novel, back to the fore and up to date, but perversely generating an old fashioned response, and offending some distinctly nineteenth-century sensibilities.³⁵ Hammer’s revitalisation of the *Dracula* formula ensured his relevance to the audience and demonstrated the relevancy of a Medieval-Gothic tyrant to modern audiences.

³⁵ Recent criticism of *Dracula* has focused on psycho-sexual elements, in-line with the constructed vision of the Victorians as repressed prudes. This is particularly noticeable with regard to Stoker himself who Barbara Belford notes has ‘In biography and fiction [...] been given a frigid wife, a penchant for prostitutes [and] a sexually transmitted disease’ (Belford, 1996: x).

Hammer's first *Dracula* film was revolutionary in a number of ways. Not only was it the first British *Dracula* film, but it was also the first vampire film in colour – capitalised on by large quantities of bright red blood (Hutchings, 2003: 8, 7). Even Hammer's practice of producing new versions of classic texts was original in this period; most horror productions were focused on space and science fiction. The film even adopted an innovating approach to the text. In *Adaptation and Appropriation* (2006) Julie Sanders notes that 'It is usually at the very point of infidelity that the most creative acts of adaptation and appropriation take place' (Sanders, 2006: 20). This is particularly true in relation to *Dracula* where fidelity to the original text is not only rare, but often neither sought nor expected.³⁶ Hutchings remarks that 'The raising of expectations only to confound them is one of the main ways in which genres renew themselves' (Hutchings, 2003: 47), which seems to be exactly what happens in this version, with Hammer cleverly playing upon audience expectation. Jonathan Harker ignores the warnings he is given and takes his place at Dracula's castle as a new librarian, apparently unsuspecting of his unusual but charming host. As Harker is left in private, and begins writing in his diary, we learn he too has a secret; he is there with the purpose of ending the evil of Dracula. This sudden reversal of roles in which we see a version of Harker attempting to prey on Dracula, is one of the film's most compelling innovations, though there are several more intelligent changes that increase the film's pace. *Dracula* films stage a complex relationship between invention and adaptation, repurposing a great figure of horror from the nineteenth century to continue to try to incite fear in the twentieth century.

The character of the Count has been much revised since 1897. Even in 1958 audiences knew what Dracula looked like, how he spoke, and what to expect thanks to Universal Studios' horror films featuring the recognisable Bela Lugosi. The Count had to

³⁶ This is made far more straightforward by the titling conventions involved. Not only for the adaptations, but for Stoker's original novel as well; the title *Dracula* refers to just one character, the central plot device, the main antagonist, the most compelling part of the novel, as well as its chief novelty.

be modernised, too. Amongst the innovations, Lee's Count featured – for the first time since the largely hard-to-see German film *Nosferatu* (1922) – Dracula equipped with fangs (Hutchings, 2003: 7). This rather bestial feature suits Lee's performance; as he switches between stillness and civility, the Count uses up to date speech (“I'm Dracula”), but at other times launches into frenzied and savage bursts of movement. Similarly, the Count does not rely on ‘gimmicks’. Van Helsing's dictaphone recording establishes a set of rules that discards such feats as transforming into animals (probably as much a practical decision for the film makers as any other factor), but more than this Lee's Count lacks quirks in this first appearance; he does not hypnotise women, nor utilise any ‘mystical’ looking hand gestures or language. Lee's quiet, brooding, and supremely charismatic menace is a key feature that anchors the character amongst changing tides of tone and quality.

Aside from the habit of repeating success, another staple of the Hammer toolbox was sex, and in the Count's case, sex appeal. Hammer used the X rating of the film for full effect, and kept adding to its list of firsts, with Hutchings saying of *Dracula* that ‘for the first time ever in vampire cinema, the eroticism of the bite is unambiguously present’ (Hutchings, 2003: 50). As with the film's critical reaction, such comments suggest the film's updates ensured it was triggering the same cultural sensitivities as Stoker's novel. The appeal of the Count to women was not Hammer's invention, but something made plain as never before, as James Rose in *Beyond Hammer: British Horror Cinema Since 1970* specifically links this to Lee's portrayal of the Count: ‘the Count is, without doubt, one of the most sexually charged manifestations within horror cinema, especially as depicted by Hammer and Christopher Lee’ (Rose, 2009: 14). This is the contradiction at the heart of some of the most effective monsters. As discussed in the introductory chapter to this thesis, the understanding of a monster can shift dramatically, but they remain

fascinating to audiences and readers: ‘For all the horror they inspire, monsters are obliquely sources of admiration [...] and amazement’ (Ingebretsen, 2001: 2). Hammer not only made their Dracula all the more effective for the appeal he has over characters and audiences, but in doing so rendered the character a with a more complex understanding of monstrosity, rather than the clumsy ‘monster’ of monster movies. Making Dracula not only handsome, but heightening the sexuality, progressed the character towards later adaptations that made him far more Byronic, sympathetic, and even romantic.

The biggest issue Hammer’s film series suffers from is keeping the Count scary throughout its surfeit of sequels. One of the most crucial issues is whether or not the Count manages to remain terrifying in his new role as a reoccurring pest, which is perhaps largely down to individual tastes. Dracula’s theatricality, and perhaps even the kitsch quality of the films themselves, has kept the appeal for some viewers – horror films are pleasurable in their own way.³⁷ The novel is finite, about destruction and confrontation: a singular evil that must be finally conquered. Cyclical episodes of rebirth and death do not suit this. Dracula’s ability to get back up and ‘dust’ himself off is admirable, but when he is ‘dusted’ again so soon afterwards the threat to mankind never seems that great. Hutchings points out that even by the second film, *Dracula – Prince of Darkness* (1966), ‘that conflict has become less central to the film than it was in *Dracula*, and this is associated with a marginalisation of the Count that becomes increasingly apparent in the sequels that follow’ (Hutchings, 2003: 92). Hutchings mostly discusses the first sequel, but is astute in pointing out flaws with the sequels that hold true through all of them: ‘as with *Dracula*, his motivation, such as it is, involves “capturing” a woman [...] here it all seems rather petty, and Dracula himself turns out to be surprisingly easy to

³⁷ Horror films have been recognised as being inherently pleasurable in their own right. Carol Clover’s *Men, Women and Chain Saws* (1992) is a good coverage of the topic. Pinedo’s *Recreational Terror* (1997) links these ideas to female audiences.

defeat' (Hutchings, 2003: 92). *Dracula – The Prince of Darkness* came out in 1966, eight years after the first film, but was followed quickly with *Dracula Has Risen from the Grave* in 1968, *Taste the Blood of Dracula* and *Scars of Dracula* in 1970, *Dracula AD 1972* (1972), and *The Satanic Rites of Dracula* one year later in 1973. The formulaic nature of the films is not difficult to envisage from the persistent release schedule and generic titles. As the repetitive nature of the sequels struggled to remain horrifying, the Gothic tone and genre of the films were diluted to maintain the tension and drama. With each defeat Dracula became less credible as a Prince of Darkness, softening his tyrannical image and requiring further modernisation.

The original text becomes indistinguishable amongst the revisions and inventions, and 'adaptation' ceases to be the word to describe them. While 'an adaptation signals a relationship with an informing source text [...] appropriation frequently affects a more decisive journey away from the informing source into a wholly new cultural product and domain' (Sanders, 2006: 26). There seems to be an argument then that all these films do is 'appropriate' Dracula (the character), and this 'appropriation' mostly detracts from Dracula's legend. 'Horror' is the name of the genre, not terror, so as long as the peril persists and blood spurts over the furniture every now and then it is difficult to argue that an audience would stop being 'horrified'.³⁸ Looking at the later Hammer films, and the repeated reliance on formula, it becomes clear Dracula was being *reformulated* too often. Horror cinema was becoming more mainstream, and more daring. Another quotation from Hutchings shows how the entire genre had moved on: 'the increasing importance to the horror genre of contemporary settings also meant that the Gothic vampire stories associated with Hammer started to look decidedly out of place' (Hutchings, 2003: 95). The seemingly endless sequels then do little for Hammer's reputation, but for Dracula

³⁸ The distinction between terror and horror adheres to Radcliffean models; though perhaps used to opposite effect. Whereas the fear and suspense are poorly realised, the ever-present blood provides horror.

himself they were of crucial importance. Dracula becomes less menacing as Hammer's formula for sequels is repeated perhaps as many times as it can. The need for more diverse, and even more sympathetic, readings of *Dracula* becomes apparent.

One of Lee's other significant roles in the field of Gothic tyranny, Dr Fu Manchu, is another example of how Dracula's influence has continued into other films and characters. When discussing how Fu Manchu's cultural status has plummeted Mayer cites 'vague memories of Christopher Lee reruns' as the most likely exposure (Mayer, 2014: 1).

The producers:

clearly drew on the Hammer style, which marked such popular productions as *The Curse of Frankenstein* (1957) or *Dracula* (1958), mixing it up with other popular modes of the day, such as the James Bond thrillers or the European genre film. (Mayer, 2014: 113)

The comparison is perhaps best drawn through the last two films in the series, *The Blood of Fu Manchu* (1968) and *The Castle of Fu Manchu* (1969), not only because of their similar naming conventions (Dracula could easily replace Fu Manchu in these titles), but because they were directed by Jess Franco. In 1970, Jess Franco convinced Lee to play Dracula in his film, *Count Dracula*, by stating it was an adaptation faithful to Stoker's original novel.³⁹ Not only did Lee play both roles simultaneously, then, playing both Fu Manchu and Dracula for the same period in the 1960s, but both franchises shared directorial talent, allowing further parallels to be drawn between them. Fu Manchu therefore is a comparable 'franchise' that mixes both the same closeted atmosphere of Victorian fiction with the changing technology and values of the twentieth century.⁴⁰ The first book of the series is Sax Rohmer's *The Mystery of Fu Manchu*. Like *Dracula*, *The Mystery of Fu Manchu*, and its numerous sequels, situate the villain in the title, not the

³⁹ It is unsurprising that the film still made many revisions, but is more notable for the elements of the novel it was among the first to bring to the screen: the Count's moustache, and his growing younger as he feeds.

⁴⁰ The director of the first two Fu Manchu films also directed for Hammer, including the aristocratic vampire film *Kiss of the Vampire* (1963).

hero. The titles of the novels in many ways seem to prefigure the sequel-heavy naming conventions that would later become associated with horror films, and *Dracula* in particular. The later novels *Daughter of Fu Manchu* (1931) and *The Bride of Fu Manchu* (1933) perhaps illustrate this best, strangely prefiguring titles like Universal's *Dracula's Daughter* (1936) and Hammer's *The Brides of Dracula* (1960). In film, then, it is clear that both Fu Manchu and Dracula were being cast in the same mould.

Fu Manchu and Dracula also share specific similarities, from origin to diffusion. Frayling says that Fu Manchu 'speaks "the purest English I have ever heard". He is a nobleman, appalled by the chaos of contemporary China. He wants China to be *someone* on the world stage again' (Frayling, 2014: 15). Just as Dracula seeks to eradicate his accent, Fu Manchu speaks pure English, and similarly shares both his nobility and his purpose of reliving past glories through conquest. Both, too, share an association with the devil: '[Fu Manchu] was presented by Sax Rohmer as an archangel ruined and often linked to Milton's Satan' (Frayling, 2014: 15). Perhaps the biggest similarity between the two figures is how they have been both enhanced but altered by their afterlives.

Frayling's description of Fu Manchu in film seems to echo the treatment of Dracula as 'the afterlife of Dr Fu Manchu in films since the 1920s is shown to have *amplified* the sinister elements, and the racism, of the original stories, before turning them into camp nostalgia' (Frayling, 2014: 16). Fu Manchu's film career shares a trajectory with Dracula's – they both spawned innumerable imitators in other genres. Fu Manchu has a clean line of descendants that imitate the character's distinct role and style. Fu Manchu has been identified as 'a progenitor of Flash Gordon's villain Ming the Merciless and James Bond's evil Dr. No' (Seshagiri, 2006: 164). As with Dracula's film iterations, losing the specificity of the Orientalist anxiety contributed to the longevity of some of these characters: 'The Fu Manchu replicants and clones who did not too obviously share

the figure's foregrounded Asianness fared slightly better than their blueprint' (Mayer, 2014: 1). The legacy of Fu Manchu can be seen in the arch-tyrants that followed; characters that drew on Fu Manchu's Orientalist blueprint without explicitly recreating the cultural moment. Historical stimulus was imperative in forming these modes of tyranny, but the ability to transcend periods and genres has allowed them to thrive.

The last two Dracula films Hammer made starring Christopher Lee are remarkable for modernising the formula, literally putting Dracula in the present day.⁴¹ These films, *Dracula AD 1972* and *The Satanic Rites of Dracula* rescue the series from the general lack of innovation endemic to the others, as well as returning the mythic quality present in the first film. This is immediately apparent in the opening of *Dracula AD 1972*, as the film begins with Van Helsing and Dracula already mid-confrontation as Van Helsing is once again trying to rid the world of, what the voiceover refers to as, 'the nightmare legend' of Dracula. Wrestling on top of a moving carriage the two seem evenly matched, until Van Helsing is thrown from the carriage just before it crashes, impaling Dracula upon the spoke of a broken wheel. Dracula turns to dust, which his servant gathers up, along with the lethal spoke, and a signet ring. These are buried in a London churchyard. A strange satanic ceremony later and Dracula is back. This early scene embraces and challenges the series' episodic and fragmented nature. The audience does not know what prefaced the final confrontation on top of the carriage, just as they do not know what or who brought Dracula to London in the first place. The return of Peter Cushing provided revitalisation, first as the original Van Helsing, and later as his descendant, Lorrimer Van Helsing, who defeats Dracula in professional vampire hunting style, utilising a mixture of holy water and a pit of crosses sharpened as stakes. The interim absence of Van Helsing 'book ends' the series nicely; in-keeping with general horror trends where 'the typical

⁴¹ The last, at the time of writing, was a jointly produced kung-fu film *The Legend of the 7 Golden Vampires* (1974). It did not feature Lee.

audience was now seen as being predominantly in the eighteen-to-thirty age group' the films in-between had featured amateur teenage vampire slayers who are, as Meikle points out, 'almost incidentally defeating an adversary whom Van Helsing had previously required all of his prowess to tackle' (Meikle, 2009: 168). Transporting Dracula to a contemporary setting helped modernise the Count and update Hammer's increasingly stale formula, but it also re-enacted the anachronism from the original novel. Dracula, a *Victorian* tyrant, is resurrected to haunt contemporary London. In divesting itself of its medieval roots Hammer's Dracula series began to move toward a Dracula that could move freely across texts and genres – a process continued with its next sequel.

