

The Emergence of IRISH GOTHIC FICTION

HISTORY, ORIGINS, THEORIES



JARLATH KILLEEN

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To my wife, Mary Lawlor, and our daughter, Eilís, I owe the most gratitude. I offer them my love and dedicate the book to them both.

Zombieland: From Gothic Ireland to Irish Gothic

... send help! The leprechaun is attacking.¹

I

In 1963, an efficient little shocker called *Dementia 13* (or, *The Haunted and the Hunted*, to go by the title under which it appeared in the United Kingdom) was released, somewhat misleadingly promoted as ‘the most terrifying screen experience of your life’. The film concerns the Halorans, a castellated, fabulously wealthy, Irish landed family whose members appear to be cursed, haunted by the ghost of Kathleen, the youngest daughter, who drowned in a mysterious childhood accident in the family lake. Kathleen may be dead but she is certainly not forgotten and her puzzling demise is commemorated annually by a strange ritual choreographed by the family matriarch, the events of the plot taking place during the seventh such act of remembrance. During the course of the film, it appears as if Kathleen is less-than-faithfully departed and determined to wipe out the rest of the clan from beyond the grave in a series of brutally executed (and well-shot) axe murders. In an unsurprising denouement, the murderer is finally revealed to be rather more flesh and blood than spirit, however, and it is in fact Kathleen’s traumatised brother, Billy, who is set on re-uniting the family in the next world.

While a passable B-movie, only noted by film scholars as the first film directed by the then almost completely unknown Francis Ford Coppola, *Dementia 13* is interesting from an Irish studies perspective for a number of reasons. The eerie use Coppola makes of Irish locations, shooting them as inherently frightening spaces in which anything could be (and probably is) lurking, the dysfunctional family dynamics (the Halorans are possibly even more psychopathic than the Corleones, the central figures in Coppola’s *Godfather* trilogy (1972–90)) and the familiar

Gothic trope of the past violently erupting into the present connect this minor horror film to a much longer cultural tradition which figures Ireland as a zone of weirdness, the supernatural and the pathological.

At the time of shooting, Coppola was working for the veteran horror maestro Roger Corman, who had just wrapped up *The Young Racers* (a charmingly terrible film about racing car drivers and the women who love them), which he filmed all around Europe, finishing up in Ireland, and *Dementia 13* was basically made with the left-over budget from Corman's film, with some of its actors thrown in, supplemented by additional players brought in from the Abbey Theatre. The Irish setting was, then, purely happenstance, since, as Kim Newman points out, Coppola would have filmed in Texas had he been there at the time.² Coppola got the most out of the location, however, and while naming the dead daughter Kathleen was probably simply a matter of invoking something suitably 'Oirish' for an American audience, it (un)happily results in the personal history of the Halorans becoming (unintentionally) emblematic of a national history in which the Irish are haunted by the ghost of a different Kathleen (ni Houlihan) and young men are led into perpetuating murderous deeds on her behalf. Concerning a ritual commemoration of death, and released three years before the Irish state celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the 1916 Rising with tremendous pomp and circumstance, the film implicates such commemorative events in a cycle of madness and murder and suggestively anticipates the blame that would later be heaped on the anniversary festivities for the renewed campaign of the Irish Republican Army in 1969. Moreover, the IRA's Border Campaign had just finished in 1962, and the image of young men conducting murderous assaults because of the memory of a ghostly and allegorical woman would have been fresh in the minds of an Irish audience at the very least.³

Therefore, although Ireland was little more than incidental to its planning, the film resonates with what had by then become a very traditional version of Ireland as a site of queer goings on, and Coppola is merely utilising a recognisable trope in cinematic tradition which associates Ireland with either quaint Celtic charm or grand Gothic guignol (or sometimes both). For every *Finian's Rainbow* (1968 – and also directed by Coppola, who must have been smitten by Irish blarney), with its jolly, cheerful leprechaun grotesquely over-played by Tommy Steele, there is a *Leprechaun* (1993; dir. Mark Jones) with a leering, gurning, homicidal version of the same mythical creature, played this time by Warwick Davis who seems to be enjoying himself a bit too much in the role. Ireland, and its (real and mythical) inhabitants, are convenient shorthand for the supernaturally bizarre and appealing in Walt Disney's

Darby O’Gill and the Little People (1959; dir. Robert Stevenson), and Dublin reappears as the location for the origin myth of the title character of the television series *Angel* (1999–2004). A recent example of this easy identification of Ireland with the demonic and the supernatural, *Hellboy II: The Golden Army* (2008; dir., Guillermo del Toro), ends under the Giant’s Causeway in County Antrim, which is apparently where the Angel of Death hangs out. While the cinematic incarnation of these Gothic Irish associations is relatively recent, it draws on a long history of such representations in literary terms. If Ireland is a source of demented axe murderers for Coppola, for the ancient Greek geographer Strabo it was inhabited by incestuous cannibals who ‘deemed it commendable to devour their deceased fathers’.⁴ For Giraldus Cambrensis (Gerald of Wales), in *Topographia Hibernia* (c.1185), Ireland was populated by a bunch of deranged perverts who enjoyed sex with goats, lions and especially cows, and he described intimate relations with the latter as ‘a particular vice of that people’.⁵ As late as 1775, Gilbert White, the great English naturalist, was encouraging the study of the Irish since the ‘manners of the wild natives, their superstitions, their prejudices, their sordid way of life, will extort many useful reflections’.⁶ This particular construction has been especially useful in structuring relations between Ireland and its neighbouring nations. Indeed, the Celtic peripheries have very often been defined in direct opposition to England, so that the highlands of Scotland, the hills and valleys of Wales, and the boglands of Ireland were configured as atavistic zones of the irrational populated by primitive monsters, against which England appeared normal, rational and progressive, a contrast heightened by the Enlightenment. Siobhán Kilfeather has emphasised the juxtaposition of the strange, the dangerous and the Irish in early Gothic fiction,⁷ and the direct association of the Celts with the Goths was made by the Scottish antiquarian John Pinkerton in his *Dissertation on the Origins and Progress of the Sythians or Goths* (1787).

A good representative example of this conflation of Ireland and exotic danger is Sophia Lee’s *The Recess* (1783–5), a counterfactual history tracing the lives of the twins, Matilda and Ellinor, illegitimate daughters of Mary, Queen of Scots and the Duke of Norfolk. In Lee’s novel Mary and Norfolk had married in secret, sincerely believing Mary’s husband Bothwell dead, only to be shocked by his reappearance, and therefore forced to secrete away their twin girls in an underground hiding place below a monastery, the ‘recess’ of the title, in an attempt to protect them. Matilda and Ellinor have various adventures in the course of a long novel, falling in love with the earls of Leicester and Essex and undergoing hardship and exile in their quest to survive. After her husband,

Leicester, dies, Matilda is kidnapped and taken to Jamaica, remaining there for eight years. Her sister, meanwhile, has her own foreign tribulations, travelling to Ireland in search of Essex, where she excites the unwanted sexual desires of the Earl of Tyrone, who imprisons her so that he has the time to seduce her. Ireland is a wild and dangerous space, and Ellinor has little good to say about it or its inhabitants, complaining that it ‘offers to our view a kind of new world; divided into petty states, inveterately hating each other, it knows not the benefit of society . . . The advantages of commerce, the charms of literature, all the graces of civilization, which at once enrich the mind and form the manners, are almost unknown to this people’.⁸ So shocked is Ellinor by the behaviour and dress of the native Irish that she speculates that they have about as much in common with her as the ‘inhabitants of the Torrid Zone’, making the parallel between Ireland and Jamaica as exotic and perilous spaces clear for the reader.⁹ Ireland is to be interpreted here as if it has somehow been geographically displaced from its true location in the tropics; those visiting the island from the mother country can rightly view themselves as entering a state of nature and incivility, a ‘new world’ in need of taming, or one perhaps impossible to tame. Tyrone’s sexual licence, his perverted, ‘licentious’ and excessive desire for Ellinor, is mirrored by his rebellious ‘hopes of wholly expelling the English, and ascending the throne of Ireland’, allowing sexual and political subversion to merge together in his body. Indeed, his lust may stem from his political greed, so that Irish rebellion is figured as the cause of Irish sexual dissolution.¹⁰

Although Lee’s novel is set during Elizabeth’s Irish wars, her treatment of Ireland is heavily dependent on eighteenth-century prejudicial accounts of the seventeenth century, especially David Hume’s *History of England* (1754–62), where the rebels of 1641 are described as naturally inclined towards violence and atrocity, a propensity ‘farther stimulated by precept; and national prejudices empoisoned by those aversions, more deadly and incurable, which arose from an enraged superstition’.¹¹ Given that both sisters have spent their lives in another rather odd location, the recusant priest hole that is the recess, where they have been kept safe from the dangers of a stridently Protestant land, that Ellinor fails to see Ireland as an equivalent space in which the rejected and endangered find refuge is somewhat disappointing. Ireland is even stranger than the hollowed out cave in which the sisters have been raised simply because it is Ireland, whereas the cave is at least to be found in the homeland. This reversion to ethnic and geographical bigotry is also disappointing given that Lee herself had spent a lot of time in Ireland, living in Dublin, where her parents worked as actors, during much of the 1750s. Lee provides a rather more nuanced view of Ireland and the Irish in *The Two*

Emilys (1798), the eponymous protagonists of which are both raised on the Irish estate of Bellarney. Although one of the Emilys (Fitzallen) is hateful and manipulative, determined to destroy her 'rival', the other Emily (Arden), this second Emily changes the initially prejudiced views of the Irish harboured by her cousin the Marquis of Lenox. The Marquis believes that the Irish are 'wild', but the key point here is that he has never even met an Irish person, and therefore Emily Arden can, through her kindness and intelligence, demonstrate to him that while Ireland is indeed rustic it is not necessarily therefore also 'wild' and uncivilised.¹²

Ireland also makes a cameo appearance in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) when Henry Clerval is murdered by the monster on the Irish coast. Given the setting of this incident in 1797, it is likely that it should be read as an occluded representation of the 1798 rebellion, so that Shelley participates in a larger discourse about the rebellion which figured it as monstrous and atrocious, committed by the subhuman and bestial Irish Catholics. Sir Richard Musgrave, for example, in his monumental *Memoirs of the Various Rebellions* (1801), memorably describes the 'lower class of the Irish' as 'fraudful, ferocious and sanguinary towards such of their fellow subjects as differ from them in religion; and for this reason the Scotch peasant, or mechanic, differs as much from the Irish, as a house dog does from a wolf or a fox'.¹³ For critics of the rebellion, the rebels were rather like abject monsters, and Shelley's association of her creature with the Irish rebels suggests that while it is possible to look on both with pity they are still terrifying presences, and that Ireland is a fit place to find such human detritus. Fred V. Randel has argued that Shelley's treatment of Ireland in this section of the novel should not be misread as an unsympathetic dismissal of an unregenerate colony. When Victor Frankenstein first sees Ireland from his boat he describes it as possessing a 'wild and rocky appearance', a phrase that would seem to confirm negative associations, but he goes on to explain that 'as I approached nearer, I easily perceived the traces of cultivation'.¹⁴ For Randel, this is an illustration that 'Mary Shelley temporarily posits and then decisively discredits the stereotypes about the Irish that supported England's colonial dominance'.¹⁵ Victor's last words about Ireland, however, position it as a 'detested' space, and it remains identified in his mind with murder, madness, imprisonment and loss, so that it is difficult to accept Randel's liberal reading of the text.¹⁶

These Gothic associations continue in William Hope Hodgson's brilliant but bonkers *The House on the Borderland* (1908), which is set in the west of Ireland in a village called Kraighton, 40 miles from Ardahan in County Galway (where Hodgson lived for a time), a place that turns out to be a gateway to an otherworld, out of which come horrific pigmen

(and for some observers, the distance between swinish monsters and the natives would not have been very large). Arthur Machen's *The Terror* (1917) is set in Wales, but one character, an Irish traveller, announces, 'I can hardly believe . . . that I'm not still in the wilds of Ireland,'¹⁷ and who can blame him when the animals all begin a large scale assault on humans – especially given the tendency of the Victorian popular press to depict Ireland as peopled by sub-human beasts.¹⁸ As Luke Gibbons has emphasised, for English readers exoticism 'begin[s] at home . . . colonization and the animus against Catholicism were inherently bound up with the subjugation of the Celtic periphery'.¹⁹

It is hardly surprising, then, that many Irish novels written for the English market specifically set out to deflate or at least problematise this sense of Irish oddness and of Ireland as an exotic tourist resort. Famously, in Maria Edgeworth's *The Absentee* (1812), Lord Colambre moves from Oxfordshire to the family's estate in the Irish midlands. Though he has been warned by his mother that he is heading into the regional equivalent of the heart of darkness, he actually finds a much more complex and attractive place and eventually persuades the entire family to move back and take their responsibilities towards the country's improvement seriously. A more neglected novel, Elizabeth Griffin's *The History of Lady Barton* (1771), opens with its heroine and her husband travelling to Ireland during a storm (echoed, perhaps, by Victor Frankenstein's journey):

Behold us then landed upon what may almost be called a desert island, for it is entirely surrounded by an arm of the sea, and uninhabited by every thing but a few goats, and some fishermen, who are almost as wild as they.—It was about four o'clock in the morning, when we arrived at this dismal place, and such a morning, for darkness, rain, and wind, I never saw!²⁰

While first impressions are not good, Lady Barton quickly establishes convivial relations with the group of local fishermen she meets, and the ship's passengers are treated with courtesy and respect by the inhabitants. Lady Barton does maintain the class distance between the natives and the newcomers, describing the former as reacting to her arrival 'with that sort of surprise which I imagine we should feel, if an order of higher beings were to descend by miracle to visit us'.²¹ This distance is lessened, however, by the fact that far from Ireland being a source of dastardly evil, the villain of the novel is Colonel Walter, an absentee landlord born in England, who clearly lacks what Lady Barton thinks is a proper understanding of the responsibility he has for his estate in the Irish countryside. Lady Barton complains that the colonel 'is now going to Ireland, to take possession of his estate, and a seat in parliament for

a borough he never saw—I am no politician, or I should animadvert a little upon this subject'.²² As Christina Morin has pointed out, the novel 'constructs Colonel Walter as not just the source of . . . [Lady Barton's] troubles in the narrative but of Ireland's as well.'²³ Irish strangeness is quickly dismissed and English malignity becomes more prevalent as the novel progresses. Such Irish writers realise the expectations of alienation their English readers anticipate and set up Irish exoticism only to undermine it and suggest the two nations have more in common than might be expected given the representational history into which the authors are intervening.

Although Ireland has been long constructed as a strange place, barbarous and dangerous, it was an Irish political theorist who supplied perhaps the most powerful discourse through which such a construction could be refracted. In 1757, Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* delineated a version of the Sublime which connected it to obscurity, darkness, danger and the primitive past when druids 'performed all their ceremonies in the bosom of the darkest woods, and in the shades of the oldest and most spreading oaks',²⁴ and (perhaps inadvertently) in doing so he provided a powerful language with which the Irish landscape could be described. Burke, of course, considered the Sublime to have positive rather than negative associations, and indeed connected it to the most powerful force in the universe, God, and this positive reinterpretation of the primitive is unsurprising from a man who spent much of his childhood in the extraordinarily impressive Blackwater Valley in County Cork, whose imposing mountains may have helped to shape Burke's understanding of the power of nature. The sublime power of nature was certainly clear to him, and he also surveyed these destructive forces when he was fifteen and experienced a flood of the Liffey near his family home on Arran Quay. In a letter to Richard Shackleton he admits that the natural disturbances 'excite' him, 'the whistling winds, and the hoarse rumblings of the Swoln Liffy . . . It gives me pleasure to see nature in those great tho' terrible Scenes, it fills the mind with grand ideas'.²⁵ As Luke Gibbons points out, it may have been these childhood experiences of nature in extremity which provided Burke with the beginnings of his Sublime theory.²⁶

Whatever the source of Burke's own views, his theorisation certainly provided the basis for versions of Ireland as a Sublime space. When, in Regina Maria Roche's immensely popular *The Children of the Abbey* (1796), the heroine Amanda Fitzalan travels from Wales to Ireland, upon entering Dublin Bay she is greeted with an extraordinary sight, 'a scene which far surpassed all her ideas of sublimity and beauty, a scene

which the rising sun soon heightened to the most glowing radiance'.²⁷ It is while in Ireland that Amanda encounters Castle Carberry, 'a large Gothic pile, erected in the rude and distant period' (a time in which Burke located sublimity) 'when strength more than elegance was deemed necessary in a building'. The castle is on the pinnacle of a 'rocky eminence overhanging the sea' and is surrounded by ruined druid temples to emphasise its majesty and antiquity. As Burke insisted that the power of the Sublime was such that its observers would be struck into reverence and fear at its majesty, so is Amanda impressed by the imposing power of Castle Carberry, and she 'viewed the dark and stupendous edifice . . . with venerable awe'.²⁸ In the romantic Irish novel, English visitors to Ireland are often so struck with the sublime magnificence of the scenery they encounter that they are rendered silent. Famously, Horatio Mortimer, the hero of Sydney Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806), is so astonished at the wilds of the west of Ireland that he lapses into Burkean reverie: 'Mountain rising over mountain, swelled like an amphitheatre to those clouds which, faintly tinged with the sun's preclusive beams, and rising from the earthly summits where they had reposed, incorporated with the kindling aether of a purer atmosphere. All was silent and solitary – a tranquillity tinged with terror, a sort of "delightful horror", breathed on every side.'²⁹ There is danger as well as delight in surrendering to the power of the Irish Sublime, and Horatio is in peril here of stumbling out of his stable English self into a kind of interpretive free play, impelled by the Irish landscape.

So evocative did this trope of the foreign visitor having a 'sublime' experience when first coming into Ireland become that Owenson's scene is virtually repeated in Bram Stoker's *The Snake's Pass* (1890), when the hero, Arthur Severn, is so astounded by the extreme environment of the west of Ireland, its 'mass of violet and sulphur and gold', that he confesses to feeling 'exalted in a strange way, and impressed at the same time with a new sense of the reality of things'.³⁰ Two hundred years later this experience is recreated (though toned down somewhat) in the film adaptation of Cecelia Ahern's *P.S. I Love You* (2006; dir. Richard LaGravenese), where the American tourist Holly Kennedy (played by two-times Oscar winner Hilary Swank!) finds herself both amazed and lost in the Wicklow mountains (which have been obviously CGI-ed for extra sublimity). Holly is looking for the 'national park' and is gob-smacked to discover that the wildness of the countryside is what the Irish think a park looks like. Luckily, Holly also encounters a gorgeous yet wise local man (an improbable Gerard Butler) who can direct her back to civilisation, and, of course, they end up married. The genders may have been reversed, but the marriage plot of the romantic novel

remains intact, as does the Celtic weirdness and devastatingly sublime Irish environment.³¹ Whereas these sympathetic versions of the Irish Sublime tend to emphasise the positive dimensions of the experience, the danger of the Sublime is nevertheless retained, its ability to completely overwhelm and overcome the Self. Certainly, awe is an appropriate reaction to such extremity, but while the experience of terror can be 'delightful' to a certain extent, horror narratives have played on the dangers rather than the thrills of Ireland.

Ireland as a whole is readily identifiable as a Gothic space in popular culture. In *The Milesian Chief* (1812), the great Gothic novelist Charles Robert Maturin articulates this commonly held view of Ireland cogently. The country possesses a 'dark, desolate and stormy grandeur' and is 'the only country on earth, where, from the strange existing opposition of religion, politics, and manners, the extremes of refinement and barbarism are united, and the most wild and incredible situations of romantic story are hourly passing before modern eyes'.³² In this passage, Maturin references the version of Ireland which was dominant. Certainly, seen through the eyes of the English reading public for whom the Gothic authors were writing, Ireland was a spatial and temporal anomaly, and it remains so for a modern cinema audience.³³ Of course, this version of regional space as a classic site of ghostly energies and horrific creatures has always been central to Gothic convention, and where the plot of a traditional Gothic novel does not take place on the Catholic Continent, it usually locates itself in those geographical areas deemed marginal to metropolitan sophistication. Traditionally, horror and the Gothic take place in what has been called the 'outlandish'³⁴: obscure, out-of-the-way places, usually in the countryside and in villages, or – where the Gothic locates itself in an urban environment – monstrosity emerges from under the stairs, from the attic, out of the cellar, spaces on the edge rather than at the centre. To English eyes, the Celtic fringes were such 'outlandish' spaces,³⁵ Ireland peculiarly so given the link between the geographical term 'outlandish' and the Catholicism dominant there.³⁶ Darryl Jones has termed fictions which concern themselves with identities and areas 'marginal' (a word he rightly objects to) to England (and also to cosmopolitan America) 'regional Gothic', and he claims that 'in the ideological rhetoric of horror, Catholics, Welshmen, hillbillies and cannibals are all pretty much the same'.³⁷ He points out that the construction of the Celt as a kind of counter-Enlightenment figure, and of Celtic lands as zones of the weird, went hand in hand with the emergence of the Gothic novel and the appearance of a modern English identity. As English identity was configured as normative, those areas which surrounded it – the 'Celtic fringes' – were simply constructed as abnormal.³⁸

Moreover, as Christopher Morash has outlined, the Celtic fringes were not only considered repositories of all that which England wished to deny and banish (the irrational, the superstitious, the perverse, the Catholic, the cannibalistic), they also became a kind of collective zone of atemporality, a place of the primitive, the out-of-touch and the backward which the modern world had not yet affected. If the Gothic is often seen as the return of the repressed, the past that will not stay past, Ireland has usually been constructed as a place where the past had never in fact disappeared, a place where the past is in fact the always present. Morash points out that nineteenth-century philologists such as James Cowles Prichard, Franz Bopp and J. Kasper Zeuss all argued that in Celtic languages was preserved the remains of a European ur-language and that 'in a slide which was common in nineteenth-century ethnography and beyond, this was taken to indicate that the Celtic peoples of the present day were an instance of a cultural anachrony, a race out of time'.³⁹ In such Celtic regions as Ireland time and space took on different meanings and history itself was out of joint. According to Declan Kiberd, Ireland operated as 'England's unconscious', hence the surprising number of English Gothic narratives which use Ireland as a shorthand indicator of the depraved past rather than the technological future.⁴⁰

This version of Ireland as a Gothic madhouse had to be confronted by Irish writers, but rather than reject it, a great many of them, on first glance, appear to have embraced it, allowing the tropes and themes of the Gothic to infect practically everything they wrote. Any list of important Irish writers includes a rather extraordinary number of Gothic specialists and horror aficionados, and their apparent over-representation in the Irish ranks has rightly seemed to some critics to require an explanation. In fact, one of the great 'problems' in Irish literary history has been not only that Ireland apparently failed to produce the equivalent of George Eliot's realist classic *Middlemarch* (1871–2) but that instead it produced so much literary material that can be called 'non-realist', and particularly a large amount of what has now been classified as 'Gothic'. In assessing the Irish contribution to world literature, Vera Kreilkamp has noted that the 'marginalised Gothic mode . . . permeates virtually all Irish writing', and this seems about right to me.⁴¹ Indeed, Kreilkamp suggests that far from existing as a separate tradition in Irish writing, it is the *only* tradition of Irish writing. When Irish writers tried to produce purely realist novels, they generally failed, as the Gothic interrupts, intrudes and disrupts any supposedly stable realist mood.

Since the critical turn to the Gothic in the 1970s, after which a torrent of theoretical and historical material on various versions of non-realism poured from the academic presses, a number of important cultural

historians with an interest in Irish studies have attempted to provide an explanation for this state of affairs. Explaining the Gothic diffusion has been a serious difficulty for theorists of Irish writing, although many have pointed out that because of the impact of colonialism, authority and control have been very much contested fields in Ireland so that distinguishing between the real and the unreal has usually been a function of power. In such circumstances the paraphernalia of the unreal, and a language of fragmentation, paranoia and schizophrenia, have seemed more useful to many writers in representing Ireland than the tools of literary realism.⁴² While this explanation is certainly suggestive, the overwhelming pervasiveness of the Gothic remains one of the most contentious areas of Irish studies, and although a great deal of ink has been spilt in the critical discussion, a fully theorised and historically grounded account of the emergence of the genre in Ireland has not really been attempted. This scholarly gap possibly remains because the texts in which the form first made its appearance are not only very little read but are also (apparently) not very good – unlike the more attractive terrain of the nineteenth-century Irish Gothic canon, which contains such extraordinary achievements as Charles Robert Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1829), Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's *Uncle Silas* (1864) and *Carmilla* (1871–72), Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). The persistence of this over-attention to the Irish Gothic canon and away from Irish Gothic origins has allowed a number of serious misconceptions about Irish Gothic to arise and persist in critical argument.

In this study, I will set out to provide a robustly theorised and thoroughly historicised account of the 'beginnings' of Irish Gothic fiction, map the theoretical terrain covered by other critics and put forward a new history of the emergence of the genre in Ireland. It should be noted that although I will *theorise* the Irish Gothic, I will not be *Theorising* it – in other words, those looking for a full-blown engagement with Theory should go elsewhere.⁴³ The study will try to clarify why it is correct to think of the Irish Gothic novel as an Irish Anglican response to historical conditions, and it will also assess this Irish tradition in the broad context of Gothic Studies as a whole, rather than relegate it to the backwaters of literary history, where it has often been placed. Very early Irish Gothic fiction should be subjected to close reading and careful historicisation, but also firmly placed in relation to Gothic as a genre which, as Richard Davenport-Hines puts it, comprises 'four hundred years of excess, horror, evil and ruin'.⁴⁴ In other words, the early Irish Gothic texts should be read in relation to both Irish history of the 1750s and 1760s *and* to the conventions of the genre in broad terms. Until this is done,

a reading of the Irish Gothic through, for example, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, seems premature.⁴⁵ The main argument I will be making here is that the emergence of Irish Gothic should be understood in the context of the split in Irish Anglican public opinion that opened in the 1750s and seen as a fictional instrument of liberal Anglican opinion in a changing political landscape. This will allow me to demonstrate the connections between these little read, almost completely forgotten, supposedly negligible Gothic fictions and the Irish Gothic tradition more generally, and also the Gothic as a genre of global significance. Of course, even using the terms ‘Irish Gothic’ and ‘Irish Gothic tradition’ has become problematic in recent years, and in this introductory chapter I will address some of the theoretical problems that have stymied discussion of the field so that the way can be cleared for a proper historical account of the genre in Ireland.

II

There has been much (and often confusing) critical discussion since the mid-2000s as to whether ‘Irish Gothic’ constitutes a ‘tradition’, a ‘canon’, a ‘genre’ or a ‘mode’, discussion which sometimes suggests that these are all mutually exclusive terms. The terminological difficulty arises in part because it is difficult to know where Irish Gothic begins and ends since, on close examination, Gothic tropes, motifs and themes appear everywhere and anywhere in modern Irish literature. In a discussion of American Gothic, Fred Botting argues that in the United States ‘the literary canon is composed of works in which the influence of romances and Gothic novels is . . . overt’, so much so that American literature seems ‘virtually an effect of a Gothic tradition. Gothic can perhaps be called the only true [American] literary tradition’.⁴⁶ This is even more the case with Irish literature. It is not that Ireland merely produced a large number of important writers such as Roche, Maturin, Le Fanu, Wilde and Stoker whose work is considered central to the Gothic canon, but also that the Gothic appears even in texts which seem, on a superficial reading, to be distant from or antagonistic to the genre – the work of the great national novelist Maria Edgeworth being a case in point. When what constitutes the Irish Gothic is so diffuse, achieving a critical bearing seems difficult if not impossible and this concern has led to calls for some terminological clarification and limitation.⁴⁷

For an example of the terminological confusion in which critics have sometimes found themselves when dealing with Irish Gothic, Siobhán Kilfeather’s generally excellent survey article both describes the period

from the 1760s to the 1820s as the ‘heyday of the genre’ and, conversely, notes that ‘many of these novels are only partly Gothic (or mock-Gothic) but that is typical of the genre’.⁴⁸ What is unclear here is whether a novel which is only ‘partly’ Gothic, or which mocks the Gothic, can still be included as representative of the genre. Is a ‘partly Gothic’ text Gothic? From the way this is phrased it would seem that Kilfeather assumes that a ‘partly’ or ‘mock’ Gothic novel should still be thought of as Gothic, and indeed, it would be difficult to accept that Mrs F. C. Patrick’s *More Ghosts!* (1798), which parodies the late eighteenth-century literary obsession with bumps in the night typical of Gothic, should be excluded on the basis that it ridicules rather than simply repeats the genre’s conventions. In a further potentially confusing sentence, Kilfeather indicates that Irish Gothic writers ‘crossed the Gothic with the sentimental novel, the novel of manners, or – most commonly – the national tale’, but neglects to explain whether such ‘crossings’ lifted these texts out of the Gothic ‘genre’ and into another one.⁴⁹

Once we widen our perspective, of course, it is clear that it is not just with the Irish Gothic that terminological confusion holds sway. To say, as Judith Halberstam has said, that the Gothic is ‘overdetermined’ is to understate things considerably!⁵⁰ ‘Gothic’ is notoriously one of the most slippery terms in the literary critical dictionary, and it has been defined in very many ways. Indeed, the terms used for such definitions just keep multiplying: depending on which critic you are reading, the Gothic is a ‘genre’,⁵¹ a ‘domain’,⁵² a ‘mode’,⁵³ a ‘discursive site’,⁵⁴ an ‘area of literary space, a niche in the ecology of literature’.⁵⁵ Robert Miles has spoken of Gothic as ‘a series of contemporaneously understood forms, devices, codes, figurations’.⁵⁶ Given the sheer multiplicity of terms used about the Gothic by very eminent scholars it would be unwise to rule anything out, but this has not prevented some attempts at terminological policing. Because of the looseness of the Gothic, that it should be considered a genre at all has been denied. For example, for James Watt ‘any categorization of the Gothic as a continuous tradition, with a generic significance, is unable to do justice to the diversity of the romances which are now accommodated under the “Gothic” label, and liable to overlook the often antagonistic relations that existed between different works or writers’.⁵⁷ Similarly, Gary Kelly has opined that the Gothic romance ‘was not so much a coherent and authentic genre as an ensemble of themes and formal elements which could be taken over and adapted in whole or in part by other novelists and writers’.⁵⁸

Although it may initially seem attractive to be able to discard the term ‘genre’ when dealing with the Gothic, on the basis that the Gothic is too unstable or impure since it combines different genres, ultimately

this discarding does not help because it rather obscures literary history. Complaining about the Gothic's 'instability', for example, and positing it as a reason why the Gothic does not constitute a 'genre', indicates a belief that it is possible to isolate a pure genre in the first place, one uncontaminated by other genres. However, as David Duff has reminded us, genre theory is a notoriously 'disputatious field'⁵⁹ precisely for the reason that there are few (if any) texts which belong only to one particular genre. Expecting any genre to be categorically simple or pure is to misunderstand genre entirely, and to ignore the fact that, as John Frow explains, 'the textual event is not a member of a genre-class because it may have membership in *many genres*, and because it is never fully defined by "its" genre' (my italics).⁶⁰ Frow supports Ann Freadman's argument that it is useful to 'think of genre in terms of sets of intertextual relations . . . the relation between all those texts that are perceived to be relevantly similar to this one, as well as all those texts that are perceived to be relevantly dissimilar'.⁶¹ Texts are 'uses of genres, performances of or allusions to the norms and conventions which form them'.⁶² So, for example, while Charles Dickens's extraordinarily complex *Bleak House* (1852–3) is best placed in the 'realist' genre, this is not to deny that it also has a place in the Gothic genre, as well as participating in a number of other subgenres (like detective fiction) of the much broader genre of the novel. A drive for complete conceptual clarity has been powerfully evident in some discussions of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, which has divided many critics over the question of whether it should be considered a Gothic novel at all. Robert Mighall makes an investment with history fundamental to his definition of the Gothic, highlighting a 'concern with the historical past . . . [and] rhetorical and textual strategies to locate the past and represent its perceived iniquities, terrors, and survivals', on which basis he excludes *Frankenstein*.⁶³ For others it is *Frankenstein*'s position as the inaugurating text of the new genre of science fiction that lifts it out of the Gothic's borders. Imagining that there is a potential generic purity will mislead the literary critic, and accepting that texts use genres (as well as being used by genres) prevents the critic from reaching the counter-intuitive conclusion that one of the most famous Gothic novels of all is not actually a Gothic novel at all.

An analogous case of generic mixing from Irish writing could be made for Maria Edgeworth's *Ennui* (1804). On the face of it this novel is a realist text, indeed an anti-Gothic narrative, supporting the expulsion of the Gothic, anachronistic elements in Irish society so that modernity can be brought fully to bear on the island. The plot is apparently straightforward enough: the bored English Lord Glenthorn travels to his Irish estate in order to make his life more meaningful. On the way

he encounters the standard stereotypes that were believed to populate Ireland, the inveterately lazy bumpkins who speak in rather silly accents. Glenthorn is presented with two alternative views of Ireland's future. His land agent, Mr McLeod urges the slow but steady modernisation of the country through the introduction of English methods of agricultural production, education of the Catholic peasantry in non-denominational schools, and encouragement of industry (sounding very like Edgeworth's father, Richard Lovell); his neighbour, Mr Hardcastle insists that the Irish are un-reformable and lazy and improvident by nature as opposed to culture, and he advocates coercion and a firm colonial hand in keeping them down. The choice lies between allowing the Irish to remain characters in a Gothic story or gently translating them into a national bildungsroman. The ideological weight of the novel appears to come down on Mr McLeod's side and suggests that the spectre of the Gothic can be banished given enough reforms and patient application of reason and technology.

However, the main problem with this reading of the novel is that it ignores the energies of the text: Lord Glenthorn is completely bored while in 'rational' England and is only awakened to life's possibilities when he meets Ellinor, his Irish former wet-nurse and a banshee-like figure straight out of a Gothic melodrama. His excitement increases once he arrives in Ireland, confronts its Gothic scenery, meets its Gothic cast list and almost becomes involved on the rebel side of the 1798 Rebellion (before fighting on behalf of the state). There is a sense, in other words, that recreating Ireland into a miniature version of England may well be industrially desirable and economically necessary, but that it will be disastrous from a psychological view and that cultural decadence and ennui will follow such a recreation. The plot of the novel certainly seems to opt for a reformable and possibly realist Ireland of the future; the energy of the novel lies with the Gothic melodrama Glenthorn finds being enacted when he migrates there. *Ennui* is, it seems to me, a good example of Gothic energy refusing to allow realist closure. Edgeworth may be intellectually on the side of English reform but psychologically her novel is more attracted to Irish Gothic irreality. *Ennui*, I argue, is a case of a novel which has a place in at least two genres: it is certainly a realist novel, but it is also, I think, a Gothic novel, and the two genres conduct an argument within its pages. Which genre actually triumphs is, ultimately, not a determining factor in deciding the genre to which the novel belongs, since it clearly 'participates' in both.⁶⁴

Bleak House, *Frankenstein* and *Ennui* are actually fairly late examples of texts in which the Gothic genre co-exists with other genres, and it should be emphasised that the Gothic originated in the eighteenth

century when, as noted by David Duff, 'genre-mixing' was both 'a critical idea' and 'a creative fact'.⁶⁵ These are not, in other words, anomalous examples. The early history of the novel (including the Gothic novel) is, to say the least, very, very messy, and it is not simply difficult but next to impossible to make hard and fast distinctions between romances, histories, memoirs, Gothic novels and sentimental novels in this period. Genre mixing is simply part of what happens in the eighteenth century, from Horace Walpole's mixture of the ancient and modern romance, to M. G. Lewis's *The Castle Spectre* (1797), 'a drama of a mingled nature, Operatic, Comical and Tragical',⁶⁶ to the 'new species of writing', as Samuel Richardson called *Pamela* (1740–1).⁶⁷ As Markman Ellis has pointed out, although the 'novel' is a highly confusing and potentially misleading generic label to use to 'describe the bulk of eighteenth-century prose fiction', it is also unavoidable.⁶⁸

Moreover, Gothic has always been a self-consciously impure genre. There has always been a great deal of 'crossing' going on in fiction thought of as Gothic, and the Gothic itself, from the very beginning, describes itself as 'spliced', heterogeneous, anomalous, hybrid, a literary mutant. To object to the terminological confusion that is generated because of this mixing is to imagine that there could possibly be somewhere a Gothic uncontaminated by other genres, or a 'pure' Gothic mode that exists ready to be added as a kind of ingredient as part of the combination of a given novel (so that some novels have a pinch of Gothic with a dollop of the sentimental and a dash of the realist novel). When reading what has traditionally (and incorrectly) been considered the 'first' Gothic novel, Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), it becomes clear that the Gothic has always been configured as an impure. Using *Otranto* as an 'origin' text has always been attractive because when, in the second edition, Walpole gave it the more expansive subtitle, 'A Gothic Story', he seemed to provide a kind of generic stability to a term that was causing desperate literary critics to pull their hair out. Yet, James Watt rightly observes that this novel only gave an 'illusory stability to a body of fiction which is distinctly heterogeneous'.⁶⁹ That illusory quality should have been obvious from Walpole's second preface, of course, since he straightforwardly admits that his fictional experiment is a generic hybrid, a 'blend' combining two different 'kinds of Romance' (one we would now call 'realist', the other traditional romance) in one work.⁷⁰ Like most hybrids in the history of Gothic, Walpole's proved an unstable combination quite liable to break down, an amusing but ultimately unsatisfying experiment in generic splicing. The second novel which declared its Gothic affinities, Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron: A Gothic Story* (1777), is rather more

like a realist novel than a Gothic one in that Reeve reduces what she saw as Walpole's supernatural excrescences to a minimum and attempts to make her story as faithful to reality as possible. For both Walpole and Reeve, the term 'Gothic' indicated not the supernatural but the medieval, and it was only later that it became clear that it was in relation to elements other than historical period (such as theme, tropes, props, stock characters) that these novels were influential. 'Gothic' then came to designate not temporal setting but a vast panoply of other elements, amusingly set out in the anonymous article 'Terrorist Novel Writing' (1797) with its famous 'recipe':

Take – An old castle, half of it ruinous.
 A long gallery, with a great many doors, some secret ones.
 Three murdered bodies, quite fresh.
 As many skeletons, in chests and presses.
 An old woman hanging by the neck; with her throat cut.
 Assassins and desperados, '*quant suff*'.
 Noise, whispers and groans, threescore at least.⁷¹

As Jacqueline Howard comments, the Gothic has always been 'an indeterminate genre', comprised of 'impurities',⁷² from the very start not something 'distinct' from realism, but a genre which contained and combined the realist and romance genres. Part of what makes the Gothic Gothic is that it is a mixture. It is a genre which absorbs and assimilates other genres. To be blunt about it, 'Gothic' has been a mess since it was first used as a descriptive term for fiction, and that it continues to be such a terminological problem is very appropriate,⁷³ and when the Gothic intrudes on other genres it tends to have a similarly destabilising effect. Thus, like *EmmUI*, Irish texts which seem in one sense straightforwardly romantic national tales or realist novels often have their narratives of reconciliation disrupted and dissipated by the invasion of the Gothic elements, narrative devices, tropes and themes, preventing settlement and closure. Much Irish writing, while not full-blown Gothic, is 'interrupted' by Gothic as if to remind the reader of what the historian Brendan Bradshaw has described as the 'cataclysmic element of Irish history'.⁷⁴

That Gothic is therefore a genre which is generically unstable (like most other genres, but even more so) should not be too disturbing (unless we are addicted to certainties). According to Jacques Derrida, the 'law of genre' means that while a text 'cannot belong to no genre, it cannot be without or less a genre', and it is also true that 'every text participates in one or several genres'. Assigning a text to a genre is therefore necessary, but 'such participation never amounts to belonging'.⁷⁵ Precisely the wrong question to ask about a novel like *Frankenstein* is

whether it is a ‘Gothic’ or a ‘science fiction’ novel – because it is both. Richard Haslam complains about the tendency of many critics (including myself) to use the term ‘Gothic’ to apply to radically different novels and points out that ‘some Irish authors use the Gothic mode extensively in one work (Maturin’s *Melmoth*) but not in another (Maturin’s *The Wild Irish Girl*). Or they splice the Gothic mode with other supernaturalist or quasi-supernaturalist modes’.⁷⁶ However, to split the ‘Gothic’ from the ‘supernaturalist’ in this way is to misunderstand the always already ‘spliced’ nature of the Gothic genre. Haslam’s addiction to classification prisons is even more damaging when it comes to eighteenth-century texts when these genres were in their infancy. As Michael Gamer points out, when looking at ‘Gothic’ or ‘romantic’ texts from the eighteenth century we are dealing with a period ‘in which the texts we now associate with each had not yet been categorized in the ways we would now find familiar’.⁷⁷ For Gamer, Gothic texts ‘regularly contain multiple modes of writing’, and Gothic is a ‘site that *moves*, and that must be defined in part by its ability to transplant itself *across* forms and media’.⁷⁸ This tendency to shift, to move and to morph is understandably frustrating for critics and historians since it is much easier to deal with objects and events that have a relative stability, but we must take things as they are and not re-make them to fit our intellectual preferences.

The Gothic as a genre often behaves rather like the ghosts and phantoms that populate many of its canonical texts. As Fred Botting explains, ‘Elusive, phantom-like, if not phantasmatic, floating across generic and historical boundaries, Gothic (re) appearances demand and disappoint, and demand again, further critical scrutiny to account for their continued mutation.’⁷⁹ James Watt has urged that one way to deal with this elusiveness is through a renewed focus on discrete literary examples and urges literary historians to ‘focus in detail on the functioning of specific works, so as to provide the basis for a more nuanced account of the way that the genre was constituted in the late eighteenth [century]’.⁸⁰ This kind of focus is specifically what I want to achieve here. For some critics, historical and terminological messiness, blurriness and amorphousness are enemies to be beaten into a conceptual clarity that glosses over the complexities of history and genre theory, but I suggest that such clarity is reached only by ignoring how individual texts actually work.

III

Given the overall ‘messiness’ of the Gothic genre, critics should exercise great caution when looking at regional or national variations. ‘Irish

Gothic' is not a genre but rather a particular inflection of a genre, weighted with political and ideological ballast. While not a genre, it is, however, a tradition, and more often than not a very self-conscious one, given that later texts constantly revisit earlier ones, 'revising plots, revisiting themes, reanimating characters . . . recall[ing] their predecessors as much as they innovate and modernise'.⁸¹ Despite the self-conscious, and often self-referential, tendency of Irish Gothic, calling it a 'tradition' has become very controversial in Irish studies and has been attacked by a number of very prominent critics. The notion that there even is a Gothic tradition in Irish writing is still relatively new, and ironically the critical figure involved in convincing scholars to examine the tradition was also at the same time undermining its existence. As a brilliant biographer of Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu and a formidable cultural historian, W. J. McCormack is, perhaps, the major theorist of the Irish Gothic. In his seminal 'Irish Gothic and After' (1991) he examined the field in some detail, tracing its beginnings in a number of now obscure novels from the late eighteenth century such as Roche's *Children of the Abbey* (1796), Mrs Kelly's *Ruins of Avondale Priory* (1796), Mrs F. C. Patrick's *The Irish Heiress* (1797) and *More Ghosts!* and Mrs Colpoys's *The Irish Excursion* (1801), and followed its trajectory through the writings of Maturin, Lady Morgan, Lady Clarke, Le Fanu, William Carleton, Wilde, Stoker, W. B. Yeats, John Millington Synge and Elizabeth Bowen. This list of writers looked, to some, to be a ready-made Irish canon, an interpretation bolstered by McCormack's argument that 'if the Irish tradition of gothic fiction turns out, on examination, to be a slender one, there are other ways in which such material is of literary significance'.⁸² Indeed, McCormack's article fell foul of the more general reaction to *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* in which it appeared. Although the editor, Seamus Deane, explicitly stated that the anthology was not meant to amount to a 'canon' of Irish writing, and was through its very inclusiveness designed to undermine and problematise all such pretensions to canonicity, critics of the project claimed that in its selection of editors and its exclusion or under-representation of some Irish writers it effectively amounted to a politicised rather than a catholic representation of the richness of a vaguely defined 'Irish' literature. 'Irish Gothic and After' was taken by some as positing a canon of Irish Gothic, and McCormack later returned to the issue to complicate such a simplistically linear reading of his choices.

In his important study *Dissolute Characters* (1993), McCormack argued that the Irish writers of Gothic literature did *not* produce a definitive 'tradition' but merely mobilised the conventions found in English Gothic.⁸³ For McCormack, the terms 'tradition' and 'canon' conjure up

too strongly the image of a direct and chronological line of great writers influencing one another. The danger with such constructions is that they effectively close themselves off to external forces and pressures, make Irish culture into an inward looking and self-generating force, and suggest a coherence and formal and ideological similarity that simply does not exist between the texts and authors themselves. In relation to Irish Gothic itself, McCormack posed a chronological problem: there is a large gap of twenty-five years between the publication of Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) and Le Fanu's first novel, *The Cock and the Anchor* (1845) (which, according to McCormack, is not a Gothic novel), and a further gap of nineteen years before *Uncle Silas* (1864) arrived. Such a gapped and discontinuous line could be called a 'tradition' in only the most dubious sense. McCormack wanted to complicate this idea of a tradition by examining what he called 'interventions' into Irish literary history; he pointed out that Honoré de Balzac's *Melmoth réconcilié* (1836), rather than any Irish text, is a crucial connection between Maturin and Le Fanu.⁸⁴

McCormack's main difficulty is with the political and historical implications of the entangled concepts of 'canon' and 'tradition' in the writing of Irish literary history. He is not simply uncomfortable with the 'Irish Gothic canon/tradition' but also with canons and traditions as constructed by literary historians with ideological agendas to promote. Indeed, his chapter 'Cashiering the Gothic Canon' begins with what might be construed as a polemic against previous literary historians who have constructed Irish literary history from an Irish nationalist perspective (precisely the argument used against the *Field Day Anthology* in the first place). Although he surprisingly exempts Seamus Deane's *A Short History of Irish Literature* (1986) from a shame list of 'literary chroniclers'⁸⁵ he singles out versions of Irish literary history which canonise in order to promote a 'patriotic' view of Irish writing. He complains, for example, that 'the Jonathan Swift whom editors know' (and whom, it is implied, gains McCormack's approbation) 'is scarcely recognisable as the figure of similar name recurring as a patriot in the literary histories'. Indeed, 'the chroniclers inhabit a last ditch of cultural nationalism'.⁸⁶ That McCormack emphatically includes the Field Day school and its supposed supporters in the Irish media in his disapprobation is clear from a reference in *From Burke to Beckett* (1994) in which he argues that 'much of what declares itself post-colonialist in its concerns is readily detectable as Irish nationalism, unreconstructed yet occasionally garnished with the origami of notable house-Trotskyites in the Dublin newspaper world'.⁸⁷

Although McCormack is very dissatisfied with the notion of an Irish

Gothic tradition in part because such a construction results in Sheridan Le Fanu being uncritically linked to writers such as Stoker and Maturin – writers he considers to be often embarrassingly bad by comparison – the position of Le Fanu is merely a local and restricted example of the tendentiousness of canon making and tradition drawing in general which he has spent a great deal of his critical career undermining. It is the political implications of canon making and the ideological connotations of a certain view of an Irish literary tradition, as well as the historical simplifications involved in constructing Irish literary and Gothic traditions, that attract McCormack's destructive focus. In *Dissolute Characters* he declares it his 'modest' aim to so problematise Le Fanu's relationship with the 'so-called' and 'doubtful' Irish Gothic tradition, that it would be impossible to fit him in to prevailing models, but it is clear that in doing this McCormack wants to add to the growing problematisation of the ideas of canon and tradition in Irish literature itself.⁸⁸

The appeal to 'tradition' masks historical processes, elides questions of origin and naturalises complex literary and cultural relations, and does this for ideological reasons. McCormack urges the 'unmasking of tradition as cousin-german to ideology'.⁸⁹ As Terence Brown pointed out in a review of *Dissolute Characters*,

it is none of McCormack's purpose . . . to suggest the kinds of continuities, influences, rewritings, and critical engagements that are the stuff of less forensically sceptical literary history. Literary history in McCormack's quizzically interrogative mind is by contrast, a contested, a troublingly uncertain activity which can only be awarded respect when *it* respects the weird contingencies of the human variable and the negotiations that occur in all writing between the world as text and the world as social and political construction. His version of a literary history is really a kind of anti-history which is arranged in terms of fissures and discontinuities.⁹⁰

McCormack's complaints have been strongly echoed by others. Richard Haslam too is very ill-at-ease with the concept of 'tradition' and wants that term retired. He invokes the suggestion made by Robert Hume, who, in an influential article, urged that Gothic be thought of as a 'mode', and a 'very loosely defined mode' at that.⁹¹ Haslam insists that 'It may⁹² now be time to go all the way—retiring "the Irish Gothic *tradition*" and replacing it with "the Irish Gothic *mode*"—as long as the latter phrase is understood to be shorthand for a distinct but discontinuous disposition, a gradually evolving yet often intermittent suite of themes, motifs, devices, forms, and styles, selected in specific periods, locations, and rhetorical situations, by a succession of different writers'.⁹³ In a recent intervention into this debate, Christina Morin has supported Haslam's call for an end to an obsession with tradition found

in Irish studies. She argues that both the terms 'Irish Gothic' and the 'Irish Gothic tradition' are too restrictive, and while 'helpful' in pointing out connections between writers, misleading in their apparent transparency.⁹⁴ Margaret Kelleher is also suspicious of the term 'tradition' and suggests that while 'the Gothic mode with its distinctive anxieties is a significant form in nineteenth-century Irish writing', 'the coherence and extent of such a tradition may be overstated'.⁹⁵

My own response to this complaint by Kelleher is that while certainly the 'coherence' of the tradition could be overstated, this would matter only if you have already invested in the idea that traditions have to be 'coherent' rather than rather messy, inchoate and amorphous. While the critical numbers against the notion of an 'Irish Gothic tradition' are stacking up, there are still others, like Jim Hansen, who use the term without appearing to worry too much about the complications involved, but at the moment, such critics appear to be in the minority.⁹⁶

Of course, the attack on notions of tradition in Irish Gothic Studies is merely a symptom of a much wider suspicion of traditions and the traditional in modernity and post-modernity, and when we widen our interpretive lens it becomes clear that 'tradition' is one of the most abused terms in existence. As many have contended, modernity is in large part predicated on the rejection of tradition which was configured as a kind of historical burden preventing the individual from realising his self-worth. Raymond Williams points out that the term 'traditionalism' is generally applied as a 'description of habits or beliefs inconvenient to virtually any innovation'.⁹⁷ 'Tradition' indicates a 'handing down' of knowledge or material, and since modernity involves the slaying of the past and the rejection of that handed down on authority, to call something a 'tradition' is actually a way to dismiss it. The *myth* of the modern is that it is all that the past is not: it is progress. As Michel de Certeau has argued, 'modern Western history essentially begins with the differentiation between the past and the present',⁹⁸ and as Diarmuid Ó Giolláin explains, 'a key implication of modernization is that tradition prevents societies from achieving progress'.⁹⁹

Interestingly, Gothic novels are often about precisely this shift from the traditional and pre-modern to an innovative modernity. While 'Gothic' as a term may gesture towards the Middle Ages,¹⁰⁰ Gothic novels themselves are usually interested in 'transition periods' more generally, in-between times of change,¹⁰¹ what Robert Miles has called the 'Gothic cusp', on the birth of modernity.¹⁰² Gothic, in other words, is about that transition from a 'traditional' to a 'modern' society, and traces the dangers and difficulties involved in such an epistemic transformation. In its repeated recurrence to the refusal of the past to go

away, the Gothic demonstrates the kinds of neurotic replications that occur when a society or an individual attempts to deny the force of the traditional. In renouncing the traditional, the Gothic often compels its characters to deal with monstrous representations of traditional knowledge and traditional behaviours. The dead come back to life and terrorise the living. The Gothic is located at this historical juncture as it is a product of a society that is seeking to heal itself from the crisis involved in such a traumatic transition where the traditional has been supposedly superseded.¹⁰³ In other words, the Gothic has been rather less suspicious of traditions and the traditional and rather more interested in what happens when you deny traditions than some of those attacking the notion that an Irish Gothic tradition exists at all.

‘Tradition’, the handing down from one generation to another, generally with the implication that it be treated with respect, is simply antithetical to much thinking generated by modernity, in part because such handing down imbues the past with an aura it perhaps does not deserve. Unfortunately, there has also been a tendency to see the traditional only in its most objectionable guises and a concomitant automatic, knee-jerk rejection of anything that comes with the aura of the past and authority. Much scholarly work has gone into investigating the ‘invention of tradition’,¹⁰⁴ the manufacture of tradition for ideological reasons, to keep the present generation in ideological subservience to an older one.¹⁰⁵ In literary terms, too, ‘tradition’ has been imbued with a kind of sanctified aura, mainly because of the work of T. S. Eliot and his crucial essay ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’ (1919), which called for the individual writer to channel the work of his great literary forebearers, to attempt to embody ‘the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer’, effectively surrendering himself to the awesome power of the Western tradition.¹⁰⁶ The attack on ‘tradition’ has certainly been felt in English Studies, and from the 1950s onwards, generations of ‘anti-Establishment’ intellectuals have directed their polemic against the canon as derived from older theorists like Eliot and F. R. Leavis, as representative of a conservative ideological orientation. Indeed, one of the first results of the attack on canons and traditions was a new critical respect for Gothic, supposedly marginalised as a minor and embarrassing strain in literature by conservative readers. Critics turned in ever-increasing numbers to laud the importance of this much-maligned genre, claiming for it victim status, a necessary move as ‘the cultural politics of modern critical debate grant to vindicators of the marginalized or repressed a special licence to evade questions of artistic merit’. Certainly, the Gothic has become paradigmatic as the ‘Other’ of classical realism and has led critics to eulogising it as the ‘battered child’ of modern literature.¹⁰⁷

When we turn again to the attack on the notion of an 'Irish Gothic tradition' it is clear that ideological concerns are behind it. W. J. McCormack complains that 'the notion of Anglo-Irish literature is given an excessive stability by the acceptance of tradition as accumulated and accumulative succession',¹⁰⁸ he notes that 'in its Yeatsian form' the assertion of a tradition is 'a statement of certain continuities';¹⁰⁹ tradition, he later opines 'is frequently identified with a conservative literary history';¹¹⁰ his book is all about 'unmask[ing] the Yeatsian tradition';¹¹¹ he is sympathetic to the German philosopher Martin Heidegger's view of tradition as 'cousin-german to ideology'.¹¹² This is also what lies behind Richard Haslam's discontent with 'tradition'. He contends that:

'Tradition' denotes the handing across generations of sacred knowledge and rules; in literary critical contexts, the designation evokes the solemn architectonics of Eliot, Leavis and Yeats. However, tradition is too weighty (and weighted) a word to describe the irregular development and deployment of Gothic forms and themes in the work of Irish writers over the course of three centuries.¹¹³

In calling for the retirement of 'tradition' from the Irish Gothic critical idiom Haslam invokes the support of not only Robert Hume but also Fred Botting, one of the major figures in Gothic criticism.¹¹⁴ There is, though, a serious problem with relying on Botting to back up this dismantling of 'tradition' in favour of 'mode' in that he actually uses both terms fairly inconsistently throughout his study of Gothic.¹¹⁵ Indeed, to suggest that Botting favours a shift from 'tradition' to 'mode' is to misrepresent his view. Botting's argument is that given the sheer diffusion of 'Gothic forms and figures over more than two centuries' it is difficult to define Gothic as 'a homogenous generic category'; as a 'mode' it exceeds 'genre and categories'.¹¹⁶ There is certainly no rejection of the notion of a 'Gothic tradition' here since in the same paragraph he writes, 'While certain devices and plots, what might be called the staples of the Gothic, are clearly identifiable in early Gothic texts, the *tradition* draws on medieval romances, supernatural, Faustian and fairy tales, Renaissance drama, sentimental, picaresque and confessional narratives as well as the ruins, tombs and nocturnal speculations that fascinated Graveyard poets' (my italics).¹¹⁷ A page and a half later, discussing American Gothic, Botting claims that in the United States 'the literary *canon* is composed of works in which the influence of romances and Gothic novels is far more overt', so that American literature seems 'virtually an effect of a Gothic *tradition*. Gothic can perhaps be called the only true literary *tradition*' (my italics).¹¹⁸ He afterwards points to Horace Walpole as the founder of 'the Gothic *tradition*' (my italics);¹¹⁹

argues that Charles Brockden Brown was a negotiator of ‘European and American Gothic traditions’ (my italics);¹²⁰ and considers that David Lynch’s *Blue Velvet* (1986) absorbs ‘the American Gothic tradition’ (my italics).¹²¹

The term ‘tradition’ is indeed a problematic and sometimes distorting one in literary critical history, but if we were to retire all terms which were problematic and distorting we would be left with a much denuded and even more distorting view in which ‘mode’ does not help one bit. The Gothic is a genre which warns against such railing against and repression of traditions, such deconstructions of the traditional, so it is rather odd to find it co-opted into the anti-traditional project. An important objection to the intense suspicion of ‘tradition’ when discussing Irish Gothic is that ‘tradition’ is a much more polyvalent term than many of its critics have allowed. Indeed, McCormack himself makes it clear that he objects only to a specific formulation of tradition, tradition ‘in its Yeatsian form’¹²² – the view of ‘tradition’ articulated by the modernists. Modernist views of tradition are not the only ones, even if they have been allowed to dominate discussion in the literary critical world. While McCormack wants to ‘cashier’ the monologic, modernist view of tradition, he reminds us that it is perfectly possible to ‘consider tradition historically as the (sometimes contradictory and violent) convergence of readings, not of texts’.¹²³ He urges his readers not to mistake tradition for its objects (the components of the canon) but instead to recognise it as ‘the social and cultural dynamics of the process of handing down, and the place of this in the modes of production of the period and the historical character of that period’.¹²⁴

Indeed, once we move outside the sometimes narrow confines of literary history we find that ‘tradition’ has been used in this much more complicated way as including both actual works and the processes involved in interpreting and transmitting these works. For example (one that might not gain me very many friends), the Catholic Church in the *Dogmatic Constitution of Divine Revelation*, debated at the Second Vatican Council in 1962, problematised an old-fashioned view of Catholic tradition as simply referring to the deposit of faith and redefined it as ‘the whole process by which the Church “hands on” . . . its faith to each new generation’.¹²⁵ The relationship between Irish Gothic texts – or Irish texts that employ Gothic tropes and themes – and the process of reception and interpretation of these texts is (hesitatingly and in a limited way) analogous to the relationship between scripture and interpretation in the Catholic tradition: ‘Tradition comes before and during and not just after, the writing of Sacred Scripture’.¹²⁶ Haslam’s reminder of the term ‘mode’ is certainly useful, but it is rather strange

to think that its use requires the ‘retirement’ of the term ‘tradition’. To invoke a more theological discourse, I would suggest that the Irish Gothic mode *subsists in* the Irish Gothic tradition, and that this tradition includes all articulations of the Gothic mode (including all critical refec-tion on it) that have any relationship to the subject matter of ‘Ireland’, as broadly conceived as that can be.

