



Faculteit Letteren en Wijsbegeerte

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**FEMALE GOTHIC POETRY
IN SCOTLAND AND NORTHERN ENGLAND
OF THE 1800S**

Anne Bannerman, Sarah Pearson, and Barbara Hoole

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*Turn from the path; if search of gay delight
Lead thy vain footsteps back to ages past!*

from 'Prologue' by Anne Bannerman

Preface

MOTIVATIONS

In the three years leading up to my bachelor paper, I had already considered a wide range of subjects, but one thing kept nagging at the back of my mind: why, in a field of study so fond of poetry and challenging the norm, was gothic poetry shunned? Teachers in the past often glossed over gothic prose as a precursor to Romanticism, let alone take a closer look at a poem by Anne Radcliffe or an ode by William Collins. It is more of a question than a subject, of course, yet it spiked an aspiration to engage with this type of 'underdog' literature, a mixture of high and low culture, sometimes with a socio-political message, sometimes solely intended to enrapture.

I decided to write my bachelor paper on how evil and desire were perceived in the gothic poetry by Sarah Pearson and Anne Bannerman, and how these were shown in this type of literature on a broader scale. While I was writing that paper I experienced first-hand how diverse gothic poetry really is, and how much this - as of yet - largely uncharted territory has to offer. Especially the ambiguous position of women writers of gothic poetry in the eighteenth century intrigues me; women writers were usually confined to the - then disrespected - realm of the novel, and were definitely not expected to engage with 'literature of excess'. The more I engrossed myself in the subject, the more I realised this, and the surer I became of wanting to unravel it further.

AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

In this thesis, I will focus specifically on the poetry of Anne Bannerman, Sarah Pearson, and Barbara Hoole, three female writers who produced gothic poetry in the 1800s and who were printed in contemporary magazines and newspapers as well as published poem collections. I will not only fixate on the actual literary output of these women, but also recover their context and place in the Gothic mode. A better understanding of these unduly neglected poets will be brought about by archival research, historical contextualisation, and close reading. Thus attempting to fill an anachronistic void, artificially created by scholars, I will make a modest contribution to the landscape of poetry.

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A list of abbreviations used in references and footnotes

BW	'The Burgomaster's Wife' by Sarah Pearson
DL	'The Dark Ladie' by Anne Bannerman (from <i>Tales of Superstition and Chivalry</i>)
EL	'Elegiac Lines composed in the Ruins of Roche Abbey' by Barbara Hoole
EMW	'Evening Meditation on Water' by Barbara Hoole
G	'The Genii' by Anne Bannerman
IP	'Invocation to Poetry' by Barbara Hoole
LD	'Lines Composed whilst Climbing Some Rocks in Derbyshire' by Barbara Hoole
LL	'Lines Composed during a Walk in the Leasowes' by Barbara Hoole
LWN	'Lines Written in November' by Barbara Hoole
MK	'The Mysterious Knight' by Sarah Pearson
MU	'On Reading in Several Publications Many Invidious Allusions to Mrs. Radcliff's Elegant Novel, "The Mysteries of Udolpho"' by Sarah Pearson
N	'The Nun' by Anne Bannerman
OI	'Ode I: The Spirit of Air' by Anne Bannerman
OII	'Ode II: The Mermaid' by Anne Bannerman
P	'Prologue' by Anne Bannerman (from <i>Tales of Superstition and Chivalry</i>)
RS	'Rhapsody of Sorrow' by Barbara Hoole
SV	'Sonnet V: To the Owl' by Anne Bannerman
SVI	'Sonnet VI: To the Ocean' by Anne Bannerman
SAR	'Stanzas Addressed to Mrs. Radcliffe, Author of "The Mysteries of Udolpho"' by Barbara Hoole
T	'A Tale' by Barbara Hoole
TDe	'To Death' by Barbara Hoole
TDi	'To Disease' by Barbara Hoole
VSM	'The Vigil of St. Mark' by Sarah Pearson

I. Introduction

1. A Gap in Gothic Studies

The field of gothic poetry has long been neglected, often reduced to a mere paragraph in many essays, articles, or chapters on gothic fiction, if discussed at all. The reluctance towards this type of literature escalated into avoidance, perhaps due to the sensational or second-rate reputation of gothic literature which originated in its original classification as "popular trashy novels"¹ and which was reinforced by the New Critics.² It "produce[s] emotional effects on its readers rather than developing a rational or properly cultivated response,"³ writes Fred Botting in *Gothic*. This negative reputation is, however, undeserved, especially when we take into account the vast popularity of the genre in its heyday and its considerable influence on later (sub)cultural developments. Academic engagement in gothic poetry should follow and if at any time, now is the time. Caroline Franklin takes the initiative with *The Longman Anthology of Gothic Verse*, a first-ever anthology limited to gothic poetry only. In her preface, she writes that her anthology "resists [...] the usual assumption that the Gothic was largely the province of prose fiction,"⁴ which the quantitatively much larger bulk of gothic poetry contradicts. Franklin calls for a paradigm shift when she insists that gothic verse has been "neglected as an area of research."⁵ The revival of academic interest in gothic prose, which started over thirty years ago,⁶ is well-established and there is a noticeable renewal of the interest in the erotic, and in horror and terror, parallel with the revived interest in the (romantic) Gothic, from readers as well as scholars. The interest in Romanticism - sometimes considered the Gothic's more established sibling - is peaking, and lastly, the relative briefness of gothic poems acknowledges today's inclination towards short and rapid media.

Academics such as David Punter, Botting, and Andrew Smith, started exploring gothic prose as early as the 1980s and academics like E.J. Clery, Diane Long Hoeveler, and Anna Powell followed from the 1990s onwards, pulling female gothic writers back from the past. Nevertheless, for now, the obstacle formed by prejudice and misplaced elitism has not yet been overcome. The disregard of preceding scholars can have a crippling effect, but a lack

¹ Botting, Fred. *Gothic*. London: Routledge, 1996. Print. 22. Henceforth: Botting.

² Powell, Anna, and Andrew Smith. *Teaching the Gothic*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. Print. 2. Henceforth: Powell.

³ Botting, 4.

⁴ Franklin, Caroline. *The Longman Anthology of Gothic Verse*. Ed. Franklin. Harlow, England: Pearson Education Ltd, 2011. Xii. Henceforth: Franklin.)

⁵ Franklin, xii.

⁶ I take David Punter's *Literature of Terror* (1980) as a starting point.

of a priorly existing framework creates the freedom needed to discuss such a varied subject as gothic poetry in all its facets. In light of the quote "Gothicism in literature [...] smelt of rebellion, chaos and slightly sulphurous,"⁷ we can break away from the former disinclination towards gothic poetry. In an effort to continue the dialogue started by Franklin, I distinguish and illustrate five main concepts in this thesis, which are central to gothic poetry: violence and vice; insanity; the female figure; the sublime, and the gothic form.

In *Teaching the Gothic*, Powell and Smith validate teaching gothic prose⁸ by calling on its ability to combine "high art and popular culture,"⁹ much like certain parts of contemporary English Studies do.¹⁰ The mixture of high and low holds true for gothic poetry as well, and it has more qualities in common with its prosaic sibling. Before we go into the discussion and illustration of gothic poetry, I will discuss the parallels and differences between gothic poetry and prose, taking into account scholars such as Powell and Smith, but also Punter, Botting, Franklin, Clery, Sandro Jung, Adriana Craciun, Hoeveler, and Clive Bloom. The latter considers the Gothic as a feeling in "architecture, *poetry*, novels, short stories, pornography, romance, and painting"¹¹ formed with the use of formulas. Bloom emphasises its flexibility yet also considers "the gothic mood and [its] vocabulary"¹² up until now as variations on the notions established from 1760s to 1900s.

Concerning prose, the unmistakably most prominent characteristic is the setting. Ruined castles, partially collapsed abbeys, eerie graveyards, and desolate landscapes dominate the gothic novel. The traumatic past is present in all of the decors against which these stories take place. In gothic poetry, we usually do not see such a clearly defined need for a specific setting. The "eruption of a traumatic past into the present"¹³ is mainly expressed through a gloomy, haunting atmosphere and vague clues as to the surroundings of the lyrical I or the poem's protagonist, which may - or may not - be linked to the setting. This link with the past is in gothic prose also expressed through its allusion to manuscripts. Many novels claim to be

⁷ Bloom, Clive. *Gothic Histories: The Taste of Terror, 1764 to the Present*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010. Print. 17. Henceforth: Bloom.

⁸ Powell and Smith use the word 'texts', but the contributing authors engage mainly with prose, not poetry.

⁹ Powell, 1.

¹⁰ Consider for instance comics studies, game studies, studies in children's or adolescent literature, and more, which all struggle to be taken seriously by more traditional fields of study, despite the richness in their subject material.

¹¹ My italics, Bloom, 2. Note also that Bloom lists poetry second, before the novel and the short story.

¹² Bloom, 4.

¹³ Franklin, 5.

translations or transcriptions,¹⁴ or hinge on manuscripts in other ways.¹⁵ In gothic poetry, this is reflected in the archaic language and spelling as well as the fragmented nature of the poem which suggests an "imitation of manuscript transcriptions."¹⁶ The rediscovery of old forms, such as the ballad,¹⁷ and folklore myths and legends also contribute to a return of the past in the present.

Aside from the strong presence of the past, Punter also argues for the terror of extreme situations as one of the main forces behind Gothic prose.¹⁸ Botting's theory of the Gothic similarly centres around comparable concepts of excess and transgression and he furthermore states that these concepts "reassert the values of society,"¹⁹ since they show the necessity of "virtue and propriety."²⁰ Punter links the violence and vice in these situations with "the denial of Eros,"²¹ resulting into immoral eroticism. Botting also remarks on the similarity of the feeling of terror and that of "awe accompanying religious experience,"²² which the Sublime strengthens as it "offered intimations of a great, if not religious, power."²³ This religiosity returns in several gothic poems, yet it certainly does not have to be as predominant in all. Franklin nonetheless emphasises the "sophisticated remove from unquestioning belief in the supernatural"²⁴ which occurs in gothic poetry, suggesting at least an unconscious indebtedness to religious feeling. As to the importance of the Sublime in gothic poetry, Franklin points to Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757)²⁵ as the main influence.²⁶

In this thesis, my main objective is to fill the current gap in gothic studies where poetry is supposed to be. I will deal with three virtually unknown female poets, viz. Anne

¹⁴ The most famous example being *The Castle of Otranto* (1763) by Horace Walpole, claimed to be the translation of a medieval manuscript. (*Four Gothic Novels: The Castle of Otranto, Vathek, The Monk, and Frankenstein*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994. Print. 7.)

¹⁵ For example *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) by Ann Radcliffe, where Emily accidentally reads an unsettling part of her father's correspondence after his death.

¹⁶ Franklin, 15.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁸ Punter, David. *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day*. London: Longmans, 1980. 9. Henceforth: Punter, Literature.

¹⁹ Botting, 7.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Punter, Literature, 411.

²² Botting, 39.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Franklin, 3.

²⁵ Burke, Edmund. *A Philosophical Inquiry into Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. N.p.: Digireads Publishing, 2009. Print. Henceforth: Burke.

²⁶ Franklin, 4.

Bannerman, Sarah Pearson, and Barbara Hoole (born Wreakes, later Hofland)²⁷ and discuss how they use these five facets of gothic poetry in their work; violence and vice; insanity; the female figure; the sublime; and the gothic form. By recovering these women writers from the past, I will not only address the issue of the lack of academic work around gothic poetry, but also join the rapidly growing field surrounding women's writing.

2. The Dark Side of Womanhood and (Gothic) Literature

In part III of *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction, 1762-1800*, Clery illustrates the attitudes of a male-dominated literary scene towards women readers and, by extension, women writers. Young women were seen as extremely malleable, and reading or consuming large amounts of novels made them "liable to many errors, both in conduct and conversation"²⁸ due to the 'unnatural' characters and situations encountered in novels. This censure of women readers extends to women writers, and culminates when these women write about sublime subjects, without first correcting others for their "imaginative excesses."²⁹ Clery points out the domination over the literary scene by male writers and the invisibility of women writers in the introduction to her book *Women's Gothic: From Clara Reeve to Mary Shelley*, when she says:

While male poets issued their manifestos, dabbled in metaphysics, or cut a dash in fashionable drawing rooms, women were, if not invisible, then confined by circumstances, and by the more intangible prison of female propriety.³⁰

Attempts to evade this ignominy included publishing anonymously³¹ or under the name of a male relative.³² Apart from adhering to the first strategy and publishing her first novel (*The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*, 1789) anonymously, Ann Radcliffe later used another strategy to avert scrutiny from (male) reviewers. In her second novel, *A Sicilian Romance*

²⁷ Born Wreakes, Barbara married one Mr. Hoole only to be widowed and remarry a Mr. Hofland. Since she published her poem collection as Barbara Hoole, I will refer to her using this last name.

²⁸ Qtd in Clery, E.J. *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*. Cambridge: CUP, 1996. Print. 95. Henceforth: Clery, *Supernatural*.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 106.

³⁰ Clery, E.J. *Women's Gothic: From Clara Reeve to Mary Shelley*. Tavistock: Northcote House Publishers Ltd, 2004. 1. Henceforth: Clery, *Women*.

³¹ Such as for instance Anne Fuller, who published *Alan Fitz-Osbourne* anonymously in 1787.

³² Anna Laetitia Aikin (later Barbauld) ascribed solely to her brother John Aikin the fragment 'Sir Bertrand' as well as the essay "On the Pleasure Derived from Objects of Terror," which it accompanied.

(1790), Radcliffe devised the so-called 'explained supernatural,' in which she uses mysterious occurrences which are interpreted as supernatural events by the heroine, thereby sidestepping the necessity of actual supernatural events. This development led to a chiasm in gothic fiction, with on the one hand what Clery calls 'horror Gothic', the unbridled, unexplained supernatural predominantly written by male writers,³³ and on the other hand the "lower, more timid form of 'terror Gothic', a school of mainly female writers."³⁴ According to Clery, this device "originated out of the social definition of fiction itself"³⁵ to protect their social status, yet later reviews from for instance Sir Walter Scott criticised these tactics in favour of "the uninhibited supernaturalism of Walpole and Maturin,"³⁶ thereby "encourag[ing] the development of an implicit gender hierarchy."³⁷ Scott, however, benefited from associations with for instance *Tales of Wonder* by Matthew Lewis (1801), but the reputation of women poets, in this case that of Bannerman, was damaged by such associations.³⁸

Hoeverler goes even further in her book *Gothic Feminism*, where she asserts that female gothic writers use their novels to express "their ambivalent rejection of an outward complicity with the dominant sexual ideologies"³⁹ to other women writers. Hoeverler continues to claim that "[t]he female gothic writer attempted nothing less than a redefinition of sexuality and power in a gendered, patriarchal society."⁴⁰ In the introduction to *The History of Women's Writing, 1750-1830*, Jacqueline Labbe implies that leaving women out of the canon allowed for more stream-lined, simpler poetics when she states that "a standard genealogy [of the Graveyard School of poetry] becomes increasingly unstable"⁴¹ if women writers as Charlotte Smith, Anna Laetitia Aikin (later Barbauld), and Anna Seward are taken into account. It is true, of course, that around the turn of the nineteenth century, a social struggle for women writers was being fought; "they created and supported movements [...], initiated literary styles [...], and signalled transitions."⁴² Labbe names Jane Austen as the exception proving the rule that women "did not write major texts (otherwise we surely would

³³ These writers include, but are not limited to, Horace Walpole, Matthew Lewis, and William Beckford.

³⁴ Clery, *Women*, 9.

³⁵ Clery, *Supernatural*, 109.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 110.

³⁸ Pittock, Murray, ed. *Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Romanticism*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2011. 18. Henceforth: Pittock

³⁹ Hoeverler, Diane Long. *Gothic Feminism: The Professionalization of Gender from Charlotte Smith to the Brontës*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 1998. Print. 5. Henceforth: Hoeverler, *Feminism*.

⁴⁰ Hoeverler, *Feminism*, 19.

⁴¹ Labbe, Jacqueline M., ed. *The History of British Women's Writing, 1750-1830*. Vol. 5. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. 13. Henceforth: Labbe.

⁴² Labbe, 1

know of them),"⁴³ forgetting that even she had to "hurriedly hid[e] away her manuscripts whenever a visitor entered, and [originally] published anonymously through her brother."⁴⁴ And even though Labbe is not biased as to the deplorable status of women writers, she nonetheless stresses that "women and men wrote not [sic] in separate spheres,"⁴⁵ but were part of the same cultural society. Clery seems to agree with this call for a spectral rather than binary approach to women's writing, while still emphasising the importance of recovering women writers and the richness of their work, when she points out that "the dualism of male and female traditions involves a simplification of the reality and fails to account for many aspects of women's writing."⁴⁶

Radcliffe, as a woman writer, could not even save her reputation by rationalising the 'supernatural' occurrences in her novels, which is demonstrated by the rumours claiming that she "died raving mad."⁴⁷ Notwithstanding the idolisation of Radcliffe received by some of her (male) peers, certain critics could not resist reducing her to her status - or lack of status - as a woman writer. Remarkable is the fact that, whereas female writers of gothic novels were considered women with "rather impure and wanton ideas,"⁴⁸ female writers of gothic *poetry* were (and still are) marginalised almost entirely, so that the poetry collection *The Poems of Mrs Radcliffe* (1816) by the most famous female gothic writer is rarely enlisted amongst her work. The deliberate neglect of such a substantial volume of writing as female gothic poetry⁴⁹ is to blame both on the eighteenth-century prejudice towards this type of writing, as well as on its continued omission by contemporary scholars. Even Seward, 'Swan of Lichfield' and "esteemed by contemporaries,"⁵⁰ was "discouraged from writing [because of] its impact on her marriageability."⁵¹ This depreciation of women poets through social stigma does not do justice to the sophistication which marks many poems by female authors, as for instance that of Pearson, a domestic servant who did not know the luxury of hours of leisure to produce poetry, yet created long poems marked by an intricately crafted incantatory rhythm.

⁴³ Labbe, 12.

⁴⁴ Clery, *Women*, 1.

⁴⁵ Labbe, 2.

⁴⁶ Clery, *Women*, 2.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁴⁸ Qtd from Clery, *Supernatural*, 96.

⁴⁹ Eighteenth-century poem collections by women writers were much more numerous than novels by writers of any gender.

⁵⁰ Karioff, Claudia Thomas. *Anna Seward and the End of the Eighteenth Century*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2012. 52. Henceforth: Karioff.

⁵¹ Karioff, 55.