If *Dracula AD 1972* revitalises the formula, then *The Satanic Rites of Dracula* dilutes it, adding the secret service into the mix. It is the most direct sequel in the series as Lee, Cushing and several characters from the previous film return. The film again contains many flaws, and some scenes that could have been horrifying simply are not,⁴² but the film continues the mythologizing of Van Helsing and Count Dracula, essentially pairing them off as adversaries destined to battle one another. This is more noticeable as it is the first time in Hammer's films that Van Helsing and Dracula speak to one another. For the first time in one of the Hammer films, Dracula has a plan beyond committing petty acts of vengeance: to destroy the world. It is here we can see the dilution of the genre; Dracula's plan to release a deadly toxin, ill-fitting for a character Hammer themselves had closely linked to period Gothic. As the final Dracula film though, at least in terms of the series' own distorted timeline, it does seem appropriate that the Count has taken it upon himself to realise the level of menace posed in Stoker's novel. The Count finally evolves from a domestic threat to a national one. Hammer's Dracula is one of the great twentieth-century archetypes of tyranny as much as Stoker's was of the nineteenth.

⁴² For instance, a particular scene which does not match its potential to be horrifying is the reveal of Dracula – sitting behind a desk, shining a lamp in Van Helsing's face, speaking plain English.

Just one year after playing the modernised villain Dracula in *The Satanic Rites of Dracula*, Lee can be seen as displaying many of the same characteristics as the bond villain Scaramanga in *The Man with the Golden Gun* (1974). Lee's type-casting as some of the most memorable screen villains up to the present day shows the perseverance and longevity of the type of tyrant manifested in *Dracula*. Lee himself is the best example that, in his own words: 'Count Dracula might escape, but *not* the actors who play him' (Lee, 1997: 252). In modernising the Count, then, the reliance on historical violence, both medieval and even Victorian, is lessened – but Dracula begins to exhibit forms of new Gothic tyranny. As with Fu Manchu the *historical* violence and tyranny that was implicit in the creation of the characters becomes less apparent as the need to diffuse into different versions, across texts and genres, requires figures that can transcend their surroundings. The arch-tyrants of the long nineteenth century rarely have legitimate rule as in earlier texts; they seize power or control from the shadows. Historical violence was a vital ingredient in the creation of Dracula and Fu Manchu but arch-tyrants support the essential functions of the Gothic mode by embodying such violence within themselves. This conflation of the entire text into just its villain is significant in terms of the evolution of the Gothic tyrant: Dracula becomes symbolic of tyranny itself – representing a threat to stability from whatever source it might emanate.

Conclusion: Sequel Forthcoming

In conclusion, through figures like Dracula and Fu Manchu a new archetype of tyranny begins to emerge. The certainty that accompanied the tyrant's destruction in classic Gothic fiction gave way to the need to create a perpetual and returning menace. Dracula 'exists as an independent, free-floating character who stars or guests in narratives that have little or nothing to do with Stoker's novel' (Hutchings, 2004: 40). Dracula is easy to transplant, reconfigure and resurrect without much risk of damaging the working formula.

Whilst their repeated thwarting and destruction may seem to limit their capacity to cause fear, the promise of their return reinforced it. As with much Gothic fiction, the things that we seek to repress rarely remain so. There is more to Dracula's resurrection than mere clichéd horror film returns; however, as each iteration brings a change in context, and perhaps more importantly, signals a return of the prevalence of the tyrant in the popular imagination. The updating and restaging of such eminent nineteenth-century figures and ideas reflects how persistent the fears they speak to are. Like Dracula, 'Otherness' adopts many forms, and is liable to change over the centuries. The medieval influences that made Dracula so Gothic to the Victorians have effectively been displaced; Dracula's nineteenth-century Eastern associations seem no longer to be of primary importance to most interpretations of Dracula in the twentieth century. Hammer perhaps recognised this better than most by the time they updated their *Dracula* cycle by bringing the Count in to the seventies – literally. A clear indication can be seen in the correlation between waning popularity, visible Orientalism and facial hair. Fu Manchu is now perhaps most known as a type of facial hair, whereas Dracula is overwhelmingly portrayed as clean shaven: the Count has modernised, whereas Fu Manchu remains tied to his status as 'Other'. Tyranny was understood as a formative aspect of twentieth-century history – the arch-tyrants that emerged during it show a new understanding of tyranny. Tyranny is never truly defeated.

Ultimately, whilst they may seem different figures, the similarities between Dracula and Fu Manchu, as this chapter has demonstrated, far outweigh their differences. Each sustains a regime purely in their own form. The lasting threat of Dracula, as either a powerful warlord or a charismatic lover, continually assaults gender and sexual norms, with the promise of spreading his decadence to others. The lasting image of Dr Fu Manchu as 'a madman bent upon self-destruction by strange means, or the gibe of a preternaturally clever scientist and the most elusive being ever born in the land of mystery

– China’ is challenged throughout the twentieth century as new figures of tyranny emerge (*Fu Manchu: 277*); super-villains and evil masterminds. These rose to prominence in texts inspired by the Cold War – one need only think of any Bond villain. New ideas of destruction and self-destruction reshaped the imagination to make Fu Manchu’s abilities seem decidedly tame, whilst science fiction was equally quickly overshadowed by scientific reality. Whilst madmen remained very much prolific in the Gothic fiction that followed, the ‘land of mystery’ was finally pushed off the face of the earth – and in to the speculative unknown of the future. Historical excess and performing tyranny can be seen as merged with the arch-tyrants, signalled by their ambition to control. The next chapter takes these ideas into the modern era – where the impact of tyranny and war can be seen in the post-apocalyptic landscapes in which they are set.

Chapter 5: Tyrants in the Post-Apocalyptic Playground



Figure 1: Image from the Daily Mail (28/06/2008).

The Post-Apocalyptic wasteland is, paradoxically, a site of both fear and entertainment. On 28th June 2008, an online *Daily Mail* article entitled ‘A terrifying vision of a devastated America in the wake of a nuclear attack’ began with the line: ‘Washington is laid to waste. The Capitol is a blackened, smoking ruin. The White House has been razed. Countless thousands are dead’ (*Daily Mail*: online). The article went on to explain how terrorists had posted the above image online with a view to instil fear: that the above image could pass in to reality. Unbeknownst to the *Daily Mail*, or at least unacknowledged in the article, the image in question was actually a piece of promotional or concept art from the interactive video game *Fallout 3* (2008) that would be released in October that same year. The evocative language used in the article, combined with the fact that the image was deemed newsworthy at all, signals just how effective post-apocalyptic imagery can be on the popular imagination. Just as the pseudo-terrorists had sought to claim this imaginative space to create fear, the *Daily Mail*, in its own way, was seeking to do the same. The final irony that the image was actually produced as part of a recreational activity is typical of our experience with the Gothic; what should scare us

often becomes enjoyable, thrilling and alarming in equal amounts. The article ends its brief commentary on the desolate image by concluding ‘so far that is only a dream [...] or, as this picture suggests, a nightmare’ (*Daily Mail*: online). Not only does the *Daily Mail* recognise that such nightmares are often the dreams of others, but the use of term ‘nightmare’ demarcates the pseudo-wastelands of the imagination as distinctly Gothic territory.

The wasteland is a hybrid of a science fiction future and a Gothic past. The Gothic mode’s dissemination into science fiction is widely acknowledged by critics, particularly in Botting’s widely-read *Gothic* (1996), but for post-apocalyptic fiction, however, the combination of these two seemingly disparate genres is more productive. Science fiction has been characterised as a more logical genre than other horror writings, being called ‘a measured study of hypothetical changes in environment and of Mankind’s reaction to them’ and spoken of as achieving the ‘popularisation of many unfamiliar snatches of knowledge and technological developments’ (Griffiths, 1980: 25; Aldiss, 1973: 2). This is not reflective of all of science fiction, and certainly not of dystopias and post-apocalyptic works. Stories set in wastelands are frequently associated with the Gothic, and criticism speaks of the way texts of this type ‘have quieted nuclear dread by turning it into the tropes of a new gothicism’ (Disch, 2000: 96). William Hughes has inextricably linked the Gothic mode with science fiction, calling it ‘the unnatural, uncaring, and irresponsible parent of science fiction’ (Hughes, 2014: 463). Aside from being an ‘irresponsible parent’, however, both modes’ similar use of the past has been the subject of comment. *The Science Fiction Handbook* (2009) immediately draws attention to this aspect of the genre, remarking that ‘the tendency of science fiction to be set in historical periods different from those in which it is written suggests parallels with the subgenre of the historical

novel' (Booker, 2009: 5). Hughes specifically links this function of science fiction with the Gothic:

this fiction's visions of the future are – as was often the case in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Gothic – tempered with a deep consciousness of the past, however imaginatively that departed milieu might be rendered. (Hughes, 2014: 473)

Hughes identifies the common ground shared by both science fiction and Gothic forms: they are informed primarily by the past – one need only think of the preface to *Otranto* that purported it to have been printed in 'the year 1529' (*Otranto*: 5). This is immediately apparent with post-apocalyptic fiction, denoting such texts as *Gothic* science fiction. It is not something wholly distinct from the Gothic mode but a modern variation of it, with Botting noting that for such hybrids 'underworlds lurk at the limits of modern knowledge' (Botting, 2005: 111).¹ Post-apocalyptic narratives have been characterised as set amongst a myth of human progress, that 'apocalyptic scenarios take place against the prior and persistent conceit that human culture does truly move to culmination, that there is a larger goal or a target toward which time's arrow is moving' (McMurry, 1996: online). The retrogression toward Gothic savagery, then, acts as a warning to counter belief in progress towards a Utopian future. Like Gothic fiction, science fiction texts are often parables of fear and are associated with horror.

One term that conflates the fear and enjoyment of disaster fiction is 'cosy catastrophe'. The phrase was coined by Brian Aldiss who says that 'the essence of cosy catastrophe is that the hero should have a pretty good time (a girl, free suites at the Savoy, automobiles for the taking) while everyone else is dying off' (Aldiss, 1973: 294). I would argue that this term is extremely reductive and unrepresentative of fiction of this type. Aldiss' 'essence' relates to only a small facet of the texts he was directly seeking to apply

¹ For a more distinct example, Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1979) is frequently interrogated as an example of such a hybrid as it brings together elements from both forms.

it to – while by virtue of surviving, heroes of disaster fiction do fare better than the general population, they can hardly be said to have a good time. The limitations of this term have been noted elsewhere, such as in the *Guardian* article ‘Jane Rogers’s Top 10 Cosy Catastrophes’ (*Guardian*: online). Rogers confesses that before writing her list she was unfamiliar with Aldiss’ specific definition and ‘had attributed a rather different meaning to the term: I had taken it to mean, quite simply, fiction set in a recognisably realistic world’ (*Guardian*: online). One wonders if a general assumption of that broad, benign meaning for the term is responsible for the phrase’s longevity. The one virtue of ‘cosy catastrophe’ speaks to the appealing nature of these texts; the concept of absolute liberation that ensues the collapse of society’s laws, restrictions and responsibilities. Beyond this, there is much truth to Rogers’ assertion that Aldiss’ ‘is a limited and insulting definition, and Aldiss was using it to put John Wyndham firmly in his place’ (*Guardian*: online). This chapter will explore how Wyndham, his near-contemporaries, and his literary descendants actually use the catastrophe as a complex means of exploring dynamics of pleasure, pain, power and freedom, which are all central to the Gothic mode.

Richard Matheson’s *I Am Legend* (1954) is perhaps *the* archetypal Gothic science fiction text, particularly after its increasing fame through subsequent adaptations. The novel contains recognisable quantities of both modes: ‘*I Am Legend* is part of a subgenre, the postapocalyptic tale, that can be found in both Gothic literature and science fiction’ (Oakes, 2000: 73). Matheson’s story seems an American outlier during a period when disaster fiction has been noted as a British phenomenon due to a ‘preoccupation of British writers with disaster’ (Wingrove, 1984: 45).² The similarities between Matheson’s text and its British counterparts includes not just tone and content, but most importantly in

² American science fiction of this period, even if it explored similar themes, tended more towards the imaginative, such as Ray Bradbury’s *The Illustrated Man* (1951), which was published the same year as John Wyndham’s *The Day of the Triffids* (1951).

subject. After a pandemic has turned most of the world into vampires, the seemingly immune Robert Neville lives a solitary existence barricaded inside his house, emerging only during the daytime to scavenge for supplies and kill the sleeping vampires. Neville is eventually able to shift his mind-set from the superstitious to the scientific, enabling him to understand the vampire-germ better, and kill them with greater ease. After encountering another survivor, a young woman named Ruth, Neville takes her in to his home, only to discover she is in fact a vampire sent to spy on him by a new society of vampires. Neville is attacked by this new group, seriously injured and captured. Accepting his fate, Neville asks Ruth not to let *this* society become as cruel as his had been, and awaits execution. Neville's final reflections are the realisation that he has become a legend; something feared by the living vampire population and will undoubtedly pass into superstition. Matheson's work most blatantly displays its fascination with double-facing aspects of tyranny; one man's hero is another's villain, and one can easily become the other. This is typical of Matheson's oeuvre: 'Matheson's work concentrates on humanity's ability to destroy itself, reflecting cultural aspects of the Cold War years such as the threat of nuclear holocaust' (Oakes, 2000: 63). The novel's central premise, as reflected in its titling, is that Neville inadvertently becomes the Gothic tyrant of legend.

Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids* (1951) is chiefly associated with scientific romance rather than Gothic fiction, but in many ways is a prototypical zombie text. Whilst it is not about zombies, the text follows the same structure as the protagonists flee from shambling, ever-amassing monsters. The protagonist, Bill Masen, wakes in a hospital bed recovering from an eye surgery that forced him to miss a mysterious light in the sky that has made most of the country blind. An added threat that Masen warns others about is the dangerous triffid population; walking plants that have no need for sight, that

can kill with a single blow of their venomous branches. Masen joins with various other survivors over the course of the novel. One group is based on logical principles but lacks compassion; they will abandon the dying blind population and instead repopulate by structuring a society around men with multiple wives. Another effort, led by a man named Coker, forces the sighted to lead the blind until the blind die off mysteriously. Masen is eventually reunited with the woman he loves, Josella, at an isolated farmhouse where they try to eke out an existence despite the growing triffid numbers. The farm is invaded by a pseudo-military group Masen encountered earlier in the novel, but they manage to escape to join a new community on the Isle of Wight.