In this way ‘tradition’ can be re-conceived, in Paul Ricoeur’s words, *not* as ‘the inert transmission of some dead deposit of material but . . . the living transmission of an innovation always capable of being reactivated by a return to the most creative moments of poetic activity’.¹²⁷ The sociologist Edward Shils has made the very useful distinction between tradition as something that is authoritatively handed down and tradition as ‘a chain of transmitted variants, as in the “Platonic tradition” or the “Kantian tradition”’. Shils’s point is that it is perfectly possible to use a non-essentialist, and indeed non-authoritarian, version of tradition which reveals how traditions are historically constructed while maintaining the sense that there are indeed things handed down from one generation (of writers) to the next.¹²⁸ Likewise, for the philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre, traditions are always *negotiated* rather than a simple set of authoritative texts or rules.¹²⁹ The Eliotean notion of a Tradition would be difficult to maintain in a country like Ireland anyway, given the violent discontinuities and gaps in its history. In an attempt to explain the absence of a strong realist canon in Ireland, the theorist David Lloyd has posited that there were simply too many elements within Ireland that could not be assimilated by a realist form. He argues that the paradigm of the realist novel is the bildungsroman, the novel of education and growth, and it thus relies on notions of development and maturation, expressive of a society growing teleologically into a nation state. Ireland was, however, composed of many elements which were uninterested in such statist narratives, and these ‘non-modern’ elements could not be properly accounted for by the standard realist conventions, and thus the realist novel never really had a chance in Ireland.¹³⁰ This also helps to explain why applying modernist notions of tradition and canon to Irish writing at all is simply to make a category error, and why attempts to do so will always break down.

Accepting the much more complicated and conflicted version of tradition suggested by W. J. McCormack and used elsewhere helps us to come to grips with some of the complications of Irish literary and social history – especially since it also helps the critic break away from the historically myopic scepticism towards tradition that has defined modernity and post-modernity. Taking full account of this view of tradition as a very complex, contradictory, often ‘violent’ process of

textual production and cultural interpretation allows us to see critical responses to the use of Gothic themes and tropes as constituting part of the Irish Gothic tradition, a tradition in which no one single ideological or political affiliation is discernible. While appreciating the force of McCormack's critique of putative 'traditions' as often all-too-easy constructions of the ideological imagination, I would suggest that the kind of Irish Gothic line left after his deconstruction resembles a Gothic edifice, full of suggestive gaps, obscure corners, imposing promontories (the 'great' works), fractures, fragments.¹³¹ In other words, despite the effects of historical process and 'external' interventions, a list of writers which includes figures as substantial as Maturin, Le Fanu, Wilde, Stoker, Yeats, Synge, and Bowen, all of whom have a connection to the same political and geographical space, all of whom have recourse to the same broadly defined conventions of Gothic, all of whom have some thematic associations, may still amount to a (much complicated) version of a tradition, indeed, a Gothic tradition in the full sense of the word. The Irish Gothic is a canon, a tradition and a mode all at once. A literary tradition survives in the face of McCormack's justifiable worries that ideology rather than history lies behind the positing of an Irish Gothic. To assert a Gothic tradition in Ireland we need not make a disguised claim to Irish self-sufficiency or even to any great thematic coherence linking very different texts and authors; we have merely to suggest that certain Irish writers pursued certain similar questions that were historically specific to the Irish situation, and in doing so they utilised the Gothic conventions. The 'Irishness' of the tradition comes from the fact that the writers had some important Irish connection, dealt with Irish issues, and were partially influenced by (or at least vaguely aware of) an Irish line of precursors.

Engaging with contemporary debates about the extent and importance of the Irish Gothic helps to clear the field for a proper discussion of the history of the genre in Ireland, ironically by acknowledging and accepting the messiness and blurriness of definitions and traditions. In Chapter 1, I move on to placing the genre in the Irish Anglican community and tracing the reasons for its emergence in the aftermath of the political crisis of the 1750s. The apparently obvious relationship between Irish Anglicans and Irish Gothic has been challenged since the late 2000s, and this chapter gives serious attention to such objections (unpacking the theory of a 'Catholic-nationalist Gothic') and also seeks to examine carefully the reasons why the Irish Gothic is correctly associated with Irish Anglicans. I argue that the Irish Anglican community in Ireland should be thought of as an 'enclave' dependent on images of horror and terror to police its borders. In the 1850s, with the Money Bill

dispute, this enclave suffered an extraordinary crisis and split into liberal and conservative camps. This split led 'liberal' Patriot Anglicans to move from pure horror and terror to the much more complicated genre of the Gothic. The chapter also shows that one possible reason for the attractiveness of the Gothic for the Anglican community in Ireland is that it is a genre peculiarly obsessed with questions of identity and liminality. Historicising the Irish Gothic in the 1750s is the first step to understanding its ideological and theological biases, and helps to explain why previous theorists have been right to insist on the Protestantism of the genre.

Chapter 2 takes seriously the objection that critics of Irish Gothic have been exceeding the proper limits of interpretation, that they are guilty of in some way breaching interpretive decorum in pushing explanation as far as it can go. Specifically in terms of the Irish Gothic, the charge has been that many of us are guilty of seeing Ireland and Irish issues everywhere we look – of imposing an Irish context on literature that is really uninterested in Ireland. I will pay particular attention to the concern that 'reading Ireland' into Irish Gothic texts is a form of allegoresis rather than interpretation. The chapter will then move on to looking at the use of allegory in eighteenth-century Irish writing as a context for understanding certain allegorising trends in Irish Gothic writing of the mid-century, paying particular attention to the context provided by *aisling* poems, Jonathan Swift's *The Story of the Injured Lady* (1746), and later national novels.

Chapter 3 builds on the argument concerning the use of allegory in eighteenth-century Irish writing and examines that curious (and curiously neglected) novel *The Adventures of Miss Sophia Berkley*, often now posited as the 'first' Gothic novel written and published in Ireland. The novel was published in 1760, just months after a major anti-union riot had taken place in Dublin and in the context of a major pamphlet war debating the merits of patriotism in Irish politics. The novel itself is rather mysterious in that we know nothing about its authorship and very little about who actually read it. Although no one has ever interpreted the novel in terms of the politics of the 1750s, this chapter will argue that it is only by re-placing it in the print culture of Patriot Dublin that we can begin to understand why a specifically 'Gothic' fiction emerged at precisely this moment in Ireland's history. The novel is particularly obsessed with questions of marriage and consent, and these were the terms in which the debate about a potential union of Great Britain and Ireland was being conducted at the time of publication. The main characters in the novel insist on the importance of consent in all contracts (and especially sexual contracts), and they frame all instances where consent is not sought as an attempt to enslave and demoralise.

The chapter argues that reading the novel into 1750s Dublin and the pamphlet debates on the union and the Money Bill dispute reveals that the emergence of Irish Gothic fiction drew very deeply upon patriot sentiment and argument, and establishes that the tradition of Irish Gothic fiction begins as an expression of liberal Irish Anglican thought.

Chapter 4 examines the monstrous construction of the Catholic in Irish writing and imbeds this construction in monster theory and the Gothic more generally before moving on to examine ways Irish Catholic historians attempted to challenge this construction through a revision of the history of the most infamous episode in Irish history, the 1641 rebellion. It examines, in particular, the new histories of the rising produced by Catholics such as John Curry as well as furious Irish Anglican reaction to this attempted ‘unmonstering’. This is a prelude to a reading of Thomas Leland’s Gothic novel *Longsword* in Chapter 5, which treats the novel in parallel with Leland’s later *History of Ireland* (1773) as two parts of a project to unmonster the Irish Catholic and promote liberal Anglican Patriotism. The conclusion briefly traces the history of Irish Gothic from the mid-eighteenth to the twenty-first century and examines whether it can be said that the genre is passing out of popularity in Ireland. The book will, therefore, attempt to thoroughly ‘explain’ the emergence of the Irish Gothic, but it will also help the reader see where the tradition goes after the 1760s, right up to contemporary writings.

Notes

1. Ozzie Jones while the O’Grady farm is under attack from an evil Irish creature in search of his pot of gold. *Leprechaun*, film, dir. Mark Jones, 1993. The leprechaun’s weakness is a four-leaf clover, and at the end of the film he is defeated when the child hero, Alex, sticks a clover plant to some chewing gum and manages to get it into the leprechaun’s mouth. This is the first of a (so-far) six-film franchise.
2. Newman, ‘Irish Horror Cinema’.
3. It should, perhaps, be emphasised that these political echoes are almost certainly coincidental and not indicative of Coppola’s insights into Irish society or predictive abilities. Texts have echoes and resonances far beyond the control of their authors, and Gothic texts, in particular, as W. J. McCormack has explained, often violate the ‘official best intentions’ of their authors. ‘Irish Gothic and After’, 111. This interpretive slipperiness is compounded in relation to *Dementia 13* which, although ‘authored’ by Francis Ford Coppola, had additional scenes added by the producer, Roger Corman, after an initial screening of Coppola’s version. Corman was apparently disappointed by the relative restraint on display and he wanted some supplementary violence. He was also concerned about the shortness of the film and added a prologue in which

- a psychiatrist ‘tests’ the psychological fortitude of audience members, given that they are about to undergo such a terrifying experience. The additional material was directed by Jack Hill.
4. Quoted in O’Beirne Ranelagh, *Short History*, 8.
 5. Gerald of Wales, *History*, 74.
 6. Gilbert White to Thomas Pennant, 9 March 1775, quoted in O’Halloran, *Golden Ages*, 98.
 7. Kilfeather, ‘Gothic Novel’, 80.
 8. Lee, *The Recess*, 222–3.
 9. *Ibid.*, 224.
 10. *Ibid.*, 229.
 11. Hume, *History of England* (1763), Vol. 6, p. 374.
 12. Lee, *Young Lady’s Tale*.
 13. Musgrave, *Memoirs*, 858.
 14. Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 177.
 15. Randel, ‘Political Geography’, 485.
 16. Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 187.
 17. Machen, *Terror*, 17.
 18. For an analysis of the ‘Gothicising’ of Ireland and Wales, see Jones, ‘Borderlands’. For the depiction of the Irish in the Victorian press see Curtis, Jr, *Apes and Angels*.
 19. Gibbons, *Gaelic Gothic*, 11.
 20. Griffith, *History of Lady Barton*, 15–16.
 21. *Ibid.*, 17.
 22. *Ibid.*, 10.
 23. Morin, “‘Terre inconnue’”, 7.
 24. Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry*, 231.
 25. Edmund Burke to Richard Shackleton, 25 January 1744/45. *Correspondence*, 38–9.
 26. Gibbons, *Edmund Burke*, 2–3.
 27. Roche, *Children of the Abbey*, 91. Obviously, Roche here mingles Burke’s two categories, but the implications of her use of his treatise are clear.
 28. *Ibid.*, 147–8.
 29. Owenson, *Wild Irish Girl* (1999), 19.
 30. Stoker, *Snake’s Pass*, 3–4.
 31. For films which have essentially the same plot see also the equally bad *Leap Year*, dir. Anand Tucker, 2010 – with Amy Adams and Matthew Goode – the rather better *The MatchMaker*, dir. Mark Joffe, 1997 – Janeane Garofalo and David O’Hara – and the enjoyable *The Last of the High Kings*, dir. David Keating, 1996 – Christina Ricci and Jared Leto. Female American tourists appear in such films to be equally impressed by the primitive landscape and version of masculinity on offer in Ireland.
 32. Maturin, *Milesian Chief*, Vol. 1, p. 54.
 33. For Ireland in popular cinema, see Barton, *Acting Irish*; Rockett, Gibbons and Hill, *Cinema and Ireland*; Gillespie, *Myth of an Irish Cinema*.
 34. Colley, ‘Britishness and Otherness’.
 35. There is currently a strong tendency in horror cinema to locate the Gothic in places like Eastern Europe. See, for example, *Hostel*, dir. Eli Roth, 2005; *A Serbian Film*, dir. Srdjan Spasojevic, 2010.

36. Haydon, "I Love my King and my Country".
37. Jones, *Horror*, 18.
38. See also Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*.
39. Morash, "Time is Out of Joint", 133.
40. Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, *passim*.
41. Kreilkamp, 'Review', 248.
42. For this argument, see especially Gibbons, *Transformations*, 15–16.
43. I am, to put it mildly, unqualified to write such a study.
44. Davenport-Hines, *Gothic*.
45. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari are currently strong contenders to take over from Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan as the most cited theorists in Gothic Studies. See, for a very provocative intervention, Powell, *Deleuze*.
46. Botting, *Gothic*, 16.
47. Haslam, 'Irish Gothic', 83, 86.
48. Kilfeather, 'Gothic Novel', 82–3.
49. *Ibid.*, 86.
50. Halberstam, *Skin Shows*, 92.
51. Hogle, 'Introduction', 1.
52. Watt, *Contesting*, 6.
53. Platzner and Hume, "Gothic Versus Romantic", 273.
54. Miles, *Gothic Writing*, 4.
55. Richter, 'Reception of the Gothic Novel', 117.
56. Miles, *Gothic Writing*, 3.
57. Watt, *Contesting*, 1. Although, part of the attraction of Watt's study is that despite the fact that he begins by claiming that the Gothic is *not* a genre he carries on using the term 'genre' to refer to the Gothic for the rest of the book.
58. Kelly, *English Fiction*, 49.
59. Duff, *Romanticism*, vii.
60. Frow, *Genre*, 23.
61. Anne Freadman, 'Untitles: (On Genre)', *Cultural Studies*, 2: 1 (1988), 73, quoted in Frow, *Genre*, 24.
62. *Ibid.*, 25.
63. Mighall, *Geography*, xiv.
64. There is no space here for a full reading of the role of the Gothic in Edgeworth's novel. For a beginning to such a reading see, Killeen, 'Irish Gothic Revisited'.
65. Duff, *Romanticism*, 161.
66. Quoted in Duff, *Romanticism*, 161.
67. Samuel Richardson to Aaron Hill, 26 January 1746/47, *Selected Letters*, 78.
68. Ellis, *History of Gothic*, 12.
69. Watt, *Contesting*, 1.
70. Walpole, *Castle of Otranto*, 9.
71. Reprinted in Clery and Miles (eds), *Gothic Documents*, 183–4.
72. Howard, *Reading Gothic Fiction*, 2.
73. Contrarily, Jim Hansen argues that rather than being a generic mess, 'the English Gothic novel, with its fleets of unquiet ghosts, overly-sensitive confined women, usurping Catholic counts, and ineffectual suitors,

- provides what might be the most lucid and flagrant set of generic tropes, approaches and concerns in the history of modern English literature' *Terror and Irish Modernism*, 7.
74. Bradshaw, 'Nationalism and Historical Scholarship', 251.
 75. Derrida, 'Law of Genre', 212.
 76. Haslam, 'Irish Gothic', 87.
 77. Gamer, *Romanticism and the Gothic*, 2.
 78. *Ibid.*, 4.
 79. Botting, 'Preface', 1–6; for discussions on the Gothic's transformative tendencies see Botting, *Gothic*; Goddu, *Gothic America*; Hogle, 'Introduction', 1–20; Miles, *Gothic Writing*; Mulvey-Roberts, 'Introduction', xv–xviii; Punter, *Literature of Terror*: Vol. 1.
 80. Watt, *Contesting*, 1.
 81. Ellis, *History*, 13.
 82. McCormack, 'Irish Gothic and After', 833.
 83. McCormack, *Dissolute Characters*, 2–11.
 84. *Ibid.*, 2–33.
 85. *Ibid.*, 2.
 86. *Ibid.*, 2.
 87. McCormack, *From Burke to Beckett*, 14.
 88. McCormack, *Dissolute Characters*, 3.
 89. McCormack, *Ascendancy and Tradition*, 337.
 90. Brown, 'New Literary Histories', 468–9.
 91. Platzner and Hume, "Gothic Versus Romantic", 273.
 92. A rather misleading word here – Haslam appears in no doubt as to the sagacity of his approach.
 93. Haslam, 'Irish Gothic: A Rhetorical Hermeneutics Approach'.
 94. Morin, "Gothic" and "National"?, 185, note 12.
 95. Kelleher, 'Prose Writing and Drama in English', 472.
 96. Hansen, *Terror and Irish Modernism*.
 97. Williams, *Keywords*, 320.
 98. de Certeau, *Writing of History*, 2.
 99. Ó Giolláin, *Locating Irish Folklore*, 12–13.
 100. Montague Summers claims that 'the connexion between the Gothic Romance and Gothic Architecture [of the twelfth century] is, so to speak, congenital and indigenous'. *Gothic Quest*, 189. This claim was echoed by Varma, *Gothic Flame*, 18, and Kilgour, *Rise of the Gothic Novel*, 11.
 101. McIntyre, 'Were the "Gothic Novels" Gothic?', 645.
 102. Miles, *Ann Radcliffe*, 87.
 103. Veeder, 'Nurture of the Gothic', 54–5; Punter, *Gothic Pathologies*, 2.
 104. For the classic study, see Hobsbawn and Ranger, *Invention of Tradition*.
 105. In Irish terms see Comerford, *Ireland*.
 106. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', 51.
 107. Baldick and Mighall, 'Gothic Criticism', 210.
 108. McCormack, *From Burke to Beckett*, 12.
 109. *Ibid.*, 12.
 110. *Ibid.*, 303.
 111. *Ibid.*, 305.
 112. *Ibid.*, 306.

113. Haslam, 'Irish Gothic: A Rhetorical Hermeneutics Approach'.
114. Haslam, "'Broad Farce and Thrilling Tragedy'", fn. 17.
115. Indeed, bizarrely, Haslam points out that McCormack himself uses both the term 'mode' and the term 'tradition' in his studies. Most critics I have consulted do not see a conflict between the terms.
116. Botting, *Gothic*, 14.
117. *Ibid.*, 14.
118. *Ibid.*, 16.
119. *Ibid.*, 21.
120. *Ibid.*, 115.
121. *Ibid.*, 175.
122. McCormack, *Burke to Beckett* 12.
123. *Ibid.*, 12.
124. *Ibid.*, 303.
125. McBrien, *Catholicism*, 62–3.
126. *Ibid.*, 62.
127. Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, Vol. 1, p. 68.
128. Shils, *Tradition*, 12–13.
129. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*.
130. Lloyd, *Anomalous States*, 125–62.
131. This is a description Richard Haslam dismisses as 'picturesque' (and we know what he means by that). 'Irish Gothic: A Rhetorical Hermeneutics Approach'.

Braindead: Locating the Gothic

I'm coming apart! Oh, mother of God, I'm coming apart!¹

I

The Irish Gothic tradition is a central one in terms of Irish writing, and, according to many critics, one of the most important connections between many of the writers in this tradition is their inhabitation of an 'Anglo-Irish', 'Ascendancy' world, though we need to acknowledge that these terms elide much in the way of class, theological and political difference, and it is best to be more specific.² In an influential formulation, Roy Foster argues that the Irish Protestant Ascendancy, especially Charles Maturin and Sheridan Le Fanu 'pioneered the nineteenth-century tradition of Irish supernatural fiction' as an expression of their investment in 'Protestant Magic', which included Freemasonry, folklore and esoteric philosophies like Swedenborgianism.³ This is a view echoed by Terry Eagleton, for whom the 'fact that Anglo-Irish writers . . . should have exhibited such fascination with madness and the occult, terror and the supernatural' is explicable because the Gothic operated as that community's 'political unconscious . . . the place where its fears and fantasies most definitely emerge'.⁴ In a previous study, I, too, argued that the Gothic is best seen as an expression of what I called the 'Irish Anglican Imagination'.⁵ Although this apparently obvious relationship between Irish Anglicans and Irish Gothic has been challenged in recent years, one possible reason for the attractiveness of the Gothic for the Anglican community in Ireland is that it is a genre peculiarly obsessed with questions of identity. As Robert Miles has argued, the Gothic is particularly concerned with 'representations of the fragmented subject',⁶ and Irish Anglicans had to tackle a great deal of such fragmentation in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a function of what

T. C. Barnard has called this community's 'crisis of identity'.⁷ Indeed, the difficulties and upheavals in Irish Anglican identity throughout its history have been so great as to pose serious problems to historians who want to provide a convenient, short-hand term to label this community.

'Finding yourself' might be a rather irritating hobby of far too many in these post-modern times, but identity has always been a tricky problem for us humans. The inhabitants of Ireland are, of course, notorious and perennial navel gazers, perpetually asking what it means to be Irish and dogged in our desire to embrace (good football players) or reject (bad novelists) potential candidates depending on the national mood. Though clearly, 'Irish identity' means a great deal to us, we have not been without some helpful analysts who couldn't see what all the existential fuss was about. In the early eighteenth century, Philip Yorke, later the first earl of Hardwicke, had a simple explanation of 'Irishness'. As he explained in the House of Commons, 'the subjects of Ireland were to be considered in two respects, as English and Irish, that the Irish were a conquered people, and the English a colony transplanted hither and as a colony subject to the law of the mother country'.⁸ This Manichean version of Irish identity was, however, unsatisfactory to most who lived on this benighted island, not least the 'English' colonialists who became almost tormented in their search for the Self. Barnard warns historians not to overestimate the existential unease of the Irish Anglican community and insists that 'the inhabitants of eighteenth-century Ireland agonised less about their own identities than do the rootless and perplexed enquirers of the late twentieth century',⁹ but of course, this goes without saying (not least because we are living in a post-Freudian age), and in no way mitigates against the kinds of uncertainties evident in the expressions of existential angst found in the ruminations of Irish Anglicans. Irish Anglicans certainly thought they constituted a discernible community in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. Ireland, as Sir Richard Cox put it, was divided sharply into civilised Anglicans and barbaric Catholics, and he most definitely lived in *Hibernia Anglicana* (1689–90). William Molyneux explained the sense of a unity of purpose many within this community felt, pointing out that 'Your Majesty has not in all Your Dominions a People more *United* and *Steady* to your Interests, than the *Protestants of Ireland*'.¹⁰

Commentators have tended to agree that the different communities inhabiting the island of Ireland encountered the world in often startlingly different ways, and that cultural differences became distinct ways of understanding reality, psychological divisions which made conflicts and tensions harder to resolve. For example, Oliver MacDonagh's brilliant and seminal *States of Mind: Two Centuries of Anglo-Irish*

Conflict, 1780–1980 (1983) ascribes very different views of time and space to different communities living in Ireland, discussing things such as ‘the Ulster Protestant sense of territoriality’,¹¹ ‘the Irish nationalist . . . concept of space’,¹² ‘the peasant’s view of property’.¹³ It is important to note that MacDonagh’s study is an attempt to trace mental states, to document not events but collective mental attitudes. In his seminal study of competing Irish cultures, F. S. L. Lyons, too, argues that much of the conflict in Irish history can be put down to the fact that its different communities understand the world in such different ways that they have become ‘seemingly irreconcilable cultures, unable to live together or to live apart, caught inextricably in the web of their tragic history’.¹⁴ Discussion of ‘mentalities’ is actually quite common in historical and sociological research. ‘Social memory’ has been brilliantly theorised by Paul Connerton as a communal memory which involves folklore, mythology, tradition and literature.¹⁵ In his study of ‘collective memory’ Maurice Halbwachs insists that individual memory is best seen through the prism of collective memory since the individual constantly depends on her version of the past being reflected and corroborated by the community to which she belongs.¹⁶ We remember the past not merely as individuals but as parts of a collective and community – ‘knowable communities’ have memories, and one way of getting at these memories is through an analysis of the literature that the community has produced. This book argues that the Irish Gothic tradition, for example, is one, very telling, way to examine the mental world of the community that (generally) produced it: the Irish Anglican community.

Some critics have protested strongly against any resort to terms like ‘the Irish mind’, ‘the Irish Protestant mind’, or (worst of all?) ‘the Irish Anglican imagination’.¹⁷ For Richard Haslam, for example,

the definite article should be treated with caution and caveats when employed categorically (‘the Irish Gothic mode’). Even more intellectual vigilance is necessary when ‘the’ prefixes prosopopœia . . . Extreme caution is required when dealing with hazardous materials like Freudianism, especially when hypostasized creations like ‘the . . . Ascendancy literary imagination’ are psychoanalyzed in order to expose ‘the return of the repressed’ . . . Thus, although presumably intended to function as historical shorthand, Killen’s references to entities entitled ‘the Protestant character’, ‘the English mind’, and ‘the Irish Protestant mentality’ are distinctly problematic.¹⁸

Let me acknowledge that there is a genuine problem in attempting to generalise and articulate a view about the *mentalité* and psychology, but also the general characteristics, of a given culture, and that it is not only inadvisable but impossible in the strictest sense to essentialise any given set of people because there will always be exceptions and differing

versions of the same community. It is certainly strictly true to say that ‘the Irish mind’ or ‘the Protestant imagination’ or ‘the English personality’ do not exist except in the most hypothetical and abstract terms. There are a few more points to be made in respect to this, however, the first being the rather obvious one that substituting the prefix ‘an’, or ‘one version of’, for the definite article, does not really help matters, and that qualifications while useful can be not only cumbersome but very misleading. After all, surely only the paranoid reader would consider that terms such as these are meant to be treated literally in the first place. So, although I can easily concede the point that ‘*the* Irish Anglican imagination’ does not exist, I continue to insist that it is perfectly possible to discuss ‘the Irish Anglican imagination’.

Finding the correct term(s) to describe the post-Cromwellian Protestant settlers in Ireland has always, of course, been a peculiarly difficult task. Not that people have been unforthcoming with suggestions: ‘the Anglo-Irish’, ‘the Protestant interest’, ‘the king’s Irish subjects’, ‘the English in Ireland’, ‘English Protestants of Ireland’, ‘the whole people of Ireland’, ‘the Protestant Ascendancy’. Deciding between these labels is not simply a matter of politics (usually explicit) but often of ontology (usually implicit), and all decisions are in the end self-defeating, not least because members of the community themselves couldn’t make up their own minds.

Irish Anglicans constituted a community that was, to say the least, conflicted about its own identity, and often split by very public disagreements. Many were deeply attached to the English connection and asserted an English identity very strongly. Others quickly adapted to being in Ireland and appropriated an Irish identity – indeed, many styled themselves the ‘whole people of Ireland’¹⁹ (ignoring the substantial body of Catholics who had a rather different perspective on national identity). Others hesitated between Irishness and Englishness, walking the existential high-wire along the hyphen. Scott C. Breuninger usefully argues that many thinkers in the ‘transitional phase’ in the 1720s ‘displayed a bifurcated vision of “Irishness”: a type of dual identity dependent upon specific contexts’.²⁰ Others adopted a different identity depending on the audience they were addressing: to one group they would adopt the tones of the English settler, to another they could speak as if they had deep roots in Ireland. Attitudes to the ‘native’ population (primarily meaning the Catholics) contributed to the identity crisis, as did the attitude of the ‘natives’ to the newcomers. Again, some Catholics saw the Anglican community as a gang of interlopers, invading aliens displacing the natural inhabitants of the country; others (though fewer in number) embraced the Anglican community more congenially. It is generally

accepted that there is a historical dimension to the identity crisis: in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Anglicans in Ireland felt reluctant to call themselves 'Irish' for a variety of reasons – not least that they had inherited a view of the Irish as degenerate savages that would make anyone hesitant about adopting the term to describe themselves.²¹ However, slowly, over the course of the eighteenth century, and especially as Anglicans in Ireland began to realise that, from an English perspective, they were as Irish as the native Catholics, the term 'Irish' became more acceptable, and indeed, increasingly attractive, and many began to adopt the label with enthusiasm. Such a chronology is, of course, a largely theoretical construction and bears only strained resemblance to the social and psychological realities of living in this existentially confused community. The constant re-making of Irish Anglican identity should come as no surprise to those acquainted with sociological and philosophical theories of identity. As Steven Shapin, a historian of the seventeenth century, points out, 'identity has to be continually made, and is continually revised and remade, throughout an individual career in contingent social and cultural settings'.²²

It is certainly understandable that Irish Anglicans reacted to English perceptions. After all, according to Charles Taylor, 'our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others – and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves'.²³ To be Anglican in Ireland meant to be considered too Irish by English commentators, yet generally not Irish enough by Catholic fellow inhabitants of the island, and this was not a comfortable existential position in which to be stuck. Being stuck 'in-between'²⁴ two antagonistic or at least sceptical interpreters, surely helped in the development of what Mary Douglas has called an 'enclave' mentality.²⁵ An 'enclave' is a shared cultural space in which ideas about time and space, ethics, physical nature, metaphysical reality and human relationships are held in common so as to allow the individuals who occupy that space to negotiate their relationship to reality and to others outside the enclave as successfully as possible. The cultural ideas shared by the individuals and groups within the enclave have to be both flexible enough to allow genuine engagements with reality, the external world and changing historical circumstances but also static enough to ensure a robust understanding of where the borders of the enclave lie. The most important issue for the enclave is the mapping of its own limits and the policing and maintenance of its boundaries, keeping its members inside and blocking the entrance of detested outsiders.

Although Douglas reserves the term ‘enclave’ for extremely tightly defined groups such as terrorist organisations and street gangs, the relatively small size of the Irish Anglican community in the eighteenth century, its obsession with a ‘black and white’ vision of insiders and outsiders and the nature of its rituals of inclusion and exclusion suggest that ‘enclave’ may be the best term to describe them. The important thing about enclaves is that in situations where a minority is overwhelmed in numbers by an outsider majority, and where the minority feels at least potentially under constant threat, membership of the enclave can help pacify fears and lead to a sense of security while being surrounded by threat. This helps us understand why although Irish Anglicans referred almost fetishistically to the fact that they were extraordinarily outnumbered by the murderous Catholic monsters that surrounded them there was also a sense of calm and security on display within the community itself. For example, while Archbishop William King could, in 1719, point to the fact that ‘we have six or seven Papists for every one of us [Anglicans]’, he was still reasonably secure and relatively unafraid: ‘Tis somewhat to the honour of the Protestants of Ireland that notwithstanding . . . we have kept our country in quiet, while Britain is now under the fears of a second rebellion’.²⁶ The tendency of Irish Anglicans on the one hand to see a potential 1641 around every corner while on the other hand to express relative peace of mind has led to a historiographical dispute over how best to characterise the dominant mentality of the community. For Tom Bartlett, ‘the fundamental insecurity of their political and social position’ was due to the fact that they always felt ‘under siege and threat of rebellion’, while to Sean Connolly a ‘general mood of confidence’ rather than anxiety can be detected.²⁷ Douglas has explained, however, how an enclave mentality can simultaneously alert its members to feelings of siege and external threat while also generating a sense of togetherness, mutual trust and confidence in internal resources, so such apparent contradictions can be reconciled. This Irish Anglican community was relatively stable and secure by the 1740s, especially after a generally stable period of political harmony in the 1730s.

Douglas emphasises that enclave identity is maintained by stressing the ‘saved’ nature of insiders, and the damned destiny of the outsiders, which can often spill over into monsterring outsiders and representing the world beyond the enclave as dark and threatening and the inside as warm, embracing and rewarding.²⁸ Obviously, the most basic outsider was the Irish Catholic. The Irish Anglican enclave was immeasurably strengthened by a sense of being in a country populated by aggressive antagonists, and indeed so great was this sense of Catholic exclusion that in attempting to define the Irish nation, most Irish Anglicans simply

disqualified the descendants of the conquered 'savage Irish' entirely. The Penal Laws, whatever we may think of their more practical implications (about which much scholarly ink has been spilled)²⁹ had the psychological consequence of sealing about three-quarters of the Irish population into a never-never land, quarantined away.³⁰ Nor was there much love lost between the Anglican elite and the Irish Presbyterians, whom they regarded as a little better than the Catholics, and the passing of the Test Act in 1704 (which required the taking of the Anglican sacrament for every public office), effectively sent both non-Anglican groups to the political and civil wilderness – again, an action which had more psychological than practical effects (though the material effects should not be discounted).

The enclave must keep others out and its own members in, and the most effective means of doing this is through a process whereby those outside the border are 'othered' – defined as inherently threatening and monstrous – and its own members are warned of moral and physical abandonment should any 'betray' the enclave through associating with, joining, or admitting the reviled Other. And, as Connolly points out, in Ireland, 'the fear of internal betrayal was a central feature of Protestant political culture'.³¹ The basic discourse of the Gothic has proved very useful in sustaining the life of enclaves since the Gothic is very much about border disputes. Tzvetan Todorov divides fantasy (in which the Gothic is included) into two broad categories, that dealing with the 'Not-I' and that concerned with the 'I', and in both categories boundaries are central features. Fantasy of the 'Not-I' involves relations between Self and Other (such as between Irish Anglicans and Irish Catholics) and protecting the Self from external threats; fantasy of the 'I' concerns expelling the 'Other' hidden within the Self, expelling the treacherous aspect of the Self (defined sociologically or psychologically) and making the Self pure again.³² These disputes have been powerfully literalised in two basic Gothic plots. Typically, a small, tightly knit community is attacked by a monstrous invader who must be expelled and destroyed. Classic examples of such invasion narratives are Stoker's *Dracula*, Jack Finney's *The Body Snatchers* (1954) and Stephen King's *Salem's Lot* (1975). In the alternative plot, an individual finds that they are internally fractured because of strange and unwelcome aspects of the interior mind or body. Obvious examples here are Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), William Peter Blatty's *The Exorcist* (1971) and Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club* (1996).

The Self whose borders are under threat in early English Gothic writing has been powerfully read as tied to a nationalist Protestant mentality which emerged from the 'Glorious' Revolution of 1688, the

threatening Other manifesting in the shape of monstrous Continental Catholicism.³³ As an enclave, Irish Anglicans had, obviously, a threatening external group much closer to home, since they were surrounded and vastly outnumbered by Irish Catholics. Self-consciously enclosed by this threatening monstrosity, the Irish Anglican community sought numerous ways to protect itself and also sought to provide a coherent narrative of itself that would reassure and protect against invasion and internal upheaval. It found that the imagery of horror and terror was peculiarly equipped to do both, not only warning of the dangers of those outside righteous Anglicanism but also demonstrating vividly what transpired to those who happened to capitulate to the attractiveness of the Other. Horror offers to those who remain within the borders of the enclave moral purity and safety from annihilation, and while it might detail the surface attractiveness of the Other, its exotic seductiveness – hence the form’s preoccupation with licentious and sexualised versions of Catholicism – it does so only to reveal that beneath this veil of eroticism lies a rotting corpse: to give way to its attraction is to consign oneself to eternal damnation. At times, of course, the Irish Anglican community could offer its inhabitants material rewards for remaining within the enclave’s borders – political and social power – but as the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries progressed, and rolling concessions were offered to Irish Catholics by the British government, such power came to seem increasingly ephemeral and illusory, and moral and religious purity was offered in exchange.

The parameters of the Irish Anglican enclave became a cause for concern after the 1641 rebellion (a revolt by both Old English and native Catholics against the ‘new English’ Protestants who had been granted land and political rights in the aftermath of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century plantations), when the social and psychological walls dividing the community from Irish Catholics were fortified, but the isolation of the enclave was emphasised by the fact that many within it felt abandoned by their ethnic and religious ‘allies’ on the British mainland, a feeling that only increased in the two centuries that followed. Throughout the eighteenth century, sermons from Anglican divines spoke of ‘a Wall of Defence’ built by God around His elect community, and this wall was reinforced by the tropes and images used by Irish Anglicans to describe those who lived on the other side of this wall. In England, John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments* (1563) had demonised Catholics and provided a basic source for the imagery of the monster in the later Gothic tradition; in Ireland, Sir John Temple’s historical ‘analysis’ of 1641, *The Irish Rebellion* (1646), fulfilled the same role. In it he explained that as agents of the great deceiver himself, Satan, Irish Catholics were literally

contagious pollutants of the blood, evil fiends who could not be trusted and who were involved in a huge international conspiracy – effected through secret societies – to wipe out heretics, against which Irish Anglicans must enforce a social, political and psychological separation. Temple's was one in a series of texts which produced and defended the notion that Irish Catholics were demons in need of policing (and perhaps exterminating), a series which prominently included William King's *The State of the Protestants of Ireland* (1691). These texts operated as a proto-Gothic nexus that provided, in the shape of the evil Catholic, the template for the invading external monstrosity central to the Gothic tradition and reinforced the political panic that made the policing of enclave borders so compellingly attractive. Irish Gothic inherits from this proto-Gothic literature the version of Catholics as a morally defiled outsider group in opposition to a community of virtuous and righteous Anglican insiders, often a remnant left alone to proceed against the horrific monstrous foe, a trope basic to texts such as Regina Maria Roche's *Children of the Abbey* (1796), Maturin's *Melmoth*, Le Fanu's *Carmilla* and Stoker's *Dracula*. As well as instilling sectarian paranoia, these texts blamed the racial and theological impurity of the Irish Anglican enclave itself for the threat of 1641 and insisted that all such impure internal elements be cleansed.

That the English came to be seen as another group of dangerous outsiders was more surprising, but a strong sense of betrayal had settled in terms of the Irish Anglican relationship with those in the 'mother country'. In fact, this sense of betrayal is what partly caused the shift towards Anglican acceptance of the appellation of Irishness in the first place, since if you were destined to be treated as Irish by everyone else, you may as well act that way. As Swift put it, 'Our Neighbours . . . look upon Us as a Sort of *Savage Irish*, whom our Ancestors conquered several hundred Years ago'.³⁴ By the 1720s, when Swift was writing, this had been a long-standing complaint. Before the Treaty of Limerick was signed, one Irish Anglican was complaining that his ethnic and religious 'allies' in England regarded Protestants living in Ireland as the 'scum of their Nation', 'People setting up for our selves', and that their view of the entire population of Ireland had become so jaundiced that they 'wish this Island sunk in the Sea'.³⁵ There are deep economic 'causes' to the shifting of identity towards an Irish inflection. Irish Anglicans were deeply resentful of the fact that, whenever it suited English financial needs, Westminster politicians would vote for bills which had the effect of damaging Irish trade, and they were especially enraged by the suppression of the Irish woollen industry through the Woollen Act of 1699, which essentially prevented the Irish exportation of cloth. An Irish

identity was also fostered by the fact that (partly because the parliament was empowered to vote for the 'additional duties' concerning the disposal of revenue and partly owing to an increased sense that the English parliament was likely to pass laws that would not be in their favour) the Anglican elite met on a much more regular basis in the Irish parliament which began holding very habitual sessions at the start of the eighteenth century. Although only four parliaments had met by 1692, from that year the Irish parliament began to meet about once every two years. The very act of meeting so regularly was bound to have a psychological effect on such a small group of people in any event, and from their joint activities as a politically active assemblage during parliamentary sessions it was an easy step to considering themselves a group. Given that they were doomed to find themselves being considered as possessing the 'odious Character of an Irish-man' by their English neighbours anyway, the Anglican community may have had little choice but to accept the title 'Irish' and do something positive with it (in a way quite similar to the appropriation of the term 'queer' by the gay community in the twentieth century).³⁶

By 1717 the Bishop of Kilmore was writing that he found 'the distinction between English and Irish grows more wide'.³⁷ Although the Anglican community in Ireland had been calling itself 'English' since the Reformation, because of the alienation from English sympathies they began to adopt more local terminology, like 'the people of Ireland'. As Connolly puts it, 'the people of Ireland, in the sense of those whose voices were entitled to be heard, were the Protestants of the kingdom, a minority, but possessed of the greater part of its commercial and landed wealth'.³⁸ A growing affection for Ireland and a growing identification with the country was expressed in many ways, particularly through an interest in the ancient past of the country fostered by an incipient anti-quarianism and a tree-planting fad that expressed the desired rootedness of the Irish Anglican community in the Irish soil. The Church of Ireland bishops William Nicolson of Derry and Francis Hutchinson of Down and Connor were busy in the 1740s claiming that Ireland had an ancient civilisation as great as that of Greece, and the Physico-Historical Society was founded to demonstrate that in the past Ireland had indeed been a crucible of culture.³⁹ When Alan Brodrick decided in 1712 not to take up the offer of a seat in Westminster, he explained that he did it because he (more or less) thought of himself as Irish now: 'I shall be thought of and perhaps find that I am (what of all things I would least choose to be) an Irishman'.⁴⁰ In this he sounds like Jonathan Swift, a very reluctant 'patriot', forced to accept his Irishness after his ambitions for a political career in London were dashed. What we find, therefore, is a 'growing

consciousness' of a 'distinct group solidarity defined in opposition to England' but also remaining outside other groups on the island.⁴¹

Another crucial factor in the bonding process was what Sean D. Moore has called the 'Irish financial revolution', which involved a small group of important Irish Anglicans providing a 'national security loan to the Irish Treasury' to enable it to raise enough troops to resist should there be an invasion by Jacobite forces. As Moore emphasises, 'this public loan formed a political and economic community, what amounted to an informal republic based on the shared risk of mutual investment, in which each lender depended on the others for protection of existing property and future investment payments'.⁴² The loan was to be repaid by taxes gathered by the Irish Treasury and authorised by the Irish parliament, in which many of the original lenders actually sat, so the incestuous (and frankly corrupt) nature of this financial agreement reinforced psychological ties and enclave self-reflection. Both inter-personal loyalty and financial interests meant that the Irish Anglican community became particularly threatened any time English interference in the financial regulation of Ireland became possible, which partly explains why declarations of Irish patriotic sentiment by the enclave became particularly loud during moments when English colonial control was expressed in fiscal meddling. The Declaratory Act of 1720, for example, made clear the right of the English parliament to enact tax legislation for Ireland, and it inspired a host of patriotic pamphlets in defence of Irish financial independence and a scheme to establish a national bank, a bank which would not have deposits but would be concerned with debt – in the first place, the loans given by Irish politicians to the Irish Treasury, and in the second place the repayment of the interest on these loans in perpetuity. Using the terminology first applied by the Irish philosopher George Berkley about this group of Irish Anglican politicians and speculators, Moore calls them the Irish Monti, since they depended for their financial security on the continued repayment of interest, and indeed the Irish Anglican community was easily mobilised against any threat to this financial security, and developed a patriotic discourse and literature designed to protect against any English interference in the payments of interest.⁴³ The interconnection of the Irish financial system with Irish Anglican patriotism was to have serious consequences in the 1750s, when a political crisis was caused by a dispute over a money bill, and this crisis would result in the development of the Irish Gothic novel.

The 'changing perceptions of national identity' in the Anglican community in Ireland have been the subject of much useful commentary.⁴⁴ One thing it is important to acknowledge is the provisionality of any (and indeed all) statements of identity in the period because a radical

uncertainty plagued all attempts or gestures towards definition, although the shift towards acceptance of an 'Irish dimension' to the community's identity was probably more or less complete by the 1760s. What is traceable is a sense of Irishness which is exclusively Anglican (rather than just Protestant, given that Dissenters are positively disqualified), with a sense of being a chosen people inherited from the writings of Sir John Temple. This Anglican community occupied a kind of mental ghetto, sealed off by a (porous) membrane from the outside world, including their nearest neighbours.

The ritualistic nature of the Irish Anglican state is also explicable in an enclave context since, as the sociologist Emile Durkheim has pointed out, without such ritualistic re-enforcement of group identity, individuals will begin to weaken and break away from the collective.⁴⁵ Rituals are a form of social glue which allows individuals to merge their identities with the larger (and personally re-enforcing) one of the group.⁴⁶ For Irish Anglicans, the intense community togetherness was strengthened by the public rituals that promoted the national consciousness, including the celebrations of 4 November (birthday of William III), 5 November (Gunpowder Plot and William's arrival at Torbay), 30 January (beheading of Charles I), 29 May (Restoration of the Monarchy), 1 July (Battle of the Boyne), and, most importantly, 23 October (anniversary of the 1641 rebellion). As Douglas points out, enclaves are maintained by constant invocations of the origins of the community, re-enactments of the past which emphasise the assaults that the community has suffered from external groups. Indeed, organisations such as the Boyne Club and the Protestant Society were formed to ensure the adequate commemoration of the Williamite victory and the security of the Anglican establishment. What Ian McBride calls a 'culture of patriotic commemoration' was a key ingredient of the ritualistic adhesive which held together a group otherwise in disagreement about almost everything.⁴⁷

This entrapment between opposing viewpoints, between Ireland and England, Catholics and Presbyterians, further helps to explain why Irish Anglicans have been so attracted to the Gothic throughout their history. Tzvetan Todorov has influentially associated the Gothic with a psychological 'hesitancy' between a supernatural and a natural understanding of the events of the narrative, and has plotted the 'fantastic' in a crucial formulation:

In a world which is indeed our world, the one we know, a world without devils, sylphides, or vampires, there occurs an event which cannot be explained by the laws of this same familiar world. The person who experiences the event must opt for one of two possible solutions: either he is the victim of an illusion of the senses, of a product of the imagination – and laws

of the world then remain what they are; or else the event has indeed taken place, it is an integral part of reality – but then this reality is controlled by laws unknown to us . . . The fantastic occupies the duration of uncertainty. Once we choose one answer or the other, we leave the fantastic for a neighbouring genre, the uncanny or the marvellous.⁴⁸

This mode of hesitation, this psychological ambivalence, which Todorov believes central to the fantastic, is also what defines Irish Anglican mentality. There were no greater cultural hesitators on these islands than the ‘Anglo-Irish’; so deep was their sense of cultural ambiguity that Julian Moynahan has rightly called them a ‘hyphenated culture’.⁴⁹ As hybrid figures, Irish Anglicans were in a perfect position to develop an important tradition in a genre that emphasises hesitancy over certainty and which refuses to dissolve binaries such as living/dead, inside/outside, friend/enemy, desire/disgust.⁵⁰ W. J. McCormack has identified the ‘verbal intricacy . . . represented by complicated oaths of loyalty, arcane or antique documents, and compromising last wills and testaments’ as central to the Irish Gothic,⁵¹ and this is only fitting given the ethnic and national complexities involved in the construction of an Irish Anglican identity in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Given their constant attempts to renegotiate their identity, the tortuous verbal and plot convolutions of the typical Gothic novel were powerful representations of the existential gymnastics forced upon Irish Anglicans by history.

The Gothic ambivalence highlighted by Todorov was irresistible for such pathological prevaricators and compellingly represented the hesitancy of Irish Anglicans between an ‘English’ realist embracing of the technological, the future and the rational on the one hand and an ‘Irish’ Catholic superstitiousness, anachrony and atavism on the other. For, if most Irish Gothic novels do, as Christopher Morash insists, end with the expulsion of the primitive past and the horrific,⁵² that expulsion is never really complete because these Gothic writers, like the people they represent, were not fully convinced of the desirability of the rational. *Dracula*, for example, does not conclude with the death of the Count but rather the birth of Jonathan and Mina Harker’s baby. This baby is burdened with the ‘bundle of names’ of the men of the Crew of Light as if to guarantee his role as a symbol of a bright future in which the atavistic has been fully laid to rest.⁵³ However, in a text which revolves so importantly around the circulation of blood, one name has been conspicuously left out of this new baby’s title. After all, Dracula has bitten Mina, and she has partaken of his blood in a perverse parody of the Eucharist. Van Helsing himself confirms that such a sharing of blood is tantamount to sexual consummation, and if Dracula’s blood courses through Mina’s veins it must surely have been transferred to her

new son. This possible survival of the primitive in the new is part of a wider attraction to Dracula throughout the novel, an attraction felt by Mina – the moral exemplar of the plot – herself, who tells us that when confronted by Dracula in her bedroom she did not want to ‘hinder’ his bloodsucking.⁵⁴ This is unsurprising, perhaps, when Dracula operates at times as an ultra-masculine embodiment of all that her now white-haired and presumably impotent husband Jonathan cannot provide. In fact, a refusal to completely exorcise the atavistic is a recurring feature of Irish Gothic, from the entirely ambiguous ending of *Melmoth the Wanderer*, where it is unclear if the Wanderer has actually disappeared for the last time, to the final line of Le Fanu’s *Carmilla*, in which the now dead narrator Laura writes that she sometimes thinks she hears ‘the light steps of Carmilla at the drawing-room door’⁵⁵ – an ending which suggests that perhaps Laura is dead because Carmilla has finally come to claim her. An inability to decide what side of the existential hyphen to inhabit can help explain why certain groups and communities are more attracted to the ambivalence and ambiguities of the Gothic than others, and the Irish Anglicans are a very useful test case for this argument.⁵⁶

Running alongside this sense of being a liminal community trapped in a liminal space, Irish Anglicans began to experience a profound fear that real power was slipping away from them. Roy Foster has persuasively argued that there is an intrinsic connection between a growing sense of Irish Anglican political and social displacement and the turn to writing Gothic fiction. In a response to a reading of W. B. Yeats as having ‘remembered’ his Protestantism only in the 1920s, when he tried to implicate himself in a liberal Irish Protestant tradition of Edmund Burke, Jonathan Swift, George Berkeley and Henry Grattan, Foster pointed out that Irish Protestantism had been an aspect of Yeats’s identity from the very beginning. Foster reminded the reader that, although Irish Protestantism has a proud tradition of rational philosophising and healthy scepticism, another, darker, side to the Protestant character has always existed and finds expression in an obsession with the occult and the Gothic. He linked this attraction to occult process and marginal states of being to a realisation by Irish Protestants of their increasing marginalisation in the new Ireland that was emerging throughout the nineteenth century. As the Catholic middle class grew and began to occupy traditionally Protestant positions in municipal government and local structures of power, Protestants compensated for their loss of power in the real world by re-investing their energies in another, more obscure, and yet more powerful, domain. He argued that all the major Irish Gothicists were marginalised figures ‘whose occult preoccupations surely mirror a sense of displacement, a loss of social and psychological

integration, and an escapism motivated by the threat of a takeover by the Catholic middle classes'.⁵⁷

Tracing a connection between the neo-classical castellation of Ascendancy houses in the eighteenth century and the Gothicising of Protestant fiction in the nineteenth century, Foster illustrated how, in both cases, the cultural fashion was protective: by investing in the neo-classical Protestant Ireland laid claim to a superior intellect beyond the vicissitudes of political reality; the Gothic enclosed the Ascendancy in a highly codified and stratified world requiring rites of initiation, secret knowledge and a sense of esoteric entitlement. Moreover, both modes stretched into the distant past and thus pre-empted the emergence of Catholicism, thus rooting Irish Protestants in a history longer than that of their political rivals.⁵⁸

Roy Foster's explanation of the Irish Gothic persuasively links politics, religion and culture, and his depiction of the Protestant Irish as a cultural group obsessed with their own impending extermination and determined to find methodologies by which to circumvent such an annihilation by escape into other realms of power is certainly convincing. Yet, we should not push this explanation too far as it could be read as absolving Irish Protestants of any involvement in nineteenth-century history itself. This is more clearly the problem with Julian Moynahan's analysis of the Irish Gothic: 'The Gothic seems to flourish in disrupted, oppressed, or underdeveloped societies, to give a voice to the powerless and unenfranchised, and even, at times, to subvert the official best intentions of its creators.'⁵⁹ This, I think, is a rather forced argument, especially since England, the locus of the Gothic tradition in this period, could hardly be considered a particularly 'underdeveloped' country, and we must remember that the Anglican writers of Gothic in Ireland formed a part of the (relatively) powerful rather than the powerless, and it doesn't really make sense to view them as marginalized in anything other than purely psychological terms. The Anglican elite was still in social and political control; this was, though, a control that was coming under increasing threat, and which always seemed on the verge of slipping away, especially in the nineteenth century. Gothic, in truth, may not belong to the dispossessed but to the paranoid possessors, the out-of-control controllers, the descending Ascendancy. I think we need to be careful in rushing too quickly to endorsing an argument that would somehow render Irish Anglicans so marginal to power in nineteenth-century Ireland that the realm of the Gothic and the occult substituted for real influence in the real world. Such a view is in danger of distorting the picture of Anglican power in Ireland; it may have been on the wane through the nineteenth century but its demise was long in gestation and longer in arrival.

Moreover, what Foster's argument slightly overlooks is that Irish Gothic has a longer history than the nineteenth century, longer, in other words, than the actual marginalisation of Anglican interest in Ireland. McCormack has traced it back to the last decade of the eighteenth century, and in my own work, I have located the 'origin' of Irish Gothic in the use of horror and terror in historical texts from the mid-seventeenth century. If we take into account the tropes and themes that preoccupy Gothic literature in general, then an Irish tradition can be followed at least back to Sir John Temple's response to the 1641 rebellion.⁶⁰ In his *The Irish Rebellion*, Temple codified in horror many of the images and arguments that would reappear again and again in poetic and fictional texts that would later be termed Gothic. The 1641 rebellion was certainly configured by its major historian as a moment when extermination appeared to be on the cards for the Protestant 'race' in Ireland, but paranoia does not marginalisation make. It is not legitimate, in other words, to trace feelings of fear and terror on the part of the Anglican enclave in Ireland and come to the conclusion that this fear was therefore indicative of a genuine diminution in real power. Proto-Gothic literature which utilised a variety of ethnic horror and terror flourished during the period of the Penal Laws when Anglican power was consolidated, and traces of a heightened fear of extermination can be found in the work of some of the most powerful men in eighteenth-century Ireland, such as Archbishop William King, who was constantly seeing Catholic ghosts and monsters lurking in the outer darkness. Irish Gothic fiction (as opposed to proto-Gothic horror), though, did not appear until the end of the 1750s and the early 1760s, by which time the Irish Catholic middle class had (partially) established itself and begun to make concerted and organised efforts to have the Penal Laws repealed and power in Ireland re-distributed, which is why the fear of lost control Foster has noted as central to Irish Protestant thinking should be traced to these crucial decades.

It is important to recognise that Gothic is not synonymous with horror, and although the Gothic novel appropriates the imagology of horror which monsters others in proto-Gothic literature, it does so in a surprising way which actually articulates a much more amenable toleration for that reviled Other and a genuine desire for reconciliation with that Other in the creation of a new and progressive Ireland. The Irish Gothic may have its roots in a profoundly intolerant and retrogressive Protestant chauvinist nationalism, and it may carry on and repeat many of the tropes and themes of this horrific intolerance, but it also transforms this tradition in an attempt to imagine a different future for the island. The Irish Gothic novel is not a straightforward extension of

horror into fiction but a profoundly ambivalent attempt to solve the tensions of the past, break out of the suffocating enclosures of the enclave, and connect with those outside the borders. That it is not usually a very successful attempt to do this, and instead collapses and dissipates into contradiction and incoherence, does not ultimately alter this central fact. As a narrative of the self – that is, as a means of providing a coherent sense of a community and individual identity – the Gothic tends to failure, usually collapsing under the weight of its own existential ambitions. Elizabeth Napier long ago pointed to the incoherent, inconsistent and incomprehensible aspects of the Gothic, and William Patrick Day has demonstrated that the Gothic narrative frequently ends in collapse rather than resolution.⁶¹

However, the broadly liberal orientation of the Gothic must be acknowledged. As Baldick and Mighall argue, the Gothic novel is best understood as an instrument of liberal thinking, in fact, often a rather tame articulation of bourgeois Whiggism promoting the values associated with middle-class liberalism and largely in favour of protecting the state and the family from breakdown, ‘gratefully endors[ing] Protestant bourgeois values as “kinder” than those of feudal barons’.⁶² As this version of liberalism is articulated in an Irish context it reveals itself as both profoundly suspicious of Catholicism and yet simultaneously longing to reach out and embrace it in fraternal toleration, an ambiguity with enormous political implications for Irish society. Irish Gothic is not, as many believe, a straightforward expression of Anglican bigotry in which Catholics simply continue to occupy the villain’s position, but instead it articulates an urgent need felt by liberal Anglicans to find some means of reconciliation with the reviled Other, for the healthy future of the body politic. In Ireland, Anglican liberalism came into its own in the 1750s with the solidification of a strong patriotic consciousness, a consciousness which emerged because of a crisis of existential proportions in the Anglican enclave: the Money Bill dispute of 1753. Before turning to the dispute itself, it is important to interrogate the argument that Irish Gothic should be considered a specifically Anglican (or even broadly Protestant) mode, since this claim has come in for a great deal of criticism recently.

II

What’s wrong, sweetie? It’s just a church, that’s all.⁶³

In highlighting here the importance of the connection between Irish Gothic and the Irish Anglican community, I am repeating and endorsing

the long-held view that the Gothic is essentially a Protestant genre. I am not the only critic who thinks that Protestantism is a necessary precondition for Irish Gothic, of course. W. J. McCormack has opined that Irish Gothic is ‘distinctly protestant’,⁶⁴ and in a recent return to the subject, Roy Foster has also re-emphasised the importance of ‘Protestant insecurity and self-interrogation’ to the development of the genre in Ireland.⁶⁵ Luke Gibbons too considers Gothic as a genre oppositional to Catholicism, writing of it as ‘following through the cultural work of the Glorious Revolution . . . expunging the traces not only of feudalism but its archaic Catholic remnants from the social order’, which accounts for the constant re-appearance of ruins – ruined convents, ruined monasteries and ancient and ruined castles – in texts like Roche’s *The Children of the Abbey*.⁶⁶ However, the association between Irish Gothic and Irish Anglicanism has been seriously questioned by a number of substantial and important critics.

Seamus Deane has pointed to the existence of what he calls a ‘Catholic-nationalist Gothic’, highlighting James Clarence Mangan’s *Autobiography* (written 1848; published 1883), as a major text in this body of work.⁶⁷ Richard Haslam takes both McCormack and myself to task, rightly protesting that there is a substantial body of Gothic writing composed by Irish Catholics,⁶⁸ including John Banim, Michael Banim, William Carleton (though, of course, Carleton did convert to Protestantism), James Clarence Mangan, John Banville, Neil Jordan and Seamus Deane – to which list I would add Gerald Griffin, Oscar Wilde⁶⁹ and James Joyce – there are distinctly Gothic elements to stories like ‘The Sisters’ (1904) and ‘The Dead’ (1914), as well as the Circe episode of *Ulysses* (1922). Claire Connolly agrees, and argues that ‘not solely associated with a besieged Anglican tradition, then, Gothic modes pervade the writing of the 1820s . . . Richard Haslam is surely correct to suggest that thinking of the Gothic in terms of mode rather than confessional affiliation “assists in the pursuit of Catholic-nationalist Gothic”’.⁷⁰ In a study of Gerald Griffin’s ‘The Brown Man’ (1827), Sinéad Sturgeon has protested the traditional association between the Gothic and Protestantism, arguing that ‘the work of Griffin, a Catholic raised in post-1798 Limerick, whose father reportedly assisted the Irish peasantry in the severe repression that followed the rebellion, provides an opportunity to widen the parameters of criticism to explore what Richard Haslam has postulated as “an Irish-Catholic-nationalist Gothic mode”’.⁷¹

For such commentators, the claim that Gothic, and Irish Gothic in particular, is a Protestant (or Anglican) genre is disproved by pointing to the existence of a substantial and growing number of Catholics

who write Gothic fiction. This is, however, a fallacious objection to the original argument, and multiplying the number of Catholic Gothic writers would not help in the slightest either since the issue does not relate to authorship but to the politics (and theology, in this case) of form. Unfortunately, this kind of mistake is what happens when terms like 'genre' and 'tradition' are dismissed from the critical vocabulary, because without them the ideological and theological commitments of a particular form become invisible. As Terry Eagleton puts it, 'there is a politics of form as well as of content. Form is not a distraction from history but a mode of access to it',⁷² an observation supported by the studies of Susan Wolfson and Richard Cronin, who both insist that form is as political and ideological as any other aspect of a text.⁷³ That Catholics produced Gothic fiction in no way changes the ideological commitments of the genre any more than the fact that some feminists make pornographic films would mitigate the basic misogyny of pornography itself. The existence of Irish Catholic Gothic writers in no way negates the original point made by McCormack and Foster, and rearticulated by myself, which is that Irish Gothic is a Protestant mode because Gothic itself is a Protestant mode. The point being made here is not that Irish Gothic was written only by Irish Protestants (though it mostly was), but that the form itself is Protestant.