3. Regional Romanticism in Northern England

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, a closely-knitted network of literary relationships formed in Northern England. This network not only encompassed epistolary discourses - which in the case of for instance Anna Seward led to a literary output⁵² - but was also centred around local papers like the *Sheffield Register* (later to become the *Sheffield Iris*), the *Sheffield Courant*, and the *Hull Advertiser*.⁵³ The correspondence through mail explains how writers who were geographically relatively far apart could still discuss and criticise each other's work, like for example Seward, Lichfield-based, who did not let the geographical distance stop her from critiquing Edinburgh-based Bannerman via Thomas Park, residing in London.

Two of these local papers, which were extensively researched by Sandro Jung, are the *Sheffield Register* (by Joseph Gales, 1787-1794) and its successor, the *Sheffield Iris* (by James Montgomery, 1794-1816).⁵⁴ They encouraged interest in local poets through the publication of local poetry in the section 'Repository of Genius' and 'Cemptucet, or the Bower of the Muses' respectively. Celebrated poets such as Seward as well as minor Sheffield poets were printed side by side on these pages. The succession of Gales by Montgomery did not only result into a name change of both newspaper and section, but also into a geographically wider range of poets, producing names as Charlotte Smith⁵⁵ and Samuel Taylor Coleridge.⁵⁶ Papers like the *Sheffield Courant* debuted poetic works by Hoole, among others. Besides papers, there are local anthologies as *Flowers from Sheffield Park* (1827), which "[reflect] the range of poetry published in the *Sheffield Iris*."⁵⁷

The back and forth of tribute poetry in 'The Repository of Genius' between poets and patrons, as well as poets among each other, evokes an idea of a closely-knitted literary family, as indicated by for instance Henry Francis Cary's sonnet "To Mr. William Newton, of Bradwell, Derbyshire" intended to compliment William Newton, or Newton's poems

⁵² Kairoff, 179.

⁵³ Hull is located approximately 100 km east of Sheffield.

⁵⁴ Jung, Sandro. 'William Newton: Anna Seward's "Peak Minstrel"', *The Wordsworth Circle* 40.2 (Spring 2009) 113. Henceforth: Jung, Newton.

⁵⁵ Smith played an important role in the early development of the Gothic novel by mixing sentimental novel with a sense of the sublime. [Blank, Antje. "Charlotte Smith". *The Literary Encyclopedia*. 23 June 2003.]

⁵⁶ Jung, Sandro. 'Sarah Pearson's Gothic Verse Tales', *Women's Writing* 16.3 (December 2009) 395-6. Henceforth: Jung, Gothic Verse Tales.

⁵⁷ Jung, Newton, 114.

addressed to Pearson to encourage her writing career,⁵⁸ &c. The high praise Pearson received for her poetry was remarkable when "women poets were praised most when their writings could be excused as the products of leisure time,"⁵⁹ while 'leisure time' was scarce for Pearson, a "working-class Sheffield poet"⁶⁰ who made her living as a servant. Aside from mutual literary courting, Jung states that the "physical proximity [of the poems] [also] generated a proximity [...] of meaning"⁶¹ for the readers. He further claims that seeing the poetry of national figures as Seward and Smith printed alongside local figures as Hoole and Mary Sterndale caused the readers to compare them, a statement reinforced by the miscellaneous poem collection compiled with parts of the "Repository of Genius".

These literary circles in and around Sheffield, and especially the *Sheffield Register* and the *Sheffield Iris*, also supported the work of female writers. Hoole (1770-1844) for instance debuted in the *Sheffield Courant*, but she also contributed poetry to the *Hull Advertiser*, as well as the *Sheffield Register*. Pearson (1768-1833), on the other hand, joins the Sheffield literary scene in the early 1790s.⁶² Her first poem collection, *Poems*, was printed by Joseph Gales from the *Sheffield Register*, and even though Gales never printed original material under her name in his paper, he did print tributes to Pearson.⁶³ Moreover, the impressive length of the list of subscribers to this collection caught the attention of several magazines, such as *The English Review*⁶⁴ and *The British Critic*.⁶⁵ Gales also might have had a hand in the publication of Pearson's poetry in certain London-based periodicals.⁶⁶ Despite the change in the paper's demeanour when James Montgomery succeeded Gales, the text 'To a Counterfeit Shilling. From Miss Pearson's Poems, lately published' appeared in the *Sheffield Iris* in 1800. Pearson later appointed Montgomery as an executor of her will.⁶⁷ So, much like Seward's relation to Newton, the relation between editor and poet could exceed a purely literary friendship.

⁵⁸ "Sonnet to Miss Pearson. Written after reading her poems lately published" (1790) and "Ode to Miss Pearson" (allegedly by Newton). [Jung, Sandro. 'Sarah Pearson (1768-1833): A Sheffield Poet', *The Wordsworth Circles* 42.3 (Summer, 2011). Henceforth: Jung, Sheffield Poet.]

⁵⁹ Kairoff, 51.

⁶⁰ Kairoff, 163.

⁶¹ Jung, Sheffield Poet.

⁶² Jung, Gothic Verse Tales, 395.

⁶³ "Sonnet to Miss Pearson. Written after reading her poems lately published" by William Newton and "Ode to Miss Pearson" (anonymous, but believed to be Newton). [Jung, Gothic Verse Tales, 395.]

⁶⁴ *The English Review, or, an Abstract of English and Foreign Literature*, 16 (1790): 336.

⁶⁵ *The British Critic*, 16 (1800): 201.

⁶⁶ Jung implies business links between Gales and the Robinsons, "a major London bookselling firm". [Jung, Sheffield Poet.]

⁶⁷ *A letter by James Montgomery to Lord Viscount Milton, dated July 16, 1833.*

4. A Regional Poet Considered: Anne Bannerman (1765–1829)

In Edinburgh, a predominantly male literary circle also formed around figures as Thomas Campbell, Robert Anderson, John Leyden, and Thomas Park, with as one of its marginal female members Anne Bannerman, a poet "participating in a different, more complex poetical agenda."⁶⁸ Bannerman's participation in the literary scene was severely complicated by her being a woman poet, and she relied heavily on the favours of male friends. Her literary career started in periodicals like the *Monthly Magazine*, and the *Poetical Register*, which published her work either under her real name or under pseudonyms such as 'Augusta' or 'B'.⁶⁹ The editor of the *Edinburg Magazine*, Robert Anderson, also promoted her work by publishing it in his magazine and "praising her poetry to important literary figures of the day."⁷⁰ An unmarried woman "from an undistinguished family,"⁷¹ Bannerman struggled to support herself financially or protect her reputation socially, even though she was "an unusually educated, urban woman poet."⁷² Her unstable financial and social situation did not compel her "to turn toward normative themes and poetic forms,"⁷³ however, and after she gave up on supporting herself through her writing, Bannerman took up a position as a governess.⁷⁴

Bannerman's 1800 poem collection, *Poems*, was "widely praised in reviews and correspondence."⁷⁵ *The Monthly Magazine* praised this collection as one in which "vigour, harmony, and taste"⁷⁶ are united. The revival of the popularity of the ballad, and the emergence of the Gothic further ensured a particular esteem for her longer poems, especially by the *Critical Review*, which looks past Bannerman's gender and values her poetry for its brilliance:

⁶⁸ Miller, Ashley. 'Obscurity in Anne Bannerman's "The Dark Ladie"', *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies* 3.2 (Summer 2007). Paragraph 1. Henceforth: Miller.

⁶⁹ Craciun, Adriana. 'Bannerman, Anne (1765–1829)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004. Paragraph 2. Henceforth: Craciun, ODNB.

⁷⁰ Craciun, ODNB, 1.

⁷¹ Pittock, 17.

⁷² Craciun, Adriana. "Romantic Spinstrelsy: Anne Bannerman and the Sexual Politics of the Ballad." *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism*, ed. Leith Davis, Ian Duncan, and Janet Sorenson. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004. 207. Henceforth: Craciun, Spinstrelsy.

⁷³ Pittock, 17.

⁷⁴ Craciun, Spinstrelsy, 208.

⁷⁵ Craciun, ODNB, 2 of 6.

⁷⁶ *The Monthly Magazine*, 10 (1800): 610.

Anne Bannerman's Odes may be quoted as an irrefragable proof that the ardour, whatever be its gender, which gives birth to lofty thought and bold expression, may glow within a female breast.⁷⁷

Their four-page long review features an excerpt from 'Ode I: The Spirit of the Air' and one of the sonnets, alongside repeated praise for "this elegant production."⁷⁸ In spite of their plentiful approbation, *Critical Review* does not hesitate to critique 'The Nun' as the weakest poem due to its similarity to the epistle to 'Eloisa to Abelard' by Alexander Pope.

Nevertheless, that same *Critical Review* did not take well to Bannerman's second poem collection, *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* (1802), as did most of Bannerman's literary audience.⁷⁹ Despite a larger body of potential readers - *Tales* was published in London, not Edinburgh - it did not sell well. Together with *Poetical Register*, *Critical Review* deemed the major fault of this poem collection its "impenetrable darkness,"⁸⁰ and accuses Bannerman of erroneously handling the concept of 'obscurity'. Remarkable is that *Critical Review* misgenders Bannerman as male, which excludes the bad reception of this collection solely on the basis of Bannerman's gender. Harsh critique also came from Anna Seward, yet indirectly, seeing as she "roundly abuse[d] [Thomas Park] for his support of [Bannerman],"⁸¹ instead of addressing Bannerman herself.

Sir Walter Scott seems to partially agree in his *Essay on Imitations of the Ancient Ballad*, while suggesting that if the narrative ambiguity of this poem collection is deliberate, "few persons have succeeded better than this gifted lady."⁸² *The British Critic* also received Bannerman's second collection with mixed feelings; whereas Bannerman's talents are acknowledged ("Miss Bannerman [is] already known for poetical talents"⁸³), she is advised to employ those talents with more decorum, and that "the marks of talent [are] formed for better things."⁸⁴ *The Monthly Mirror* is equally hesitant to praise these poems, and insomuch as they acknowledge Bannerman's skill, they also criticise its "ancient style."⁸⁵ It is remarkable that

⁷⁷ *The Critical Review*, 31 (1801): 435.

⁷⁸ *The Critical Review*, 31 (1801): 438.

⁷⁹ Craciun, Spinstrelsy, 205.

⁸⁰ *The Critical Review*, 38, (1803): 110.

⁸¹ Miller, paragraph.

⁸² Scott, Sir Walter. *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. Vol. IV. Edinburgh: Adam & Charles Black, 1807. 26.

⁸³ *The British Critic*, 21 (1803): 78.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *The Monthly Mirror*, 15 (1803): 102.

most reviews market *Tales* as belonging "to the family of Tales of Wonder,"⁸⁶ often in a derogatory manner. Despite disappointing or hesitant reviews and harrowing critique from peers, the poems were received positively by *Annual Review, or, Register of Literature* in a review that chooses to focus on Bannerman's overall skill for "gems of poetry" and which asserts that Bannerman is "capable [...] of higher productions."⁸⁷

⁸⁶ *The British Critic*, 21 (1803): 78. *Tales of Wonder* (1801) was a collection of horror ballads, compiled by Matthew Lewis, author of the controversial *Monk* (1796).

⁸⁷ Both; *Annual Review, Or, Register of Literature*, 1 (1803): 721.

II. Female Gothic Poetry in Scotland and Northern England in the 1800s

1. V for Violence and Vice

"Thou Queen of Terrors! from whose iron hand
My groaning frame hath felt unwonted smart,
Hath sunk and fainted at thy fierce command,
And found thine arrows rankling in my heart"
- from 'To Disease' by Barbara Hoole

In this chapter, I will determine how violence and vice pervade gothic poetry, which forms these concepts take, and determine their importance for the gothic mode of writing and especially for gothic poetry. Fred Botting stresses the importance of violence and vice first in his book *Gothic* when he says: "Gothic signifies a writing of excess."⁸⁸ He adds that this excess "[t]ransgress[es] the bounds of reality and possibility [and] challenge[s] reason."⁸⁹ This transgression thus not only encompasses a lapse in reason, but also a "return of pasts upon presents"⁹⁰ (those pasts often burdened with immoral acts), which engenders a movement away from socially or morally accepted behaviour, which in its turn enables violence and vice. These two concepts, violence and vice, can be defined, respectively, as a "[g]reat strength or power of a natural force or physical action, especially when destructive or damaging"⁹¹ (violence) and "[d]epravity or corruption of morals; evil, immoral, or wicked habits or conduct"⁹² (vice) and are the central concepts in this chapter. These concepts refer to transgressive acts prompted by "[p]assion, excitement and sensation,"⁹³ and have a mutually enforcing nature. Botting states that "an over-abundance of imaginative frenzy, untamed by reason"⁹⁴ is what makes the gothic mode so appealing. Violence and vice hold an important function in gothic poetry, and they are embodied mainly through harmful figures, allegories and symbols, or a hazardous atmosphere. Apart from Botting's *Gothic*, sources for this chapter include Haggerty's book *Queer Gothic* and O'Malley's *Catholicism, Sexual Deviance, and Victorian Gothic Culture*. Ann Radcliffe's essay 'On the Supernatural in Poetry' and numerous contemporary pamphlets were also deliberated.

⁸⁸ Botting, Fred. *Gothic*. London: Routledge, 1996. 1. Henceforth: Botting.

⁸⁹ Botting, 6.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 1.

⁹¹ "vice, n.1." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, September 2014. Web. 6 October 2014.

⁹² "violence, n." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, September 2014. Web. 6 October 2014.

⁹³ Botting, 3.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*.

The first figure which comes to mind when discussing violence and vice is the gothic villain or evildoer. The gothic villain, usually male,⁹⁵ is presented as inherently evil and marked by violent and vicious tendencies. According to Botting, gothic villains "populate the Gothic landscapes as suggestive figures of imagined and realistic threats."⁹⁶ Although frequently human in gothic prose, the evildoer in gothic poetry is remarkably frequently represented as a supernatural being. The villainous figures occurring in gothic poetry range from human beings, like the shady patron and the wicked husband in Pearson's 'The Burgomaster's Wife', to supernatural creatures, like the mermaid, the spirits, and the genii re-occurring in Bannerman's poetry, or the devils in 'The Mysterious Knight' by Pearson. Even though not all gothic villains are supernatural beings, they often conjure the appearance of having supernatural powers. A characteristic of all gothic villains, however, is a sense of evil,⁹⁷ whether that be through deeds that may not have been intended evil yet are, or because they are evil in essence.

The introduction of supernatural or spectral beings marks a sense of otherworldliness in gothic texts, and the distinction between the supernatural and the natural usually carries a religious subtext denoting an anti-clerical, notably anti-Catholic, attitude. The supernatural furthermore has a link with the strange or uncommon. Radcliffe writes in her posthumously published essay 'On the Supernatural in Poetry' that "everything familiar and common should be carefully avoided,"⁹⁸ as a supernatural being "loses [their] power over the imagination"⁹⁹ when presented as something or someone familiar. The supernatural is not, however, equal to the uncanny, which is an interfusion of the familiar and the unfamiliar into a singular being (or object). Whereas the supernatural is normative once explained, the uncanny is haunting and cannot be explained.¹⁰⁰

An example of an evildoer in gothic poetry is the Spirit in Bannerman's 'Ode I: The Spirit of the Air'. The poem's protagonist is portrayed as an aggressive dictator and a god-like figure imposing cruel justice. The Spirit's tyrannical character is stressed from the beginning

⁹⁵ Female figures of evil also exist in Gothic poetry, but here their sexual or erotic qualities are usually emphasised more than their potential for violence. Therefore I will discuss these figures in chapter three: 'Danger Dames: Unearthing the Sexualisation of Female Figures'.

⁹⁶ Botting, 2.

⁹⁷ According to the OED: 'the antithesis of 'good'; (1) morally depraved, bad, wicked, vicious; (3b) [related to] the Devil' ("evil, adj. n. 1, 3" *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, September 2014. Web. 6 October 2014)

⁹⁸ Radcliffe, Ann. 'On the Supernatural in Poetry', *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* 16.1 (1826), 148. Henceforth: Radcliffe.

⁹⁹ Radcliffe, 148.

¹⁰⁰ I will discuss the uncanny and the supernatural more thoroughly in chapter five, 'Forms of the Uncanny and Forms of Verse'.

of the poem. Claims such as "[m]y will supreme, mine awful sway,/ The earth, the air, the sea obey" (OI, 5-6), and "I mock destruction on his tow'ring seat,/ And leave the roaring winds, contending at my feet" (OI, 101-102) imply the Spirit's omnipotence - or its megalomania. The lyrical I aggrandises its power and knowledge as well, and presents itself as omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent ("My glance pervades the realms of space;/ Each hidden spring, this arm can trace;/ O'er all the prostrate world my power extends." (OI, 7-9)). Especially the Spirit's potential for violence is reflected in the tempestuous setting; even though the poem's opening line tells us how the Spirit hushes the "angry winds, that sweep," the Spirit attacks an Arab's "daring band" (OI, 43) and causes a shipwreck ("My harp shall join in solemn strains;/ My voice shall echo to the waves,/ That dash above your coral graves." (OI, 76-78)), seemingly without reason. However, the Spirit is not an absolutely irrational or negative figure. Even though the poem emphasises the Spirit's aggression and power, it also stresses the Gothic's concern with promoting justice and a distinction between right and wrong, for instance when the Spirit proclaims its task "[t]o cheer the wretch, whom fetters bind,/ To crush the oppressor's giant crest,/ To hurl destruction on his breast" (OI, 16-18), thereby overthrowing the oppressor and, supposedly, liberating the oppressed as a consequence. The motif of cruel justice also occurs later in the poem, when the Spirit avenges a mother who tries to save her son and then "flies, plunging, sinks beneath the billowy tide" (OI, 30), but was not aided by the seamen. The Spirit penalises the seamen by summoning "a ghastly form" which "o'er her infant weep[s]" (OI; 39 & 40) when the seamen return to their "happy homes" (OI, 35) and thus painfully reminds the seamen that they neglected to help the distressed mother, thereby implementing a cold-blooded type of justice.

Other figures in Bannerman's poetry display an indirect claim to omnipotence, such as for instance the Genii in the eponymous poem. Even though the lyrical I does not coincide with the genii, the megalomania of the latter seeps through in his/her characterisation of the genii. The genii are addressed directly (with the phrase '[adjective] Genii') five times throughout the poem and all five adjectives used in these invocations mark omnipotence.¹⁰¹ What is more, even in other references to the genii, the lyrical I chooses to focus on their presumed status of power; they are linked to fate and therefore implied to be inevitable ("fateful powers" G, 49), they are "powerful rulers" (G, 131) or even "tremendous rulers" (G, 307). They are not, however, presented as beloved ruling entities. References such as

¹⁰¹ These adjectives being "Awwful" ("causing dread" (OED); G, 1), "All powerful" (G, 67), "Tremendous" ("such as to inspire [...] awe" (OED); G, 125), "dark" (G, 177), and "powerful" (G, 229); all clearly emphasising the Genii's capability to inflict awe or terror on others.

