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Classical Gothic: The Aristotelian Experience in the Gothic Reading Process

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Abstract

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This dissertation explores the connection between the Gothic novel and Ancient Tragedy (as described by Aristotle in his *Poetics*). This connection focuses on our emotional reaction to the text and has a direct impact on the historical persistence of the Gothic—both in its survival as a distinct literary genre and in its influence on other genres. I explore three primary texts in the project, each at distinctive historical points: Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1818), Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). Through my use of Aristotle and Ancient Tragedy I argue that we do not lose the community experience when we leave the arena of Greek and Roman Theater, nor do we need Drama to experience it, but that it still exists in the individual Gothic reading process in the community that consists of the protagonist, the narrator, and the external reader. The variation in not only the date of publication, but also the tone and style of each primary texts allows me to see explore how attributes of the audience reaction that Aristotle describes in his *Poetics* still exist, and emphasizes how his theories regarding the emotional connection between the audience and the text are still current, and they are not solely applicable to Drama, but can be used to give us further understanding of the individual reading experience.

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Classical Gothic: The Aristotelian Experience in the Gothic Reading Process

Introduction

She mediated, by turns, on broken promises and broken arches, phaetons and false hangings, Tilneys and trap-doors.

- Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*

There was something awesome in the thought of the solitary mortal standing by the open window and summoning in from the gloom outside the spirits of the nether world.

- Arthur Conan Doyle, *Selecting a Ghost*

Why Gothic literature? I have been interested in this genre for many years, but as an undergraduate it was not the focus of my studies, in fact, except for a few canonical texts (*Frankenstein*, *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*) my classes did not cover much Gothic literature. Now, knowing more about the genre and its history it is not too surprising that the genre is not very popular or prevalent in an academic setting. I sought out the Gothic independently, reading novels purely for pleasure, and one summer I happened upon Matthew Lewis' *The Monk*. That novel cemented my love for the Gothic, and my desire to pursue the study of the genre. What captivates me is the balance the Gothic strikes between being a genre that draws the reader in and encourages them to indulge their emotions, but also trains them to be effective close readers by modeling this act within its pages. This, in part, also contributes to the genre's continuing (and growing) popularity.

Parts of this project go back as far as ten years. In 2004 I stared at a blank page with only a vague idea of what I would like to spend the next year researching and writing as part of my undergraduate senior honors thesis. I knew I wanted to take two of my favorite plays (Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*). Yet, a year later I had a finished thesis in my hands. After completing such a daunting project, I knew I truly wanted to pursue a Ph.D. in English Literature in part because I enjoyed the in-depth research associated with taking on such

a large project. Undertaking a comparative analysis of *Macbeth* and the *Agamemnon* (texts so seemingly embedded in their respective historical and cultural contexts) posed a challenge for which I was prepared because ever since I began to study English literature, I have been intrigued by the intertextuality between the works of British (and European) authors, and those of Classical authors. Although Classical poets wrote nearly two thousand years before Dante, Milton, or Shakespeare, etc. (and even longer before canonical 18th and 19th century authors), all these writers were all steeped in the Classics. I studied Ancient History, Art History, and of course Classical literature, spanning the Epic, Philosophy, Comedy, and Tragedy. The latter genre had the strongest impact on me, and ultimately helped shape this dissertation because I saw parallels between that genre and Gothic literature.

In 2010 I once again found myself staring at a blank page, but I had a more precise idea of how I wanted to spend the next few years of my academic career. I knew the project needed to blend the Gothic and the Ancient world because I continued to have an interest in the intersection between British literature and the Classical literature. My project takes as its inspiration the correlation between the 19th-century Gothic novel and Greek and Roman Drama and Theater. The Gothic is known for its strong psychological and emotional hold on the audience, and these novels help us reconnect with the *catharsis* experienced by the audience of Greek and Roman Tragedy (as described and interpreted by Aristotle in his *Poetics*). Recognizing key similarities between the Gothic and Ancient Drama through Aristotle's treatise provides greater insight into the Gothic's focus on emotional manipulation, it also allows critics see how the aesthetic balance between the emotional and intellectual response is achieved, meaning, how one can be empathetic and fully immerse oneself in the Gothic, while nevertheless retaining critical and analytical distance. This balance is responsible for the enduring popularity of the Gothic—it is a

genre that not only entertains and is enjoyed on visceral and emotional level, but it also provides social and philosophical commentary, it gives the audience something to think about and ponder, long after the initial shock and fear has worn off.