The relationship between Catholicism and modern forms of literature has been fraught. In an essay entitled 'Catholic Literature in the English Tongue, 1854–8', delivered in 1859, John Henry Newman claimed that, in terms of modern English writing, 'we have . . . a Protestant literature'.⁷⁴ Newman obviously went too far in this declaration since, as he observed, William Shakespeare could be considered a Catholic writer, and the canon of modern English literature would have to include figures like Richard Crashaw, John Dryden and Alexander Pope. If he had contented himself with reference to the novel form, however, Newman would have been on much more solid ground. After all, literary historians have been keen to stress not just that the Gothic is essentially Protestant but that the novel form itself is Protestant, and that Catholics who write novels are interlopers in an alien tradition.⁷⁵ Newman was echoed, though from a less sympathetic position, by George Orwell in the twentieth century, who asked contentiously, 'How many Roman Catholics have been good novelists? Even the handful one could name have usually been bad Catholics. The novel is practically a Protestant form of art; it is a product of the free mind, of the autonomous individual'.⁷⁶ You need not necessarily agree with Orwell's association of freedom with Protestantism to endorse his central intuition that the novel and Protestantism are deeply connected – indeed, so closely

connected that a claim that the novel is interpellated by Protestantism may not be an overstatement.

In her article 'The Englishness of the English Novel' (1980), Q. D. Leavis argued that 'the glories of English literature are innately Protestant in character' and that 'the English novel owes more than anything else to the fact that it has traditionally been the product of an essentially Protestant culture'.⁷⁷ The claims of Newman, Orwell and Leavis have largely been supported by over a century of literary scholarship. Ian Watt's seminal *The Rise of the Novel* (1957) contended that 'it is . . . likely that the Puritan conception of the dignity of labour helped to bring into being the novel's general premise that the individual's daily life is of sufficient importance and interest to be the proper subject of literature'.⁷⁸ This was echoed by Michael McKeown's *The Origins of the English Novel* (1987), endorsing a connection between the 'Protestant mind' and the form of the novel.⁷⁹ Clearly, this is not all that needs to be said, and the relationship between the novel and Protestantism would have to be qualified by its simultaneous connection with the romance. However, it is probably best to articulate the relationship between the novel and the romance as one of critical dependency (in the same way that Protestantism, being a belated Christian denomination, depends on Catholicism as a way to define itself). Something very similar might be said of Gothic fiction, which is both driven by Catholophobia – it is a form which is inextricably bound up in, one of whose major functions is, attacking Catholicism – and yet which also displays constant and repeated Catholophilia, a desire for that which has been rejected. This is a fairly basic point about the Gothic made by very many serious scholars of the genre, including Victor Sage, Cannon Schmitt and Patrick O'Malley, who have done much to elucidate this disgust–desire dichotomy driving the Gothic forward.

In the 1960s, Maurice Levy argued that the Glorious Revolution leading to the Protestant Settlement was of basic importance to Gothic writers,⁸⁰ and Victor Sage has supported this, insisting that 'the penetration of Protestant theology into every aspect of English culture since the Settlement acts as a most intimate, and at the same time a most objective, conditioning factor in both popular belief and literary culture'.⁸¹ The Gothic tradition is formed partly from the images of horror abstracted from that great founding text John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* (Book of Martyrs) (1563), whose *raison d'être* is precisely the demonstration of Catholic monstrosity and, as John Henry Newman pointed out in his 'Lectures on the Present Condition of Catholics in England' (1850), versions of Catholics-as-monsters pervaded English culture as a long and pernicious tradition:

this Tradition does not flow from the mouths of the half-dozen wise or philosophic, or learned men who can be summoned in its support, but is a tradition of nursery stories, school stories, public-house stories, club-house stories, drawing-room stories, platform stories, pulpit stories; – a tradition of newspapers, magazines, reviews, pamphlets, romances, novels, poems, and light literature of all kind, literature of the day; – a tradition of selection from the English classics, bits of poetry, passages of history, sermons, chance essays, extracts from books of travel, anonymous anecdotes, lectures on prophecy, statements and arguments of polemical writers made up into small octavos for class-books and into pretty miniatures for presents; a tradition floating in the air.⁸²

Patrick O' Malley rightly insists that 'in its ideological structure, the English Gothic novel, though it typically represents Catholicism, is fundamentally a Protestant genre'.⁸³

It is rather too easy to compile a list of prominent Catholic novelists as a way to refute the thesis that the novel is a Protestant form, but such an approach would completely miss the point, and this can be said for the Gothic also. One use Catholic writers made of Gothic motifs and tropes was as a mode of writing back, a kind of 'reverse Gothic'. Emma McEvoy has recently pointed out that when Catholics write Gothic they often use it in order to uncover the anti-Catholic basis of the genre: it is 'possible for Catholic-sympathising writers consciously to rewrite or renegotiate the Gothic' by 'inflect[ing]' the conventional tropes of the Gothic 'differently'. This does not change the basic theological orientation of the genre but it does mean that Catholic writers have tried to experiment creatively with inherently unsympathetic material.⁸⁴

The most obvious example of this kind of writing back is in Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), where he takes the prevailing Catholic demonology of the Gothic and overturns it so that the Gordon rioters of 1780 become implicated in the evil and perversity ascribed to Spanish Inquisition monks and Continental nuns and priests and monks by Horace Walpole and Ann Radcliffe. Burke's appropriation of the discourse of the Gothic to describe not Jacobite monstrosity but its Jacobin mirror image, so that the Catholic Church and the institutions of the *ancien régime* are precisely those under Gothic attack rather than the agents of Gothic terror themselves, proved seminal to Catholic writers. For Burke, it is the proponents of modernity who violate the bedroom and the propriety of the female body in their assault on Marie Antoinette rather than the inquisitorial Catholic Church that undermines female virginity and chastity through its confessional. As Luke Gibbons perceptively notes, in Burke's writing as a whole, 'the brutality of British colonialism in India, and the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789, meant that [a] new form of state terrorism was now unleashed upon the world, driven by a form of

zealotry and intolerance which Burke, in the *Reflections*, traced back to the Cromwellian period'.⁸⁵

James Clarence Mangan so thoroughly appropriated the paraphernalia of the Gothic that he became a living incarnation of Melmoth the Wanderer, literalising the language of the Gothic to parodic extreme. The Catholic-born Mangan's satirical take on Gothic was matched by the crypto-Catholic Oscar Wilde's demolition of it in 'The Canterville Ghost' (1887), where the Gothic is reduced to a mechanical and hammy piece of amateur theatrics needing to be put out of its misery by the virginal innocent usually terrorised within it. Where they were not reversing or parodying the Gothic, other Catholics accepted the monstrous attributes given to them by the genre and used these attributes to warn and threaten those who marginalised and tried to silence them. In *Caoineadh Airt Uí Laoghaire* [*Lament for Art O' Leary*] (composed 1773), Eibhlín Dhubh Ní Chonaill strikingly uses the version of Irish Catholics as vampires to her own purposes, and as she drinks the blood of her slain husband she warns his killers that revenge is nigh. Many Irish-language Gothic texts speak of the power of the living dead and the inability to kill that which is most frightening, a tradition which includes Seán Ó Coileáin's 'Machtnamh an Duine Dhoilíosaigh' ['Thoughts of the Heartbroken'] (1813) and Máirtín Ó Cadhain's *Cré na Cille* [*Churchyard Clay*] (1949).

In fact, the 'writing back' possibilities of the genre were highlighted from the start by Horace Walpole who, in his preface to *The Castle of Otranto*, outlined how the ideological intent of a particular medium could be undermined and undercut by intelligent readers and writers. In the preface to the first edition, Walpole's fictional 'editor' described how print was ideologically Protestant and was a means by which the original reformers hoped to convert Europe. Others, however, saw the new medium as a way they could disguise their nefarious designs to instil superstition and fear in the population:

Letters were then in their most flourishing state in Italy, and contributed to dispel the empire of superstition, at that time so forcibly attacked by the reformers. It is not unlikely that an artful priest might endeavour to turn their own arms on the innovators, and might avail himself of his abilities as an author to confirm the populace in their ancient errors and superstitions. If this was his view, he has certainly acted with signal address. Such a work as the following would enslave a hundred vulgar minds beyond half the books of controversy that have been written from the days of Luther to the present hour.⁸⁶

In one sense, therefore, by using an anti-Catholic weapon as a means of self-defence, and even pre-emptive attack, Catholic Gothic writers were exploiting the subversive potentialities already inherent in the genre.

Of course, other Catholics simply absorbed and internalised the tropes of the Gothic and used them to revile Catholicism, becoming Protestants *manqués* in the process. This is, perhaps, clearest in the case of William Carleton, a convert to the Established Church. Much of his career was devoted to depicting the Catholic Church in the monstrous terms typical of Temple and Maturin. His most explicit Gothic tale, ‘Confessions of a Reformed Ribbonman’ (later renamed ‘Wildgoose Lodge’) (1830), portrays a Catholic agrarian society attacking and brutally killing Protestant women and children. Carletonian styles of paranoid anti-Catholic Gothic infect much nineteenth- and twentieth-century Catholic writing, and even the trite version of the Catholic Church as an inquisitorial institution and the priest as a lecherous and monstrous child abuser, central to *Melmoth the Wanderer*, was resurrected in documentaries like *States of Fear* (1999) – covering the industrial school system from the 1860s to the 1970s – and the depiction of the Magdalene Laundries in, for example, Peter Mullan’s *The Magdalene Sisters* (2002). Although it would take far too much space to demonstrate completely here, too many twentieth-century Irish Catholic writers who use Gothic motifs in their work adopt almost wholesale the monstrous version of Catholicism basic to the Gothic novel. For example, Patrick McCabe’s brilliant ‘bog Gothic’ *The Butcher Boy* (1992), and Neil Jordan’s 1997 film adaptation can both be accused of powerfully reproducing the anti-Catholic paranoia of the Gothic in their version of 1950s Catholic Ireland as a pornotopia of violence and perverse sexuality. Indeed, commentary on Ireland in the 1950s as a whole often descends to a reproduction of well-worn Gothic tropes and themes, and figures like the paedophile priests Brendan Smith and Séan Fortune have also taken their place as caricatured versions of a typical Gothic villain in many accounts. Catholics have certainly used and abused the Gothic genre in complex, problematic and also sometimes brilliant ways, but the form itself remains an alien one. The genre is a Protestant one, and in Ireland, the Gothic novel emerged in response to a specific political crisis within the Irish Anglican enclave, to which I now turn.

III

The Money Bill Dispute

What, then, caused Irish Anglicans to start writing Gothic fiction rather than simply continue recycling the tropes of horror and terror which demonised Catholics and sealed the Anglican enclave behind a wall of

defence forever? Here, the split in the Irish Anglican community in the 1750s is a crucial starting point, and the split itself needs to be carefully described and explained because of its lasting impact on the Anglican imagination for the rest of the eighteenth century.

'It is a very striking and very shocking picture . . . to see a Protestant multitude attack a Protestant government, in a country where all together do not make up a sixth of the whole, without any imaginable cause of complaint but because it is government.' This was the response of the Westminster-based Whig politician George Dodington to a major riot in Dublin on 3 December 1759 when a largely Anglican crowd assembled outside the parliament buildings on College Green and manhandled and threatened the politicians it thought were gathering to vote for a political union of Ireland with Britain. The crowd were motivated by a fervour of patriotic concern for Irish rights and privileges, which it believed were being threatened by external pressure coming from Westminster and betrayal within the Irish parliament itself. Dodington's sense of the event was not quite accurate, however, as the Protestant multitude were not attacking a Protestant government so much as a section of it which it considered more committed to self-interest and subservience to the parliament in London than an assertion and maintenance of Irish liberty. Irish *patriot* politicians were largely exempt from the violence of the mob, and indeed some of them may have helped organise the riot. While to British onlookers the riot was evidence that Irish affairs had irrevocably changed and that the country now needed much more direct and intrusive management, within Ireland it was proof that the Irish Anglican ruling class was bitterly split between a patriot and a 'court' constituency, and also that this division would set the agenda for internal affairs for the foreseeable future.⁸⁷

The riot of 1759 was part of the working out of tensions that had bubbled and over-spilled within the Irish Anglican enclave during the 1750s, caused by the notorious Money Bill dispute of 1753. It is necessary to describe this dispute in a certain amount of detail, mostly because while it is an event (or series of events) very familiar to eighteenth-century Irish historians, literary critics have tended to pass by it very quickly, transfixed as they have understandably been by the Wood's Halfpence affair of the 1720s,⁸⁸ and the 1798 rebellion and the union debate at the end of the century.⁸⁹ The Money Bill dispute is, however, central to the construction of Anglican opinion in Ireland; it split the Anglican community in very damaging ways, and it brought a permanent end to a period of relative calm in Ireland. It was also the reason for the termination of the so-called age of the undertakers, where the Irish parliament was more or less controlled by a small

group of men who ‘managed’ it on behalf of the Irish executive (the Lord Lieutenant, the Chief Secretary, and Dublin Castle officials). The executive was appointed directly by London, and it issued its instructions to the undertakers who were expected to handle the votes in the Irish parliament to ensure the desired outcomes. Although an inferior institution to its London equivalent because of Poyning’s Law (1495) and the Declaratory Act of 1720, it was still important to gain the consent of the Irish parliament in order to raise the revenue necessary to the workings of the government. In other words, it was very important to Westminster that the Irish parliament played ball, and to ensure this harmony, the undertakers managed the parliament, or they ‘undertook’ to do so, hence their title.

What brought the dominance of the undertakers to a close were the Money Bill dispute and its fallout. The three most important undertakers at the time were Henry Boyle, the Speaker of the House of Commons; George Stone, the Archbishop of Armagh; and John Ponsonby, the Chief Commissioner of the Irish Revenue Board. Boyle was the main political player for most of the period, and this created tension with Stone and Ponsonby, who were jealous of Boyle’s position and eagerly looked for ways to overtake him politically. A major opportunity appeared to present itself in 1751 when Stone’s patron, the Duke of Dorset, became Lord Lieutenant, and Dorset’s son, Lord Sackville, was made Chief Secretary. For Stone, his supporters were now in major positions of power, and it was time to make some bold political moves. The tensions between the undertakers boiled over in 1751–3 in relation to two issues. In the first place, Boyle was determined to resist Stone’s power games and demonstrate his own authority by destroying the career of Arthur Jones Nevill, the surveyor general and one of the archbishop’s protégés, and he effectively had Nevill expelled from parliament for defalcation, which incensed Stone. Then, an Irish money bill, which had been sent over to Westminster for inspection in accordance with Poyning’s Law, was returned altered to the Irish House of Commons where it was rejected, mostly by Boyle’s supporters, thus precipitating a constitutional crisis.

The alteration itself was significant. There was a surplus in the Irish Treasury, and the Irish Parliament decided that it would dispose of the surplus by reducing the (considerable) national debt. This disposal posed a serious financial threat to members of the Irish Monti since paying off the national debt would also involve paying off the principal loaned to the Irish Treasury by the Monti, and on whose interest payments many Irish Anglicans now depended. As Sean D. Moore highlights, ‘outcomes of earlier debates over taking such a measure suggest that the majority

of subscribers and of Irish MPs opposed eradicating the national debt' and were prepared to defend its maintenance against any external threats such as came from Westminster through appealing to 'national interests' and the discourse of patriotism.⁹⁰ The Westminster decision required legislation, and the Irish Commons drafted the heads of a bill concerned with the allocation of the surplus. While the majority in the Irish parliament were prepared to accept the specifics of the actual bill itself, ceding control of the Irish surplus to Westminster was far too financially dangerous to be permitted, and this control was clearly what the executive wished to wrest away from the Irish parliament. In their desire to make it clear that these decisions were taken only with the 'previous consent' of the king (re-iterating the priority of the crown over the Irish Commons), the Irish executive ensured that the necessity for this consent was inserted into the preamble, an alteration which emphasised the dependence of the Irish parliament. Boyle's faction rejected the altered bill in large part to score political points against the Stone-supporting Irish executive, but although much of the tension between the undertakers was due to political ambition and personal animosity, the battle between them concerning the money bill was actually fought using the rhetoric of patriotism. In other words, the rejection of the money bill was couched in patriotic terms as a denunciation of English interference with Irish parliamentary affairs, and Boyle's supporters portrayed Stone's camp as a 'castle' (i.e., unpatriotic) clique and themselves as defenders of Irish freedom from foreign interference.⁹¹

Ultimately, the dispute concluded with a whimper rather than a bang. The English ministers given the job of overseeing the constitutional crisis managed to find a sufficiently lucrative pension for Boyle, and he made way for Ponsonby to become Speaker of the House of Commons. Indeed, by the end of the crisis all three undertakers were working together again and had been given plum jobs as Lord Justices in the absence of the Lord Lieutenant. Despite this deft management by the English ministers, however, the crisis had been fought in such a way that rifts were never, in fact, healed, and as Thomas Bartlett puts it, 'the grounds on which Boyle chose to fight, the conduct of his campaign, its final outcome and its overall impact on Irish political life . . . were of the utmost significance for the future'.⁹² The parties had chosen to fight on national grounds, and Boyle and his supporters in particular depicted his opponents as traitors of the national interest. As Lord Sackville put it in 1753, Boyle essentially set himself up 'as the protector of the liberties of Ireland', and he consistently suggested that since Stone was English, he could not have the interests of the Irish Anglican community at heart.⁹³ It was even rumoured, and this was an indication of things to come,

that Boyle might have appealed to Catholics in his patriotic campaign, thus indicating that one way forward for patriotic interests was to unite with other like-minded inhabitants of the country, even if they were not co-religionists. Indeed, Boyle's supporters ratcheted up the rhetoric so much that the fate of the entire country seemed to depend on blocking the passage of the altered money bill, the passing of which was portrayed as the end of Irish liberty.⁹⁴ Sackville fulminated that the 'question was represented as a struggle of Ireland against England, and there was not a common fellow in the streets that was not made to believe that, if we had carried the question, all the money was to be sent the next day to England, and that for the future parliaments were to be no longer held in Ireland'. So heated did the rhetoric become that 'Ireland forever' was the cry in Irish Anglican circles the country over.⁹⁵

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of the Money Bill dispute in galvanising an Irish Anglican political consciousness. For Lord Clare the dispute had radicalised the Irish Anglican nation,⁹⁶ evidence of which could be seen in the formation of a rash of patriot clubs, the making of patriot toasts (often at the point of a sword) and the explosion of a pamphlet war (which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2) between supposedly 'patriotic' and 'court' factions. The political outcome and the arguments of Boyle were quickly linked in this overheated rhetoric to the well-being of the Irish nation itself (or, at least, the Irish Anglican nation, though we should acknowledge that to its advocates, this was one and the same thing), with Stone being presented not merely as a traitor and a representative of English interference but a sexual pervert as well whose celibacy disguised his interest in beautiful young boys – the kind of pornographic insinuations usually directed at Catholic priests now focussed on a high-ranking Anglican.

One pamphlet, written by 'Hellen O'Roon' indicated that for the country to fall into the hands of Stone would be disastrous because of 'his Indiscretions, concerning with an effeminate Turn of Constitution, his Celebacy, and even his unblemished Chastity, have contributed to blacken his Character with ridiculous and shocking Aspersion, so galling, that it requires all his Innocence to support it'.⁹⁷ The group which gathered around to support Boyle already had an acutely developed sense of patriotic consciousness. As Martyn J. Powell explains, Boyle's supporters saw themselves as 'the repository of a patriotic conscience',⁹⁸ although the financial self-interest fostered in this group by the Irish financial revolution should also be acknowledged. What the crisis helped these patriots to do was to communicate this patriotic fervour to a readership and constituency outside of strictly political circles. The crisis convinced English politicians that the undertaker system was not

working well anymore and that the basis of Irish rule would have to change; they began to look beyond the Anglican Irish nation to woo those marginalised by Anglican hegemony, namely the Catholics and Presbyterians, in order to threaten the Irish Anglican elite with what could happen should they continue to make noises demanding independence, eventually turning to a policy of direct rule which cut out the undertakers, beginning with the administration of Lord Townshend in the late 1760s. By that stage, though, the stable door was off its hinges, and a large section of the Irish Anglican enclave was so addicted to the discourse of legislative independence that it could be satisfied by nothing else. Indeed, when the Money Bill *constitutional* crisis was actually resolved amicably, this actually exacerbated the *political* crisis.

The heightened political fervour generated by the pamphlet war did not dissipate (as it had after the Wood's Halfpence affair),⁹⁹ and despite the attempts made to paper over the political cracks, 'the heightened political consciousness that resulted from Boyle's campaign could not be made to vanish'¹⁰⁰ but instead shaped politics in Ireland until at least 1782 and the granting of legislative independence. The Earl of Charlemont argued that in 1753

the people were taught a secret of which they had hitherto been ignorant, that government might be opposed with success, and, as a confidence in the possibility of victory is the best inspirer of courage, a spirit was consequently raised in the nation, hereafter to be employed to better purposes. Men were likewise accustomed to turn their thoughts to constitutional subjects, and to reflect on the difference between political freedom and servitude.¹⁰¹

Boyle's supporters were incensed when they found out that the supposed doyen of Irish patriotism had actually helped resolve the crisis through compromise, and they turned on him in print, depicting him as a traitor to Ireland's cause. Indeed, once the settlement became widely known in March 1756, a large crowd congregated in College Green and burned Boyle in effigy and accused him of being bought out. One anonymous pamphlet, *The Tryal of Roger for the Murder of Lady Betty Ireland* (1756), represented Boyle as being put on trial for murdering 'Ireland', that is, for his betrayal of patriot principles.

It is important not to exaggerate the size of the patriot faction in the Irish Anglican community, or the degree to which it was genuinely representative. Although patriotism became a convenient rhetorical shorthand after the dispute, Sean Connolly warns against a tendency to see the patriots as either a coherent group or as legitimately forming a 'tradition' of thought in the eighteenth century. He points out how 'untypical most [patriots] actually were of the society in whose name

they claimed to speak', and he demonstrates that Molyneux, Swift, Lucas, Boyle and Grattan were not only very different from each other but also considered anomalous in terms of Anglican Ireland more generally.¹⁰² He also indicts the patriot group in the Money Bill dispute of political opportunism, being motivated by their personal ambitions rather than the general good of the Anglican community (and given the personal financial implications of the crisis for many of them, this is a convincing point), and describes the dispute as a 'transparent attempt by a powerful parliamentary faction, threatened with displacement, to gain popular support by presenting itself as engaged in the defence of Irish interests against English encroachment'.¹⁰³ I don't here seek to suggest that a very strong element of self-serving was not part and parcel of patriot rhetoric in the eighteenth century, but it is also true that this rhetoric ignited a particularly strong patriotic fuse in its Anglican audience, and this helped generate a considerably motivated and active patriot public, quite willing to turn on supposed patriots like Boyle when they believed he had betrayed the cause for his personal enrichment.

The split between the patriot and 'court' factions was both serious and long-lasting and felt everywhere in Irish Anglican culture, with the two factions taking opposing views on a variety of different issues, often apparently far removed from the crisis itself.¹⁰⁴ Given that members of the enclave already felt threatened by external agents (Irish Catholics, Irish Presbyterians and English politicians), this internal split left them more psychologically vulnerable. It also meant that both Todorov's fantasy of the 'Not-I' and of the 'I' could be useful to Irish Anglicans in coming to terms with their new position. The terror of 'coming apart' because of internal divisions, as expressed by many a Gothic hero, such as the poor bedevilled George Lutz of *The Amityville Horror* in the epigraph to this chapter, became a reality for the Anglican enclave in the 1750s, and, given the level of existential interrogation Irish Anglican identity had already undergone by that stage, it is not surprising that it is to this period that Irish Gothic fiction can be traced.

This deep internal division was accompanied by an extraordinary outpouring of printed materials, primarily pamphlets directly related to the dispute and to the 1759 riot, that had thousands of patriotic Anglicans turning out on the streets to make visible their contempt for the conduct of their political betters. Sean Moore has brilliantly described how, earlier in the century, the Anglican Monti had effectively created what we now sometimes call 'Anglo-Irish literature' as a way to defend their investment in the financial revolution and prevent external interference in internal Irish financial affairs:

If the Anglo-Irish Swift can be credited with helping to cultivate a new nationalism [in the 1720s and 1730s] . . . it was only because a distinct national identity, an ‘Irishness’ underwrote the colonial appropriation of traditional rights of sovereignty. A newly patriotic Irish press held the potential to protect leading citizens’ investments in their national security in the form of the Debt of the Nation. If the Irish popular imagination had to be mobilized to defend the Monti, friendly domestic print media organs were necessary for the task, and their production of works on Irish themes planted the seeds for a new market in Anglo-Irish literature.¹⁰⁵

Irish Anglican nationalist literature emerges out of this attempt to continually defend financial security of the enclave’s leading members by applying a rhetoric of Irish self-determination and perfidious English interference, and this helps to explain the explosion in print media at moments of financial threat like the Wood’s Halfpence affair.

The Money Bill dispute is another of these moments, but here the crisis splits the Anglican enclave in two and therefore a different kind of literature is necessary to articulate and negotiate the split, one which addresses internal psychic division as well as external menace. There was also a new and more conspicuous consumption of fictional material by an Anglican reading public which probably translated its hunger for political food for thought into a desire for more imaginative literature, especially the new genre of the novel. Given the sheer amount of fictive material in the pamphlets being consumed in the 1750s (an issue that will be addressed in Chapter 2), there was not an enormous gap between politics and the novel anyway. For Mikhail Bakhtin the novel is, in part, a response to a collapse of authority (including political authority). He argues that the novel ‘begins by presuming a verbal and semantic decentering of the ideological world, a certain linguistic homelessness of literary consciousness, which no longer possess a sacrosanct and unitary linguistic medium for containing ideological thought’.¹⁰⁶ Given the shift in and shattering of relative political unity in Anglican Ireland due to the Money Bill dispute, the growth in the production of Irish fiction is understandable – as long as it is also understood that such growth is not linear or without reversals, and as long as we don’t associate the growth in fiction exclusively with the novel form (all fictive forms should be included).

As Rolf Loeber and Magda Loeber chart, there was a ‘slight rise’ in the publishing of original fiction in Ireland in the 1750s, a rise that only became secure in the 1780s,¹⁰⁷ but this rise in the mid-century is accompanied by an explosion of fictional motifs and allegorical material in political pamphlets.¹⁰⁸ As Irish Protestants, especially Anglicans, became increasingly politicised, they also became more interested in reading in

general, and there is probably a connection between the two. One of the genres which can be traced to this turbulent period is the Irish Gothic novel, now accepted as one of the major forms of Irish writing since the 1760s. According to the Loebers, the Irish Gothic novel appeared for the first time in 1760 with the publication of *The Adventures of Miss Sophia Berkley*, and this is a genre which has maintained its hold on the Irish imagination since then.¹⁰⁹

As will become clear in subsequent chapters, I argue that Irish Gothic was initially written by members of the patriotic faction of the Anglican enclave, and if this is true it would mean that established accounts of the tradition as ideologically extremely (indeed, almost hysterically) conservative, need to be qualified. For Margot Gayle Backus, the Irish Gothic is an exceptionally reactionary form. In her study of the 'Gothic family romance' she reads the deployment of the Gothic by Irish writers from Swift onwards as a means by which the 'Anglo-Irish' reinforced a sense of communal identity in which uniformity was promoted in order to 'protect rather than discredit the political interests of the group whose "unofficial" perceptions it records'.¹¹⁰ Rather than submitting the social and political structures underwriting the colonial subordination of Ireland to scrutiny, 'the Anglo-Irish family romance posits a seamless coherence between intrapsychic and national subjectivities, extending and replicating settler colonialist symbolic relations by continually reinforcing Anglo-Irish settler colonialism's dominant obsession with the veneration and maintenance of a national Other'.¹¹¹ Luke Gibbons, too, sees the Irish Gothic as a highly conservative form and argues that through it Irish Protestants 'expung[ed] the traces not only of feudalism but also its archaic Catholic remnants from the social order'.¹¹² Gibbons is here extending the insight of critics like Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall who have emphasised the Gothic as an Enlightenment instrument, one aspect of which is an intensely Protestant desire to see Catholicism wiped from the face of the earth, their liberalism combined with the bigotry of modernity. Although, of course, in Britain, this combination led to a social and political revolution in 1688, in Ireland, where the majority of the population was Catholic, the colonial situation meant that Glorious Revolution principles were translated into a rigid adherence to a status quo far from liberal in practice. Enlightenment principles, 'progressive' in Britain, could be, and were, extremely retrogressive in Ireland. Reading the Gothic as the means by which these principles were defended in Ireland leads Gibbons to portray it as necessarily reactionary rather than subversive. Joseph Cleary suggests that given that they were surrounded by antagonistic elements Irish Protestants were more 'prone to be darker in temper, more fundamentalist and less

optimistically liberal' than their English co-religionists, a darkness that led them to adopting the Gothic rather than the realist novel as their main fictional avenue of expression.¹¹³

Likewise, in an attempt to explain why Irish Protestants would be so attracted to the Gothic, Christopher Morash has pointed to its role in a conservative attack on Irish Catholics and Irish Catholicism. He argues powerfully that Irish Gothic is not a *celebration* of the weird and the occult so much as an attempt to exorcise these elements from Irish society. Rather than accept the version of Ireland as Gothic inherited from the English Gothic tradition, the traditional narratives of Irish Protestants attempt to find ways of destroying this image: the Irish Gothic

is a riposte to a Celticist project which almost invariably celebrated the survival of the past in the present (often in racial terms), a narratologically produced demand for a stake to be driven in the heart of all that confounds the project of modernity, particularly when that agent of resistance is the blood of an ancient race unaccountably flowing through the veins of the present.¹¹⁴

Just as Count Dracula must be staked at the end of Bram Stoker's 1897 novel, so too the version of Ireland as atavistic must be banished (and, the suggestion goes, its Catholic representatives as well) and Protestant modernity ushered in. Given that the patriot faction in Irish Anglican politics developed in part at least as an attempt to protect the parasitic drain of the Irish Treasury by the Monti, even associating the Irish Gothic with this faction in politics may not appear to diffuse the intensely chauvinistic strain that has been read as fundamental to its construction. Backus, Gibbons, Cleary and Morash offer a fascinating reading of the entire Irish Gothic tradition as one aspect of the wider project of Protestantising and modernising Ireland. Rather than an indulgence in a form of political escapism from the realities of power loss, as Roy Foster argued, these critics claim that the Gothic is an attempt to re-assert the kind of cultural realism deemed necessary for a nation to enter the modern world and be accorded the full privileges of nation status.

A conservative reading of the Irish Gothic would certainly help in explaining why it emerged in the 1760s, since this was the period when the Catholic 'threat' became increasingly visible to conservative Irish Protestants after a period of relative quiet. The Catholic Committee, dedicated to agitation for repeal of the Penal Laws, was formed in 1756, and the beginnings of agrarian agitation (construed by some radical conservative thinkers as evidence of a Catholic plot) with the appearance of the Whiteboys in the 1760s. The arrival of the Whiteboys, a

group of agrarian agitators bound together by an oath of secrecy, in County Tipperary in 1761, sent shockwaves through the Irish Protestant community, and inspired some hysterical reaction in its more paranoid figureheads. Fear was partly fuelled by the fact that the Whiteboys would meet at night dressed in white linen and were easily perceived as highly organised in their perpetration of violence. The Whiteboys were largely interested in settling local disputes, mostly caused by what they considered to be immoral incursions on traditional farming by the enclosure of common pasture – though this specific grievance soon expanded to embrace other causes, at times gesturing towards a more national project. Moreover, the agitation quickly spread to nearby counties and was seen by many conservative Protestants as the mobilisation of Catholic interests as a start to a reprise of 1641. This fear was confirmed by the Rev. John Hewetson, from Co. Kilkenny, who infiltrated the secret society and claimed he had obtained evidence of a conspiracy which took in the whole of Irish Catholic society and was funded by French agitators preparing for invasion. The agitation continued for about four years, keeping Protestant fears on a constant simmer, fears which would eventually result in the trial and execution for treason of Fr Nicholas Sheehy in 1766 (fingered by Hewetson), one of the most traumatic incidents of eighteenth-century Ireland.¹¹⁵

However, while there was certainly an intensification in anti-Catholicism in the late 1750s and early 1760s which fed into the split in Irish Anglican opinion caused by the Money Bill dispute and its aftermath, and which did feed into the Gothic novel, two other intellectual developments also came to fruition in this period too, developments which provoked an admiration and desire for Catholicism rather than its demise. Two publications in particular are important for this change: Edmund Burke's *Enquiry into the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757) and James MacPherson's *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* (1760), followed quickly by *Fingal* (1761) and *Temora* (1762), which launched the Ossianic cycle and was a literary sensation. These publications more or less rehabilitated the primitive and the previously 'savage' as potent sources of inspiration, with Ossian in particular manufacturing the Highland warrior as an example for a British military culture. Luke Gibbons has astutely pointed out that, 'The Ossian controversy, the rise of the Gothic novel, and the development of the aesthetics of terror . . . all coincide with the Seven Years' War in America and India, and the unprecedented expansion of the British Empire', and all can be seen as spaces and places for the remaking of British masculinity and power in the face of new global challenges.¹¹⁶ Moreover, with the fetishisation of the 'primitive' in the nostalgic glow of an Ossianic longing, Celts and

Celtic regions could look particularly attractive as rehabilitative vantage points for those vitiated by the pressures of modernity. The Ossian poems functioned to legitimise a sentimental reading of the Celtic past as a lost age of heroes and poets from which we moderns could draw some much needed power – though this had the knock-on effect of making the past itself appear attractive, even if that past had the garb of Catholic medievalism wrapped around it. As Clare O'Halloran notes, 'the success of [Macpherson's] poems was instrumental in enhancing the status of Gaelic culture and encouraging a new interest in it, both in Scotland and Ireland', an interest that would flower in the 1780s' work of Irish Protestants like Joseph Cooper Walker and Charlotte Brooke,¹¹⁷ what Seamus Deane has called the first 'Celtic Revival'.¹¹⁸

The beginnings of this 'revival' can be discerned in the 1760s. In this kind of atmosphere it is unsurprising that a historical novel which looks back to the medieval period with some longing (while still keeping it sufficiently distant), like Leland's *Longsword*, could find a readership. The Sublime, too, while denoting an aesthetic experience close to terror, was also desired for its ability to excite the enervated modern subject through its excessiveness and superfluity. This was an era, indeed, when such excess was beginning to be viewed with less of a jaundiced eye anyway. Peter De Bolla has argued at length that there is a connection between the discourse of the Sublime and that of debt in the eighteenth century, claiming that it is no coincidence that it was during the Seven Years War, when the British National Debt expanded exponentially to extraordinarily excessive proportions in order to finance the continuation of the war, that discourses of excess such as the Sublime were pervasive.¹¹⁹ Moreover, both become productive of a certain kind of subject, the subject defined by excess or difference, whereby individuality is signified by difference.¹²⁰

What highly conservative readings of the Irish Gothic fail to account for is the fact that rather than simply reproduce and attempt to exorcise the atavistic past and Catholic present, Irish Gothic is initially indulged in by liberal Anglicans who wish to recruit Catholics (or at least articulate a less intolerant kind of anti-Catholicism) and the Sublime and the primitive to their patriotic agenda. Of course, anti-Catholicism and liberal thinking went hand in hand in the eighteenth century, and for many Enlightenment thinkers, Catholicism remained a vast spectre looming over the Continent in need of exorcising.¹²¹ Although there was a gradual drift away from a straightforward anti-Catholicism in elite circles hostility certainly remained and erupted during particularly anxious moments. It is well to remember that Catholic Emancipation did not take place until 1829, and that this was more or less forced

upon the English political establishment. As Colin Haydon remarks, it was difficult to give up anti-Catholic rhetoric because it was a powerful social glue holding British society together, so that 'the survival and wide appeal of anti-Catholicism was bound up with its function of social bonding. In general terms, it provided a negative definition of what was good and acceptable, by showing its wicked, deviant antithesis'.¹²²

Liberalism and anti-Catholicism certainly co-exist in the Gothic novel. Yet, while Gothic fiction in Ireland was, initially at least, written by an Anglican elite, this was a disaffected, alienated and angry elite, and one willing to reconsider the political status quo. Joseph Cleary's comments on the Irish novel in general can be certainly applied more specifically to the Irish Gothic novel: it was

developed, especially in its initial stages, primarily by intellectuals descended from what was historically a creole colonial settler community. These writers typically displayed either a mixture of alienation from, or contempt for, the local indigenous culture, as well as considerable anxiety about the anti-modern backwardness of the colony compared to the mother-country. But in many cases the colonial settler elites, sensitive to the rise of mass democracy and cultural nationalism across Europe, were also compelled to attempt imaginative appropriations of the indigenous cultures to bolster their own national legitimacy.¹²³

Even this, though, grants too little to the early Anglican writers of the Irish Gothic since, while they retained a suspicion of Irish Catholicism and Irish Catholics, they were also motivated by very legitimate patriot concerns about representation and were moving (or indeed had moved) to a more tolerant attitude to Irish Catholics and Catholics more generally and did want to grant them some place in the political nation. While I can certainly endorse the claim that Irish Anglicans felt a 'realist' disjuncture with their English co-religionists, this does not mean that Irish Gothic is therefore more 'reactionary' than its English equivalent. There are certainly reactionary elements in the Gothic, and in Irish Gothic, but these are not divorced from the general liberalism of the genre. Irish Gothic fiction (unlike the proto-Gothic horror narratives found in the work of Sir John Temple and Archbishop William King, and which are continued in the hysterical writings of Archbishop Richard Woodward in the 1780s and Sir Richard Musgrave in the 1790s) is much more ambivalent, conflicted and liminal in fictional terms, and also much more ideologically elastic.

In a suggestive analysis of the romance, Bridget Fowler (invoking the arguments of Marxist Antonio Gramsci) argues that in societies where a significant section of the public are denied political agency, popular literature offers a kind of compensatory fantasy in which this agency

is granted back to them. Popular fiction is therefore, simultaneously, 'escapist' (in that it offers fantastic resolutions to real life problems) *and* highly political, a way for deprived groups (or groups which self-perceive as deprived) to imaginatively grasp what they feel is denied to them in reality.¹²⁴ It is patently clear that by the mid-1750s, Irish Anglican patriots felt deprived of agency by their colonial masters and their fellow Anglicans who had submitted to 'court' politics. This feeling of alienation was confirmed by the outcome of the Money Bill dispute. Patriot politics might have originally been mobilised to protect the interests of the Monti, but it spilled over into the public sphere through literature, and out of the control of its original inventors. In this kind of atmosphere emancipatory fantasies could easily be exploited by writers and publishers, and the conditions for the explosion of popular literature of all kinds (including what would eventually be called the Gothic) were set in place.

Given the extent of the alienation, popular fiction acted as what Ernst Bloch has called a 'utopian' form, generated by *The Principle of Hope* (1947). For Bloch, even the most deeply conservative and reactionary of popular genres has a utopian element that should not be ignored, a desire for a possible future, a 'not yet' that might be, not realisable in the mire of contemporary reality but potentially realisable in a different future. In such putatively escapist fiction, disaffected population groups could have their social and political desires satisfied. This popular literature appeals to the 'Not Yet Become' in which even the vaguest possibility for social change is reaffirmed in imaginative terms, as what Bloch calls this fiction's 'cultural surplus'.¹²⁵ What is particularly important about popular fiction is that it is an appeal to a community – usually a ready-made community – waiting to be re-affirmed through its reading practices. The Irish Anglican patriotic community had already made a brief appearance in the 1720s during the Wood's Halfpence controversy and demonstrated its appetite for reading political pamphlets then. However, this faction was completely radicalised by the Money Bill dispute. Reading popular fiction offers a kind of vicarious pleasure in which deeply held desires and fantasies can be satisfied in a very safe way, and given that the Irish Gothic novel emerged at this very moment, it seems apposite to read it alongside the political controversies of the 1750s.

Political alienation made fantastic and phantasmic forms such as that which would eventually be called the Gothic attractive to Irish Anglicans. A straightforwardly realist view of life was more or less denied them by the fact of their marginality in both a broader British setting (alienated and rejected by the English) and a more narrow

Irish setting (outnumbered and generally disliked by Irish Catholics). As Joseph Cleary puts it, ‘the Irish Protestant middle class could not share with its English Protestant counterpart the same sanguine faith in historical progress and evolution through gradual reform’, mostly because such reform threatened to ‘scupper Protestant dominance’.¹²⁶ So popular did Gothic novels become in Ireland that by the 1790s their conventions were sufficiently well understood that parodies began to appear, including Wolfe Tone’s *Belmont Castle, or Suffering Sensibility* (1790) – which more or less takes on and subverts the novels of Anne Fuller – and Mrs F. C. Patrick’s *More Ghosts!* (1798), a burlesque poking fun at the abundance of supernatural entities crowding out real people in the fiction of the period.

Irish Anglicans were living through a liminal period as the old homogenised enclave was broken and a new grouping (a patriotic one) was being formed, for which liminality, liminal forms are required. In a study of such liminal periods, Victor Turner has emphasised the way in which, for the community undergoing traumatic transition, the moment of crisis must be continually returned to symbolically in an attempt to come to terms with the psychological breach endured.¹²⁷ Gothic literature is a literature of the liminal that obsesses over moments of fracture and dissolution and re-enacts such moments repeatedly in an attempt to come to grips with them. During the liminal stage the subject has to suffer a period where binaries are dissolved, boundaries are crossed, and dualities are merged together.¹²⁸ Gothic literature, the literature of hesitation and hyphenation, is a particularly apt form to use to explore dissolutions, crossing and mergings. For Todorov, the reader of the fantastic is caught in a kind of nervous hesitation between the uncanny and the marvellous. Although such hesitation may ultimately be decided one way or the other (as in the work of Anne Radcliffe, where the supernatural is ‘explained’), the most important moment of the text is indeed that hesitatory one of suspense and anxiety. For Todorov, the fantastic is ‘that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event’.¹²⁹ The fantastic text begins in a recognizable reality then brings the characters through a period of radical uncertainty and out the other side to a different but still secure reality. It is a form that must be extraordinarily attractive to those undergoing such transitions in history, and this partially explains why it emerges at moments of extreme hesitation and in historical communities stuck in liminal spaces and liminal times. The Gothic is a means not so much to escape from everyday realities as to transmogrify them and confront them in different guises. William Patrick Day insists that readers of the Gothic wished to tackle fears and anxieties rather

than avoid them, and that the Gothic is a kind of homeopathic cure for such anxieties, solving existential problems with the actual causes of such anxieties.¹³⁰

The full-dress Irish Gothic can be seen as a meeting of Irish Anglican paranoia, anti-Catholicism and psychological claustrophobia with nostalgia (for a past of which they were never a part), desire for the Catholic Other, and sublime respect for history. This division is expressed in two competing tendencies in Irish Gothic writing: a Whiggish, 'progressive', modernising view of the contemporary world as moving away from and expelling the superstitious trappings of the Catholic past found in ruined churches and castles, libidinous monks and priests and female rape towards a new and prosperous future; and a nostalgic longing for the existential and social security of the past and the sublime power of the chivalric Middle Ages, including its religious expressions. Paranoia and monstrosity dialogue with desire and toleration; the ability of the Gothic to express such competing positions explains why it pervades Irish Anglican writing – as existential and geographical hesitators (between England and Ireland, Anglicanism and Catholicism) they needed a language of hesitancy and ambivalence to articulate identity, and the Gothic was uniquely positioned to provide that language. The following chapters will investigate whether the beginnings of the Irish Gothic tradition met these expectations.

Shifting analysis away from futile attempts to discover the 'first' Irish Gothic novel to a more fruitful examination of why the Gothic novel emerged in Ireland in the mid-eighteenth century is central to the aims of this book. Joseph Cleary has issued a call for an end to the Anglo-centric model of Irish literary history where Irish literature is either praised or decried because of its apparent (realist) paucity or (non-realist) plenitude as compared to English literature. He points out that 'the history of the Irish novel is always assessed in terms of its English counterpart; never in terms of other peripheral societies that were also struggling in the same period against strong metropolitan rivals for literary recognition'.¹³¹ This study will try to shift the emphasis away from a direct comparison between English and Irish Gothic of the eighteenth century (in which comparison Irish Gothic literature will always come off worst), towards locating the Irish Gothic within a much more expansive field of Gothic Studies. Alongside this re-placing of the early Irish Gothic, the book advocates a move away from the current tendency towards survey and guide in Gothic Studies. In terms of the Gothic the preponderance of surveys has been understandable,¹³² since newcomers to the area need a trustworthy guide to the sheer mass of critical material that now exists. Indeed, in terms of Irish Gothic, there is indeed still a need for a survey

of the available primary material so that the field can be mapped out empirically.

Close study of a small number of texts has become rather unfashionable, though. In literary studies, there has been a gravitation towards the kind of work brilliantly performed by scholars like Franco Moretti. Moretti has a global perspective and is interested in mapping world literatures in order, as he explains, to make the material available ‘historically longer, geographically larger, and morphologically deeper than those few classics of nineteenth-century Western European “realism” that have dominated the recent theory of the novel’.¹³³ More controversially, he has appealed for a literary history ‘without a single direct textual reading’,¹³⁴ which would make the present study completely irrelevant.

This is, indeed, the age of quantitative analysis, and understandably so, as scholars grow excited about the possibilities opened up by the digital humanities. I note that as I write the Loeber’s *Guide to Irish Fiction* is being digitized, and there is a growing lack of interest in the close analysis of individual texts. Matthew Wilkens, one of the best advocates of the digital humanities, urges his colleagues to turn to ‘algorithmic and quantitative analysis of piles of texts’ because ‘we gain a lot by having available to us the kinds of evidence text-mining . . . provides’. By digitizing an enormous body of material and searching it with a computer program we can, according to Wilkens, arrive at relatively safe and supportable generalisations looking for ‘potentially interesting features without committing months and years to extracting them via close reading’.¹³⁵ Other scholars have been less convinced of the need to move away from close reading, however. Ian Campbell Ross has queried the clarion call for the abandonment of detailed textual analysis:

Moretti himself provocatively suggested that reading individual works has become as irrelevant as trying to describe the architecture of a building from a single brick – though, perhaps wisely, he did not enquire too closely into what happens to buildings if single bricks, or at least too many of them, and especially those foundational bricks at the bottom of the building, go missing.¹³⁶

In his article on ‘Mapping Early Irish Fiction’ (2011), Ross indicates that looking closely at these individual building blocks can help transform current understandings of Irish literary history as a whole. This present study examines one important element of Irish fiction, the Gothic, tracing it to its initial instantiations, which are placed carefully in their ‘institutional’ setting in terms of Irish studies, history, literary studies and Gothic studies, in order to see if such a placing is helpful for understanding all these fields.

The Emergence of Irish Gothic Fiction is an examination of texts which have hitherto been almost completely absent from literary history except when they have been gestured towards or glanced at briefly. Restoring such texts to prominence is not against the spirit of Moretti's argument that canonical fetishising needs to be undermined. Thomas Leland is not Jonathan Swift; *The Adventures of Miss Sophia Berkley* is not *Castle Rackrent* (1800). As Ross insists, there is a need to show that 'many, many books, that neither are, nor have ever formed, part of the canon, do matter.'¹³⁷ Indeed, Clare Connolly rightly warns against literary critics becoming lost in statistical analysis and insists that 'our current sense of the quantity of Irish fiction has rather outstripped our interpretive procedures'. Her view that 'critical challenges outweigh bibliographical ones at present',¹³⁸ echoes that of James Watt, who has urged literary historians to 'focus in detail on the functioning of specific works' rather than providing more general accounts, and such focus and specificity is precisely what this book intends to provide in examining the reasons for the emergence of the Irish Gothic in the late 1750s.¹³⁹ Such readings of Gothic literary texts are only possible if we continue to believe that the texts themselves matter, that these texts signify something, and in the next chapter I turn to some of the problems now associated with such interpretive assumptions.

Notes

1. George Lutz, in *The Amityville Horror*, film, dir. Stuart Rosenberg, 1978, screenplay by Sandor Stern. George feels he is quickly turning into the former inhabitant of his home in the town of Amityville. Unfortunately, the former inhabitant murdered his entire family, so this transformation does not bode well for the Lutzes.
2. See especially Backus, *Gothic Family Romance*, *passim*, for this argument.
3. Foster, 'Protestant Magic', 221.
4. Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, 187.
5. Killeen, *Gothic Ireland*.
6. Miles, *Gothic Writing*, 4.
7. Barnard, 'Crises of Identity', 39–83.
8. Quoted in McDowell, *Ireland in the Age of Imperialism*, III, 131.
9. Barnard, 'Protestantism, Ethnicity and Irish Identities', 212–13. Of course, and rather ironically, it was Barnard himself who first used the expression 'crisis of identity'.
10. Molyneux, *Case of Ireland*, dedication to the king, 18.
11. MacDonagh, *States of Mind*, 19.
12. *Ibid.*, 23.
13. *Ibid.*, 37.
14. Lyons, *Culture and Anarchy*, 117.

15. Connerton, *How Societies Remember*.
16. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*; idem, *The Collective Memory*.
17. For the generation of which egregious term I stand guilty. See *Gothic Ireland: Horror and the Irish Anglican Imagination*.
18. Haslam, 'Irish Gothic: A Rhetorical Hermeneutics Approach', 3. In his article on 'Irish Gothic' in the *Routledge Companion*, Haslam likewise accuses me (in particular) of 'hypostasizing' 'the Irish Anglican Imagination' in my book on the subject, although he does admit that I am partly redeemable since I accept that such terms are open to challenge, 88–9.
19. As Swift addressed the 4th Drapier's Letter.
20. Breuninger, 'Berkeley and Ireland', 105.
21. Hayton, 'From Barbarian to Burlesque', 5–31.
22. Shapin, *Social History of Truth*, 127.
23. Taylor, 'Politics of Recognition', 25.
24. See Bhabha, 'Culture's In-Between', 53–60.
25. Douglas, *In the Wilderness*, 12; idem, *How Institutions Think*.
26. King to Bishop William Nicolson, 28 May 1719, quoted in Connolly, *Religion*, 255.
27. Bartlett, *Fall and Rise*, 36; Connolly, *Religion*, 251. See also, Eccleshall, 'Anglican political thought', 37, 49; Johnston, *Ireland in the Eighteenth Century*, 1; Boyce, *Nationalism*, 99.
28. Douglas, *How Institutions Think*, 80; idem, *In the Wilderness*, 53.
29. The historiography of the Penal Laws is extensive. See especially Froude, *English in Ireland*; Mant, *History of the Church of Ireland*; Lecky, *History of Ireland*; Murray, *Revolutionary Ireland*; Sullivan, *Two Centuries*; Burke, *Irish Priest*; Burns, 'The Irish Penal Code'; Wall, *Penal Laws*; Burns, 'Irish Popery Laws'; Cullen, 'Catholics'; Corish, *Catholic Community*; Connolly, 'Religion and History'; idem, *Religion*, 263–313; McGrath, 'Securing the Protestant Interest'.
30. Calculating even the relative size of the different denominations in eighteenth-century Ireland is fraught with difficulties, the only firm statistics coming from a religious census taken in 1732 by collectors of a hearth tax. They calculated that 73 per cent of households were Catholics, but most commentators believe this underestimates the correct number considerably. According to Sean Connolly, 'the most it seems safe to say is that Catholics in the first half of the eighteenth century probably made up somewhere between three-quarters and four-fifths of the population'. *Religion*, 145.
31. Connolly, *Religion*, 261.
32. Todorov, *Fantastic*, 107–39.
33. Levy, *Le Roman 'gothique'*, 46.
34. Swift, 'A Letter to the Whole People of Ireland', *Drapier's Letters*, 64.
35. Anonymous, *Considerations concerning Ireland*, 3, 2–3.
36. [Brewster], *A discourse concerning Ireland*, 44; see also Hayton, 'From Barbarian to Burlesque'.
37. Quoted in Connolly, *Divided Kingdoms*, 219–20.
38. Connolly, *Divided Kingdoms*, 227.
39. See De Valera, 'Antiquarianism and Historical Investigations in Ireland', Chapters 1–2.

40. Quoted in Connolly, *Divided Kingdoms*, 229.
41. McBride, “The Common Name of Irishman”, 246.
42. Moore, *Swift*, 3–4.
43. *Ibid.*, 5–8.
44. See especially Hayton, ‘Anglo-Irish Attitudes’, 145–57.
45. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*.
46. Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion*.
47. McBride, *Eighteenth Century Ireland*, 309.
48. Todorov, *Fantasy*, 25.
49. Moynahan, *Anglo-Irish*.
50. Killeen, ‘Irish Gothic’; see also Todorov, *Fantastic*, 25.
51. McCormack, ‘Irish Gothic and After’, 831.
52. Morash, “Time is Out of Joint”.
53. Stoker, *Dracula*, 402.
54. *Ibid.*, 306.
55. Le Fanu, *In a Glass Darkly*, 319.
56. It is, for example, no surprise that Gothic appeals powerfully to teenagers, who undergo an extreme version of such hesitation, in their case a hesitation between adulthood and childhood.
57. Foster, ‘Protestant Magic’, 220.
58. *Ibid.*, 219.
59. Moynahan, *Anglo-Irish*, 111.
60. Killeen, *Gothic Ireland*, Chapter 1.
61. Napier, *Failure of Gothic*; Day, *Circles*.
62. Baldick and Mighall, ‘Gothic Criticism’, 214.
63. Katherine Thorn, to her ‘son’, Damien (the AntiChrist) as they try to enter a Catholic Church. *The Omen*, film, dir. John Moore, 2006. Screenplay by David Seltzer.
64. McCormack, ‘Irish Gothic and After’, 837.
65. He specifically warns – quite rightly – against over-emphasising ‘the idea of self-conscious historical guilt and repression’ in motivating Irish Anglicans to participate in the Gothic genre. Writers like LeFanu, Wilde and Stoker, for example, were far more interested in analysing the subject position of Irish Protestants and motivated by their liminality and uncertainty than in mitigating or articulating a sense of communal guilt for the wrongs done to Irish Catholic peasants. Foster, *Words Alone*, 103.
66. Gibbons, *Gaelic Gothic*, 10–11.
67. Deane, *Strange Country*, 126. Mangan has been correctly read as a writer of Gothic by a number of critics. See also Wurtz, ‘Scarce More a Corpse’; and Haslam, “Broad Farce and Thrilling Tragedy”.
68. Haslam, ‘Irish Gothic: A Rhetorical Hermeneutics Approach’, 5; McCormack, ‘Irish Gothic and After’, 837.
69. Though Wilde’s Catholicism is, of course, a hotly contested subject. See Killeen, *Faiths of Oscar Wilde*.
70. Connolly, *Cultural History*, 170–1.
71. Sturgeon, “Seven Devils”. The postulation is, of course, Deane’s rather than Haslam’s, but the point is well made.
72. Eagleton, *How to Read a Poem*, 8.
73. Wolfson, *Formal Charges*; Cronin, *Politics of Romantic Poetry*.

74. Newman, *Idea of a University*, 262.
75. I would suggest that the term 'Protestant novel' is a tautology, while 'Catholic novel' makes a great deal of sense.
76. Orwell, 'Inside the Whale', 515.
77. Leavis, 'Englishness of the English Novel', 318.
78. Watt, *Rise of the Novel*, 74.
79. McKeon, *Origins of the English Novel*, 337.
80. Levy, *Le Roman 'gothique' anglais*, 46.
81. Sage, *Horror Fiction*, xiii.
82. Quoted in Sage, *Horror Fiction*, 27.
83. O'Malley, *Catholicism*, 32. See also Schmitt, *Alien Nation*, 2.
84. McEvoy, "'Really, though secretly, a papist'", 49–61. see also Tarr, *Catholicism in Gothic Fiction*; Purves, *Gothic and Catholicism*.
85. Gibbons, 'The Mirror and the Vamp', 24. For further commentary on Catholic Gothic as a mode of 'writing back', see Gibbons, *Gaelic Gothic*, 14–15.
86. Walpole, *Castle of Otranto*, 5–6.
87. Dodington's remarks are quoted by Connolly, *Divided Kingdom*, 386.
88. The Wood's Halfpence controversy erupted in 1722 when a hardware manufacturer, William Wood, bribed his way into being granted a patent to produce copper coinage for Irish use. Not only was the patent secured by corrupt means but the coins produced by Wood were bad quality, and it was felt by many commentators on the Irish economy that their use would drive gold and silver from circulation in the country. The controversy sparked an intense debate about the right of the Westminster parliament to approve such patents for Ireland, about Irish economic independence, and saw the most dramatic intervention into Irish affairs by Jonathan Swift, who wrote a series of letters, seven pamphlets, on the issue under the pseudonym M. B. Drapier (1724–5).
89. I have drawn upon a great many accounts of the crisis in this narrative, but especially, Bartlett, *Fall and Rise*, 38–44; Powell, *Britain and Ireland*, 16–47; Megennis, *Irish Political System*, 62–109; Dickson, *New Foundations*, 97–100. The classic study is O'Donovan, 'Money Bill Dispute', 55–87.
90. Moore, *Swift*, 5.
91. The significance of the money bill itself should not be completely ignored. Because of its very reduced power relative to Westminster, the Irish parliament was quite protective of its perceived right to grant the additional duties necessary for the parliament to meet. Powell, *Britain and Ireland*, 9.
92. Bartlett, *Fall and Rise*, 41–2.
93. *Ibid.*, 42.
94. *Ibid.*, 42.
95. Powell, *Britain and Ireland*, 29.
96. Megennis, *Irish Political System*, 62.
97. Hellen O'Roon, *The P_____e Vindicated*, 9–11.
98. Powell, *Britain and Ireland*, 12.
99. For Powell, 'this period witnessed a move towards popular participation in Irish politics, through both peaceful and violent means, on a scale that

- completely overshadowed the controversy that raged in Dublin during the Wood's halfpence dispute'. *Britain and Ireland*, 25.
100. Bartlett, *Fall and Rise*, 43.
 101. Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Manuscripts and Correspondence*, Vol. 1, p. 7.
 102. Connolly, 'Precedent and Principle', 131.
 103. *Ibid.*, 132.
 104. In one instance its influence can be seen in the development of two opposing antiquarian schools of thought. According to those adhering to what Lesa Ní Mhunghaile terms the 'Scytho-Celtic model', Celts had descended from the barbaric biblical Sythians, and Celtic 'civilisation' was a degraded one in need of thorough improvement and cultivation by the Normans. This was a view most powerfully articulated by Edward Ledwich's *Antiquities of Ireland* (1790). The alternative model, articulated by patriot-leaning antiquarians adopting a 'Phoenician origin myth', claimed that the Celts were descended from the Phoenicians and had built up a tremendously sophisticated civilisation in pre-Norman invasion Ireland, a sophistication rivalling that of modern England. This meant that there could be seen to be a confluence between ancient Irish civilisation and the civilisation carried over to Ireland by the Norman, Elizabethan, Cromwellian and Williamite English migrants, and therefore the 'natives and the newcomers' had more in common than differences. 'Anglo-Irish Antiquarianism'.
 105. Moore, *Swift*, 6.
 106. Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', 367.
 107. Loeber and Loeber, *Guide to Irish Fiction*, liv-lv.
 108. For a very interesting survey of this material, see Hill, "Allegories, Fiction, and Feigned Representations".
 109. I would not place too much importance on establishing exactly what the 'first' Irish Gothic novel is. Loeber and Loeber, 'Publication of Irish Novels and Novelettes'.
 110. Backus, *Gothic Family Romance*, 15-16.
 111. *Ibid.*, 19.
 112. Gibbons, *Gaelic Gothic*, 10-11.
 113. Cleary, 'National Novel in an Imperial Age', 63.
 114. Morash, "Time is Out of Joint", 138.
 115. For the agitation, see Donnelly, 'Whiteboy Movement'; Bric, 'Whiteboy Movement in Tipperary'; for the Sheehy affair, see Gibbons, *Edmund Burke*, 21-4.
 116. Gibbons, *Gaelic Gothic*, 21.
 117. O'Halloran, *Golden Ages*, 111.
 118. Deane, *Celtic Revivals*, 20.
 119. De Bolla, *Discourse of the Sublime*, 106-12.
 120. *Ibid.*, 14.
 121. As Colin Haydon remarks, 'logic and evidence combine to suggest that detestation of Popery persisted among the lower orders generally'. *Anti-Catholicism*, 179.
 122. *Ibid.*, 253.
 123. Cleary, 'The National Novel', 58-9.