"[i]mperious kings" (G, 95), "terrific kings" (G, 197), "terrific masters of the deep" (G, 267), "impetuous powers" (G, 341), "[i]mperious rulers" (G, 393), or even "[m]alignant tyrants" (G, 287) convey that the Genii's status of power is one acquired through fear.

The genii's identities as omnipotent but inimical rulers is, however, already challenged in line thirty-one, when the lyrical I states in an unusually brief sentence that "[s]hort was your [the genii's] triumph" and follows this statement with a pithy recounting of how "[s]cowling, [they] fled" (G, 35). This early warning is implicitly repeated in lines 319, 322, and 334, with footnotes referencing to acts of divine intervention in Genesis, and is voiced explicitly in the poem's last lines, when the lyrical I addresses the genii:

Imperious rulers! dare you still aspire
To wield the sceptre of the realms of fire?
That ardent element, you conquer now,
Whose meaner deities before you bow,
Shall, for your ruin, all its force combine,
To sweep from nature's face your dreadful line.
In strength uninjur'd, piercing, and sublime,
Your eyes shall stretch along the track of day,
And scan its glories, --till they all decay.
--But, when the skies shall glow, in living fire,
Your powers, your terrors, and your spells expire;
Your reign is finish'd, when, from shore to shore,
The seraph's trump reveals, that Time shall be no more. (G, 393-406)

In these lines, the lyrical I challenges the genii, while simultaneously reminding them of their impending downfall. This is where the genii's megalomania becomes most visible; the reputation of omnipotence which they have fashioned for themselves is cast aside by another, more powerful entity, in this case "Power Omniscient" (G, 28).

Another common motif in gothic poetry deals with demons and devils. Although demons and devils are traditional motifs in the way of religious evil, they are not the only figures in this category. Corrupted religious figures such as wayward sextons, ghostly nuns, and debased priests also found their way into gothic poetry. The anti-clericalism is mainly aimed at Catholicism; Botting furthermore points out the "association of Catholicism with

superstition, arbitrary power and passionate extremes,"¹⁰² and highlights the "Roman tyranny [which] was [...] identified with the Catholic Church"¹⁰³ to explain the anti-Catholic subtext in many gothic texts. This anti-clerical reaction turned "Gothic writing [into] a powerful means to reassert the values of society,"¹⁰⁴ by questioning the moral not of religion but of the authoritative figures of Roman Catholicism practising and imposing religion on others. In his book *Queer Gothic*, George Haggerty affirms this when he discusses the infamous *The Monk* by Matthew Lewis (1796), and the way in which it explicitly connects "Catholicism and bodily lust [...] in various ways."¹⁰⁵ He furthermore maintains that, when a character (or, in poetry, a figure) is Catholic "they are always already transgressive to the English audience,"¹⁰⁶ that there is an "automatic association of Catholicism with political/sexual transgression."¹⁰⁷ Patrick O'Malley, however, remarks in *Catholicism, Sexual Deviance, and Victorian Gothic Culture* that, even though Catholicism was an evident compound in gothic texts (and it evidently led to a major socio-political debate), "[Radcliffe's] contemporaries did not necessarily think this worthy of comment."¹⁰⁸ A possible explanation O'Malley offers for this phenomenon is that Radcliffe "creates a useful language for anti-Catholic sentiment."¹⁰⁹

Nonetheless, the anti-Catholic discourse in eighteenth-century Britain ruffled many feathers, in literary form as well as in pamphlet form. For instance, the debate surrounding the rights of 'papists', as is shown in an overture published in 1705, declared that all "Papists, Priests and Jesuits"¹¹⁰ in Scotland should be disowned and prevented from performing their rituals of worship. In 1764, a pamphlet appeared in Dublin by the hand of James Caldwell. The immorality with which Caldwell associates Catholicism is exemplified when he makes a claim against this form of Christianity saying that "[a]mong other horrid Follies, that have been sanctified by the Name of Religion, Men have thought it their Duty to offer human Sacrifices, and that the Merit was enhanced if the Victims were their Children."¹¹¹ Caldwell sees the immoral acts of another religion as enough proof to "at least withhold [sic] some

¹⁰² Botting, 63-64.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 5.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 7.

¹⁰⁵ Haggerty, George E. *Queer Gothic*. Urbana: U of Illinois, 2006. 69. Henceforth: Haggerty.

¹⁰⁶ Haggerty, 71.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 70.

¹⁰⁸ O'Malley, Patrick R. *Catholicism, Sexual Deviance, and Victorian Gothic Culture*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2006. 15. Henceforth: O'Malley.

¹⁰⁹ O'Malley, 17.

¹¹⁰ "Overture for an act against popery and papists." [Edinburgh?], [1705?]. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*.

¹¹¹ Caldwell, James. "A Brief Examination of the Question Whether it is Expedient either in a Religious or Political View, to Pass an Act to Enable Papists to Take Real Securities for Money which they May Lend." Dublin, 1764. *Eighteenth Century Collection Online*. 4. Henceforth: Caldwell.

national Advantages from Papists."¹¹² A reaction to this pamphlet was published the same year, anonymously. It reproaches Caldwell for his "Manner of Reasoning, extraordinary in its Deductions, and founded upon imagines Principles,"¹¹³ and supports Roman Catholics as "good and faithful Subjects to Protestant Princes."¹¹⁴

The Papists Act (1778) by the Parliament of Great Britain (and later that year by Parliament of Ireland) also caused an avalanche of reactions, as it was the start of the Catholic emancipation in Great Britain and Ireland. It caused the Gordon Riots in 1780 and triggered a heated debate. One of the pamphlets in this debate was 'An Appeal from the Protestant Association to the People of Great Britain, Concerning the Probable Tendency of the Late Act of Parliament in Favour of the Papists' (1779). In this pamphlet, a group of Protestants claimed that it is "a duty [they] owe to religion and [their] country, [...] to procure a remedy for the evils apprehended from [the Papists Act]."¹¹⁵ The main concern voiced in the answer of the Protestant Association is a fear of "political tenets of the most dangerous tendency,"¹¹⁶ viz. that the Catholics would overthrow current politics and resort to regi- and genocide:

But, when Papists thunder excommunication against all who differ from them in opinion, and their religious profession itself breathes the very spirit of persecution and cruelty, against those whom they anathematize as heretics; who, if Princes, are to be deposed and murdered; if subjects, to be massacred: when they avow such principles as these, what security can be given to any state for their peaceable behaviour? And what claim can they have to toleration under any Protestant government?¹¹⁷

In 'The Mysterious Knight', we find the traditional religious motif of demons perverting humans. Halfway through the poem, when "the wild winds unloos'd from their caverns arise" (MK, 51), the demons are introduced. Their entry is violent and bombastic, and even though the guests were "[s]oon lull'd in the arms of the tempest to sleep" (MK, 71), the mysterious knight's suffering is centralised ("In paleness and horror, his [the mysterious

¹¹² Caldwell, 7.

¹¹³ "A Few Remarks on a Pamphlet Written by Sir James Caldwell" Dublin (1764). *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*. 4. Henceforth: Remarks.

¹¹⁴ Remarks, 6.

¹¹⁵ The Protestant Association. 'An Appeal from the Protestant Association to the People of Great Britain, Concerning the Probable Tendency of the Late Act of Parliament in Favour of the Papists.' London (1779). *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*. 3. Henceforth: TPA.

¹¹⁶ TPA, 4.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

knight's] visage increas'd,/ While it stream'd with a cold, deadly dew" (MK, 68-69); "the knight, who his horrible vigil must keep,/ And in midnight's black bosom still bitterly weep" (MK, 73-74)). Firstly, the "[g]roans, and shrieks more than human" and "yells still more hideous" (MK; 79 and 108) coming from the mysterious knight's room cast the aforementioned demons in the role of evildoers. Additionally, the "sulphureous airs" (MK, 118) in the mysterious knight's chamber, as well as "the contract infernal" written "in letters of Blood" (MK; 122 and 120) strengthen this line of thought.

In this poem, the reader's suspicion of the mysterious knight shifts to that of "each demon of mountain and flood,/ That enjoys desolation" (MK, 52-53). What prompts suspicion in the mysterious knight, who is "[u]nknown to the Baron, unknown to his friends" (MK, 21), is his sudden appearance; yet, he wins over their favour quickly with his daring ("Imperious he [the mysterious knight] spurn'd the less venturous throng,/ And darting the knights, and the nobles among,/ Was foremost in danger, and sport" (MK, 18-20)) and knowledge ("On each subject they talk'd he was perfectly skilled/ His mind with all Science appear'd to be fill'd" (MK, 38-39)), and is at one point even considered "the whole race in one man" (MK, 40). However, the mysterious knight is linked with violence by proxy (that is, his ties with maleficent demons conjuring cataclysmic storms), rather than through an explicit, direct display of violence originating from his figure. Therefore, even though the mysterious knight has not shown violence or vice directly, the mystery surrounding him, his charm, and the allusions to the Faust legend¹¹⁸ cast him as a Gothic villain, largely due to his dealings with demons.

The second motif related to corrupted religious figures occurs in Pearson's 'The Burgomaster's Wife'. Here, the sexton is the keeper of the key to the Wife's vault ("The Sexton kept the key." BW, 24). First, he is portrayed as wanting to deprive the supposedly dead wife from the "crosses, beads, and rings/ Locketts, and such-like curious things" with which she was buried (BW, 10-11). The very next line, however, indicates a change in motives from material greed to lust. The narrator steers the reader's attention in this direction when he or she stress a need for privacy by phrasing the sexton's want for "a private view" (BW, 26) and when they have the sexton "seize the hand" of the wife (BW, 29) and thus mimicking a gesture of courtship, instead of reaching for her necklaces in order to steal them.

¹¹⁸ I discuss the mysterious knight as a Faustian figure in more detail in chapter five, 'Forms of the Uncanny and Forms of Verse' (page 54f).

When looking at the titles of Hoole's poems, it is clear that personifications - attributing human characteristics to animals, inanimate objects, or, in this case, abstract concepts - are also prominently used in gothic poetry, especially in sonnets like 'To Melancholy', 'To Despair', 'To Fear', 'To Death', &c. Bannerman devoted several sonnets to personifications as well as to symbols, such as 'Sonnet V: To the Owl' and 'Sonnet VI: To the Ocean', along with an ode, 'Ode III: To Pain'. Using these devices allows the poets to introduce violence in their poems in an indirect, less provocative manner, and address problematic subjects such as death and depression. Personifications and symbols thus offer the possibility to voice socially unaccepted feelings towards these subjects indirectly, concerns which Hoole frequently thematises in her poetry.

One of Hoole's poems, which explores personifications, is called 'Lines Written in November'. Much like Bannerman's poetry, this poem starts with an incantation addressing the "Demons of the blustering gale," and continues to describe a tempest at sea. The setting not only conveys turmoil, but also one of lost or impossible love; a "pensive breast" (LWN, 6) needs soothing, the ocean is "[t]he Lover's tomb" (LWN, 10), even the wind bemoans the sick lover ("Lorenzo's sick! -- the good, the kind!/' LORENZO!' swells the gale" (LWN, 17-18)). Only half-way through the poem, the instigator of the discomfort is revealed to be the personification Disease. Disease, perceived as female, "her sable mantle throws" (LWN, 23) over her victim, Lorenzo. This poem, however, ends with the apparition of another personification: Hope. She is also perceived as female, yet instead of describing her as a bringer of "grief and anguish" (LWN, 24) and a claimer or taker of lives, Hope is portrayed in terms of "sweet controul" (LWN, 36) and bliss. Furthermore, Hope is accompanied by Virtue, whereas Disease's sycophant is Pain.

Hoole personifies Disease again in the sonnet 'To Disease'. She is once more perceived as female; whereas her presence was not appreciated in 'Lines Written in November', here the "Queen of Terrors" (TDi, 1) is earnestly requested to stay as a "heaven directed guest" (TDi, 8). Regardless of the portrayal of Disease as the bringer of God's mercy¹¹⁹ and despite the longing of the lyrical I, Disease's function to discipline the lyrical I is emphasised above all. She "scourge[s] her victim, till [her] chastening rod/ Hath truly taught [the] suppliant soul to bend" (TDi, 9-10), her "fierce command" (TDi, 3) is enforced by her

¹¹⁹ The lyrical I explains that Disease has taught him/her to "humbly bless the mercies of that GOD" (TDi, 11).

"iron hand" (TDi, 1), and Disease does all of this to "refine, amend,/ And purify [the] soul from earth's dull clay" (TDi, 12-13).

Another way to reflect violence is the use of a turbulent setting. Radcliffe commends the importance of "correspondent scenery"¹²⁰ in the gothic mode when she writes: "the desolate heath, the troubled elements, assist the mischief of his malignant beings."¹²¹ Radcliffe assigns a particular meaning, in terms of a Gothic rhetorical repertoire, to landscapes wrapped in obscurity, as clear light "lessen[s] every feeling of terror"¹²² and thereby annihilates any feeling of violence. Scenery or setting is used as a way to evoke a feeling of violence and to reflect the figures' - or lyrical I's - internal life. By conjuring up storms, crashing thunder, blinding lightning, and the cries of animals (including those of people), the writer is able to show rather than tell. In short literary art forms, as most poems, every bit of textual evidence can alter the semantics of the entire poem, and many poets do not hesitate to use setting or atmosphere as a subtle, yet very much haunting, tool to add depth.

Bannerman uses tempestuous oceans throughout her poetry, as for instance in 'Ode II: The Mermaid', where the ocean and wind act as personified forces which have separated the two lovers, Ajut and Anningait. These "demons of the gulf below" (OII, 3) are not only described in terms of raging destruction ("turbid deep" (OII, 8); "black'ning tempests" (OII, 23); 'the dark and angry deep/ Hangs his huge billows high in air" (OII, 31-32)), but also in terms of death ("death-fraught whirlwinds" (OII, 1); "the disparted main, and opes its shelving graves" (OII, 40)). The ocean and wind continue to be described negatively, even after Ajut accepts her Mermaid form and, if she does not initiate, then she at least aids the wind and ocean to let "the torn vessel drink the surging waves" (OII, 39) and to "lead the victims to their fate" (OII, 68).

Bannerman even devotes a sonnet to the "tempestuous main" (SVI, 1) with 'Sonnet VI: To the Ocean'. Even though the ocean is introduced as "[h]ushed" (SVI, 1), this is clearly a temporary state, as suggested in lines three and four: "Ah! Who would think, that danger lurks within,/ That ev'n thy murmu'rings seem to say -- beware." Furthermore, when the lyrical I remembers "the angry whirlwind's sweep" (SVI, 7), the ocean becomes increasingly

¹²⁰ Radcliffe, 147.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid, 150.

more personified; it smiles ("Thy smiling aspect" (SVI, 6); "[the ocean] smil'st delighted" (SVI, 12)), it embraces seamen ("[The ocean] [w]helm'st in [its] wat'ry breast the luckless crew" (SVI, 11)), and it drives ships into rocks ("On the sunk rock thou driv'st the fated bark" (SVI, 10)). The lyrical I deems the ocean capable of judging right from wrong, but emphasises that it is "destructive" (SVI, 5), "unpitying" (SVI, 9), "ruthless" (SVI, 13), and ultimately sadistic.¹²³

Nevertheless, the wind and the ocean - as well as other bodies of water - do not always figure in gothic poetry as the herald of aggression and destruction. 'Evening Meditations on the Water' by Hoole exemplifies this. The water is the "soother of the mind" (EMW, 26), and the wind is even described as "[a]fraid to break by rude or whispering note/ The dulcet sadness of this sober scene" (EMW, 10-11). Even when the general atmosphere is "mild, and sweet, and beautiful" (EMW, 1), there are hints of melancholy, and death, yet these come from the lyrical I, who seeks for a "balmy influence on my fever'd brain" (EMW, 31). The danger comes from her mind, and the view on the water "lulls the weary throb of care" (EMW, 28), instead of amplifying it, as often happens in Bannerman's poetry.

These analyses of primary texts and contemporary documents illustrate the importance of externalised violence and vice. In numerous previous works on Gothic fiction, we already saw the significant role played by the evildoer, which became such an essential part of gothic texts that it a trope under the name 'gothic villain'. Gothic villains can be human (e.g. the knight in Pearson's 'The Mysterious Knight') or supernatural (e.g. the Spirit in Bannerman's 'Ode I'), but will usually convey a notion of (supernatural) power. In the case of the knight, it is his knowledge and the mystery surrounding him. The Spirit and the Genii, on the other hand, hold dominion over the elements of wind and water and can control them at their whim. A second category of figures portraying violence and vice is that which I have dubbed 'religious evil'. Gothic texts - prose as well as poetry - are riddled with demons, devils, and corrupted religious figures. This anti-clericalism, and especially the anti-Catholicism, finds its origins in a largely political function. The debate around the rights of the so-called 'papists', or Catholics, flared up high in the eighteenth century, and the hostile attitude towards Catholics is reflected in eighteenth-century literature.

¹²³ Mark the implications of the ocean's sadism when the lyrical I exclaims: "What are thy triumphs -- but another's pain!" (SVI, 14).

Whereas these two categories, the gothic villain and religious evil, are motifs one can recognise in gothic fiction, the allegories for abstract concepts such as 'melancholy' and 'death', is largely reserved for gothic poetry only. Personifying these abstractions enables the poet to approach subjects with feelings that may not be socially accepted under the cover of poetic license or literary genius. Hoole does this repeatedly, for instance to vent the emotions surrounding her son's death. Apart from allegories, another way to bring violence into gothic texts, especially poetry, is through the setting. The violence of storms at sea is mingled with the sublimity of said vast plain of water, causing terror and awe which I will discuss further in the chapter on the sublime in gothic poetry.

2. 'tis Madness, Madness that Hath Ravished Me

"I love thee, cheerless, melancholy bird!
Soothing to me is thy funeral cry;
Here build thy lonely nest, and ever nigh
My dwelling, be thy sullen wailings heard."
- from 'Sonnet V: To the Owl' by Anne Bannerman

In the second chapter, I will talk about the various ways in which gothic poetry deals with death and depression, melancholy and morbidity. The first thing Amy Reed remarks in her book *The Background of Gray's Elegy* is that "any historic study of English poetry must necessarily involve some recognition of the habitual melancholy of the English poets, its causes and its chosen means of expression."¹²⁴ Therefore it is important to lead off with a closer look into the eighteenth century concept of melancholy and how it developed. Secondly, I will examine morbidity – more specifically Sigmund Freud's death drive – and how it manifests itself in gothic poetry. In this regard, the 2011 issues of 'Studies in Literary Imagination', edited by Richard Terry, are a valuable source. These essays are the products of the research project 'Before Depression: the English Malady 1660-1800' and studies what depression meant "before the condition existed as a standardized medical concept with a recognizable cluster of symptoms."¹²⁵ Other sources include 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle' by Sigmund Freud and Nicholas Royle's *The Uncanny*.