To undertake this discussion I chose three primary texts, Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1818), Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). These three novels may not seem like the most intuitive texts to choose for a discussion on the Gothic, especially because they are not known for being crucial in the development of the genre—not as instrumental as Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796), Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), or even Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818).[1] However, I chose to focus on texts that may not be quite as canonical or as easily classified as Gothic (*Dracula* being the exception) because my aim is not simply to make a link between the Gothic and Ancient Tragedy, but to simultaneously discuss how that connection is not merely related to the Gothic as the established genre we now know, but also that that helps the Gothic become a highly influential genre that makes its way into other genres, in essence giving them a hint of the Gothic. Austen's and Braddon's texts may not be strictly Gothic texts, but they nevertheless comment on the Gothic and allow me to make the argument that ties the Gothic to Greek and Roman Tragedy. Choosing more canonical Gothic works it would limit the discussion. Yes, the connections I am making are applicable to the Gothic, but also more far-reaching because it then makes the Gothic into an adjective, as opposed to a genre, and as an adjective that is associated with Aristotelian principles, it can help us not just understand how it works, but why it influences others, and also ultimately sheds new light on the Aristotelian principles themselves. In addition to my primary texts, I also include supplementary texts, which include: Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Robert Louis

[1] These texts are discussed throughout the project but more tangentially.

Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, Homer's *Odyssey*, Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*, Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders*, among others.

I organized my chapters in concentric circles, where each chapter takes a step back from the characters themselves. I explore their psychological inner worlds, their interactions with one another, then with their environments, and finally I look at the community (which includes the exterior readers) and the text as object. My first chapter sets up my terminology and the methodology for how I will explore the characters in my primary texts. There I make the argument for the connection between Ancient Tragedy and the Gothic—which is a thread that goes through each subsequent chapter, the main connection being the importance and use of *catharsis* in both genres and how they go about achieving it in their audience. Here, I also position my argument and reading/analysis of the Gothic in relation to the prevalent criticism of the genre. I discuss how the Gothic reader is fragmented and maneuvers through the novel identifying and sympathizing with varying characters, both "heroes" and "villains." I set up Aristotelian ideas in this chapter, such as his concept of *catharsis*. What unites the readers of the Gothic is similar to what brought together spectators of Ancient Tragedy—authors who sought to engage not only with the audience on an intellectual level, but on an emotional one.

In the second chapter I take up the internal reader and delve into their psychology and interior world of the protagonist, and how that impacts our understanding of a common aspect in Gothic criticism: gender. The discussion on gender is tied to affect and how it is manifested and interpreted by the main characters. Through Catherine, as well as the Robert Audley and George Talboys (of *Lady Audley's Secret*) and the "ensemble cast" of *Dracula*, I discuss the importance (for both Ancient Drama and the Gothic), of not only heightened emotions in the quest to experience *catharsis*, but also varying emotions—and I explore how Austen, Braddon and Stoker

(following Aristotle's rules) guide the internal reader through that Gothic (yet also Classical) experience. Braddon and Stoker's texts are complementary to Austen's novel because they create an expanding view of the Gothic Mind, showing how Gothic texts written almost at the beginning, middle, and end of the 19th century, and in different styles and tones (satirical, sensational and conventional, respectively) nevertheless share certain unifying Aristotelian qualities.