124. Fowler, *Alienated Reader*, 30–3.
125. Bloch, *Principle of Hope*, Vol. 1, pp. 29, 417–18. Fowler uses Bloch effectively in *Alienated Reader*, 32–4.
126. I would substitute Protestant in that sentence with ‘Anglican’ given the fact that Presbyterians were considered as much outside the Irish political nation as Irish Catholics
127. Abrahams, ‘Foreword’, ix.
128. Turner, *Ritual Process*, 28.
129. Todorov, *Fantasy*, 25.
130. Day, *Circles*, 189.
131. Cleary, ‘National Novel’, 50.
132. And I have even written one myself: Killeen, *Gothic Literature, 1825–1914*.
133. Moretti, ‘Novel’, 111.
134. Moretti, ‘Conjectures’, 57.
135. Wilkens, ‘Canons’, 256.
136. He is citing a comment made by Moretti in an interview with John Sutherland, 9 January, 2006 for the *Guardian*. Ross, ‘Mapping Ireland’, 4.
137. Ross, ‘Mapping’, 16.
138. Connolly, *Cultural History*, 18.
139. Watt, *Contesting*, 1.

The Creeping Unknown: Re-Making Meaning in the Gothic Novel

I'll show you what horror means!¹

I

The claim that horror and the Gothic 'mean' has recently become something of an embarrassment to many theorists of and commentators on the genre. In a powerful study of horror narrative, Roger B. Salomon complains about a 'rage for explanation' in accounts of the genre and insists that horror is precisely that which is beyond elucidation, proclaiming proudly that in his own study he will 'eschew explanation, dealing with what I consider a phenomenon of experience that cannot be explained'.² Matt Hills has devoted an entire book to the 'pleasures of' rather than the reasons for horror and spends a great deal of time undermining approaches to horror which emphasise the cognitive and psychoanalytic 'meanings' supposedly motivating horror stories, warning that such analyses often manage to bypass affect, which he considers one of horror's defining features.³ Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall had earlier cautioned against the tendency of critics to diagnose the Gothic as a symptom of bourgeois anxiety and a means of mapping the fault lines of a dominant culture. For both, it isn't 'the "business" of Gothic fiction to "articulate" or "negotiate" anxieties' but rather 'to be scary or sensational', which 'does not amount to the same thing'.⁴ In the race to explain, critics ended up explaining away.

Interestingly, it has very often been an Irish Gothic masterpiece which has served as the battleground on which the opponents of interpretation have (to coin a phrase) staked their claims. Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) has been one of the most (over?) analysed texts in the history of Gothic criticism, and there is no sign of this interpretive attention waning any time soon. The fanged Count has been made to serve as the

locus for countless late Victorian concerns, and he has demonstrated a remarkable ability to mutate into almost anything: Irish landlord, peasant, Jew, proletarian, sexual deviant and liberator, New Woman, mother, menstruating woman, medieval aristocrat, terrorist, and anything else you can think of. Many have become increasingly frustrated with this interpretive slipperiness, particularly when the possible sexual meaning of particular scenes and images are made explicit by overenthusiastic analysts. *Dracula* expert Elizabeth Miller berated the critics in a barnstormingly entertaining survey revealingly called *Sense and Nonsense* (2006), and in a later article she fantasised about ‘a *Dracula* in which wooden stakes are wooden stakes, and blood is merely blood . . . not an easy task when we consider the extent to which the text has been pushed to the brink of total libidinal abandon’. She warned that ‘sexual readings of *Dracula* owe as much to the tenor of the readers’ times as they do to the original text. In fact, some reflect the late twentieth century’s voyeuristic obsession with sexuality in all its forms, coupled with a determination to project (sometimes in condescending fashion) its own self-proclaimedly sophisticated and liberated views onto a text (and an author) shaped by what is viewed as late Victorian repression.’⁵ In a similarly exasperated vein (sorry!), countering the more sex-saturated readings of Stoker’s novel, Robert Mighall insisted that ‘*Dracula* is a horror story about vampires’, not sex, and that rather than depicting a graphic gang-rape reinforcing a repressive Victorian regime on a ‘suddenly sexual woman’, ‘the scene in the crypt depicts a vampire-slaying . . . [and] Lucy is a vampire who is being destroyed according to the method prescribed by folklore’.⁶

For this school of criticism, sometimes a stake really is just a stake. Although psychoanalytic readings of Gothic have borne most of the brunt of this scepticism, it is the critical act of apparently dissolving the Gothic text into (interpretive) context that is the actual target. In a now infamous attack on the work of Stephen King, the commentator Don Herron berated the novelist for precisely his tendency to write as if for an audience of scholar fans, complaining he had ‘never read fiction as ready made for critical explication as King’s . . . he loads his work with themes, recurring motifs, cross-references. In essays and books he endorses the idea of a “sub-text” – important adult concerns about politics, relationships, or economics which invest an otherwise popular novel or film with serious intent’. For Herron, such interpretive ‘sub-text’ is a way of evading the main function of a horror writer, which is to scare the hell out of the reader, and instead appeals to the intellect rather than the gut. While this ‘appeases the academic mind . . . which seeks propaganda in everything it reads’, it betrays the genre itself, which is

about horrifying readers and not making them muse on social or psychosexual anxieties.⁷ Herron's attack on King, however, reminds us that despite the current scepticism about cognitive accounts of horror, some practitioners write precisely in order to comment on social, political and cultural issues and that to ignore this fact would be to misrepresent the genre.

The concern expressed by the likes of Miller, Mighall and Herron emerges from a long-standing one in literary studies regarding the limits of interpretation and the duties of a literary critic towards the text being interpreted. A consistent worry has been that many critics are exceeding the proper limits of interpretation, that they are guilty of in some way breaching interpretive decorum in pushing explanation as far as it can go. Specifically in terms of the Irish Gothic, the charge has been that many of us are guilty of seeing Ireland and Irish issues everywhere we look – of imposing an Irish context on literature that is really uninterested in Ireland. It should be noted, however, that sometimes Ireland pops up in a novel when least expected. Very late in the plot of Regina Maria Roche's *Clermont* (1798) (a text which resides in the cultural memory now only as one of the Northanger Novels) it is revealed that the mysterious past of Madeline, the heroine's father, the Clermont of the title, involves a hidden Irish subversive past. His wife, Madeline's mother, was one Geraldine, the daughter of Lord Dunlere, an exiled Irish supporter of James II, of whom he was a 'zealous' follower. Suddenly – as if out of nowhere – the heroine's family becomes implicated in Jacobite sympathy, and for a novel published in the year of the 1798 rebellion, this connection has political implications far beyond the working out of the plot. By naming her heroine's Irish mother Geraldine, Roche connects her to the Norman Fitzgerald family, the earls of Kildare and the dukes of Leinster, and indirectly too Lord Edward Fitzgerald, a leading member of the Society of United Irishmen, deeply involved in the military organisation of the rebellion, and notorious in the 1790s as a political radical and separatist. Indeed, in using such a name Roche's novel may slip from Jacobitism into covert Jacobinism.⁸ Later, Maria Edgeworth would also code Fitzgerald into the politics of her novel *Ennui*, whose character Lady Geraldine is highly critical of distorted travel narratives of Irish society. Ireland can, then, catch the reader unawares, and knowing this may make many Irish studies critics sceptical when told they are over-stepping the interpretive mark.

In an article on Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's 'Green Tea' (1871), William Hughes advises against what he considers a rather too hasty tendency of critics who come from within the discipline of Irish studies to allow their interpretive lens to be conditioned by the demands of the

discipline itself. For Hughes, the mis-reading of Irish Gothic is due to (political) demands generated by the academy:

Within the institution of Irish Studies, it might be suggested, a subtle pressure is all too often brought to bear, its imperative being to reclaim such writers as Le Fanu, Stoker and Wilde as generically or distinctively Irish writers, even where their literary productions were shaped by a London-oriented publishing industry as much as by an Anglo-Irish selfhood predicated upon educational and behavioural co-ordinates which link the Irish ascendancy to its English counterpart.⁹

There are a number of problems with the extract just quoted, not least Hughes's rather too casual use of terms like 'Anglo-Irish' and 'ascendancy', terms which have been subject to a great deal of scrutiny from Irish historians and critics over at least four decades and which would only be used about figures like the thoroughly middle class Le Fanu, Wilde and Stoker with caution and qualification.¹⁰ However, Hughes's concern is certainly understandable, and perhaps Irish studies critics have been rather too eager to comprehend the work of canonical figures like the writers mentioned in an *exclusively* Irish context, though this too is not all that surprising given the institutional weight accorded to approaches which elide rather than explore precisely that context. Since so many critics have been content to pretend that Ireland does not even exist in terms of these writers, or that it is at best a 'background' to be left behind as quickly as possible, the contrary tendency to over-emphasise Ireland in New Historicist terms is only to be expected. Moreover, and this is a point that really should not have to be made at this stage, but which, perhaps, it may be worth stating bluntly here: reading these texts and writers in relation to Ireland is not *in any way* an attempt to claim that other issues and other places should be ignored. Irish studies has done us all the critical favour of returning an Irish dimension to authors and texts that had been read for decades as if Ireland were completely marginal to interpretation, and demonstrating the complexity of the ways in which instead it is an (often shadowy) presence. If, at times, it is necessary to argue that one interpretation necessarily rules out another, then this is a matter of sifting the evidence rather than declaring out-of-hand that the political or institutional gravitation of a large body of critics (most of whom disagree with each other vehemently) is, in effect, queering the pitch and distorting the evidence.¹¹

Richard Haslam has been to the fore in cautioning against what he sees as very problematic 'Irish' readings of Gothic texts by Irish writers, and in a number of interventions he has set out to rein in the interpretive over-enthusiasm of Irish studies critics (including myself).

In a very considered response to my own readings of the Irish Gothic, Haslam has argued that my ‘psychoanalytically-inflected reading of Irish history shapes [my] reading’ of Gothic fiction, and that I, like many others, always tend to see Gothic texts as commenting in some way on ‘the burden of colonial history’, as commentaries on the anxieties of Irish Protestants in general.¹² Luckily, I am not alone in making such an egregious blunder, and Haslam includes Julian Moynahan, Joseph Spence and Terry Eagleton as my brothers-in-error. Apparently we all make the same interpretive mistake as, like academic versions of Stephen King, we are all reading Gothic for the supposed sub-text: ‘this interpretation substitutes allegoresis (a hermeneutic practice) for allegory (a rhetorical practice); in the former, a text lacking the conventionally accepted characteristics of theological, moralistic, historical, political, or personification allegory is explicated *as if* it were a deliberately designed allegory’.¹³ Haslam’s worry is about what he views as the generally illegitimate critical practice of allegoresis, an uncalled-for, unprovoked, unnecessary imposition on an unwilling text, a breach of hermeneutical decorum, and ultimately a complete misrepresentation of both a text and the Irish Gothic itself. In an important article on ‘Irish Gothic’ in the rather official *Routledge Companion to Gothic* (2007) he warns against the tendency towards allegorising he finds in most critics of the Irish Gothic, arguing that ‘critics employing a psychoanalytically inflected historicism attempt to extract the political contexts (allegedly) inscribed allegorically within texts’.¹⁴

Northrop Frye had a neat line in responding to accusations of allegoresis. In his *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) he explicitly warned that ‘all commentary is allegorical interpretation’.¹⁵ I, too, would hesitatingly suggest that all accounts which relate something other than simply the plot and the material condition of the text are at least open to the accusation of allegoresis. Frye’s point is that all readings which assess the way a text ‘says one thing but means another’ are necessarily implicated in the mode of allegorical interpretation. As Morton Bloomfield explains, ‘except for textual scholars who attempt to preserve and protect the verbal surface of a work . . . we may put all interpreters into the general category of allegorists’.¹⁶ Haslam is concerned that Irish studies readers are involved in subordinating both the text and the author to the critic, to seeing in the text what they (we!) want to see in it, and he wishes to re-establish a proper relationship between a text, an author and a critic in which the critic should not set out to make the text say things that the author did not intend.¹⁷ Since, he argues, Charles Robert Maturin did not intend *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) to amount to a consideration of the Irish Protestant position in Ireland, or the politics of Ireland at

the time, it is unfair of critics to claim that this is what the novel does. That kind of interpretation ‘makes itself a little too much *at home* in the text’ and ends up imposing an allegorical reading which is simply not there; he cautions that hesitancy in interpretation rather than allegoresis should take precedence.¹⁸

Certainly, hesitancy and caution are useful qualities for any literary critic. They are even more important for readers of Irish Gothic, given that it has mostly been the work of Irish Anglicans, and as I have argued in the previous chapter, there is a reason why they were attracted to Gothic in their writing. As Tzvetan Todorov has persuasively demonstrated, Gothic fiction is generally marked by a psychological ‘hesitancy’ between a supernatural and a natural understanding of the plot, and this, I think, can be fruitfully linked to the cultural hesitancy of Irish Anglicans, of whom it can be said that ‘there were no greater cultural hesitators in the British Isles’.¹⁹ It is no part of my general plan here to argue that we should calcify the hesitators and their texts into a very specifically drawn out allegory. However, I also endorse Moynahan’s view that Gothic often violates the ‘official best intentions’ of its authors so that while it may (or may not) be true that any Irish Gothic writer did not intend an allegorical reading of her work this does not necessarily mean that the novel she produced does not include such an allegory.²⁰ As I have already explained, Haslam is deeply suspicious of psychoanalysis as a tool of interpretation considering it a cheap way to incorporate readings that a particular critic wishes to propound under the cover of either the personal, political or cultural unconscious (he includes a long footnote disputing Fredric Jameson’s conceptualisation of the ‘political unconscious’²¹), but while critics (including myself) should perhaps be more tentative in employing such models in literary analysis it is important to recognise that what Haslam is trying to do is to close down analysis by effectively outlawing modes of interpretation with which he does not agree.

There is no space here to rehearse Jacques Derrida’s argument that once a text leaves the author she cannot control the ways it can interpreted²² or to re-emphasise the now surely uncontested view that an author is not in complete control of what meanings a text contains. I am not here arguing that authorial intention is unimportant or to be dismissed,²³ simply insisting that there may be more to a text than an author assumes or would recognise. As G. K. Chesterton put it, ‘either criticism is no good at all (a very defensible position) or else criticism means saying things about an author, the very things that would have made him jump out of his boots’.²⁴ Baldly speaking, even if in these texts the author was not *intentionally* commenting on the ‘Irish Anglican

imagination', he may have ended up doing so anyway, and it is the duty of the literary critic to uncover this commentary. It is difficult to see why any literary critic would want to disagree with this position.

The presence (or absence) of allegory in texts which do not declare themselves allegorical is the subject of a major theoretical controversy in post-colonial studies in general, and Irish studies in particular, in ways that bear heavily on this present book. In a divisive article entitled 'Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism' (1986), the Marxist critic Fredric Jameson theorised that 'all third-world texts are necessarily . . . allegorical, and in a very specific way: they are to be read as what I would call national allegories, even when, or perhaps I should say, particularly when their forms develop out of predominantly western machineries of representation, such as the novel'. Jameson's argument was refreshingly clear: the condition of emerging from, or being in, a Third World geographical zone necessitated the writing of the nation even when the author apparently wanted to write about something else – for example, private life – since 'even those [texts] which are seemingly private . . . necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory'.²⁵ For Jameson, private and the public worlds cannot be separated in 'Third World' countries, and therefore Third World writers cannot help but write about the nation in an allegorical sense. Jameson is also clear that while allegory is not absent in First World writing, there it is 'unconscious' – writers do not realise they are encoding the national allegorically – whereas 'third-world national allegories are conscious and overt'.²⁶

To say that Jameson's article landed him in a pot of post-colonial hot water would be to underplay things. Aijaz Ahmad responded with a full-blown attack, accusing Jameson of homogenising post-colonial writers and writings, insisting that the absolute difference between the First and Third Worlds posited by Jameson was spurious, and suggesting that Jameson was close to asserting that in order for a text to count as a Third World text it *had* to be allegorical. Ahmad noted that 'if we start thinking of the process of allegorisation not in nationalistic terms but simply as a relation between private and public, personal and communal, then it also becomes possible to see that allegorisation is by no means specific to the so-called third world'.²⁷ Ahmed's attack has been rather too superficially used as a knock down response to Jameson's article, but there is far too much of a rhetorical tendency to caricature Jameson in the article for it to work as anything other than a qualification. What Jameson over-emphasised, perhaps, was the claim that all 'Third World' literature should be read as national allegory, and his insistence that this allegory is always intentional is unpersuasive. His

major point, though, that being forced into a subordinate position relative to a dominating (capitalist) power has serious affects in terms of shaping the literature emerging from the Third World (as much as it has limiting though different effects on the literature emerging from the colonial centre) is surely accurate. Neil Larsen has perceptively argued that in Jameson's article

the potential for error lies in the *a priori* reduction of every individual instance of 'third world literature' to . . . national allegory. But it seems to me correct to regard this allegorising process as a structural tendency in the narrative forms of 'peripheral' modernities – a tendency that may, in many instances, never amount to more than an abstract possibility. If it can be allowed that the third world nation itself exists, on one plane at least, only as an abstract possibility . . . then it follows that attempts to represent this nation, to portray it in a narrative or symbolic medium, will reflect this abstraction within the formal elements of the medium itself.²⁸

Despite the attacks on Jameson, he provided a crucial argument of great use to theorists of Irish studies in the late 1980s and early 1990s, especially since many of them invested heavily in the notion of Ireland as, in Luke Gibbons's terms, a 'First World country, but with a Third World memory' (a formulation not without critics of its own).²⁹ For Gibbons, this meant that Irish writing could (should?) be read allegorically, or as necessarily allegorical, and he argued that 'allegory in a colonized culture is part of the symbolic ordering of life itself', continuing that allegory in these cases 'is not just a personification of an abstraction; it is . . . not simply . . . a mask that can be removed at will [but a] *part of consciousness itself* under certain conditions of colonial rule'.³⁰ To live in Ireland is to think allegorically, just as Jameson believes that to be a Third World writer is to write allegorically. In Jamesonian terms, then, Ireland has been read as a country operating under a politics of allegory. For Gibbons, those living under the conditions inherent in Ireland think in allegorical terms because these are the only terms in which the historical situation – discontinuous and traumatic – can be assimilated and understood.

For those of Gibbons's theoretical persuasion, Haslam is wrong to accuse his interlocutors of allegoresis because he misunderstands the role that allegory plays in Irish culture and consciousness. There is, though, probably an over-attachment to allegory by post-colonial critics in Irish studies. As Kevin Barry has argued persuasively, this approach tends to privilege a particular mode as having a very specific political resonance, a privilege that automatically reads other literary devices in a negative manner. So, for example, for Gibbons, whereas allegory brings together two or more different things without ever asserting their

complete identification, which therefore allows allegory to possess a politically radical charge, metaphor smoothes out difference in favour of similarity and homogeneity, and is therefore politically conservative. It is highly unlikely that such complete identification between a political viewpoint and a literary device (rather than a genre) is tenable, and the obsession with allegory has perhaps trapped critics slightly.³¹ Moreover, 'allegory' is probably not all that useful a term to use in this context, as these critics themselves have recognised. Both Jameson and Gibbons have attempted to make the term resonate in a more capacious way than its traditional iterations. In an earlier discussion, Jameson had spoken of allegory as useful to a world of radical discontinuity and fragmentation (by which he means the contemporary world) as a means of bringing together the bits and pieces of reality and experience, in 'a clumsy deciphering of meaning from moment to moment, the painful attempt to restore a continuity to heterogeneous, disconnected instances'.³² In his article on 'Third World Literature' he warns against an over-attachment to the 'traditional conception of allegory' ('an elaborate set of figures and personifications to be read against some one-to-one table of equivalences'), which he calls a 'one-dimensional view of this signifying process' and advocates the allegorical 'spirit' which is 'profoundly discontinuous, a matter of breaks and heterogeneities, of the multiple polysemia of the dream rather than the homogenous representation of the symbol'.³³ This warning is echoed by Gibbons, who argues that 'for allegory to retain its critical valency it is vital that there is an instability of reference and contestation of meaning to the point where it may not be at all clear where the figural ends and the literal begins'.³⁴

As should be clear by now, however, the term 'allegory' is misleading in such contexts, and not simply because questions necessarily arise regarding the supposed 'intentionality' of the authors involved. Making a distinction between 'traditional allegory' and 'post-colonial allegory' does not really help. Historically, the term 'allegory' evokes straight-forwardly allegorical works like Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1590–6), John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), John Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681), Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (1872) and George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945). In each of these texts allegory operates in a fairly clear-cut manner in which the text's 'surface' meaning (this is a story about farm animals rebelling against their human masters) is really an obvious cover for the real story being told (this is about the Russian Revolution and its aftermath). Allegories of this nature are generally not that difficult to decipher, often because the allegorical nature of the text will be pointed out by the author or the text itself.³⁵ Of course, there have been cases where critics have

claimed to have uncovered *intended* allegories after the fact and with no confirmation possible by the author. A notorious example of this is a 1964 article by high school teacher Henry Littlefield concerning what he argued was the buried allegory in L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1901), which, it turns out, was not really about Dorothy and her friends the Scarecrow, the Tin Man and the Cowardly Lion traversing the land of Oz at all but was, in fact, an allegory of American economic and political life in the Gilded Age.³⁶ This came as surprise to most readers of *Oz*, but it had the happy effect of making a complex period of economic history eminently explicable to students and the allegorical interpretation was seized on enthusiastically by generations of economic historians, textbook writers and high school and university students who – if asked – would explain confidently that the much loved novel was ‘really about’ the bi-metallic controversy, and who could also tell you that the Wizard himself was really President McKinley, the Scarecrow the put-upon Mid-West farmer, the Tin Man the exploited proletariat, and the Cowardly lion William Jennings Bryan himself.

The problem with Littlefield's argument is not the claim that *Oz* can (and perhaps should) be read as in some ways commenting on, related to, complicated by the historical controversies raging while Baum was writing. It would, in fact, be bizarre to argue otherwise. The difficulty lies in Littlefield's pushing this claim to its illogical conclusion: that Baum was *intentionally* allegorising and that his novel *directly* maps on to late nineteenth-century America. ‘Genuine allegory’, as Northrop Frye has pointed out, ‘is a structural element in literature: it has to be there, and cannot be added by critical interpretation alone’;³⁷ most literary texts are simply not allegories in this manner, and using the term in relation to them is more likely to confuse than clarify. It would be best to avoid using the term ‘allegory’ in situations where the argument merely concerns whether it is useful to read a text in relation to particular political, social, cultural or religious issues. Indeed, in these circumstances another term put forward by Northrop Frye serves much better. In his analysis of romance Frye posits that, by its structures and conventions, romance always provokes alternative meanings, but he insists that ‘the word allegory here is misleading: I should prefer some such phrase as “symbolic spread”, the sense that a work of literature is expanding into insights and experiences beyond itself’.³⁸

Frye's preference for the term ‘symbolic spread’ is helpful in two ways. In the first place it ensures the critic does not over-egg the pudding by making excessive claims regarding the intentional coding of the text being interpreted, such as claiming that Bram Stoker intentionally *meant* *Dracula* to ‘stand for’ Irish landlordism, or indeed Irish agrarian terror.

But the term also helps critics avoid the trap of a bizarre and slavish devotion to authorial intention, which should continue to be acknowledged as vital in reading and interpreting texts, but only as one part of the interpretive package. Although Richard Haslam believes that many Irish studies critics are suffering from the old 'affective fallacy' whereby the reader tends to read her own prejudices back into a work rather than take full account of the actual text in front of her eyes I suggest that perhaps Haslam is suffering from a version of the 'intentional fallacy' in his (generally fruitless) search for what these Gothic writers 'really' meant.³⁹ Again, the point is not to dispense with the authorial intentions – whatever such dispensing would look like – but merely to suggest that they do not govern what a text means or how it holds that meaning. The validity of any particular interpretation remains with the kinds of evidence provided for that reading: in other words, it is not enough to declare, out of hand, that a particular interpretation is simply illegitimate because it does not take sufficient notice of authorial intentions (known or unknown) but must depend instead on the robustness of the textual and extra-textual evidence provided to support the reading. 'Symbolic spread' may be a bit cumbersome, but it will serve much better than 'allegory', which could then be incorporated as a specific version of such 'spreading'.

Siobhán Kilfeather has asked some apposite questions about these complex issues of interpretation, wondering, 'if one decides to read the gothic as an allegory of the state of the nation, how far does one let the particular situation of the author – where he or she is coming from – determine the intention, if not the full meaning of the allegory? Or is the allegorical dimension something provided by the reader?'⁴⁰ Answering these questions is not straightforward, but it is unlikely that either the author or the reader 'determines' the 'full meaning' of the text or the way it symbolically spreads. Given that straightforward allegory is very rarely in question (though who ever claimed it was?), the job of the critic is to carefully and tentatively explicate fairly complex relationships between author, text and context (usually thinking in New Historicist ways when doing so). Frye's term 'symbolic spread' helps here because it does not have the implications of intentional allegory where one thing in a text can directly be explained in terms of another. There should be relatively few 'gotcha!' moments in genuine interpretation, where a text's code is suddenly cracked and meaning becomes transparent. Frye himself was very strict in using 'symbolic spread', believing that the symbolic spread of realism tended 'to go from an individual work of fiction into the life around it which it reflects' (a rather unfortunate formulation), while the symbolic spread of romance (which would include the

Gothic) ‘tends rather to go into its literary context, to other romances that are most like it’, but there is no compelling reason to maintain this distinction.⁴¹ As Anne Williams has pointed out, Frye’s solution to the tensions between allegory and ‘symbolic spread’ is ‘unsatisfactory’,⁴² a claim very few would dispute at this stage. The argument that romance ‘symbolically spreads’ to ‘other romances’ rather than to ‘the life around it’ emerges from a view of both realism and non-realism to which hardly any literary historians would now subscribe – and Rosemary Jackson’s theorisation of fantasy as a genre which involves considerable commentary on the real is more persuasive.⁴³ As Williams puts it, ‘the aura of “other meaning” attaching itself to romance landscapes involves more than “intertextuality”’.⁴⁴ In an earlier study of eighteenth-century Irish Gothic I endorsed ‘the New Historicist notion that texts and the histories in which they are imbedded are mutually productive processes’;⁴⁵ the term ‘symbolic spread’ usefully describes the means by which this mutual production of interpretation takes place.

The almost fetishistic appeal to both the text and the author by critics like Haslam in determining whether or not a given fiction is operating as in some ways a commentary on contemporary history fatally misunderstands how texts actually make meaning. As Luke Gibbons has perceptively insisted, it is simply impossible to always be able to determine ‘on textual grounds alone . . . whether a text is functioning allegorically or not’. Just because a clear and direct correspondence between text and historical situation is not immediately discernible is inadequate grounds on which to dismiss claims that the text ‘speaks to’ or makes meaning in relation to these situations. It may be necessary to ‘go “outside” the text, to its historical conditions of meaning, in order to give full scope to its semantic potential’. The historically sensitive critic is not a magician capable of conjuring up meaning where he wants it to be but is charged with the job of noticing ‘the historical contiguity of the text to other narratives and symbolic forms that are working their way through the culture’.⁴⁶ This is an echo of Fredric Jameson’s point about the process of interpretation itself: the critic, he insists, is not to be chained to the content of a text so much as he is to attempt to enact ‘a laying bare, a restoration of the original message . . . beneath the distortions of the various kinds of censorship that have been at work upon it’.⁴⁷

As a (relatively) contemporary and very obvious example of ‘symbolic spread’, I would cite John Carpenter’s *Halloween* (1978), which soon after its release came to be seen as a quasi-conservative (perhaps ultra-conservative) commentary on the sexual revolution of the 1960s and a warning that sexual promiscuity equals death. In the film, all the teenagers who have sex are brutally murdered with a phallic-like knife

by the deranged Michael Myers who appears to be engaging in a not-so-subtle reinforcement of family values. Using the term 'allegory' here would be ill-advised. Carpenter later expressed shock that his film could be read as an endorsement of abstention and insisted that it was not his intention to bring an end to the sexual revolution, and given Carpenter's well-known liberal political views, it is highly unlikely that he was being purposefully misleading here.⁴⁸ It would be bizarre to argue that, simply because there was no conscious intention on Carpenter's part, the film should not be read as containing a commentary on sexual behaviour, and indeed Carpenter now accepts that this is how the film operates in terms of its meaning-making.⁴⁹

Similarly, Haslam's puritanical approach to the interpretation of texts would appear to render illegitimate readings of *Dracula* (1897) which see in the staking of Lucy Westenra a re-inscription of patriarchal values on a sexually transgressing woman because such an interpretation was probably not consciously meant by Stoker (although accusing the critics of allegoresis is a polite way of putting this). Unfortunately, Haslam appears to be on the verge of becoming the Mary Whitehouse of Irish Gothic Studies and is finger-wagging his way through most critical material on the Irish Gothic canon.⁵⁰ Although he claims that his work is an example of what Steven Mailloux has termed 'rhetorical hermeneutics', which examines how 'interpreters interact with other interpreters in trying to argue for or against different meanings',⁵¹ in as much as he has unfortunately become obsessed with correcting what he considers the interpretive excesses of everyone else, he seems to me to be trying to do the (literary) police in different voices.⁵² Critics surely have a duty to be over-interpreters (though cautious ones) rather than play it safe all the time. The act of criticism defended here is what Wayne Booth has called 'overstanding', which he contrasts with the more common 'understanding'. If 'understanding' a text involves asking straightforward questions about it which the text appears to suggest in and of itself, 'overstanding' necessitates asking questions that seem foreign to the text at hand and may seem at first rather outrageous. As Jonathan Culler puts it, 'it can be very important and productive to ask questions the text does not encourage one to ask about it'.⁵³ One of these outrageous questions is: how does this Irish Gothic text intervene in Irish history, if at all (keeping in mind the possibility that it doesn't)? Irish writing, and perhaps Irish Gothic writing more particularly, necessarily (because of Ireland's colonial history), 'symbolically spreads' from the specifics of the text into the cultural situation in which it was produced in ways that are often (though not always) unintentional and unconscious and which require careful (and hesitant) uncovering by the literary critic.

II

As will be clear from the above (necessarily brief) intervention into a contentious field, the question of interpretation has become a very highly charged one in terms of reading Irish Gothic fiction (particularly the canonical works). The mobilisation of Frye's term 'symbolic spread' is intended as a way of escaping from the interpretive bind in which an obsession with allegory has left critics. Of course, straightforward, 'traditional' allegory plays an extremely significant role in Irish life and writing and has done for centuries. For example, the allegorical representation of Ireland and Irish sovereignty as female can be traced to the image of the 'sovereignty goddess' in pre-Christian rituals designed to validate a new king. The physical condition of the goddess depended on the validity of the man to whom she was to be symbolically married, and she could change from old, ugly and barren to young, beautiful and fertile.⁵⁴ In the 'loathly lady' tradition, a wizened hag would meet a group of young men and demand that one of them make love to her; this deed accomplished, the hag would transform into a beautiful young woman. In another tradition, a hag called Becuma marries the king, causing the land to become infertile and the crops to fail, a situation which could only be altered by the blood sacrifice of a young man whose life force would mingle with the soil and make it fertile once more. G. F. Dalton argues that we need to conflate these two stories: 'As a preliminary to the king's inauguration, a young man was put to death as a blood-sacrifice to the goddess, that this was considered a sexual union with her, and that the sacrifice was thought to rejuvenate the goddess and make her fit to marry the king.'⁵⁵

After the coming of Christianity, these practices were abandoned as living realities and instead oral and literary traditions kept current the allegorical valence of the old rituals.⁵⁶ Certainly, allegorical images of Ireland as a woman can be found everywhere in eighteenth-century Irish literature. Much of the allegorical poetry written in Irish in the eighteenth century is Jacobite in political orientation and therefore operates as part of what Daniel Szechi has called a 'discourse of opposition'.⁵⁷ These poems use a variety of female names to designate Ireland, including Caitlín Ní Uallacháin (the name that would eventually become, in the 1902 play by W. B. Yeats and Lady Gregory, Cathleen ni Houlihan), Síle Ní Ghadhra and Móirín Ní Chuilleanáin. In poems by Seán Clárach Mac Domhnaill, Séan Ó Tuama and Tadhg Gaelach Ó Súilleabháin, Ireland is variously depicted as a widow mourning the death of her husband or a young engaged girl whose suitor has vanished or a wife who has been abandoned and longs for her husband's return. Usually

the missing and greatly missed male is the Stuart Pretender. While the abandoned Ireland waits in hope for her Stuart saviour, she is more often than not also subject to the unwanted sexual attentions of a degenerate and dissolute pervert (usually George I or George II) determined to have her at any cost. While the majority of these poems end before the re-appearance of the hero, on rare occasions they express joy and happiness as the Stuart prince actually comes back.

These are indeed national allegories very similar to those described by Fredric Jameson in that they carefully mingle together sexual relations and political aspirations, reading private and public histories together. A good example of such a poem is the anonymous 'Síle Ní Ghadhra' (c.1740) (first published in 1831, but circulating in the eighteenth century), where the allegorical Síle is found celebrating the return of her lover who has been missing and the subsequent freedom of her people because of this return. While waiting for her lover, she had to suffer the presence of the 'enemies' of Ireland, especially the 'accursed English pup' who had been harassing her since the departure of her 'spouse', but now, with the 'Frenchman and his hosts' who come 'over the waves' to assist her in her struggle against the unwelcome invaders of the house, things are looking up. The poem's conclusion sees a future in which religious freedom is guaranteed to the Catholic masses.⁵⁸ Síle's appeal to Continental Catholic powers is relatively common in the period and shows that the Gaelic poets were aware that the Jacobite leadership pursued alliances with a number of European Catholic leaders in the mid-century.⁵⁹ The Munster poet Aogán Ó Rathaille is a powerful representative of writers of the *aísling* in this century. His poetry constantly returns to the allegorical figure of Ireland waiting for her hero to return to her from his exile. In 'An millead d'imthigh air mhór-shleachtaibh na h-Éireann' ('The ruin that befell the great families of Ireland'), Ireland is depicted as severely mistreated by foreign oppressors, waiting for a Stuart deliverance:

Tír fá ansmacht Gall do traochadh!
 Tír do doirteadh fá chosaibh na méirleach!
 Tír na ngaibhne – is treighid go h-eug liom.

Tír bhocht bhuidheartha, is uaigneach céasda!
 Tír gan fear gan mac gan céile!
 Tír gan lúth gan fonn gan éisdeacht!
 Tír gan chothrom do bochtaibh le déanaí!

The abandoned country suffering under English oppression,
 Downtrodden by the feet of outlaws.
 A chained land, sickening and weakening me.

The poor, anxious, lonely and tormented land,
 A land without men, sons or husbands,
 A land without vitality, or spirit, incapable of making a sound,
 A land where the poor have to suffer injustice.⁶⁰

Images of rape and abduction are central to Jacobite poetry as ways of talking about politics and the relationship between Ireland and Britain. Indeed, marriage, rape and sexual desire are vehicles for imaging radical political ideas to eighteenth-century Gaelic poets, who combine an extremely personal and intimate language with that of national and international politics (the appeal to Catholic France for assistance). In eighteenth-century Irish writing, the personal is extremely political.

According to the literary historian Breandán Ó Buachalla, the allegorical poetry which assigns commonplace names like Síle, Caitlín and Móirín to Ireland is part of a popular rather than a more formal *aisling* tradition where Ireland is given regal and even celestial titles such as Éire, Banba and Fódla. With the writing of these kinds of demotic poems, it became permissible to represent Ireland as an ordinary woman and to discuss high politics using the language of the domestic and erotic economy. From the eighteenth century onwards, it was increasingly common for Ireland to be represented by the lowly as well as the exalted, a practice which would eventually find expression in the nineteenth-century national novel.⁶¹ The female figure is the main interest in these poems, her ordinariness a means by which the reader can identify with her and a way political sentiment can be directly and accessibly communicated to a popular audience. The act of political aggression figured in the relations with Hanoverian Britain is conveyed vividly in images of violence committed upon an innocent woman who needs help and protection from a suitably positioned and honest male. Current political issues are alluded to, but indirectly, and tend to be subsumed in a more general allegorical framework. These poetic allegories also form the background for the use of female names for Ireland by agrarian secret societies like the Whiteboys (in the 1760s) and the Defenders (in the 1790s). Whiteboys, for example, often declared their loyalty to figures like Queen Sive, a royal title, but also to more apparently commonplace figures like ‘Shevane Meskill’ and ‘Sieve Oultagh’, and when brought to trial, they insisted that names like Sive were references not to political aspirations but to actual old women who lived in the neighbourhood.⁶²

These are all examples of straightforward allegories. Seeing them as commentaries on Irish politics does not require recognising a symbolic spreading of resonance since such political poems would not be mistaken for anything other than allegorical comments on Ireland’s status in the eighteenth century. This has not always been clearly understood,

and some commentators have theorised that the use of female names for Ireland in Irish language poetry was a way to occlude the poetry's politics and ensure that, should the poem fall into the hands of the authorities, its treasonable orientation would either go unnoticed or be deniable. The collector John O'Daly, for example, argues that 'as the sufferer was not permitted to complain openly, the voice of discontent was often veiled in the language of allegory. Ireland was usually designated by some endearing name'.⁶³ Although this may sound plausible, when the actual poems themselves are taken into account it is clear that this theory is simply untenable. Far from occluding or disguising their political intentions, the poems are replete with very direct political references (to the Pretender, to the Jacobite cause). Their politics are overt rather than covert. Most importantly, these poems locate political and emotional resonance in the female body itself rather than simply in particular aristocratic or divine instantiations of it, so that ordinary women are incorporated as vehicles for political aspirations. As Máirín Nic Eoin argues, 'in using vernacular names, eighteenth-century poets were above all reclaiming the emotive force of the female sovereignty figure'.⁶⁴ Nic Eoin worries, though, about the stripping of female agency that can be witnessed in these songs. The allegorical female complains, mourns, bewails, desires, hopes, but never acts. There is no sense given in these poems that the female figure has the power to change things herself rather than wait for either the return of her lover or the arrival of foreign allies, and she is always dependent on male action. Change is effected, if at all, though the miraculous return of the displaced male, who saves the distressed female and by implication, Ireland. Indeed, this lack of agency is one of the strongest reasons why feminists have found the whole allegorical tradition problematic.⁶⁵ For Nic Eoin, 'the use of female personification, as part of a gendered ideology of kingship, hindered the process of radicalisation which was necessary if a revolutionary movement such as the United Irishmen was to gain widespread support'.⁶⁶ It is difficult to see how this passivity could be avoided in traditional allegory, where there is a static and one-dimensional quality to the allegorical figures. However, in less straightforward allegories like the national and the Gothic novel, the female figure is more than simply a representation of Ireland (though also that) and symbolically spreads outwards to other potential meanings, and in this context the possibilities for character development and even agency become evident.

Most commentary on anglophone uses of the allegorical tradition of female personification of Ireland concentrate on the emergence of the so-called national novel towards the end of the eighteenth century. This was the period when the issue of a political union between Great Britain

and Ireland became a subject of major public debate and novelists intervened in the national conversation by allegorising the relations between the two countries in plots where Ireland is configured as a sensitive, sentimental, fresh-faced and innocent woman who, after a series of trials and tribulations, is happily married off to a rational man who represents Britain.⁶⁷ This is the now infamous ‘Glorvina solution’ to the political divisions of the two countries as proposed by a number of writers, most importantly Sydney Owenson and Maria Edgeworth.⁶⁸ The term derives from Owenson’s novel *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806), which served as a paradigmatic example of how the national novel worked. In this story, Horatio, the dissolute son of Lord M-, is punished by his father for his bad behaviour by being sent to the family’s estates in the west of Ireland, a place Horatio thinks of as a wild and foreign habitation full of weirdos. There he meets the Catholic Prince of Inishmore and his daughter, the beautiful and extraordinarily talented Glorvina, with whom he falls deeply in love, unaware that a marriage has already been arranged between her and his father. What happens in the course of the novel is essentially that Horatio’s initial suspicion and consternation regarding the bizarre Catholic Irish is transformed into a genuine respect as he (and by implication, the English reader) learns more about the true richness of Irish culture and history. Glorvina is given the job of overturning the ignorant prejudices of Horatio through a process of education, and by the end of the novel he has become convinced of Ireland’s status as an ancient civilisation deserving of great honour (though there is no implication that this rules out either his continued superiority over Glorvina herself or English hegemony in Ireland).⁶⁹ The politics of the national novel appear quite uncomplicated in that the implication of such marriages seems to be that Ireland’s difficulties with England could be solved through love (between peoples) rather than violence, as long as Ireland remains the female partner (and therefore the subordinate party) in a union with a kinder though still dominant male England. The ‘union of hearts’ in the national novel acts as a grand allegory of the desired for, or already completed but contested, union, marriage suggesting an apolitical solution to deeply political problems, harmony found in love and family rather than political debate.

The Wild Irish Girl has long occupied the central position in this traditional version of literary history, though recently critics have suggested that the national novel has been read too straight. In an important intervention into the study of the national tale, especially as treated by Charles Robert Maturin, best known as the writer of the Gothic masterpiece *Melmoth the Wanderer*, Christina Morin has argued that an emphasis on the harmony of the ‘Glorvina solution’ has ignored the

tensions underlying the endings of such novels. Pointing to Maturin's *The Wild Irish Boy* (1808), for example, she claims that it 'showcases the ways in which the national tale's allegorical project refuses closure and instead flirts threateningly with continued conflict'.⁷⁰ Her study intensely scrutinises the discourse of the Union and the 'Glorvina solution' to the tensions between England and Ireland, 'Anglo-Irish' and 'Gaelic' Ireland, which posits a potential source of national and individual well-being in a happy 'companionate' marriage between the two sides of the binary. According to Morin, to this quasi-pornographic version of national union-as-marriage Maturin brings an alternative language of Gothic nightmare and chaos: rather than end in secure marriages his novels typically gravitate towards female madness and fragmentation. Chaos rather than order, and a language of nightmare rather than dream, characterises Maturin's examinations of the national question. As Morin reminds us, even in *The Wild Irish Girl* itself, 'the consent Glorvina offers to Horatio's marriage proposal remains ambiguous at best', as she grieves for the death of her father, a death she believes partially caused by the man she is in love with and is to marry.⁷¹ For Morin, the national tale and the Gothic novel never really remain separate genres and should be considered cross-fertilising influences on each other, the Gothic acting like a cultural acid undermining any romantic plot resolutions. In an Irish context, 'allegorical' marriages can never be simply imaged as uncontested or leading to an easy harmony.

Just as to the *aisling* poems, what is central to these later novels is the connection maintained between public issues of constitutional importance and the supposedly more private matters between individual men and women. Like the Gaelic poets, the national novelists see the solution to Irish political discord lying in a marriage between an allegorical Irish woman and an English man (the Stuart Pretender for the Gaelic poets, a more generalised English male figure for the national novelists). The only alternative envisioned to such a marriage is sexual assault and continued unhappiness for the Irish woman. Both traditions could then be considered as symptoms of what Seamus Deane has called 'the pathology of literary unionism', though it is a term he directed most particularly at figures like Charlotte Brooke and Maria Edgeworth as they used culture as a weapon to seal the sexual deal, attempting to make 'cultural reconciliation' a reality before the possibilities of political union could be properly considered (a cultural project involving a 'union of hearts' that was forever being postponed because of various political ruptures such as the French Revolution and the 1798 rebellion).⁷² Recent historians of the national novel have argued that it was not, in fact, an invention of the early nineteenth century, and have traced the national allegory

of marriage back to novels like Regina Maria Roche's *The Children of the Abbey* (1796), the anonymous *The Triumph of Prudence over Passion* (1781) and *The Irish Guardian* (1775), written by 'A Lady'.⁷³ Most literary historians also accept that Jonathan Swift's *The Story of the Injur'd Lady* and *The Answer to the Injured Lady* (written 1707, published 1746) are important precursors to the marriage trope in the national novel, but while Swift certainly politicises marriage and sexual contract and allegorises Ireland as a woman, he is, in fact, doing something very different from either the Gaelic poets or the later national novelists. The solution he offers to Ireland's national difficulties is not marriage with an external English figure but a dependency by a female Ireland on the manly Irish Anglican nation, and therefore his work is not completely implicated in Deane's pathology but rather suggests alternative possibilities, directing Irish attention inwards rather than outwards.

III

The Story of the Injured Lady was written in reaction to two events. The first was the failed application by the Irish House of Lords for a political union with England in 1703. A union was put forward because Irish politicians believed that Westminster encroachments on the liberty of the Irish parliament had become insufferable and that either complete legislative independence or complete political union was the only way out of constant political tension between the two countries. Needless to say, the address to Queen Anne was more or less ignored. The second event was the conclusion shortly afterwards of a union between Scotland and England in 1707. For Swift, this amounted to an intolerable rebuff to Irish Anglicans by the English and he conveyed his anger in allegorical fashion in the letter of a lady (representing Ireland) complaining about her sexual mistreatment by a gentleman (England) who had seduced her and promised marriage but who then went on to court an ill-mannered and unpredictable love rival (Scotland). The ill-treated lady had been persuaded to give up her virginity by the suave and seductive gentleman, but only because she believed that marriage was on the cards, and she is now outraged and emotionally wounded by his treatment. 'Being ruined by the Inconstancy and Unkindness of a Lover', she writes in the hope of warning other women 'never to put too much Trust in deceitful Men' (3).⁷⁴

Surprisingly, given the catalogue of complaints she delivers about his mistreatment, the injured lady is still eager to have her former lover return to her, is ready to completely forgive him, and lays most of the

blame at the feet of her love rival. Kate Trumpener thinks it is ‘the most inexplicable part of this story that the two women betrayed by the same scoundrel should continue to compete with one another for a man . . . who deserves neither’.⁷⁵ After all, not only did the gentleman seduce the injured lady, but after the seduction he demonstrated his true nature as a cruel and hard taskmaster, taking every chance to ‘shew his Authority, and to act like a Conqueror’, and ‘expected his Word to be a Law to me in all Things’ (4, 5). After sexual satiation, the lover criticises the lady’s management of her estate and usurps her authority by sending his own steward to run things instead; he replaces her servants with his own, prevents her from making her own living, and insists that she make some monetary contribution to his expenses. Far from a companionate relationship, in other words, this is more like the story of an aristocratic Pamela where Mr B actually gets his way.

Swift’s *Story* is best read as an allegorised, domesticated and violent version of the history of Ireland contained in William Molyneux’s *The Case of Ireland, Stated* (1698). Molyneux, one of the most celebrated of Irish political philosophers, had earlier argued that Ireland was never conquered by England, but when the Normans arrived had made an ‘easie and voluntary submission’ and willingly entered into a relationship of equality where both countries were separate kingdoms under the one throne.⁷⁶ Swift accepts that there was some measure of submission involved but complicates this by indicating the sheer inflation of the rhetoric and untruths involved in getting the lady into bed. Moreover, the tendency of the gentleman to act like a conqueror once he has had his sexual way allegorically implicates England in a relationship of violence and deceit with Ireland and renders the original period of relations between them less like courtship and more like the prelude to a date rape. The lady’s memory of the primal event is ambiguous, although she accepts that some of the responsibility remains with her. His rhetoric overwhelmed her, and she was ‘undone by the common Arts practised upon all easy credulous Virgins, half by Force, and half by Consent, after solemn Vows and Protestations of Marriage’ (4). In making the allegorical English figure a sexual adventurer, Swift’s ‘letter’ is not unlike the *aisling* poems which represented George I as a pervert harassing an innocent Irish woman. Moreover, in its occluded reference to the lady’s quasi-rape by England, the story participates in, or at least resonates with, the idiom of rape and sexual assault that is the hallmark of what Howard Erskine-Hill has called the ‘rhetoric of Jacobitism’. In poems like Alexander Pope’s *The Rape of the Lock* (1712), the Glorious Revolution is coded as a sexual conquest close to rape.⁷⁷ As Daniel Szechi has emphasised, ‘a major motif in eighteenth-century poetry, that

of the “lost lover” stemmed directly’ from a patrician Jacobitism, and although it would be foolish to consider Swift himself as a Jacobite, he is certainly provocatively incorporating its tropes into his *Story*.⁷⁸

Importantly, the reader is never given the perspective of the male lover and instead is manipulated into complete sympathy with the oppressed woman, especially since he is taken into her confidence through his ability to read her private letters. In the light of her long list of complaints, her desperate desire that the gentleman still choose her over her pernicious rival is rather pitiable. Moreover, that she expends so much energy attacking her supposed rival for the affections of the gentleman seems like a waste of her talents. The rival’s faults are as numerous as the gentleman’s, and the reader may presume that they deserve one another and that the injured lady is far better off without either of them. The rival is of the wrong religion, is a slattern who can’t keep her affairs in order, is bad-tempered and sluttish. That the two rivals actually have much in common seems beyond the ability of the lady to understand.

The male friend she writes to, however, can see clearly, and he berates the lady for her inability to realise that her ‘rival’ has nothing to do with the bad behaviour of the gentleman and should be seen as a potential ally. *The Answer to the Injured Lady* directs the lady away from a continued pursuance of the hateful gentleman and urges instead independence and an alternative alliance with a closer male authority, an allegorical representation of the Anglican Irish. Unlike the Gaelic poets who urge a long and patient period of waiting for the English Stuart lover to return, after which the economic and political fertility of the land will be restored, the injured lady’s friend tells her to become practical and look for new avenues to happiness – there is already a perfectly suitable adviser close at hand. Thomas McLoughlin argues that Swift, ‘by handing over the narration to a female voice, dissociates himself from the masculine role of domination (England) and foregrounds the “other”, the female’.⁷⁹ This, however, ignores the fact that the lady is answered by a more authoritative voice than her own, that of a male adviser who, while indicating a kind of independence (from the abusive gentleman), does not advocate an early form of feminism but rather a new dependency, though on a more worthy male subject. Swift is, of course, partially trapped by an inability to see beyond his conviction that the lady cannot rule herself and needs a masculine figure to make sure that things run smoothly, but refreshingly, he advises her to look closer to home for this man and, once decoded, the main point of the allegory is to advance a clear unequivocal alliance between the Irish Anglican ruling class and a female Ireland – an allegorical Ireland as sympathetic and accessible as the allegorised figures in the Gaelic poetry.

This response to Ireland's troubles is surprising partially because of the extent of the criticism levelled at individuals within the Anglican ruling class by the two letters, but it is a legislative independence figured as an intimate relationship that Swift wishes to endorse. Of course, this also lets Irish Anglicans off the hook for their ineffectual mismanagement of Irish affairs, but the unspoken assumption is that Anglican Ireland is capable of reforming its character and assuming full political and domestic responsibility. As Rick G. Canning argues, 'Gender allows Swift to present the relationship between England and Ireland as a love story gone wrong. This allows him in turn to make . . . [a strong case] for the Ascendancy's control of Irish affairs'.⁸⁰

Rather than a Jacobite or a unionist response to Ireland's political difficulties, then, Swift offers a patriotic one, though one also dependent on the recognition that marriage, inconstancy and sexual violence are useful ways of discussing politics. The *Answer* informs a female Ireland that although it looks as though she is in a desperate situation, she need not despair. Her first lover turned out to be a bit of a disaster; however, the answer to this is not to continue to pine for him like some kind of idiot but to turn to a much more eligible authority, one fortunately standing at hand ready to take up the mantle of responsibility. As Canning explains, 'The lady's weakness calls for some form of male authority, and since English authority is selfish and cruel, the Ascendancy's alternative authority appears benign, natural, and paternal'.⁸¹ As the lady's interlocutor insists, 'have no Dependence upon the said Gentleman, further than by the old Agreement, which obligeth you to have the same Steward' (9) – an argument that requires the Injured Lady to continue to accept that the same king remain head of state of both countries, but which requires also a complete rejection of the gentleman's continued authority over her.

For the Gaelic poets and the national novelists, political stability required an outward gaze to a male authority outside the bounds of the Irish nation. That authority was, of course, a different one for these authors (the Catholic Stuarts and Protestant Britain), but they shared the sense that Ireland herself could *not* solve her own problems. For Swift, however, Ireland had an internal solution in the form of the Anglican ruling class. After all, although the gentleman kicked all her old servants out (the Irish Catholics), the new ones he provided (English Protestants) turned out to be not so bad, and many of them had been 'brought over' to the Injured Lady's 'side' at this stage, so they could now be trusted to take on the role of advisers (5):

As the friend instructs the lady on what to say, proposing resolutions against dependence, absentee landlords, and English restrictions on Irish trade and

leases, he reveals that his voice is the voice of Ascendancy Ireland. His resolutions, in other words, identify a specific set of problems and with them a specific set of victims: the Anglican fraction of Ireland's population.⁸²

Swift's solution, therefore, while using the same metaphor of marriage and sexual desire, was important in that it indicated that a patriotic resolution could be sought which allowed an alliance to be arranged between the Anglican Irish nation and Ireland herself. It also demonstrated the flexibility of the allegorical imagination and the uses to which different communities could put the same allegorical figures. Ireland as woman would prove increasingly important for the Anglican enclave later in the century when the Money Bill dispute caused ruptures and divisions to bubble to the public surface once more. While the allegory would be utilised in political pamphlets and satires, it would also be channelled into a new emerging form, the Gothic novel, and used in a much less limited way so that the term 'allegory' would not in fact be an appropriate one to use in analysis. The Irish Gothic novelists allowed their female characters to be both independent agents and also to symbolically spread beyond the dimensions of the plot into a relation to the politics of the day. It is to these uses that I now turn.

Notes

1. Edward Hyde to 'Champagne Ivy'. *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, film, dir. Rouben Mamoulian, 1931.
2. Salomon, *Mazes of the Serpent*, 2.
3. Hills, *Pleasures of Horror*.
4. Baldick and Mighall, 'Gothic Criticism', 221.
5. Miller, *Dracula*; idem, 'Coitus Interruptus'.
6. Mighall, *Geography*, 246.
7. Herron, 'Stephen King', 137–8, 153–4.
8. Obviously, there is a great deal more to say about this fascinating and complex novel, and indeed about Roche's work more generally, but that is a project for another day.
9. Hughes, 'Origins and Implications', 45.
10. W. J. McCormack makes this point very strongly in commenting on Le Fanu and Stoker in particular, pointing out that '[Neither] came from land-owning families . . . [and they] were of foreign (Huguenot) background, and one of these (Le Fanu) could also boast a Gaelic ancestry (through the Sheridans)'. 'Irish Gothic', *Handbook*, 135.
11. A rather too obvious example of this is the case of the 'Irish studies' interpretation of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). Some critics are unimpressed by the fact that while some 'Irish' readings claimed that the Count should be read as representative of the landlord classes other 'Irish' readings proposed he be read as a reverse, a colonising peasant reeking revenge on

his colonial masters. The implication in some criticism is that Irish studies critics had the responsibility of being at least in agreement with each other and that disagreement automatically invalidated the critical perspective taken. My response to the *Dracula* 'controversy' is that, while it is difficult to see how the Count could be both a landlord *and* a tenant in any coherent reading, the novel itself is hardly a model of consistency and a decent reading would emphasise the contradictions and convolutions of the novel rather than impose any simplified ideological lucidity merely in order to justify an interpretative position. See Stewart 'Bram Stoker's *Dracula*' for a careful response to some of the apparent contradictions in Irish studies readings.

12. Haslam, 'Irish Gothic: A Rhetorical Hermeneutics Approach'.
13. *Ibid.* Of course, the term 'allegory' does occur in Terry Eagleton's suggestion that 'it is possible to read [Charles Robert] Maturin's astonishing [*Melmoth the Wanderer*] as an allegory of this strange condition in which exploiters and victims are both strangers and comrades'. *Heathcliff*, 190, quoted in Haslam, 'Irish Gothic: A Rhetorical Hermeneutics'.
14. Haslam, 'Irish Gothic', 84.
15. Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 89.
16. Bloomfield, 'Allegory as Interpretation', 302.
17. Allegory seems to be difficult to escape from as far as the Gothic is concerned. Jim Hansen also reads the Gothic as an 'inveterately allegorical genre'. *Terror and Irish Modernism*, 89.
18. Haslam, 'Irish Gothic: A Rhetorical Hermeneutics'.
19. Killeen, 'Irish Gothic: A Theoretical Introduction', 6; see Todorov, *The Fantastic*, 25.
20. Killeen, 'Irish Gothic', 3; Moynahan, *Anglo-Irish*, 111.
21. Haslam, 'Irish Gothic: A Rhetorical Hermeneutics', fn. 60.
22. Derrida, 'Signature Event Context', 313.
23. Neither, of course, was Derrida.
24. Quoted in Culler, *Literary in Theory*, 167.
25. Jameson, 'Third-World Literature', 69.
26. *Ibid.*, 80.
27. Ahmad, 'Jameson's Rhetoric', 15.
28. Larsen, *Determinations*, 19.
29. Gibbons, *Transformations*, 3. One of the most trenchant critics is (unsurprisingly) Richard Haslam. See, "A Race Bashed in the Face", *passim*.
30. Gibbons, *Transformations*, 21, 142–3.
31. Barry, 'Critical Notes'.
32. Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, 72.
33. Jameson, 'Third-World Literature', 73.
34. Gibbons, *Transformations*, 20
35. Although this is not always the case. In perhaps the most comprehensive analysis of allegory, Angus Fletcher adopts a very catholic understanding of the term and, as well as the classic allegories, includes under the term 'the modern romance and the detective story' since they 'carry double meanings that are no less important to the completion of their plots than is the *moralitas* to the preacher's parable'. *Allegory*, 5. He accepts that the 'modern' reader would probably not read these genres in an allegorical

manner, and he insists that ‘the whole point of allegory is that it does not need to be read exegetically’, more or less approving of Frye’s sense that from the standpoint of a commentator ‘all literature . . . is . . . more or less allegorical’, 7–8.