In the eighteenth century, melancholy had different consequences depending on the gender of its sufferer. On the one hand, men's melancholy "was associated with genius, denoting a creative intensity and inner depth" or even "a pose adopted by intellectual young men,"¹²⁶ says Katharine Hodgkin in her article 'Scurvy Vapors and the Devil's Claw: Religion and the Body in Seventeenth-Century Women's Melancholy'. According to Vieda Skultans in *English Madness*, male sufferers from melancholy were "treated with respect and sympathy."¹²⁷ On the other hand, women's melancholy was "not described in the attractive terms of other kinds of melancholy."¹²⁸ Hodgkin forgoes the litotes when she writes that

¹²⁴ Amy Louise Reed. *The Background of Gray's Elegy*. New York: Columbia UP, 1924. 1. Henceforth: Reed.

¹²⁵ Richard Terry. "Editor's Comment." Editorial. *Studies in Literary Imagination* 44.2 (2011): V.

¹²⁶ Both: Hodgkin, 3.

¹²⁷ Vieda Skultans. *English Madness: Ideas on Insanity, 1580-1890*. London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1979. 86. Henceforth: Skultans.

¹²⁸ Skultans, 81.

“[women’s] melancholy is less positive than men’s, more bodily, less intellectual.”¹²⁹ Once more, the condition of women is reduced to a bodily malfunction. The early modern idea that psychology and physiology are closely related continues to live on in the perception of women’s illnesses throughout the eighteenth century.¹³⁰ Furthermore, melancholy “is identified with contemplative and thoughtful people,”¹³¹ which poses women before an impossible conundrum. Contrary to male education, “female studiousness only increases the risk”¹³² of imbalanced humours, rendering thought and contemplation absolutely out of the question.

According to early modern medicine, the body balances four fluids or humours (blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile) and an imbalance manifests itself in psychologic as well as physiological complaints; “health consisted in the ‘good proportion’ of these qualities throughout the parts of the body.”¹³³ A corruption of the humours by a plethora of black bile leads to melancholy “characterized by extreme and wild behaviour, by delusions and hallucinations.”¹³⁴ A circular reasoning also allowed emotions to disturb “the body’s production of humours and spirits,”¹³⁵ which in turn would alter the emotional state of the subject. Stereotypically, the female body was cold, “wet and spongy”¹³⁶ and ultimately plagued by an unstable balance as it was “constantly challenged by the ebbs and flows of the menstrual cycle and of child-bearing.”¹³⁷ The reproductive function of the female body is thus foregrounded and overbears the ability for reason, which is typically assigned to the dry and hot bodies of men. Incidentally, “precisely because of their weakness of reason, women were prone to develop cases of melancholy.”¹³⁸

Elaine Hobby also mentions the critical position of the womb in her article “‘As Melancholy as a Sick Parrot’: Depressed(?) Women at the Beginning of the Long Eighteenth Century’. After giving birth, she states, “an accumulation of ill melancholy blood”¹³⁹ may

¹²⁹ Katharine Hodgkin. "Scurvy Vapors and the Devil's Claw: Religion and the Body in Seventeenth-Century Women's Melancholy." *Studies in Literary Imagination* 44.2 (2011): 3. Henceforth: Hodgkin.

¹³⁰ Angus Gowland. *The Worlds of Renaissance Melancholy: Robert Burton in Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006. 41. Henceforth: Gowland.

¹³¹ Hodgkin, 4.

¹³² Both: Hodgkin, 5.

¹³³ Gowland, 45.

¹³⁴ Hodgkin, 2.

¹³⁵ Gowland, 49.

¹³⁶ Schmidt, 79.

¹³⁷ Hodgkin, 4.

¹³⁸ Schmidt, 117.

¹³⁹ Elaine Hobby. "'As Melancholy as a Sick Parrot': Depressed(?) Women at the Beginning of the Long Eighteenth Century." *Studies in Literary Imagination* 44.2 (2011): 24. Henceforth: Hobby.

cause serious illness ending in death when untreated. Women were believed to hoard ‘seeds’ in their uteri when they lacked regular sexual release and “when the seed is thus retained it corrupts, and sends up filthy vapours to the brain.”¹⁴⁰ According to early modern midwives, this smoke also causes melancholy. Women are thus “particularly susceptible to the melancholic disorders [...] immediately after childbirth [...] or in the absence of sexual pleasure.”¹⁴¹ Vapours of menstruation have the same effect, according to Robert Burton¹⁴² - author of *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) - and the only remedy is marriage or “religion, work [i.e. bodily labour] and a disciplined life.”¹⁴³

However, women’s unruly bodies were not the sole culprit for their mental illnesses. Only idle women are “apt to fall into these conditions”¹⁴⁴ claims Burton, thus naming laziness as a second cause of women’s melancholy. Another root of melancholy is sin, “for accounts of mental distress in [women’s] spiritual life stories often locate religion as significantly more important than religion.”¹⁴⁵ Nonetheless, it is important to note, as Hodgkin does, that these stories “belong to the genre of exemplary lives [and] exclude any sort of discourse on sexuality;”¹⁴⁶ the body of a pious woman is presented as devoid of its biological functions. Hobby raises the point that “bodily imbalance [was believed to] make a person vulnerable to Satan’s temptations,”¹⁴⁷ which opens the door to despair and melancholy. Again, the interpretation of women’s mental illness sidesteps the possibility of a (in this case religious) identity and favours laying the blame on women’s “disorderly and ungovernable bodily passions.”¹⁴⁸ Again, women’s melancholy is “understood as an affliction caused in some way by the womb.”¹⁴⁹

Stephen Bending offers another view on melancholy when he makes the distinction between melancholic pleasure and melancholic depression in his article ‘Melancholy Amusements: Women, Gardens, and the Depression of Spirits’. The difference between pleasure and depression is “the ability, literally, to walk away” from the first, while the latter

¹⁴⁰ Jane Sharp and Elaine Hobby. *The Midwives Book, Or, The Whole Art of Midwifry Discovered*. New York: Oxford UP, 1999. 236.

¹⁴¹ Hobby, 25.

¹⁴² Skultans, 80.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Hodgkin, 5.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 11.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 18.

¹⁴⁷ Hobby, 33.

¹⁴⁸ Hodgkin, 6.

¹⁴⁹ Jeremy Schmidt. *Melancholy and the Care of the Soul: Religion, Moral Philosophy and Madness in Early Modern England*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2007. 3. Henceforth: Schmidt.

causes a “sense of entrapment in a landscape.”¹⁵⁰ One of Hoole’s poems, ‘Lines Composed during a Walk in the Leasowes’, expresses the pleasure solitude and the complementary melancholy mood can affect when one is merely “wandering through the lonely dell” (LL, 7). The poem opens with “YE lovely scenes! bewitching groves!,” and continues to praise the “[s]till softer charms [which] adorn the grove” (LL, 13): “a fragrant Zephyr” (LL, 2), “the murmuring rivulets” (LL, 5), “soften’d streamlets” (LL, 8), &c. This reliance on nature motifs is “evidently intended to bring the spectator in a particular mood,”¹⁵¹ namely melancholic pleasure.

‘Rhapsody of Sorrow’, also by Hoole, relies heavily on nature motifs as well. However, this poem illustrates the inescapable melancholy. Even though the opening line promises optimism (“WHEN on the morn I lift my eye,/ Its cool gale greets my rising sigh;/ When Sol his brightest beams displays.” RS, 1-3), nothing seems to succeed to lift the lyrical I’s spirits. Neither the sun’s “brightest beams” (RS, 3), nor the “gay flowerets” under “cloudless skies” (RS, 9 & 10), or the “sweet music from the woods” (RS, 12) can uplift his/her “sad soul sickened at [Sol’s] rays” (RS, 4). Like Amy Reed remarks in *The Background of Gray’s Elegy*, “melancholy plays a large part and is often communicated through nature description.”¹⁵² Hoole’s lyrical I speaks of how s/he “long[s] to see the tempest roll” (RS, 15), to let her mind’s eye revel in “the welkin [which] darkly lours” (RS, 17), “the deepening thunders [sic] sound” (RS, 20), and “the lightnings [sic] forky glare” (RS, 21). The entrapment in his/her melancholic state is reflected in a sense of indecision. When surrounded by the gleeful scenery of summer, the lyrical I “pants for Autumn’s pensive joys” (RS, 26), and when “these gloomy comforts are [his/hers]” (RS, 33), s/he longs for Winter. (The lyrical I, however, never expresses a longing for Spring.) One constant throughout the poem is the lyrical I’s insistence on the presence of Death; when s/he wakes up to ‘Sol’, her “sad soul sickens” (RS, 4) and when it is night, s/he “mourns for the returning day” (RS, 8). The air is “[s]uffuse[d] with death” (RS, 22) during the storm, and in Autumn, s/he focuses on “[t]he falling leaf that shakes with death” (RS, 27) and the overall “cheerless view” (RS, 30) of this “sombre scene” (RS, 35).

¹⁵⁰ Both: Stephen Bending. “Melancholy Amusements: Women, Gardens, and the Depression of Spirits.” *Studies in Literary Imagination* 44.2 (2011): 43.

¹⁵¹ Reed, 142.

¹⁵² *Ibid*, 140.

Morbidity is "an unhealthy preoccupation with ... death,"¹⁵³ which in certain cases escalates into a strong affection for death as a concept, or an intense longing for death as a state of being. Fred Botting describes gothic texts or 'writings of excess' as "an overabundance of imaginative frenzy, untamed by reason,"¹⁵⁴ a description which mainly focuses on violence from an external Other. This preoccupation with externalised violence comes from the association of the Gothic with "tyranny and barbarity,"¹⁵⁵ which needed to be clearly distinguished from the socially and politically proper English(wo)man. "In the eighteenth century," Botting explains, "the emphasis was placed on expelling and objectifying threatening figures of darkness and evil."¹⁵⁶ This was easily done through the demonization of southern European (usually Italian) figures or characters, complicating the reader's identification with immoral figures or characters featuring in the texts. Nonetheless, Gothic texts "subverted rational codes of understanding,"¹⁵⁷ which includes the internalisation of excess and transgression, and whereas Gothic fiction feels the need to punish characters which do not abide to the laws of reason, in Gothic poetry there is a poetic freedom which allows the poet to engage with the ambiguously socially acceptable. Poems on morbidity, then, earned their position as "writing[s] of excess" because it "transgress[es] social proprieties and moral laws"¹⁵⁸ when it opens the dialogue about (an unhealthy preoccupation with) death.

Nicholas Royle discusses the death drive in his book *The Uncanny*, and by calling this "the *old* idea of a desire for death,"¹⁵⁹ he presents the death drive as something that may be named and thus made visible by Freud, but also as something that has been around before Freud's theories. Freud introduces the principle of the death drive halfway through his essay 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle'. In his introduction to the 1989 translation, Gregory Zilboorg comments on Freud's terminology that "[i]n German, Freud uses the words *Trieb* and *Triebhaft*, which mean instinct, instinctual drive, a sense of being driven toward a certain even though not always comprehended goal."¹⁶⁰ The death drive is thus not simply a death wish;

¹⁵³ "morbid, adj. 2." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, September 2014. 6 October 2014.

¹⁵⁴ Botting, Fred. *Gothic*. London: Routledge, 1996. 3. Henceforth: Botting.

¹⁵⁵ Botting, 5.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 10.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 6.

¹⁵⁸ Both: *ibid*, 1 & 3.

¹⁵⁹ Royle, Nicholas. *The Uncanny*. New York: Routledge, 2003. 85. Emphasis mine. Henceforth: Royle.

¹⁶⁰ Freud, Sigmund. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Ed. Gregory Zilboorg, Trans. James Strachey. New York: W.W. Norton, 1989. Xxxiv. Henceforth: Freud, BPP.

Freud explains it as "the instinct [or drive] to return to the inanimate state"¹⁶¹ or, in other words, [o]ne group of instincts [i.e. the death drive] rushes forward so as to reach the final aim of life as swiftly as possible."¹⁶² And that aim of life is, according to Royle's reading of Freud, death.¹⁶³

Forms of self-preservation and self-assertion are merely tactics employed so that "the organism shall follow its own path to death," because "the organism wishes to die only in its own fashion."¹⁶⁴ Royle elaborates on Freud on the meaning of 'fashion' when he writes that "we all want to die in our own way, on our own terms, according to our own trajectory, in accordance with 'detours' of our own devising."¹⁶⁵ However, even if Freud wrote in the eighteenth century, his psychoanalytical approach to the death drive would not help negate the social (and religious) transgression implied by this instinct, and Gothic poetry as a medium would still offer these poets the opportunity to engage with subjects which formerly were inaccessible. I have selected two poems which reflect two different interpretation of morbidity; in Anne Bannerman's 'Sonnet V: to the Owl', an affection for death as a concept can be found, and in Barbara Hoole's 'To Death', longing for death as a state of being is present.

The owl as a messenger of death is a fundamental aspect of Bannerman's poem, as well as the lyrical I's inclination for the owl in its function. The idea of the owl as a bird of ill omen or as having some kind of link with death is developed mainly in the middle stanza, but already forms from the first and second line, when the lyrical I dubs the owl a "cheerless, melancholy bird" (SV, 1) with a "funereal cry" (SV, 2). In the second stanza, then, links the owl first with destruction by describing the mingling of the owl's "discordant scream" with "the howlings of the northern blast" (SV, 6 & 5; note the echo of 'owl' in the verb 'howl'). The last line of this stanza concretises the reader's suspicions: the owl is a messenger of death who "call[s] the sufferer to eternal rest" (i.e., death; SV, 8). When looking at the specific words Bannerman uses in direct or indirect reference to the owl, terror and death. The first sentiment, terror, mainly centres around the owl's "sullen wailings" (SV, 4), whereas the second category focuses on how the owl is closely linked to death, since the "melancholy bird" (SV, 1) has a "funereal cry" "[t]o call the sufferer to eternal rest" (SV, 2 & 8).

¹⁶¹ Freud, BPP, 46.

¹⁶² Ibid, 49.

¹⁶³ Royle, 84.

¹⁶⁴ Both: Freud, BPP, 47.

¹⁶⁵ Royle, 93.

The owl's traditionally negative connotation in poetry is negated in this poem by the lyrical I's constant affections for the bird and its function. The poem opens with a declaration of love¹⁶⁶ and continues to express a feeling of "soothing" (SV, 2) or comfort derived from the owl's cries and its "lonely nest ... ever nigh" (SV, 3). This longing for physical proximity is repeated throughout the poem in the form of the owl's "discordant scream" (SV, 6) which, even mingled with the "roarings of the stormy waves" (SV, 10), reaches the lyrical I's ear. In this last stanza, it is not only the sound of the storm and the owl which come together, but also the sentimental ejaculation "Hark!" (SV, 13) of the lyrical I, further reinforcing the affiliation between the two.

Barbara Hoole, however, preferred the direct approach in her poem 'To Death', which - as the title states - addresses an allegorised Death directly. According to the lyrical I, Death has "a visage grimly dark,/ And sad and fearful ... voice" (TDe, 3-4), or in short, Death has a "grisly form" (TDe, 17). In the third and fourth stanza, nevertheless, there is a slight turn. Death is no longer merely appalling, the lyrical I assigns her feelings, such as those of hopelessness and lovelessness, while still addressing her. The first is illustrated by lines eleven and twelve, which read as follows: "To [Death] on whose benighted eyes/ No more shall wake Hope's radiant morn." Death's exclusion from love is exemplified in the lines embracing these: "to [Death's] heart whom sever'd joys/ Have left cold, bleeding and forlorn" (TDe, 9-10) and "[t]o [Death] whose 'dull cold ear' no more/ Shall lift sweet Love's impassioned stain" (TDe, 13-14). Another turn occurs in the last two stanzas, initiated with an opposing "No!" (TDe, 21). Here, the lyrical I uses vocabulary of courtship, yet aims their words not at Death herself, but at her "awful dower" (TDe, 24), namely death as the end of life. In hindsight, the reader sees this focus on Death's "kind and mild ... dart" (TDe, 21-22) already hinted at in the previous stanza, where Death is portrayed as a companionless entity.¹⁶⁷ In the last line of this poem the lyrical I "begs thy long, thy cold embrace" (TDe, 28), yet even despite this echo of the love of the lyrical I in Bannerman's 'Sonnet V: to the Owl', Hoole's lyrical I does not mediate her ulterior motives for wooing Death.

¹⁶⁶ i.e.: "I love thee, cheerless, melancholy bird!" (SV, 1).

¹⁶⁷ The stanza in question is the following:

"To such an one thy grisly form,
That scares gay Pleasure's glittering train,
Appears no Demon of the storm,
No dreaded Messenger of pain" (TDe, 17-20).

As we saw in this chapter, depression and death, melancholy and morbidity are important in gothic poetry. Melancholy is heavily gendered and regarded as a negative trait for women, whereas it was a sign of genius in men. For both sexes, it is strongly linked with bodies; melancholy was caused by an imbalance in the bodily fluids and thus a physiological as well as a psychological problem. A cause specifically for women, then, was a lack of regular sexual release, eventually resulting in melancholic fumes fogging the female brain. Other gothic poems distinguish between melancholic pleasure and melancholic depression, like Hoole's 'Lines Composed during a Walk in the Leasowes' versus 'Rhapsody of Sorrow' respectively. The ability to move away from melancholy – whether that be physically or psychologically – decides whether or not it is pleasurable or depressing. Melancholy can further escalate into morbidity, or an unhealthy fixation on death (either the abstract concept or the state of being). It can ultimately lead to what Freud calls the death drive, the idea that any living organism strives to return to an inanimate state (i.e. death). 'Sonnet V: to the Owl' by Bannerman displays strong love for death as a concept, whereas 'To Death' illustrates Freud's death drive.