The third chapter takes one more step outward and refocuses on the exterior world and how the characters read, misread, and decipher their physical environment. This builds on the previous chapter because it takes the interpretation and analysis one step back. This chapter looks at not only the relationships and interactions among people, but also how objects and locations play a role in how the protagonists act and play roles for one another. The next chapter takes the lens back even one more step to show people who are not in the texts themselves (for the first time so far in the project), so chapter three acts like a bridge between those two worlds. The fourth chapter focuses not just on what is being said, but how it is being said. It builds on the importance of objects by taking that concept even further by looking at the text itself as an object and dissecting its parts. This is the final chapter because it combines the topics of the second and third chapters and shows how they work together. In the final chapter I develop the idea of the "community" of readers by combining the experiences of the internal reader, the external readers, and the narrators of the texts. The individual vs. the group dynamic comes into play even more in Braddon and Stoker's novels, where there is a more distinct reading community within the text, and we are invited to join them. Within the group everyone is vying for credibility. Who we believe in large part has a retroactive effect on previous chapters and interpretations because we (yet again) question their motivations and the authenticity of their

"performance." This is simply one example of how the Gothic invites us into its dark and ominous halls time after time, always showing us something new.

Although not at the center of the project, one aspect I trace throughout is the idea of the Gothic villain. In Chapter I we see how the fragmentation of the reader is tied to our propensity to identify and be interested in the villain, as opposed to the hero of the Gothic narrative. In Chapter II I delve into the psychology of the protagonist, and make a connection between the excess of affect and madness, defining madness as a disease of affect. In Chapter III, this idea is taken up with the theme of acting; the insane need to learn how to hide in plain sight. In Chapter IV, the villain is tied to the idea of crime, but as we see specifically with female criminals, often they have few options open to them. When we take all these ideas together, empathizing with villains, insanity, acting and hiding, and lastly crime, we see a textual manifestation of an incredible popular modern genre. We as a society channel our desire to experience negative emotions associated with all these elements with our fascination with books, film, and television that glorifies criminals, especially murderers, and more specifically mass murderers. There is not shortage of representation of this in popular culture. A very recent example is that of the Showtime television series *Dexter*, which aired from 2006 to 2013; it traced the life of a serial killer and sociopath who learned how to hide his activities from those close to him. What made his situation unique was that he realized he needed to kill, but made a conscious effort to only murder other serial killers, and thus became the ultimate anti-hero.

I bring up this example not just because of the similarities to the Gothic villain, but also because through this modern example we also see the continuing need for the *cathartic* experience. Aristotle may not have had a 21st century cable program in mind when penning his treatise, but we see those rules followed even in such a recent example. What drew in audiences

is the desire to not only view violence (in that sense the program clearly violated not just Aristotle's but also Radcliffe's rules on terror being more artful than horror) but also to indulge in dark desires in order to experience the emotional release in a safe and controlled environment. Of course, not all audiences are drawn to this—just like not all Greek and Roman people flocked to Tragedies—but those who experience pleasure from the manipulation of their emotions, and the experiencing of unpleasant emotions (fear, suspense, disgust, etc.), do flock to this particular genre. And if we judge by the ratings of the show, and the prevalence of this type of entertainment, there are many who do. This project is my attempt to explore potential reasons for why this is the case. I try to follow the wise words of Stoker's Professor Van Helsing:

> Remember, my friend, that knowledge is stronger than memory, and we should not trust the weaker…Take good note of it. Nothing is too small. I counsel you, put down in record even your doubts and surmises. Hereafter it may be of interest to you to see how true you guess. (Stoker 112)

Chapter I
The Gothic Trajectory: Reading the Reader

Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament…through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions.

- Aristotle, *The Poetics*

Ordinary people waited till life disclosed to them its secrets, but to the few, to the elect, the mysteries of life were revealed before the veil was drawn away. Sometimes this was the effect of art, and chiefly of the art of literature, which dealt immediately with the passions and the intellect.

- Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

Introduction

When imagining the Gothic, one pictures dark and stormy nights, decaying castles, damsels in distress and other highly conventional images. In his essay "Gothic versus Romantic: A revaluation of the Gothic Novel," Robert Hume states: "it is usually assumed that…such 'Gothicism' is only too often ridiculous, even in the hands of its leading exponents…the object of this essay is to suggest that the Gothic novel is more than a collection of ghost story devices" (282). Even though Hume's essay is outdated (1969), the main idea behind his study of the Gothic remains prevalent even in recent criticism. Recent critics including from Michael Gamer, Marshall Brown, David Richter, and Robert Miles approach their study of the Gothic in a similar way. The goal is to "defend" the genre and this is often achieved by showing the impact of the genre on other fields and types of writing—such as Romanticism, modern Science Fiction, philosophical treatises, etc. Almost forty years after Hume's essay, and even after generally accepting that the Gothic is indeed worthy of scholarship and serious attention, one still feels the need to justify giving it that attention. I contend that the Gothic deserves and requires our attention because although it is undoubtedly a conventional genre, it serves a vital purpose and one that links the genre to Ancient Tragedy, as Aristotle described it in his *Poetics*. Both genres

share the goal of eliciting a *cathartic* reaction from their audiences. Recognizing these similarities provides greater insight into the Gothic's emphasis on emotional manipulation—the novels build suspense, empathy, and anger. They mislead readers, and employ similar tactics in order to control and influence their experience as they take part in the text.

The connection to Classical Drama and *catharsis* highlights one key aspect of the Gothic: the encouragement of the audiences to participate on an emotional level while simultaneously maintaining critical distance from the text. This balance is instrumental for the genre's longevity, enduring popularity, and influence on other genres. This connection heightens the Gothic to a genre that both entertains and is enjoyed on visceral and emotional levels, and provides social and philosophical commentary; much like Ancient Tragedy it gives the audience something to think about and ponder long after the initial shock and fear has worn off. I link both genres because of the similarities they share in the sense of the impact on the audience. But in addition to that, connecting the Gothic to Ancient Tragedy also allows us to explore the historical significance and longevity of the Gothic. Although it is often defined as a genre that emerged in the mid 18th century and became fully formed in the 19th century with the novels of Bram Stoker, Charlotte Brontë, or Mary Shelley, the span is much longer, and that we can learn about the genre by looking much further back (before the term Gothic, or even "novel" existed), and also forward at where many would say the Gothic achieved completion—with Stoker.

My Gothic Trajectory: Stoker, Braddon, and Austen

In this dissertation I will focus on three primary texts: Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1818), Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*

(1897). My discussion will be supplemented by other texts, Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796), Aeschylus' *Oresteia* (5th century BCE), and Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (ca. 1599), among others. I chose my three primary texts (surprising choices for many readers, perhaps) in part because one might not automatically label them "Gothic" (*Dracula* being the exception). Austen's text is a satirical take on the genre, and Braddon's is more often classified as a prominent work of Sensation Fiction. Yet each text has ties to not only the Gothic, but also elements of Greek and Roman Tragedy. These elements take it beyond the archetypal stories of Classical tales; they also highlight similarities between the form the stories take and the narrative techniques used by the playwrights and the novelists. Both genres value closely controlling their audience throughout the reading/viewing experience—they each ask the audience to suspend disbelief and immerse themselves in the story. While this is true of fiction in general, what differentiates the Gothic (and ties it to Drama) is that they both foreground their own artificiality. The characters become not only readers of their surroundings, but players, they are acting for their fellow characters, and everyone becomes aware of this fact.