36. Littlefield, ‘*The Wizard of Oz*’, 47–58.
37. Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 53–4.
38. Frye, *Secular Scripture*, 59.
39. Indeed, Haslam appears to adopt what Northrop Frye calls the ‘Little Jack Horner’ view that a text is like a pie into which the author has ‘diligently stuffed a specific number of beauties or effects’, and out of which it is the job of the critic to pull. *Anatomy*, 17.
40. Kilfeather, ‘Terrific Register’, 58–9.
41. Frye, *Secular Scripture*, 59.
42. Williams, *Art of Darkness*, 81–2.
43. Jackson, *Fantasy*, 3.
44. Williams, *Art of Darkness*, 81.
45. Killeen, *Gothic Ireland*, 25.
46. Gibbons, *Transformations*, 21.
47. Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, 404.
48. Jones, *Horror*, 117.
49. Clover, *Men, Women and Chain Saws*, 167.
50. In a recent intervention, Haslam took to task a number of critics who had read the apparent dislocation between the intended reader of Le Fanu’s narrative ‘Carmilla’ (‘a town lady’) and the claims of the Editor of *In a Glass Darkly* (1872) that the letters were written to Dr Martin Hesselius (not, obviously, a woman) as suggestive from an interpretive point of view. For Haslam, this is an example of an authorial error and should therefore have no bearing on interpretation. ‘Theory, Empiricism and “Providential Hermeneutics”’, 339–62.
51. Steven Mailloux, *Reception Histories: Rhetoric, Pragmatism, and American Cultural Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 50; quoted in Haslam, ‘Irish Gothic: A Rhetorical Hermeneutics’.
52. I should also, of course, acknowledge that I have learned a great deal from Haslam’s approach, especially a better sense of the need for critical hesitancy – over-enthusiasm can easily lead to over-statement.
53. For ‘overstanding’, see Booth, *Critical Understanding*, 242–4. See also Culler, *Literary in Theory*, 172–3, where he discusses Booth’s idea in detail.
54. For this tradition, see Dalton, ‘Tradition of Blood-Sacrifice’; MacCana, ‘Women in Irish Mythology’; Ni Bhrolchain, ‘Women in Early Irish Myths’; O’Brien, ‘Female Principle’; Kearney, ‘Myth and Motherland’, 59–80; Lysaght, *Banshee*; Loftus, *Mirrors*; Curtis, Jr, ‘Four Erins’.
55. Dalton, ‘Tradition of Blood Sacrifice,’ 345.
56. This myth changed slowly over the centuries as colonisation progressed. In pre-*aisling* poems like the ‘Hag of Bear’ and other writings, the ‘sovereignty goddess’ continued to exist in folklore. Innes, *Woman and Nation*, 26–7; Lysaght, *Banshee*, 217.
57. Szechi, *Jacobites*, 33.
58. Nic Eoin, ‘Secrets and Disguises?’ 16.
59. Szechi, *Jacobites*, 90–104.

60. Ó Rathaille, 'An millead d'imthigh air mhór-shleachtaibh na h-Éireann', 6. Translation by Mary Lawlor.
61. Ó Buachalla, 'Irish Jacobite Poetry', 46. In an excellent review of this poetry, Máirín Nic Eoin has questioned Ó Buachalla's claim that this poetry is a 'popular' form as 'it is difficult when dealing with Irish-language material to differentiate between an elite and a popular or plebeian literary voice'. However, she does accept that this poetry 'brings us into the realm of eighteenth-century popular culture'. 'Secrets and Disguises?', 8.
62. Gibbons, *Transformations*, 141–2.
63. Meehan, ed., *Poets and Poetry*, 8–9.
64. Nic Eoin, 'Secrets and Disguises?' 44.
65. The conflation of the two has been held as dangerous and oppressive to real women in real Ireland. The main force behind this critique has been the poet Eavan Boland. See 'The Woman Poet'; *Kind of Scar; Object Lessons*: 'If you took the hero out of the story, what was left? What female figure was there to identify with? There were no women on these back streets. None, at least, who were not lowly auxiliaries of the action. The heroine, as such, was utterly passive. She was Ireland or Hibernia. She was stamped, as a rubbed-away mark, on silver or gold; a compromised regal figure on a throne . . . She was invoked, addressed, remembered, loved, regretted. And, most important, died for'. 66. See also Longley, *From Cathleen to Anorexia*, 17.
66. Nic Eoin, 'Secrets and Disguises?' 45.
67. For the best articulation of this view, see Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, 137.
68. Tracy, 'Maria Edgeworth and Lady Morgan', 10.
69. Owenson, *Wild Irish Girl*, ed. Connolly and Copley, 10.
70. Morin, *Charles Robert Maturin*, 9.
71. *Ibid.*, 9.
72. Deane, 'Heroic Styles', 45–58; *idem*, 'General Introduction', xix–xxvi.
73. Connolly, *Cultural History*, 6.
74. Swift, 'Story of the Injured Lady', 7–9. References will be placed in parenthesis in the body of the chapter.
75. Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, 133.
76. Molyneux, *Case of Ireland*, 14.
77. Erskine-Hill, 'Literature and the Jacobite Cause', 49–50, 53–4.
78. Szechi, *Jacobites*, 35.
79. McLoughlin, *Contesting Ireland*, 67.
80. Canning, "Ignorant, Illiterate Creatures", 64: 1 (1997), 86. I prefer to avoid the term 'Protestant Ascendancy' to describe the Irish Protestant ruling class in the 1710s given the historiographical controversy over the use of the term. See McCormack, 'Genesis of Protestant Ascendancy'; *idem*, *Ascendancy and Tradition*; *idem*, *Dublin Paper War*; Kelly, 'The Genesis of "Protestant Ascendancy"'; Hill, 'Meaning and Significance'.
81. Canning, "Ignorant, Illiterate Creatures", 81.
82. *Ibid.*, 92.

Mad Love:
*The Adventures of Miss Sophia
Berkley and the Politics of Consent*

There's no love in your violence.¹

I

Like a beleaguered Jane Austen heroine, Ireland, in the eighteenth century at least, had to get herself married off. The only question appeared to be the possible bridegroom. Early in the century, Irish Anglican political opinion appeared eager to support an Anglo-Irish union of hearts, but the man in this case treated the overtures of his potential spouse with deep suspicion, when he didn't ignore them completely. An Irish parliamentary address requesting union in 1703 was passed over with almost no comment at all, and eventually the Irish got the message. In the *Injured Lady* pamphlets, Swift offered a completely endogamous solution to Ireland's problems in a marriage of convenience with the Anglican enclave. The Swiftian solution increasingly became the most attractive one to Irish Anglicans as the eighteenth century progressed – letting Ireland marry a man now seen as a foreign cad didn't seem like such a good idea when he was intent on patronising you, stealing your money and reducing you to the status of a paid servant. In an anticipation of the now extremely hackneyed plot of a romantic comedy, Irish Anglicans started to hope that the boy-next-door would prove a better match than the rogue to whom the heroine seemed initially far more attracted. Ultimately, it was not to be, and a shotgun marriage between Britain and Ireland was hastily arranged at the end of the century, but until that moment, it was unclear who would be victor. Indeed, in 1782, with the granting of legislative independence, it looked as if the best man had won as political and domestic power was granted to the Irish Anglican enclave over Ireland herself. The 1798 rebellion, however, proved that Irish Anglicans simply could not keep their house in order,

and the (un)loveable rogue Britain re-entered the stage at the last minute to steal the girl away.

One of the reasons why the marriage metaphor was important was because legislative union was one of the central ‘themes’ of eighteenth-century Irish politics, and marriage was from the very start of this discussion a way to think through the implications of the unionist project. We now tend to think of the metaphor of union-as-marriage as most important for the end of the century when the debate on what would eventually be passed as the Act of Union was in full swing, and certainly this metaphor can be found everywhere in the political discourse of the 1790s and early 1800s. Claire Connolly quotes one pamphlet, *To be, or not to be, a Nation; that is the Question?* (1799), which described the union as ‘a treaty of marriage’, and prayed, ‘God grant that they may turn out a happy couple, and that the said union may not terminate in a divorce!’² Connolly also notes the absence of any mention of love in contemporary pamphlets using marriage as a union metaphor, despite the way the companionate marriage had become a staple of the novel of romance by this stage. Maria Edgeworth, though generally favourable to a union, famously claimed that ‘England has no right to do to Ireland good *against her will*’, implicating the Act of Union in a narrative of rape and enforcement rather than true love and companionship.³

While attention has been lavished on the unionist discourse of the late eighteenth century, though, a union of Ireland with Britain was on the cards throughout the century, and marriage was generally the favoured metaphor used in discussion. Union was not a new theme in Anglo-Irish affairs, introduced in the 1790s, but had been a persistent issue throughout the eighteenth century.⁴ What is crucial to understand is that while Irish Anglicans to a greater or lesser extent were sympathetic to a union at the start of the eighteenth century, and therefore could envision it as a kind of companionate marriage, by the 1750s things had begun to change and Swift’s characterisation of relations between ‘lady’ Ireland and ‘gentleman’ England as based less on companionship and love than on exploitation and expropriation was appropriated in allegorical accounts of political realities and debates.⁵

Positive support for a union from Irish Anglicans can be found in commentary from the early eighteenth century. In the first decade a union was formally requested three times by the Irish parliament, but, largely because of English political opinion, was turned down. In 1697, William King, the bishop of Derry, argued that a union would allow a kind of mutual ‘flourish[ing]’ of Ireland and England. William Molyneux, almost in an aside, suggested that a union was ‘an happiness we can hardly hope for’ in his famous *The case of Ireland . . . stated* (1698).

Henry Maxwell, the MP for Bangor, believed a union to be ‘highly beneficial to England as well as to Ireland by enlarging the foundation of its power, wealth and trade, and by strengthening the inward frame of its constitution’. After the Declaratory Act 1720 had demonstrated, pretty clearly, the view of the British government that Ireland was not a separate kingdom, William Nicolson, the then bishop of Derry, claimed that Irish Anglicans would be glad of ‘an incorporation into the United Kingdom of Great Britain as hath been allowed the Scots’. These declarations of support for a union were not all that unusual in terms of the sentiments being articulated by Irish Anglicans in the first half of the century.⁶ It should be noted, however, that when a union was being advocated, it was in order that the rights and liberties associated with English commonwealthmen could be guaranteed for Irish Anglicans – this was especially the case for advocates in the 1720s and 1730s like Arthur Dobbs, MP for Carrickfergus, and Samuel Madden, member of the Dublin Society.

However, by the mid-century, Irish Anglican opinion had changed. Indeed, so changed had the Irish Anglican attitude become that when Lord Hillsborough, MP in Westminster, proposed a union in 1751, he was attacked as a kind of madman. In the anonymous *An humble address to the nobility, gentry and freeholders of the kingdom of Ireland* (1751) his scheme was described as ‘preposterous, unnatural’, terms which suggest a rejection of the heterosexual marriage paradigm of union in favour of terms which see the union as an example of sexual perversion. The scheme was configured as not simply sexually dissipated but actually satanic in origin, ‘horrid’, ‘infernal’, ‘hellish’, and ‘abominable’, in danger of causing ‘black and dreadful scenes of desolation, calamity and distress’. Hillsborough was personally attacked as well, and dismissed as impudent and malicious, ‘a Blind, stupid Bizzard’, ‘brainless, short-sighted babbler’, a ‘poisonous, seditious, undermining Rat’:

since Infamy is the most tormenting Punishment in this World for Guilt and Villany, next to that Worm within, which preyeth upon the Conscience of those who are Partakers of the Works of Darkness; let all those who are desirous to breed Rancour, Jealousy and Confusion, between two Sister-Nations, be assured; That besides the Malediction of the Present Age, their Iniquity will be accursed from Generation to Generation.⁷

The anonymous pamphleteer is driven by what he sees as Hillsborough’s disgraceful slight on Ireland’s equality as a separate kingdom. In other words, part of his desire to emphasise the sororal relationship is his realisation that, were Britain to be gendered male and Ireland female,

marriage between them would be at least a plausible scenario, and in such a marriage, a female Ireland would be doomed to a naturally subordinate role. By maintaining equal sisterhoods, the pamphleteer can indicate that any union would by definition be unnatural and indeed 'infernal', a violation of both human and divine law.

If the tide had turned against a union for Irish Anglicans, English politicians had also changed their minds and were now quite anxious to see such a union take place. Initially, English politicians thought Irish affairs could be controlled relatively easily without such a union, but, the more Irish Anglican patriots troubled smooth relations between the two countries, the more attractive direct control became. By the 1750s, important figures such as Henry Fox, Lord Hillsborough and George Dodington all began to argue for the merits of a legislative union as a way to guarantee control by the British parliament of Irish political affairs.⁸ In 1753, there was discussion of a possible union at the highest levels of the British government as the Prime Minister, Henry Pelham, fed up with how the undertaker system was operating, considered whether a union would solve problems in that direction. These discussions became quite advanced very quickly and the Prime Minister was presented with a paper on the benefits of union by the Irish surveyor-general, Arthur Dobbs, a paper which he considered at length, though nothing actually came of it.⁹ After the difficulties of the Money Bill dispute, British politicians were increasingly convinced that a tighter control was needed over Irish affairs. The Duke of Bedford, appointed Lord Lieutenant in 1757, argued that a new style of political control over the Irish parliament was needed as the undertaker system no longer seemed to be effective, and he insisted that far too much attention had been paid to fostering the different factions in Irish political life.

The union boat had sailed, by then, and the Irish political context had been changed utterly by the Money Bill dispute. The dispute, more than any other event in the early eighteenth century, politicised the Anglican population of Dublin, especially the literate population. The Dublin crowd had already become more politically active in the 1740s and had been energised by the Charles Lucas affair. Lucas was an apothecary with a reformist agenda in terms of corporation politics which ultimately widened to include a more nationally oriented patriotism. Although Lucas was eventually hounded out of national politics, he left behind a significant rhetorical legacy which was re-ignited by the Money Bill dispute. Indeed, the extent of popular patriot opinion in 1750s Dublin can hardly be exaggerated, and it was not uncommon for the populace to riot should this patriot perspective fail to be endorsed or supported by the Irish political system. As well as being a matter of high politics,

the Money Bill dispute spilled out into the cultural ether and generated a great deal of extra-parliamentary comment and support. A number of historians have traced the extent of this extra-parliamentary activity in toasts, bonfires, dinners, crowd activity, riots and pamphlets. All these avenues were used by ‘patriot’ and ‘castle’ supporters to articulate their case,¹⁰ although strangely, no one has yet mined the representation of these conflicts in the fiction of the day – especially in the emergence of the Gothic novel – a point which this chapter hopes to begin to address. Cultural products, even ones which appeared to have no direct bearing on the Irish political matters at hand, became appropriated and used as weapons for both sides in the dispute.

A good example of the way in which apparently unconnected cultural material could find itself appropriated by the politicised Dublin crowd for the purposes of commentary is the famous Smock Alley riot of 1754, which was sparked by the refusal of the actor West Digges to repeat the lines of Alcanor, senator of Mecca, in the play *Mahomet the Imposter* (1744), James Miller’s rewriting of Voltaire’s *Mahomet*. The lines, which complain about the imposition of Mahometan religion on the city of Mecca, were apparently interpreted by the audience (in a practical example of Frye’s theory of symbolic spread) as a commentary on the politics of the Money Bill dispute and the imposition of a foreign power’s politics on the city of Dublin. When Digges refused the audience’s demands of an encore, a riot ensued.¹¹ This incident is a convincing demonstration that a Dublin audience in the mid-eighteenth century was inclined to read literature in a quasi-allegorical fashion, or – to be more accurate – to see literature (whatever its provenance) as symbolically spreading to intervene in contemporary events. It is more than likely that Digges himself, a known patriot, also saw the lines as a way to indirectly comment on the dispute.¹² Indeed, 1750s Dublin was saturated with political allegories anyway. The Money Bill dispute sparked what Eoin Megennis describes as a ‘pamphlet war’, and many of these pamphlets resorted to direct allegory in order to represent the state of Irish politics at the time.¹³

The literature that poured from the presses during and after the dispute also demonstrates the extent to which allegory itself was a default means by which politics was discussed in mid-century Ireland. David Dickson has observed that ‘much of the public rhetoric [of the Money Bill dispute] was coded’,¹⁴ and what is most noticeable about this code is its allegorical or symbolically spread status, where allegorical figures stand in for the major political and social players in the dispute. Many of these pamphlets were so popular that they were brought together in omnibus volumes such as *The Cabinet: Containing a Collection of*

Curious Papers, Relative to the Present Contests in Ireland (1754), and *The Patriot Miscellany* (1756) – the main collections consulted for the writing of this chapter – and they were read by a wide audience, including the elite. As Jacqueline Hill points out, there are a number of features shared by these pamphlets: they are all anonymous or pseudonymous, use irony and fictive elements including allegory to a very large extent, and they are more often than not written by the ‘patriot’ side of the political dispute (or, to put it this way, it was generally patriots who resorted to politics as allegory).¹⁵

The use of such fictive elements was partially dictated by the censorious nature of the Irish executive, which had quite strong powers of prosecution in terms of printed matter, as was witnessed in the Charles Lucas affair, the threat of prosecution prompting Lucas to flee the country in 1749. *Honesty the Best Policy: Or, The History of Roger* (1752) was the first of these allegorical patriotic pamphlets, in which Henry Boyle became the English squire Sir Roger de Coverly, and his enemies became objects of satire. The squire was one of the more popular allegorical figures for Boyle in the 1750s. Importantly for this study, some of the allegorical pamphlets echo the kinds of domestic and sexual scenarios played out in the *aisling* poems, the national novel and Swift’s *Injur’d Lady* pamphlets explored in the previous chapter. One of the best of the political pamphlets is *The True Life of Betty Ireland . . . Together with Some account of her Elder Sister Blanch of Britain* (1753), probably by Sir Richard Cox, possibly modelled on Swift’s *Injur’d Lady*.¹⁶ The pamphlet examines Irish history and resorts to the traditional representation of Ireland and Britain as women who have to fight off unwanted sexual advances while maintaining their virtue, encouraging what it calls a ‘better understanding’ between the two sisters.¹⁷ Betty represents Ireland, and she complains that her financial affairs are in tatters, as ‘her small Revenues had been embezzled by Agents, Farms let to insolvent Tenants, double Leases made out, huge Fines taken in Hand and sunk in their own Pockets. She was preyed upon by Vagabonds and Outlaws’. However, she is placed in a more dangerous situation because of the undesired attentions of ‘a Foreign Count’ who has fallen in love with her. Like the unwelcome suitors in the *aisling* poems, the foreign Count is prepared to rape and abduct Betty to have his way, but Cox goes further in making the Count the kind of man who will go on to become a prototypical Gothic villain. The Count is ‘an odious Monster’, who abducts her with his ‘Pack of outlandish Goths . . . to take Possession of her Freehold, and break down her Gates’. Betty is saved by her sister British Blanche, who ‘generously came in to her Assistance, repelled Force by Force, and rescued her from a Tyrant Ravisher’.¹⁸ The allegory

in this case refers to Queen Elizabeth's protection of Ireland from the machinations of Philip II of Spain, but the implication of the pamphlet in the midst of a debate about a possible union between Ireland and Britain is that while a female Britain once stepped in to rescue Ireland from abduction and rape, a male Britain who turns his lustful attention on the beautiful Betty might look less like a rescuer and more like the rapacious foreign tyrant from whom Betty will need saving.

The abduction of women was not merely an allegorical threat in this period, of course, as actual kidnapping of women (usually women of fortune) was carried out with alarming frequency in eighteenth-century Ireland. Most of the abductions were by men who wished to marry the abducted women and therefore gain access to their money. The historian A. P. W. Malcomson, in his compelling study of these cases, provides the example of Miss Charlotte Newcomen of Carrigglas, County Longford, abducted by Thomas Johnston, a member of the local aristocracy, in 1772. Newcomen was worth a large amount on the marriage market, but that money was well protected in terms of family settlement, so the whole abduction was actually pointless. Unfortunately, this did not prevent Johnston from carrying it out anyway, possibly because he did not understand the complicated legal position of supposed heiresses. It may be instructive to give the account of Newcomen's abduction as a comparison with that of poor 'Betty Ireland':

Miss Newcomen . . . made all the resistance that woman could do. She was dragged downstairs. On the first flight Miss Webster met her and caught her in her arms, then both held fast by the banister of the stair. Johnston, they say, cried out 'Break their arms!'. . . As Johnston came out of the door, a Miss Cornwell, niece to Mr Webster, who lived next door, struck him on the head with an iron pin which fastened his window . . .

The poor soul [Miss Newcomen] . . . scratched Johnston's face, cuffed Edwards, tore his hair, and kept herself so still by the help of an iron that was to the pillion, that they could not get her fixed to the horse, though they . . . dragged [her] barefoot through a street dirty as possible, and in their attempts to put her on horseback used her with as much roughness and as little delicacy as if she had been a common hussy.¹⁹

The kidnap was unsuccessful and Johnston was killed while trying to effect it. The relative frequency of incidents of this nature suggests that the educated Anglican population reading such allegorical pamphlets as *The True Life of Betty Ireland* would have been able to translate such fictions into the distressing realities for many women of the period, so that the gap between fiction and reality would have been quite small. Just as the use of common names for Ireland in the work of the eighteenth-century Gaelic poets may have increased the ability of their

audience to see real women as at least potential embodiments of Ireland (with very serious consequences for the political power of women in the long term), so too may the use of figures like Betty Ireland to discuss the Money Bill dispute have encouraged readers to see an association between Irish Anglican heiresses and Irish sovereignty, particularly with regard to the threats against the sexual integrity of both.

The politicisation of the Irish Anglican reading public climaxed in December 1759 when Dublin erupted in a very serious riot. The cause of the riot is simple enough to discern. Rumours of a now very unwelcome parliamentary union with Britain were floating in Dublin, and they coalesced around the fact that Chief Secretary Rigby was preparing to bring the heads of a bill to the Irish parliament which would enable it to be recalled quickly in an emergency. Rigby was particularly concerned at the time with the threat of a French invasion, but this bill was interpreted by the crowd as a way to make the passage of an act of union easier. Although on 22 November, Speaker John Ponsonby assured the crowd assembled around the parliament that a union was not being contemplated, this crowd had been betrayed before by the settlement of the Money Bill dispute, and was not, it thought, to be fooled this time. The Dublin Castle administration actually placed a newspaper advertisement declaring that there was no union on the cards – directly appealing to the politicised crowd through the most popular medium of political discussion – but this did not calm the multitude which continued to congregate outside the parliament. Instead of dispersing, the crowd built a gallows, possibly with the intention of actually hanging Rigby. Because of the noisy and increasingly dangerous gathering outside parliament, the introduction of the bill was cancelled. The disturbance, however, continued; it lasted two days and had to be brought to a close by the deployment of the military. Indeed, so disturbing was the riot that Rigby pushed for the introduction of a riot bill, and the heads of such a bill were introduced and passed the House of Commons but were later dropped (a riot act was not passed in Ireland until 1787).²⁰

What actually happened during the riot is unclear, but certainly a number of members of both houses of parliament were verbally and physically abused by the crowd, and several were terrified for their lives. Many of them were struck as they tried to enter the house, and others were forced to swear oaths of loyalty to the country and against a union. Hercules Langford Rowley, MP for County Londonderry, was, despite his muscular name, dragged down a street in humiliation. According to Horace Walpole, some of the mob actually entered the parliament building itself and put an old woman on the throne – suggesting the masculinity of the undertakers was in serious question.²¹ The woman on

the throne may also have been an unsubtle reference to Primate George Stone, Archbishop of Armagh, one of the major court figures in 1750s Ireland. Stone was suspected of engaging in sodomitical activity and was an open target for satire in the pamphlet press. Although Walpole claims that there were a number of fatalities incurred by the rioters during the quelling of the riots, Sean Murphy has examined contemporary sources carefully and concluded that Walpole must have been mistaken.²²

During the riot, and in a number of pamphlet responses to the riot, discussion of Irish political equality and rights was once again central, and this deeply irritated some of the more conservative sectors of the Irish Anglican enclave. One pseudonymous pamphlet, *A short but true account of the rise, progress and happy suppression of several late insurrections . . . in Ireland* (1760), complained bitterly that in Dublin 'you might hear the lowest tradesmen call themselves free citizens with more than Roman arrogance'.²³ The leadership of the riot that took place on 3 December is difficult to ascertain (though Patriot politicians undoubtedly had some hand in it, given that most of them went unmolested while other politicians were forced to swear publicly that no union would be implemented). The riot demonstrated plainly that Irish Anglicans were now prepared to use violence if necessary to thwart implementation of a policy to which they were opposed.

That the anti-union riot of 1759 is connected to the political divisions opened up (and never healed) by the Money Bill dispute of the early 1750s is very clear, and Irish Anglican patriotism was the basic principle behind the crowd's activities. The Chief Secretary, Rigby, emphasised this when he argued that the real people to blame were Patriot politicians who had used the population in order to push its policies through parliament:

For many years, the mob in this kingdom has been wickedly and infamously made use of, by different parties, as an engine to carry questions in parliament, by terrifying the members; and I know of a certainty that expressions have dropped this very session even from members of parliament, that since they had no chance for numbers in the House, they must have recourse to the old method of numbers without doors.²⁴

Given the progress of the Seven Years War with France, many British politicians were reluctant to blame Irish Anglicans, and saw Jacobite spectres, Catholic plots and a potential French invasion lying behind the riotous behaviour of the Dublin populace. British politicians often failed to register that the Irish Anglican enclave was now irrevocably split between patriot and conservative court factions, and also they did not really believe that the patriot calls were more than simply rhetorical

shots across the bow. De facto Prime Minister Pitt was convinced that the ‘practices of papists and emissaries of France’ had been closely concerned with the start of the Dublin riot and he did not accept that Presbyterian weavers of the Liberties had been the main participants.²⁵ Pitt maintained this stance despite the warnings of Rigby that Catholics had probably little to do with the riot. Sir Robert Wilmot, the Lord Lieutenant’s London secretary, also insisted that Catholics were to blame, wondering whether those who believed otherwise had ‘embarrassed’ themselves ‘by representing that popery had no hand in the disturbances of the third of December . . . French incendiaries paced these simple wretches in the front of the battle and sheltered their own creatures in the rear’.²⁶ For these figures, the Catholic and Continental menace had not yet been banished.

The anti-union riot was an unambiguous indication that Ireland, and the Irish public (or at least, the Protestant section of it – though it would be unwise to restrict the politicisation to them alone), had become radicalised, even more so than during the controversy over Wood’s Halfpence in the 1720s. Moreover, unlike the brief but intense spurt of widespread political interest displayed by Irish Anglicans in the 1720s, this time the population would remain radicalised. This radicalism was expressed through a greater interest in national politics, an interest which would eventually culminate in the emergence of the ‘Patriot Party’ under Henry Flood. As a version of patriotism took hold of elite sections of the ruling class, it also filtered down to the literate and even the illiterate Anglican public. When the settlement of the Money Bill dispute became widely known, for example, the Dublin crowd was enraged and about 1,000 congregated in College Green and burned an effigy of the Speaker of the House of Commons – a warning to those ‘patriot’ politicians who had appeared to have been bought up by the Castle in negotiations, their patriotism revealed as a veil for highly personal venality. Allegory and ‘fictive’ representations of current affairs were central elements of the cultural life of the newly energised patriot population.

The Gaelic poets placed their hopes in the restoration of the old order, the ‘return’ of the Pretender, the revival of a Catholic state. Irish Anglican Patriots used some of the same imagery as their Catholic compatriots. Both communities invested heavily in allegorising intimate, sexual and conjugal relationships as a means of discussing the politics (especially Anglo-Irish relations) of the day. However, Irish Anglican patriot dreams were, of course, very different from those of the Gaelic poets. They wished for a parliament completely in their own control, a continuation of a connection to Britain through the monarch but autonomy within the empire. They essentially wanted a marriage, not

between a female Ireland and the British king, but a female Ireland and the Irish Anglican nation. In the context of a very visceral debate in and about Ireland's independence, in which marriage, seduction, coercion and abduction are common metaphors employed to discuss political union, it is strange that novels published in Ireland in the 1760s have not been examined as occluded contributions to, or interventions in, such debates. Although the term 'allegory' would certainly be misapplied if used in a straightforward way about popular romances written and published in mid-century Ireland, these are narratives deeply invested in a language of intimacy and desire highly politicised at the time, and certainly 'symbolically spread' to comment on politics and social changes. Let me now turn to one of these popular romances, the novel also considered the 'first' of a new genre, the Gothic novel.

II

The Adventures of Miss Sophia Berkley is an anonymous novel of romance and marriage published in Dublin in 1760, just a few months after the riotous response to rumours of union – rumours often articulated in terms of marriage and sexual congress – and it would surely require a stretch of the imagination to believe that it is not in some way implicated in this debate. Allegory is, again, the wrong word for the popular fiction published in Ireland in this period, but by employing the same language and tropes as political pamphleteers and Gaelic poets, romantic novels certainly 'symbolically spread' beyond the details of their repetitious plots and, to a population trained to see analogies for the politics of the nation everywhere they looked, love stories were coded commentaries on political realities.

Placing *The Adventures of Miss Sophia Berkley* in the allegory-saturated context of Irish political debate of the mid-eighteenth century is the best way to understand how it can (should?) be read as a text deeply concerned with making meaning for its readership and providing a way in which sense could be salvaged out of the rhetorical chaos persisting in a Dublin political arena. This is not to say that reading the novel politically is the only legitimate response for a critic, or to suggest that affect should be ignored. However, cutting this novel off from the white heat of political debate in which it was first launched would be seriously misleading. Moreover, as an epistolary novel, it is always already implicated in politics. Although obviously influenced by masterpieces like Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1748), which deal with the history of a woman and her love plot

(successful or tragic), it is important to remember that this romantic tradition existed alongside a much more explicitly political epistolary tradition which included *Letters Written by a Turkish Spy* (1687–94), Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes* (1721) and Oliver Goldsmith's *Letters from a Citizen of the World* (1762). Rather than seeing these traditions existing separately, though, perhaps it would be better to consider them as cross-contaminating, although as Ruth Perry has argued, the political spy letter did give way to the love letter novel through the course of the century.²⁷

In his analysis of epistolary culture in eighteenth-century Germany, Simon Richter concluded that 'any effort to draw clean lines separating public, private, and intimate spheres, virtual or real, must fail'.²⁸ As Mary A. Favret argues, 'The cabalistic quality of intimate correspondence in the political works persisted both in the epistolary novel and in popular imagination, although it often remained hidden beneath the dynamics of 'romance' . . . sexual intrigue becomes a metaphor for political intrigue'.²⁹

Moreover, if *The Adventures of Miss Sophia Berkley* is to be considered as a partial commentary on the politics of mid-century Ireland, its anonymous status is hardly surprising, given that, as James Kelly has explained, 'most entrants into the public sphere' during and after the Money Bill dispute, 'chose to occlude their identity by publishing their sentiments anonymously'.³⁰ Far too much emphasis has been placed on the way novels relate to each other in literary history and not enough, as Paul Hunter has demonstrated, on the way novels borrow from, depend upon, other genres, including political pamphlets, travel narratives and poetry, a point emphasised as well by Harriet Guest who argues that novels 'participate in debates that cut across genres; they assume readers who are also immersed in periodical literature, in poetry, in histories, readers who discuss plays and parliamentary debates, who perform music, and peer into the windows of the print shops'.³¹ Retrospective attempts to insist on a clear distinction between fiction and fact when looking at eighteenth-century literature are, as Elizabeth Heckendorn Cook emphasises, 'anachronistic',³² especially given that fictional letters, such as those by Pamela, posed as genuine letters, and therefore purposefully blurred such distinctions anyway.

The anonymity of *Sophia Berkley*, and the unnamed editor's claims of having 'discovered' these letters in the papers of a deceased friend, does lend a sense of authenticity to the novel. Moreover, in the 'pamphlet war' generated by the Money Bill dispute, many of the pamphlets took the form of anonymous or pseudonymous epistles, sometimes even between allegorical female figures, such as *The P**** Vindicated, and*

*the Affairs of I----d Set in a true Light, in a Letter from The Honourable Hellen O'Roon, to the Right Honourable Lady Viscountess ***** in London* (1754), which describes England as a 'Mother-Sister-Country';³³ *The Conduct of a Certain Member of Parliament During the Last Session; and the Motives on which he acted; Explain'd in a Letter to a Friend* (Dublin, 1755); and *A Letter from Dionysius, to the Renowned Triumvirate* (1754). The provenance of *The Adventures of Miss Sophia Berkley* is rather more difficult to discern when placed in this context.

For Mary A. Favret, there was always a political force to the epistolary novel, a political force latent until the 1790s when it was made manifest in the aftermath of the polemical debate waged in the form of letters between Edmund Burke in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) and Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man* (1791–2) and the foundation of the London Correspondence Society in 1792. Letters made public through publication indicate the relationship between the private and the public long before the notion of the personal as political became a popular slogan.³⁴ In its investment in the language of sexual intimacy, love, marriage, rape and abduction, *Sophia Berkley* revisits the material that formed the basis for many allegorical versions of Ireland in Gaelic poetry, Swift's *Injured Lady* and the pamphlets that followed the Money Bill dispute and the anti-union riot, and this also suggests that the novel needs to be read with these contexts in mind. As Heckendorn Cook has established, 'the eighteenth-century letter-novel was never *not* political'.³⁵

My main argument about *The Adventures of Miss Sophia Berkley* is that its plot of sexual intrigue 'symbolically spreads' from the actual events of the plot to cover the politics of the day, and does so from a particular political perspective: that of the Irish Anglican Patriots. At this stage, the Irish Anglican literate public felt betrayed by the supposedly patriotic politicians in whom they had placed their faith during the Money Bill dispute and who they then mocked so powerfully during the anti-union riot. For this reading public, union was not marriage but unnatural congress, incest and rape; like the Ireland of the *aisling* poems, the patriot crowd waited the return of the true lover who could rescue them all from the depredations of the foreign, perverted abductor who wanted to force a union, and this true lover was the genuine patriot politician who had been so mistakenly lionised during the start of the Money Bill dispute as Ireland's real saviour. The issue of what kind of fiction Irish Anglicans were reading is very important in this context, especially if it uses the same tropes and characters as are prevalent in the political culture.

The Adventures of Miss Sophia Berkley, written by ‘a young Lady’ and published by James Hoey, is one of the most important neglected texts in Irish literary history. If the categorisation of Rolf Loeber and Magda Loeber is correct, not only is this the ‘first’ ‘Irish Gothic’ novel but, given that it pre-dates Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) by four years, it may also have a claim to be the ‘first’ Gothic novel. It is important to pause here, of course, and repeat the warnings given in the Introduction against searching for the ‘ur’ text of any genre, an exercise not only pointless but, in fact, damaging. As has been pointed out, the notion that Walpole’s novel is the point of origin of the Gothic genre is a complete misunderstanding of how literary history works. Anne Williams insists that the idea that *Otranto* ‘sprang fully armed from Horace Walpole’s dreaming brow in 1764’ is a Gothic myth of origins,³⁶ and one that, for example, marginalizes female writers by establishing a kind of primogeniture mirrored by its thematic centrality in much Gothic fiction itself.

With the publication of *Sophia Berkley* we have, if not a point of origin, certainly a significant moment, and it is worth pausing here to explain what we know about this novel and to suggest in what ways it can be seen as a Gothic novel at all. We actually know very little. I have located no contemporary reviews, no advertisements for the novel, it is unaccompanied by a subscription list, and Christina Morin counts it among the ‘forgotten’, having ‘disappeared’ ‘from the cultural memory of British and Irish Gothic fiction’.³⁷ Indeed, the novel is apparently so easy to forget that the Loebers, having been the first to rediscover the novel, promptly forgot it again, and it does not appear in their extraordinary *Guide*. The author is unknown, identified only as a ‘young Lady’ on the title page, though this presumably refers to Sophia herself, whose letters to a friend Constantia (mysteriously absent from the actual story itself, given her apparent closeness to Sophia) form the body of the novel, which is introduced by an unnamed editor who has supposedly found these letters in the papers left by a ‘deceased friend’ (2),³⁸ (also unnamed – though presumably not Constantia, as the editor would surely otherwise have mentioned this).

For an eighteenth-century Gothic novel, the plot is relatively simple. Just before her marriage to the rich and cultured Horatio, our heroine, Sophia Berkley, is left bereft when he is apparently killed by pirates on the British coast. When her father dies very soon after this and leaves her destitute, Sophia goes to London to earn her living as a partner in a millinery firm. Unfortunately, her beauty enflames the depraved desires of Castilio, who, having been rebuffed, demonstrates he can’t take no for an answer. He kidnaps Sophia and imprisons her in his mansion, where

he attempts to convince her to willingly become his lover or suffer the consequences. Luckily, Sophia manages to escape from the mansion by picking a hole in one of its walls, *Escape from Alcatraz* style, and returns to London, where she is almost captured again by Castilio's associates, saved only by the intervention of the rich and kind Dorimont, who also (and immediately) falls in love with her. Sophia, however, is a one-man woman and insists she can never recover from the loss of her Horatio – given which declaration, she is fortunate indeed when the supposed corpse turns up on her doorstep, very much alive and insisting that rumours of his death were exaggerated.

It transpires that Horatio has been having adventures of his own. Kidnapped, not killed, by the murderous pirates and carried to Algiers, where he was kept prisoner, he built a getaway boat and escaped with a number of other prisoners only to be shipwrecked on a deserted island (rather like Sycorax, Caliban's mother in *The Tempest* [1623]). Horatio was then rescued by a French aristocrat, the Marquis de Bellville, who quickly became his best friend, took him to France to meet his family and then tried to convince him to marry his sister, who had fallen in love with him. Unfortunately, the hot-headed Marquis was enraged when Horatio refused to marry Mademoiselle de Bellville (it seems that Horatio was also hung up on his first love) and forced him to take part a dual. In the fight the Marquis was killed. Horatio's loyalty to the dead Marquis was such that he was extremely reluctant to reveal the reasons why they fought, and he was prepared for execution by guillotine. Literally on the chopping block, Horatio was saved once again, this time by Mademoiselle de Bellville, disguised as a man. So deeply in love with Horatio was she that she was willing to give her life for him, claimed that s/he was, in fact, the killer of the Marquis and that Horatio was covering for his/her crime. Having both been sent off for execution by the French king who had grown irritated with the farce being played out with his criminal justice system, they were saved when her mask fell off and her identity was revealed. The king, and her father, were so touched by the self-sacrifices both parties have been willing to make that Horatio and Mademoiselle de Bellville were forgiven. Horatio then returned to England to be reunited with his beloved Sophia.

Understandably, given this plot, there have been objections to the description of *Sophia Berkley* as a Gothic novel. Maurice Levy has influentially deplored the apparent expansion of the term 'Gothic' so that 'each component of the notion becomes in itself sufficient justification for using the whole concept', an expansion that results in Gothic becoming the equivalent of 'non-realistic'.³⁹ I wouldn't share Levy's general concerns with policing the term 'Gothic', though I certainly wouldn't

use it to incorporate everything non-realist. However, even for Levy, *Sophia Berkley* would surely be at least a candidate for inclusion, since he admits that the term ‘conjures up’ for him, ‘female innocence engaged in labyrinthine pursuits and threatened by monachal or baronial lubricity’, although admittedly there are no ‘ruined castles and abbeys’ to be found here.⁴⁰ More specifically, Richard Haslam has asked, using Levy as a starting point, that we ‘reduce the critical temptation to make “Gothic” mean practically everything, asking pointedly, ‘What does it mean to label . . . *The Adventures of Miss Sophia Berkley* (1760) “Irish Gothic” when [it was] published before the mode’s generally accepted *terminus a quo* – Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764)?’⁴¹ The answer to this specific question is not really very difficult: it means that *Otranto*’s claims to startling originality will have to be tempered a bit, no bad thing given the novel’s inflated sense of its own importance. The idea that *Otranto* sets the limits to the genre is to take Walpole rather more seriously than he took himself. The answer to generic complexity is not to close down the porous borders – particularly not of a term like Gothic which has undergone a number of mutations in its relatively long history.

Sophia Berkley is certainly not straightforwardly a ‘Gothic’ novel in the way that Walpole’s is, not least because the term Gothic is not used by it as a self-description (it does not have that disquieting sub-title, *A Gothic Story*). It also lacks the medieval setting that was the most basic meaning of the term when used by Walpole (which helps to explain why *Longsword* [1764] is a much more self-evident addition to the genre), and is a novel set in contemporary England. However, *Sophia Berkley* combines a number of elements which *would* become basic to the genre: a long Catholic Continental interlude; an emphasis on horror and terror; the abduction of a virginal girl followed by numerous (and serious) threats of rape and murder by an older, aristocratic and sexually dissolute male; images of death and torture; scenes of confinement and entrapment; an overall sense of persecution and paranoia that runs throughout the novel and adheres to both the main characters, Sophia herself, and her lover Horatio. This last element is extremely important because an atmosphere of persecution is one for which the Gothic novel later became famous, especially in novels like William Godwin’s *Things as They Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794) and James Hogg’s *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824). As in these novels, the characters in *Sophia Berkley* are sometimes persecuted for clear reasons (Castilio’s sexual desire being the most obvious), but more often they suffer for reasons unknown and unknowable that expand outward and make it appear, at times, as if

they are living in a hostile and threatening universe pitted against them. As Sophia herself puts it, 'I considered that everybody around me was in the plot against me' (56).

Both Sophia and Horatio sometimes appear caught up in an incomprehensible web which conspires to keep them apart, so that letters mysteriously go missing or unanswered, parent figures die without warning (one kindly mother dispatched by an unlucky kick to the face by a cow) and even apparently inconsequential bits of paper come back to haunt Sophia with a signature she doesn't remember making. Moreover, these moments of existential and even cosmic paranoia and crisis force the characters to attempt to decipher the meaning of their own lives and the world into which they have been thrown – in other words, this is a novel that does indeed 'mean', and whose meaning 'symbolically spreads' well beyond its pages to address very seriously the concerns of the public who first read it, the rioting, unsettled, existentially distressed, paranoid and persecuted Irish Anglicans who, like Sophia, felt betrayed and threatened, and whose reading habits often led them to fictional representations of their plight in the pamphlet literature of the day. Moreover, it also demonstrates that although one of the important aspects of Gothic is indeed its affective qualities, its ability to incite dread and fear in the characters and the readers, the response of the characters to that dread and fear here is to try to seek meaning, or to remake it cognitively, in the face of existential terror. Meaning and feeling are not separate and unrelated categories in the Gothic; instead, the latter provokes a search for the former.

The implication of the novel in the political discourse of the 1750s is not difficult to demonstrate. As patriotism became a significant discourse in Irish Anglican political life, patriots became obsessed with discussing the Irish situation relative to Britain by utilising the language of freedom and slavery. By the late 1750s, the discourse of liberty and opposition to slavery had a respectable patriotic history in Irish Anglican writing, beginning with William Molyneux's *Case* (1698) arguing 'that Ireland should be Bound by Acts of Parliament made in England is against Reason, and the Common Rights for all Mankind'.⁴² The analogy made by Molyneux here is between the (Irish Anglican) nation and the free individual: just as an individual citizen has the right to self-determination so too has an individual nation, and any usurpation of that right by a foreign parliament is basically an act of enslavement. Archbishop William King too warned that 'the mischiefs of tamely submitting to the tyranny and usurpation of a Governor may be worse and have more dangerous consequences to the Commonwealth, than a War'.⁴³ In the third *Drapier's Letter* (1724), Swift pointedly asked, 'were not the People of *Ireland* born as *free* as those of *England*?

... Am I a *Free-man* in *England*, and do I become a *Slave* in six Hours, by crossing the Channel?'⁴⁴ Opposition to Irish slavery is a persistent theme in Swift's work, and in *A Short Character* (1710) he attacks the Earl of Wharton, accusing him of 'finishing the Slavery of that People, as if it were gaining a mighty Point to the Advantage of England'.⁴⁵ Swift's feelings were echoed by the contrarian Charles Lucas, who in 1748 described as 'of slavish and corrupt stamp' Irish parliaments which allowed English MPs to 'impose' laws on Ireland,⁴⁶ and declared (rather proudly) 'I disdain the Thought of representing a People, *who dare not be free*'.⁴⁷ For Lucas, as for Molyneux and Swift, 'LIBERTY . . . the best Gift of Heaven, is your [Irish Anglican] inheritance', but this inheritance was under threat from those within the Irish Anglican nation who would simply give up this natural right.⁴⁸

Importantly, those who attempted to take away these supposedly natural rights by 'selling out' to the British parliament (that is, the supposed Patriots like Boyle who had resolved the Money Bill dispute apparently to their own advantage) were excoriated in an anonymous pamphlet (probably by Henry Brooke), *Liberty and Common-Sense to the People of Ireland, Greeting* (1759):

Wherefore, when we elect Persons to represent Us in Parliament, we must not be supposed to depart from the smallest Right which we have deposited with them. We make a Lodgement, not a Gift . . . And, were it possible that They should attempt to destroy the Constitution which We had appointed them to maintain, They can no more be held in the Rank of our Representatives, than a Factor, turned Pirate, can continue to be called the Factor of those Merchants whose Goods he had plundered.⁴⁹

Given the centrality of the dichotomy between freedom and slavery in Irish patriotic discourse in this period, that a significant portion of *The Adventures of Miss Sophia Berkley* is taken up with Horatio's peons to freedom and his disparagement of those who would give up their liberty without a fight to foreign despots would seem to suggest a conscious and deliberate discursive connection between it and what has been called 'colonial nationalism'.⁵⁰ Like the Irish Anglican nation, Horatio too must also resolve an identity crisis, and this resolution is articulated in terms of his refusal to be treated like a slave – the exact language being used by Irish Anglican 'colonial nationalists' trying to explain the reasons for their refusal to accept a union with Great Britain. After he is abducted by a gang of pirates, Horatio is informed that his captor, the 'inhuman Rodolpho' (113), intends to keep him as a slave for the rest of his life 'and that no ransom, however great, should purchase [his] liberty' (112). Horatio insists that he would rather commit suicide

than remain in service, since death is preferable to slavery (114). What disgusts him most, however, is the fact that some of those with whom he is trapped appear resigned to life in servitude, and in despair he asks ‘how they could bear life under such unmanly usage’ (114). Some, he finds, ‘preferred even a miserable existence to death; and would rather have languished their days in the most abject slavery, than perish in a moment’ (117). Such an option is anathema to Horatio, who – like Charles Lucas – chooses to risk his life than remain quiescent in the face of tyranny. In other words, Horatio talks a lot like an Irish Anglican Patriot and this is hardly a coincidence in a novel published after a decade when the language of patriotism was pouring from the presses in political pamphlets, satires, allegories. In eventually marrying him (and resisting the seduction of the villain), Sophia unites with a figure whose symbolic significance spreads over the class from which the author of the novel itself most probably came.

Horatio’s determination to escape slavery leads to a dramatic escape on a raft which is then wrecked, causing him to be ‘thrown upon a small island’ (118). The shipwreck had long been a conventional way to image the supposed collapse of the Gaelic world in the face of the Jacobite defeat, perhaps most memorably by Dáithí Ó Bruadair in ‘An Longbhriseadh’, or ‘The Shipwreck’. Horatio’s island is ‘a desert one’, ‘totally uninhabited’ (119, 118), a highly significant plot twist coming in the same century as Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), which, as many critics have argued, is essentially a story about identity and subjectivity. In her examination of island literature, Diana Loxley argues that *Robinson Crusoe* was a central text in the formation of the modern individual, and the Crusoe figure on the deserted island became a paradigmatic example of the human subject coming to existential awareness.⁵¹ Deserted islands, particularly, are spaces where ideas of origin and identity can be pondered in a kind of Utopian space, ‘the site of that contemplation being the uninhabited territory upon which the conditions for a rebirth or genesis are made possible’⁵² and where the individual can go through a process of ‘reformulation and renewal’. Having felt abandoned by a metaphorical parent – the Big Daddy England – Irish Anglicans too had to go through a dramatic process of rebirth and reconstitution – only, the island on which this rebirth took place was far from uninhabited, and was rather populated by extreme expressions of otherness, Irish Catholics. Horatio uses his deserted island to demonstrate that he is not going to be treated as a slave, and it is where he begins the process of becoming a man, effectively starting from scratch, and – shockingly for a mid-eighteenth-century Irish Anglican publication – is assisted by a French aristocrat.

The emphasis on French benevolence is perhaps the most surprising element of the novel and, given the Francophobia prevalent in the 1750s, would have surely worried contemporary readers. Britain and France had been at war since 1756, and rumours of a French invasion of Ireland had been rife for about a decade. Even before the Seven Years War broke out there had been invasion scares in Ireland, and in April 1755 there were rumours abounding that the French had actually landed in the west of Ireland.⁵³ These fears were increased during 1759, when the increased build-up of the French navy led by Jacobites encouraged leading British politicians to consider that Ireland would be subject to a French incursion. Indeed, even the anti-union riot was blamed on French spies by the British Prime Minister,⁵⁴ and by making the French wholly and genuinely sympathetic here, the author of *Sophia Berkley* dangerously shifts her novel, indeed radicalises it so that it is not simply patriotic but seems prepared to contemn all manner of alliance in order to ensure that its characters do not have to endure a life of slavery. The implication of this for the Anglican readership is that it too may have to consider new alliances (perhaps with the reviled Catholic majority) in order to avoid being subjected to the political servitude of which so many of them were terrified.

This radicalisation would also help explain the very sympathetic treatment of Roman Catholics in the novel as a whole. Sophia's best friend as a girl is Isabella, a Catholic, who is presented as morally incorruptible and extraordinarily loyal, given that she falls in love with Horatio first yet graciously steps aside to allow Sophia to marry him without guilt. She is depicted as a kind, considerate and extremely self-sacrificing girl, prepared to give up her own happiness to secure that of her closest friend, and although Sophia articulates the common anti-Catholic distaste for the institutional church, describing Catholicism as a 'religion which, as it addresses itself to the passions of mankind, can never chuse a better opportunity of taking possession of the mind, than when it is weakened by grief' (11), this rhetoric does not spill over into a denigration of any particular Catholic in the novel at all. Individual Catholics are good and even heroic.

In one sense it is not surprising that patriotic literature could sometimes articulate a measure of sympathy towards Irish Catholics since Irish Anglicans felt that they now occupied a similar position to the previously reviled Other. If the Irish Anglican enclave felt surrounded by a nefarious Catholic population and abandoned by the English, then individual Irish Anglican Patriots felt even more isolated, fighting against a corrupt political system operating through graft and self-interest. Periodicals such as the *Universal Advertiser* 'popularised the sense of

a black-and-white political firmament, filled by virtuous patriots struggling against a venal Castle administration, corrupt placement, and an English ministry intent on further subjugating the Irish parliament and draining the Irish treasury for non-Irish purposes.⁵⁵ In this kind of atmosphere, Catholics could be seen as potential allies rather than default enemies. Taking into account the toleration extended towards Catholics in the novel, the sympathetic representation of France, the hero's defence of liberty and freedom and his attack on the 'enslaved mentality' of those who would submit to tyrannical rule, the implication of the novel in the patriotic politics of the 1750s is difficult to dispute.

This relatively benign version of Catholics and Catholicism was not maintained later in the Irish Gothic novel. Anne Fuller's *The Convent, Or the History of Sophia Nelson* (1786), for example, recycles quite a scandalous version of the Church for its readership. In a plot which, as Christina Morin has pointed out, anticipates Le Fanu's *Uncle Silas*,⁵⁶ an orphaned girl (Sophia Nelson) is singled out for marriage to her first cousin Dick by his nefarious father, her uncle Woodville. Sophia is imprisoned in a French convent where – rather like Lucy Snowe in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* (1853) – she finds her Protestantism under natural and supernatural pressure as great efforts are made to convince her to renounce her faith and convert. Like Lucy, Sophia's national status as a 'British subject' (and therefore by implication, naturally Protestant and free) is what saves her from conversion, although significantly, again like Lucy, she is attracted to Catholicism as well as revolted by it. Although *Sophia Berkley* clearly regrets the loss of Isabella to a French convent and considers Catholicism as theologically dodgy, it does not indulge in delusions about Catholic plots that abound in the later Gothic novel.

III

The plot of *The Adventures of Miss Sophia Berkley* charts what will become a commonplace course for later Irish national novels: projected (happy) marriage disrupted by Gothic disasters such as the horrific attack on Horatio which causes all the trouble, followed by the constant and improbable plot coincidences which keep the loving couple separated, especially Sophia's abduction by a perverted villain and imprisonment in a aristocratic mansion. The novel never really reaches the 'schizophrenic' levels traced by Kate Trumpener in her analysis of the national tales of the 1810s (as the historical novel begins to take shape), a schizophrenia which disrupts the closed Burkean family dynamics which links

harmonious marriages to harmonious national politics in the genre.⁵⁷ However, *Sophia Berkley* certainly prefigures this schizophrenia in the near-hysteria to which the heroine is constantly reduced by the early events of the novel. Indeed, Sophia is prone to a heightened and excessive sentimentality at the start of the novel, is often to be found in tears and is easily manipulated by nefarious enemies because of her emotional fragility. However, eventually Sophia demonstrates that she is a plucky figure able to withstand a great deal of physical and psychological stress and strain – unlike, say, Swift’s Injured Lady.

In later novels, the Gothic marriage plot, or the abduction plot, causes its heroine to go mad or to behave increasingly irrationally, and sometimes madness results from any attempt on the heroine’s virtue. Female madness is a significant feature of the Gothic genre as a whole, prominent examples of which are the imprisoned Agnes in Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk* (1796), Bertha Mason in Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847) and the heroine of Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s ‘The Yellow Wallpaper’ (1892). However, here, Sophia starts off as a very fragile and vulnerable figure who is easily disturbed psychologically, but by the time of her abduction by Castilio she has become a robust and powerful woman who is able to pull a wall to bits to escape from her abductor, climb and leap down from large walls, walk incredible distances and resist even the overtures of a good man to maintain loyalty to her first love. This is a novel, in other words, which has little time for the kind of weakness displayed by the Injured Lady, who can’t make up her own mind and needs advice. Sophia, too, writes letters, but only to inform Constantia of what she has already decided to do.

Although appealing to the language of sensibility at the start of the novel, Sophia quickly becomes convinced of the dangers of both appearing emotionally weak and succumbing to emotional convulsions, and even in her love life she is guided by reason rather than reaction, having learned the lesson of her mother who was, it seems, too much led by her feelings. With her parents, ‘their affection for each other did not allow them to consult the rules of prudence’ (8), and they stupidly eloped, after which Sophie’s grandfather wrote his daughter out of his will and refused to ‘soften’ in his resolution against the marriage (8). He may have been right to oppose the marriage because Sophia’s father turns out to be a disaster when it comes to economic management; the family soon finds itself in financial difficulties, and by the time he dies, his estate is heavily indebted. Before his death, Sophia’s father admits, ‘I am justly punished for my extravagance!’ (38). It is notable that Sophia’s choice in marriage is rich enough to ensure her future happiness. Horatio has an estate of his own nearby and ‘my lover’s rank, person and fortune,

gave him a sufficient title to any woman' (19). Sophia recognises that 'the only obstacle . . . was my friendship for Isabella' (19), who had fallen for Horatio first, but in proper rational fashion, she overcomes her concerns about this prior attachment. Sophia accuses herself of being 'guilty of the most unpardonable breach of friendship', which leaves her 'ashamed and confused' (16), though, notably, not prepared to actually give up Horatio. Although Sophia counts herself as carrying exalted ideas of female friendship, she admits that Isabella, in her self-sacrificing behaviour, 'went beyond' her (19). The emotions take second place to Sophia's reasonable and calculated assessment of her future prospects and her obvious determination to avoid the mistakes made by her own mother.

What all this indicates is that Sophia is driven more by prudence and rationality than by susceptibility to emotional breakdown. Indeed, she constantly shows she is stronger than those who surround her, including her father. While he goes into 'violent' convulsions brought on by his distress over Horatio's apparent death, she, despite being left destitute by events and feeling that the 'whole universe is indifferent' to her (36), holds up well. Another character, Mrs Williams, insists that 'the true philosophy of soul . . . consists in governing the passions; not in superciliously pretending to be without them' (47), and Sophia seems to have taken this to heart. Avoiding the madness suffered by her Gothic inheritors, Sophia maintains both her virtue – and her sanity. She is much stronger than the reader is led to believe at the start, and she demonstrates this strength in a number of ways.

Moreover, like her fiancé, Sophia is rather addicted to the language of liberty and slavery, and she is willing to commit suicide rather than submit to the sexual tyranny of Castilio. It is clearly tempting to the destitute Sophia to yield to Castilio's seduction. He promises her an easy life and shows that many other women have succumbed to his charms. Like her true lover, Horatio, Sophia recognises that this would be to accede to slavery. Were she to submit to the abduction and rape then she would be reduced to chattel status and would have submitted to an act of pathological violence (pathological given that her abductor seems to make a habit of it). Sophia, however, does not submit, and indeed will not be bribed or cajoled into a sexual relationship outside that with her one true love. Unlike the Injured Lady, who was talked into premarital sex, Sophia sees through the excessive rhetoric of her would be lover, and stays faithful. Like the gentleman who managed to secure the Injured Lady's submission, Castilio talks about love and marriage quite a lot. However, the hollowness of the rhetoric of marriage and union is completely exposed during the discussions between Sophia and Castilio and Sophia and Fidelia.

Castilio at first maintains a fiction that he intends to marry Sophia and that he will legitimate their sexual relationship once he has had his way with her. He later admits that he really just wants her as his mistress, to make sure he has constant access to her body, but he does concede to her clear distress that she can *pretend* that she is his wife if she really wants to: ‘if you will consent to make me happy, my whole fortune shall be your’s; if you desire it you shall take my name and appear to the world as my wife; can I do more?’ (73). Castilio certainly tells others that Sophia is his wife in order to allow him to get away with abducting her (as Fidelia first tells her, ‘I thought you had been his wife!’ 57), and, bizarrely, he tells her that she will ‘meet with nothing but the strictest honour’ from him (58). In these scenes, the language of love and marriage is exposed as merely a rhetorical disguise for force and rape, and Castilio’s outward appearance as an honest gentleman is shown in fact to be the disguise of a monster. Sophia at one stage protests about ‘the horror he inspired me with’ (67) and explains how ‘he was deaf to everything but his own brutal appetites’ (74). If Swift rather played down the more horrific elements of the partial seduction, partial rape of the Injured Lady, the author of *Sophia Berkley* effectively Gothicises Swift’s plot and highlights the full misery of the abduction, threats and near-rape of the dependent female once she has no male to turn to for help.