3. Danger Dames: Unearthing the Sexualisation of Female Figures

"And to the alarmed guests she turn'd,
No breath was heard, no voice, no sound,
And in a tone, so deadly deep,
She pledg'd them all around,
That in their hearts, and thro' their limbs,
No pulses could be found."
- from 'The Dark Ladie' by Anne Bannerman

Feminist criticism in the late 1960s and 1970s "has both (a) worked to recover denigrated or lost writing by women [...] and (b) reread many long-interpreted, as well as rediscovered, texts to bring out within them the suppression and reassertion of women's condition, thought, and uses of language amid male-dominated social structures."¹⁶⁸ The second part of feminist criticism's efforts is especially useful for this chapter on the reading of gothic poetry for female figures, and how they are treated by women poets. Bodies, including women's bodies, have been politicised in literature for centuries, and the emergence of the gothic mode during political unrest as well as its taste for "excess [which] transgresses the proper limits of [...] social order"¹⁶⁹ puts it forward as an ideal medium to express "[u]ncertainties about the nature of power, law, society, family and sexuality."¹⁷⁰

In this chapter, I will explore the characterisation of female figures, and especially those who transgress the boundaries of social and/or sexual propriety. I will attempt to sketch the contribution of gothic poetry to the evolution of the female figure as an active agent, as e.g. in John Keats's *belle dame sans merci*, and which later laid the foundations of the Victorian notion of the *femme fatale*. I have already quoted two of the sources I will use, namely Fred Botting's *Gothic* and parts of Anna Powell and Andrew Smith's essay compilation *Teaching the Gothic*. Other sources include *Queer Gothic* by George E. Haggerty, *Gothic Riffs* by Diane Long Hoeveler, *The Art of Darkness* by Anne Williams, and the essays 'Lesbianism and Romantic Genius' by Andrew Elfenbeim, Ashley Miller's 'Obscurity in Bannerman's "The Dark Ladie,"' and 'Romantic Spinstrelsy: Anne Bannerman and the Sexual Politics of the Ballad' by Adriana Cracuin.

¹⁶⁸ Powell, Anna, and Andrew Smith. *Teaching the Gothic*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. 34.

¹⁶⁹ Botting, Fred. *Gothic*. London: Routledge, 1996. 4. Henceforth: Botting.

¹⁷⁰ Botting, 5.

Haggerty writes that "[t]ransgressive social-sexual relations are the most common denominator of gothic writing."¹⁷¹ He furthermore claims that gothic texts are "invested in same-sex and transgressive incestuous desire."¹⁷² With the word 'desire', Haggerty has found a key word in gothic fiction. "Gothic fiction is not about homo- or hetero-desire as much as it is about the fact of desire itself," explains Haggerty, and in gothic texts in general, that "desire is expressed as the exercise of (or resistance to) power."¹⁷³ Williams agrees with this observation, especially when it comes to the erotic fantasies of women, which "tend to focus on power and powerful embraces."¹⁷⁴ This does not stop a patriarchal culture to marginalise women as well as 'the erotic', however.¹⁷⁵ Female figures adhering to such desires "manifest that instability, that refusal to be *one thing* that is so troubling to patriarchal order,"¹⁷⁶ says Williams. A woman's value is tied up with her sexual honour in such an intimate manner that "she must literally die when that honor is reft from her."¹⁷⁷ Gothic texts offer the opportunity to explore sexuality and gender beyond "the severe limits on self-determination suffered by young women in the late eighteenth century,"¹⁷⁸ and Bannerman's poetry in particular "can be seen as participating in a [...] more complex poetical agenda,"¹⁷⁹ which Cracuín calls "proto-feminist,"¹⁸⁰ since the female figure in her poetry is usually an active agent.

One such ballad which explores the possibilities of gender and sexuality is 'The Dark Ladie' by Bannerman, which was inspired by Samuel Taylor Coleridge's ballad 'Introduction to the Tale of the Dark Ladie'. Notwithstanding Bannerman's occupation with "the sexual politics of feminine idealization and demonization," Coleridge originally "uses the Belle Dame figure as a pawn in a masculine sexual economy,"¹⁸¹ in this poem and renders her even more passive in the sister tale published in 1834, 'The Ballad of the Dark Ladie', in which a beautiful woman hankers for her knight in a traditional fashion. However, as Cracuín observes, "[i]nstead of providing yet another tale of women's victimization," 'The Dark Ladie'

¹⁷¹ Haggerty, George E. *Queer Gothic*. Urbana: University of Illinois, 2006. 2. Henceforth: Haggerty.

¹⁷² Haggerty, 18.

¹⁷³ Both; Haggerty, 2.

¹⁷⁴ Williams, Anne. *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic*. Chicago: U of Chicago, 1995. 156. Henceforth: Williams.

¹⁷⁵ Williams, 151.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 117.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 116.

¹⁷⁸ Powell, 108.

¹⁷⁹ Miller, Ashley. 'Obscurity in Anne Bannerman's "The Dark Ladie"', *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies* 3.2 (Summer 2007). Paragraph 1. Henceforth: Miller.

¹⁸⁰ Cracuín, Adriana. "Romantic Spinstrelsy: Anne Bannerman and the Sexual Politics of the Ballad." *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism*, ed. Leith Davis, Ian Duncan, and Janet Sorenson. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004., 212. Henceforth: Cracuín, Spinstrelsy.

¹⁸¹ Both: Cracuín, Spinstrelsy, 211 & 209.

depicts a cool, collected female figure with a "glaring eye [that] dried the life-blood" (DL, 121-122), and Cracuin continues to write that Bannerman "also resists the covert misogyny of the Romantic idealization of women."¹⁸² In Bannerman's version of the tale, the Dark Ladie controls the male figures and causes them to "compulsively tell the tale of the Dark Ladie's seduction."¹⁸³ Whereas in Coleridge's version the focus lies on her qualities as "[a]n Angel beautiful and bright" ('Introduction to the Tale of the Dark Ladie', 70), Bannerman's Dark Ladie is described in terms of "[h]er long black veil that swept the ground" (DL, 32), "[h]er wild eyes" (DL, 156), and - unironically - "the voice, the tone, that stopt/ Thro' all their limbs, the rushing blood" (DL, 69-70).

Miller picks up on special status of voice in her essay 'Obscurity in Anne Bannerman's "The Dark Ladie"' when she remarks that "speech as a form of communication [between the knights] is arrested"¹⁸⁴ with the entry of the Dark Ladie. Even though the Dark Ladie does not have a literal voice, but "a tone, so deadly deep" (DL, 53), she manages to ensnare the knights and immobilise their bodies.¹⁸⁵ Thus, the Dark Ladie accomplishes what is impossible in "traditional Scottish abduction ballads;"¹⁸⁶ she refuses the role of the silenced victim, instead "rendering her audience mute"¹⁸⁷ without losing her grip on their minds, bodies, and senses. The poem never explains what Elfenbeim calls "the lady's cross-gendered appearance,"¹⁸⁸ however. Elfenbeim names various ways in which a woman can cross-gender, i.a. through assuming "masculine manners and physical appearance" or through displaying a "masculine sexual license."¹⁸⁹ In essence, Elfenbeim views gender in the eighteenth century as a (binary) performance and women 'cross-gender' when they appropriate behaviours stereotypically assigned to men. In the ballad, the knights attempt to attribute the Dark Ladie's cross-gendering to "any conventional narrative of sexual transgression,"¹⁹⁰ which may be found in "[s]ome story, [of] how this poor Ladie/ Had left, alas! her husband's home/ With this dread knight [viz., Sir Guyon] to flee" (DL, 142-144), but the knights proclaim that:

¹⁸² Both: Cracuin, *Spinstrelsy*, 209 & 210.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ Miller, paragraph 5.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ Cracuin, *Spinstrelsy*, 211.

¹⁸⁷ Miller, paragraph 6.

¹⁸⁸ Elfenbein, Andrew. 'Lesbianism and Romantic Genius: The Poetry of Anne Bannerman', *ELH* 63.4 (Winterd 1996). 948. Henceforth: Elfenbeim.

¹⁸⁹ Both; Elfenbeim, 930.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 948.

Ah! none could ever hear or know,
Or, why, beneath that long black veil,
Her wild eyes sparkle so.

Or whence those deep unearthly tones,
That human bosom never own'd;
Or why, it cannot be remov'd,
That folded veil that sweeps the ground? (DL, 154-160)

By explaining gothic texts as "testing ground[s] for many unauthorized genders and sexualities, including [...] masculinized females,"¹⁹¹ Haggerty affirms Williams's interpretation of gothic writing as a way to circumvent social stigma while still enabling the author to experiment with the boundaries of gender and sexuality (stereotypes). In his essay for *Teaching the Gothic*, Steven Bruhm ratifies this in explicit phrasing when he writes "sexuality has been the purview of a feminist criticism that reads - correctly - issues of gender in the Gothic as explorations of power inequities."¹⁹² These experiments with the possibilities of female figures led to figures as the *belle dame*, which John Keats immortalises as the *belle dame sans merci* in a poem bearing the same name (1819), and the *femme fatale*, which peaked as a motif in Victorian literature from 1880 to 1900.

Keats's *belle dame* is "[f]ull beautiful, a faery's child;/ Her hair was long, her foot was light,/ And her eyes were wild" ('La Belle Dame Sans Merci', 14-16) and well-versed in the art of seduction. Her skills to lure a mortal man to his demise caused her to be interpreted as a supernatural figure, an interpretation which is strengthened when Keats describes her as "a faery's child" ('La Belle Dame Sans Merci', 14), her voice as "[a] faery song" ('La Belle Dame Sans Merci', 20), and her dwellings as an "elfin grot" ('La Belle Dame Sans Merci', 29). Rendering the *belle dame* a supernatural creature removes her from mortal women, thus distancing potential *belles dames* from the idealised image of what a patriarchal society deems a good woman. Bannerman finds middle ground in 'Ode II: the Mermaid', in which a mortal woman is transformed into a supernatural creature due to her loyalty to her lover.

'Ode II: the Mermaid' is another of Bannerman's ballads which is inspired by the writing of another poet. In December 1751, Samuel Johnson published issues n°186 and

¹⁹¹ Haggerty, 2.

¹⁹² Powell, 93.

n°187, which featured the story of the Icelandic lovers Ajut and Anningait. Here, Ajut and Anningait are presented to the reader as two virtuous seemingly greysexual¹⁹³ lovers; despite the high praise for Ajut, Anningait felt attracted to her only after repeated visits. Ajut's enthusiasm is equally disputable at the outset of the tale. After a considerable time, however, the courtship commences and when Anningait fails to return from a fishing trip, the despondent Ajut is left subject to the pursuit of Norngusk. The latter is set upon her hand in marriage, yet his scheming goes awry and drives Ajut into the sea, in search for her lover. The tale ends with the suggestion that Ajut transformed into a mermaid.

Bannerman picks up the narrative here and introduces the mermaid as a figure simultaneously one with the ocean and divided by it from her people. Ajut's identification with the ocean is hinted throughout the ballad; in the first stanza, Ajut establishes a relation with the ocean through observing it, which is exemplified when she not merely hears the ocean (OII, 4) but listens to it (OII, 8) and keeps vigil over it (OII, 7). In the second stanza, she explains the importance of her watching over the sea as its being her lover's grave (OII, 12). In the following stanza she admits to her transformation (OII, 21) and with that confesses a second reason for her isolation, scilicet the implications of social and sexual transgression accompanying her transformation to a *femme fatale* mermaid.¹⁹⁴ Over the course of the ballad, Ajut accepts her new identity as a *belle dame sans merci*, and "lure[s] the sailor to his doom" (OII, 26). She embraces her new-found talents like she lets the ocean embrace "the torn vessel" (OII, 39), as if on a power-high. Whereas she previously took on a more passive, distant role of observation, she now acts and "[t]hrice welcome[s] to her weary sight,/ Avenging ministers of wrath" (OII, 51-52) to help her fulfil "her fearful destiny [...] To lead the victims to their fate" (OII, 66-68) and even goes so far as to draw parallels between her fate and that of angels when she concludes that she "With callous heart, to hidden rocks decoy,/ And lure, in seraph-strains, unpitying, to destroy" (OII, 69-70).

With 'A Tale', Hoole writes a classic knight-in-shining-armor poem. The narrative tells of a "hardy knight" (T, 3) who stumbles on an entrance to the lair of "a wizard form,/ Dark as the Demon of the Storm" (T, 71-72) and discovers amongst the demons accompanying the wizard form "a beauteous Maid" (T, 65), which he naturally wishes to

¹⁹³ Or graysexual; when one experiences sexual attraction only after emotional and/or romantic attachment.

¹⁹⁴ The imagery of the mermaid in folklore is associated with the killing of their partner (cf. Atargatis), causing storms and shipwrecks, as well as eroticism and seduction.

save. What makes this seemingly classic sweep-in-and-save-the-princess tale slightly different are the following stanzas:

There saw the Knight with horror, laid,
Fair as the morn, a beauteous Maid,
 The prey of tortures dire,
From whose blue eyes incessant flow
The briny tears, whose lips of snow
And cheeks that burn with hectic glow
 Bespeak internal fire.

Close by her side, a wizard form,
Dark as the Demon of the Storm,
 In awful silence stood:
And from her breast of swan-like hue,
Deep-pierced, a shining thread she drew,
And while she wound the magic clue,
 Thus hail'd the impious brood. (T, 64-77)

Hoole blends the identities of the maid and the wizard form by introducing them together and by employing a confusing use of pronouns: the "breast of swan-like hue" (T, 74) must refer to the maiden, since the wizard form is dark, and the one "wound[ing] the magic clue" (T, 76) must be the wizard form. Grammatically speaking, however, the referents she/her do not apply to the correct figure. Adding to the confusion is the poet's description of the wizard form as exactly that; a wizard, not a witch, which would be more common for a female figure.

The obscured lines between the maiden and the wizard form suggest two options of interpretation. On the one hand, the wizard form could be a projection of the maiden's wish for empowerment, an interpretation which is reinforced by the wizard form's speech following this excerpt, in which she claims that the demons are "[s]laves of [her] potent word" (T, 78) and that she reigns supreme, and her tears which "[b]espeak of internal fire" (T, 70). Be that as it may, this would mean that the "yawning cave" (T, 18) filled with "[t]en thousand sprites" (T, 25) is part of this projection, which seems arguable. On the other hand, the maiden could be a hex set to lure the knight into the wizard form's lair. After all, even though the knight claims the maiden will "[t]o life, to bliss, to love restored" (T, 128), the poem ends before the

reader finds out whether or not the knight and his cargo escape. In either interpretation, the wizard form and the maiden are in league to enthrall the knight and not only avoid the traditional female passivity, but also seem to evade punishment for taking on female agency.

The ballad form was a "transitional genre - part oral, part written,"¹⁹⁵ both traditional and innovative. The ballad's traditional qualities came from its ties to the past and to folklore, and it was considered innovative due to its association of the gothic ballad "with free-thinking, political sedition, and threateningly new forms of social and religious reforms."¹⁹⁶ Especially the redefined socially and religiously acceptable gives the poet an opening to introduce sexual transgression, not the least in the Gothic's favourite scapegoat: Catholicism. In 'The Nun', Bannerman combines the typical gothic anti-Catholicism with "the sexual ambiguities of revenant ballads."¹⁹⁷

In this poem, Bannerman introduces a nun "[i]mmured for ever in [a] living tomb" (N, 3). The nun, being the lyrical I, speaks directly to the reader, and thus compels to the reader's compassion. Bannerman's nun reminds the reader of the bleeding nun in Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*. This figure is bipolar in many ways; she appears as a guide and simultaneously as a murderess, observes Joseph Andriano,¹⁹⁸ and she symbolises a "transcendence of female identity" while "blood, sign of life and death, and of the female capacity to give both, stains her garments."¹⁹⁹ Like Lewis's bleeding nun, Bannerman's nun "recognized her own desires,"²⁰⁰ but did she act upon them? The nun's apparent desire for her sister chimes through the excerpts addressing the "sister of [her] soul" (N, 13), through a sensuous repetition of s-sounds, as well as the insistence on broken heart imagery (e.g.: "The scorpion anguish stung me to the heart" (N, 20); "No gush of sorrow eased my swelling heart" (N, 26)). The nun reiterates the "faithful love" (N, 99) which made her "resign/ Each glowing vision of a youthful mind" (N, 99-100) and emulates the contrition an eloper might feel when she exclaims:

O! mid the varied woes, that heap thy shrine,
May none e'er pay an offering like mine!

¹⁹⁵ Hoeveler, Diane Long. *Gothic Riffs: Secularizing the Uncanny in the European Imaginary, 1780-1820*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2010. 163. Henceforth: Hoeveler, Riffs.

¹⁹⁶ Hoeveler, Riffs, 169.

¹⁹⁷ Cracuin, Spinstrelsy, 214.

¹⁹⁸ Andriano, Joseph. *Our Ladies of Darkness: Feminine Daemonology in Male Gothic Fiction*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 1993. 41. Henceforth: Andriano.

¹⁹⁹ Both; Williams, 119.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

May none e'er covet thy bewitching joys!
Hard is the purchase, and unwise the choice
One blissful tear thro' rapture's channel flows,
And thousands stream o'er wounds which never close. (N, 133-138)

Furthermore, whereas Lewis's nun is punished for her indiscretions by becoming a bleeding nun without being interred, Bannerman's nun is buried alive. This may have to do with the gravity of their respective sins; while Lewis's nun "had been a monstrously evil woman, an adulteress and murderess,"²⁰¹ Bannerman's nun 'only' cherished an unfulfilled incestuous love. However, both women are "uncontrollable female[s] [...] torn between masculine spirit and the desires of the female flesh" and their "status as specter is appropriate: how else may the possibility of female desire be represented [in a patriarchal society]?"²⁰²

Apart from proclaiming the Gothic ballad as *the* form of verse to talk about "seduced nuns, [and] malicious monks,"²⁰³ Hoeveler furthermore emphasises its engagement with "premodern superstitions like demon-possession and the material reality of ghosts."²⁰⁴ Such a material ghost figures in 'The Burgomaster's Wife' by Pearson. The narrative of the ballad tells the story of a presumably deceased wife who leaves behind an unloving husband who "oft had wish'd his lady well,/ In some far better place" (BW, 17-19). After being interred in the family's vault, "[t]he Sexton kept the key" (BW, 24), which he promptly uses to break into the vault after the funeral, not only to steal the riches buried with the Wife, but also "to take a private view" (BW, 26). When the sexton opens the coffin, however, he does not find the expected passive female, but "Madam tries to rise!" (BW, 30) and thus takes agency. Even though the Wife is an active agent, she is not rational or calculated - like Bannerman's Mermaid or Spirit of the Air - as much as that "[h]er strength is reviv'd by fear" (BW, 33). The Wife namely acts out of self-preservation, or the preservation of her virtue, which is stressed when she "[c]all'd loudly on her Dear" (BW, 36). Her dear, however, is not thrilled by her return, and acknowledge her as his wife only after she proves her identity through supernatural means. (When the Burgomaster says: "I wou'd as soon believ my mares/ Are dancing rigadoons up stairs,/ As that you are my Wife" (BW, 70-73), the Wife conjures "in the garret, lo, his mares/ Giving themselves all sorts of airs" (BW, 76-77).) For the remainder

²⁰¹ Andriano, 43.

²⁰² Both; Williams, 119.

²⁰³ Hoeveler, Riffs, 163.