Many of *The Day of the Triffids*' most influential aspects – a group of survivors keeping a horde of monsters at bay, travelling through ruined cities and clashing with rival gangs – have become recurrent tropes within the genre. The final two texts this chapter will explore, Danny Boyle's *28 Days Later* (2002) and Robert Kirkman's continuing zombie comic book series *The Walking Dead* (2003-), draw on *The Day of the Triffids* directly, with a similar structure and some comparable scenes – all three texts feature a protagonist who wakes up in a hospital bed to find the world destroyed. The three texts together constitute different permeations of the same idea, each arguably growing more Gothic. The zombie motif has become the prevalent form of disaster fiction, perhaps even of Gothic fiction in general.³ Yet each still confronts the problem of opportunistic tyranny and regimes in a manner that makes them more dangerous than zombies, triffids or *I Am Legend*'s vampires, and it is that which makes these texts central to this thesis' argument. By including these two modern examples this chapter will demonstrate how newer forms re-articulate older Gothic and science fiction hybrids and

³ From classic films such as George A. Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) and *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), through to modern parodies such as *Zombieland* (2009) and *Shaun of the Dead* (2004), the zombie variation of the apocalyptic themes of *The Day of the Triffids* and *I Am Legend* has become a horror mainstay, with no sign of its popularity waning.

continue to explore the breakdown of morality. In these scenarios of survivors trying to create new societies amongst their Gothic surroundings the position of leaders and regimes, and the associated systems of negotiating power are interrogated, demonstrating how crucial this concept is to the Gothic mode, whatever form it takes.

The influence of the Cold War is one manner in which the past's legacy is detectable across much post-apocalyptic fiction; despite their 'futuristic' settings, the characters are still responding to *past* events: fallout. The term 'fallout' emphasises that the aftermath is just as damaging as the event itself. Fallout in a nuclear wasteland may refer to the 'radioactive particles that are carried into the atmosphere after a nuclear explosion and gradually fall back as dust' but the term's wider application as 'the adverse results of a situation or action' is an apt analogy for the Gothic mode (OED, online: 1946, 1954). As we have seen throughout this thesis, significant events that influence the popular imagination continue to have effects for decades, sometimes even longer, after the event has concluded.⁴ It is this dwelling on the past that marks such science fiction tales as inherently Gothic inflected. This is most clearly seen in *Fallout 3* through its distinctly Cold War veneer; its soundtrack, many items, and even its 'futuristic' robots look like they have walked straight from the set of a mid-twentieth century science fiction production.⁵ This same codified influence of the Cold War is recognisable across post-apocalyptic works. The instigation of the Cold War and the anxieties roused by the much-discussed and ever-increasing arsenals of nuclear weaponry coincide exactly with the popularity of this type of fiction:

it was not until the atomic bombing of Hiroshima in August, 1945, followed by Cold War nuclear tensions, that post-apocalyptic stories – especially though

⁴ This bears some of the hallmarks of trauma. Roger Luckhurst's *The Trauma Question* (2008) explores the way in which such issues of trauma have informed ideas of self.

⁵ The robots, for instance, are based on those in the film *Forbidden Planet* (1956).

dealing with nuclear holocaust and its aftermath – were propelled to the forefront of science fiction. (Booker, 2009: 53)

Not merely a political debate, the threat of nuclear weaponry posed a real risk to the lives of ordinary people, and has caused commentators to note that ‘living under the threat of nuclear suicide became a normal experience’ (McCauley, 2016: 102). It is unsurprising, therefore, to find so much fiction devoted to exploring how people might live during or after such devastation. This had led to two seemingly contradictory ideas: that post-apocalyptic fiction is forever associated with the Cold War, and, at the same time, is located elsewhere in time and space – even utilising other types of disaster than nuclear explosion. The two are linked in more indirect ways; through shared themes and anxieties, but, more significantly, the proliferation of Cold War disaster fiction has led to its key elements becoming tropes for all post-apocalyptic fiction. Repetition of Cold War ideas has led to them being encountered across wastelands of all types. It is in just such a manner that postmodern criticism has noted that ‘history and “truth” become relativized and dependent, more than ever before, on the texts and the metaphors that reconstruct them’ (Arva, 2008: 71). The reason these texts maintain their Cold War symbolism is that this representative copy has replaced the ‘real’ and become indistinguishable – the tropes of post-apocalyptic fiction constitute their own hyperreality.

The term hyperreality is used to denote when symbols and representations become better understood than the reality they once represented. In ‘Against a Perpetuating Fiction: Disentangling Art from Hyperreality’ Torikian defines hyperreality as ‘a term used to describe the way the world is absorbed by an individual’s preference for illusory objects over authentic ones’ (Torikian, 2010: 100). Torikian continues that this is ‘done through the modification of an object or cultural icon to make it more appealing than its actual form’ (Torikian, 2010: 100). Fictionalised disaster narratives have become so ingrained in the popular imagination that they have displaced the actual history that

inspired them. Similarly, the literary descendants of those texts repeat tropes and reference their forebears despite the changed social climate. Returning to the example of *Fallout 3*, in providing a digital playground the game embodies many of the same traits as the ‘hyperreal’ reading of Disneyland. The example of Disneyland as ‘the alpha point of hyperreality’ (Sorkin, 1992: 206) is a famous one amongst postmodern scholars:

At Disneyland one is constantly poised in a condition of becoming, always someplace that is ‘like’ someplace else. The simulation’s referent is ever elsewhere; the ‘authenticity’ of the substitution always depends on the knowledge, however faded, of some absent genuine. (Sorkin, 1992: 216)

It is not difficult to characterise *Fallout 3* as a theme park that conforms to this quotation. Not only is *Fallout 3* immersive, but it allows the player to freely explore its wasteland finding narratives for themselves without being led, and it is not surprising that it contains a wealth of references and ‘Easter eggs’ (intentional hidden jokes or references), both subtle and obvious.⁶ In many ways this can be considered a postmodern pastiche because ‘there is only this smorgasbord of quotations – like a dozen different movie and MTV videos and television shows spliced randomly together’ (Powell, 1998: 39). *Fallout 3* then is a meta-text writ large, able to pay homage to its influences in a myriad of ways, rewarding those familiar with them, and enriching the experience for those who are not.⁷

The spectre of nuclear destruction itself bears some of these hyperreal traits. Abbot says that nuclear war ‘became an actual threat only after being conjured up as an abstraction and that becomes more of an eventuality the more it is debated and discussed’ (Abbott, 2008: online). This is worth consideration – while the threat of nuclear destruction is talked of as an historical certainty, it never took place – it exists only as an

⁶ Moral choices also form a role in this game, much in line with contemporary trends. As Jagoda states: ‘In these same years, mainstream companies also produced a range of narratively complex videogames with multifaceted characters, including *BioShock* (2007), *Mass Effect* (2007), and *Fallout 3* (2008), which reenergized discussions about games and narrative that had fallen out of favor [sic] in earlier debates about ludology versus narratology’ (Jagoda, 2017: 207).

⁷ Explicit references in the game can be found to works such as *Dracula* (1897), *Them!* (1954) and the ‘Mad Max’ franchise (1979-), with less specific allusions being made to *The Omega Man* (1971), *The Road* (2006) and even *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* (1970).

idea. This is typical of hyperreality, in which there is little substance beyond the numerous modes of representation; there is ‘no reality behind this generalized, neutralized and neutered flow of codes, simulations and simulacra’ (Powell, 1998: 63). If nuclear war itself is on the cusp of merely being hyperreal, then the fiction its threat has inspired must be doubly so. Another quotation on hyperreality emphasises the ability of the hyperreal to legitimise itself: ‘the myth, the chanter, the audience, all form a kind of social bond – a social group that legitimizes itself through the chanting of the myth. The myth requires no authorization or legitimization other than itself’ (Powell, 1998: 25). The repetition of ideas from one text to the next enacts this ‘chanting’ – post-apocalyptic fiction embraces the hyperreal to self-legitimize and indirectly encode historical violence into contemporary works.

The constant referencing of popular and widely-known texts is one technique for asserting the authenticity of a text. Torikian argues that ‘hyperreality must always rely on asserting its “realness.” If it did not, then it would lose its fundamental function of blurring the line separating real from unreal’ (Torkian, 2010: 105). *28 Days Later* has been credited with reinvigorating the zombie genre but the film draws on a range of influences, and frequently echoes other works. The biohazard symbol, prominent on the film’s marketing and DVD cover, links it to the popular multi-media ‘Resident Evil’ franchise, known as *Biohazard* in its native Japan, which was adapted into film earlier the same year as *28 Days Later*.⁸ The film’s screenwriter Alex Garland has even noted his inspiration from the games: ‘at the point I was working on *28 Days Later* I had a lot of zombie movies as well as video games like *Resident Evil* turning round in my head’ (Creative Screen Writing: Online). In consciously drawing on such influences and

⁸ Not only has *28 Days Later* been singled out for praise (*Bloody Disgusting*: Online) but according to the *Guardian* article ‘House of Hammer rises from the dead’ the film and its sequel have been influential in encouraging similar productions (*Guardian*: Online).

recycling the motifs and symbols of *I Am Legend*, *The Day of the Triffids* and countless other post-apocalyptic and zombie films, it is easy to see these texts, and many like them, as forming part of the hyperreal wasteland landscape. However, this is not always a positive and the popularity of hyperreal products has been attributed to a dearth in originality: ‘in a world in which stylistic innovation is no longer possible, all that is left is to imitate dead styles, to speak through the masks and with the voices of styles in the imaginary museum’ (Jameson, 2009: 7). The resurrection of dead or past styles is in its own way Gothic. As part of *Fallout 3*’s promotion the company that produced it sponsored a film festival with its president, Vlatko Andonov, stating that ‘this film festival gives us a fun platform to give people further insight into *Fallout 3*’ (Bethesda: online). These films, which are acknowledged as inspiring the themes of *Fallout 3*, include two adaptations of *I Am Legend: The Omega Man* (1971) and *The Last Man on Earth* (1964).⁹ Post-apocalyptic literature seems often deeply indebted to the works that preceded it, with Shapiro noting, in *Atomic Bomb Cinema*, that ‘in virtually every [atomic bomb] film we see the impress of older storytelling traditions, and the sociohistorical environment in which the films are made’ (Shapiro, 2002: 12). This continuation of older traditions not only reveals the clearest example of how the referential nature of post-apocalyptic fiction facilitated the absorption of Cold War history into its literary DNA, but equally raises the question of what traditions it drew on before atomic bomb narratives came into being. In this way, we can see how post-nuclear tyrannical figures continue the legacy of their Gothic ancestors by enacting spectacles of power and following their own desires.

⁹ Other films shown included *Damnation Alley* (1977), *Wizards* (1977), *A Killer Boy and his Psycho Dog* (1975) and *Twelve Monkeys* (1995). *Wizards* in particular should be acknowledged for using Nazi propaganda as a plot point – a further example of how historic tyranny can be transplanted into the wasteland.

A major theme of wasteland literature is liberation. As Sorkin states, ‘the abiding theme of every park is nature’s transformation from civilization’s antithesis to its playground’ (Sorkin, 1992: 210). Critics have latched on to psychoanalysis and fetishisation to explain both the appeal and ensuing liberation that post-bomb fiction has come to be associated with:

the atomic bomb, as the most powerful bomb of all time, has inspired almost everyone who has written or made movies about it to represent it as a kind of aphrodisiac releasing the forces of the Id. (Disch, 2000: 82)

Nowhere can this fetishisation be seen more clearly than the bikini – the now ubiquitous bathing suit was, explicitly, named after Bikini Atoll: ‘the Pacific Island location of the first postwar nuclear test’ (Alisabeth Fox, 2014: 214).¹⁰ The post-bomb world equally provides opportunity for the powerless.¹¹ Nietzsche’s concept of the ‘Will to Power’ has some relevance here, as it ‘presents the desire to dominate as the fundamental human motivation’ (Reginster, 2007: 32). The destruction of the world can be thus be read as a power fantasy, seemingly in-step with the idea as discussed by Nietzsche: ‘what Nietzsche’s picture of the will reveals, or rather holds forth like a promise, is a vision of uninhibited exertion and excitement’ (Porter, 2006: 550). Most tellingly these ideas had some bearing on the course of the twentieth century’s history, perhaps even in the realisation of atomic weaponry as ‘Hitler’s Nazism is a paradigmatic embodiment of the will to power’ (Reginster, 2007: 32).¹² The presence of weaponry with the capacity to end existence as we know it caused fundamental shifts in power dynamics. Published in 1962, King-Hall’s book, *Power Politics in the Nuclear Age*, is not just an account of the impact

¹⁰ Created during the period when nuclear testing dominated the news, some critics have stated that the bikini ‘generated more debate and condemnation than the bomb tests had’ due to its explosive new style (Delis Hill, 2002: 163).

¹¹ *Mad Max 3* (1985) captures this sentiment well in the character of Aunty who states: ‘Do you know who I was? Nobody. Except on the day after, I was still alive. This nobody had a chance to be somebody’.

¹² This seems to be based, according to most Nietzsche scholars, on a flawed understanding of his ideas. Heidegger, for example, lectured in ‘confrontation with the interpretation of Nietzsche promoted by prominent Nazi philosophers’ (Ansell Pearson, 2006: xxi).

of the nuclear weapon on world politics, but is itself an artefact of the Cold War, allowing it to better offer insight into the era and context in which post-apocalyptic literature began to thrive.¹³ For example, the text makes mention of a type of bomb that prioritises buildings and infrastructure over human life in contemporary terms: ‘there is talk at the moment of writing of a new kind of bomb, the neutron bomb, which would destroy all life, but leave buildings intact’ (King-Hall, 1962: 53). Such anxieties are realised within the texts under discussion in this chapter, where non-direct means are responsible for decimating the population but leaving many resources for survival intact. While this seems naturally advantageous in war, it also leads to the realisation of the most pleasure in post-apocalyptic fiction – that of being unrestricted by other people and able to do whatever one wants. For most characters this is a feeling that does not last – for others it allows them to become tyrants.

What makes King-Hall’s book so relevant to a discussion on Gothic fiction is its recognition that power is most frequently enforced through violence and suffering: ‘The central and decisive factor in international politics, at any rate up to 1945, has been a State’s capacity to exert physical violence upon its opponent’ (King-Hall, 1962: 21). As discussed in previous chapters, the centrality of the capacity to inflict violence to the dynamics of power and consolidation of authority cannot be overestimated. Furthermore, King-Hall speaks in terms that relate his subject directly to the Gothic-Historic approach of this thesis, by linking nuclear weaponry to a continuum of violence dating back to man’s earliest ancestors: ‘the nuclear weapon closes a chapter which began when primitive man first used violence by throwing a rock at his enemy or clubbing him over

¹³ King-Hall’s book uses evocative phrases that belong in post-apocalyptic novels, such as: ‘the whole structure of society would have disappeared: animals, crops and water would be contaminated; disease would be rampant and crazy radiation-doomed survivors from the ghastly chaos in the cities would be roaming the land’ (King-Hall, 1962: 68).

the head' (King-Hall, 1962: 49).¹⁴ As we have seen, power is consolidated through displays of violence. Nuclear and atomic weaponry present so potent a force that they change the basic dynamic between assumed power and the capacity to inflict violence between sovereign states:

the individual normally lives under the rule of law, and his policies are designed to confirm thereto; in a democracy they may include the object of altering the law. But the State, in theory at least, is sovereign and in the last resort answerable for its actions only to itself. (King-Hall, 1962: 38)

After the destruction of society and the establishment, survivors, or groups of them, effectively become sovereign states themselves, with the 'politics' between these different groups becoming tantamount to that of international politics.