Like Swift’s gentleman, Castilio, then, talks of marriage and being honest, and for both this is nothing but a melodramatic ploy to ensure sexual satisfaction. Sophia does not fall for such nonsense but sees behind it to the naked power of the aristocratic male and determines to do something about it. Pretending that Sophia is his wife is the way Castilio covers up for his intended crime of rape. The novel works very hard to expose the language of marriage and love as a cover for abuse. Anglican Patriots too had seen through the metaphor of marriage in the discussion of a political union. In *Patriot Queries, Occasioned by a Late Libel, Entitled, Queries to the People of Ireland; to which is added, A Letter to the Author of Them, by Another Hand* ([1754]), the unidentified author asks of Primate George Stone, a proponent of political union, ‘whether if . . . [he] had been suffered to go on for a while in his own way, he would not have destroyed all the private Virtue we have among us, and unpeopled the Nation, by substituting something else in the Place of Wedlock’.⁵⁸ That ‘something else’ is clearly an illegitimate sexual relationship, rather like the one proposed to Sophia by Castilio, something that looks to the outside world like a marriage but which both parties to the contract know is actually a fiction based on threat and a misuse of power. Likewise, *Liberty and Common-Sense to the People of Ireland, Greeting* (1760) (probably by Henry Brooke) insists

that for all the rhetoric of political union as marriage everyone knows that no true marriage can take place between Ireland and Great Britain: 'When a Marriage is proposed between Nations, Princes, or Potentates, the Advance is always made from the Stronger to the Weaker; from the Greater to the Less; for, otherwise, Contempt and Refusal might evidently ensue. But when did England address Ireland on this subject?'⁵⁹ Though the writer of this pamphlet is appalled by the riots against the union, he is also completely opposed to the notion of a union as well and insists that 'The dreaded UNION cannot possibly be brought to pass. The Parties neither are agreed, nor ever were agreed, nor ever will be agreed, on the *said Bands of Matrimony*, to the End of Time' (27).

That *Sophia Berkley's* plot of sexual intrigue is to be read as to some extent an intervention in the national question is suggested in many ways. Of course, the language of abduction and rape participates in the kind of discussion about the possible union between Britain and Ireland that caused the 1759 riot in the first place, but more than this, Sophia frames her refusal to submit to Castilio in terms of a withholding of 'consent', a politically charged word in Irish politics of the 1750s. For the Irish Anglican Patriots it was consent, or rather the lack of it, which explains Ireland's treatment by Britain. The term 'consent' had been a controversial one during the Money Bill dispute of the 1750s, which was triggered in part by a failure by the Irish House of Commons to agree on whether an acknowledgement of the king's consent should be accepted as part of a money bill in November 1751.⁶⁰ Originally, when the application to use the treasury surplus was made, the term 'gracious recommendation' was placed in the preamble to the heads of bill to refer to the king's review of the request. But, by the time it arrived back in December 1751, the term 'recommendation' had been replaced with the much more contentious term 'consent', indicating the level of control the British parliament was trying to assert over Irish affairs. The king was 'consenting' to the decisions of the Irish parliament, which suggested that consent could just as easily be withheld. Even the Chief Secretary Sackville was surprised by this change, opining that 'the word consent was not left out accidentally and a debate about the power of the Crown over the surplus of His Majesty's revenue would not be very eligible.'⁶¹

More importantly, in the pamphlet war which followed the start of the Money Bill dispute, consent was fetishistically referenced in discussions of national politics in the context of rape, legalised prostitution and abduction. For example, in *Common Sense: in a Letter to a Friend* (1755), the author complains about his 'poor, poor Country! formidably attacked from *without*, betrayed from *within*, and, at the same Time, pregnant with Swarms who are eager to prostitute, each his Share of

Talents, to the Disguise of the most *vital* Truths, and Recommendation of the most fatal Measures', all because of the attempt to pass off 'previous consent' as a genuine political truth, 'a Doctrine, now almost as notorious as Transubstantiation; vindicated by the same Species of Reasoning, with as much Zeal, and pretty equal Success'.⁶²

In this context it is understandable why *The Adventures of Miss Sophia Berkley* places such an emphasis on the necessity of obtaining consent in all matters of sexual union, and this emphasis interestingly pushes the novel towards a kind of proto-feminist vindication of women's right to choose and a colonial nationalist refusal to submit to imperial power. Sophia's father insists that 'I will never desire you to marry against your own consent', and 'he had taken a resolution never to force my inclinations' (21), a promise respected by Horatio who announces that 'he would sooner renounce me for ever, than owe his happiness to any motive but my affection for him, which he flattered himself he might in time deserve, by the truth and delicacy of his love for me' (22). Swift's Injured Lady was still desperate for a union to be formalised between herself and the abusive gentleman lover, despite his mistreatment of her. Sophia Berkley, contrariwise, is desperate to extricate herself from the home in which her supposed seducer has imprisoned her – a stance that reflects the political difference between the early and middle years of the eighteenth century, since where union was once desired by Irish Anglicans, it was now being openly and aggressively rejected by Patriots. If political discourse was to constantly resort to the tropes and themes of contemporary fiction then novels too could be one of the ways in which political war could be fought for the future of the Irish Anglican nation.

Sophia learns an important lesson about her abductor very quickly: appealing to his sense of decency will not work. Whereas the Injured Lady's male correspondent believed that 'an improvement in Ireland's fortunes depends on a change of heart in England',⁶³ by the time of *Sophia Berkley*, Irish Anglican Patriots had realised that this was a pipe dream and had to be abandoned. Appealing to England's sense of decency did not work for the Injured Lady; looking to Castilio's sense of honour fails to work for Sophia and she soon concludes that God helps those who help themselves. Sophia makes her own future rather than wait around for someone to save her. She indeed accepts help from others, but essentially she looks after herself. At times this leads her to behave in ways slightly less than respectable in order to obtain what she wants, but she appears to have learned that being behind about going forward is not the way to ensure her own safety or financial security. In many ways, her female assistant Fidelia is a good example of

where behaving like the Injured Lady will get you. Fidelia's family are Castilio's tenants, and after he came across her he became infatuated and determined to possess her sexually. While her father 'refused at first to comply' with Castilio's demands, he eventually capitulated 'lest Castilio, in whose power he was, should turn him out of his farm' (61). Castilio did not rape Fidelia but seduced her by promising marriage and then, as soon as they had sex, protested about the impossible situation in which he found himself, as a landlord could not possibly marry the daughter of one of his tenants (62). Sophia avoids the fate of the Injured Lady and fights for her survival in a world that seems pitted against her, maintaining her right to exercise her consent as a necessary precondition for sex and marriage. In this she acts as an example of self-sufficiency and self-authorisation to the initial readers of the novel.

IV

Making meaning, symbolically spreading, the situations in which these characters find themselves resonate with the struggles of identity and self-authorisation the Irish Anglican enclave was also undergoing in the mid-eighteenth century. Although I am suggesting that Sophia is usefully read as in some ways a representation of Ireland, Horatio of Irish Anglican patriotism, and Castilio of English rapacity, this should not be taken to mean that the characters operate in a straightforward allegorical manner. Sophia is *not* an allegorical Ireland – the meanings with which she is invested symbolically spread out to incorporate Irish national politics and make her a close relation of the Injured Lady and the wronged women of the *aisling*. Similarly, Horatio is not an allegory of the Irish Anglican patriot enclave, but he does speak its language and his story can be read as providing an oblique commentary on Irish Patriot discourse of the mid-eighteenth century. The stories of Sophia, Horatio and Castilio should be read contiguously with the politics of the time and they operate as ways to think through the kinds of political struggles being waged in the period.

Fighting for her own survival, Sophia is one of a long line of protagonists of the eighteenth-century novel who have, essentially, to make their own identities in a hostile world which has left them orphans. In *Adultery in the Novel* (1979), Tony Tanner argues that the eighteenth-century novel often centres on outsiders such as orphans, prostitutes or adventurers who embody and represent the radical experimental status of the novel itself in its beginnings. These social outsiders carry 'unstabilized energy' that threatens 'directly or implicitly, the organisation of

society, whether by the indeterminacy of their origin, the uncertainty of the direction in which they will focus their unbonded energy, or their attitude toward the ties that hold society together and that they may choose to slight or break'.⁶⁴ Emerging from a marginal space, from a kind of orphaned people, Irish Anglicans, a trouble-making group of Patriots rioting in the streets, demanding rights and institutions commensurate with these rights, making radical gestures towards another marginal group of people (Irish Catholics), searching for identity in a rather indeterminate manner, *Sophia Berkley* gestures towards some potentially radical solutions to the existential problems being suffered by its initial readers (solutions which would eventually come to fruition in the formation of the United Irelanders).

Sophia's literal orphanhood is mirrored by her existential loneliness and the feeling that the world is an unfriendly one, but Irish Anglicans were likewise spending a great deal of time attempting to extricate themselves from parental figures and negotiate an independent identity of their own. For too long had Irish Anglicans depended on the rhetoric of family affection connecting them to the 'parent' country, England, only for this affection to be taken advantage of when England routinely acted in self-interest. Samuel Madden in 1738 wrote of England as 'our true Parent and Protector . . . who must wound herself whenever, through inadvertence she hurts us.'⁶⁵ This rhetoric of familial harmony was eventually revealed as wishful thinking. The realisation that England would indeed act in self-interest and have no difficulties in wounding Ireland came slowly, but eventually Wood's halfpenny dropped – owing to a number of factors, including (but not limited to) the Treaty of Limerick, the Woollen Act 1699, the 'sole rights' dispute of the 1690s, *Annesley v Sherlock* 1717–19, the Declaratory Act 1720, the Wood's Halfpence crisis and, finally, the Money Bill dispute of 1753 – and a spirit of independency and even rebellion began to motivate Irish Anglican patriotic voices. Many realised that the time was ripe to break away from parents and parent figures and embrace adulthood and adult identity.

As I have explained, Irish Anglican identity was famously confused in the eighteenth century, and many different self-identifying labels were adopted, including: the 'English of Ireland', 'the gentlemen of Ireland', 'the Protestant interest', 'the whole people of Ireland', and even 'Irish' (enthusiastically, or in resignation). Jim Smyth has called Irish Anglicans 'amphibious creatures', two things at once, but this in fact underestimates the degree of confusion involved.⁶⁶ In realising that the 'motherland' had abandoned them, many felt they were now on their own, and this realisation brought a kind of existential crisis to bear. The novel form is one place where such existential crises could be resolved, and for

Tanner, that many protagonists of major eighteenth-century novels are orphans allows them to begin the process of self-constitution without always having to look behind them for the permission of their elders. After the death of her parents, and the apparent murder of her fiancé, Sophia is all alone in the world, and it is up to her to establish her own identity. She leaves her home place, 'where every object recalled to me some past misery', and 'determined to go to London . . .' (40), where she 'was now exposed to a faithless world, unfriended and alone!' (42). What she comes to realise, though she never expresses this very clearly, is that she is better off without the parental baggage represented by her father (as Anglican Ireland was coming to realise, in its rejection of union with its 'parent' England, that it too was better off without Big Daddy), because her father was so completely useless at his job. Although she speaks of him with affection, the information the reader is provided with concerning him is conclusive in demonstrating his status as a bad father.

While clearly better off without her father, Sophia does appear at a disadvantage without her mother, although her loss undoubtedly disturbs Sophia, and she mentions it a number of times as a running sore in her life. Of course, the absence of the mother in Gothic fiction became commonplace very quickly. As Ruth Bienstock Anolik points out in her article 'The Missing Mother', 'the mothers of most Gothic heroines are [typically] dead long before the readers meet the daughters',⁶⁷ prominent examples being the mothers of Isabella in *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and of Emily in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). Missing a mother, mother-substitutes are often sought, and Sophia certainly finds them in a number of female characters who assist her, including her friends Isabella, Constantia, Fidelia and, most prominently, Mrs Williams. Carolyn Dever argues that the absence of the mother causes particular problems for fictional daughters, that it 'creates a mystery for her . . . to solve, motivating time and again the redefinition . . . of female decorum, gender roles, and sexuality' and that 'maternal loss prompts anxieties that undermine a protagonist's efforts to construct an identity'.⁶⁸ The kinds of existential void into which Sophia seems to be about to fall at times may be partially explained by the haunting absence of the mother, and there is a sense in which, for Sophia's identity crisis to be brought to a conclusion, the lost mother must be restored and reclaimed (or incorporated) into her self.

The death of Sophia's mother is not merely an unfortunate event that happened long before she was born and an event which has traumatised her; it is plainly caused by two men: Sophia's father and grandfather. Sophia is the product of a highly unsuitable marriage in which her

mother was badly treated by both her father and her husband. Sophie's mother dies 'before I was a year old', and she is left in the hands of her father, who has already demonstrated he is not much good at protecting women from disaster. Although her father is 'a man of strict honour; possessed of many great and excellent qualities' he is also 'naturally hasty and impatient of control' and 'a little inclined to extravagance' (6): in other words, he is financially incompetent. He received a 'considerable' fortune from his post in the army but 'this, though not inconsiderable, was hardly sufficient for a man whose ideas were like his' (7). It is very significant that Sophia's mother is not simply 'lost' through death at the start of the novel but is also lost a second time when Sophia misplaces a watch containing her picture when she loiters on the beach with Horatio. The transition here seems simple enough – Sophia must abandon her mother completely if she is to enter fully into maturity and marry, and therefore the mother is left by the sea (a feminine space anyway) and will be fully left behind when Sophia marries and takes on the mother's role by becoming pregnant. This second loss of the mother, however, sends Sophia into a panic, and it is when Horatio returns to the beach to retrieve the watch that he is attacked, and apparently murdered.

Leaving behind and forgetting this mother are dangerous things to do, and this incident perhaps serves as a warning that such marginal women should not be abandoned so easily. Importantly, Horatio returns to Sophia in her dreams and visions as a penetrated and bleeding body whose image terrifies and traumatises her again: 'if I closed my eyes but an instant, Horatio's image arose to my imagination all pale and bleeding' (34). The male body leaking and bleeding is a feminised image connected to the abject body of the dead and absent mother. Indeed, the vision of Horatio, covered with blood and stab wounds evokes the image of the menstruating woman, essentially reminding Sophia of what a marriage with him would bring (childbirth and complete identification with the reviled female).⁶⁹ The forgotten mother returns, then, in a particularly violent and horrific way, perhaps as a warning of what happens when such women are left on the scrap heap of history.

Images of the menstruating woman recur later in the plot when Sophia uses menstruation as a way of avoiding sex with Castilio, claiming she is 'ill' with (mysterious) pains and therefore cannot possibly have intercourse with him. Drawing such direct attention to her menstruation should, by cultural logic, configure Sophia as polluted and abjected, particularly given that she is still a nineteen-year-old adolescent. As Shelley Stamp Lindsey emphasizes, in Western culture, 'poised between natural and supernatural realms . . . the menstruating adolescent girl occupies

a liminal state, an object of both aversion and desire'.⁷⁰ However, as for later Gothic heroines such as Carrie White in Stephen King's first novel (1974) or Ginger Fitzgerald in the film *Ginger Snaps* (2000; dir. John Fawcett), menstruation actually propels Sophia to heroic stature as she uses it to demonstrate her resistance to the demands of the sexual economy. What is particularly horrifying about Castilio, given the consistent representation of the menstruating girl in Western culture as reviled, is that he doesn't seem put off by Sophia's leakage, and still wants to have sex with her – a fact which could partially explain why he is represented in such extreme terms in the novel.

What Margrit Shildrick calls the 'leaky body' of the woman makes female characters monstrous and dangerous to a culture whose central, idealised figure is the whole, clean, differentiated body of the man.⁷¹ In *Powers of Horror* (1982), Julia Kristeva writes that the abject as a 'jet-tisoned object . . . is radically excluded and draws me toward the place where meaning collapses . . . it lies outside, beyond the set, and does not seem to agree with a [superego's] rules of the game'.⁷² Yet, far from Castilio feeling polluted by touching the menstruating girl, or revolted by her emission, it is the menstruating Sophia who is polluted by *his* presence, feeling herself 'contaminated by his touch' (74). Here, it is the monstrous male who is the contaminator and polluter, and Sophia uses her menstruation to gain time for herself and plot ways of escape. Far from being a disadvantage, menstruation is useful here as a way to empower a woman under the threat of rape.

Castilio is a monstrous version of the patriarchal order that Sophia has repeatedly encountered in the more benign guise in her father. Both her father and Castilio possess the power to completely destroy women. Castilio, with his insatiable sexual appetite, which extends so far as to include the desire to rape a menstruating woman, is a kind of Phallus Magnus, an absolute version of the man as monster. Linda Williams (in looking at the reaction of men and women to manifestations of the monstrous in horror) has argued that women tend to look more sympathetically at monsters as they see representations of themselves in the monster's reviled body. According to Williams, where a man can see only 'a biological freak with impossible and threatening appetites that suggest a frightening potency precisely where the normal male would perceive a lack' the woman 'recognizes the sense in which this freakishness is similar to her own difference'.⁷³ For the woman, the monster is a kind of mirror. This, however, is not at all how Sophia reacts to Castilio, and she feels no sense of identification with him but only an acute awareness of how this monster is an existential threat to her.

Traditionally, woman-as-monster is primarily represented in relation to her sexuality, with particular emphasis on the abjection of her reproductive organs. Kristeva has defined abjection as that which does not 'respect borders, positions, rules', that which 'disturbs identity, system, order'.⁷⁴ In a society founded on the law of the father, where the 'clean and proper body' is associated with the supposed 'wholeness' of the male, woman's body, with its threatening 'leakiness', comes to represent the unclean, improper body, characterised by its menstrual waste – a source of unease, loathing and disgust.⁷⁵ Thus, woman's abjection stands as the key for the preservation of patriarchal order since her monstrosity justifies her destruction and re-establishes the symbolic value of the phallus. That Castilio wants to rape Sophia despite the fact that she may be menstruating is actually an indication of how closely he associates woman with abjection: he may as well be fucking her into oblivion since she will more or less disappear as a person once he has had his way with her. In threatening her with rape, Castilio is indicating to Sophia that he has the power to wipe her out of existence, to erase completely her individual identity and propel her into an existential void. Since she understands this, it is no surprise that Sophia indicates that she would prefer death over rape, because death at least does not involve slavery. Forced union is worse than actual death to her because the former includes a devastating loss of subjectivity and agency. This should be remembered when evaluating why a non-consensual union was considered with such horror by Irish Anglicans in the 1750s.

To reassert her identity and subjectivity, Sophia is forced to become a version of the *vagina dentata* as she tries to escape Castilio's mansion. Wielding a knife and cutting her way with her female accomplice through the walls of her prison, she indicates that the marginalised woman is willing to fight back. She has already astonished Castilio in asserting her independence in her conversations with him, demonstrating she has left behind the fragile femininity of which she was indulgent at the start of the novel. During the most protracted conversation between Castilio and Sophia, she insists, 'I am prepared for your brutality; but the very moment you attempt to exercise it upon me, I shall make use of the only means left to free myself from your detested power', upon which declaration 'Castilio seemed amazed at me' because 'he had no opinion of a woman's courage' (72). The castrated woman in horror fiction is often identified with the passive, tame, domesticated victim, who is chased and destroyed by the male monster/castrator.⁷⁶ Obvious examples here are Matilda in Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, Antonia in Lewis's *The Monk*, Amanda in Maria Regina Roche's *The Children of the Abbey* (1796), right up to Mimi in Bram Stoker's *The Lair of the*

White Worm (1911). Sophia rejects this passive state, and by the light of the moon (which 'shone very bright', 77), the symbol of the menstruating woman, and with a phallic pen-knife in hand (69), she hacks her way to freedom, transforming herself in the act into a phallic woman. The powerful woman is often represented in horror fiction as a monstrous figure, a devouring creature, destructive, savage, aggressive, who uses knives or her sharp teeth to incorporate her victims:⁷⁷ *Lucy* in *Dracula*, Catherine Tramell in *Basic Instinct* (1992; dir. Paul Verhoeven), or even Jennifer Hills in *I Spit on Your Grave* (1978; dir. Meir Zarchi), for example. However, while in misogynistic horror the phallic woman is constructed as a grotesque parody of a man,⁷⁸ in *Sophia Berkley* she is celebrated as a heroine. Clair Kahane and Susan Wolstenholme have both read the confined spaces in which Gothic heroines are enclosed as representations of the female body,⁷⁹ and therefore the supposedly menstruating Sophia's forced escape from this enclosed space can be seen as a destruction of that suffocating body and her full emergence into individuality. Her friend, another abjected female, acts like a kind of midwife to Sophia's birth, though she herself is (possibly mortally) injured in the birth.

Far from abjecting women, this text confers a heroic power on them, understandable coming from a country which had been gendered female and therefore weak for centuries. Far from denigrating the castrating and phallic woman, it suggests that certain men need to be castrated and that women should be the ones to do it. Moreover, the episode where Mademoiselle de Bellville appears disguised as a man becomes meaningful in the context of the struggle against the undermining of the powerful woman in eighteenth-century Irish culture. Horatio is saved from execution by a cross-dressing woman, the Mademoiselle de Bellville (pretending to be a man called Clerimont⁸⁰), and when her true identity is revealed the crowd become delirious: 'the people followed us with loud huzzas all the way' (147). The Mademoiselle de Bellville's actions demonstrate that women are as brave as men. 'I would have died for you, Horatio' (167), she declares, and although she, like Isabella, retires into a convent with a broken heart, she tells him to remember that France is a place populated by such admirable women as herself: 'Remember, when you are in England, there are women here not unworthy of your esteem – I had almost said your tenderness' (168). This is daring for a novel published in 1760. In actually making the cross-dressing woman a hero(ine) rather than an object of fear and disgust, the novel again legitimates the powerful woman over the weak man. Having his head cut off would have been the most straightforward act of emasculation the novel could have performed on Horatio, and it stops just short of

this by having him saved by a woman dressed as a man, a performance she seems very capable of getting away with.

There was an obsession with the cross-dressing women in eighteenth-century culture, and she was most often configured as an individual of threat and danger. As Catherine Craft-Fairchild has emphasised, while factual accounts of cross-dressing women sometimes praised them for their attempt to enter masculine life to earn money for their children, in fiction, the cross-dressing woman was 'blamed and punished'.⁸¹ Notably, one such female cross dresser 'outed' herself in 1755 in *Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Charlotte Charke*, where she explained how she had passed as a man for years, even to the point of getting married to a woman. Craft-Fairchild outlines that while such real transvestites were treated with relative respect, in a number of important fictional treatments of female cross-dressing, the transgressive woman is the cause of anxiety rather than celebration. For example, in Eliza Haywood's *Love in Excess* (1719–20), when Moletta disguises herself as a page to follow the Count D'Elmont to France, her father contracts a fever. In Mary Davy's *The Accomplished Rake* (1727), a cross-dressing woman causes her husband to die. Most famously, in Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801), Harriet Freke is monstered through and because of her cross-dressing, a transgression that links her with revolutionary violence and radical immorality. Darryl Jones explains that Mrs Freke, the 'sadistic cross-dressing lesbian', is 'the pre-eminent 1790s "unsex'd female", the demonic political woman'.⁸²

Not so, however, in *Sophia Berkley*, whose transvestite is celebrated as brave, intelligent and brilliant, or as Horatio says, 'had not my heart been already fixed for ever, the appearance and manners of Mademoiselle de Bellville would have engaged my whole attention' (124). 'She was, I think, the most perfect character I ever knew' (125). Of course, by the time Horatio has returned to England he has proved himself to be a worthy husband to Sophia, and as different from her father as could be imagined, accepting and admiring of the powerful woman, and completely loyal and true to his first love. If his loud proclamations of his love of liberty should be read as echoing Irish Anglican patriotic opinion, then his reappearance following his apparent death suggests that, although some Patriot leaders like Henry Boyle appeared to have abandoned the Irish cause in the settlement of the Money Bill dispute, this is only an apparent desertion, and (like Horatio) a leader will eventually rise as if from the dead to reclaim his heroine (Ireland).

Sophia Berkley is what Nancy K. Miller has called a 'euphoric' epistolary novel in that the plot leads to its heroine's redemption through marriage (as opposed to the 'dysphoric' plot which sees the heroine

disgraced through seduction and/or death),⁸³ but here this heroine must do most of the identity defining work by herself (and for herself) because the men around her are more often than not incompetent as protectors. In its reconstitution of the abjected female as a powerful agent, the novel offers a way out of the Injured Lady's trap. Swift could never imagine a female figure with the kind of pluck and power of Sophia or Mademoiselle de Bellville and therefore points the Injured Lady towards the Irish Anglican man as a necessary saviour. In this novel, though, the heroine is as powerful as necessary and quite capable of looking after herself. That she ends up with a liberty-loving, slavery-hating male figure is just a companionate bonus.

V

The Adventures of Miss Sophia Berkley essentially rejects the notion of a union with a foreign interloper and prefers one with Horatio, the representative of the Irish Anglican ruling class (though tellingly in its liberal guise), which is at this stage in its history becoming rather more tolerant towards Catholics (though not to Catholicism). Union with the stranger is configured as what Jim Hansen has called a 'Gothic Marriage' where Ireland is 'the confined, threatened, terrorized female as England became . . . her terrorizing, avaricious, and lustful captor-husband. From the perspective of an Irish political consciousness, the Gothic is born where the domestic affection metaphor miscarries'.⁸⁴ The key point here is that the author of *Sophia Berkley* rejects one kind of marriage as a sham and pretence – the very version of marriage that would eventually come to be seen, in both the Act of Union and the later national novel, as the solution to the constant difficulties in the relationship between Ireland and England – and suggests that a completely different marriage is preferable. In this, the author anticipates the views of anti-unionist figures towards the end of the century.⁸⁵ For a while, the fate of Sophia Berkley looks grim: her proper suitor has been either killed or abducted (just as it seemed to many that Patriot opinion had been destroyed during the Money Bill dispute and the subsequent debate on a potential union), and she is prey to the attentions of a rival suitor who has only her worst interests at heart. Sophia's abductor talks constantly of his respect for her and his love and what he will do for her future prosperity, but this rhetoric of love and affection masks his true rapacity and his real desire to have his way with her without making any real commitments. Such a union, as its mid-century detractors never tired of pointing out, was never going to be between equals and was not one which would have

mutual benefits for both; instead it promised to be a profoundly unequal one based on threats, violence and disorder. Poor Sophie has no one to protect her, given her orphan status, but while Swift fails to make the Injured Lady a figure of power like the versions of a female Ireland found in the *aisling* tradition, the author of *Sophia Berkley* does make her heroine into an agent in her own destiny.

Sophia is saved, ultimately, not only by her own ingenuity and will-power but by the return of her saviour – not the Pretender, but Anglican, Patriot, Ireland, not vanquished, only misled for a while by ruffians and pirates. *Sophia Berkley* thus rejects what would become the standard narrative arc of the national novel at the end of the century (even if that arc is less straightforward than many critics appear to assume). In reading the ‘union’ fiction of the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, Seamus Deane convicts it of liberalism, or at least a liberalism that is ultimately tied up in imperial and colonial politics. The national novel, in his reading, is a genre which attempts to convince its British readers that Ireland is cultured and alterable, capable of change and modification, capable of entering fully into modernity, and also that the Union will be worth it in the end. For Irish Anglican readers, the national novel tries to convince them that while Catholicism is, of course, an atavistic religion, particular Irish Catholics are not monsters and can be fully incorporated into the political nation and perhaps eventually convinced to give up their tenacious grip on their religion if their fellow countrymen and women show them some kindness.

Tolerance and conciliation are the key words here, although in Deane’s analysis this kind of liberal unionism is inherently suspicious.⁸⁶ The ‘happy bourgeois family . . . becomes the model for colonizer–colonized relationships’.⁸⁷ The national marriage ‘glosses over the contradictions, the inequalities, concealed in the institution of marriage itself . . . disguising the asymmetries encompassed within the trope of a “balanced” order’.⁸⁸ In *Sophia Berkley* there is no such glossing over, and the question of consent is highlighted and emphasised in a powerful way. Moreover, the Anglo-Irish marriage never takes place and instead Sophia returns to her first love, who only appeared to have abandoned her. In never becoming a *direct* allegory of the Irish Anglican experience, *Sophia Berkley* retains an interpretive and signifying capaciousness that would be somewhat lost when the national novel emerged as it was more tied to direct allegory than earlier fiction. Even more importantly, *Sophia Berkley* demonstrates that far from being a genre trying to evade meaning, the Gothic is sometimes rather too meaningful and only a complete immersion in the contemporary literature helps in the interpretive project. One of these many meanings is that it is no longer appropriate

to stereotype Catholics as monstrous villains without any redeeming features, and this unmonstering process proved a very difficult task for the early Irish Gothic novel, to which I now turn.

Notes

1. Kakiyama, sadomasochistic killer, in *Ichi the Killer*, film, dir. Takashi Miike, 2001. Screenplay by Sakichi Satō.
2. Connolly, 'Writing the Union', 180.
3. Maria Edgeworth to Sarah Ruxton, 29 January 1800, quoted in Hare, *Life and Letters*, 72. See also Dougherty, 'Mr and Mrs England'.
4. James Kelly examines the discourse of the union in Irish political affairs over the long term in 'Origins of the Act of Union'; idem, 'Public and Political Opinion in Ireland'; David Hayton is much more sceptical about this tradition in 'Ideas of Union'. See also Robbins, *Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman*, ch. 5; Hill, 'Ireland without Union'.
5. The literature of the Union has received a good deal of attention from critics. See Connolly, 'Completing the Union?'; idem, 'Writing the Union'; McCormack, *Pamphlet Debate*.
6. Kelly, 'The Act of Union', 52–3.
7. Anon, *An humble address, passim*, especially 24.
8. Powell, *Britain and Ireland*, 29.
9. *Ibid.*, 26.
10. See, Powell, 'Managing the Dublin Populace'; idem, 'Political Toasting'; Harris, *Politics and the Nation*, 214–21; McCracken, 'Conflict between the Irish Administration and Parliament'; Hill, "Allegories".
11. Sheldon, *Tomas Sheridan*, 198; Mounsey, 'Thomas Sheridan', 65–77.
12. Suspicion at the time was rife that Digges had refused to say the lines precisely in order to cause a riot by his Patriot friends in the audience, friends that he had invited because he was aware of the court politics of Thomas Sheridan, actor-manager of the Theatre-Royal.
13. Megennis, *Irish Political System*, 106.
14. Dickson, *New Foundations*, 100.
15. Hill, "Allegories", 70.
16. [Sir Richard Cox], *The True Life of Betty Ireland*.
17. *Ibid.*, 7–19.
18. *Ibid.*, 8.
19. Quoted in Malcomson, *Pursuit of the Heiress*, 62–3.
20. Garnham, 'Riot Acts'.
21. Walpole, *Memoirs of the Last Ten Years*, Vol. 2, pp. 403–4.
22. For a detailed look at the events, see Murphy, 'Dublin Anti-Union Riot'.
23. Freeman, *Short but true history*.
24. Quoted in Powell, *Britain and Ireland*, 62.
25. Murphy, 'Dublin Anti-Union Riot', 58–60.
26. Quoted in Murphy, 'Dublin Anti-Union Riot', 61.
27. Perry, *Women, Letters*, 93.
28. Richter, 'Ins and Outs of Intimacy', 117.
29. Favret, *Romantic Correspondence*, 36.

30. Kelly, 'Regulating Print', 164.
31. Hunter, *Before Novels*; Guest, *Small Change*, 15.
32. Cook, *Epistolary Bodies*, 17.
33. Anonymous, *The P**** Vindicated*, 6.
34. Favret, *Romantic Correspondence*, 9.
35. Heckdendorff Cook, *Epistolary Bodies*, 174.
36. Williams, *Art of Darkness*, 14, 8.
37. Morin, 'Forgotten Fiction', 80–1.
38. Anonymous, *Adventures of Miss Sophia Berkley*. References to the text will be made in parenthesis in the body of the chapter.
39. Levy, "'Gothic'", 6.
40. *Ibid.*, 2.
41. Haslam, 'Irish Gothic', *Routledge Companion*, 90.
42. Molyneux, *Case of Ireland*, 116.
43. King, *State of the Anglicans of Ireland*, 2.
44. M. B. Drapier, *Some Observations upon a Paper, call'd, the report of the committee of the most honourable the Privy-Council in England, Relating to WOOD's Half-Pence* (Dublin: John Harding, 1724), in Swift, *Drapier's Letters*, 31.
45. Swift, 'A Short Character of Thomas, Earl of Wharton', *Works of the Rev. Jonathan Swift*, IV, 179.
46. Lucas, *Political Constitutions*, Address X, 128.
47. *Ibid.*, Address XI, 148.
48. *Idem*, *Divelina Libera: An Apology for the Civil Rights and Liberties of the Commons and Citizens of Dublin* (Dublin: James Esdall, 1744), 5.
49. [Brooke], *Liberty and Common-Sense*, 3–4.
50. Simms, *Colonial Nationalism*.
51. Loxley, *Problematic Shores*. I owe this reference to my doctoral student, Ian Kinane.
52. *Ibid.*, 3.
53. Megennis, *Irish Political System*, 100.
54. *Ibid.*, 133, 139.
55. Dickson, *New Foundations*, 93.
56. Morin, 'Forgotten Fiction', 88.
57. Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, 142, 146.
58. *Patriot Queries*, 9.
59. [Henry Brooke], *Liberty and Common-Sense*, 22.
60. Powell, *Britain and Ireland*, 20.
61. Megennis, *Irish Political System*, 67.
62. [Lionel Cranfield Sackville, Duke of Dorset?], *Common Sense*, 13–14, 15.
63. McLoughlin, *Contesting Ireland*, 70.
64. Tanner, *Adultery in the Novel*, 3–4.
65. Madden, *Reflections and Resolutions*, 109.
66. Smyth, "'Like amphibious animals'", 787. See also Barnard, 'Crises of Identity'; Canny, 'Identity Formation in Ireland', 201–2.
67. Anolik, 'Missing Mother', 25.
68. Dever, *Death and the Mother*, xi, xii.
69. Mulvey-Roberts, 'Menstrual Misogyny and Taboo', 159.
70. Lindsey, 'Horror, Femininity', 284.

71. Shildrick, *Leaky Bodies*. I owe this reference to Maria Parsons.
72. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 2.
73. Williams, 'When the Woman Looks', 87, 88.
74. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 4.
75. Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine*, 'Introduction'.
76. Creed, *Monstrous-Feminine*, 'Introduction'.
77. *Ibid.*, 107.
78. *Ibid.*, 157.
79. Kahane, 'Gothic Mirror'; Wolstenholme, *Gothic (Re)Visions*.
80. Did the use of this name inspire Regina Maria Roche when she was writing *Clermont* (1798)?
81. Craft-Fairchild, 'Cross-Dressing and the Novel'.
82. Jones, *Jane Austen*, 54.
83. Miller, *Heroine's Text*, xi.
84. Hansen, 'Wrong Marriage', 356.
85. See Corbett, *Allegories of Union*, 16.
86. Deane, *Strange Country*, 20–30.
87. Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender*, 80.
88. Boone, *Tradition Counter Tradition*, 9, 7.

The Monster Club: Monstrosity, Catholicism and Revising the (1641) Rising

I think there are monsters, like real ones!¹

I

It is difficult to live at ease when you believe that you are surrounded by monsters. The existential and social anxiety that can be traced in Irish Anglican attitudes and behaviour in the eighteenth century (despite the concomitant expressions of security) can be partly explained by the fact that most of them thought that they were living everyday life in a country mostly populated by diabolical monsters. This is the kind of anxiety horror cinema is particularly good at depicting, and it might be helpful to think of eighteenth-century Ireland as a refined version of a zombie movie in which a small, select group of survivors battle in a world dominated by the living dead. The best analogy may be to George Romero's seminal zombie film *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), which features a group of stressed out and increasingly agitated survivors trapped in a farmhouse besieged by a large crowd of the recently dead who have mysteriously returned to some semblance of life. The zombies have only one thing left on their minds: eating living flesh.

On all sides, Irish Anglicans were surrounded by hordes of sanguinary and satanic Catholic demons waiting for a chance to dismember, disembowel and, in some cases, cannibalise them (just as they cannibalised Jesus in the Eucharist), or perhaps possess their bodies and absorb them (through conversion) into the Catholic collective like a kind of primitive Borg.² Indeed, the notion that Catholics shared one mind was expressed forcefully by Archbishop King in 1727 when he complained that all Catholics 'have a correspondence and mutual intelligence by means of their priests and they can at any time bring a mob together from remote places'.³ The annual sermon on 23 October commemorating the 1641

rebellion was a yearly reminder – as if any were needed – of just how precarious life was for the elect in a godforsaken place like Ireland.⁴ ‘Are there any of those bloody papists in Dublin?’ famously asked one eight-year-old girl when she had emerged from Christ Church cathedral immediately after the commemorative sermon in 1746. The girl’s terror was palpable to Dr John Curry, a Catholic physician who was so influenced by the remark that he determined to make an effort to change the mindset of his Anglican countrymen and women by revising the history of the rising.⁵ Such revision, however, required convincing Anglicans that the bogeyman was not real, that Catholics were not zombies or bloodthirsty maniacs, and it therefore encountered the difficulty that it is extremely hard for people to give up the ghosts they have lived with for generations. Unmaking monsters is much more problematic than making them in the first place.

‘Monster’ may seem like an extreme term to use in relation to Anglican perceptions of Irish Catholics, so an incursion inside the teradome is necessary to justify the frequent recourse to it in this chapter. I will begin where every other critic on the matter of the monster begins, by telling you that the word monster is derived from, or at least connected, to the Latin word ‘*monstrum*’, meaning to show, or demonstrate, to reveal, or warn.⁶ Monsters tell us something – indeed, warn us to be wary and to watch out: be alert, for here be things that frighten. Beyond their function as signifiers of the potentially dangerous, however, there has not been much agreement over what actually constitutes a monster in teratology. Definition has proved very difficult. Some monsters are rather obvious: giant bugs, of the kind that populate ‘creature features’, such as the enormous ants in *Them!* (1954; dir. Gordon Douglas); the gigantic arachnids of *The Giant Spider Invasion* (1975; dir. Bill Rebane) and *Eight Legged Freaks* (2002; dir. Ellory Elkayem); or the oversized mutant cockroaches in *Mimic* (1997; dir. Guillermo del Toro). Such creatures look disgusting in the first place and cause an instinctual repulsion in humans. They are horrifying biological mistakes, clearly outside the normal order of nature. These fictional monsters have ‘real-world’ equivalents, of course, in things like the Loch Ness Monster (whose monstrosity is helpfully signalled by his/her name), the Yeti or Abominable Snowman (another rather obvious title), and also the gigantic squid rumoured to be prowling around the waters around Norway and Iceland waiting for some tasty humans upon whom to feast.

The biologically queer have traditionally been culturally figured as monsters, and this kind of monstrosity, one associated with non-human animals, segues rather too easily into a view of certain kinds of humans as also monstrous – or at least signifying monstrosity. If we are now

rather less (publicly) comfortable with assigning the term ‘monster’ to humans manifesting biological oddness such as grotesque obesity, gigantism or dwarfism, hydrocephaly, physical retardation or handicap, this was not always the case, and freak shows and circuses made a great deal of money exhibiting such human strangeness to large crowds from the eighteenth century onwards.⁷ Moreover, humans have not been slow to translate real-life deformity into the fictional giants, dwarfs and other grotesqueries that populate myth, fairy tale and horror.

The term ‘monstrous birth’ was fairly common in the early modern period and used to describe the delivery of a newborn manifesting almost any kind of strange defect. For example, in 1715 in Darken Parish, Essex, Sarah Smith reportedly gave birth to a baby with the body of a dolphin, talons instead of hands, possessing six heads (but one neck) with various facial features such as those of a calf, a camel and a dragon. This, Sarah’s neighbours wisely decided, was obviously a monster, and a punishment for her generally loose way of life. Both mother and child died soon after the birth, with the village priest declaring (and who could dispute him?): ‘As she lived a monster, so she died of a monster’.⁸ Part of the thinking behind designating such unfortunates as monsters derives from Aristotle’s fourth book of *Generation of Animals*, where he declared, quite definitively, that ‘anyone who does not take after his parents is really in a way a monstrosity, since in these cases Nature has in a way strayed from the generic type’ (of course, given that Aristotle also believed that the first kind of monstrosity was when a female rather than a male was formed in the womb, thereby forever associating femininity and monstrosity, his certainty on this matter is not to be trusted).⁹ Biological bizarreness is, again, the central issue: monstrosity is easily legible because it is written on the body, the skin of the monster.

The great theorist of monstrosity Noel Carroll defines a monster as ‘any being not believed to exist now according to contemporary science’ and which is seen as ‘threatening *and* impure’, ‘categorically interstitial, categorically contradictory, incomplete, or formless’, affecting a response of disgust or horror in anyone perceiving it. For Carroll, the monster is generally a biological hybrid or horrific biological combination of different species. Such shocking co-minglings are so radically impure that they cannot fail to produce a horrific response in anyone who sees them. Carroll argues that monsters are the key to the horror genre because we are so curious as well as horrified by the bizarre biologies of the monster that we are driven by ‘cognitive appetite’ to try to find out everything we can about that monster.¹⁰

So far, so (relatively) uncontroversial. Both human and non-human animals can be included in the category of the monstrous as long as they

manifest a kind of biological abnormality (in the case of humans, this will typically compromise their humanity, so that, for example, in David Cronenberg's version of *The Fly* (1986), poor old Seth Brundle is fused with a common housefly to become 'Brundlefly', a hybrid of human/insect). However, given this understanding of the term 'monster', a problem arises when someone who otherwise looks perfectly 'normal' is thought of as monstrous. These people are not biologically impure but are, rather, psychological deviants. They differ from the normal not really in body but in mind, in thought. The main figure considered in relation to this category of monstrosity has been the 'serial killer', whose behaviour and way of thinking is so different from the norm that the term 'monster' seems an appropriate one to apply (perhaps the only one).

It is difficult to know what to call a figure like the Satan-obsessed serial killer Richard Ramirez, or the Night Stalker, who enjoyed himself raping, torturing and killing in 1980s California, believing himself 'above good and evil', except a 'monster' – although I suppose the liberal mind might be able to come up with a less upsetting term.¹¹ Such 'monsters' are probably even more frightening to most of us than giant cockroaches. There may be a kind of evolutionary terror of spiders and snakes and various insects (useful, perhaps, when we were stumbling around the African savannah during the Neolithic, which would explain our apparent instinctual disgust when confronted with gigantic versions of these potentially harmful creatures) but our fear of the human monster that looks normal is rather more complex. On one level of course, Sigmund Freud's theory of the *unheimlich* can be all too easily applied to the psychological monster: there is something uncanny about the human monster that looks completely normal.¹² They resemble that which is long known and familiar, your neighbour, your family member, but they are actually hollowed-out shells containing a terrifying otherness. The various manifestations of Jack Finney's *The Body Snatchers* (1954) – including the two best film adaptations, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956; dir. Don Siegel; 1978; dir. Philip Kaufman) – contain one of the most obvious representations of this kind of monster, but even the glassy-eyed unemotional pod-people pale beside real monsters able to mimic the emotions of utter normality, of the normal self. Their monstrosity is revealed only when they attempt to rape, torture or kill you. Again, while possession by an evil spirit is apparently signalled by a lot of clear indicators in our culture – such as speaking in tongues, vomiting pea soup, increased problem with body odour – this is not necessarily true historically. The witch, while often an isolated individual who behaved strangely, could be your wife, sister or mother whose evil only

became apparent at certain points of the day or night. Monstrosity could hide, as well as reveal, in other words (hence Robert Louis Stevenson's famous story).

Contemporary horror has rather perfected the notion of the monster in our midst. The mild-mannered Denis Nilsen, or grinning John Wayne Gacy, only become obvious monsters in retrospect, the isolation and loneliness of the former and child-friendliness and penchant for clown costumes in the latter only providing evidence of monstrosity once the pile of bodies built up.¹³ Again, the liberal mind becomes uneasy with the term 'monster' in cases like this because the term appears to imply that there is something 'inhuman' about such activities: as if it is not only humans who are capable of such horrifying behaviour. The term 'monster' allows us to separate ourselves from the murderous other, as in the use of the term to apply to the notorious Robert Thompson and Jon Venables, the ten-year old abductors and killers of two-year old Jamie Bulger in Bootle, near Liverpool in 1993. The policeman who came to arrest Venables declared that he knew he was evil the moment he clapped eyes on him. Terry Eagleton caustically remarks that this is the kind of comment 'that gives evil a bad name',¹⁴ but it also makes application of the term 'monster' to perpetrators of such crimes more problematic.

It is certainly politically incorrect to bandy the terms 'evil' and 'monster' around, and there can be detected in Noel Carroll's taxonomy of the monster an attempt to protect humans from being labelled 'other'. Carroll is explicit in his rejection of the term 'monster' when it is applied to non-supernatural, completely human killers like Dr Hannibal Lecter, the extraordinarily civilized psychiatrist and cannibal of Robert Harris's series (1981–2006). For Carroll, the term 'monster' is simply inappropriate in these circumstances.¹⁵ This has profound implications for the study of the monstrous in eighteenth-century Ireland, of course, as it would mean that the term 'monster' is not particularly useful in describing how Irish Anglicans read their Catholic neighbours. Rather than reveal anything, the term 'monster' would merely mislead and misguide the historian.

However, monster theory has to come to terms with a general tendency to apply the term in a much wider sense than the terminological gatekeepers like Noel Carroll would desire. If culturally we like to apply the term 'monster' to Fred West, for example, it seems rather counter-productive to quibble that Mr West does not inhabit the interstices of biological categorisation, though, of course, we could still reassure our troubled liberalism by insisting that it is unfortunate that the unlearned should descend to the language of the tabloid newspaper. Some scholars

of horror have been more accepting of the term ‘monster’ in such cases, mainly because it seems simply unacceptable that the likes of Hannibal Lecter and Norman Bates from *Psycho* (novel by Robert Bloch [1959]; film by Alfred Hitchcock [1960]) should not be called monsters just because they are not biologically odd and give no indications that they are possessed by anything other than a quirky sense of humour and a rather broader set of interests than the rest of us. Bates, it might be quibbled, is at least ‘possessed’ in a weaker sense by the memory of his mother, but even so, he is not a genuine hybrid.

The term ‘monster’ simply has to be expansive enough to take in sociological and psychological as well as biological weirdness, and for this reason horror commentators would find it much more useful to take film critic Robin Wood’s understanding of the ‘monster’ as a starting point. Although Wood is among the most politically motivated of critics, and as a good leftist finds the term ‘monster’ distasteful, he recognises that societies use it in order to identify and alienate groups and figures against which they want to define themselves, so that as a formula for the horror film he suggests that ‘normality is threatened by the Monster’, where the monster is everything that normality isn’t (it goes without saying that for Wood ‘normality’, or ‘conformity to the dominant social norms’, is actually the real enemy, and the monster a kind of victim, but this political position need not worry us here). Therefore, categories such as other people, women, the proletariat, other cultures, ethnic groups within the culture, those possessing alternative ideological and political views, deviant sexualities and children can all find themselves monstrous depending on the particular historical moment.¹⁶ Or, as Jeffrey Jerome Cohen puts it, ‘the monster dwells at the gates of difference’.¹⁷

Interestingly, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Catholics were considered biologically impure and interstitial, and also sociological pollutants, and therefore monstrous regardless of the theory used to examine them. Catholics could indeed be biologically anomalous in that, in league with Satan, they possessed satanic bodies, literally. There are many cases in which Catholics were treated as if they were biological contaminants and biological hybrids. They were also considered to be cognitively different – their brains worked in a different way to those of Anglicans. Moreover, they combined many different categories within these bizarre bodies. They were both ‘loyal’ and ‘disloyal’, living and dead, singular and multiple, human and animal/bestial. Even those who accepted that Catholics were nominally human, however, were not convinced that they were not for that reason to be considered ‘monstrous’. As Cynthia Freeland has reminded us, monstrosity is associated with evil, so that those who arouse moral disgust tend to be seen in

monstrous terms.¹⁸ It may also be useful to consider Steven J. Schneider's description of a monster when thinking of how Catholics appeared to Anglicans. Using Sigmund Freud's claim that an object appears 'uncanny' when it embodies past ideas that are believed to have been surmounted, he describes monsters as '*metaphorical embodiments of paradigmatic horror narratives . . . capable of reconfirming surmounted beliefs by their very presence*'.¹⁹ Given Michel de Certeau's description of modernity as an attempt to banish forever that which is considered past,²⁰ Catholics could often be considered the most monstrous objects on the planet since the Reformation was precisely a kind of repudiation of the past and an attempt to start anew. For this, Catholicism, and Catholics as embodiments of Catholicism, are extremely problematic, because Catholicism is an entire system of old ideas that have been supposedly 'overcome' and now constitute ancient history, and an individual Catholic is a personification of this dead system, he is the past come back to life. Daily life for an Anglican in eighteenth-century Ireland therefore might be considered analogous to a very bad horror film series where the monster is repeatedly killed but just as repeatedly returns as strong as ever (if not, indeed, stronger) in time for the sequel.

In England, the tradition of monsterring Catholics has proved crucial to the formation of the national mind, as demonstrated by historians such as Linda Colley but also by literary scholars like Raymond Tumbleson.²¹ When Colley examined the origins of British identity she located it in 1707 when England and Wales united with Scotland to create the United Kingdom of Great Britain, a unity she argues made possible in large part by a shared Protestantism dating from the Reformation, a dependence on the King James Bible, a mutual anti-Catholicism and a fear of French invasion.²² The seventeenth century was imaginatively reconstructed as a providential struggle against a great demonic force able to morph into various disguises and manifest in extraordinarily diverse forms. This monster was called popery, and its tentacular malevolence could be detected in the tyrannical king, Charles I, or even in a republican junta who had behaved rather too much like the Catholics they were supposed to be vanquishing.²³ Onto this grand, amorphous Cuthulu-like Catholic menace could be projected anything and everything considered abnormal, and Catholicism was configured as a perverse and disgusting repository of everything rejected by a Britain establishing its modern identity: feudal, medieval, international, superstitious, authoritarian.²⁴ The insidious and basic anti-Catholicism of the British state has been powerfully demonstrated and analysed by historians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and certainly, the depth and extent of the fear of both the Catholic Church and even individual Catholics was

extraordinary.²⁵ The intensity of anti-Catholicism can be explained as partly derived from the association between Catholicism and the alien, since Catholicism was configured as profoundly un-English, linked to the Irish, the French, the Spanish. Indeed, anti-Catholicism, and other cross-class prejudices, helped to unite a Britain that was otherwise split by internal disagreements. Colin Haydon argues convincingly that in eighteenth-century Britain ordinary Catholics ‘all feared that they would become social outcasts if they openly proclaimed their real beliefs’, though he admits that ‘it is impossible to gauge with any precision how common these problems were’.²⁶ Raymond Tumbleson does, however, point out that although prejudice was widespread and manifested even in everyday life, because of a perceived relation between ‘Papist’ and ‘Romish,’ anti-Catholicism often functioned as a prejudice more directed against the foreigner rather than the man down the road.²⁷ The basic anti-Catholicism in British culture allowed Catholics to be reduced to stereotypical, often caricatured, villains – the very villains who would go on to populate the Gothic novel.

As has been argued by the historian Jeremy Black, anti-Catholicism was ‘the prime ideological commitment of most of the population’ of England in the eighteenth century.²⁸ The English calendar was packed full, with days set aside to honour the Protestant past and the deliverance of the national church from the grips of the papacy (the Gunpowder Plot, the St Bartholomew’s Day Massacre, and even the Great Fire of London 1666).²⁹ The *Protestant Almanack* of 1700 includes on its frontispiece the posting of Luther’s 95 Theses, the ‘deliverance’ of England from popery by Edward VI, the second ‘deliverance’ of England from popery by Elizabeth, the Gunpowder Plot, the Fire of London, and the third ‘deliverance’ of England from popery by William and Mary.³⁰ Moreover, the monstrosity of Catholics could even take biological as well as theological and sociological form. In her study of ‘monstrous births’ in post-Reformation England, Julie Crawford provides numerous incidents of Catholicism being associated with biological abnormality. Not only were Catholics casually called monsters but they were believed to be physically deformed. Crawford points to how those involved in the Gunpowder Plot, for example, were variously described as ‘Romish monsters’ and ‘the rarest form of monsters’ and how images of Catholic traitors depicted them as physiologically weird.³¹ However, the most important point about Catholic monsters was precisely that they were less easy to spot than a two-headed calf. As Crawford points out, ‘the real threat of traitorous “monsters” . . . was less their notable physiognomy than the fact that, at least from the outside, they were not remarkable at all’ and they could pass by you in the street without anyone

noticing their hidden evil: ‘from the outside, “rarer monsters” look only like men’.³² It is too easy to forget now, but Catholics were literally read as slaves of the antichrist in seminal texts such as John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*, which was written in 1563 and enjoyed a status second only to the Bible in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.³³ This canonical text, which contained an account of the sufferings and death of the Protestants in the reign of Queen Mary, can be read as an anti-Catholic manual for slow learners. In the fourth book of Foxe’s classic, which depicts the poisoning of King John by a monk who had already been absolved of his sin by the pope, the reader is informed that this event begins the ‘proud and mis-ordered Reign of Antichrist, beginning to stir in the Church of Christ’, and after which ‘the loosing out of Satan’ is inaugurated with acts of extraordinary cruelty and barbarism being perpetuated in the years since that time, especially in the martyring and murdering of countless English Protestants during the reign of ‘Bloody’ Mary.³⁴

The monsterring approach to Catholicism was particularly evident during periods when it seemed that Catholicism had become a serious threat to the state. For example, during the 1641 rebellion in Ireland the English presses released numerous pamphlets which claimed that Satan was behind the whole affair. One particularly memorable one, *Grand Plutoes Remonstrance* (1642), was in the form of a long speech given to the Irish Catholic rebels by Satan himself in which he instructed them to ‘drink healths to my infernall majestie in the blood of your enemies, making their skulls your quaffing-bowls to the glory of your religion’.³⁵ Anti-Catholicism operated as what Colley has called a ‘vast superstructure of prejudice’³⁶ and was the ideological glue which allowed various (otherwise ideologically opposed) parties to come together in support of the 1688 revolution, which, as Paul Kleber Monad has written, ‘was the victory, not of timeless conceptions of “liberty”, but of virulent anti-Catholicism’.³⁷ One tract written to ‘all members of the next Parliament’ warned those gathered that

the Church of Rome is still the same Church it was a hundred years ago, that is, a mass of treachery, bribery, perjury, and the highest superstition; a machine without any principle or settled law of motion, not to be mov’d or stopt with the weights of any private or publick obligations; a monster that destroys all that is sacred both in Heaven and Earth, so ravenous that it is never content unless it gets the whole world into its claws and tears all to pieces.³⁸

As Linda Colley points out, the slang term applied to Catholics in the seventeenth and eighteenth century was ‘outlandish’, which meant

that ‘Catholics were not just strange, they were out of bounds’, out of the boundaries, that is, of the human as well as the nation.³⁹ Frances E. Dolan records how discussion of Catholics usually involved connection to monstrous births as if Catholics had been conceived in the darkness, the results of ‘unnatural’ relations between humans and demons.⁴⁰ Catholic strictures on sexual morality, especially as they applied to priests, were read as means by which to trick the naïve into immorality. One Protestant almanac of the late seventeenth century claimed that at least fourteen popes had been incestuous.⁴¹ In one memorable pamphlet, the MP Henry Care warned his peers to beware the growth of Catholicism in the land, a growth that could only result in

your wives prostituted to the lust of every savage bog-trotter, your daughters ravished by goatish monks, your smaller children tossed upon pikes or torn limb from limb, whilst you have your own bowels ripped up . . . and holy candles made of your grease (which was done within our memory in Ireland), your dearest friends slaving in Smithfield, foreigners rendering your poor babes that can escape everlasting slaves, never more to see a Bible, nor hear again the joyful sounds of Liberty and Property. This, this gentlemen is Popery.⁴²

In a diatribe like this, we are close to the extraordinarily excessive anti-Catholicism of a late twentieth-century film like *The Omen* (1976; dir. Richard Donner), where a cabal of Catholic priests and Vatican officials conspire to bring about the birth of the antichrist, a memorably demonic-looking child called Damien Thorn. In *The Great Law of Subordination Consider'd* (1724), Daniel Defoe emphasised the monstrous and supernatural nature of Catholicism, calling popery ‘the Hobgoblin, the Spectre with which the Nurses fright the Children, and entertain the old Women all over the country’, a state of affairs to which he has no apparent objection.⁴³ The cannibalistic nature of Catholicism was highlighted in prints like William Hogarth’s *Transubstantiation Satirized* (1725), which depicted the Virgin Mary popping the Christ child into a huge meat grinding machine for the production of communion wafers which Catholics then consume from a priest’s hand.

This monsterring is perfectly understandable given the parasitic need of Protestantism for the Catholic *alter ego*. Without a monstrous Other, against which to define itself, the Self finds it difficult to retain any coherence. As Michel Foucault puts it in *The Order of Things* (1966), ‘the unthought (whatever name we give it) is not lodged in man like a shrivelled-up nature or a stratified history; it is, in relation to man, the Other: the Other that is not only a brother, but a twin, born, not of man, nor in man, but beside him and at the same time, in an identical newness, in an unavoidable duality’.⁴⁴

The connection between radical evil and Irish Catholicism was firmly established by Sir John Temple in *The Irish Rebellion* (1842),⁴⁵ but it was a connection that needed to be repeated periodically throughout the century following in case anyone was inclined to forget it. Hence, in 1745, one Anglican preacher, William Henry, reminded his congregation that even if the current Catholic Church was ‘too Politick to let fly her Fire-brands, Anathemas, Depositions of Princes, Crusadoes, Armys of Holy Cut-Throats’, it ‘has this artillery of Hell still in her Stores’.⁴⁶ The annual sermons about 1641 returned constantly to the same stock of anti-Catholic imagery, and yet the congregants never seemed to grow tired of hearing the same old stories again and again. They were told, repeatedly, that Catholics were still working hard (in secret) to overturn the land settlement, to institute a Catholic theocracy, to exterminate both Protestantism and Protestants, were infiltrating the higher reaches of government, and in general were constantly seeking ways to enact their terrible nature – usually in league with demonic forces, of course.⁴⁷ In 1722, Henry Downes warned that ‘Catholics, like others incompletely rational, must be restrained for their own, as well as for others’ good’, an attitude which basically justified any and all anti-Catholic measures since they were being enacted for the good of the Catholic soul as well as the safety of the citizenry.⁴⁸ In another sermon, John Ramsay complained in 1714 that while the Irish had always had a strange manner of living in comparison with the civilised English, Catholicism had exacerbated this problem and encouraged ‘their wild savage way of living in single cottages and dismal uninhabitable places’.⁴⁹ Catholicism made the dirty even filthier and led to atavistic and incestuous versions of domestic life. These examples could be multiplied but the point is clear.