²⁰⁴ Ibid, 166.

of the ballad, the Wife takes on a passive role again, which does not hinder her to exert a certain stretch of power until her ultimate death seven years later, after which she "[w]ou'd ne'er again come back to knock/ Her Husband up at any o'clock,/ But *left him free to marry*" (my italics; BW, 118-120).

The link between desire and sexual transgression and (political) power is very strong in gothic texts, especially female figures are telling figures in this respect, since they betoken the Other. These female figures are usually presented in a binary view of a patriarchal image of a good woman on the one hand and that of a wicked woman on the other, both defined by their sexual honour; if that honour is sullied, the female figure is inevitably confounded to the stereotype of the wicked woman. Gothic texts offer the writer - poet or otherwise - the opportunity to challenge these stereotypes of gender and sexuality by offering up female figures which defy the stereotype of the passive female by having them take female agency. Male gothic writers tended to maintain punishing wicked women with suffering or death and rewarding good women with marriage and were apt to employ *belles dames* and *femmes fatales* as stock characters representing moral degradation, while female gothic writers, Bannerman especially, examined these stereotypes and created female figures which both embraced their active role in the plot and came out the victor.

4. Terrorising Texts: Sublimity in Gothic Poetry

"In vain to quit the chilling Porch,
The awe-struck Sheperd tries,
His wither'd nerves had lost all power,
Wild terror stretch'd his eyes."

- from 'The Vigil of St. Mark' by Sarah Pearson

In her essay 'On the Supernatural in Poetry' (1826), Ann Radcliffe talks about "circumstances which excite forlorn, melancholy, and solemn feelings"²⁰⁵ or, in other words, the sublime. In this chapter, I will reconstruct said sublime and its components as the transmuted concept most commonly adopted in gothic poetry – and especially the gothic poetry of Bannerman, Pearson, and Hoole. Secondly, I will show how these different sources of the sublime manifest themselves in Gothic poetry, and illustrate this using the works of the aforementioned poets. The circumstances of the sublime, as phrased by Fred Botting, have the following effects:

Gothic terrors activate a sense of the unknown and project an uncontrollable and overwhelming power which threatens not only the loss of sanity, honour, property or social standing but the very order which supports and is regulated by the coherence of those terms.²⁰⁶

The tension between a threatening environment and the protagonist's will to survive is so characteristic of many gothic texts, whether they be poetry or prose, and owes much to a sublime atmosphere which allows us to "indulge in that strange mixture of horror, pity, and indignation."²⁰⁷ This atmosphere is in its turn built up out of carefully selected words and phrasings, the setting, and the psychology of the poem's figures, with most emphasis on diction and setting. The central position taken by characters in novels or short stories shifts to the latter, which often serves as a metaphor for the sentiments of the poem's subject, as we will see further on.

²⁰⁵ Radcliffe, Ann. 'On the Supernatural in Poetry', *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* 16.1 (1826). 149. Henceforth: Radcliffe.

²⁰⁶ Botting, Fred. *Gothic*. London: Routledge (1996). 7. Henceforth: Botting.

²⁰⁷ Radcliffe, 149.

In "first-phase Gothic aesthetics,"²⁰⁸ the sublime is predominantly modelled on the so-called 'Burkean' sublime, or the notion of the sublime as developed in Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757). Even though the notion of the sublime explicated in this work is one of philosophical aesthetics, it later evolved into literary poetics. Rodolphe Gasché writes in the essay collection *The Sublime: From Antiquity to the Present* that Burke's debt to the preceding British thinkers is great, yet that it does not stop Burke from setting his work off from earlier "neo-classical principles,"²⁰⁹ and thereby Gasché reminds us that we have to read Burke's theory as one in the middle of an ongoing dialogue; with figures as Longinus antedating him and others, like Immanuel Kant, following him. Karl Axelsson discusses Thomas Burnett in his *The Sublime: Precursors and British Eighteenth-Century Conceptions*. Burnett was a theorist who published his treatise almost a century before Burke's; *Telluris Theoria Sacra* was published in 1681 (translated to English in 1684), and shared many parallels with Burke's work. Seventy-six years later, the immense popularity of Burke's theory caused it to be repeatedly reworked, as did the notions of the sublime from other theorists, and the Burkean sublime also integrated its motifs into the cultural literary heritage.

Even though Burke was not the first to write on the sublime, his treatise is most often referred to as the most influential for the notion of the sublime in English literature, and especially literature of terror. Botting states that "Gothic [literature] signified a trend towards an aesthetics [...] associated primarily with the sublime,"²¹⁰ and David Punter calls Burke's theory central to gothic literature as the first attempt "to systematise a connection between sublimity and terror."²¹¹ Burke popularised the discourse of the sublime, and "caught the attention not only of his British but also of his French and German contemporaries."²¹² August Wilhelm Schlegel, for instance, criticised Burke for reducing the beautiful to a "mechanistic effect."²¹³ Burke's popularity is reflected in secondary sources engaging with his *Inquiry*, as well as in later attempts by other artists to grasp the sublime.

²⁰⁸ Powell, Anna, and Andrew Smith. *Teaching the Gothic*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. 12. Henceforth: Powell.

²⁰⁹ Qtd in Costelloe, Timothy M., ed. *The Sublime: From Antiquity to the Present*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012. 24. Henceforth: Costelloe.

²¹⁰ Botting, 3.

²¹¹ Punter, David. *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day*. London: Longmans, 1980. 44. Henceforth: Punter, Literature.

²¹² Costelloe, 25.

²¹³ *Ibid*, 26.

Radcliffe does the latter when she partakes in the discussion surrounding the ideas of 'Mr. Burke' in the essay quoted above, and especially with his idea of "[t]he union of grandeur and obscurity."²¹⁴ Anna Laetitia Aikin enters the discussion in 1773, when she published her essay 'On the Pleasure Derived from Objects of Terror, with Sir Bertrand, a Fragment'. Two other theorists are Uvedale Price and William Gilpin, the first of which who calls repeatedly on Burke's authority to strengthen his own arguments. Their focal points lie on the picturesque and the beautiful, and their role in landscape painting, rather than the sublime in philosophy or writing. This change in focus shows the diversity in which the discourse of the sublime branches off as well as its connection to other cultural concepts. As Timothy Costelloe writes in his introduction to *The Sublime: From the Antiquity to the Present*, the discourse of the sublime is not "irrelevant, irresponsible, nostalgic, poor, and weak - in a word, dead."²¹⁵ Academic works on the subject are numerous, with Philip Shaw's *The Sublime* (2006) for the New Critical Idiom and the aforementioned Axelsson (2007) as only two selections from the vast collection of recent studies.

Despite Burke's insistence on his treatise being a philosophical enquiry rather than a literary one, he devotes the entire fifth part of his theory to words, and more specifically, poetry. Whereas Gilpin focussed on (landscape) painting, Price centres his treatise around scenery, yet states that "to confine that study [of the beautiful, sublime, and picturesque] to scenery only, would [...] contract the mind."²¹⁶ Burke, then, asserts that words have "considerable a share in exciting ideas of beauty and of the sublime [...] and sometimes a much greater than any of [the visual arts]."²¹⁷ The detailed engagement with words and poetry pave the way to read Burke's treatise as not just a philosophical one, but also a literary one. The notion of the sublime's "dependence on the stuff of language,"²¹⁸ as Shaw phrases it, is nonetheless not a new one. John Dennis, for instance, appraises the qualities of language as early as 1704,²¹⁹ and especially the language of poetry "because it is more passionate and sensual"²²⁰ than prose. Other theorists to acknowledge, even before Burke's treatise, that

²¹⁴ Radcliffe, 150.

²¹⁵ Costelloe, 1.

²¹⁶ Price, Uvedale. *An Essay on the Picturesque, as Compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful: And, on the Use of Studying Pictures, for the Purpose of Improving Real Landscape*. London: J. Robson, 1794. Vi. Henceforth: Price.

²¹⁷ Burke, Edmund. *A Philosophical Inquiry into Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. N.p.: Digireads Publishing, 2009. 83. Henceforth: Burke.

²¹⁸ Shaw, Philip. *The Sublime*. London: Routledge (2006). 29. Henceforth: Shaw.

²¹⁹ In 1704, Dennis published *The Grounds of Criticism*, which starts "with an invocation of the Longian notion of poetry" (Shaw, 31).

²²⁰ Qtd in Shaw, 31.

"sublime qualities [...] are derived not from objects, but rather from the ideas we 'annex' to objects"²²¹ were John Baillie and Joseph Priestly. However, not only theorists abided by the sublime power of language; John Milton, too, "identified [the sublime] with the transformational power of language."²²²

The sublime is the strongest emotion we can feel, and its origin is anything that "excite[s] the ideas of pain and danger,"²²³ or suggests the idea of death. Therefore, what stands central in his theory is fear or terror. Burke defines fear as "an apprehension of pain or death,"²²⁴ and everything which – directly or indirectly – contributes to that fear is also a source of the sublime. Price remarks the difficulty with which one could "conceive any set of objects, to which, however grand in themselves, an addition of terror would not give a higher degree of sublimity."²²⁵ Radcliffe also agrees with this conceptualisation of the sublime caused by "a sort of tranquillity tinged with terror,"²²⁶ and continues to discuss the distinction between terror and horror in her essay 'On the Supernatural in Poetry'. Whereas terror "expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life,"²²⁷ horror "freezes human faculties, rendering the mind passive and immobilising the body."²²⁸ This distinction is in part a moral one, since terror "suggest[s] the power of a divine order,"²²⁹ where horror leaves "the mortal subject"²³⁰ irreparably damaged. Botting calls horror the cause of the 'negative sublime': it is "the response to an excess that cannot be transcended."²³¹

According to E.J. Clery, Aikin deems the delight in terror a way to escape "humdrum reality,"²³² to cure indifference of mind with "artificial terror as a remedy."²³³ The pleasure derived from terror, however, is less easily defined, as it "seems to present a real paradox. The evidence for it is universal yet difficult to explain."²³⁴ In her essay, Aikin first acknowledges

²²¹ Shaw, 43.

²²² Ibid, 33.

²²³ Burke, 23.

²²⁴ Ibid, 32.

²²⁵ Price, 120.

²²⁶ Radcliffe, 150.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Botting, 75.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Clery, E.J. *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*. Cambridge: CUP, 1996. 81. Henceforth: Clery, Supernatural.

²³³ Clery, Supernatural, 81.

²³⁴ Ibid, 80.

the immense popularity of "tales of ghosts and goblins"²³⁵ and the imprint they leave on the minds of the consumers. Later, however, she claims "that the avidity with which we attend [these texts] is not a proof of our receiving real pleasure,"²³⁶ and continues thus:

The pain of suspense, and the irresistible desire of satisfying curiosity, when once raised, for our eagerness to go quite through an adventure, though we suffer actual pain during the whole course of it. We rather chuse to suffer the smart pang of a violent emotion than the uneasy craving of an unsatisfied desire.²³⁷

The aspect of texts of terror Aikin stresses is therefore not the uplifting qualities of fear on the mind, but the driving force of curiosity; "Passion and Fancy co-operating elevate the soul to its highest pitch, and the pain of terror is lost in amazement."²³⁸

The importance of obscurity to enhance terror is not only expressed by Aikin. Radcliffe raises this point as well when she writes that "[o]bscurity leaves something for the imagination to exaggerate,"²³⁹ or, as Price phrases it: "its partial concealments, it excites that active curiosity."²⁴⁰ When parts of the image are left to the reader's imagination, when it is, in Radcliffe's words "seen in glimpses through obscuring shades,"²⁴¹ the reader feels a persistent uncertainty as to the magnitude of the danger they are in. Vice versa, the terror is considerably decreased when the partially concealed cause of peril comes into full view, according to Burke.²⁴² Radcliffe adds another important distinction to the discussion of obscurity, much like she insisted on a differentiation between terror and horror; videlicet "the discrimination between the effects of obscurity and confusion."²⁴³ Whereas obscurity the absence of distinctness (and therefore a negative concept), "confusion is a thing as positive as distinctness,"²⁴⁴ states Radcliffe. It throws the mind into a state of chaos, rendering it

²³⁵ Aikin, Anna Letitia. "The Pleasure Derived from Objects of Terror; with Sir Bertrand: A Fragment." *An Anthology of the Short Story in 18th and 19th Century America*. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2000. 387. Henceforth: Aikin.

²³⁶ Aikin, 388.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid, 389.

²³⁹ Radcliffe, 151.

²⁴⁰ Price, 106.

²⁴¹ Radcliffe, 151.

²⁴² Burke, 32.

²⁴³ Botting, 74.

²⁴⁴ Radcliffe, 151.

unproductive and unable "to overcome, transcend even, its fears and doubts."²⁴⁵ Terror, the product of obscurity, per contra, "enabl[es] the subject to move from a state of passivity to activity."²⁴⁶ Obscurity, in other words, allows the subject agency.

More concretely applied to texts, Burke uses 'obscurity' in the metaphorical sense of the word, viz. concealment, vagueness, and ambiguity. Later in his treatise, nevertheless, he mentions darkness and "[e]xtreme light"²⁴⁷ as additional motifs which inspire terror, since both cause darkness, albeit that the latter causes temporary darkness. Burke's first main category, literal darkness as well as obscurity in idea, occur in abundance in gothic poetry. Obscurity in idea is reflected in every sinister mystery: men governed by "some unknown Power" (VSM, 27) leading them to graveyards at midnight, enigmatic knights producing "groans, and shrieks more than human" (MK, 79) and leaving naught but "sulphureous airs" (MK, 118) behind, wives confounded to "Cave[s] of Death" (BW, 40), mistresses transformed into "terrific form[s]" (i.e., a mermaid's; OII, 19), &c.

Observe for instance 'The Vigil of St-Mark' by Pearson. In this poem, the bulk of the action takes place "in the deep midnight" (VSM, 33). Even though "Spring's sweet reign" (VSM, 2) is already announced in the first stanza, a dejected atmosphere fills the air of the poem when Midnight is personified in the very next line: "Midnight in the tranquil skies,/ Sits veil'd in lighter gloom" (VSM, 14-15). This continues in the second stanza, with the creek that creeps "[s]low thro' the Vale" (VSM, 5), blindly and silently ("No light is seen, no sound is heard" (VSM, 7)). Pearson reminds the reader of this darkness on regular intervals, with phrasings like "deep involving shades" (VSM, 15), "dusky Vale" (VSM, 32), "Mysterious Twelve [...] toll'd" (VSM, 46), "[t]hat mystic Midnight" (VSM, 59).

In 'The Mysterious Knight', also by Pearson, the reader encounters a similar dependence on "midnight's black bosom" (MK, 74). The source of the distress, the shrieks from the knight's room, is "collected in darkness, and fright" (MK, 86) and is contrasted with "the next morning's light" (MK, 89), which ends the "longer suspense" (MK, 112).²⁴⁸ Pearson, however, is not the only Gothic poet to use darkness or flashes of light to create a sublime atmosphere. Bannerman also sprinkles her writing with images of "lightning's forked flame"

²⁴⁵ Botting, 74.

²⁴⁶ Botting, 74-75.

²⁴⁷ Burke, 44.

²⁴⁸ The figure of the mysterious knight was discussed in more detail in chapter one, 'V for Violence and Vice' (page 17f).

(OI, 11), and literal obscurity (e.g. "darker low'rs the thickning gloom" (OII, 25); "darkness shrouds the skies" (G, 95); "incumbent night" (N, 75)).

After obscurity, Burke remarks a second manner in which one increases terror, or the presence of power, often manifested in a powerful entity. Since this entity has the ability to inflict pain or even death on the subject, it "suggests the idea of danger,"²⁴⁹ thus causing terror. It is important to note that Burke alludes to uncontrollable power, which he exemplifies with the opposition of the strong, unmanageable wolf versus the strong, useful dog.²⁵⁰ A similar remark is made by Baillie in his 'Essay on the Sublime' (1747), when he says that "our idea of power is more or less sublime, as the power itself is more or less extended,"²⁵¹ and in the sublime, according to Botting, that power was "great, if not divine."²⁵² The same sense of a dangerous entity of power returns in Burke's notion of difficulty, with which he refers to works which necessitate "immense force."²⁵³ Although Burke does not fully explain why these constructions inspire terror in the subject, one can assume that he alludes to the terrorising presence of an entity powerful enough to create said works.

In the poetry of Bannerman, then, this presence of an entity of superior power is abundant. 'The Genii', featuring in her opening poem for the collection *Poems*, are for instance "[a]wful", "terrific kings" (G; 1 & 197). Interesting in this regard is Price's remark that "[t]he most sublime passage (according to [Price's] opinion) in Virgil, *or perhaps in any other poet*, is that magnificent personification of the thunderstorm."²⁵⁴ "The sea," Price continues, "is at all times a grand object; need I say how much that grandeur is increased by the violence of another element?"²⁵⁵ and then proceeds to enlist a number of examples by which the ocean's grandeur can be enhanced into sublimity. In 'The Genii', the devils control the sky and the seas and cause storms with their "fateful powers" (G, 49). Even though they seem omnipotent (and are called "[a]ll powerful"; G, 67), the narrator relates how the Genii fled at the sight of "the Son of Heaven" (G, 31), whereupon "the swelling ocean gave/ Her cells to shroud, and op'd the clifted cave" (G, 35-36) in order for them to escape. After the Fall of Man ("that awful hour of terror [...] When Man retreated from his Maker's eye" (G, 37-

²⁴⁹ Burke, 35.

²⁵⁰ Ibid, 37.

²⁵¹ Baillie, John. "An Essay on the Sublime (1747)." *The Sublime: A Reader in British Eighteenth-century Aesthetic Theory*. Ed. Andrew Ashfield and Peter De Bolla. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996. 93. Henceforth: Baillie.

²⁵² Botting, 39.

²⁵³ Burke, 42.

²⁵⁴ My italics; Price, 116.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

39)), the devils regain "their primeval sway" (G, 43) and reclaimed the power over the elements, lavishing their rage when they wreak destruction (cf. G, 45-48). They have become "malignant tyrants" who again are "thron'd in terrors" (G; 287 & 3).

In 'Ode I: The Spirit of the Air', there are two instances of power. One is the Spirit itself, which I discussed in detail in the first chapter on violence and vice. The second powerful entity in especially Bannerman's poetry is the wind. The wind is almost personified as a part of the Spirit, as it "sweep[s],/ Resistless" (OI, 1-2) and makes mischief with the ocean ("the wild ocean's heaving waves/ Boil"(OI, 61-62)). In the last line, the wind is even made plural to emphasise its destructive force (e.g.: "the roaring winds" (OI, 51)), even though it "contend[s] at my [the Spirit's] feet" (OI, 102); the Spirit is clearly its superior. Other phrasings emphasise not only the wind's annihilating power, yet also its endurance ("long and loud the tempest raves"; OI, 63). Furthermore, the lyrical I foreshadows torment and death on several occasions, especially in stanza four, where she threatens to haunt the seamen, and stanza seven, where she witnesses a shipwreck in which "each fainting form" "sink[s] and die[s]" (OI; 67 & 70).