The ability to act outside morality raises issues of these texts as to whether survival is even worthwhile. This theme is so visible it has led critics like Griffiths to state that 'Britain's principal fears are that Man may cease to survive as a civilised being' (Griffiths, 1980: 76). This statement seems far more representative of the post-apocalyptic genre and its complex politics of survival than Aldiss' curt 'cosy catastrophe', with King-Hall even taking the question 'Is Survival Worth While?' as the title for a chapter (King-Hall, 1962: 67). King-Hall later forges an association between the loss of civilised behaviour with the mentality of living with the constant threat of nuclear annihilation:

Mussolini once told the Italian people they must live dangerously. We have all chosen to take his advice, and when one lives dangerously, love, compassion and the humanistic virtues are at a discount. Dangerous living is brutish living. (King-Hall, 1962: 73)

Inhumanity occurs in earlier Gothic texts as an indicator of monstrosity – in the wasteland it might be necessary to survive. This taps into powerful anxieties, usually recognisable

¹⁴The idea of nuclear weaponry being the pinnacle of an arms race that began with rocks immediately suggests a key scene the start of *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), where prehistoric weaponry morphs into rockets.

around the *fin de siècle*, focusing on degeneration or regression. Just as the eighteenth century feared Catholicism and superstition, and the nineteenth feared atavism and moral decline, it seems that the Cold War influenced a twentieth-century fear of a return to ruthlessness.¹⁵ The capacity to both act independently and make tough choices is the essence of survival: ‘Many disaster stories are social Darwinist parables which take cruel delight in telling us that when it comes to the crunch it will certainly not be the meek who inherit the Earth’ (Wingrove, 1984: 47). This manner of behaviour is a step away from civilization towards savagery and barbarism. The texts under discussion in the chapter unite behind a central fear that the apocalypse will make tyrants out of us all. Whether benign or malevolent, the characters in these novels seek to raise themselves to seats of power and control: to re-establish order on their own terms. Whilst the first four chapters of this thesis have endeavoured to show how integral the past has been towards representing anxieties of the present, this final chapter projects these same anxieties into the wastelands of an indeterminable future. This chapter will now examine the depictions of tyrannical figures and regimes in these devastated futures, seeking to trace their Gothic heritage. Similarly, it will explore what makes the post-apocalyptic wasteland such a fertile breeding ground for tyranny. To accomplish this it will be structured around three facets of the post-apocalyptic experience, common to all four texts under discussion, that demonstrate that Gothic tyranny is thriving in the wasteland. Firstly, it will establish that the rulers of the wasteland are Gothic tyrants, ruling in a like manner and often directly re-enacting medievalism. Secondly, it will demonstrate how structures act as new versions of Gothic castles, bestowing power and authority in themselves. Thirdly, it will explore the moral dilemmas that arise because of these two facts – these texts raise genuine concerns about what might be necessary to restore order, a layer of awareness not

¹⁵ Texts like Wells’ *The Island of Dr Moreau* (1896) and *The Time Machine* (1895) in the late nineteenth century inverted the teachings of Darwinism and posed that if mankind evolved from animals then they might revert back into them too.

as prominent in earlier texts on Gothic tyrants. The loss of societal hierarchy and the necessities of life in a bleak setting eschew morality in their own way, allowing for otherwise monstrous behaviour to be claimed justifiable.

Reconstructing Medievalism

An aspect of these texts that most closely links them to Gothic fiction is their tendency to engage in reconstructing medieval and Gothic practices. Most obviously the reconstruction of medievalism is recognisable after disasters have wiped out civilization – not just populations and technology, but also standards of behaviour. In *I Am Legend* Neville acts at times like Manfred from *Otranto* – as a Gothic tyrant. Neville becomes less civilised, particularly when ruled by his appetites and suffers emotional outbursts. The biggest indicator of Neville’s tyrannical status is his extreme brutality, particularly when directed against women. Neville finds a sleeping woman and after she begins struggling he ‘dragged her the rest of the way by her hair’ (*Legend*: 28). This begins a pattern of violence directed at women in the novel, a pattern Neville himself becomes aware of, and is forced to ask himself: ‘Why do you always experiment on women?’ (*Legend*: 50).¹⁶ These violent acts continue throughout the novel. A later experiment sees an enraged Neville ‘smashing [a woman] across the cheek and snapping her head to the side’ (*Legend*: 52). This time, however, there is the acknowledgement that Neville enjoys this type of violence and even his own injuries as the reader is told he was ‘enjoying fiercely the burning pain in his flesh’ (*Legend*: 52). This violence towards women links to Neville’s most apparent urge – his desire for sex. When ‘the women had seen him and had started striking vile poses in order to entice him out of the house’ they are almost successful as he asks himself ‘Why *not* go out?’ (*Legend*: 6, 18). Neville seemingly resents the ‘naked women flaunting their hot bodies at him’ and the internal struggle it ignites (*Legend*: 22), and perhaps this accounts for some of Neville’s making women a

¹⁶ Neville kills not only female vampires, but children as well (*Legend*: 18).

focal point for his violence. The inability to fulfil this sexual desire is one of Neville's greatest causes of suffering: 'all the words of centuries couldn't end the wordless, mindless craving of his flesh' (*Legend*: 7). There is a detectable sexual element to Neville's violence. For instance, when forcing Ruth to comply with his commands his blows have the effect of, supposedly unintentionally, undressing her: 'his taut fingers ripped away part of her dress' (*Legend*: 113). The scene brings Neville in line with many of the other Gothic tyrants that have been discussed in previous chapters; as with his forebears he chases women, strikes them, and almost forces himself upon them. This is emphasised by one of Neville's chilling acknowledgments, that 'If [Ruth] had come two years before, maybe even later, he might have violated her' (*Legend*: 125). Neville is enacting the exact threat to women and virtue that posed marked tyranny in early Gothic novels.

Neville's other chief appetite, food, also leads to his enacting Gothic tyranny. Throughout the novel Neville's appetite changes depending on his progress. After Neville has killed children he loses his appetite, but after finally making improvements to his house, to the sound proofing in particular, 'his appetite increased' (*Legend*: 18, 39). This peaks after Neville has discovered the truth behind the vampires, and he seems satisfied for one of the first times in the novel: 'he had a glass of wine with his steak and was amazed how flavoursome everything was' (*Legend*: 79). Being driven by his appetites characterises Neville as somewhat uncivilized, emphasised in the same seen through his eating habits: 'The steak he finished to the bone, and he even chewed on that' (*Legend*: 79). This is another image that depicts Neville as savage. As with his sexual desire, thwarting Neville's appetite leads to violence as we are shown the extent to which he is governed by emotion. Neville's outburst when the vampires assault his generator, 'fury exploded in him. Enough!', is motivated by the threat to his food supply: 'the freezer was

off; all the food would spoil' (*Legend*: 36). Neville's rage is shown elsewhere in the novel, even after his rational phase, such as when first encountering Ruth who does not correspond to his wishes: 'with a snarl of rage he drove his right palm across her face' (*Legend*: 113). Neville's two hungers do seem to be linked; for Mathias Clasen 'metaphorically, Matheson suggests that the need for companionship is as real, as fundamental, and as strong as the need for sustenance' (Clasen, 2010: 320). Neville's actions extend meeting a need for companionship, however, as his isolation has left him incapable of acting according to his whims. Neville, then, not only preys upon the innocent, but is a violent self-indulgent figure in his own right. Neville here becomes Manfred, epitomising the characteristics of the Gothic tyrant. While Neville struggles against these urges, other tyrants indulge in them.

The vampire society, by comparison, seems to be a fully realised model ruled by medieval barbarism. While the vampires that gather outside Neville's house are also ruled by their own appetites, they are not united and are not as frightening: 'There was no union among them. Their need was their only motivation' (*Legend*: 11). By contrast, the organised vampire group makes a strong and troubling first impression on Neville: 'They came by night. Came in their dark cars with their spotlights and their guns and their axes and pikes' (*Legend*: 148). From their 'methodical butchery' it is immediately clear that this new society is ruthless (*Legend*: 149), with their medieval weaponry further signposting their Gothic barbarism. The text asserts that "'New societies are always primitive'", but the group makes this clear earlier with a violent display of brutality and power for Neville and the reader: 'the street was a scene of rushing, violent action' (*Legend*: 157, 148). Most condemningly, the perpetrators enjoy this violence, with Neville finding them 'more like gangsters than men forced into a situation' (*Legend*: 149). Oakes states that 'the novel presents a new world emerging from the ashes of the old,

with no place for humanity' (Oakes, 2000: 75), which definitely seems to be the case. Inhumanity, so apparent in earlier chapters, is apparent again here on the expressionless faces of the murderous vampires carrying out their callous brutality: 'Their faces were cruel and emotionless' (*Legend*: 149). The novel either ends with hopelessness or optimism depending on how Neville's pleas are interpreted, as a dying Neville asks Ruth not to let it be "too brutal. Too heartless" (*Legend*: 159). Society, in a sense, has come full circle: barbarism and severity are once again flourishing.

Medievalism is reconstructed in *The Day of the Triffids* both overtly and indirectly by the militaristic Brighton group whose behaviour marks them as a tyrannical regime who export violence as a commodity. After the group approaches Masen he soon understands that they are 'offering [him] a kind of – feudal seigneurie' (*Triffids*: 227). The medieval connotations of such an arrangement are obvious, and have resonated elsewhere within this thesis, particularly the chapter on the French Revolution. The reversion of society is seemingly complete in this scenario as all society has to aim for is a recreation of a flawed and corrupt model from its past, with a tyrannical regime installing lesser tyrants to exploit the workforce. As with all tyrants, examples abound of how this new regime seeks to use threats in order to enforce its will. In their eyes, Masen's farm is already under their control: "Frankly, if you do not care to take it, we shall put in someone else who will. We can't afford waste in these times" (*Triffids*: 227). The Brighton regime is clear that their system of control is one backed up by violence: "If they like to refuse what we offer – well, that's their own funeral" (*Triffids*: 228). The Medieval-feudalism is combined with Cold War-era military aggression and isolationism. Before encountering the group directly, Masen essentially realises that an iron curtain has fallen around Brighton: 'Who or how many they were I did not know. I simply found a rough wall of stones piled across the road, and painted with the instruction: KEEP OUT'

(*Triffids*: 199). It is immediately clear that the group has a hostile, shoot-first attitude: ‘The advice was backed up by the crack of a rifle and a spurt of dust just in front of me’ (*Triffids*: 199). In the context of the Cold War, such an attitude was especially dangerous – reckless hostility with nuclear weapons would have had massive consequences. The regime has clearly adopted a pseudo-military aspect, recognisable in the uniforms they wear, ‘four men clad in grey-green ski-suits. Two of them wore pistols holstered to the right hip’, and the ‘monstrous-looking vehicle’ that ‘suggested a military origin’ (*Triffids*: 224/225, 224) that they arrived in. This is identified as more than mere survival, however, as it is the birth of a new tyrannical society founded upon forcing compliance through the use of its armed forces: “‘Supreme authority and legislative power is vested in the Council. It will rule. It will also control the armed forces’” (*Triffids*: 228). As in pseudo-Medieval Gothic texts, the Brighton group seem to be operating from a position of martial authority – the power to harm others bestows authority.

The positioning of the Brighton faction at the novel’s climax is the ultimate realisation of the anxieties this type of fiction espouses: with more realism than the new vampire society, we are faced with a brutal and savage organisation that has learned nothing from the disaster that swallowed the world. The Brighton regime labour under the belief that “‘the first country to get on its feet again and put itself in order is also going to be the country to have the chance of bringing order elsewhere’” (*Triffids*: 229). It seems unbelievable that after everything that takes place in the novel the villains are aiming for the rather clichéd world domination. This is reiterated by a further statement:

“Clearly it is our national duty to get ourselves back on our feet as soon as possible and assume the dominant status so that we can prevent dangerous opposition from organizing against us”. (*Triffids*: 229)

Nationalism also abounds within this group, apparently, drawing attention to their inherently fascist mentality. Ruddick in his book, *Ultimate Island: On the Nature of*

British Science Fiction (1993), is highly dismissive of Wyndham throughout, drawing attention to the way his fiction ‘propagandizes’ and ‘sentimentalizes’ in what he defines as ‘the two most common failings of British postholocaust literature’ (Ruddick, 1993: 143). The presentation of the Brighton group, I would argue, refutes this point. It is distinctly unsentimental in its representation of a subset of people within society and their attitudes. As with Neville’s tyrannical actions, this statement also excuses the group’s savage actions as they believe they are for the greater good. This flimsy pretence for their manner of absorbing and exploiting other survivors allows them to believe they are not only justified, but a legitimate state and thus able to classify its opponents as enemies. Implications made elsewhere in the novel are made explicit here – the Brighton faction are examples of people *definitely* stupid enough to doom the human race. The final page confirms they are still leading ‘a life of squalid wretchedness behind their stockades’ – a sentiment that neatly summarises not only their medieval lifestyle, but its ineffectiveness (*Triffids*: 233). Just as the Brighton faction most closely emulates the behaviour of classic Gothic tyrants – ruling through force and a misguided belief in their justification to do so – from the perspective of the hyperreal wasteland they become a permanent feature: the aggressive faction capitalising on catastrophe rather than learning from it.

As an actual military leader, Major West in *28 Days Later* enacts the role of Gothic villain more directly than many other post-apocalyptic tyrants. West’s melodramatic threat to Hannah’s virginity as his men chase the women through their Gothic mansion reflects Manfred over 250 years ago in *Otranto*. Like Manfred, West seeks to maintain control of his fortress, but his motivations are different. As is common throughout the post-apocalyptic genre such actions are in order to preserve life and continue survival. If West is not wrong in his aims, who is there to tell him he is wrong in his methods? Even the optimistic Jim has killed by this point in the film. West’s own

cynicism echoes the cyclical treatments of violence throughout Gothic fiction. Upon learning that Jim killed a boy, West's reaction is muted, telling Jim that he had to. "Survival. I understand", before somberly adding "I promised them women" (28). West also tells Jim that eight days ago he found Jones with his gun in his mouth. West set the radio broadcasting and promised them women "because women mean a future" (28). When West says that he "can't let them [the women] go" (28) it is more than just the challenge to his authority, he *literally* needs them in order for his group to have a future. West's treatment of the tethered infected soldier, Mailer, is also an act the film ultimately punishes him for, despite being an attempt at gathering scientific information. We are not instructed to feel any great sympathy with the infected; this is no *I Am Legend*, there will be no infected society and there is no possibility of a cure. Despite this, West's effective torture of Mailer in order to see how long it takes an infected to starve to death marks him out as tyrannical to the protagonists and the audience.