I include *Dracula* because even though it is the more conventionally Gothic text, it still contains these connections to the Classics and Aristotle, emphasizing the applicability of these Classical tenets in many different manifestations of the Gothic—even when the genre is fully formed. In fact we can see the universality of the Classical Aristotelian approach by looking at the conventional Gothic because we see that it is not weeded out as the genre develops, but rather becomes more striking. My chosen texts allow me to discuss four central factors related to my argument:

1. There are connections between Greek and Roman Tragedy and the Gothic that have not been explored.[2] Freudian and psychoanalytic readings of Gothic texts are prevalent, yet I am taking an alternate direction to many of the same questions the Freudian approach explores. Gothic novels often discuss thematic issues dealing with hidden fears, complex and strange relationships, the unleashing of the mind and/or the body—all of which can be explored and interpreted by viewing them through a Freudian lens. But the Freudian approach is limiting for my purposes because the Gothic (like Ancient Tragedy) is focuses on a communal (shared) experience, as well as an individual one. Both genres are deceptively simple. Even though they may have a strong emphasis on plot (over more "complex" ideas like stream of consciousness, for example), these archetypal plots are nevertheless sophisticated in that they have timeless aspects that can transcend time and be appropriated by various genres without losing their impact.

2. Reader response theory is important in a tangential manner because I see a new community created between the reader, the protagonist, and the narrator. Each text contains varying levels of readers, interior and exterior readers. The interior is the protagonist of the text. They must read their surroundings and their experiences. We are privy to some of their conclusions and understandings. "We" are the exterior readers. The protagonist and the narrator guide us, although we are often purposely mislead. The narrator straddles these two worlds, at times behaving like a character within the text, but also pointing at its artificiality and breaking the "fourth wall" of the narrative. Narrative

[2] The attempt to connect the Gothic to earlier time periods is not altogether new. In his "I Think; Therefore, I am Heathcliff" (2003), Daniel Cottom argues that "Descartes *Meditations* (1641) is actually the first Gothic novel" (1068). He makes the connection on the level of theme and even convention—I seek to link them on those levels as well, but my focus is on the effect they have on the audience, and how characters within the Gothic behave like actors in a Greek or Roman Tragedy.

framing helps create the balance between artificiality and immersion (e.g. the use of epistolary narrative techniques, addressing the "reader," etc.). The interaction between the interior and exterior readers, and the narrators fosters the creation of the text. In essence the novels are being written as they are being read. This is a topic I take up in greater detail in Chapter IV where I discuss the formation of the Gothic narrative style. I separate the readers into interior and exterior, but even within the each category we have yet another separation. The exterior reader is drawn to both the hero of the text, but also the villain, who is often the more sympathetic and well-rounded character. Eventually, this character becomes what we term the "anti-hero." That part of the fascination with such anti-heroes and even villains translates into actual mental instability, and the audience's fascination with depiction of overt and subtle madness.

3. The connection to Ancient Tragedy helps explain the Historical persistence and impact of the Gothic.[3] Both genres perpetuate the idea that enjoyment is tied to heightened emotions and *catharsis*.[4] Further, this purgation of emotions should be experienced as part of a larger community—as when viewing a play with your fellow citizens. For my purposes in examining the Gothic, the community is created even when reading alone. Ancient Tragedy influences the Gothic, and in turn, the Gothic influences other genres. For example, I will explore the Gothic's impact on sensation fiction and (in more detail)

[3] History is inextricably tied to the Gothic, including its creation. As Bartett Kalter states in his "DIY Gothic: Thomas Gray and the Medieval Revival" (2003): "Gothicism reacted against an increasingly dominant view of history in the eighteenth century through the medium of style. Nostalgia for the Middle Ages, variously expressed an interior design, buildings, landscape gardening, paintings, and literature, was born of dissatisfaction with the present" (991).