It was often denied, of course, that Anglicans believed that Catholics were monsters. After all, it was protested, the penal laws against Catholics were due to their political rather than their theological beliefs: Catholicism, as one commentator put it, was a ‘complicated System, mixed up with many Doctrines of a political Nature’, and therefore Catholics effectively acted as fifth columnists.⁵⁰ However, given that the oath that had to be taken to enter parliament specifically required swearing against Transubstantiation, a purely political reading of discrimination has always had a hollow ring to it. Catholics, moreover, were also attacked in terms of what we would now call their reproductive rights, in that the confessional state attempted to intervene in the relations between Catholic parents and their children.⁵¹ Again, while measures intended to prevent an increase in the Catholic population can be explained as being driven by political pressures, the view that Catholics were sexual deviants who couldn’t stop breeding also played into such

legislation. Archbishop William King calculated that ‘the number of papists is greater than the number of protestants in most places 4 to 1 and in some places 20 to 1’, as Catholics were unable to keep their sexual desires under control.⁵² The notorious penal laws passed in the parliaments of 1695 and 1697, supplemented by additional legislation passed in the reign of Queen Anne, covered a large proportion of Irish Catholic life and constituted a thorough institutionalisation of the rampant anti-Catholicism running riot in Ireland at the time. The period as a whole witnessed the simultaneous rise of security and anxiety in the Anglican enclave as outlined in Chapter 1.⁵³

It is by now a historiographical commonplace that anti-Catholicism in Britain waned as the eighteenth century progressed, especially after the defeat of the Pretender at Culloden in 1746. Linda Colley, a historian who emphasises how central anti-Catholicism was in the establishment of a British identity in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, nevertheless insists that Catholic Emancipation of 1829 ‘could never have come to pass without marked shifts of opinion’ in Britain over the subject.⁵⁴ The foremost historian of eighteenth-century British anti-Catholicism, Colin Haydon, agrees that ‘in the thirty years or so following Culloden . . . [the] consensus in matters concerning Popery broke down’, and in elite circles an increasing ‘toleration’ could be charted, though he also insists that there remained a virulence to popular anti-Catholicism that did not go away at all (though it too, lessened).⁵⁵ In his study, Haydon presents a wide variety of evidence to demonstrate this change in intellectual opinion about Catholicism, and certainly crude versions of ‘No Popery’ prejudice became embarrassing to many elite figures by the mid-century.⁵⁶ Pressing practical needs hastened the decline of extreme anti-Catholicism in the corridors of power, especially when the Protestant Volunteer force in Ireland began making noises in support of the rebellious colonials in America while the Irish Catholic majority stayed silent or expressed loyalty to the crown. With the acquisition of Canada as well, a country with some 70,000 Catholic inhabitants, it became increasingly problematic to attempt to keep Catholics out of the army or to enact new penal laws, and pressure for repeal of the existing ones became difficult to ignore.⁵⁷ The impact of the Enlightenment is also generally posited as a reason for the gradual decline in public anti-Catholicism, and the philosophical emphasis on toleration is held to have laid the intellectual grounds for bringing Catholics increasingly into the instruments of the state.

The argument that anti-Catholicism was on the wane through the eighteenth century in Britain is, then, probably more or less correct, though it is difficult to gloss over the Gordon Riots of 1780 and the

continued opposition to Catholic Emancipation before, during and after it was granted in 1829,⁵⁸ and the sheer extent of anti-Catholicism in the very popular Gothic novel would also need to be considered by any serious study of this very complex problem.⁵⁹ What the ‘waning’ of intense anti-Catholicism probably meant was that the Catholic became less of a monster for the British in political terms and more of a social and political irritant – though one whose monstrosity would quickly be re-established in the nineteenth century.⁶⁰

While the (very) slow (and certainly not in any simple way ‘progressive’) erosion of anti-Catholicism in Britain can be accepted as at least a historiographical hypothesis, this is not the case for eighteenth-century Ireland. The persistence of an anti-Catholic paradigm in Ireland is understandable, because, if to some extent English Protestants could be convinced that Catholics after Culloden were not really a threat any more – especially given that the Pretender had started decrying the Catholic Church by that stage – this was not such an easy line to take for an Irish Anglican marooned in a country in which he knew himself to be one of a small minority, and where it was impossible to live life day by day without encountering very many of these bloody monsters you had been reading about in your copy of Temple’s *The Irish Rebellion* or William King’s *The State of the Protestants of Ireland Under the Late King James’s Government* (1691) (often handily released in a grand omnibus edition) and hearing about in annual sermons about the lessons of 1641. In 1719, the Reverend Boyle Davies warned that ‘Popish errors are really in themselves monstrous and dissonant to all sound principles, both of reason and religion’.⁶¹ It was the very fact that he lived among Catholics that drove Davies to such extreme statements since, as he insisted, ‘while we have papists among us, we shall never want an enemy, nor an executioner fitted to our destruction’.⁶²

For most Irish Anglicans, 1641 was only the first in a horror series; at the end of each instalment the audience goes home believing that the monster has been destroyed and normality restored – only to find that this monster reappears at the start of the next part. There were horror sequels aplenty in eighteenth-century Ireland, sequels where the monster actually looked to be growing stronger than ever rather being subject to a law of diminishing returns. And monster theory continued to be applied to Irish Catholics without much deviation. In eighteenth-century Ireland there was never any real decrease in the levels of monstrosity applied to the Catholic population. On one level the daily encounters between the two populations could bring a sense that Catholics deserved compassion and respect; however, on another it merely reconfirms the level of threat they pose: given that there are so many of them, and given

that they have demonstrated a tendency to kill and maim Anglicans in the (recent) past, seeing some of them every day just reminded the elite minority of how much it had to fear.

It is often casually believed that everyday encounters will help erase prejudice between alienated groups of people, and that while it is easy to hate a nebulous category of 'others' it is rather more difficult to hate the very specific others who live next door: 'popery' may be a system you find abhorrent, but the Catholic tenants with whose welfare you become associated are in a different category altogether. Although this argument is superficially plausible, there is reason to suspect that being forced every day to encounter people you have already decided are abhorrent does nothing but increase your hatred of them. In such cases the stereotype can, in effect, filter both memory and understanding so that stereotype-confirmation is unconsciously sought by the observer. The mind filters information to make sure it accords with beliefs already held about a group or person, which provides an obstacle to any attempt to undo the social divisions based on such group behaviours. Of course, the real point is that this kind of filtering is more or less an unavoidable fact about being human as self-definition requires others against which identity can be contrasted. Moreover, given that Anglicans genuinely feared the reversal of the land settlement, social relations with Irish Catholics could easily be seen as a zero-sum game in which, were Catholics to gain some element of readmission to the state, the result would be loss of power for the Anglican minority, and this is a situation in which stereotype flourishes.⁶³

This fear was certainly not relieved by the sheer numbers of Catholics relative to Protestants, a topic of continued interest to the elite in the period. In one letter in 1831, Archbishop Hugh Boulter of Armagh reckoned that there were five Catholics to every Protestant in the country, though in a later letter he admitted that others felt that the actual number could be as high as eight to one.⁶⁴ Ross Moore, the sovereign of Carlingford in County Louth was even more pessimistic, and in 1734 he worried that 'the odds against us in this town and neighbouring country I am persuaded are at least 200 to one – I do not mean 100, but one single Protestant . . . at the mercy of a Popish mob'.⁶⁵ This disparity was a serious imaginative problem, partly because most Anglicans seem to have believed that Catholics, in Archbishop William King's words, 'breed very fast'.⁶⁶

The evidence that Catholics were read as monstrous in Ireland is overwhelming for the early eighteenth century. As argued in *Gothic Ireland* (2005), the basis of this belief is 1641 – the belief that 1641 is always already about to happen again because the monsters who caused it are

still the same and are still knocking around the place. In fact, a belief in the unchanging nature of Irish Catholics is central to their continued monsterring by Irish Anglicans. Catholics, of course, attempted to deal with the monsterring in a variety of ways. One way was through declarations of loyalty to the monarch, organising petitions which asserted how unflinchingly loyal Irish Catholics had been since the Williamite Settlement, pushing hard for a new formulation of various oaths of loyalty required for Catholics to enter the army or parliament.⁶⁷ Others included more direct and combative challenges to the discriminatory nature of the Irish state, lobbying for the overturning of the penal laws, the bitter quarterage dispute.⁶⁸ Overall, these campaigns did have some impact and contributed to a shift in the attitudes of some Irish Anglicans – indeed, Irish Anglican opinion bitterly split on the matter of toleration of Catholicism, a split into ‘liberal’ and ‘conservative’ camps (though the liberal camp remained very much a minority affair), and the Anglican Patriots made the most movement towards a rapprochement.

It is important to acknowledge that while making monsters is a complex matter, unmaking them is extraordinarily difficult. Challenging the dominant interpretation of 1641 was, perhaps, the most important but also most dangerous way of making the case that Catholics were not, in fact, the demons they had been depicted as being, and issuing such a challenge is a more aggressive methodology than simply making a declaration of loyalty to the state. After all, such a declaration could indicate that Catholics had in fact changed their natures, that while they were evil and annihilating monsters in the past, they had effectively reformed and were ready to take their full place in polite society again. To actually re-examine the central mythology of the Irish Anglican self, however, was a completely different matter altogether. To challenge the dominant interpretation of 1641 was to suggest that Irish Catholics had *never* been monstrous, and many challenges in fact reversed the monstrous imagery to project monstrosity onto Irish Protestants in order to absolve Catholics from all or any blame for the mistakes of the past.

While Irish Anglicans always felt uneasy in eighteenth-century Ireland, that unease only increased as the century progressed, and it reached a fairly hysterical denouement in the emergence of a new term to designate the Anglican interest in Ireland. The now notorious term ‘Protestant Ascendancy’ was coined in the fulminations of Archbishop Richard Woodward in *The Present State of the Church of Ireland* (1786), which insisted that ‘the wishes of some of the friends of the Roman Catholics interest . . . are evidently subversive of the Protestant Ascendancy’, warned that the ‘Ecclesiastical establishment is an essential part of the Constitution of this Kingdom’, and pointed out that

‘Protestant ascendancy . . . cements this Country with Great Britain.’⁶⁹ That Protestant superiority felt the necessity of such an invocation of Ascendancy only from the 1780s tells us that something was happening by then that seriously threatened identity and provoked this reaction. One provocation was that surprising and unexpected result of the penal laws: the growth of a Catholic middle class, which led directly to the formation of the Catholic Committee (1756) and the regeneration of the Catholic threat. The founders of this Committee were John Curry and Charles O’Conor, whose families had both lost out in the land confiscation but who had resurged in the middle class. They simultaneously launched an assault on the Anglican configuration of Irish history, and during the 1750s and 1760s they wrote a number of pamphlets claiming that the stories of massacres in 1641 were wildly exaggerated, that Temple’s work was partisan and partly deranged, and that the 1641 rebellion was more justified than that of 1688. Loyal Catholics had long felt that it was imperative that the demonic version of 1641 be challenged and put firmly into the past, and this challenge was taken up by Catholic scholars of great repute.

II

There is a sense in which John Curry was the right man for the job of revising the rising. His Catholic family had been stripped of their lands in the Williamite settlement since his father had fought in support of James II, and they were, therefore, effectively driven into the middle classes; Curry’s father became a merchant, and John himself moved into medicine. During the last Jacobite rebellion of 1745, Irish Catholics did not rise to the challenge of the moment to express a loyalty with the Pretender but instead remained quiet and acquiescent. This earned them a certain respect in English intellectual opinion, and Curry, already greatly irritated by the continuing animosity towards Catholics in Ireland, took the opportunity to post his attack on traditional Anglican versions of the 1641 debacle with *A Brief Account from the most Authentic Protestant writers of the Causes, Motives, and Mischiefs of the Irish Rebellion, on the 23rd Day of October 1641* (1747).

What was especially daring about Curry’s intervention was that instead of being released under his own name, he decided to perpetrate an act of literary cross-dressing. The study was published as ‘a Dialogue between a Dissenter, and a Member of the Church of Ireland, as by Law Established’ (a description which sounds suspiciously like the start of a joke). This impersonation was to have serious implications in the

literary war which broke out over the pamphlet, but Curry effectively created a version of a liberal Irish Anglican in order to exacerbate the divisions in the Anglican enclave which would later become evident in the reaction to the Money Bill dispute. Curry played the ecclesiological cross-dressing with a certain amount of tongue in cheek. Scandalously, he has his Dissenter harangue his Anglican interlocutor at the end of their dialogue for being such an intrepid advocate for Irish Catholics: 'you have today so zealously pleaded the Cause of the *Rebellious Irish Papists*, that I suspect you are not so good a *Protestant* at the Bottom, as I would have you to be'.⁷⁰ This self-referential undermining of the enterprise injects a jovial tone into what is otherwise a deadly serious literary and historiographical game as Curry attempts to wrest interpretive control of the 1641 rebellion out of the hands of those he considers zealously committed to an anti-Catholic agenda. The act of speaking in tongues not his own, of wearing ecclesiastical garb belonging to different (and adversarial) denominations, is a radical one in a period when all three Christian churches were mutually antagonistic.

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have argued that when women cross-dress it is as a 'dream of prophecy and power' because by appropriating the clothes of the more powerful gender some of that power is also appropriated.⁷¹ However, what cross-dressing also does is question the very notion of such a strict division between categories. For Marjorie Garber, cross-dressing is a way to offer 'a challenge to easy notions of binarity, putting into question the categories of "female" and "male", whether they are considered essential or constructed, biological or cultural',⁷² and the same problematisation occurs when a reviled and hated other adopts the language and wears the clothes of those who revile him. While there is one sense in which this denominational cross-dressing could be read as the typical act of a monstrous traitor as he disguises himself in order to pass as normal and perpetrate his crimes much more easily, given that Curry is genuinely attempting to convince liberal Anglicans that Catholics are not the bogeymen of the 1641 fairy tales, a radicalisation of identity is the better interpretation of his pamphlet.

What Curry effects to do is no less than unmonster the Irish Catholic, and to do it through the voice of a liberal Anglican, largely by forging a connection between Irish Catholics and Irish Protestants based on their common nationality. As the liberal Anglican asserts, he speaks 'In Justice . . . to that People (whom, notwithstanding the difference of their Religion . . . to mine, I shall ever regard as my Brethren and Countrymen . . .)'.⁷³ Crucially, for his revisionism, Curry has his liberal depend only on Protestant testimony (the histories written by Protestants in the aftermath of the rebellion) to prove that the traditional view of the rebellion,

and therefore of Irish Catholics, is simply untenable, while also asking some other serious questions including why, as the rebellion happened over a century prior to the publication of the pamphlet, and given their dutiful and submissive loyalty displayed ever since, the 'inhumane Exaggerations' of 1641 are being bought up against Irish Catholics at this time.⁷⁴ In other words, Curry speaks with an Anglican voice through his sources as well as his dialogues, according the scholarship of his enemy a certain amount of respect.

Where Curry meets with problems, however, is in his inability to completely abandon the discourse of the monster. If the Irish Catholic is no longer to be accepted as monstrous, then Curry believes he has found another group who can be read as bestial. He reverses the general accusations against Catholics and here accuses Protestants of desiring the 'extirpat[ion], by all possible Means' of 'that useful and inoffensive set of Men [Irish Catholics] from the Face of the Earth'.⁷⁵ Instead of Catholics being guilty of numerous massacres in 1641, the whole affair was really caused by the massacre of peaceful Catholic families in Islandmagee (populated, he claims, by about 3,000 people), a massacre which started the entire chain of murderous events.⁷⁶ More important than these reversals, however, is Curry's attempt to distinguish between Catholics. While some are indeed bad citizens and dangerous there are also 'sober and unbigoted Roman Catholics' who 'did, and do, sincerely condemn, and abhor' the terrible behaviour by their co-religionists during 1641.⁷⁷ Thus, rather than being 'essentially' evil, Catholics are an (ordinary) group of people with some flawed members, but far more judicious and moderate ones. Curry's book attempts to produce a 'category crisis', introduce a porous membrane between hitherto distinct categories and allow for 'border crossings from one (apparently distinct) category to another'.⁷⁸

As always, attempts to challenge the impervious nature of a border produces an immediate reaction, and Curry's struggle to gain interpretive control of 1641 did not go unchallenged. Walter Harris, a Laois lawyer and Anglican antiquarian (with a reputation for tolerance and sympathy towards Gaelic culture) quickly responded in the white heat of intellectual battle. In *Fiction Unmask'd; or, an Answer to a Dialogue lately published by a Popish Physician* (1752), Harris attempted to skewer Curry by revealing the fictional strategies involved in his original intervention: as if he were the host of a masked ball reaching the end of the evening, Harris felt the need to remove the visor from Curry's face and reveal his true nature. *Fiction Unmask'd* is not unlike that moment in Neil Jordan's *The Crying Game* (1992) when Stephen Rea discovers that the beautiful young woman with whom he had fallen in

love is in fact a man, shocking both Rea (who immediately throws up) and the audience, which has been taken in. Of course, there are always those who claim that they are never duped by transvestism, no matter how elaborate the disguise, and like them Harris insists that he was never taken in by Curry's trickery, representing himself as a penetrating observer alert to the subtleties of the Catholic faith. For Harris, Curry's Anglican drag performance was weak and unconvincing from the start. Much of Harris's response is couched in the terms of a theatre critic who is very unimpressed by the acting talent in front of him, or an anti-theatricalist terrified of the sublimated power of impersonation to transform and change, who insists again on fixity and stability.

Harris complains about Curry's 'personation' and regrets that 'weak People, believing it to be a real Discourse, must entertain strange Notions of the Protestants'.⁷⁹ He later insists that no Protestant would argue the way Curry's Anglican does. What disturbs Harris most, however, is not really the fact that Curry felt it his right to publicly intervene in the discourse of 1641, an event so central to Anglican mythology that it would be difficult to overestimate its importance. What is more disturbing is that some Anglicans actually bought his disguise, actually found themselves convinced by it. In other words, the threat to the Irish Anglican community comes not from the disguises or the rhetoric of a member of the Catholic community but from the failure of some members of the Irish Anglican enclave to sign up fully to the official interpretation of 1641. The first was a threat from without, one that the Irish Anglicans had suffered periodically over the course of a century; the second was symptomatic of an internal fissure, a division within the self that needed to be healed or rejected.

Some Anglicans were too amenable to the discourse of unmonstering, and Harris is very clear that these Anglicans need to be treated as traitors who have been infected by a Catholic disease – or perhaps, fallen in love with their own destruction. Harris configures those liberal Anglicans as having been seduced by a perverted desire, railing against the 'infatuation of many who call themselves Protestants. Monstrous Infatuation! when Protestants act a Popish Part'.⁸⁰ Curry pretended to be a Protestant; now, Protestants are 'becoming' (dressing as, fixated upon, infatuated by) Catholics! Intellectual assent is here configured as a kind of perverted lovemaking; the lovemaking is so intense that two have really become one, and worse, the Anglican Self has been replaced by a Catholic Other, the true self displaced by a false self (in a version of demonic possession). This slippage of identity makes it easier for Catholics like Curry to feel a right to 'personate' Anglicans. Curry's transgression has engendered an era of transgression where identity

becomes fluid and out of control. Like the transvestite who tricks the heterosexual into an act of sexual betrayal, so the denominational cross-dresser who seduces an Anglican into congress with a Catholic through rhetorical seduction.

Harris's fear is that such a thorough interpenetration of denominational identities is so radical that some will find it difficult to distinguish one from the other. He further warns that such impersonation is not confined to book publication. He claims that during the Scottish rebellion of 1745 several 'weekly scraps' written by a 'Romish priest' were published under the title 'Impartial Examiners'.⁸¹ One response to this kind of role playing and theatrical performance of history is a return to the facts, and to 'true' identities, but – bizarrely – Harris does not opt for this, and instead continues with a different kind of fiction, one where he too can dress up, and here he decides (logically enough) to impersonate a Catholic. Instead of providing a rational history of 1641 as a rebuke to theatrical revisionism, the reader is given even more dramatic dialogue – this time between a Catholic (clearly intended to be Curry himself) and an extraordinarily knowledgeable Protestant, knowledgeable not merely about the 1641 rebellion but about Catholic/Protestant relations in the round. It must be said that whereas Curry's Dissenter is remarkably stubborn and finds it difficult to accept anything put forward by his Anglican interlocutor, Harris's Catholic is a less robust figure who caves in quickly to the arguments amassed by the Anglican. Often his responses to an extraordinarily prolix exposition on the evils of Catholicism are cursory and intellectually passive as if he has been overwhelmed by the subtlety of a far more engaged thinker. Where the real Curry would undoubtedly have entered into a disputatious disagreement with what he had just been told, Harris's extremely amiable Catholic merely responds, 'Well, proceed with your Observations'.⁸²

Considering the loyal behaviour practiced by Irish Catholics in the period, the invective contained in Harris's pamphlet is extraordinary, but it tells us much about the centrality of anti-Catholicism to Irish Anglican identity, and the dangers posed by any sense that some Anglicans were willing to make an accommodation with these monsters. For Harris, Catholicism is a mental masquerade, a vast theatre of lies and deceptions where ordinary speech cannot be trusted because of the 'doctrine of Equivocation and mental Restrictions' (or reservation) where Catholics are permitted to lie, even directly, depending on the intention behind their words.⁸³ For example, the ability of Curry to impersonate Anglicans comes from the Catholic comfort with impersonation and lies more generally so that Catholics even swear 'by Double Entendre'.⁸⁴

The traditional accusations against Catholics are trotted out by Harris, although he laces these accusations with considerable bile: Catholicism, or 'Popery' is a 'deformed' system, whose entire ambition is to 'enslave the Majority of Mankind' through its preaching of a series of doctrines opposed to true Christianity, doctrines including Transubstantiation, Auricular Confession, purgatory, the worship of saints, indulgences, the right to depose heads of state, and hundreds of others, and what is required is a cleansing 'Antidote' to 'a Poison, with which some [Irish Anglicans] have been infected'.⁸⁵ Catholics are an infectious disease for which Harris has the cure.

Harris argues that the case of Irish Catholics is a special one. Unlike minority populations which could be treated with pity by the ruling elite, Catholics always have to be discriminated against because Catholics are by definition always already disloyal to all non-Catholic authority. Indeed, the discourse Harris is attempting to undermine is, he believes, part of a wider Catholic conspiracy to restore the Pretender: 'surely such Books were calculated for some expected Season of Conspiracy and Murder' for which the Gunpowder Plot and the 1641 rebellion stand as models.⁸⁶ Regarding 1641, Harris re-confirms that between 40,000 and 50,000 Protestants were killed, and, in response to Curry's claim that many of the Depositions are inherently untrustworthy because they relate stories of ghosts appearing on Portadown bridge, he affirms that the ghosts did appear since the apparitions have been 'attested by some many Witnesses of Reputation'.⁸⁷ Harris offers here a narrative of an epidemic, sourcing the disease in the Catholic faith and tracing its impact on a host population, Irish Anglicans, who are being turned into zombie-like followers through exposure to such contagious germs. The supernatural support given to Harris's theory of epidemic links back to a pre-Hippocratic view of diseases as 'caused' by the gods, rather than natural occurrences. The satanic origin of the Catholic infection is central to Harris's argument, as it is a disease which strips the manly Anglican of his identity and replaces it with the identity of the parasite. The problem is that the average Irish Anglican is spiritually weak enough to be open to catching this disease – the Anglican disbeliever was essentially inviting the Catholic to invade and pervert his body. It is also clear that such vulnerability on the part of the Irish Anglican community would be made worse by the divisions highlighted and exacerbated by the Money Bill dispute, and a community divided against itself was sure to fall.

The heightened rhetoric of Harris's 'unmasking' of Catholic theatricality could not prevent the appearance after the Money Bill dispute of a growing constituency of Irish Anglicans which was no longer convinced

that Catholics were evil incarnate – that Catholics were quite simply monstrous – and many of the members of this constituency actually saw the Catholic population as potential allies. The standard interpretation of the 1641 massacre was considered a great obstacle in the way of a translating the increasingly friendly relationships between individual Anglicans and Catholics into concrete political change, including the dismantling of the penal laws. This necessitated a rewriting of Irish history from a partisan to what had become known as a ‘philosophical’ viewpoint, by which was merely meant the lack of any apparent subjective or prejudiced position. What was believed to be needed, really, was what is now called ‘Irish revisionism’, an objective, ‘value free’ rewriting of Irish history which would examine controversial episodes from a ‘neutral’ perspective.⁸⁸

There was certainly a sense of fatigue in the air given the sheer intensity of the historical disagreements and, as Jacqueline Hill explains, ‘everyone (or so it seemed) was waiting for the “philosophical” history of Ireland which would identify the real lessons of Irish history’.⁸⁹ The agenda was already clear for such a rewriting: the invidious nature of Irish Catholics would have to be neutralised or rebutted and the place of Irish Catholics in the kingdom made much more palatable to Irish Anglicans, who could then, with a clear conscience and without excessive fears for the consequences of such actions, pass the necessary repeals of the penal laws and admit Irish Catholics fully into political life. However, given the reaction to the work of John Curry, it was also very clear that it could not be an Irish Catholic who wrote this ‘new history’, as such a figure would simply lack credibility; what was needed was a believable, moderate, respectable and respected Irish Anglican who could claim the approval of both sides of the religious divide. It quickly became obvious who the right person for such a rewriting would be: Thomas Leland, classicist, historian, and also author of *Longsword*, another significant text in the emergence of the Gothic in Ireland.

Notes

1. Sean Crenshaw in *The Monster Squad*, film, dir. Fred Dekker, 1987. Screenplay, Shane Black and Fred Dekker. Poor Sean discovers that, not only are monsters like Dracula and the Mummy very real, but they are planning to take over the world. It is up to him and his band of adolescent monster hunters to stop them.
2. The Borg are an alien intelligence central to *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (1987–94). They are distinguished not only by their apparently unstoppable drive for power but also by the fact that they have managed to destroy individuality and have become one collective intelligence.

3. Archbishop William King to Archbishop Wake of Canterbury, 12 July 1727, quoted in Fagan, 'Dublin Catholic Mob', 133.
4. For an account of these sermons, see Barnard, 'Uses of 23 October 1641'; Kelly, "'Glorious and Immortal Memory'".
5. This anecdote is told by Charles O'Connor in his 'Account of the Author', a prefatory introduction to John Curry's own *Historical and Critical Review of the Civil Wars*, iv.
6. See Gilmore, *Monsters*, 9; Asma, *On Monsters*, 13.
7. For a brilliant study of the freak show phenomenon, see Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity*; see also Youngquist, *Monstrosities*.
8. Anonymous, *Miracle of Miracles*, 6.
9. Aristotle, *Physics* II.8.
10. Carroll, *Philosophy of Horror*, 27, 28, 32.
11. See Eagleton, *On Evil*, for the liberal uneasiness with the term 'evil', 13–15. For serial killers and discourses of monstrosity, see Tithecott, *Of Men and Monsters*.
12. For Freud's theory see 'The Uncanny'.
13. For an excellent study of the Nilsen case, see Masters, *Killing for Company*.
14. Eagleton, *On Evil*, 2.
15. Carroll, *Philosophy of Horror*, 38–9.
16. Wood, 'American Nightmare', 69, 66–7.
17. Cohen, 'Monster Culture', 7.
18. Freeland, *Naked and the Undead*, 10–11.
19. Schneider, 'Monsters as (Uncanny) Metaphors', 6.
20. de Certeau, *Writing of History*, 2.
21. Colley, *Britons*; Tumbleson, *Catholicism*.
22. Colley, *Britons*, 11–12.
23. See Miller, *Popery and Politics*, 82; Kenyon, *Popish Plot*, 8.
24. 'Protestants . . . [were] able to produce an image of England as inherently Protestant because Protestantism's opposite, popery, was inherently foreign'. Lake, 'Anti-Popery', 82; Jones, *Revolution of 1688*, 95.
25. Though Robert Clifton does worry that 'though the horror and fear felt by . . . Englishmen for Catholicism is a cliché of historical writing, its brutal strength is seldom fully communicated to readers of the present day'. *Last Popular Rebellion*, 57.
26. Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism*, 15.
27. Tumbleson, *Catholicism*, 13–14.
28. Black, *Natural and Necessary Enemies*, 161.
29. The blaming of Catholics for the Great Fire of London was part of a complex affair. Fingers were pointed at many including the French and the Dutch, but in 1681 an inscription was added to the Monument erected to commemorate the Great Fire, an inscription that blamed Papists. See Miller, *Popery and Politics*, 103. For the annual commemoration of events attached to deliverance from Catholic danger, see Cressy, 'Protestant Calendar', 31–52.
30. Colley, *Britons*, 21, gives illustration. For 'nationality' as a subsection of Protestantism, see Clifton, 'Fear of Popery'.
31. Crawford, *Marvelous Protestantism*, 104.
32. *Ibid.*, 105–7.

33. For Foxe's contribution to 'nation forming' see Haller, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*. For the idea of England as an elect nation with a singular and privileged destiny, see Lamont, *Godly Rule*.
34. Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, 1, 192, 452.
35. Anonymous, *Grand Plutoes Remonstrance*, 4.
36. Colley, *Britons*, 36.
37. Quoted in Tumbleson, *Catholicism*, 9.
38. Quoted in Speck, *Reluctant Revolutionaries*, 235.
39. Colley, *Britons*, 23.
40. Early modern versions of *Rosemary's Baby*. See Dolan, *Whores of Babylon*, 39.
41. As one rhyme put it: 'Their Church consists of vicious Popes, the rest / Are whoring Nuns, and bawdy bugg'ring Priests. / A noble Church! Dub'd with religious Paint, / Each Priest's a Stallion, every Rogue's a Saint.' Quoted in Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism*, 254.
42. Quoted in Miller, *Popery and Politics*, 75.
43. [Daniel Defoe], *Great Law of Subordination Consider'd*, 20.
44. Foucault, *Order of Things*, 326.
45. See Killeen, *Gothic Ireland*, 28–54.
46. Henry, *Philippic oration*, 9–10.
47. Barnard, 'Uses of 23 October', 898.
48. Downes, *Sermon Preach'd . . . the 5th November 1722*, 15–16.
49. Ramsay, *Sermon Preach'd to the Protestants of Ireland*, 52.
50. [James de Dallon], *The ax laid to the root*, 22.
51. See Backus on Irish Protestantism and child sacrifice. *Gothic Family Romance*, *passim*.
52. William King to Archbishop Wake of Canterbury, 12 July, 1727. Quoted in Fagan, 'Dublin Catholic Mob', 133.
53. The best account to give consideration to all of these features is Bartlett, 'Rise and Fall', 7–18.
54. Colley, *Britons*, 325.
55. Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism*, 164.
56. *Ibid.*, pp. 164–178; also Bartlett, *Fall and Rise*, 66–8.
57. Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism*, 164–203.
58. An underlying distrust of Catholicism remains central to British society today – an anti-Catholicism made visible recently in the lead up to the visit of Pope Benedict XVI in 2010. During the weeks leading up to the Pope's arrival, a particularly startling resurfacing of this submerged current in British history was evident, though now energised by a fashionable version of atheism and a disgust at child abuse scandals.
59. For Catholicism and the Gothic, see Tarr, *Catholicism in Gothic Fiction*; for a more recent study which argues that the Gothic is in fact rather generous in relation to Catholicism, see Purves, *Gothic and Catholicism*.
60. For the sheer pervasiveness of anti-Catholicism in British life, see Haynes, *Pictures and Popery*. For nineteenth-century incarnations of anti-Catholicism see Peschier, *Nineteenth-Century*; Paz, *Popular Anti-Catholicism*; Norman, *Anti-Catholicism*; Wheeler, *Old Enemies*.
61. Davies, *Protestant unity urg'd*, 10–13.
62. *Ibid.*, 6.

63. LeVine and Campbell, *Ethnocentrism*; Brown, *Prejudice*.
64. Boulter, *Letters*, Vol. 1, p. 210; Vol. 2, p. 70.
65. Quoted in Bartlett, *Fall and Rise*, 48.
66. Quoted in Barnard, *New Anatomy*, 282.
67. See Bartlett, *Fall and Rise*, 56–7, 77–81, 282–3.
68. Leighton, *Catholicism*, 67–86.
69. Woodward, *Present State of the Church of Ireland*, quoted in McCormack, *The Dublin Paper War*, 7.
70. [John Curry], *A Brief Account . . . of the Irish Rebellion*, 63.
71. Gilbert and Gubar, *Madwoman in the Attic*, 65–6.
72. Garber, *Vested Interests*, 10.
73. [John Curry], *Brief Account*, 1–2.
74. *Ibid.*, 3.
75. *Ibid.*, 4.
76. *Ibid.*, 50–1.
77. *Ibid.*, 47.
78. Garber, *Vested Interests*, 16.
79. Harris, *Fiction Unmask'd*, 1.
80. *Ibid.*, 15.
81. *Ibid.*, 1.
82. *Ibid.*, 8.
83. *Ibid.*, 3. The terror surrounding ‘mental reservation’ was recently on display again in response to Cardinal Desmond Connell’s explanation of his actions in the investigation of institutional child sexual abuse in the diocese of Dublin. When responding to questions by the Commission of Investigation under Judge Yvonne Murphy (investigating the way allegations of sexual abuse by priests and religious were dealt with by the Dublin Archdiocese from 1974 to 2005), the Cardinal gave completely inadequate and at times misleading answers, which he later justified by invoking ‘mental reservation’. His explanation provoked justified outrage.
84. *Ibid.*, 4.
85. *Ibid.*, 13–14.
86. *Ibid.*, 17.
87. *Ibid.*, 194.
88. Revisionism has had a very controversial history in twentieth- and twenty-first-century Ireland. It supposedly emerged from an attempt to write a version of Irish history which did not reproduce the nationalist tale of ‘faith and fatherland’, but it quickly became accused of perpetuating a colonial view of Irish history rather than providing anything really ‘objective’. On the ‘revisionist controversy’, see Brady (ed.), *Interpreting Irish History*; Foster, *Irish Story*; Boyce and O’Day, *Making of Modern Irish History*.
89. Hill, ‘Popery and Protestantism’, 116.

Undead: Unmaking Monsters in *Longsword*

Everyone said it was just a story. There's no such thing as the Boogeyman.¹

I

In order to reanimate the zombified and monstrous corpses of Irish Catholics, to try to make them human again, Irish history, and particularly the history internalised by Anglicans, would have to be rewritten to read like something other than a horror story. Thomas Leland was an eminently respectable figure to write such a history. He was a classical scholar, an expert on rhetoric and author of a much praised biography of Philip of Macedonia, a professor of oratory and history and Fellow of Trinity College, as well as an ordained minister of the Anglican church and chaplain to Lord Lieutenant Townshend. He was also widely known as a tolerant and liberal man with deep friendships across Christian denominations including many who were Catholic (such as Charles O'Connor, for whom he had managed to secure access to Trinity's collection of Irish manuscripts) and others who were Quaker. Certainly O'Connor believed that Leland had the skills to do the job properly as 'a philosopher, as well as a Christian'.² O'Connor's trust in Leland was bolstered when he delivered one of the most 'liberal' sermons about 1641 on the annual commemoration in October 1771, in which he, while accepting that Irish Catholic had committed atrocities, spent much more time excoriating Protestants for marginalising loyal Catholics in the period leading up to the rebellion and attacked the continued impoverishment of Catholics in contemporary Ireland, urging his congregation to 'reform our own conduct, and avert the return of God's judgement'.³ Famously, Edmund Burke was also convinced that Leland was the right man for the job, and pressed him to take up the task.⁴

It would take Leland until 1773 to actually publish his 'philosophical

history' of Ireland, a history that would eventually be read as a failure – a judgement I will argue was both premature and a misunderstanding of what Leland actually achieved. In the meantime, he composed the only fictional work that has ever been ascribed to him, *Longsword; The Earl of Salisbury* (March 1762), a novel which has attracted very little attention from literary critics or scholars, and none (as far as I can tell) from historians, who often neglect to even mention it when appraising Leland's historical work on Ireland. This novel tells the story of the return to England in 1225 of William de Longespée, the third earl of Salisbury and illegitimate son of Henry II, after the wars in France. His journey home is beset with many trials and tribulations. He is shipwrecked on the way back to England on the Isle of Rhé and attacked by the allies of his bitter enemy the Count Mal-leon who spreads rumours suggesting that Longsword is actually attempting to invade France and take control of the entire region for his own enrichment. While defending himself against these attacks, he befriends one of Mel-leon's initial supporters, Les Roches, and becomes deeply involved in Les Roches's complicated family difficulties, ultimately taking his daughter Jacqueline under his protection. When Longsword eventually arrives back in England he finds his castle appropriated and his wife taken prisoner by Raymond, nephew of the king's advisor Hubert, who have both insisted that Longsword is dead. Raymond hopes to marry Longsword's wife, Ela, and Raymond's brother Reginhald, a duplicitous monk living in a nearby monastery, assists in these plans. Luckily, Longsword arrives back in time to prevent the marriage from being (illegally) performed, has the culprits punished and regains control of his lands and the family he lost through the wars.

Leland's novel was influential, and should be considered crucial to the emergence of the historical as well as the Gothic novel, an influence felt by later Irish writers especially. When Anne Fuller set her own historical fiction *Alan Fitz-Osborne* (1786) in the reign of Henry II during the Barons' Wars, she combined Leland's historical sensibility with Horace Walpole's supernatural excesses. Fuller continued in the historical vein with *The Son of Ethelwolf: An Historical Tale* (1789), and James White, more specifically interested in a direct depiction of Ireland, wrote *Earl Strongbow; or, the History of Richard de Clare and the Beautiful Geraldina* (1789), in which the narrator meets the ghost of Strongbow who tells him his life story in (sometimes mind-numbingly boring, sometimes mildly amusing) detail.

While generally accepted as important in the development of the historical novel, *Longsword* has not been considered to have any relation to the important philosophical history Leland went on to write,

and is certainly not felt to have anything to do with Ireland. Both of these assessments, I suggest, are mistaken. In 1764, two years after the publication of *Longsword*, Horace Walpole wrote a novel, set in Italy, about the internal collapse of a medieval aristocratic family. He claimed to have written it in order to ‘escape’ from politics, to examine a world far removed from eighteenth-century England. The idea for the novel apparently came to him in a dream and when he began to write his dream up ‘the work grew on my hands, and I grew fond of it – add that I was very glad to think of anything rather than politics’.⁵ However, scholars have argued persuasively that, despite its apparent temporal and spatial distance from eighteenth-century England, *The Castle of Otranto* is in many ways a novel about contemporary politics, and that a serious reading of the novel has to take account of its imbrication in political debates of the day in which Walpole’s family was deeply implicated.⁶

Interestingly, when scholars have mentioned *Longsword*, it has usually been in relation to Walpole’s much more obviously significant novel. *Otranto* was a controversial sensation after its second preface (April 1765) revealed that rather than being a mere reprinting of a ‘found manuscript’ from the Dark Ages this was in fact a product the age of reason and one, moreover, written by a son of the former Prime Minister. In other words, Walpole’s Gothic novel was a scandal because it had been written in the eighteenth century and seemed to grant emotional and imaginative power to the medieval, the Catholic, the supernatural and superstition in an age when all these things should have been banished.⁷ E. J. Cleary contrasts the near hysterical reaction to the second edition of *Otranto* with what she calls the ‘universal’ and ‘unproblematic’ approval of *Longsword* two years’ earlier, due she believes to the latter’s exclusion ‘of any hint of the supernatural or marvellous’.⁸ This assessment needs to be considerably qualified – *Longsword* did not receive anything near ‘universal’ approval given that it was only reviewed twice and greeted with mild praise. The *Monthly Review* called it an ‘agreeable Romance’ in which the ‘truth of history is artfully interwoven with agreeable episodes’, speculating that the anonymous publication was the ‘production of some elegant female pen’,⁹ while the *Critical Review* pronounced it ‘a new and agreeable species of writing, in which the beauties of poetry and the advantages of history are happily united’.¹⁰ This resembles the reception given to the first edition of Walpole’s novel, although clearly *Otranto* was believed to be an exhibit of the supernatural superstition of the Catholic Dark Ages and, set on the Continent, was distanced from the English readers and much ‘safer’ on a first reading.

Although it has generally been ignored by subsequent critics (and

in fairness, it is not a very good novel), *Longsword* does deserve more attention. When they have examined it, critics have emphasised the novel's relevance to contemporary British rather than specifically Irish politics. Fiona Price argues that *Longsword* is really about the struggle against absolutism that had dominated British history since the sixteenth century, and that, crucially, it was published at a time when tensions between Britain and France and Spain were high. For Price, 'Leland's novel uses the reign of Henry III, when territories had just been won in Gascony, to warn George III about the dangers of favouritism and absolutism . . . Britain, the novel argues, can keep the balance abroad only if the distribution of power at home is correct'.¹¹ Toni Wein, too, believes that the novel is 'about' Britain, claiming as evidence a peon in Book V when the narrator asks 'when shall our country feel the blessings of a wise and virtuous rule? Shall faction and tumult for ever disturb the land, and sordid avarice and slavish adulation for ever surround the throne?' (Vol. 2, pp. 78–9) to (a never explicitly mentioned) George III as a 'glorious Monarch'.¹² For Wein, Leland's novel is 'chauvinistic' in its (English) nationalism,¹³ a rather premature judgement given that an Irish context for the novel is never even considered. Seeing *Longsword* in relation to British politics is understandable, and even plausible, but it does require the critic to ignore the fact that when Leland was writing the novel he was deep in researching Irish as well as British history, and that, therefore, there may be lessons specifically for the Irish as well as the British reader in his only fiction.

The novel is certainly trying to tell its readers something. Leland informs the reader in the opening Advertisement that:

It is generally expected that pieces of this kind should convey some useful moral: which moral, not always, perhaps, the most valuable or refined, is sometimes made to float on the surface of the narrative . . . Although [the author of this novel] cannot pretend to be very deep, yet he hopes he is clear. And if anything lies at the bottom, worth the picking up, it will be discovered without his direction.

It is unclear whether this is a kind of joke on the reader, since Leland's moral is all but transparent, unless it is the simple moral that there is no such thing as transparency. This is, after all, a novel in which situations and characters are always being misunderstood and misinterpreted, requiring later revised explanation. Apparently obvious morals – that the French are universally corrupt, that plots and conspiracies are everywhere – and facts – that *Longsword* is dead – are all corrected by later pieces of information, so that the real moral may be that the apparent always requires a more rigorous hermeneutic than we might think.

As Price points out, the novel continually highlights ‘the difficulty of distinguishing truth from falsehood in any immediate way’ – a point with which a scholar of rhetoric such as Leland would have been very familiar.¹⁴ And, if the apparently obvious really needs much greater scrutiny than it is generally afforded, this may be a clue that this novel is rather more complex – and about much more – than has previously been appreciated by its critics. Moreover, other supposedly ‘obvious’ things, like the universal barbarism of Catholics, may also be in need of greater investigation, because, if Walpole’s novel ultimately ends up displaying Catholics as superstitious and romanticised (while, perhaps, actually endorsing their view of reality), Leland’s novel makes very few compromises with the prejudices of his own class and readers.

Whether the novel is Gothic is another question. It has often been referenced, with *The Adventures of Sophia Berkley*, as one of the two Irish Gothic novels written and published before Walpole’s supposedly foundational *Otranto*.¹⁵ Historians of the Gothic, such as David Punter, have generally accorded it the respect of at least a passing reference (though Punter very strangely thinks that Leland, a professional historian, doesn’t know his history, while Walpole, a dilettante, does).¹⁶ As I indicated when considering *Sophia Berkley*, it is best to be suspicious of all arguments about origins, especially the origins of something as generically unstable as the Gothic novel. In *Gothic Ireland* I argued for a very diffusive and historically protracted growth of the Irish Gothic novel out of a large variety of ‘proto-Gothic’ genres and modes: martyrologies and horrific histories, anti-Catholic scatology, the sublime, antiquarianism, Graveyard Poetry. The historical novel is clearly another of these proto-Gothic ingredients, and obviously, *Longsword* is a major addition to this genre. Its contribution to the history of the Gothic novel is more substantial, however, than merely providing an appropriate medieval setting for a plot.

‘Medieval’, after all, is what ‘Gothic’ signified most straightforwardly in the eighteenth century, rather than the supernatural paraphernalia we now associate with the genre, so that in many ways *Longsword* is as unproblematically a Gothic novel as Clara Reeve’s *The Old English Baron*, which its author describes as ‘a Gothic Story, being a picture of Gothic times and manners’.¹⁷ As Alfred Longueil points out, ‘Walpole’s *Otranto* and Clara Reeve’s *Old English Baron* were literary “Gothic stories” . . . [in that] they aimed at a medieval atmosphere by means of medieval background’,¹⁸ and exactly the same applies to *Longsword*. Reeve in *The Progress of Romance* (1785) claims that *Longsword* is, in fact, the opposite of *Otranto*, in that it is a carefully constructed historical novel rather than a supernatural flight of fancy. Although

she acknowledges that it uses a great many of the same elements as Walpole's Gothic story, she argues that it does so in a controlled rather than a crazed way.¹⁹ Reeve believed her own novel, *The Old English Baron*, was a riposte to *Otranto*, and therefore more of an imitation of *Longsword*; her decision to subtitle her novel 'A Gothic Story' demonstrates how the term signified a time period rather than the supernatural baggage she rejected.

Moreover, because of Richard Hurd's *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762), the negative implications of 'Gothic' had been substantially neutralised in an ideological sense, and the term became to many ears simply a descriptive one, an adjective without prejudice signifying a period in time rather than a barbaric atavism. The late eighteenth century's nostalgic attraction to the Middle Ages emerges partially from a deep investment in the concept of the 'Gothic constitution', which was a central feature of much political thinking in British circles in the eighteenth century. During the English civil wars of the seventeenth century it had been somewhat fashionable in Republican circles to attack the monarchist past as 'gothick', a tendency best seen in James Harrington's *Oceana* (1656), which described a Europe whose classical republicanism had been destroyed by Gothic invaders and barbarians. This damaging attack on the Gothic transformation of the law was transformed after the Restoration. The common law, and the careful balancing of powers between monarch and parliament established through slow change and tradition, became a source of pride for many thinkers. Ancient rights and privileges which demanded respect and protection from the abuses of parliament or monarch were considered 'gothic' inheritances and prized as such.²⁰ As Robert Miles points out, 'Prior to the French Revolution, for any of those subscribing to Whiggism in its many varieties, "Gothic" possessed a positive rather than negative political valence. It was a common belief among Whigs and radicals alike that the English Parliament traced its origins to an ancient, or Gothic, constitution brought to England by the Saxons'.²¹ William Blackstone characterised the gothic constitution as being like a medieval castle the present generation inherited: 'an old Gothic castle, erected in the days of chivalry, but fitted up for a modern inhabitant. The moated ramparts, the embattled towers, and the trophied halls, are magnificent and venerable, but useless. The inferior apartments, now converted into rooms of convenience, are cheerful and commodious, though their approaches are winding and difficult'.²² Although a central plank in much conservative English political philosophy, the 'gothic constitution' had actually been used as a radical measure to defend Irish politics against colonial incursions by the British parliament. William Molyneux, in his *Case of*

Ireland, based much of his argument on the ‘ancient constitution’ which covered the peoples of both Britain and Ireland, because the ‘English and Britains that came over . . . with him [Henry II] retain’d all the Freedoms and immunities of Free-Born Subjects’.²³ Molyneux configured the reign of Henry II as crucial in the transfer of the ‘gothic constitution’ to Ireland, and it is no surprise when Henry’s son turns up as the central figure in a liberty-loving Irish Anglican, Thomas Leland.

The ‘Gothic constitution’ reappeared in the work of a number of prominent Irish Anglican thinkers who wished to examine the provenance of Ireland’s independence from Westminster interference. Controversially, Charles Lucas, a radical Dublin apothecary who was the guilds’ representative on the city commons in the 1740s, made a name for himself as a campaigner for the recognition and restoration of the ‘ancient rights’ of Irish Anglican freeholders. In a series of pamphlets, Lucas argued that ‘liberty’ was a natural right given to all rational men, ‘liberty’ meaning the right to live in a society governed by the consent of the governed to laws, and religious freedom, a state of affairs given to humankind by God, activated in the ‘Gothic’ period in Britain, and embodied in common law. Lucas’s argument was that any attempt by a British parliament to make laws for Ireland, was illegitimate and a breach of this ancient constitution since Ireland had its own parliament. He praised George II as the defender of the Gothic constitution, ‘by divine Providence, called to the most exalted Station that is known in any Part of the Earth. You preside over the GREATEST, because the FREEST PEOPLE in the World.’²⁴

For Edmund Burke, too, ancient rights were central to his thinking. In *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, he famously characterised the Glorious Revolution as a necessary evil ‘to preserve our ancient indisputable laws and liberties, and that constitution of government which is our only security for law and liberty’, going back even further than Magna Charta to ‘the more ancient standing law of the kingdom’.²⁵ He returned to William Blackstone’s metaphor of the constitution as a Gothic castle and pointed out, ‘Your constitution, it is true, whilst you were out of possession, suffered waste and dilapidation; but you possessed in some parts the walls, and in all the foundations of a noble and venerable castle. You might have repaired those walls; you might have built on those old foundations’.²⁶ The Gothic castle may have fallen into disorder, in other words, but that is no reason to raze it to the ground; instead, focus should be shifted towards repair and consolidation. Respect for the past would help protect rights and privileges more than any revolution which involved destruction of existing structures. While not dependent on the image of the Gothic castle, Thomas Leland

certainly wished to retain respect for the Gothic, or 'ancient' constitution, as he called it in *Longsword*. As Fiona Price points out, a central episode of the novel returns to the signing of the Magna Charta, which takes place off-page, in an episode where the 'ongoing fight to preserve ancient liberties is highlighted'.²⁷ In the constitutional clashes between the Irish patriotic and court factions, of which the most serious had been the Money Bill dispute, the 'ancient liberties' of the Irish kingdom had been constantly evoked, so that it is highly unlikely that Leland's recourse to such a highly controversial discourse has no Irish resonance. The entire novel revolves around an attempt to trample on ancient rights, to replace the rightful heir with a usurper, and the conclusion ensures that these ancient rights are preserved. Only the corrupt and self-serving seek to destroy ancient rights for their own benefit, and they are themselves routed and dead by the end of the story. As Price emphasises, 'confronted by anxieties concerning absolutism and the spread of luxury, Leland fashions a historical romance in which rupture (of inheritance, of political power) threatens but is ultimately avoided; here (as for Burke), inherited constitutional liberties and proper rule save the political day'.²⁸

Leland's respect for ancient traditions included a healthy appreciation for (though not uncritical adulation of) Irish prehistoric society. In opposition to negative depictions of the ancient Irish as incestuous, uncivilised barbarians, he took a balanced approach to the misty past and saw much to praise in ancient Ireland. In the 'Preliminary Discourse' to his *History of Ireland*, Leland admits that he is 'disqualified' to speak about ancient Ireland in any detail because he is 'totally unacquainted with the Irish language', a subtle but devastating dismissal of figures like David Hume who had written so scathingly about ancient Ireland while being simultaneously unable to read the source documents in their original language. Leland thanks his friend Charles O'Connor, a Catholic, for providing him with help on this issue,²⁹ and carefully warns that

if we enquire into the manners of the ancient Irish from English writers, we find their representations odious and disgusting; if from writers of their own race, they frequently break out into the most animated encomiums of their great ancestors. The one can scarcely allow them any virtue; the other, in their enthusiastic ardour, can scarcely discover the least imperfection in their laws, government, or manners . . . Yet, when we examine their records . . . [we find] an imperfect civilisation.³⁰

'Civilisation' is the key word in this description, even if it is employed in a qualified way, especially given that prejudiced versions of Irish prehistory depicted the island as a squalid place of barbarity and atavism.

Leland's assessment of the Irish past is always as judicious as possible, and he concludes that, far from the English presence being an unqualified benefit to the Irish inhabitants, 'we must confess that they were not taught [their] love of justice by the first English settlers' – the clear implication here being that the opposite is in fact the case.³¹

Respect for the Gothic past is a consistent feature of Leland's thinking in general, and of *Longsword* in particular. However, there are other reasons to consider the novel as an important beginning to Irish gothic fiction. In a short consideration of *Longsword*, Alison Milbank suggests that what makes the novel Gothic, and worthy of inclusion in a Gothic canon, is 'the strong emphasis on tropes of imprisonment, usurpation and forced unions within specifically Gothic sites of monastery, castle and dungeon, in a plot that involves fear, pain and other strong emotions'.³² Certainly, in the light of Walpole's novel *Otranto*, *Longsword's* Gothic foundations become clearer. While without Walpole, it would be difficult to read *Longsword* as a Gothic text, in Walpole's wake, the connections between Leland's novel and the Gothic become rather clearer. Other Gothic elements in the novel include a remarkably convoluted narrative system – stories within stories within stories – and most of all, the presence of that Gothic staple, the monkish villain, here in the guise of the despicable Reginhald.

And it is with this character that the connection between Leland's later philosophical history of Ireland and his only novel also becomes clearer. Leland was clearly under some pressure from the end of the 1750s and into the 1760s and 1770s to agree to produce his objective history of Ireland, and the main obstacle in his way was not so much the question of how to deal objectively with the 1641 massacres as how to handle the apparent 'cause' of 1641, the perfidious nature of Catholics as delineated by Temple and reiterated by Walter Harris. For both of these earlier historians, Catholics were monsters so warped by the doctrines of their church as to be incapable of being normal humans. Massacring Protestants is simply what Catholic monsters do as far as Temple is concerned, and to expect any different is to misunderstand the very nature of the Catholic threat. As Joseph Liechty puts it, the questions every eighteenth-century Irish Protestant had to answer in a post-1641 world were 'Are Irish catholics human? . . . is accounting for Catholic behaviour a subject for demonology?'³³ A philosophical history of Ireland could not be written while the answer to these questions remained a straightforward 'yes', so the Catholic had to be completely de-contaminated before a fair and even partly objective version of 1641 could even be contemplated. *Longsword*, I argue, amounts to a kind of de-contamination chamber in which Leland could experiment with

unmonstering the monstrous Catholic before he could go on to defang them in a history of the island.

Defences by Catholics against monstrous stereotyping, as for example by John Curry and considered in the previous chapter, were too biased to be effective, especially as Curry had simply reversed the accusation and painted Irish Anglican perfidy as the real reason behind the massacres of 1641. To be effective, a truly objective history needed to treat Catholics not as angels or demons but as human beings, perhaps overly influenced by a despotic theology but generally fair and decent and deserving of toleration and respect on political grounds (though not, and this also had to be clear, on theological grounds). What was needed, in other words, was what we would now call a thoroughly liberal account of Irish history that would decouple metaphysics and history. An 'objective' Anglican history needed to accept simultaneously that while many Catholics may be bad people, capable of committing atrocities, that did not make them agents of the devil, or satanic instruments of pure evil. Catholics needed to be unmonstered. What needed to be revealed to the Anglican reader was the great 'unthought' of Irish Anglicanism: the nearness, the familiarity of the Catholic as well as his alterity, because only in this way could the Anglican reader be convinced to move beyond horror towards fraternity. What Leland needed to show was that the Other is as basic to identity as the Self, or, as Michel Foucault puts it, that 'the Other . . . is not only a brother, but a twin, born, not of man, nor in man, but beside him and at the same time, in an identical newness, in an unavoidable duality'.³⁴ That Catholics and Anglicans are, in fact, brothers as well as enemies is central to de-fanging the Catholic vampire. To be a Protestant, after all, requires there to exist such a thing as a Catholic, and therefore the existence of the Protestant is dependent on the Catholic to a degree that is simply not true of the Catholic on the Protestant.

Catholicism was generally held to be a kind of perverse supplement, or heretical addition, to a pure 'Protestant' Christianity, a paganism grafted on to the primitive church from which true Christianity had only emerged since the Reformation. However, in being generated imaginatively as a horrific antithesis to Protestant righteousness, Catholicism also occupied a central position as a guarantor of Protestant identity. One commonality between the two denominations is, of course, their shared history before the Reformation. Writers who wished to by-pass the sectarian rancour of the post-Reformation period in order to locate ways and means of reconciliation could set their novels in the medieval period and effectively avoid all mention of religious divisions. Thus, Leland's decision to write a novel set in the thirteenth century is

understandable coming from a reconciling historian in eighteenth-century scholarship. By delving into a pre-Reformation past, in much the same way as Archbishop James Ussher when he was trying to argue for the *a priori* presence of the Anglican Church in early Christian Ireland and recognising St Patrick as a kind of Anglican *avant la lettre* in his *Discourse on the Religion Anciently professed by the Irish and British* (1622), Leland can return to a safer time away from the acrimony of the post-1641 period.

The pre-Reformation past is a version of what Mary Louise Pratt calls a 'contact zone', a 'space and time where [separated] subjects . . . are co-present, the point at which their trajectories now intersect'.³⁵ The Middle Ages is an in-between space and time where contiguity as well as congruence can be explored, exchanges made. Milbank argues that *Longsword* depicts the Catholic Middle Ages in romantic mode, nostalgically harking back to a heroic and chivalric age. In fact, like most Gothic novels, there is a palpable tension between the cosmic orderliness (under threat from disorder within the state) of the Middle Ages and the current disorder evident in understandings of the cosmos in the eighteenth century. Leland returns to this past and allows readers to encounter a real 'monster' in the mad monk Reginhald, but he surrounds him with Catholics who are perfectly respectable and generous-hearted and in contrast to whom he looks anomalous rather than typical. This technique neutralises the general monsterring of Catholicism I examined in Chapter 4, and allows the contemporary Irish Anglican reader to look around at his Catholic neighbours and begin to see them as, if not exactly 'normal' as such, at least unmonstrous.

Experimenting with this technique in a historical novel was for Leland a safe way of unmonsterring the Catholic and testing the political waters before attempting the much more dangerous job of writing of a history of Ireland. This is an experiment through a work of imaginative fiction, though one thoroughly grounded in history (a history with a happy ending), in which all the characters, because of the medieval setting, are Catholics, but also where a truly bad Catholic is placed under the spotlight and examined as if a witness in a trial to determine the origins of Catholic evil. Put simply, given the general benevolence of the other Catholic characters of the novel, that one monk is contemptible sets him as the exception rather than the rule and makes Catholic villainy particular rather than general. Catholics are not villains; particular Catholics are. And the cause of their villainy is not their Catholicism *per se* but rather the fact that they are disordered individuals. This is not a method of absolving Catholicism of being a pernicious theological system. It remains, in the novel, more open to abuse by evildoers than

any potential Protestant system. However, it is merely an instrument rather than a cause of evil. And more than that, it can sometimes be used for good.

As I have pointed out, the early Gothic is often accused – rightly – of a deep anti-Catholicism, of seeing Catholicism and Catholics as the source of evil in the world, and the Gothic is correctly read as a profoundly Protestant form. As Leslie Fiedler famously argued, ‘like most other classic forms of the novel, the gothic romance is Protestant in ethos’ with a ‘natural’ aversion to Catholicism, a judgement echoed by Chris Baldick, who insists that ‘the consciously Protestant pioneers of the Gothic novel raise the old ghosts of Catholic Europe only to exorcise them’.³⁶ This is absolutely right. However, running alongside this deeply reactionary, exclusionist politics, many critics have also recognised a concomitant nostalgia for, and love of, the Catholic past (and even the Catholic Church as a whole). That the Gothic contains a powerfully nostalgic element has also been vigorously denied. Baldick and Mighall have, in fact, argued that ‘the assimilation of Gothic fiction into romantic and pre-romantic nostalgia for the Middle Ages’ has been a serious error in Gothic criticism. They point out that most of the early Gothic novels were not set in the Middle Ages and insist that even those that were never idealised this period but instead depicted it as nightmarish, populated by demonic priests and repressive patriarchs: ‘Most Gothic novels have little to do with “the medieval world”, especially not an idealised one; they represent the past not as paradisiacal but as “nasty” in its “possessive” curtailing of individual liberties; and they gratefully endorse Protestant bourgeois values as “kinder” than those of feudal barons’.³⁷ While certainly a bracing deviation from the ‘transgressive’ hypothesis of previous Gothic criticism, the argument put forward by Baldick and Mighall overlooks the desire for an ordered, metaphysically stable world that suffuses the Gothic, and they also pass over the fact that, in consistently sexualising the supposedly reviled Catholics, Gothic writers also (sometimes completely unwittingly) revealed a voyeuristic craving to at the very least gaze upon that which they rationally rejected as repulsive.