While like the other texts under discussion, *The Walking Dead* does feature hostility with pseudo-medieval groups, it spends more time on a more troubling realisation: that the main characters may become a medieval group themselves. This can be seen when the cast occupies a prison – and quickly adopts a uniform of prison overalls and riot gear that gives them a paramilitary appearance – complete with a de-humanising full-face mask (*Walking Dead*: Vol 4, 5). It is after occupying the prison and obtaining a surfeit of equipment that the group engages in its first hostile campaign against other survivors. This conflict is with the Governor, who rules the town of Woodbury, and who reconstructs medieval tyranny overtly through his sadistic torture and raping of the character of Michonne (*WD*: Vol 5). This use of torture is reminiscent of the early Gothic in that it serves no purpose; no questions are asked. Another victim made to witness parts of the torture, Glenn, states he "might have told them *anything* to make them stop. But

they never even *asked*. It's like they did it all just to *fuck* with me” (WD: Vol 6). The fact that the torture had no purpose, despite Glenn's willingness to talk, gives the reader no doubt that the Governor is a sadist and a tyrant. As has been demonstrated through earlier chapters, this type of violence ultimately leads to more violence as Michonne tortures the Governor once freed. As with *The Monk*, much is made of the instruments of torture – a full page is devoted to Michonne showing them to the Governor. Unusually here, the torture is not implied or left to the reader's imagination.¹⁷ The escalation of violence brings to the surface a 'them' and 'us' mentality and a paranoia that seemingly replicates Cold War attitudes. This is a point reiterated when the protagonist, Rick, catches up with someone attempting to deliver the prison's location to the Governor. The man pleads with Rick that such a resource could be shared: “My people *deserve* to be *safe*, too” (WD: Vol 6). Rick's response of “Don't you know what people are capable of?!” is rebuffed by Martinez's curt “I think I'm getting-- --the idea”, as Rick strangles him to death (WD: Vol 6). Not only does this interaction highlight Rick's burgeoning tyrannical tendencies to the readership, but it prompts Rick to realize himself how much he's changed, asking “Does that make me *evil*?” (WD: Vol 6). *The Walking Dead* is ambivalent to tyrannical cruelty – it sometimes seems necessary. *28 Days Later*, *The Day of the Triffids* and *I Am Legend* are much quicker to condemn it – extremes of violence belong almost solely to the antagonist groups. Compromises may be made in the wasteland, but this does not justify a return to medieval levels of feudal control, torture, or crimes against women. The tyrants of the future wasteland are unmistakably Gothic.

Structures of Power

Structures remain a significant method of obtaining power in the wasteland, both for the protagonists and the tyrannical forces who threaten them. Tyrants use imposing Gothic

¹⁷ Michonne's torture is obscene – drilling into The Governor's shoulder, pulling off his fingernails, cutting his forearm off and seemingly inserting and removing a spoon from his anus before using it to remove his eye (WD: Vol 6).

buildings, such as manors or castles in order to view their subjects, keep them out, or to hide from them. Neville's house in *I Am Legend* performs each of these functions in the novel, but as the only place of absolute safety for Neville this role is heightened – it is not just the seat of his power but a vital part of it. The boarded up windows, for instance, 'made the house a gloomy sepulchre' – an example of some singularly Gothic language (*Legend*: 3). Not only are the boards a necessary piece of security, but they also transform the property into something reminiscent of a crypt. Neville is dependent on his house, unable to safely venture farther than he can travel in a day.¹⁸ The security of the building is demonstrated throughout the novel, with Neville 'locking and bolting the door behind him, sliding the thick bar into place' (*Legend*: 6). Neville continues to make improvements over the course of the novel. After Neville's brush with death due to staying out after dark, 'he had finally taken three days and soundproofed the walls' (*Legend*: 38). Isolating himself from the screams and taunts of his tormentors is vital for preserving Neville's sanity finally allowing him to relax. Another security measure adds to the isolation of the building, with 'charred ruins of the houses on each side of his. He'd burned them down to prevent *them* from jumping on his roof from the adjacent ones' (*Legend*: 2). If the fortified mansion becomes a symbolic replacement for the Gothic castle, it is unsurprising that its master becomes equally inhospitable.

The committee at Senate House in *The Day of the Triffids* aims to avoid relapsing into barbarism – an aim that ironically contrasts with their goal of obtaining a Gothic structure:

As for the scene of our isolation, the committee had given it considerable thought, and, bearing in mind the desiderata of compactness, self-sufficiency, and detachment, had come to the conclusion that a country boarding-school or, failing that, some large country mansion would best serve our purposes. (*Triffids*: 97)

¹⁸ This is a limitation Neville is directly aware of, asking how can he ever find things 'if they weren't within a day's drive of his house?' (*Legend*: 18).

The desire to transplant their society to an isolated Gothic structure draws on the longstanding Gothic tradition of such buildings becoming symbols of power. This medieval, war-like manner of living is recognised by the committee itself, whilst they aim to spend a year in that period of isolation, working towards self-sufficiency they acknowledge that ‘We should spend that period in virtually a state of siege’ (*Triffids*: 97). Even Masen recognises that this progression of society is far more of a step back than an embrace of the future. Masen uses more loaded language that suggests this building of ‘a new state of things’ is a lot more retrograded than the committee suggests placing them all ‘more like a *tribe* than we ever were before’ (*Triffids*: 104).¹⁹ Later in the novel, when Masen and Coker are trying to locate the committee, they find the site of its first attempt, Tynsham Manor. It is immediately established as an imposing and defensible structure with a ‘high wall’ and ‘massive wrought iron gates’ embodying the committee’s goal of setting up a seat of power in a Gothic structure (*Triffids*: 140). This besieged approach to survival seems to be the standard attitude in the novel, with Masen and Coker encountering groups with similar mind-sets. One site a group had inhabited ‘had once been a fortified manor. Refortification was now under way’ (*Triffids*: 165). The combination of the medieval with the modern is explicit here: the inhabitants are attempting to make the moat usable, but ‘at least three of the windows in the front displayed machine guns’ (*Triffids*: 165). This type of defence becomes the standard for groups hoping to survive in the novel. Scouting the area by helicopter, other groups that are encountered hold out in a similar manner, with the fact that most of them do not wish to join their group and see no benefit in it signposting to the reader the heightening isolationism and distrust (*Triffids*: 171). Whilst this return to classic Gothic tropes may

¹⁹ The second and third films in the ‘Mad Max’ series show this approach – not only a reversion to feral behaviour and some aspects of medieval warfare, but a banding together into groups for survival.

have a practical value, it is equally symptomatic of the group's return to an isolationist medieval mind-set.

These pseudo-medieval fortresses may confer power but their flaw lies in their finite lifespan. Reuniting with Josella at a farmhouse called Shirning, Masen begins to fortify this house in a similar manner. This struggle is characterised as a conflict between man and nature, as 'on all sides they were encroaching to repossess themselves of the arid spaces that man had created' (*Triffids*: 197). Masen experiences this on his trips to a London that is quickly collapsing: 'it passed beyond the scope of any magic wand, most of the ghosts were going with it, withdrawing slowly into history' (*Triffids*: 198). This has been highlighted as an issue shared by both Wyndham and H. G. Wells:

They [Wells and Wyndham] both worry about the inability of humanity and its civilisation to endure; both are aware that in the never-ending flow of change humanity is only one more transient species.²⁰ (Clareson, 1990: 97)

This statement seems an apt reflection on the later sections of the novel, as concern widens beyond Masen's immediate survival and becomes a sincere doubt about the survival of the entire human species. The focus on practicalities and defences is symptomatic of resistance to extinction via complete barbarism, something borne out by Masen's own experience as it becomes clear even Shirning has a finite lifespan:

What we are on now is a road that will take us back and back and back until we can – *if we can* – make good all that we wear out. Not until then shall we be able to stop ourselves on the trail that's leading down to savagery. (*Triffids*: 173)

Coker recognises the limitations of this feudal model of survival, as well as its long-term implications: extinction. Coker proposes wider co-operation and communal living as the only solution to this inevitable decline.

²⁰ Mankind's transience naturally resonates with many other texts in the same or similar genres, particularly *Planet of the Apes* (1968). *28 Days Later* has a character mouthpiece this exact opinion, and H. G. Wells' *The Time Machine* (1895) essentially articulates this same lesson.

The thinking has to be done largely by people who are not directly productive – by people who appear to be living almost entirely on the work of others, but are, in fact, a long-term investment. (*Triffids*: 173)

The way in which the text steers these communities towards futility and discussions of civilisation, and even humanity, being superseded and wiped off the face of the earth is pessimistic in tone. Both a reliance on conflict as a method of resolving disputes and the ensuing Gothic isolationism are shown to ultimately lead one way – to death for the human race. Returning to the fictional wasteland as a post-modern construction, this sentiment is typical of the post-apocalyptic narrative. Neville's death at the hands of the vampires represents this in a microcosm, but *Triffids* argues that an instinctive response of reinstating defences and hostility to outsiders is a flawed one. The focus on finding secure structures reflects the dichotomy between reinstating Gothic tyranny and attempting to preserve community – one instinctively offers immediate survival options but the other offers a future.

Both *28 Days Later* and *The Walking Dead* can be characterised as a search for defensible, sustainable structures. In *28 Days Later* Frank and Hannah's high-rise flat has been adapted into a more comfortable, easier to defend residence, reminiscent of Neville's house. The fortified flat performs a vital function of allowing the occupiers to relax, highlighted by the film's juxtaposition of Jim's tense sprint to the flat culminating with Selena's frantic pounding on the door with the serene domesticity once inside: Christmas music is playing as Frank offers them a crème de menthe. Fortifications notwithstanding, it allows for a pretence of normal life, a point emphasised through Jim shaving. The beacon used to alert other survivors to their presence is similar to how the light at Senate House in *Day of the Triffids* is used. Such similarities help to signpost the

post-modern aspects of this dwelling.²¹ The limits of their set-up are equally telling, with their best source of water being buckets on the roof thwarted by a lack of rain. Frank and Hannah present the film with its first clear goals. Like Neville, Frank and Hannah have an awareness of their position at the end of the human race: “‘you’ll never read a book that hasn’t already been written or see a film that hasn’t already been shown’” (28).²² Using a hand-powered radio, they listen to a broadcast claiming ‘salvation’ alongside a location in the north. Like Masen, such a dwelling has a limited lifespan, and it is this fact that draws them out seeking a more optimistic future.

Major West’s mansion, as a large country house, is both a recognisable Gothic structure and a typical post-apocalypse fortification. The house has been enhanced with improvised barricades consisting of scaffolding and razor wire, along with land mines and surrounding floodlights. Like West himself, the house initially seems friendly and warm, but this is deceptive. The building’s Gothic hallmarks are enhanced through later scenes; it contains not only a secret passage (used by a fleeing tyrant) but also a bedroom filled with sinister dolls. For West, the road back to civilisation starts with domesticity, boasting about the “‘beds with clean sheets and a boiler that produces hot water’” to Jim and Selena upon arrival. The limits of this forced domesticity become apparent at dinner when a toast to “‘new friends’” ends with omelettes made from rotten eggs (28). Not only is this ceremony revealed as a flawed parody of domesticity, but an immediate inquiry as to whether the women can cook becomes the first indicator of a return to prescribed gender roles (28). Soon the soldiers attempt the rape of Selena and Hannah after putting them in “‘expensive dresses’” (28). The Gothic imagery reaches its height as a soldier drags Selena in her red dress through the building, making his intentions clear with “‘we’ll find a nice little fucking place somewhere’” (28). Selena’s transition from a strong character

²¹ One curious feature is bubble wrap on the windows, presumably to cancel the noise like Neville’s soundproofing.

²² This same thought is had by Neville in the *I Am Legend* adaptation *The Omega Man* (1971).

who rescues Jim, to one who needs to be rescued by him may be problematic from a feminist standpoint, but here it serves the hyperreal function of restaging old Gothic motifs. The Manor House becomes a bastion of the past in the worst way – the Gothic exterior seems to infect the inhabitants who begin to act suitably Gothic themselves.

Seeking a more secure base than an itinerant campsite is the chief goal early in *The Walking Dead*. Two Gothic structures are stopped at as potential dwellings. A gated community, Wiltshire Estates, seems ideal – until, in a dramatic twist, it transpires the gate was locked to keep the zombie residents *inside*. More problematically, Rick’s group finds a fortified farmhouse, still cultivated by its owner – who is unwilling to share. The first successful fortification comes in the form of a prison, complete with two layers of perimeter defences, sturdy construction, sufficient room for farming and that is laden with supplies. Not only does the stationary nature of the volumes set in the prison differentiate them from earlier issues, but there is also a darker tone: now they have a home they must defend it. Rick is faced with tough decisions, such as his first murder for the good of the group. The conflict with the Governor is the ultimate destination of this heightening tension, and seems common enough in the wasteland. Like Masen’s farm in *The Day of the Triffids*, once you are in possession of a valuable home others will try and take it from you. Rick’s group come into direct conflict with the town of Woodbury over possession of the prison. *The Walking Dead* finds the practical difficulties in survival to be surmountable, while the social and psychological difficulties are ongoing. Elements of this same dilemma are detectable in the town of Woodbury. The Governor seems tyrannical for allowing or encouraging blood sports, particularly gladiatorial combat, but there is truth to his excuse that ““You gotta keep people *occupied* or they’ll turn on *you*”” (WD: Vol 5). The ongoing need to maintain strong order is what makes tyranny a

continual element of such narratives – a harmonious society seems unachievable because it would be too vulnerable.

The biggest indication of the power that these wasteland castles confer lies in their ultimate destruction: Neville's house is raided by the new vampire society and Masen lets the triffids into Shirning as they escape. In *The Walking Dead*, the battle for the prison in volume 8 damages it greatly – as it no longer offers much protection and ceases to be worth fighting for. Such destruction and mutual loss again echoes the Cold War attitudes that informed the subgenre. In *28 Days Later*, not only does Jim let zombies inside West's mansion, but the symbolic smashing of its gates effectively means its destruction as a place of safety. The positive ending of *28 Days Later* is unusually optimistic for the subgenre, suggesting a possible return to normality, sparing Selena and Jim from having to make decisions that may lead them down a similar path to West.²³ In the continuum of the wasteland, though, the loss of such fortifications and their resources seems tragic – such advantages may never be realised again. This is why the symbolic destruction of them is so meaningful – as with the monastery in *The Monk*, it is not enough for the tyrant to be killed or dethroned, their seat of authority must be demolished. As we have seen, the possession of such structures can lead to militarism, fascism and tyranny: control must be maintained at the expense of others. As has been demonstrated the tyrants of the post-apocalyptic wastes act like the tyrants of classic Gothic texts; displaying their power through violence and shore their authority through imposing structures. What will be examined next is the nuanced way in which the wasteland draws figures into performing this tyranny.

Making Your Own Morality

In the years that had passed he had never once considered the possibility that he was wrong. (*Legend*: 136)

²³ The epilogue scene takes place in a rural idyll – an inversion of the standard horror movie ending that typically sees a vanquished threat ominously return.