[4] *Catharsis* is not a term whose meaning most critics would automatically agree upon. I intend to take up the term as defined by Aristotle. Prior to his *Poetics*, the term was used in a more medical context and it meant a literal purging of something from the body, or in a slightly more figurative sense it was used as a way to cleanse *miasma* (blood pollution due to certain forms of murder) from a person or place. However, in *Poetics* the definition becomes connected to one's emotions, such as pity and fear.

the detective genre.[5] The communal *cathartic* experience, the heightened emotions and manipulation of the audience—these are all connections that tether the Gothic to Tragedy, and they all continue to help draw in audiences. It is not difficult to find the Gothic influence in contemporary fiction, especially in film and television. For example, this past year (2013) NBC premiered a new drama one-hour series: a revamped version of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. The Gothic keeps being reinventing and reemerging, in essence rising from the grave time and time again.

4. The Gothic is often described as "women's writing," this is not meant as praise. To be fair, many Gothic novels were in deed written by women. However, often the strong emotional connection to the audience, the high popular appeal, and financial success, all help mark the genre with a scarlet letter: M for marketable, in other words, not high art or worthy of critical study. The genre is popular because it enthralls the audience, and therefore is labeled superficial and frivolous. However, despite this label, the genre tackles weighty subject matters including relationship between the genders, female power, and gender roles. This only adds to the classification of the Gothic as "women's writing" because these are typically deemed women's issues. I explore these issues of gender not simply because they are prevalent in the genre as a whole, but because these relationships take us within the Gothic world. The importance of gender also highlights the artificiality of interactions and the role of each character as a "player" on a stage; we can gauge how people read the affect of those around them, and also how they play a role as well. We see how characters read and interpret not just their own minds but also their

[5] Robert Hume (mentioned above) also mentions that even though the Gothic does tend to be reduced to certain "trappings," this is also what makes it easy it to impact other genres.

surroundings, and how those environments impact them. This is an issue I take up in further detail in Chapter III.

A History of Hazing

Often criticism on the Gothic begins in one of two three ways: a defense, a definition, or a history.[6] Most will include a combination of the two, or all three, depending on the length of the piece. Due to the above-mentioned popular appeal of the Gothic, it is often not seen as something worthy of study, and critics still feel the need to justify their study of the Gothic genre—they need to state what the Gothic is not, such as purely ghost stories or women's writing.[7] This critical trend stands out, especially after noting its absence when picking up a book on Romanticism, Victorian poetry, or Modernism.[8] To be fair, it is not uncommon that when a new genre emerges society, and especially the "academic" community looks at apprehensively.[9] We need only look at the emergence of the novel itself to note this trajectory from snobby suspicion to respect and acceptance. There is after all a reason why Henry Fielding called his "novel" *Joseph Andrews*, "A Comic Epic-Poem in Prose." If it was going to have a chance at being taken seriously, it needed to align itself with an established and respected literary tradition.

[6] There were also critics (Hume's contemporaries) who discussed the Gothic but also did not seem to believe they would survive the test of time. In essence writing more of a eulogy than a defense. For instance Clara McIntyre's "Were the 'Gothic Novels' Gothic?" states: that these writers are "relegated to the library shelf and appealing only to the student bent on literary research" (644).
[7] For example, part of Marshall Brown's opening to his *Gothic Text* includes these two affirmations.
[8] In James M. Keech's "The Survival of the Gothic Response" (1974) he states, "the Gothic novel has been viewed as little more than a literary curiosity" (130), and then proceeds to undertake his discussion, somehow needing to have such a preamble to his study.
[9] Badford K. Mudge's "The Man with Two Brains: Gothic Novels, Popular Culture, Literary History" (1992) explores the fascination with the Gothic in popular culture. He also emphasizes how the "debate over the Gothic novel also concerned the boundaries between high and low literature" (93), yet "Mary Shelley's anxieties can be found inscribed within but unacknowledged by the modern horror film" (93). This either elevates the modern horror film to the realm of literature, or (as is often the case) drags Mrs. Shelley down to the dregs of frivolous popular culture.

All new forms of art go through a period of "hazing." Yet it seems like the hazing period for the Gothic has been unending, despite the fact that respected critics have devoted years, if not entire careers, to its study. The Gothic's path to respectability has been long and rocky, and it is not quite over.