The reader finds a similar situation in 'Ode II: The Mermaid'. Again, there are two instances of power: the mermaid, which I treated extensively in the chapter on eroticism (see page 34f), and the elements. The powerful element central in this poem, however, is the ocean, and, as Gilpin says, "[n]othing can be more sublime, than the ocean."²⁵⁶ According to the descriptions, the ocean evolves from "the troubled waves" (OII, 4) through "this unbounded waste of seas" shot with "the icy surge" (OII; 16 & 20), to "the dark and angry deep" (OII, 31) and lastly "the ocean's boiling flood" (OII, 45). Nevertheless, even though the wind plays a significantly smaller role here, it is not merely set aside. The lyrical I namely starts with addressing the wind as "ye death-fraught whirlwinds!"(OII, 1) and continues to point it out as "the wild wind, with awful sweep" (OII, 33) and "[t]he raging winds and billows" (OII, 58). The wind and the ocean are often intertwined, for example in this passage: "the turbid deep/ Groans to the raging tempests, as they roll/ Their desolating force, to thunder at the pole" (OII, 8-10).

²⁵⁶ Gilpin, William. *Three Essays: on Picturesque Beauty; on Picturesque Travel; and on Sketching Landscape: to Which is Added a Poem, on Landscape Painting*. London: R. Blamire (1794). 43.

Apart from obscurity and greatness in strength, Burke also values "greatness in dimension"²⁵⁷ as awe-inspiring. The first type he names is vastness, with depth as the most potent extension, and "a rugged and broken surface"²⁵⁸ as an enhancing characteristic. In Price's essay, which is partially a reworking and explication of Burke's treatise, he names 'greatness of dimension' as a "powerful cause of the sublime,"²⁵⁹ emphasising in a footnote how he "by no means would lay too much stress on greatness of dimension"²⁶⁰ if it were not of grave importance, while simultaneously calling on Burke's authority to lend his argument more credibility. Burnet already mentioned the importance of "[t]he greatest objects of Nature,"²⁶¹ "and how they fill and, ultimately, even overbear the mind."²⁶² The last contemporary essayist I will draw in here, is Baillie, who contends that "nothing produces this elevation [like] large prospects, vast extended views, mountains, the heavens, and an immense ocean," eventually concluding this section of the essay with the statement that it is "the vastness of these objects which elevates us."²⁶³

After discussing the greatness of dimension, Burke continues with infinity,²⁶⁴ or seeming infinity, as the superlative to vastness. The seeming, or artificial, infinity can be achieved by a succession of large uniform objects, such as mountains. Whereas Burke does not emphasise the importance of landscapes, Radcliffe does. According to her, an agreement between scenery, and characters and story assists the sublime atmosphere if the latter reflect "mischief of [...] malignant beings."²⁶⁵ Radcliffe furthermore advises "a more gloomy tint"²⁶⁶ to enhance the landscape's sublimity instead of the light of day. In sublime architecture, Burke similarly remarks that it must obey "greatness in dimension,"²⁶⁷ which is repeated by Price as well. Lastly, Burke discusses magnificence, or an opulence of valuable objects, where number and apparent disorder contribute to the splendour.

Sublime vastness is in Gothic poetry often reflected in expansive plains of land or water, in the dizzying height of the mountains or the astounding depths of a cliff. Large

²⁵⁷ Burke, 39.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Price, 99.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Burnet, Thomas. *The Sacred Theory of the Earth*. London: Centaur Press (1965). 109.

²⁶² Axelsson, Karl. *The Sublime: Precursors and British Eighteenth Century Conceptions*. Bern: Peter Lang, 2007. 137.

²⁶³ Both; Baillie, 88.

²⁶⁴ Burke, 40.

²⁶⁵ Radcliffe, 147.

²⁶⁶ Ibid, 148.

²⁶⁷ Burke, 42.

bodies of water take up an important role in the poetry of Bannerman, usually as violent, hostile entities. Take for example 'Ode I: The Spirit of the Air' and 'Ode II: The Mermaid', which are discussed above. Due to the nature of these instances of vastness, magnificence is included; the small specks of foam, the discrepancies in the water's surface, the chaotic movement of the water droplets, together they form "[a] great profusion of things [...] splendid [...] in themselves."²⁶⁸

A fourth major category in Burke's theory concerns sound. The first source of terror – or rather bewilderment – related to sound is "[e]xcessive loudness,"²⁶⁹ which suspends the working of the mind by causing a (temporary) overload of the senses. Secondly, Burke mentions the cries of (wo)men or animals in pain or anger.²⁷⁰ Their terror-striking quality lies in the association of a lamenting bawl or exacerbated howl with the origin of their pain or anger. Thirdly, Burke introduces a seemingly paradoxical pair. He places the "sudden beginning, or sudden cessation of sound"²⁷¹ opposite of the "low, tremulous, intermitting sound."²⁷² Burk clarifies that the first constituent implies a heightening in attention, making the subject start, whereas the second constituent causes a troublesome anxiety. Furthermore, Burke mentions privation,²⁷³ with which he emphasises the importance of darkness or obscurity, of vacuity or spaciousness, and of silence, but also of solitude. However, Burke does not explain the latter, which is easily rejected as is shown in 'Lines, Composed while Climbing Some Rocks in Derbyshire' by Hoole. Lastly, he brings up excessive bitterness and intolerable stench,²⁷⁴ yet with very little conviction. The attentive reader will notice that these last two triggers are not present in the poetry here used for exemplification, and are very rare elsewhere.

The screeching of owls is a very popular device in Gothic poetry to create a gloomy atmosphere, considering that owls are regarded as birds of ill-omen. This returns in Bannerman's 'Sonnet V: To the Owl' ("thy sullen wailings" and "thy discordant scream", 'thy' referring to the owl (SV, 4 and 6)), but also in Hoole's 'Elegiac Lines Composed on the Ruins of Roche Abbey' ("Join night's dull bird in sorrow's plaintive moan" (EL, 30)). The screams of animals (which include those of humans) also play an important role in 'The Mysterious

²⁶⁸ Burke, 43.

²⁶⁹ Ibid, 45.

²⁷⁰ Ibid, 47.

²⁷¹ Ibid, 44.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Ibid, 39.

²⁷⁴ Ibid, 47.

Knight', as they are the main cause that brings the mystery to the knowledge of Lord Zolenski. The cries coming from his room are alike those "[e]xprest by the demons of mischief" (MK, 84) startle the guests and "make the warm blood in their veins cease to thrill" (MK, 109). The sudden cessation of the "yells still more hideous" (MK, 108) is followed by "sulphureous airs" (MK, 18) and "letters of Blood" (MK, 120), with which Pearson creates a spine-chilling open ending to her narrative poem.

In Bannerman's poetry, it is the turbulence of the storm which is employed for the sublime quality of sounds. In 'Ode I: The Spirit of the Air', the description of the overwhelming noise of the wind and sea is restricted to the occasional phrasing "roaring winds" (OI, 102), although it lingers in the background as a side effect of the storm. In 'Ode II: The Mermaid', however, "shrieks of anguish fill the sky" (OII, 48) and a mast crashes down on the ship (OII, 35). Nevertheless, not only the victims are audible in this poem; the mermaid "pour[s] the syren-song of woe;/ Like the sad mariner's expiring cry" (OII, 29-30) and thus lures her victims in. Either the protagonist warns against the Spirit or the Spirit fortifies her song when it "[h]owls in each fitful swell—Beware!" (OII, 34), depending on whether you interpret 'Beware!' as an exclamation of the Spirit itself or of the narrator.

Notwithstanding all these categories, a sublime atmosphere is impossible without a sense of fear, as I discussed above, even when a poem possesses all the other characteristics to a certain degree. Hoole's sonnet 'Lines, Composed while Climbing Some Rocks in Derbyshire' is one of those poems possessing these sources of the sublime, with the exception of fear, and demonstrates that Gothic poetry needs "images of violence and excessive passion."²⁷⁵ The use of sonnets is not unusual in Gothic poetry; look at for instance Bannerman, who produced many original and translated sonnets. In Hoole's sonnet, the main focus is vastness: in length, it looks out on "the meads below" (LD, 4); in height before the lyrical I has climbed "the mighty mountain" (LD, 2); and in depth when she²⁷⁶ has "dare[d] the threatening height" (LD, 10). The surface of the mountain is "rugged" (LD, 5) and "moss-clad" (LD, 8), and strewn with "hoary rocks" (LD, 1). Furthermore, a low threat exists between the lines. The mountain has "batter'd sides" (LD, 5), which suggests exposure to the violent elements. The sky is dark and magnificent ("th' empurpled clouds [tinged] with golden light" (LD, 12)). The "unfrequented dells" (LD, 6) and "pathless tracks" (LD, 9) imply privation of society, solitude. In spite of the poem's apparent potential for the sublime, the

²⁷⁵ Botting, 63.

²⁷⁶ I assume that the poem draws on Barbara Hoole's personal life and consequently that the lyrical I is female.

awe present in it is contested by the occasional insertion of vocabulary with positive connotations, like "smiling" (LD, 3) and "love" (LD, 5). This only foreshadows the lines after the volta, in which the mountain's "dread powers" (LD, 13) soothe the lyrical I, and instead of evoking anguish, it eases her.

By way of a preliminary conclusion, we can state that gothic poetry draws on many of the categories mentioned in the discourse of the sublime. The most prominent characteristic is not surprisingly that of darkness and obscurity, which is repeated as a source time and again by theorists like Price, Aikin, and writers like Radcliffe. Obscurity is present to a certain degree in every poem, yet claims a very important role in poems as 'The Vigil of St Mark' and 'The Mysterious Knight', both by Pearson. Burke's second category, power, is also abundantly present and can be found in the theoretical works of Baillie and Price, among others. Power can take the form of supernatural apparitions, as Genii in 'The Genii', or as purely natural forces, as the wind in 'Ode I: The Spirit of the Air' and the wind and the ocean in 'Ode II: The Mermaid', all written by Bannerman. Thirdly, Burke mentions greatness in dimension, which again comes back in various other theoretical works, such as that of Baillie and Radcliffe. In poetry, we find it across the work of Bannerman, and more especially in 'Ode I: The Spirit of the Air' and 'Ode II: The Mermaid'. In Burke's fourth category, sound, we find cries of owls in 'Sonnet V: To the Owl' by Bannerman and in 'Elegiac Lines Composed in the Ruins of Roche Abbey' by Hoole, and human cries in 'The Mysterious Knight' by Pearson and in Bannerman's 'Ode I'. Other types of sounds, like the turmoil of the ocean, a crashing ship, and so on, can be found in 'Ode I' as well, along with many other poems by Bannerman.

As we saw in 'Lines Composed Whilst Climbing Some Rocks in Derbyshire' by Hoole, the mere presence of these characteristics does not guarantee a sublime atmosphere. This poem in particular shows how characteristics as vastness only work as amplifiers which need an original feeling of terror to strengthen. The sublime in gothic poetry thus can be said to boil down to terror and how to express it in as many different forms as possible. As Radcliffe states in her essay, not only rude forms or evoking primitive imagery, yet also emotions such as solitude and melancholy, and elaborate metaphors are used as tools "to heighten the effect of [the sublime]."²⁷⁷

²⁷⁷ Radcliffe, 147.

5. Forms of the Uncanny and Forms of Verse

"And now while they rapidly gain'd on his flight,
While their valor by exercise grew,
In the heat of the chase they were join'd by a knight,
His beaver was up, and his armour was white,
And his features were pallid to view."
- from 'The Mysterious Knight' by Sarah Pearson

After the various forms of excess and transgression which were the subject of the preceding chapters, the central subjects of this chapter are forms of the uncanny that can be found in gothic poetry and the forms of verse in which they are conveyed to the reader. Fred Botting emphasises the importance of "the disturbing return of pasts upon presents,"²⁷⁸ which serves as the perfect segue from excess into the uncanny, especially when we draw in David Punter's words that "[w]ithin this excess, repetition is all"²⁷⁹ when talking about the uncanny in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' (1798). Punter herewith stresses the importance of form in poetry, when dealing with the uncanny; poems are "haunted by repetitions - by repetitions of lines, of figures and, above all of rhyme."²⁸⁰

By far the most influential essay on the uncanny is Sigmund Freud's 'Das Unheimliche' (1919), which sparked an interesting discourse which continues to this day. In this discussion of the uncanny, I will rely on Freud's essay, as well as Nicholas Royle's *The Uncanny*. As Punter pointed out in his discussion of 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', form plays an important role in the uncanny, and therefore I will also explore the form of uncanny verse. For this discussion, I will use works such as the essay 'Romantic Spinstrelsy: Anne Bannerman and the Sexual Politics of the Ballad' by Adriana Cracuin from *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism* and *Gothic Riffs* by Diane Long Hoeveler.

The first thing Freud says about the uncanny, is that it is "that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well-known and had long been familiar,"²⁸¹ which promptly reminds us of the repetition mentioned earlier. The sense of repetition comes into focus in Freud's essay when he talks about a succession of events as an uncanny effect

²⁷⁸ Botting, Fred. *Gothic*. London: Routledge, 1996. 1. Henceforth: Botting.

²⁷⁹ Punter, David. "Shape and Shadow: On Poetry and the Uncanny." *A Companion to the Gothic*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000. 195. Henceforth: Punter, Uncanny.

²⁸⁰ Punter, Uncanny, 196.

²⁸¹ Freud, Sigmund. *The Uncanny*. Ed. Hugh Haughton. Trans. David McLintock. New York: Penguin, 2003. 124. Henceforth: Freud, Uncanny.

that increases in intensity if the intervals in between the event decrease,²⁸² even though he acknowledges that it "will perhaps not be acknowledged by everyone."²⁸³ With the mention of the status this 'species of the frightening' once had, Freud stresses the uncanny (*das Unheimliche*) as something that at one point "remain[ed] secret, hidden away, and has come into the open [again],"²⁸⁴ and ultimately as something just as ambivalent as *das Heimliche*, which is its own antonym in various ways.²⁸⁵

The uncanny is a concept robed in ambiguity, and the doubt surrounding its precise contours merely reinforces this uncertainty. Freud remarks that "we have particularly favourable conditions for generating feelings of the uncanny if intellectual uncertainty is aroused,"²⁸⁶ and returns to intellect, when he claims that the repression of so-called primitive ideas by the intellect or by education become sources of the uncanny. Freud poses that the omnipotence of thoughts is a primitive world view we have all gone through "in the course of our individual development."²⁸⁷ Upbringing and education repressed this "old *animistic* view of the world, a view characterized by the idea that the world was peopled with human spirits,"²⁸⁸ and according to Freud, this explains the ambivalence of *das Heimliche* as that which is familiar as well as that which is hidden. "[The] uncanny element is actually nothing new or strange," it is merely a resurfacing of "something that has been repressed."²⁸⁹ Freud explains the uncanny effect accompanying "anything to do with death, dead bodies, revenants, spirits and ghosts" as another consequence of the repression of "the primitive fear of the dead [which] is still so potent in us and ready to manifest itself if given any encouragement,"²⁹⁰ since the people experiencing this uncanny effect have surpassed (repressed) this primitive fear.

Objects that ought to be inanimate or humans who ought to be dead (and thus inanimate), yet are (or seem) not to be so, peak high on the list of uncanny effects; there are wax dolls which appear to live, "mirror-images, shadows, guardian spirits, the doctrine of the soul, and the fear of death."²⁹¹ The uncanny effect in these situations relies on "the idea of the

²⁸² Freud, *Uncanny*, 146.

²⁸³ *Ibid*, 143.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 132.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 134.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 140.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 147.

²⁸⁸ *His italics. Ibid.*

²⁸⁹ *Respectively; ibid*, 148 & 147.

²⁹⁰ *Respectively: ibid*, 148 & 149.

²⁹¹ *Ibid*, 142.

'double' (the *Doppelgänger*), in all its nuances and manifestations."²⁹² The uncanny effect of the double in its turn relies on confusion of identity, since one "may substitute the other's self for [their] own."²⁹³ This "monstrous double signifying duplicity and evil nature"²⁹⁴ became a recurring stock character in Gothic literature, alongside figures such as the Gothic villain, the *belle dame sans merci*, demons, and so on. Curiously, this doubling of the self used to serve as a protective measure, which echoes the ambivalence of *das Heimliche* when its meaning starts out as "familiar [...], dear and intimate," yet then doubles back on itself as "concealed, kept hidden, so that others do not get to know of it or about it and it is hidden from them."²⁹⁵

Furthermore, the uncanny blurs the line between reality and fantasy.²⁹⁶ Freud mentions a possible link between the uncanny and the supernatural later on in the essay, remarks Royle.²⁹⁷ Royle furthermore underlines that the uncanny does not equal the supernatural, but that it is merely suggestive of it, or associated with it. The uncanny effect which finds its source in the supernatural, or is closely linked with the supernatural, is caused by the "manifestation of forces [one] d[oes] not suspect in a fellow human being."²⁹⁸ This is channelled into attitudes towards "a living person [...] when we credit him with evil intent," "[s]evered limbs [...], especially when they are credited [...] with independent activity,"²⁹⁹ and madness. The blurring of the line between real and unreal enables the uncanny to flourish, as it "leave[s] the reader wondering."³⁰⁰

The knight in Pearson's poem 'The Mysterious Knight' is an excellent example of an uncanny figure. As a Faustian figure, the mysterious knight reminds the reader of "the doctrine of the soul and the fear of death," as well as "a manifestation of forces [one] [does] not suspect in a fellow human being,"³⁰¹ and, furthermore, has ties with the devil (i.e. the supernatural). A Faustian figure is a figure which traditionally sells their soul for boundless knowledge and/or power for a limited time, which usually leads to moral deterioration. The introduction of the mysterious knight to the reader happens *media res*, "[i]n the heat of the chase" (MK, 13). During the boar hunt, he demonstrates his riding and hunting skills and

²⁹² His italics. Ibid, 141.

²⁹³ Ibid, 142.

²⁹⁴ Botting, 2.

²⁹⁵ Respectively: Freud, *Uncanny*, 126 & 129.

²⁹⁶ Ibid, 150.

²⁹⁷ Royle, Nicholas. *The Uncanny*. New York: Routledge, 2003. 13. Henceforth: Royle.

²⁹⁸ Freud, *Uncanny*, 150.

²⁹⁹ Respectively; *ibid*, 149 & 150.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 135.

³⁰¹ Resepecgtively; *ibid*, 142 & 150.