Not thirty pages from the end of *I Am Legend* Neville is forced to confront the reality that he may have been killing without due cause. In a discussion with Ruth, who he correctly suspects of being ‘infected’, Neville finally comes face to face with what has been intimated throughout the novel: that he is a villain. It is the quintessential statement of tyranny; everyone considers themselves the hero of their own tale, as we have seen in previous chapters. The revelation that Neville is *the bad guy* is a process begun early in the text yet Neville does not stop killing. For instance, Neville asks ‘is the vampire so bad?’, foreshadowing this important issue for the reader (*Legend*: 21).²⁴ Unlike the vampires that surround Neville at night, the ones he kills during his daytime patrols are no direct threat to him. When Neville’s discoveries lead him to conclude that ‘it was the germ that was the villain’ the issue resurfaces, suggesting vampires are as much victims as he is, though it does not appear this causes Neville to refrain from killing sleeping vampires (*Legend*: 78). Neville is able to surmise that his night-time attackers think ‘themselves true vampires when they were actually only demented sufferers’ – an acknowledgement that means Neville does identify them as in some way victimised or pitiable (*Legend*: 106).²⁵ Neville obtains this information during his period of logic and reason, giving him evidenced reasons for seeing the vampires as sufferers or even fellow human beings, and not monsters it is permissible to massacre. It is crucial to note how Neville ignores these indications and continues to subject the vampires to the same ‘Othering’ process as discussed in previous chapters, enabling him to perpetrate violence against them. The repeated comparisons to animals render the vampires as little more than beasts, as they act not only ‘like a pack of wolves’ (*Legend*: 34), but can also be noted as ‘crouching on their haunches like dogs’ (*Legend*: 10). The fact that the novel manages to

²⁴ Neville poses questions that could make the reader reappraise their assumptions about the vampires even if he does not, for example: ‘are his needs any more shocking than the needs of other animals and men?’ (*Legend*: 20).

²⁵ Neville also uses some poetic, possibly sympathetic, language to describe the vampires as ‘lonely, soul-lost slaves of the night’ (*Legend*: 105).

conceal this from the reader for so long makes a bold point about the nature of tyranny; that, as we have seen, it often comes ‘Full circle’ as victim becomes perpetrator, and vice versa (*Legend*: 161). The novel was credited with modernising the vampire story,²⁶ just as *Dracula* once was, but from a modern perspective is quite outdated in its assumptions and its interpretation of vampires joins Stoker’s and Polidori’s as foundation stones of the hyperreal construction. Vampires aside, Matheson’s novel is significant for its compelling engagement with the trope of the Gothic tyrant. Neville feels empowered by his circumstances to make this decision and carry out these killings, without much consideration for the vampire’s ‘humanity’.

Neville’s moral empowerment is in keeping with Nietzsche’s discussion of both morality, and the Overman’s capacity to create its own. For Nietzsche ‘to be a moral being is first and foremost to be a creature of convention’ – essentially conceptualising morality as a form of control (Sedgwick, 2009: 99). Equally, ‘morality is open to the charge of being a fantastic delusion’ – this turns out to be the case for Neville, who has misinterpreted the morality of killing vampires (Sedgwick, 2009: 98). Nietzsche states that ‘man is something that should be overcome’, conceptualising the *Übermensch* or the Overman – a being superior to ordinary men (Nietzsche, 1969: 41). Neville obtains this to some degree in *I Am Legend*, just as most survivors seemingly obtain the ability to transcend conventional morality. This is a trait of the Overman: ‘their will tends to manifest the master morality’ (Golomb, 2013: 526). This is more than simply ignoring the rules of society – it is the capacity to create them. The ‘Will to Power’, as discussed earlier, feeds into this idea: ‘as a perpetual willing, the will to power negates the already formulated forms and replaces them with other creations’ (Golomb, 2013: 526). Neville demonstrates this strength to negate the conventions of ordinary life and create his own

²⁶ It won the Bram Stoker Best Vampire Novel of the Century award in 2012 beating Stephen King’s *Salem’s Lot* (1975) and Anne Rice’s *Interview with the Vampire* (1976).

morality – the ability to not just act according to his own whims, but to morally justify them.

Neville's acknowledgement of his own dark desires corresponds with a growing awareness that there is little to stop him doing as he wishes. Neville's internal questioning of whether he should forego finding evidence to make him suspicious of Ruth is a powerful example of this: 'Shall I kill her now? Shall I not even investigate, but kill her and burn her?' (*Legend*: 129).²⁷ Despite the possibilities a companion holds, and his own recognition he could 'investigate' her, Neville is tempted to just act and be done with it – an increased awareness of his own self-governance, liable to no one. Neville's physical appearance becomes one way of measuring this. When Neville sees Ruth and immediately begins chasing her, the narrator gives us an insight into just how far removed from society Neville has become as 'He didn't realize how frightening he looked; six foot three in his boots, a gigantic bearded man with an intent look' (*Legend*: 112). The implication here is that Ruth has every reason to think that Neville might attack her, or worse. This transformation into a frightening figure is even detectable in Neville's speech as the reader learns Neville 'didn't realize that his voice was devoid of warmth, that it was the harsh, sterile voice of a man who had lost all touch with humanity' (*Legend*: 113/114). Characters losing touch with humanity becomes a consistent idea throughout post-apocalyptic fiction. *I Am Legend* does this more overtly than most, and it has been recognised that 'Matheson depicts society's fear of corrupt authority by Neville becoming his own political value system' (Hatter, 2013: 44). That *Legend* articulates this idea so clearly before the increased popularity and post-modern iterations of the mode make it one of Matheson's most crucial contributions to the hyperreal wasteland narrative.

²⁷ This phrasing is highly suggestive of witch hunts; a practice that was re-entering the cultural consciousness due to McCarthy era communist hunting, particularly emphasised by Arthur Miller's 1953 play *The Crucible*.

I Am Legend makes a bold statement about the subjectivity of villainy. Neville appears to the reader a hero, as he remains in each film adaptation, yet there is the unmistakable suggestion that he is acting in his own interests, on his own impulses, by his own code of ethics and that where this conflicts with the desires of others he will use violence.²⁸ The novel's powerful conclusion makes this all too evident. Neville reflects that 'normalcy was a majority concept, the standard of many and not the standard of just one man', which means that with a surfeit of vampires he is 'the abnormal one now', but that only begins to cover what has taken place (*Legend*: 160).²⁹ Neville's position as the hated minority is far from simply a case of being outnumbered, as the reactions of the vampire citizens demonstrate:

Abruptly that realization joined with what he saw on their faces – awe, fear, shrinking horror – and he knew that they *were* afraid of him. To them he was some terrible scourge they had never seen, a scourge even worse than the disease they had come to live with. (*Legend*: 160)

Ruth had told Neville that he must die, that ““the people have been out there all night, waiting. They're terrified of you, Robert, they hate you. And they want your life””, but their reactions and the visible emotions on their faces are much more powerful. Neville passes on into legend, 'an invisible specter who had left for evidence of his existence the bloodless bodies of their loved ones', a sentiment that seems just as adequate as identifying him as a tyrant (*Legend*: 159, 160). Neville is an excellent example of the post-apocalyptic Gothic tyrant. The fact that the novel is told from his perspective gives us an insight into his motivations, psychology and lifestyle that few other texts provide, but the template is broadly the same. With no society to constrain him, Neville thinks only of his own needs, and nothing of the suffering he causes to satisfy them. The novel

²⁸ Only the 2007 film version of *I Am Legend* even attempts anything similar to the novel's ending, with the suggestion that the mutant pursuing Neville was attempting to rescue his wife from Neville's experiments. This is more overt in an alternative ending sequence.

²⁹ This type of ironic reversal is typical of Matheson's peers writing for anthology shows like *The Twilight Zone* (1959-1964).

may not have captured the popular imagination as much as other texts, but *I Am Legend* is key in the transformation and updating of the Gothic genre and the tyrant in particular. It consciously draws on the motifs and tropes of earlier texts in the same way later texts incorporate it into the hyperreal wasteland.

Neville's later attitude is a marked contrast with his strait-laced adherence to the rules in the novel's prehistory. Upon Neville's wife's suggestion they keep their daughter out of school due to threat of infection Neville responds with the meek "I think we'd better, though" (*Legend*: 46). It seems possible Neville came to regret this adherence to the rules as it is not long after this that Neville refuses to burn his wife's remains, rejecting the law and risking both punishment and infection (*Legend*: 63). This is just one example early in Neville's back-story that suggests the horrifying experiences he endures change him. Neville seems to freely admit that he has abandoned conventional morality, and that he alone can judge his behaviour; 'morality, after all, had fallen with society. He was his own ethic' (*Legend*: 50). This sentiment seems to perfectly align with the earlier quotation from King-Hall about a sovereign state being 'answerable for its actions only to itself' (King-Hall, 1962: 38). Global devastation allows for the realisation of earlier colonial ambitions: any man can become a king.

Masen's preoccupation with leadership begins early in *The Day of the Triffids*. Even before leaving the hospital he is met with a horrific crowd-scene: 'Doré's pictures of sinners in hell. But Doré couldn't include the sounds: the sobbing, the murmurous moaning, and occasionally a forlorn cry' (*Triffids*: 13). Not only do the artistic and literary references act as shorthand for the desired effect, in true hyperreal style, but we are specifically told this situation is *worse*. Masen's main concern is how to look after the helpless, and if he should at all, experiencing 'a feeling that I ought to do something about it. Lead them out into the street, perhaps, and at least put an end to that dreadful slow

milling' (*Triffids*: 13). This reaction is immediately tempered by reason and a sense of futility: 'if I were to, if I did get them outside – what then?' (*Triffids*: 13). This continues to be a theme throughout the novel; Masen's dilemma between reason and feeling, logical self-preservation or futile acts of compassion.³⁰ While these instincts serve to help humanise Masen, torn between his urge to save himself and aid others, it also indicates his hesitance to assume a position of leadership. The issue is captured in a question he asks himself: 'do we help those who have survived the catastrophe to rebuild some kind of life? – or do we make a moral gesture which, on the face of it, can scarcely be more than a gesture?' (*Triffids*: 85). The issue is a central one throughout post-apocalyptic fiction as survivors are torn between the hindrance of the old moral code, or embracing their surroundings and doing anything to stay alive. Whether to turn tyrant and act as they judge best, or stay conforming to society's laws.

The fall of society affords Masen a sense of liberty, he speaks of experiencing a 'release', and more tellingly his narrative informs us that he 'was emerging as my own master, and no longer a cog' (*Triffids*: 47). Just as with Neville, the disasters in the novel afford Masen the same power as typical Gothic tyrants; he is no longer bound by civilization's rules. Masen initially struggles with breaking from the old society's laws, however, and struggles with the conflict of total anarchy, as he states: "“But you can't change and turn brutal all at once – at least, I can't”" (*Triffids*: 55). There is an additional emphasis on the morality of becoming 'brutal' in *Triffids* that was not present in *Legend*: as Neville is the sole survivor, there is no debate about saving others. While Masen's statement may seem like a rejection of savagery, it is in fact his own recognition he is struggling to make the decisions and carry out the actions necessary for his own survival. A later statement by Masen endorses his emphasis on willpower: "“If you don't fight to

³⁰ Masen repeats these ideas throughout the first half of the novel, with phrases like 'I felt that I ought to be showing these people where to find food. But should I?' (*Triffids*: 49).

live your own life in spite of it, there won't be any survival ... Only those who can make their minds tough enough to stick it are going to get through" (*Triffids*: 69). Masen, then, recognises the necessity of 'toughening up' to suit their new surroundings, but stops short of advocating accepting cruelty. Many of these sentiments are repeated by the first organisation attempting to establish a new order, who prioritise reason more than emotion. While some of their ideas are distasteful, violating society's laws, they are couched in terms that emphasise freedom instead of oppression: "We *must* have the moral courage to think and to plan for ourselves" (*Triffids*: 100). The committee is problematic. Its pragmatic approach is logical, rational – but at the same time still worrying to the reader. This mixture between tyrannical rule and attempting a more inclusive approach is emphasised through the committee's address:

"This committee, after discussion, has decided that if we are to build a new state of things and avoid a relapse into barbarism – which is appreciable danger – we must have certain undertakings from those who wish to join us". (*Triffids*: 101)

The committee, then, stresses its shared leadership – unlike many of the other groups Masen encounters it attempts democracy, albeit on very loaded terms, but still does not force compliance.³¹ It is difficult to categorise exactly where the committee lies: it certainly acts as its own morality as Neville might, ignoring the plight of the suffering and advocating policies reminiscent of selective breeding or eugenics, but its motives seem pure – it only wants survival, not domination. Eschewing any specific moral instruction, the committee presents the reader with the realisation that there are no easy options and difficult decisions have to be made, destabilising their reliance on conventional values for the purposes of the novel. By Masen and Josella accepting this, it helps establish a new status quo within the novel that is continued in later works and becomes a truism of the

³¹ The offer essentially can be summarised as 'do it our way or go start your own civilization': "There is no compulsion. The choice is yours. Those to whom our offer does not appeal are at perfect liberty to go elsewhere, and start a separate community on such lines as they prefer" (*Triffids*: 102).

hyperreal wasteland: that disaster really does cause for a reassessment of values and morality.

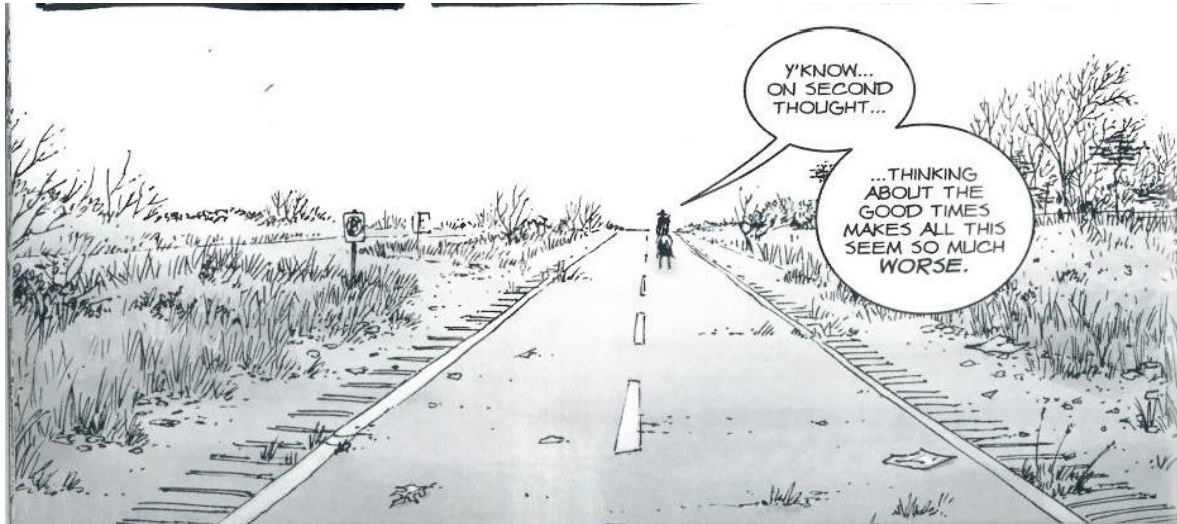


Figure 2: Panel from *The Walking Dead: Days Gone Bye* (Vol. 1).