Rosemary Jackson argues that Gothic should be seen as a literature of desire for that which is external and excluded, that which is taboo,³⁸ and for Protestant cultures, Catholicism has long occupied the space of the forbidden and the weird. For this reason, anti-Catholicism can be read as a form of Orientalism, in that it is a discourse motivated by a hatred for that which it sees as inherently attractive and sexually desirable. As Richard Hofstadter points out, anti-Catholic rhetoric is the ‘pornography of the Puritan’.³⁹ In the Catholic, the Protestant sees everything

which he has been denied, and this denial allows him to see Catholicism as what Edward Said in another context called ‘a living tableau of queerness’.⁴⁰ Thus, for the Protestant spectator, the Catholic Other represents not only absolute difference from the Self, and a repository of all that is abjected and rejected from normality, but also, and for that very reason, a site of illegitimate and transgressive desire. In other words, the Gothic, pervaded by anti-Catholicism, is often powered by an ‘attraction–repulsion’ for Catholicism and Catholics. This schizoid Protestant relationship to Catholics is brought to bear on Thomas Leland as he came to write *Longsword*, where he had to figure out how to combine a conviction that Catholics have been guilty of terrible atrocities in the past (notably in 1641) and an Anglican abhorrence of Catholic theology with a sense that Catholics are not really all that different and should be brought into public life and normalised. The Money Bill dispute had created a constituency certainly more open and receptive to the possibility that Catholics could be potential allies as well as deadly enemies, but a very vocal conservative group in the Anglican enclave was still unwilling to countenance any change of attitude toward the zombie hoards.

II

Unmaking a monster in which a particular culture is heavily invested is not easy, but it has been attempted a number of times. For example, it is a process that has been worked through in relation to vampires in the twentieth century, beginning with the attempt to make Count Dracula himself more sympathetic in Fred Saberhagen’s *The Dracula Tapes* (1975) and Frank Langella’s version of the Count in *Dracula* (stage play 1977–80; film, 1979, dir. John Badham), which presented him as a sexual saviour to repressed Western women. George Romero gave the world a sad and pathetic teenage vampire in *Martin* (1986), more pitiable than frightening, and this sympathising strain continued with the vampires of Angel in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997–2003) and the Cullen family in the *Twilight* series (written by Stephenie Meyer, 2005–8).⁴¹ The transformation of the vampire from a satanic freak to a likeable and often extraordinarily attractive hero has taken place over a century and has been a hugely successful undertaking. There are profound socio-cultural reasons why previously reviled monsters, particularly vampires (probably because they are often physically attractive) became increasingly sympathetic as the twentieth century progressed. The monsters of the past were often seen to represent people marginalised by the politics of normality, and – commenting on the

late 1980s – Margaret Carter claims that ‘creators of fictional vampires often choose the Romantic path of identification with the “alien” supernatural being, rather than with the superstitious majority bent on excluding and destroying him or her’.⁴² After all, outsiders are no longer so unproblematically hated but are often lionized as heroes oppressed by a conservative society. Monsters appeal to certain kinds of readers, too, like teenagers, who worry that they are considered monstrous by adults and who can see themselves reflected in liminal figures like vampires and werewolves. As Carol Senf points out, ‘the changing attitudes towards authority and toward rebellion against authority have . . . led to a more sympathetic treatment of the vampire’.⁴³ Making the vampire more sympathetic has required enormous social and cultural changes as well as a new range of literary, cinematic and televisual representations, and the work is still not really complete. For Leland to attempt the same kind of transformation of Catholics in the eighteenth century was brave.

The tactic taken by Leland to effect this unmonstering resembles one highlighted by the critic Robin Wood in his study of monsters of the 1970s. Wood argues that monsters are where cultures dump their repressed desires, those generated not merely by the universal and basic repression central to the human’s entry into civilisation but also, adapting Herbert Marcuse, by the ‘surplus repression’ that is specific to particular cultures and societies and which articulates what that particular culture finds most disgusting or disturbing, ‘the process whereby people are conditioned from earliest infancy to take on predetermined roles within that culture’.⁴⁴ The monster contains everything that a specific society wishes to banish from its normative version of the self, which is one reason why it needs to be exorcised and destroyed repeatedly, since adhering to normality is a never-ending project for each individual. It is important to be hesitant in using such a politically and ideologically weighted word as ‘repression’ about such monstering because it suggests too strongly an unconscious process over which individuals have little or no control. If the eighteenth-century monster represents Catholics, as I have repeatedly argued, it might be rightly objected that there was no great ‘repression’ of anti-Catholicism in eighteenth-century Irish culture – of course, the same is true of the kinds of groups Wood argues are monstered in twentieth-century America: homosexuals, feminists, the working class – all openly reviled groups and all very publicly disadvantaged.

However, what Wood is drawing attention to is that the structure of horror dramatises the act of repression. In one conventional horror plot, the monster, which represents the social groups so despised by the dominant culture, invades normal society and is then combated by

agents of normativity who kill and banish it, allowing social repression to be reasserted at the end. As Wood puts it:

central to . . . [the horror film] . . . is the actual . . . dramatization of the repressed . . . in the figure of the Monster. One might say that the true subject of the horror genre is the struggle for recognition of all that our civilization represses or oppresses, its re-emergence dramatized . . . as an object of horror . . . and the happy ending (when it exists) typically signifying the restoration of repression.⁴⁵

Now, obviously Wood's theory is too generalised and broad-stroke to be convincing as a universal theory of horror, but he usefully nuanced it later, identifying, for example, what he called 'progressive' versions of the monster where the audience/reader is invited to begin to deconstruct the monster's otherness, to actually identify with the monstrous and against the conservative society that seeks to kill it.⁴⁶ Perhaps the best representative of a 'progressive' horror film along the lines of Wood's theory is James Whale's brilliant *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935), where Boris Karloff's performance as Frankenstein's monster is carefully modulated so as to elicit audience sympathy, and it becomes almost impossible by the end of the film to support the baying village elders who want the creature destroyed.

Although Wood's revision of his original theory is useful for understanding a great many Gothic and horror texts, it is necessary to nuance his argument slightly. In some kinds of horror, the audience is not called to identify with the monster but is asked to dispense with notions of monstrosity altogether. These are narratives where the villain remains villainous, but rather than accept the over-inflated version of evil ascribed to him by the reading culture, the text asks if it is possible to imagine badness without monstrosity. In a reversal of the horror story where the sceptical observer has to be brought to recognise that they are not dealing with just a bad person but an incarnation of metaphysical evil (the stories of M. R. James are the best examples of this), in some cases readers/audiences are presented with an example of a figure they would normally consider a creature of the outer darkness only to find that Satan is not actually behind everything and they are just dealing with a very dangerous individual.

In contemporary terms, a good example of this shift from monstrous evil to individual badness is certain treatments of the paedophile, perhaps the most reviled figure in current culture. Given contemporary sensitivities it is very easy for a film-maker or writer to gesture towards a character's sexual interest in children as a shorthand way to implicate them in metaphysical evil. Examples of horror texts which demonise

characters by invoking their sexual desire for child characters include Clive Barker's *The Damnation Game* (1985) and the recent (and terrible) film *The Human Centipede* (2009; direct. Tom Six), although Quilp's dwarfish and possibly satanic monstrosity was compounded by his lascivious desire to make Little Nell his second wife in Charles Dickens's *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840–1). Other more dangerous texts have taken more care with the paedophile figure and tried to 'humanise' him (an expression which makes clear the problems involved in such exercises as it indicates that even the suggestion of paedophilia tends to 'dehumanise' perpetrators in the eyes of the public). An interesting example of a film which attempts to humanise the paedophile monster is *The Woodsman* (2004; dir. Nicole Kassell), which invokes fairy-tale tropes and iconography to conjure a sense of menace and terror around its central character, a paedophile⁴⁷ newly released from prison (played by Kevin Bacon, an actor with whom audiences appear to have difficulties sympathising in general, who had already played a one-dimensional, sadistic, psychologically warped 'paedophile' in the film *Sleepers* (1996; dir. Barry Levinson)); it slowly and carefully delineates his character as not only likeable but also heroic (though there remain a great many problems with the depiction of paedophilia in this film). A more complex attempt to make a child rapist a three-dimensional character is the controversial *Happiness* (1998; dir. Todd Solondz), which features an extremely disturbed paedophile who progresses from masturbating to tween magazines to sodomising his son's friend on a sleep over. While the film clearly condemns this character's behaviour, and ends with his arrest and imprisonment, it also invites the audience to see him as a multifaceted and tragic figure rather than an inhuman demon.

'Progressive' is not really the right term for these kinds of horror stories since, unlike the films identified by Wood, they do not ask us to be supportive of or tolerate the social group being unmonstered (thankfully we are not asked to see paedophilia or paedophiles as acceptable and in need of integration). Instead they demand that individuals be decoupled from their monstrous tendencies. The individual paedophile is to be pitied, though paedophilia is still treated as a serious crime. These texts are 'liberal' in the more robust sense since the audience is not asked to sympathise with an abstract idea but with individual people who have complex psychological lives, families and feelings. Of course, a text can have both 'conservative' and 'liberal' elements to it, 'regressive' and 'progressive' elements. However, such nuancing is useful when attempting to analyse the unmonstering attempts of *Longsword*.

The shift away from the cosmic evil of the Catholic towards a more

localized – and for that reason, more containable strain – of evil explains much of *Longsword's* lack of power as a novel. Although its plot has many twists and turns, it consistently refuses to indulge in fantasies about a global Catholic conspiracy such as are found in the fulminations of Walter Harris and Richard Woodward. Conspiracies are constantly brought up, but repeatedly dismissed as fantasies. When treating of rumours and conspiracies in *Longsword*, Leland confirms the opinions of one reviewer of John Curry's *Historical Memoirs* who wrote that exaggeration of the numbers killed in 1641 is hardly surprising for 'those who are old enough to remember the many strange reports that flew like wild-fire from one part of England to another, upon what was called runaway Saturday in the late rebellion of 1745'. Fear was the reason why such exaggerations were believed because 'when facts are seen through the medium of fear, they appear of course magnified beyond the bounds of truth'.⁴⁸ This sentiment is repeated in *Longsword* where one character reflects that 'terror seemed to have greater influence than entreaties or promises' (Vol. 1, p. 45). Such fear needs to be dispelled, and cooler heads prevail, so that rumours and exaggerations can be examined in as objective a manner as possible. On almost all occasions where a conspiracy could be inferred in *Longsword*, Leland's narrator reveals that there is no such thing in existence.

Longsword's enemy Count Savouré pretends to find the presence of *Longsword* and his men in the region evidence of a vast conspiracy to invade France, 'affected to regard the tale of their distress as vain and fictitious; and expressing strong apprehensions of a conspiracy formed by his enemies in concert with his officer to seize the island' (Vol. 1, p. 50). The Count sounds a bit like those paranoid Protestants who imagined that the appearance of a Jesuit in an area was an indication that 1641 was about to be re-enacted. Rumours and conspiracy theories here are simply pretexts for action desired all along. Instead of such rumours and rumblings gaining sway over the main characters in the novel, it instead shows how supposedly implacable enemies become friends, such as Les Roches and *Longsword*. They not only save each other's life on numerous occasions but also become life-long companions (perhaps as a good example to Leland's Anglican readers). Rivalries between compatriots are also warned against, and a 'reluctance against shedding the blood of countrymen' praised since such compatriots should have become 'endeared' to one another 'by natural affection and a long social intercourse' (an indirect rebuke to John Temple who blamed Protestants for growing warm and friendly towards their native Irish neighbours and therefore less suspicious of their behaviour) (Vol. 1, p. 65).

Jumping to an anti-Catholic conclusion is calmly prevented

throughout the novel. Justly tired of the oppression of his enemy Mal-leon, Longsword inveighs against the whole of France, sounding briefly like a character in Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*: 'Is charity so great a crime? Is tyranny suffered to rage thus without control in France?' He is answered with judicious cool by a Cistercian abbot who looks at him 'with a look in which affection and authority were united', instructing him that 'the time calls for calm and determined measures' rather than passionate and harsh outpourings of vitriol that generalise (Vol. 1, pp. 40–1). It is 'suspicion, grief, and imagination' that spreads nervous confirmations of a conspiracy among the supporters of Mal-leon rather than facts (Vol. 1, p. 68). There is, of course, a kind of 'Catholic' conspiracy at the heart of the book, a conspiracy to deprive Longsword of his lands, his son and his wife by a cabal with the monk Reginhald, his brother Grey and Duke Raymond as its chief plotters (though various lackeys come and go), but again this conspiracy is a localized concern and is not being orchestrated by mitred demons in the cloisters of the Vatican.

In *Fiction Unmask'd*, Harris asks, regarding the Gunpowder plot, 'surely it cannot be a necessary Consequence, that because only thirteen are discovered in a Plot, that no more are embarked upon it?'⁴⁹ In *Longsword*, Leland effectively replies that although it could be said that three people are behind the plot to destroy William de Longespée this does not mean that they all share equally in guilt or enthusiasm, and it does not mean either that the actual conspirators are monsters. Although Raymond would be the chief beneficiary of the plot to steal Longsword's lands and convince his wife Ela to marry him, he is a figure riven with guilt and doubts, genuinely in love with Ela and frequently regretful that he has to hurt her to take what he wants. Indeed, at one point, 'with all the bitterness of remorse, he viewed the majestic ruins of exalted beauty and greatness, the fatal effect of his lawless passions' and immediately 'his haughty soul melted into pity' (Vol. 2, p. 146). Likewise, Grey becomes nervous and guilty at numerous points in the plot, and he too is not as bad as he initially seems. Even Reginhald is 'too conscious of his guilt not to feel the most violent secret emotions of terror' (Vol. 2, p. 141).

As we have seen, John Curry and other historians enacted a kind of religious cross-dressing, writing as Anglicans in drag in order to further their political and ideological agendas. This ecumenical cross-dressing was later to be performed by the Gothic writers Charles Maturin (writing as Dennis Jasper Murphy) and Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (writing as Father Francis Purcell). Although Leland was not capable of this level of denominational transgression, he does write as a narrator of the Catholic Middle Ages, which required him, in John Patrick Delury's

terms, to write ‘across the traditional line of antagonism’, which is important.⁵⁰ Horace Walpole adopted a medieval guise when writing a ‘sympathetic’ novel of the Middle Ages, posing as Onuphrio Muralto, Canon of the Church of St. Nicholas at Otranto; Thomas Leland’s choice to write a medieval novel without distancing his narrator from the time and events depicted means that he too dons a medieval Catholic garb and crosses party lines.

This strategy is particularly powerful in a period before the medieval and the Gothic had gone through complete rehabilitation, given that Leland’s novel was published prior to those of Walpole and Reeve, who both refashioned the Middle Ages so that it became legitimate in a fictional sense. Praising ‘medieval’ traces which remain in contemporary society – particularly the medieval Gothic constitution – sets Leland apart from modernisers who wish to see the medieval wiped out as an atavistic hangover. David Lloyd points out that the term ‘medieval’ has extraordinarily negative connotations in much discourse: ‘When we name certain social formations “medieval”, then, are we designating simply formations that have yet to be and will be, in the fullness of time, sublimated into modernity, or are we designating the more troubling sites of resistance and recalcitrance to modernity’s advent?’⁵¹ In this case, Leland directly addresses the tendency to characterise the medieval past as barbarous, and the modernising fantasy that the past could be completely obliterated and a new temporal order inaugurated. Revolt against tradition is here designated as illegitimate rather than medieval tradition itself. If the usurpers like Reginhald and Grey are dangerous figures, then Longsword, who wishes to pass on an intact inheritance to his son in the form of his castle home, is an embodiment of medieval continuity. If, to the reformers and the republicans of the Civil War, and later to revolutionaries like Thomas Paine, the medieval past was one characterised by ‘a kind of sluggish fixity that inhibits progress’,⁵² to Leland it is, contrarily, the source of progress, the site of resistance to tyranny, and the place where liberty was established and enshrined (specifically with the signing of Magna Charta).

Reginhald is clearly the most important figure here. What Leland is very careful to do is separate him out from his co-religionists and even his fellow monks. Reginhald is a monk ‘whose mind but ill-suited his profession, or his residence in a seat of piety’ (Vol. 2, p. 1). Indeed, so different is he from his fellow monks that Reginhald is actually terrified of them, ‘whom he dreaded from a consciousness of his own excesses’ (Vol. 2, p. 2). They too feel nothing but antipathy towards him, though they also ‘feared the power which supported, or seemed to support him’ (Vol. 2, p. 2). There is certainly a corruption here given that these

monks 'turned their eyes from his offenses, and suffered him to disgrace and disturb their house by scandalous excesses, utterly subversive of holy discipline and order', including drunkenness, sexual perversion and profanity (Vol. 2, pp. 2–3). The problem for the monks is not that they are evil, or agents of the devil, but that they are dependent on Raymond for the continuance of their order. Because the secular arm controls the sacred instrument, the monks are essentially powerless to remove Reginhald. Leland's evil monk is in fact dependent on secular powers – a far cry from the typical anti-Catholic rhetoric which envisioned the pope attempting to exert control over the state. Where Walter Harris obsesses over the ability of the evil tentacles of Catholic power to reach from the Vatican to overthrow rightful monarchs, Leland highlights the despotic power of petty local lords who conduct a reign of terror over holy men and women whose only wish is to serve God rather than man. Although Reginhald acts extremely imperiously, his schemes very quickly come to nothing. In fact, he is terrified when in the presence of the Countess Ela, before whom 'he stood abashed and confused; and the consciousness of his own vile purposes served to increase his disorder', and she is quick to respond when he claims it is her duty under God to marry Raymond, calling him an 'abandoned and hateful wretch' who profanes 'the name of heaven' (Vol. 2, pp. 10, 14–15).

Reginhald is not so much an agent of Satan, then, as a rather pathetic and insecure man who desperately and ineffectually attempts to use the Catholic Church as a way to achieve his ambitions. It is true that, now and again, the devil does appear in the frame as an analogous figure to Reginhald and the other villains, so that the novel often seems on the verge of appealing to the satanic as a way of explaining how such terrible things happen to good men and women. The reader is told that Grey, 'like the great enemy of mankind', watches 'to ensnare the innocent, and to seduce the weak', but it is also clear that this is indeed an analogy rather than description of anything real (Vol. 2, p. 20). The devil is not literally assisting Reginhald and his brother. Moreover, it is the Catholic monks who eventually find Reginhald out. Before the plot collapses on his head the 'enormities' of Reginhald's crimes are revealed. Outstanding amongst them is his rape of a 'country maiden' whom he attempts to 'swap', once sexually satiated with her, for the concubine of another of his associates, who is so disgusted that he reports Reginhald to the rest of the fraternity: 'the whole cloister was instantly filled with sorrow and indignation. Every instance of outrage and irreverence which he had committed were now recalled to mind' (Vol. 2, pp. 139–40). The monks resolve to make sure that Reginhald suffers the full judicial consequences of his actions. The difference between Reginhald and monks

such as Ambrosio in Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796) or Schedoni in Anne Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1797) is striking. The crimes of Ambrosio and Schedoni are covered up by others, because of the inherent secrecy and obscurity of Catholicism itself, and the kind of 'mental reservation' attacked by Harris, according to which the Catholic Church permits debauchery as long as the intention to serve God can be argued. This inherent Catholic perversity is not the reason Reginhald gets away with his crimes for so long, and moreover, once he is expelled, the evil he represents is also eradicated. When Reginhald is hanged, the reader is informed that his evil has been exorcised and the monastery can return to a state of true holiness: 'The wicked Reginhald, condemned by the man for whom he had proceeded to such enormous guilt, was led away, in vain imploring mercy, urging the unmerited severity of his fate, and gnashing his teeth in rage and despair' (Vol. 2, p. 155).

Leland's sympathetic treatment of the Catholic as a potentially loyal citizen may have been partly influenced by attempts which his Catholic friends were making at the time to devise an oath of allegiance to the king which Irish Catholics could take without having to declare against Catholic doctrines – an effort which would have in one fell swoop rendered unconvincing attempts to depict Irish Catholics as inherently disloyal. Charles O'Connor in particular was

convinced that a solemn denial by Catholics of Protestant charges that Catholic teaching, among other things, laid down that no faith should be kept with heretics or that the pope could dispense Catholics from the obligations of an oath, would bring about a new understanding between Catholics and Protestants and thus facilitate the admission of Catholics to the category of citizen.⁵³

While O'Connor's efforts were not successful, and indeed Rome was not very enthusiastic about the idea of an oath, the effort in itself may have been enough to convince Leland that Catholics were serious about their relationship with the Anglican state and that disloyalty was a projection of Anglican fears.

I am suggesting, then, that *Longsword* should be read as Leland's imaginative rapprochement with Catholics (though not Catholicism) and the medieval as a means of preparing imaginatively for a potential social rapprochement between political bedfellows in Ireland, like himself and Charles O'Connor. Indeed, much of Leland's writing more generally could be read as part of this ideological project of bringing together different and hitherto opposing sections of Irish society on a non-sectarian basis. In a suggestive examination of what she calls the 'School of Irish Oratory' Katherine O'Donnell has argued that Trinity

College intellectuals like Leland, who spent much of their careers examining rhetoric and linguistics, could be seen as working in imaginative sympathy with Gaelic Ireland, which was often characterised as adept in the rhetorical arts. In a period when rhetoric tended to be caricatured as dangerous, practiced by political subversives out to deceive and bamboozle agents of legitimate state authority, Trinity scholars like Leland and Dr John Lawson praised rhetoric and the great rhetoricians of the past like Demosthenes and Cicero as potent examples to the present: 'Their study of eloquence takes the speeches of Demosthenes and Cicero as exemplary, evoking the image of a speaker stirring the passion for justice in a civic assembly and inspiring a sense of community and common cause against tyrannical rule'.⁵⁴ In this sense, the examination of rhetoric and oratory coincided with Leland's sense of an ancient constitution which enshrined rights and privileges in need of vigorous and powerful defence against so-called modernising projects. Irish Anglican patriotism found an effective voice in the example of Demosthenes, as set forth in Leland's *The Orations of Demosthenes against Philip* (1754–61). Indeed, as Robert Welch explains, this book quickly became 'the model for the Anglo-Irish tradition of parliamentary speaking as practised by Edmund Burke, Henry Grattan, John Philpot Curran, and others of his students in accordance with the idea of exalted style'.⁵⁵

Leland's ideological optimism and his political ecumenism could go some way to help explain the strange decision to end *Longsword* with the protagonist surviving the poison which killed him in reality. Christina Morin points to the ending of the novel as important, noting that 'it is, in fact, William's ghostly return from the dead that precipitates the denouement of the tale, ousting the intruders, freeing Ela from enslavement in her own home, and reuniting the young family in what seems to be a happy-ever-after conclusion'. This is a domestic reconciliation mirrored by the rapprochement within public life as traitors are banished and Longsword returned to his rightful place in political as well as family life. Morin argues that there is rather too much narrative emphasis on despair and melancholia to be altogether displaced by the apparently joyful conclusion, too much violence has taken place to render the ending really satisfying.⁵⁶ However, what really undermines the novel's favourable conclusion is the reader's knowledge that the historical Longsword was indeed poisoned and died upon his return from France, and that despite his close attention to history, Leland has altered the past in order to manufacture the happy ending. Leland is telling the reader what 'should have happened' rather than what did happen. This utopian strategy implicates *Longsword* in what the Marxist Ernst Bloch has called a 'Principle of Hope'. Fredric Jameson views narrative

as where the ‘hurts’ of history are both reflected and potentially healed of trauma through ‘happy’ conclusions. Jameson points out that oppressive, alienating experience is the basic truth of historical process – history is ‘what hurts’, and alienation is what happens when human beings live in reality. However, humans also have the ability to imagine a better, different reality, which is what narrative – especially fantastic narrative – is for since it allows us to provide imaginative resolutions to real problems and thus help restore hope for the future. This leads Jameson to endorsing Bloch’s ‘utopian’ reading of fairy tales, ‘with its magical wish-fulfilments and its Utopian fantasies of plenty’.⁵⁷

It is crucial to consider the fairy-tale ending of *Longsword* when examining the novel as a kind of utopian fiction, because in it, Leland takes one historical fact – that Longsword was indeed killed by poison when he returned home – and transforms it to give historical figures a counterfactual happy-ever-after that they were not permitted in reality. *Longsword*’s conclusion is an expression of a kind of Jamesonian hope of a non-oppressive future, the kind of hope particularly necessary in a country like Ireland, divided bitterly between Protestants and Catholics without any apparent indication of reconciliation in the future. In this way, by writing *Longsword*, Leland participated in a ‘socially symbolic act’ as it allowed him to deal with both the hurts of history and offer possible means by which these hurts could be overcome imaginatively (it is in the act of an imaginative leap that the potential for political reconciliation is first considered). Morin is concerned at what appears to be the dismissal of historical fact in *Longsword*’s utopian ending, but it might be better to read the end of the novel through Jameson’s or Ernst Bloch’s eyes, where the ‘principle of hope’ overcomes a narrative of despair, resurrection defeats death, friendship prevails over enmity.

III

Longsword, and the various unmonstrering strategies employed within it, were practice for the far more (historically) important treatment of Catholics and the Catholic Church in Leland’s later *The History of Ireland from the Invasion of Henry II with preliminary Discourse on the Ancient State of that Kingdom* (1773). Leland’s history was quickly condemned when it was first published by the very Catholics who had urged him to write it, primarily because it seemed to them to treat Catholics in exactly the same way as had previous histories. Leland had been urged to write a ‘philosophical’ history, a rival to that written by the Scottish philosopher David Hume, whose *History of England* (1754–2)

treated Catholics in an appalling manner, as well as to 'correct' extremist Protestant views of 1641. As Joseph Liechty remarks, comparing Leland's treatment of 1641 to that of David Hume's supposedly philosophical treatment is very telling, as in Hume's considered view the rebellion was 'an event memorable in the annals of human kind' because of its 'cruelty', 'the most barbarous, that ever, in any nation, was known or heard of', 'worthy to be held in perpetual detestation and abhorrence'.⁵⁸ For a supposedly model example of philosophical history, of course, Hume's analysis of Ireland is now notorious for its lack of liberalism and impartiality, given his apparent conviction that the island was populated by 'barbarous savages'.⁵⁹

Taking into account the influence of Hume's 'analysis', a history from an equally respectable (though more qualified) figure was needed, and Leland was urged to write a work of what we would now call historical revisionism, to set Irish history on a 'value-free' foothold, an objective viewpoint above the clamour and tension of sectarian explanations that had not been at all helpful in the decades before the 1770s. Since the publication of his history, however, Leland has been found wanting in most respects, not only by his Catholic friends, who were frankly shocked at what he actually wrote, but also by subsequent historians, who have concluded that he was ultimately not up to the job at hand. Leland's Catholic associates were certainly appalled, and John Curry immediately penned a response in pamphlet form, *Remarks on certain passages in Dr. Leland's History of Ireland* (1773). Edmund Burke, too, while in an anonymous review in the *Annual Register* praised the *History* later tended to disparage it and express his disappointment with Leland's treatment of 1641 claiming (rather cruelly) that once Leland began writing it 'he thought only of himself and the bookseller'.⁶⁰ More recently, Joep Leerssen has argued that 'instead of being, as was expected, balanced and tolerant, Leland's account of 1641 came down firmly on the side of the Temples and Humes, giving all the gory detail contained in the traditional anti-Catholic histories'.⁶¹ Indeed, one recent critic, Joseph Liechty, has put forward the publication of Leland's history as a case study of 'the depth of Catholic/Protestant conflict' in Ireland demonstrating that even when inclined to be generous and impartial, a Protestant writer had no real choice but to adopt a biased position in relation to 1641.⁶²

This, I feel, is an unfair verdict to pass on Leland's major work: not only is it a far more 'philosophical' history than Hume's or any other historical work written about Ireland in this period, it is essentially as objective a history as a liberal Anglican could write, and it is more or less correct in its treatment of the events it narrates. As Clare O'Halloran

correctly notes, Leland was ‘more moderate than either Hume or Harris’ in dealing with 1641 (though, it must be said, it would be difficult to be more extreme than either of these two ‘historians’).⁶³ Leland did warn O’Conor he would write ‘like a protestant’, but it seems that O’Conor did not take his warning seriously enough or understand the point Leland was trying to convey (‘I replied that I had hopes that the protestant would still be under the control of the philosopher’).⁶⁴ The greatest problem with Leland’s history also characterises the supposedly value-free histories written by revisionists in the 1940s and 1950s: it is as dull as dishwater. If Leland was attempting to write a controversial and popular account of Irish history he failed miserably. His book sold badly and, as Lietchy argues, his *History* ‘disappointed just about everyone’, not just his Catholic friends but also conservative Anglicans, who noticed that it gave not the slightest attention to any defence of the upholding of the penal laws.⁶⁵

It is important to make the point that there are philosophical and historiographical problems with writing any history with the passion taken out. One of these problems is that by attempting to be objective, the historian necessarily plays down what Brendan Bradshaw has described in another context as the ‘cataclysmic element of Irish history’, and what Frederick Jameson has called the ‘hurts of history’ are mitigated by reason and calm, objective observation.⁶⁶ Twentieth-century Irish revisionists wrote to absolve Irish history writing of the nationalist teleology and bitterness traditional to it by that time, an ideological position which often made their histories read as if they were written from the ‘British perspective’. Leland attempts the more difficult task of writing from within an Irish Anglican perspective, largely for Irish Anglican readers, while trying to bring them to a more broadly sympathetic view of their fellow-Irish neighbours, Catholics, a group of people they had been more used to seeing as monsters disguised as normal human beings. This is very delicate task as Leland’s job is to convince his own constituency – and we should never forget that Leland was a proud Anglican minister – to accept the basic humanity of a set of people they had been trained to see as the equivalents of vampires and zombies. After all, de-fanging the vampire is always more difficult than simply staking him.

Although sectarian tensions in Britain had died down somewhat, and Catholics were now being judged more leniently by the British public, in Ireland, these tensions had not been allowed to dampen down at all, and indeed, by the time Leland actually started to write his history, the fires of sectarian hatred were being stoked again because of the beginnings of agrarian agitation in Munster. Bishop Woodward was

soon to publish his infamous tract *The Present State of the Church of Ireland*, in which the traditional version of the Irish Catholic monster is restated firmly and clearly, if a little hysterically, and the split of Irish Anglicans along traditional and ‘liberal’, Patriot lines confirmed. If Woodward stood very clearly on one side of this division, however, Leland, as demonstrated in *Longsword*, and reinforced by his history, stood on the other. In neither work are Catholics depicted as monsters from the abyss involved in a global conspiracy with its headquarters in the Vatican with agents everywhere all of whom have probably entered into a pact with Satan. Once the Catholophobic environment in which Leland was writing is admitted then the radical and powerful nature of his two ‘Irish’ studies becomes clear. *Longsword*, far from really being about the state of England in the time of Henry III, is actually about whether Catholics can be trusted to hold high office – and it concludes that they are. Likewise, although Leland’s *History* is not a whitewashing of Irish Catholic history, or an indictment of the English relationship with Ireland, or an accusation that the real problem in Ireland has always been the Protestant presence, it is a relatively objective attempt by a committed Irish Anglican to cleanse as much sectarian bigotry from the Irish record as possible. Leland is motivated in this attempt by his desire to assist in the reform of the Irish political system (particularly the reform of the penal laws) being both urged by the English parliament at this time and vigorously opposed by conservative Anglican elements in the Irish parliament.

Moreover, in terms of assessing the accuracy of Leland’s narrative of 1641, contemporary historians have concluded that he is almost always correct. If he does not present Catholics as martyrs who had to bear the brunt of historical pain during the 1641 rebellion this is because they didn’t, and Leland is correct to dispute the claims of Catholic historians like John Curry that the massacre at Islandmagee took place after fighting had broken out elsewhere, and he is more or less accurate in his attempt to determine how many Catholics were actually killed in that massacre. Although Catholics are not the heroes of his history, the most important point to make is that Leland does not resort to the kind of monstering he inherits as an Irish Anglican historian, and he goes to some pains to continue the pattern established in *Longsword* of ‘humanising’ the Catholic monster and replacing him with a sympathetic and fully human enemy who has been wronged many times in the past and is more to be pitied than damned.

One of the difficulties Leland had to confront when writing his history was that, between the publication of *Longsword* in early 1761 and the final publication of his *History* in 1773, Irish Catholics appeared to be

living up to their monstrous reputation. In County Tipperary in late 1761, agrarian disturbances broke out, organized by secret societies formed by Catholic tenants, protesting against changes to the rural economy, and this agitation spread to other counties soon afterwards. The agitation was basically caused by an attempt by certain landlords to change the system of rural economy through such measures as an increase in the tithe and enclosing common land. Agitation involved the breaking down of fences surrounding such enclosed land but also included threatening anyone involved in attempts to change the moral economy; the burning of houses; and, on one memorable occasion, the trial, torture and execution of a horse in substitution for its owner, a prominent magistrate intent on quelling discontent in his district. Disturbances continued sporadically until 1765. Although there was a social rather than a religious basis to these outbreaks of violent agrarian activity, conservative Anglican opinion insisted that these incidents were evidence of the unchanging nature of Irish Catholicism and claimed that the Whiteboys (or *Buachailli Bána*, so-called because they carried out their subversive activities with their shirts over their heads) were trying to re-enact 1641.

As Thomas Bartlett explains, this sense of a Catholic conspiracy was heightened when an intrepid Anglican, the Reverend John Hewetson of County Kilkenny, infiltrated the Whiteboys disguised as a Catholic peasant. When he emerged he claimed he had uncovered a vertiginously vast Catholic conspiracy which involved every major Catholic player on the continent of Europe, stretching right up to the Vatican, in which the French hierarchy were playing a large part. Father Nicholas Sheehy was fingered by Hewetson as one of the ringleaders and was subsequently arrested and hanged for treason. The formation of the Catholic Committee, the furore caused by the beginnings of Whiteboyism in Tipperary, and the execution of Nicholas Sheehy all meant that the view of Catholics as arch conspirators against the state and against the Anglican hegemony in Ireland became once again very fashionable to maintain, and this made any 'philosophical' reading of Irish history much more difficult to effect.⁶⁷

The struggle Leland has in writing an objective history is explained clearly at the start of his narrative where he warns that his version of events will necessarily cause offence because 'it is difficult, if not impossible, for a subject of Ireland, to write of the transactions . . . without offending some, or all of those discordant parties, who have been habituated to view them through the medium of their passions and prepossessions'. Despite this difficulty, Leland insists he remains committed to the view that it is the job of the historian (or at least,

the philosophical historian) to 'form a general narrative upon the best information to be obtained' and that the attention to 'truth' must avoid 'flattering the prejudices, or fearing the resentments of sects or parties'.⁶⁸ The complications involved in maintaining an objective position on Ireland's history are very clear from the start, and objectivity is ultimately impossible to maintain. For example, Leland repeats a number of well-worn and nonsensical views concerning the native Irish, of whom he writes suspiciously that they remained 'attached to the remains of their respective tribes' after the Norman invasion, and he complains that 'in remoter districts', the Irish 'retained their original manners' (Vol. 3, p. 87). Leland also makes it clear that he is no friend of Catholicism and holds the stubborn refusal of the natives to give up their religious prejudices to blame for a great many of their later difficulties. He insists that 'far the greater number of inhabitants were obstinately devoted to popery', and that the penal laws, while unfortunate, were only implemented when 'the insolence of popish ecclesiastics provoked the execution of them' (Vol. 3, p. 88). At times, the full force of this deep seated anti-Catholicism bubbles over:

The ignorant herd of papists [Catholic priests] governed at their pleasure . . . [priests] bound solemnly to the pope in an unlimited submission . . . full fraught with those absurd and pestilent doctrines, which the moderate of their communion professed to abominate; of the universal monarchy of the pope, as well civil as spiritual; of his authority to excommunicate and depose princes, to absolve subjects from their oaths of allegiance and dispense with every law of God and man; to sanctify rebellion and murder, and even to change the very nature and essential differences of vice and virtue. (Vol. 3, pp. 89–90)

At times Leland even gives in to the force of arguments about conspiracy and dark mutterings of hidden powers behind events like 1641 (a stark contrast to his sceptical treatment of conspiracy theorising in *Longsword*). He claims that an insurrection in Ireland had been planned since about 1634 'in foreign courts', and that before the rebellion 'ecclesiastical agents poured into Ireland' to aid the conspiracy (Vol. 3, pp. 90–1). The novelist who was so careful to absolve Reginhald the mad monk of any pact with the devil becomes an historian ready to see something satanic about the activities of Sir Phelim O'Neil, who 'was either transported to the utmost pitch of malicious phrenzy, or so alarmed at the well-known instability of his followers, that he determined with an infernal policy, to plunge them so deep in blood as to render their retreat or reconciliation with government utterly impracticable' (Vol. 3, pp. 126–7). O'Neill is here transformed into an agent of the devil himself, revelling in the blood of Protestants and practically forcing his

followers into a continued and open rebellion against the rightful civil authorities.

The exaggerations of Temple are repeated to some extent in this section of the *History*, and, despite Leland's attempts to remain 'objective', the language of damnation and disease is often evoked. The reader is told that O'Neill 'provoked his savage and his barbarous followers to a degree of rage truly diabolical' (Vol. 3, p. 127), a rage which led to the most despicable reversals in the order of nature, a series of what can be called monstrous births:

Sometimes they enclosed [the English victims] in some house or castle, which they set on fire, with a brutal indifference to their cries, and a hellish triumph over their expiring agonies . . . Irish ecclesiastics were seen encouraging the carnage. The women forgot the tenderness of their sex; pursued the English with execrations, and embued their hands in blood: even children, in their feeble malice, lifted the dagger against the helpless prisoners. (Vol. 3, p. 127)

However, it would be unfair to condemn the *History* as simply a repeat of previous stereotypical versions of Irish Catholicism. Leland makes a strenuous effort to enact a kind of exorcism of Irish Anglican history and a re-banishing of the ghosts that took place at the time of the Reformation. Although horrific things happen, Leland constantly insists that all these events are – more or less – 'realist': none of them have a demonic agency behind them. Although the actions of the rebellious Catholics may look 'hellish', or 'diabolical', they are not really in league with Satan, and it is only panic and bad memories that make the Anglicans who escaped being tortured tell exaggerated stories about the supernatural events supposedly taking place in the country. Leland dismisses all accounts of supernatural intervention as not just inherently unlikely but as hysterical inventions: 'Miraculous escapes from death, miraculous judgements on murderers, lakes and rivers of blood, marks of slaughter indelible by every human effort, visions of spirits chanting hymns, ghosts rising from rivers and shrieking out REVENGE; these and such like fancies were propagated and received as incontestable' (Vol. 3, pp. 127–8). And he icily turns his sceptical judgement upon his own enclave and does not pass over the vicious responses of Irish Anglicans to the rebellion. He reminds his co-religionists that they 'forgot that their suffering brethren had, in several instances, been rescued from destruction and protected by the old natives', detailing how 'their abhorrence was violent and indiscriminate: and it transported them to that very brutal cruelty which had provoked this abhorrence' (Vol. 3, p. 128), a reaction which could best be seen in the way Anglicans

behaved during the Islandmagee incident. Although Leland is absolutely clear that this massacre was not the first occasion of violence – which would therefore justify the violent incidents carried out by Catholic natives – and condemns ‘popish writers’ (meaning especially John Curry, who had written about this incident at length) for representing Islandmagee with ‘shocking aggravation’ by exaggerating the number of those slaughtered, he still maintains that innocent Catholics, completely ‘untainted by the rebellion’ were massacred with ‘calm and deliberate cruelty’ (Vol. 3, p. 128).

Leland’s treatment of the Islandmagee massacre was to provoke John Curry to immediate reaction. Curry wrote to O’Conor, asking him whether ‘Temple, Borlase, or Hume [is] as dangerous as enemy as your friend? – I am really sick’.⁶⁹ However, Curry’s reaction misses two points: in the first place, Leland is historically correct, and his interpretation of the massacre at Islandmagee is essentially the one contemporary historians now support. More importantly, however, Curry fails to notice how Leland insists that the rebellion went on for so long because of the way it was repressed by those motivated only by a hatred of Catholicism. He insists it was the zealous nature of their desire to extirpate Catholic error which ‘served to awaken the fears and to enflame the resentments of the Irish’, especially when the state’s response was given over to the control of Sir Charles Coote, a man driven by ‘the most illiberal and inveterate prejudices’ whose ‘unprovoked . . . ruthless, and indiscriminate carnage’ in Wicklow ‘rivalled the utmost extravagances of the Northeners’ (Vol. 3, pp. 145, 146). Leland is contemptuous of conspiracy theory in his discussion of the moves against Charles I, and later refers to the ‘rumours of danger, of conspiracy, of invasion . . . industriously propagated. Pretended plots were discovered, and the most extravagant suggestions of fraud or credulity accepted and encouraged’, all because of an irrational and ‘virulent abhorrence of popery’, which also allowed people project the guilt of some Irish Catholics involved in the rebellion ‘to the whole set in both kingdoms’ (Vol. 3, p. 234).

By insisting that both sides are capable of the hysterical murderous violence that previous Anglican historians had ascribed only to Catholics, Leland facilitates what the philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer calls a ‘fusion of horizons’, whereby those divided either by strangeness or enmity can come to embrace the other by attempting to understand her. Gadamer emphasises that ‘every finite present has its limitations. We define the concept of “situation” by saying that it represents a standpoint that limits the possibility of vision. Hence essential to the concept of a situation is the concept of a “horizon”. The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular standpoint.’⁷⁰

Horizons are what prevent groups from even understanding each other, and in this context, Leland's novel and his *History* represent attempts to prepare for a potential fusion of the sectarian horizons and the creation of a more harmonious Ireland. The key point is that although in his *History* there is still a kind of alterity separating Anglicans and Catholics it is not a radical alterity, where difference is ultimately irreducible, but one where difference is possible to overcome because of a common humanity. Horizons fuse when individuals realise that the same set of circumstances can be looked at differently, the facts weighed differently, allowing different people to reach different conclusions. Once this realisation is reached, it becomes possible to see the other not as an implacably opposed enemy but as coming from a different perspective. In that way the temptation to monster opposing groups is circumvented. Overall, as Liechty emphasises, Leland 'humanised Catholics by depicting them as not only sinning but sinned against, and he desanctified Protestants by exposing them as not only sinned against but sinning'.⁷¹

Longsword was written in the immediate aftermath of the formation of the Catholic Committee in 1760 and the beginning of conservative Anglican panic about Whiteboy activity, but it was written by a tolerant man deeply involved in the antiquarian enterprise, and the novel makes a considerable and laudable attempt to prevent any backsliding on the part of the liberal Anglicans who had lost the Money Bill battle but hoped to win the war against colonial slavery. Although Leland's Catholic scoundrel Reginhald would later be reincarnated in monkish villains from Ambrosio and Schedoni onwards, in line with its author's antiquarian and historical interests, *Longsword* also expresses a general respect for the Gothic past and an implied criticism of the dissipation of the Protestant present in comparison. Most importantly, it attempts to unmake the Catholic monster and replace him with an ordinary villain who just happens to be a Catholic monk. With *The Adventures of Miss Sophia Berkley* and *Longsword*, the Irish Gothic begins as a liberal and creditable attempt on the part of patriotic Anglicans to re-imagine the past and their Catholic fellow Irishmen and women, and by doing so to free the future from the repetitious horrors of Temple and his successors. The Irish Gothic tradition constantly tied itself into narrative knots trying to reconcile anti-Catholic prejudice and tolerant inclusivity, Protestant paranoia and ecumenical understanding, often less successfully than in these initial experiments. Moreover, the past did not go away, and neither did the more straightforward horror stories told about it, and the Irish Gothic remained constantly in tension, with returns to the much more unambiguous nightmares of history found in the likes of Temple.

Notes

1. Tim Jensen, in *Boogeyman*, film, dir. Stephen Kay, 2005. Screenplay by Eric Kripke
2. Charles O'Connor to George Faulkner, 1767, quoted in Love, 'Charles O'Connor of Belanagare', 3.
3. Leland, 'On the Anniversary of the Irish Rebellion', *Sermons*, Vol. 3, p. 5.
4. Burke's involvement in convincing Leland is admitted when he wrote to Bishop Markham in 1771: 'I really thought our history of Ireland so terribly defective, that I did, and with success, urge a very learned and ingenious friend of yours and mine, in the University of Dublin, to undertake it.' Quoted in Love, 'Charles O'Connor', 2.
5. Horace Walpole, letter to William Cole, 9 March 1765. *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, Vol. 1, p. 88.
6. See, for example, Watt, 'Time and the Family'; Ellis, *History of Gothic Fiction*, 27–37.
7. Clery, *Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, 60–7.
8. *Ibid.*, 60.
9. [Ralph Griffiths], 'Review of *Longsword*', 236.
10. Anonymous, 'Review of *Longsword*', 252.
11. Price, 'Ancient Liberties?' 23.
12. [Thomas Leland], *Longsword*, Vol. 2, pp. 78–9. Subsequent page numbers will be placed in parenthesis in the main text. A valuable new edition of the text has recently been published by the Swan River Press, in July 2012, edited and introduced by Albert Power, but I will continue to quote from the Garland edition as it is an exact reproduction of the first London edition of 1762.
13. Wein, *British Identities*, 5.
14. Price, 'Ancient Liberties?' 25.
15. Loeber and Loeber, *Guide*, 749; *idem.*, 'Publication of Irish Novels and Novelettes'; Killeen, *Gothic Ireland*, 181; Morin, 'Forgotten Fiction', 80–1.
16. Punter, *Literature of Terror*, Vol. 1, p. 51.
17. Reeve, *Old English Baron*, 2.
18. Longueil, 'The Word "Gothic"', 459.
19. Reeve, *Progress of Romance*, Vol. 2, pp. 31–2.
20. See Pocock, *Ancient Constitution*, 46; Smith, *Gothic Bequest*, 71–96.
21. Miles, 'The 1790s', 48.
22. Blackstone, *Commentaries*, Vol. 3, pp. 17, 267–8.
23. Molyneux, *Case of Ireland*, 34.
24. Lucas, *Great Charter*, iii. For Lucas, see Hill, *From Patriots to Unionists*, 83–91; Murphy, 'Charles Lucas', 93–111.
25. Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, 117, 118.
26. *Ibid.*, 121.
27. Price, 'Horace Walpole, Leland and Clara Reeve'.
28. *Ibid.*
29. Leland, *History of Ireland*, Vol. 1, p. vi.
30. *Ibid.*, xxx.

31. Ibid., xxxv.
32. Milbank, 'Gothic Satires'.
33. Liechty, 'Testing the Depth', 14.
34. Foucault, *Order of Things*, xxiv.
35. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 8.
36. Fiedler, *Love and Death*, 138; Baldick, 'Introduction', 14.
37. Baldick and Mighall, 'Gothic Criticism', 213, 214, 215, 226.
38. Jackson, *Fantasy*, 3–4, 61–91.
39. Hofstadter, *Paranoid Style in American Politics*, 21.
40. Said, *Orientalism*, 103.
41. Of course, to some of us, Edward Cullen remains an unsympathetic character, but that must be because we are monsters ourselves.
42. Carter, *Dracula*, 28.
43. Senf, 'Dracula', 150. Some critics do not approve of this shift towards the sympathetic monster. Jules Zanger has decried the transformation of the vampire from a terrifying representation of metaphysical otherness to a bathetic example of social and sexual deviance for whom we can feel pity and also love. As he puts it: 'this new, demystified vampire might as well be our next door neighbour'. 'Metaphor', 17, 18, 19, 22.
44. Wood, 'American Nightmare', 71.
45. Ibid., 75.
46. Of course, the term 'progressive' rather gives the game away on Wood's behalf.
47. It would be much more clinically accurate to describe this character as an epebophile, but this term has no resonance in popular culture, where the term 'paedophile' subsumes so many other clinical types. Indeed, 'paedophile' is no longer a description of a particular psychological disorder but rather a description of a horrific mutant stalking society. See Kincaid, *Erotic Innocence*; Jenkins, *Moral Panic*; Levine, *Harmful to Minors*.
48. Anonymous, 'Review of Curry's *Historical Memoirs*', 139.
49. Harris, *Fiction Unmask'd*, 16.
50. Delury, 'Ex Conflictu Et Collisione', 12.
51. Lloyd, *Irish Times*, 76.
52. Ibid., 78.
53. Bartlett, *Fall and Rise*, 78.
54. O'Donnell, 'Burke', 75.
55. Quoted in O'Donnell, 'Burke', 76.
56. Morin, 'Forgotten Fiction', 86.
57. Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 86.
58. Quoted in Liechty, 'Testing the Depth', 21.
59. Hume, *The History of England*. Vol. 1. *Containing*, 459.
60. Quoted in Love, 'Charles O'Connor', 23.
61. Leersen, *Mere Irish and Fíor-Ghael*, 336.
62. Liechty, 'Testing the Depth', *passim*.
63. O'Halloran, *Golden Ages*, 149.
64. Quoted in Love, 'Charles O'Connor', 11.
65. Liechty, 'Testing the Depth', 24.
66. Bradshaw, 'Nationalism and Historical Scholarship', 204.

67. Bartlett, *Fall and Rise*, 68–71.
68. Leland, *History of Ireland*, Vol. 3, p. 86. All quotations will be taken from this edition and placed in parenthesis in the main text.
69. Quoted in Love, 'Charles O'Connor', 15.
70. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 302.
71. Liechty, 'Testing the Depth', 24.

Land of the Dead

That's quite a collection of stiffs you have down there.¹

The canonical texts of the Irish Gothic were produced in the white heat of Irish history, and they are marked by an ambivalent dialogue between Catholophobia and Catholophilia, 'progressivism' and nostalgia, the future and the past, English rationalism and Irish atavism. The works of three of the most important Irish Gothic writers, Regina Maria Roche, Maria Edgeworth and Sydney Owenson (later Lady Morgan), were written in the tumultuous period leading up to the 1798 Rising and in its aftermath. The completely confused and ultimately compromised anti-Catholicism of Maturin's Gothic was forged at the beginning of 'Second Reformation' Protestantism and the strengthening campaign for Catholic Emancipation. Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's intellectual outlook was shaped to a certain extent by his family's isolation during the Tithe War (1831–6) and also by his strident opposition to Daniel O'Connell. Bram Stoker's work can be read as part of a response to the spectre of republican terrorism that was usually configured in the British press as atavistic and monstrous – finding brilliant realisation in the feudal Catholic Count Dracula effecting a reverse invasion of England. The twentieth-century novelist Elizabeth Bowen wrote in the wake of the consolidation of the power of the Catholic middle class in post-revolution Ireland, and her Big Houses are more haunted by the remnants of the Anglo-Irish than inhabited by them. In all of them a dialectic between atavism and open-mindedness, bigotry and toleration, conservatism and liberalism, marks the Irish Gothic tradition as a crucial one for charting the political and social views of the Anglican elite on its journey towards marginalisation after the War of Independence (1919–21). The tradition expresses the worst of this elite, but also its best, emerging as it did from a small section of the enclave genuinely attempting to find ways to reconcile with the Catholic majority, and with Ireland herself.

With the rise of the Catholic middle class, the rationalisation of Catholicism through the Devotional Revolution (or Evolution), and the gaining of independence in 1921, power passed out of the hands of Irish Anglicans to the Catholics who had for so long been the representatives of the Other found in Gothic fiction. Cultural hesitancy passed to them too, a hesitancy between what came to be called 'traditional Ireland', the Ireland of the countryside, the church, the hearth (or some stereotyped version of this Ireland), and 'modern Ireland' defined by full engagement with the technological future. Irish Catholics also took to writing fiction characterised by an uneasiness about cultural identity, and this psychological hesitancy has facilitated the proliferation of Catholic Gothic narratives in which the cottage, the castle and the church merge as spaces blocking the nation's progress towards the rational, cosmopolitan future. In recent years Gothic imagery has been used to characterise the post-Independence decades until the 1980s, and its industrial schools and Magdalene laundries have all been imbued with an aura more common to the horror film than the history book. The figures of the Irish Catholic past, like Eamon de Valera and Archbishop John Charles McQuaid, have also been transformed into stock villains, with all the sexual perversions, hang-ups and unmerciful authoritarianism which was associated with the Catholic powers of Maturin's novels. However, despite this Gothicisation of the traditional, there remained a sense of attachment to this recent past, and a fear that in rejecting it something of the sublime might be lost and Ireland could find itself in trapped in rather than liberated by cosmopolitan banality. This hesitancy kept the Irish Gothic alive and well in the twentieth century.

The coming of the Celtic Tiger in the 1990s, with its promise of a bright future in which shadows had been completely banished and all ghosts exorcised, seemed, to some at least, to herald the end of Gothic Ireland (if not Irish Gothic). Given Ireland's reinvention as a technological hub, a site for the cutting-edge rather than the atavistic, a gateway into a free trade European Union rather than a backwater with bad roads but exotic scenery and haunted houses, it looked for a while as if the country's proverbial weirdness was being overcome and relegated to an embarrassing aspect of history. With the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, too, the murderous violence of sectarian conflict was displaced and replaced by Troubles Tourism. The inhabitants of Celtic Tiger Ireland appeared to have stopped hesitating, like paragons of Todorov's readers of the uncanny, and to have finally made a choice, rejecting the hyphenated mind of the past. For a while in the late twentieth century, it looked as though Gothic Ireland would exist only as a tourist virtual reality.

This is not to say that Irish Gothic went away, as Irish writers continued to churn out narratives of darkness and despair, but these tended to address an Ireland of the 1950s rather than the 1990s.² Indeed, it looked like the last great Irish figure who could seriously be considered a Gothic ‘hero’ was Taoiseach Charles J. Haughey, a monumental cultural hesitator in the best sense of the term. A political and social modernizer and innovator (as seen in his judicial reforms, especially the Succession Act 1965, his development of Temple Bar, his handling of the presidency of the European Commission in 1990), he was nonetheless reviled by his fellow cosmopolitans because he spoke in the language of what they considered atavistic tribal nationalism (despite his importance to the Peace Process), and, in the eyes of the high priests of modernity he was seen as a monster needing a stake through his heart. To those who had to live in it, the Ireland of the 1980s and early 1990s often appeared to resemble a very clichéd Gothic novel, Garret (Fitzgerald) the Good chasing down Charlie the Bad across an increasingly improbable plot, a battle won when Brian Lenihan – closely associated with the Haughey element in Irish politics – lost the 1990 Presidential election to the liberal Mary Robinson, a woman associated with the ‘right’ side of recent ideological battles between stereotyped traditionalists and modernisers. The truth was, as usual, more complex. Haughey, like the Irish Gothic writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, had his feet in two camps and pointed in two directions: towards an unreal and weird landscape he called (in a now notorious 1986 Channel Four documentary) *Charles Haughey’s Ireland* and towards the virtual reality future of the Irish Financial Services Centre. Perpetually hesitating between these two spaces, Haughey effectively instantiated a schizophrenic Ireland unable to decide whether its future lay in the past or the present. In the end, as Ivana Bacik has put it, Ireland was dragged ‘kicking and screaming’ into postmodernity through three abortion referenda, two divorce referenda, and a host of other, bitterly divisive, changes.³ When Haughey died in June 2006, the Gothic Ireland recognised by Maturin, a place where all manner of things were possible, a GUBU⁴ land of the imagination, also seemed to have passed on, or put out of its misery. While some popped unseemly corks of celebration at Haughey’s death – the death, so it seemed to them, of an Ireland they despised, a dark Ireland of the deep past – others reflected, like Lord Glenthorn in Edgeworth’s *Ennui*, that perhaps with the coming about of this new modern Ireland something frightening, fractious, dangerous, but exciting and stimulating had been lost.

However, as Declan Kiberd has reminded us, Irish traditions are at their most vital when they have been proclaimed about to die.⁵ Indeed,

in *Dracula*, Bram Stoker warned that far from having been banished to the past, the Gothic was as up-to-date as the phonograph and the train timetable, and that the contemporary could be as haunted as the past. At the time of Haughey's death, Ireland had as Taoiseach the incomparable Bertie Ahern, the most popular Irish Prime Minister ever to be elected, and apparently seen by many as a representative of the glossy Teflon future in which the Irish would forever be sipping lattes in their local cosmopolitan café bar. Ahern, though, turned out to be as duplicitous a figure as his 'boss', which, given that he had been groomed by Haughey for office, should never have surprised anyone. Ahern's constituency office of St Luke's in Drumcondra turned out to be as full of dark and upsetting secrets as any Castle of Otranto. His fall from grace coincided with the collapse of the Celtic Tiger, which, it turned out, was based less on sound economics than on a new inflection of a collective fairy tale the Irish had been telling each other for centuries. The haunted quality of the present now became all too obvious. The housing boom upon which so many Irish fortunes were based now threw up 'ghost estates'; the financial wizardry admired all over the world now magicked up 'toxic banks'. Property developers, who for a decade had been lauded as engineers of a cosmopolitan future, were revealed as new versions of the Rackrent family. Eerily empty houses, malevolent patriarchs, abused innocents, all seem to be with us once more. In other words, we have re-entered Gothic Ireland (or perhaps we never really left it).

The challenge for contemporary Irish Gothic is to move away from a now tired attack on the mid-twentieth century as a site of horror and repression, a view which suggests a contrast with the supposedly liberal and progressive Celtic Tiger of the new millennium, and to find a way to deal with the new realities through a Gothic story set firmly in the present. This is a challenge not unlike that presented to the Irish Anglican Patriots who wrote the first Irish Gothic novels. They had to work out how best to mitigate the religious chauvinism of the proto-Gothic past, to forge a tradition which would incorporate rather than simply exorcise previously reviled Others. Early Irish Gothic fiction might, perhaps, serve as a useful example for meeting the challenges that face twenty-first-century Irish horror.

Notes

1. Uncle Les, after surveying his nephew Lionel's basement in *Braindead*, film, dir. Peter Jackson, 1992. Screenplay by Stephen Sinclair, Frances Walsh and Peter Jackson. Following an outbreak of some kind of zombie-making virus, initially transmitted to his mother through the bite of a Sumatran monkey,

Lionel has gathered a host of zombified friends, relatives and neighbours in his house to try to protect the general population. He eventually has to destroy them all in a memorable scene involving a lawnmower.

2. In a previous article, 'Irish Gothic: A Theoretical Introduction', my phrasing suggested I thought that Irish Gothic was at an end, rather than Gothic Ireland. It turns out that I would have been no more right in thinking the one than I was in thinking the other.
3. Bacik, *Kicking and Screaming*.
4. This acronym was coined by the historian, critic and sometime politician Conor Cruise O'Brien, to describe the kind of strange events that characterised Irish political life during the premiership of Charles Haughey. It came out of an incident in August 1982 when the double murderer Malcolm MacArthur was found in the house of the then Attorney General Patrick Connolly. Haughey, who was Taoiseach at the time, responded by describing the discovery as 'a bizarre happening, an unprecedented situation, a grotesque situation, an almost unbelievable mischance'.
5. Kiberd, *Irish Classics*, *passim*.

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