"[w]as foremost in danger, and in sport" (MK, 20). Later, he displays his vast knowledge at the dinner table ("On each subject they talk'd he was perfectly skilled,/ His mind with all Science appear'd to be fill'd" (MK, 48-49)). "Long seduc'd by the charms of his converse" (MK, 41), however, the lord and knights are unaware of the knight's dark secret. Suspicion only forms when the guests hear "sounds so accurst/ Exprest by the demons of mischief worst" (MK, 84-85), and crystallises with the "sulphureous airs" (MK, 118) escaping the knight's room and "letters of Blood" (MK, 120) proclaiming the contract between the knight and the devil.

An association with the supernatural and the dealing of souls is not the only thing that is uncanny about the mysterious knight. Furthermore, he excites intellectual uncertainty in the reader; even the epithet 'mysterious' contributes to the conundrum surrounding the knight. The knight is "[u]nkown to the Baron, unknown to his friends" (MK, 21); his past is wrapped in mystery, his present is layered in ambiguity, and his future will be spent in the unknown depths of hell - probably. Despite that he seems to have cast off all secrecy when he "[u]nembarrass'd address[es] every wondering knight" (MK, 33), the mystery of the knight seeps back into the poem with his reluctance to withdraw from the company:

The reluctant, and last from the hall of the Feast
The knight in white armour withdrew;
And now half his faculties seem to have ceas'd,
In paleness and horror, his visage increas'd,
While it stream'd with a cold, deadly dew. (MK, 67-71)

The mystery returns in full force with the "[g]roans, and shrieks more than human" (MK, 80) coming from his room. The "caution so strange with cold horror bedew'd" (MK, 47) as a response to the other guests' queries reinforces the uncanny effect of the noise's disputed origins and their curiosity is rewarded with a "scene of confusion" (MK, 116) when the Lord of Zolenski discovers the knight's contract with the devil.

In the late eighteenth century, the ballad as a poetic form regained popularity and "helped shape canonical Romanticism's developing theories of genius, primitivism, and

authenticity,"³⁰² particularly in Scotland and northern England. The compatibility between gothic poetry, the uncanny, and the ballad shows in the dealings of all three with pasts, and is exemplified by the many "modern imitation Gothic ballads [which were] popular with contemporary readers."³⁰³ German ballads, especially those by Gottfried August Bürger, had great influence over gothic Anglo-Scottish ballads, with their "seduced nuns, abandoned mermaids, undead knights, and malicious monks."³⁰⁴ The peak of the gothic ballad's popularity lasted until the early nineteenth century, and was greatly damaged by the anti-Gothic sentiments expressed in William Wordsworth's preface to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*. Nevertheless, Hoeveler emphasises the discrepancy between Wordsworth's repudiation of the gothic mode and his "exploit[ation of] the techniques of gothic ballads with all their supernatural trappings."³⁰⁵

The ballad has connotations with the collective and folk,³⁰⁶ and ballad singers originally had to master "the patterns and systems of their poetic language."³⁰⁷ These things define the ballad as a form of tradition, with strong ties with the past. It is a "lower-class, plebian [sic] literary form, the literature of the *volk*."³⁰⁸ Hoeveler furthermore stresses its "heavy emphasis on the supernatural [...] and the uncanny."³⁰⁹ The gothic ballad as a form is inherently uncanny, if not due to pasts which haunt the present, then because of its position in transitional lingo between written and oral literature³¹⁰ or its fondness of repetition due to its oral origins and musical qualities.

'The Mysterious Knight' by Pearson combines many of the gothic ballad's characteristics with uncanny effects. Pearson composed this twenty-four stanzas long ballad after her work as a domestic, which only adds to the genius marking her work. Pearson employs her rhyme and metre schedule with skill, only diverging from this pre-imposed to emphasise important turns in the narrative.

³⁰² Craciun, Adriana. "Romantic Spinstrelsy: Anne Bannerman and the Sexual Politics of the Ballad." *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism*, ed. Leith Davis, Ian Duncan, and Janet Sorenson. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004. 204. Henceforth: Cracu, Spinstrelsy.

³⁰³ Cracu, Spinstrelsy, 206.

³⁰⁴ Hoeveler, Diane Long. *Gothic Riffs: Secularizing the Uncanny in the European Imaginary, 1780-1820*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2010. 163. Henceforth: Hoeveler, Riffs.

³⁰⁵ Hoeveler, Riffs, 168.

³⁰⁶ Cracu, Spinstrelsy, 206.

³⁰⁷ Atkinson, David. *The Anglo-Scottish Ballad and Its Imaginary Contexts*. N.p.: Open Book, 2014. 10.

³⁰⁸ Her italics. Hoeveler, Riffs, 169

³⁰⁹ Ibid, 172.

³¹⁰ Ibid, 163.

It is the metre which draws the curiosity of the reader to the form of this poem. It is built up from amphibrachs,³¹¹ which is already unusual in English poetry, and extremely so when used throughout long poems, for it is mostly used as an occasional variant on the anapaest. The last foot of the line is always broken off after the stressed syllable of the foot, each time ending the line with a decisive stress on the rhyme. The musical quality of this type of foot does not only add to the interpretation of this poem as a ballad, but also spurs the reader into a faster reading rhythm than usual. This exceptional metre thus mimics the cadence of horses "[i]n the heat of the chase" (MK, 13) and emulates an incantatory rhythm which goes well with the uncanny subject matter of demonic contracts.

The rhyme schedule serves to reassert the rhythm of the metre, since the last syllable of the line is always the one carrying the amphibrach's stress, and is the syllable used in the rhyme schedule. It furthermore echoes the amount of feet in the line; the rhyme schedule being abaab, one stanza consists of a tetrameter followed by a trimeter and two tetrameters, and lastly a trimeter again. Just as the use of trimeters, the use of cinquains is unconventional. Nonetheless, Pearson dutifully employs these throughout her ballad, except for stanza thirteen and twenty-three, both sestinas, which contain important turns in the poem.³¹²

The uncanny is thus marked by its memory and its status as something that should not be remembered or should not return to the present. It encompasses a sense of repetition, with or without variation, and in the form this is expressed as a strict rhyme or metre schedule, as is the case in 'The Mysterious Knight' by Pearson. Accordingly, variations on the pattern serve to emphasise the narrative. Intellectual uncertainty as another source of feelings of the uncanny comes back to this sense of repetition; the uncanny is nothing entirely new, but it is strangely familiar. This is reflected in the uncanny effect of death, corpses, and ghosts, as well as that of the *Doppelgänger*. The line between what the subject knows to be true and what they thought they knew to be true blurs in these situations, which causes creeping doubt and horror. Another blurred line associated with the uncanny is that between reality and the supernatural or the unreal. According to Freud, this uncanny effect - like many others - originates in the subject's repression of primitive beliefs and intuitions.

³¹¹ In English poetry, an amphibrach is a foot consisting of an unstressed, stressed, and unstressed syllable.

³¹² In stanza thirteen, the Lord of Zolenski requests his guests to spend the night due to the storm. In stanza twenty-three, the Lord of Zolenski is about to discover the mysterious knight's contract with the devil.

A form of verse often employed to elicit the uncanny effect is the ballad. Marked by connotations with folk, the ballad - especially the gothic ballad - is a form of verse which "presents the power of animism and magical thinking"³¹³ and which at a first glance seems to favour that same primitive intuition, yet is also marked by Sir Walter Scott's "aristocratic bardic model of the minstrel."³¹⁴ The bards, or ballad singers, or ballad writers needed to acquire the language of the ballad, says Atkinson in *The Anglo-Scottish Ballad and Its Imaginary Contexts*, and this mixture of seeming primitivism and inherent intricacy returns in 'The Mysterious Knight', in the form of an unusual metrical system and rhyme schedule.

³¹³ Hoeveler, Riffs, 167.

³¹⁴ Cracuin, Spinstrely, 206.

III. Conclusions

In the previous chapters, I explored the importance of several aspects of female gothic poetry, viz. externalised violence (and vice), internalised violence (megalomania, morbidity, and melancholia), the sexual transgression of female figures, sublimity, and the uncanny. In the discussed texts, externalised violence is usually exhibited through stock characters, such as the gothic villain, malicious monks, demons, and spirits. The religious figures which stand for violence and vice are traditionally Catholic, owing to the anti-Catholicism mood in the eighteenth century. A second manner in which the poet can integrate externalised violence is through a violent, demoniac setting, usually a tempestuous ocean. Thirdly, poets tend to use allegories of fearful abstract concepts such as 'death' and 'disease'.

However, violence in gothic poetry comes in more forms than one, and in the second chapter I discussed the importance of internalised violence, an often overlooked part of gothic poetry. Here, I talk about melancholy and morbidity, which are both expressed in potentially harmful manners. Melancholy is a gendered concept, dividing women and men once more when it portrays melancholic men as geniuses while melancholic women are unstable, sexually unsatisfied, and idle. Morbidity, on the other hand, can be expressed as a more or less innocent interest in death as a concept, but also as a more pernicious longing for death as a state.

Thirdly, I discussed the link between sexual transgression, political power, and female figures in the poetry of Bannerman, Pearson, and Hoole, as well as gothic poetry in general. Whereas in most eighteenth-century texts female agency or female desire is rewarded with death (or rape, which was considered 'a fate worse than death'), female gothic poetry approaches this subject differently. The female figure who displays agency or desire is not immediately punished or cast in the role of the whore in the virgin/whore binary, but can claim the label of the *belle dame* or, in later Victorian times, the *femme fatale*. Notwithstanding that these archetypes were often used in a depreciating manner by male authors, female poets fleshed them out into rounded, in-depth figures.

In a fourth chapter, I discussed the sublimity found in many gothic poems. The Burkean sublime, which was most influential and suffered many transformations after its initial introduction to the public in Edmund Burke's essay *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757), is evoked through terror, which

in its turn can manifest itself through multiple different aspects. The most apparent aspect in gothic poetry is darkness of obscurity, either physical (i.e. the contours of a haunted house is disguised in shadows) or mental (i.e. the extent of the haunting in the house is unknown). A second aspect is power, and more specifically the power to inflict death. Greatness of dimension is a third important aspect that inspires the sublime. A last aspect is certain sounds, like the cries of owls or the bedlam of a storm at sea.

Lastly, the uncanny in narrative and form plays an important role in gothic poetry as well. Repetition is the keyword here; a past that should remain hidden returns to the present, in a memory, in the flesh, or in an intermediate state. This repetition can be found in the rhyme scheme, the metre, in reiterated motifs, and in the narrative itself. The uncanny effect goes back to what Freud calls 'intellectual uncertainty' and a fear for anything related to death. What divides the uncanny from the sublime, then, is a disquieting feeling of discomfort (the uncanny effect) versus a mind-expanding feeling of awe (sublimity).

Bannerman's poetry displays many of the stereotypically gothic motifs. Her poetry is crowded with figures of ill intent, elements from folklore, sexual tension, and is usually set against a tumultuous tempest at sea. Nonetheless, she already hints in the first line of her introductory poem to *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry*, 'Prologue', that her poetry is progressive: "Turn from the path" (P, 1) says Bannerman. This type of social reform through poetry is most notably visible in her use of female figures. The eponym of the poem 'The Dark Ladie' represents female agency and the fulfilment of female desire. She is capable of ensnaring all the knights and reclaiming her right to act without being punished for it. Ajut in 'Ode I: The Mermaid' is a similarly powerful woman, however, she uses her allure for more destructive purposes (sinking ships and drowning sailors). Nevertheless, this rage is presented as a consequence of her transformation into a mermaid rather than a trait inherent to Ajut as a human being. A third female figure I discussed was the interred nun in 'The Nun', who seems to have been punished by joining the convent (i.e. protecting her virtue) instead of following her desires into sexual transgression. Important to note, however, is that all these female figures in the end are supernatural creatures - or at least have supernatural qualities; the Dark Ladie has an unearthly voice and wild eyes, Ajut became a mermaid, and the nun cannot die even though she is buried alive. The supernatural status of these female figures of course remove them one step further from the eighteenth-century woman, which allows Bannerman

to create empowered female figures more freely without running the risk of social stigmatisation herself.

Other figures in Bannerman's poetry are more stereotypically gothic. Entities of omnipotence and omniscience are important to her interpretation of the gothic, and especially those of a fleeting, supernatural anatomy, like spirits, genii, or demons. They commit violence and vice, and harbour megalomaniac tendencies. Bannerman's lyrical I sometimes indulges in morbidity, but steers clear from a state of indifference. Again, desire is central; a desire for power over others (e.g. the Genii), power over death (the lyrical I in 'Sonnet V: To the Owl'), or power over their body (e.g. the Dark Ladie). Her female gothic is sexual in its figures and sensual in its melody, and unapologetically so. According to her, gothic poetry "[b]lend[s] with terrors wild, and legends drear,/ The charmed minstrelsy of mystic sound" (P, 11-12) and indifference or sullenness do not belong in her view of empowerment through gothic poetry.

Pearson's poetry, then, has a religious streak to it. Poems such as 'The Mysterious Knight' exemplify this in the way in which it deals with the knight himself who struck a deal with the devil for knowledge and skill. The warning in his nearing punishment is not only addressed to the knight, but also to the knight's environment. By selling his soul to the devil, the knight does not only penalise himself, conjointly, he brings his environment in danger (cf. the knight's warning not to enter his chambers under any pretence). In 'Sarah Pearson's Gothic Verse Tales', Sandro Jung proposes that, whereas many gothic writers advocate rationality, Pearson "encourage Christian faith"³¹⁵ to surmount superstition. Furthermore, the demons featuring in the poem are ruthless and cruel, merely irredeemable sycophants. The inclusion of these figures shows a certain degree of compatibility between immorality and violence in gothic poetry, and Pearson's insistence on the Christian faith.

Another poem by Pearson which I discussed extensively is 'The Burgomaster's Wife', which might show Pearson's stance on female agency and honour. With this stance, Pearson falls somewhere between on the one hand Bannerman's proto-feminist agenda and Hoole's more covert practice of female agency, and on the other the traditional virgin/whore binary exploited by most male writers. Whereas Pearson does not deny her female figures all types of agency, and whereas these figures actively take matters in their own hands (literally so, in the case of the burgomaster's wife), they chiefly do so in order to protect their sexual honour.

³¹⁵ Jung, Sandro. 'Sarah Pearson's Gothic Verse Tales', *Women's Writing* 16.3 (December 2009) 392.

Having her heroines indulge in their female desires without subsequent punishment would mean defending sexual transgression to a certain extent, which can scarcely be reconciled with a traditional Christian faith.

This affirmation of the importance Pearson attributes to religion in gothic poetry resounds in her accolade on Anne Radcliffe's gothic romance *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. The poem, called 'On Reading in Several Publications Many Invidious Allusions to Mrs. Radcliff's Elegant Novel, "The Mysteries of Udolpho,"' does not only hint at a sisterhood of female gothic writers who unequivocally endorse each other's work, it also presents Pearson's religiously tinted poetics regarding gothic texts. Pearson mainly focuses on landscape and setting, which are blood-chilling, and then turns on the past and Murder personified while still maintaining the significance of setting. Pearson ends her poem applauding "Virtue bending from her radiant throne,/ Hail[ing] scenes to love, and truth, and fancy dear" (MU, 15-16), and thereby emphasises Christian solidarity without mentioning any of the religiously improper themes traditionally linked to gothic texts, such as sexual transgression and anti-Catholicism, as opposed to Bannerman's immediate allusion to religion in her metafictional poem 'Prologue' ("the dim regions of monastic night" (P, 4).

Hoole also seems to advocate a Christian strategy to approach superstition and terror in gothic poetry. She mentions or calls on the Christian god repeatedly, but whereas Pearson's poetry is unmistakably marked with a passion for life, an impression of defeated sullenness (or acceptance) characterises Hoole's poetry. A Romantic love for nature and solitude seeps through in her descriptions of the scenery in her poetry. Overall, the figures in her poems seem to view the world as in harmony and have an accepting attitude toward phenomena such as disease, death, and sorrow. Unlike Bannerman's and Pearson's, Hoole's poetry does not depend on a turbulent setting or figures of violence and vice, incomprehensible power and uncanny effect. She relies on the reader's ability of sympathy and imagination to instil creeping feelings of fear for loss. Nevertheless, Hoole is capable of creating unusually uncomfortable atmospheres, as she shows in 'A Tale'. Here, she blurs the boundaries in the virgin/whore binary into a continuum; the wizard form and the maiden are confused with one another and instead of keeping to either end of the binary, their merged identity encompasses the entire continuum at once. Hoole thus proposes a less black-and-white view of the female figure in poetry, and shows the reader female agency without imposing immediate punishment.

In two metafictional poems, 'Stanzas Addressed to Mrs. Radcliffe' and 'Invocation to Poetry', Hoole first notes the enthralling qualities of Radcliffe's oeuvre, and then lauds the positive effects of writing poetry on her mind. By commenting on Radcliffe's work in 'Stanzas Addressed to Mrs. Radcliffe', Hoole indirectly communicates her poetics regarding gothic texts. She emphasises the importance of ensnaring the audience with a "magical lyre" (SAR, 2), and - even though these aspects of gothic writing are somewhat rare in her own work - praises Radcliffe's narrator as a "chilling whisper quivering in the blast" (SAR, 37). Notwithstanding Hoole's mention of "dark banditti's" (SAR, 39), "shadowy forms, to mortal ken unknown" (SAR, 62), and "gasping Terror quak[ing] on her cold throne" (SAR, 64), even in this applauding poem, her poetry is marked with harmony and ease, especially when compared to Pearson, who wrote about "tempestuous skies" (MU, 5) and "gloomy castles of chivalric days" (MU, 9). Hoole aspires to create "[e]therial music borne on evening's breeze" (SAR, 41), and stresses that endeavour in 'Invocation to Poetry' as well. Hoole focuses on the soothing powers of poetry ("POESY! wert wont to soothe my hours;" IP, 3) and the "chaste delight" (IP, 17) which accompanies it.

These three gothic poets each present the reader with a unique interpretation of gothic poetics. Bannerman shows the reader gothic poetry with a decidedly progressive streak and overall use of violence to create a sublime atmosphere, Pearson combines a Christian faith with gothic poetry, and Hoole softens the edges of gothic poetry with a Romantic sense of harmony with the poem's setting. Bannerman - and to a lesser extent Hoole - adds a proto-feminist approach to their poetics, by giving her female figures agency and letting them act on their desires (to a certain extent). She furthermore refuses to differentiate between figures on the basis of their gender when bestowing omnipotence or authority to them. Not only do these poets - each to their own extent - show social and/or sexual transgression in their poems, they also seem to harbour certain aspirations concerning their poetry; social change and female empowerment, refurbish the Christian faith, and "heal with holy art the bosom's wound" (IP, 8).

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