The above panel from the first issue of *The Walking Dead* taps into the still potent iconography of the American cowboy.³² Post-apocalyptic television and film makes frequent use of such images; lone figures walking down formerly crowded streets, centres of big cities devoid of life.³³ The post-apocalyptic narrative has similarities with the Western. Like many disaster stories, Westerns display a ‘cultural attitude that the benefits of progress are not worth their price’ (Folsom, 1979: 3). The cowboy too is a hyperreal symbol: it is not contained by its historical boundaries: ‘In our mythology, the cowboy era is timeless. The ranch may own a modern station wagon, but the distinguishing attributes of cowboy and environment remain’ (Davis, 1979: 17). The significance of the cowboy myth is the virtues they have come to represent: ‘the cowboy hero stood out on the lonely prairie, dependent on neither man nor God’ (Davis, 1979: 26). In the popular

³² This image went on to become the heavily publicised poster and DVD cover image for the series’ successful television adaptation. The sentiment expressed in the panel is one of isolation, not horror: there is not a zombie in sight.

³³ *Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior* (1981) is a good example of this, a lone figure walking down an isolated highway clutching his gun. Scenes from various *Triffids* and *I Am Legend* adaptations, *Twelve Monkeys* (1995) and *28 Days Later* in particular all contain such scenes.

imagination, cowboys were representative of freedom, isolation, self-reliance and, importantly, independent thought. Rick's status as a Sheriff not only makes him easily read as a 'modern' cowboy figure, but also serves the valuable plot functions of bestowing him with some authority and granting him immediate access to a cache of weaponry.³⁴ Against a backdrop of American communist paranoia, the significance of such a figure would have been clear, but even for modern audiences the symbolism remains potent as the cowboy's isolation serves as an antithesis to the perception of tyrannical 'big government' – 'perceived as excessively interventionist and intruding into all aspects of the lives of its citizens' (Oxford Dictionaries, online: 1925). In this context, then, *The Walking Dead* pitching cowboy and outlaw figures against villainous tyrants who have nonetheless built functioning societies is a battle for freedom as much as survival, even suggesting that figures like Neville, in the end, could be seen as tragic heroes. This both recreates and complicates melodramatic binary pairings of good versus evil and the weak versus the strong. Rick is identified in such images unmistakably as 'the good guy', but soon begins making moral compromises to protect himself and others. Like Neville and Masen, he begins the dangerous path of creating his own morality and a descent into tyrannical behaviour.

In the fifth volume of *The Walking Dead*, several of the protagonists find themselves in the fortified town of Woodbury at the mercy of 'The Governor'. In true melodramatic style the Governor is immediately shown to be wantonly sadistic – he feeds strangers to the zombies they keep for sport and cuts off Rick's hand with little provocation. Little is explained about the Governor's history, though by his own admission both the name of Governor and the role seem to be self-imposed, echoing the trend discussed earlier for the disempowered to become powerful post-bombs: "always

³⁴ It also needs pointing out that *The Walking Dead* is set in the USA, where weaponry is a much more likely prospect than in *28 Days Later* or *The Day of the Triffids*.

did want to be the Governor. Saw my chance and I *took* it” (WD: Vol 5).³⁵ It is perhaps surprising then that the narrative shows us an alternative side to the Governor. As we have seen, tyrants are often the heroes of their own stories. In a manner reminiscent of *I Am Legend*’s role-reversal, *The Walking Dead* makes it clear that to Woodbury the Governor *is* a good leader, whilst *Rick* is the potential threat. This is demonstrated when the Governor walks amongst the townspeople and is shown as someone who makes sure his residents are fed and instructs children to stop running and listen to their mother. More than this, the reader is given hints at the Governor’s private life. Not only does the Governor secretly keep his undead daughter alive, but he spends his evening staring at zombie heads in tanks, commenting on how there are “fifty-seven channels and nothing on” (WD: 5). The parallels between Rick and the Governor become clearer as the narrative continues – both are willing to be cruel to serve their communities with Rick committing increasingly immoral actions. The Governor performs Gothic tyranny to excess, with displays of violence not long after his entrance, but nevertheless serves as a double for Rick. Against the Governor we can measure Rick’s own increasingly tyrannical behaviour. Both serve as an object lesson in the morality of survival – there is not one.

28 Days Later’s protagonist, Jim, is resistant to abandoning his moral code. The first people Jim meets, Mark and Selena, have a pragmatic, selfish approach to survival and seem to exist as scavengers.³⁶ It is possible to view their rescuing of Jim under these terms: it is clear from their reaction to Jim’s surgical garb they were hoping he was a doctor. Selena’s statement of “staying alive is as good as it gets” suggests she does not

³⁵ The Judge from Cormac McCarthy’s Western/American Gothic novel *Blood Meridian* (1985) is another example of many of these characteristics. The Judge is a tyrannical figure who rapes and kills children for sport, leading other characters to speculate in what sense he is a judge.

³⁶ Even their dress, long brown coats and rucksacks, are suggestive of their post-apocalyptic nomadic lifestyle – they do not have any base or storehouse, eating only the sugary snacks they have in their rucksacks.

have any longer term goals. With Jim being a weaker character, the viewer initially accepts both Mark and Selena's rationale for survival (28). In waking up *after* the zombie apocalypse Jim has missed his chance to adapt. This is demonstrated through Jim's naïve reluctance to accept Mark and Selena's exposition: after being told that "There's no Government" Jim responds "of course there's a Government. There's always a Government. They're in a bunker or a plane" (28). Similarly, Jim insists on visiting his parents' house, again demonstrating his naiveté by assuming the role of host and offering Mark and Selena the spare bedroom. The reality of the situation again has to be asserted to Jim: "we'll all sleep in the same room, it's safer" (28), again echoing the sentiment from *Triffids* that mankind is now 'more like a *tribe* than we ever were before' (*Triffids*: 104). The trip to Jim's house proves to be disastrous: after a zombie attack, Selena summarily executes a bleeding Mark. Selena's ruthlessness in killing Mark is explained by a twenty second window after infection before the victim transforms. Selena moves quickly, refusing to dwell on her actions: "more infected will be coming. They always do" (28). Selena's survival instincts are endorsed here, while Jim's weakness is at fault for leading to Mark's death. This is emphasised at the conclusion of this scene as Selena ridicules Jim's attitude: "You want us to find a cure and save the world? Or fall in love and fuck?" (28). Selena has embraced brutish living; able to kill friends without hesitation – such actions would ordinarily mark her out as monstrous but are here praised as the strength to make her own morality.

Later in the film the viewer starts to see the compassion behind Jim's reluctance and the same questioning of the 'every man for himself principle' that was present in *The Day of the Triffids*. After meeting Frank and Hannah, another pair of survivors, Jim begins to question Selena's way of living. Selena's judgement of Frank and Hannah is that they "probably need us more than we need them" (28). Jim exhibits the same

feelings as before, however the changed context makes it seem more like humanity than naivety: “I think they’re good people” (28). Again, Selena mocks Jim: “that’s nice but you should be more concerned if they’d slow you down” (28). Selena affirms she would leave them if they did, while Jim says he would not, with his acceptance of his compassion transforming his ‘weakness’ into an advocacy for humane conduct. This is endorsed through the scenes that follow, demonstrating harmony and relaxation as a pseudo-family group. A trip to a supermarket where they are able to fill a trolley with luxuries exemplifies some of the tropes of Aldiss’ ‘cosy catastrophe’. The key scene revealing the benefits of this approach is when Jim wakes from a nightmare – unlike Jim’s awakening in the hospital he has Frank to comfort him, responding with “thanks dad” (28). Selena, too, has learned the pleasures and advantages of community as demonstrated by her admittance that she was wrong when she said staying alive was as good as it gets. This advocacy of humane conduct and co-operation is atypically direct – it establishes a harmony that is unaltered by infected or the hardships of survival. It allows for the real threat of the film to have greater impact – a Gothic tyrant who has not managed to hold on to his humanity.

Jim does eventually turn brutal. Major West asks who Jim has had to kill to make it this far – West, then, is shown to be a figure that has had to kill to survive or keep order and recognises this in Jim.³⁷ At the film’s climax, West dramatically seizes the two women to act as sex objects in order to appease his troops, prompting Jim to finally adapt. After being taken out to the woods to be executed, Jim capitalises on the lack of discipline and fighting amongst the soldiers to escape. Jim hides among the piles of dead bodies indicating the extent of prior executions.³⁸ The heavy rainfall, for the first time in

³⁷ Jim’s significant kill was an infected child who surprised and tried to attack him.

³⁸ Jim lies on his back during this scene and sees a plane flying overhead – potentially a direct reference to a similar scene in *Triffids*.

the film, acts as pathetic fallacy, while together with Jim’s shirtlessness gives the scenes a sense of the primal. Camera work similarly enhances Jim’s already infected like appearance as he moves rapidly on the edge of shot. Jim makes the infected his weapons, particularly West’s torture and test subject Mailer who we see Jim release. Jim savagely kills the soldier, he gets covered in his blood and sticks his thumbs in his eyes. Jim so closely resembles an infected that Selena grabs her machete and stops inches from killing Jim. In adopting extreme means to free his friends, Jim breaks the same taboos as West. Survival is not enough reason to turn brutal – but protection of others is. This is a direct rejection of the label of tyrant – Jim is shown only to use violence in the service of protecting the innocent, particularly female virtue, not to be cruel wantonly. Jim stands apart from the other survivors of the genre – he is the hero in contrast with the tyrannical West.

The expansive ‘core cast’ allows *The Walking Dead* a balance of expendability



Figure 3: Panel from *The Walking Dead: Miles Behind Us* (Vol. 2).

and emotional impact to sustain a horror text over a prolonged period. While Jim’s new ‘family’ may not be blood relatives, Rick’s main motivations are his wife and son. For both men, family seems to be a spur to toughen up and oust conventional morality. Rick balances his allegiance to his family to the

wider group and other survivors. In the panel to the left, Rick performs a humane act of offering a stranger somewhere to sleep – only to be reminded of the reality of what other

survivors might be capable of by his wife. The balance between being able to act quickly and beyond the fallen society's moral code and avoiding cruelty and becoming a despot is precisely Rick's dilemma. When Carl questions his father's actions Tyreese responds by sticking up for Rick, telling him that: "Your dad does what he has to do – no matter what it is – for the good of *us all*" (WD: Vol 6).³⁹ Rick's loss of his hand in volume 5 symbolises his changed nature, particularly noticeable when the Governor resurfaces missing an arm in volume 6. Such dilemmas typify what makes this version of the Gothic mode so modern and compelling – it poses uncomfortable questions and situations without simple solutions or prescriptive morality. Rick is given audience-acceptable reasons to act beyond conventional morality and uses his power to act upon his own self-interest just as a tyrant would. While Jim remains compassionate, Rick does become tyrannical and demonstrates this in the classic Gothic manner – violence. In creating his own morality and living with the consequences, Rick not only demonstrates that monstrosity is a label that can be lived with, but equally that anyone can become a tyrant in the right circumstances. This is the chief lesson of post-apocalyptic Gothic – that the liberation found at the end of the world awakens the tyrannical instincts within.

Conclusion: Back to the Start

Two of the chief horrors of post-apocalyptic fiction, are just how easily previously civilised characters, even the protagonists, can perform tyrannical acts and the earnest questioning of whether such behaviour might be necessary to survive. Just as the villains of Gothic fiction were remarkable for their Byronic qualities, the protagonists of post-apocalyptic fiction can be recognised for their ability to ignore conventional morality. This earnest questioning adopts a much more ambivalent tone toward the callous inhumanity that marked tyrants out as monstrous in the first three chapters. Not only the

³⁹ This sentiment comes at a particularly ironic moment in the plot – Rick is on his way to kill someone, and Tyreese himself dies in the following volume.

plausibility of Cold War devastation, but the engagement with Nietzschean ideas of remaking morality have led to a version of Gothic tyranny that is rendered permissible. This disregarding of society's morals leads to an immediate un-learning of civilisation's lessons of co-operation and compassion, particularly for the antagonists. The liberation this affords leads to a reconstruction of medievalism – presenting warring factions re-enacting feudalism, misogyny, stockades and even slavery.

An iconic line repeated at the start of every game in the *Fallout* series is 'War. War never changes' (*Fallout 3*). These sentences suggest that the wasteland is not unconnected to the world that previously inhabited the space, but a continuum of it. The sentiment is a common one throughout post-apocalyptic fiction, such as in Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids* (1951):

The human spirit continued much as before – ninety-five per cent of it wanting to live in peace; and the other five per cent considering its chances should it risk starting anything. It was chiefly because no one's chances looked too good that the lull continued. (*The Day of the Triffids*: 19)

The quotation isolates the novel from its specific Cold War context, suggesting that there is a timeless quality to the modes of violence it depicts. Similarly, Major West, the villain of *28 Days Later*, considers the world in a “state of normality right now” because he views the zombie outbreak as a continuation of people killing people (28). Such signposting to the hyperreal nature of the post-apocalyptic sub-genre shows not only the extent to which the Gothic has diffused into other genres, but just how productive this interaction can be. In identifying how the new rulers of the wasteland engage closely with classic Gothic tropes – such as, castles, torture, dungeons and damsels in peril – the figure of the tyrant has been reinvigorated. In lieu of the divine right of kings and the cosmic, even divine, punishments that were commonplace in earlier texts, such figures show the destabilised nature of right and wrong and find new sources of horror within. The

conclusion of this thesis will bring together the distinct strands that have given definition to not only Gothic fiction's tyrants but equally the mode itself.

Conclusion: May This Bloody Record be a Warning to Future Tyrants!

He who fights with monsters should look to it that he himself does not become a monster. And if you gaze long into an abyss, the abyss also gazes into you.
(Nietzsche, 1990: 102)

This oft-quoted line from Nietzsche has perhaps become a cliché, but it is certainly applicable to the Gothic tyrant, and dramatized through narratives that feature them. Within Gothic fiction, excesses of violence, torture and inhumane conduct inevitably lead to more of the same. The structure of this thesis has been constructed to draw out the importance of historical influences to the Gothic mode – it is a type of literature that absolutely deals with the past. Apart from work from modern and contemporary historians, philosophy and prominent ideologies have been used not primarily to *be applied* to literature, but to show this literature's pre-existing engagement with these ideas. Whilst many theories have been applied within the specific context of a single chapter, most resonate throughout this thesis as a whole, and even speak to one another across the ages. Nietzsche's discussion of humanity's 'Will to Power' and the need to overcome conventional morality is one example of this: most tyrants analysed throughout this thesis demonstrate these ideas. The coming together of ideas in this manner is worth noting,

demonstrating that not only do tyrants have a continuum but equally the theories that explore them. For example, Angela Carter's discussion of sadism in *The Sadeian Woman* (1978) has two epigraphs at the opening of its first chapter: Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks* (1952) and Michel Foucault's *Madness and Civilization* (1964). Both writers have been cited within this thesis for their usefulness to establishing an understanding of the longevity of Gothic tyranny. Carter targets the writing of De Sade himself with her writing, contending that women become objects for the performance of tyranny. In addition, *The Sadeian Woman* was published the same year as Carter's 'updated' book of fairy tales, *The Bloody Chamber* (1979); a work which demonstrates many of the ideas of modernisation and adaptation discussed in chapter four. This fitting convocation of ideas centred on tyranny reflects this thesis' holistic approach. The taking of any of these theories in isolation may be useful, but it is the interweaving of seemingly disparate strands that showcases the patch-work nature of the Gothic tyrant – new ideas need to be absorbed in order to not just maintain relevance, but to stay frightening. Fiction is in constant conflict with reality; Gothic fiction is a heady mixture of both.

This same approach has been adopted with regard to the wide range of texts this thesis has sought to encompass and situate within a single continuum. This has involved using some of the most canonical Gothic texts, such as *Dracula*, *Heart of Darkness* and *The Monk*. Conversely it has also involved pairing these with similar, but lesser discussed, newer – or perhaps not even identified as Gothic – works: *The Mystery of Dr Fu Manchu*, 'The Man Who Would Be King', *The Walking Dead* and *Day of the Triffids*. In adopting this approach, this thesis has demonstrated that characteristics present in the canonical are just as present, even self-consciously experimented upon, in the lesser-known and more recent works. New media examples have also been included to reinforce the sense of the diffusion and variation of Gothic forms alongside this thesis' chronological structure. The

Gothic mode may have been originally dependent on lurid novels, the focus of chapter one, but the most widely-engaged texts with horror today are as likely to be films or video games as books, hence the inclusion of these forms in chapters four and five. The Gothic mode is always transforming itself in a myriad different ways; an engagement with tyranny, power and pain is one of the ways it stays the same.

The Continuum of Gothic Tyranny

Throughout this thesis attention has been drawn to perhaps the most continuous through-line across the Gothic continuum: the discussions between power/powerlessness and pain/pleasure that were articulated through the figure of the tyrant. By juxtaposing periods of Gothic writing with traumatic historical events, this thesis has demonstrated how Gothic literature combined violent excess and exaggerated historical reality to create situations that are frighteningly plausible. The tyrant plays a more significant role in the continuum of the Gothic mode than has previously been recognised. The sublime acts of terror and excesses of violence that characterise the Gothic mode take place as performances of tyranny and projections of their power. In linking tyrannical projections of power with climactic historical events, the Gothic is able to confront the reader with their own powerlessness; both against their government and the actions that define historical periods. Gothic tyranny responds to historical stimuli in a varied and surprising number of ways. Not only does it draw upon the past for anxieties to exploit, but equally it uses the past to distance itself from the fears of the present – enabling the Burkean sublime. History updated modes of tyranny more quickly than fiction did, allowing Gothic literature to reconceptualise and draw upon prominent tyrants. The shared and the varied characteristics of different tyrannical regimes give a clear indication of history's role in this process. The reader is only able to identify tyrants by their actions. The conception of the past that characterises barbarism of any kind as 'Gothic' similarly equates brutality

with Gothicism. Scenes of abuse and torture have long been recognised as establishing the tone for Gothic novels. A novel is only as Gothic as its most disturbing scene, but such scenes perform the vital role of signposting tyrannical characters to the reader; power must be made fearful to be adequately understood. Following on from its ancestor in *The Castle of Otranto*, early Gothic adhered to largely historical models.

By exploring the ways in which writers exploited a contemporary anti-Catholic climate, as well as the European prejudices emphasised by the French Revolution, the first chapter of this thesis identified how the Spanish Inquisition was rendered as an ‘historical monster’ and a credible threat for readers. This fictionalised version of the Inquisition deployed three ‘weapons’ that marked them as tyrannical, projected their power both in-fiction and to the reader, and most importantly informed later Gothic tyrants. The first of these weapons was the Inquisition’s near-supernatural powers of observation, allowing them to surprise the guilty at any moment. The Inquisition’s reputation of always watching created an ever-present fear that helped shape behaviour, a model most easily understood through comparison with Bentham’s theory of the Panopticon. The second of these weapons was the use of horrifying acts of torture to create fear. These scenes not only provided the most memorable sublime thrills of the period’s fiction, but effectively attempted to allow the reader to understand the pain that was being transmitted. The third weapon shown by the Inquisition was their almost fanatical devotion; a fervour to adhere to strict principles that enabled them to act mercilessly to those that crossed them. This is shown not to be unique to the Inquisition, but is shared by tyrannical monks and suggested even more broadly to be a result of rigid adherence to authority. That the Spanish Inquisition has been identified across many of these texts with devilry shows the extremes to which it was seen as being hypocritical.

This callousness becomes an underlying theme across representations of tyranny; a lack of feeling that rendered characters as monstrous tyrants.

As shown by fiction that resurrected the French Revolution for Victorian consumption, the spectacle of execution continued to be a visible indicator of tyranny, profoundly affective upon readers and audiences. This is evident from the great effort put into depicting the Guillotine, as well as its strong presence in creating melodramatic climaxes in theatre and novels. The retributive nature of the French Revolution, however, destabilised the comforting binary of aristocrat as tyrant and peasant as victim. Equally, in a departure from classic Gothic texts, the removal of a tyrant is shown to be problematic – a restoration of order does not automatically follow. The shared influence of writers like Thomas Carlyle, whose history blurred the boundary between fiction and fact, is clear on this type of fiction, characterising the Revolution as inherently Gothic. *The Dead Heart* is a melodrama that drew on Carlyle, but it makes an astute observation; again identifying a lack of emotional feeling to the perpetuation of cruelty. Unlike the earlier texts, however, the reasoning for this is explored. Enduring suffering at the hands of a tyrant is shown to be a decisive factor in making vengeful characters equally unsympathetic in turn.

Over the course of the third chapter the importance of ‘Otherness’ to the performance of tyranny becomes clear. Present in both of the preceding chapters, here it becomes a justification for the subjugation of ‘Other’ peoples regarded as ‘savage’. The Gothic fiction that confronts these ideals finds it inherently problematic, though, challenging it by demonstrating the savagery inherent to the Western coloniser. Similarly, torture remains a key motif for these discussions, acting as an indicator of internal degeneration when colonisers are marked by those they hoped to exploit or rob. The image of the Westerner as God is a recurrent trope that seemingly endorses notions of

racial superiority, but in these texts often leads to Gothic excesses that deconstruct these ideas. The idea of civilisation itself becomes confronted as supposedly ‘civilising’ figures resort to the abuses of power, essentially restaging the complete abuse of power recognised in pseudo-medieval Gothic texts. This is shown to be due to a feeling of liberation; a release from society’s restraints. *Heart of Darkness* in particular shows ambivalence towards colonial tyranny, confronting readers with a scenario in which a character is unfettered by society and begins to act deranged and vicious. Mankind’s savagery, when not kept in check by society, can turn tyrannical at any time.

As expressed throughout the fourth chapter, these same Orientalist ideas informed some of the twentieth century’s most iconic tyrants. The evolution of archetypes of tyranny, like Count Dracula and Doctor Fu Manchu, demonstrate the way in which the specific historical context that informed a character can become encoded, more subtle, and ultimately harder to recognise – necessary if a character is to update to be truly timeless. The continual assault of Dracula across the centuries, and different forms of media, has made him less recognisable as the relic of Eastern warmongering described by Stoker’s novel. The clearest example of this can be seen when Dracula is viewed in contrast with the increasingly defunct and recognisably racist Fu Manchu. The specific characteristics of this model of tyranny are its focusing on a single figure and the proliferation of sequels. Across the twentieth century tyranny is conceptualised as a constantly returning menace – tyranny is not vanquished; there is always the likelihood of its returning. The direct influence over broader, and newer, archetypes shows the strength of the original Gothic trope, as well as the continuum of Gothic fiction.

Gothic tyranny was shown as almost coming full-circle in the fifth chapter, where futuristic weaponry gave would be tyrants the opportunity to begin consciously reconstructing medieval modes of domination. The return of the importance of

fortifications, as well as overt mention of ideas like slavery and feudalism, reinforce earlier ideas that absolute, uncivilised tyranny can resurface at any time – that savagery still lies within. Components of both the third and fourth chapters find further examples here. From the fourth, the encoding of historical influences is reiterated, explained through the hyperreal and the evolution of the post-apocalyptic subgenre accordingly. From the third, the idea of liberation and the appeal of tyranny are given greater emphasis. Whereas in the colonial sphere the removal from civilisation led to a release, the complete destruction of it here leads to an earnest debate about whether turning brutal is not only permissible, but vital for survival. Where an inhuman lack of feeling occurred in earlier Gothic texts it was an indicator of monstrosity. In the wasteland, however, this same quality is explored as a trait for survival. Nietzsche's philosophy was much discussed during the period, particularly in popular culture. The theory of *Übermensch* became a motive for murder in the 1948 Hitchcock film *Rope* and 'Is God Dead?' became an iconic *Time* magazine cover in 1966. The 'heroes' of the wasteland often depict the strength to create their own morality and live with the consequences. This process can be seen as concluding the exploration that began in the fiction of the second chapter – these texts were rehabilitating readers to the idea that everyone can turn tyrant.

Together, the chapters that comprised this thesis have built up a list of five of the main facets of Gothic tyranny that can be viewed as accruing over the continuum of Gothic fiction, with most visible in any period. The first of these is observation. The prevalence of The Spanish Inquisition across early Gothic texts established the importance of not only constant observation to a tyrant's projection of power, but equally the extent to which they were thought to be always watching. Later regimes maintained this important aspect of mental and physical control. The second of these is spectacle. Execution by no means originated in the French Revolution but it took on a quality of

spectacle that closely linked the two into the nineteenth century and beyond. While previous Gothic tyrants committed their crimes in secret, or tried to disavow them or hide the evidence, the victims of the tyrannical elements of Revolutionary France – both before and after the Revolution – were unashamedly put on show. This projection of power conferred authority. The third is the vital role played by ‘Othering’. An almost essential requirement in the creation of enemies, and the incitement against them, has always been the process of differentiating them. Nowhere is this more visible than viewing Gothic fiction chronologically; each subsequent tyrant or period of history replaces the previous enemy with a new group. These have ranged from rival countries, across religious lines, racial lines, and even to rival tribes in the wasteland. The fourth characteristic is revival and reinvention. The most significant development in the nature of Gothic tyranny across the fiction of the twentieth century was the manner in which it was able to spread itself. The fifth facet is the capacity to eschew, even remake, conventional morality. In the light of nuclear annihilation, in the wake of the destruction of society, mankind’s will to power is left unchecked. This is not cause and effect, rather a realisation and exploration of how man could, even should, act without prescriptive morality restraining him. This may be most visible in the liberation of the wasteland, but the willingness to ignore society’s laws is detectable across many Gothic tyrants – from hypocritical monks through to usurping sovereigns.

Everything Horrifying and Old is Horrifying and New Again

As mentioned in the fifth chapter, iconic lines repeated at the start of every game in the *Fallout* series are ‘War. War never changes’ (*Fallout 3*). The discussion of the wasteland in the fifth chapter serves as a conclusion in itself in many ways as the re-articulation of so many diverse influences and references in post-apocalyptic fiction effectively demonstrate the presence of the Gothic tyrant even in the diffuse Gothic mode. The idea

of hyperreality was particularly apt at explaining the manner in which the Gothic tyrant has become so ingrained into the mode, even when it is scarcely recognisable. It is an idea that could be fruitful for broader discussion of the manner in which the Gothic mode has sustained itself. The reliance on repeated tropes is familiar to any undergraduate studying the Gothic; it is one of the easiest ways of identifying a Gothic text. The ever-changing nature of influence, though, makes this harder to track down the mode's history. Writers 'no longer "quote" such "texts" as Joyce might have done [...] they incorporate them, to the point where the line between high art and commercial forms seems increasingly difficult to draw' (Jameson, 2009: 2). A particular example of this could be read into Imperial Gothic, where the idea of 'the Orient, in other words, has now become an ideological representation with no corresponding reality' (Young, 2001: 389). The same tropes are repeated, even if they are not recognisable, even if they no longer refer to their specific historical context.

While this thesis has been structured in such a way as to show the continuation and updating of key motifs, the fifth chapter is not where this continuum ends. To end this thesis I wish to signpost the extent to which 'Gothic' motifs still play an important, albeit worrying role, in the popular discourse surrounding our relationship with power and authority. New technology still operates along the same principles as Gothic tyranny. Surveillance culture has become a very tangible source of fear and anxiety in the twentieth century, fulfilling the same role as Bentham's panoptic prisons did or the Inquisition's reputation for observation. Equally, people have been quick to characterise the politics of President Trump as a move toward tyranny – much has been made of his election driving sales of George Orwell's *1984* (1949) into the best-sellers list (*New York Times*: Online). The horror writers of the future may have much to draw upon.

Modern torture debates were cited in the first chapter to show how the rhetoric used in the surrounding discussion characterises them as barbaric, yet torture undoubtedly continues. The resurfacing of torture debates in the twenty-first century, and the arguments for its justification, are just one example of how a ‘Gothic’ threat is never actually gone. Public executions may no longer be an aspect of life for much of the Western world, but displays of power along these lines still remain. Even the sharing of information using modern technology plays a part in the projection of power. Taking one example from the history of nuclear weaponry shows the extent to which authority still relies on the projection of their power to maintain control: the release of footage from a 1952 test caused ‘imaginative editors [to] quickly [devise] maps and photographs showing how little would have been left of New York if the BRAVO bomb had exploded there’ (Gaddis, 1998: 226). The electronic dissemination of videos of torture and execution are more modern models of global spectacles of power. The anonymously authored article ‘Terrorist Novel Writing’ (1797) ‘despair[ed] of the current trend to “*make terror the order of the day*”’ (Corstorphine, 2018: 3). Making terror the order of the day was an overt reference to the French Revolution, where the very word terrorist originated. This same principle is being enacted by terrorists and news agencies alike. In 2015, ISIS filmed the burning alive of a Jordanian pilot, using modern technology to share a message of medieval barbarism (BBC News: Online). Fox News shared the video online with the headline ‘WARNING, EXTREMELY GRAPHIC VIDEO: ISIS burns hostage alive’ (BBC News: Online). Just as the terrorist seeks to spread fear, the broadcaster offers it up for public consumption. Gothic fiction allows for the confrontation with, and processing of, history’s constant creation of new monsters.

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