After the apologies and explanations come the definitions. My aim in this project is not to provide a definitive definition, in part because this quite possibly an impossible task.[10] Many critics have endeavored to define the Gothic. The definition is often combined with the history because confining the genre to a particular period definitely helps when defining it and pinpointing certain characteristics and conventions); Robert Miles' *Gothic Writing: A Genealogy* and Carol Margaret Davison's *History of the Gothic*, set up their timeline as 1750-1820, and 1764-1824 (respectively). There is some overlap between these two time frames, and they do contain important points in the development of the genre, such as the publication of publication of Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otronto* (1764), a text often thought to be the first Gothic novel (or Romance as it was then called), as well as the publication of Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796), Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya; or, The Moor* (1806)—all pivotal texts instrumental in the establishment of the Gothic as a distinct genre. Judith Wilt's *Ghosts of the Gothic*, Devendra P. Varma's *The Gothic Flame*, David Punter's *The Literature of Terror*, and Ann Williams' *Art of Darkness* (to name a few) do not approach the subject on a purely historical angle, yet even when approaching the genre from a

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[10] It becomes difficult to classify the Gothic because even critics disagree on what makes something truly Gothic. *Moby Dick* is an apt example because we see a debate as to whether it is slightly Gothic—as stated by Maximillian E. Novak who in his "Gothic Fiction and the Grotesque" (1979) says "there is no use making the very concept of the Gothic of the fictional mode meaningless in order to lend more scope than it had. Works like *Moby Dick* may utilize certain Gothic effects, but they are not essentially Gothic" (51). This is in direct conflict with Hume who says, "*Moby Dick* is perhaps the greatest of Gothic novels" (287). The Gothic is difficult to pin down because of this question: is it a genre that is greater than the sum of its parts, or is it only the pieces that make it what it is (and those should be strictly limited)? My critical approach is more closely aligned to Hume's (the former), and this is what we argue makes it such an enduring genre.

thematic point of view, critics still tend to feel the need to historicize the genre, even if it is just as an introductory section. In some fashion they devote a portion of their work to the "rise" of the Gothic, even if they are focusing on the genre's use of feminine sexuality, its violence, language, etc. As opposed to defining the Gothic, I seek instead to refine some of our ideas about the genre. At its core it is a conventional story that often seeks to frighten, and which frequently contains supernatural elements; but this is a reductive portrait of the Gothic. The historical view of the Gothic as strictly a genre that came about and was solidified during the mid 18th century is limiting, in that it ignores earlier inchoate manifestations of the Genre, such what is found in Ancient Tragedy.

Many texts begin with History because it is of course valuable to look at the past and assess progress and evolution.[11] *The Castle of Otronto*, even though it is often credited as the first Gothic text. Walter Scott in his 1811 introduction to the novel called it a "daring synthesis of historical realism and unfettered imaginative liberty"; he finds Walpole to be a gifted and imaginative historian who is able to tap into "that secret and reserved feeling of love for the marvelous and supernatural, which occupies a hidden corner in almost every one's bosom" (Walpole 133). Phrases like "historical realism" are not usually applied to Gothic novels. But Walpole tries to make his novel sound realistic by employing a technique, which becomes a Gothic convention used by many subsequent authors, the framing device of the found manuscript.[12] Walpole claims that the story was originally written during the crusades, and a "William Marshall" found and transcribed the story. Walpole's comments in his preface that "the story is founded on truth" and "my rule was nature" can be interpreted to mean that he wants to

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[11] History is also an apt place to start because it helps to neutralize the Gothic. As Mark. M. Hennelly Jr. States in his "Framing the Gothic: From Pillar to Post-Structuralism" (2001), "there is really no sense in either demonizing or domesticating the Gothic" (84). He is speaking of Gothic architecture, but it is a sentiment equally applicable to literature.

[12] A narrative technique used by James Hogg, Bram Stoker, Sophia Lee and Clara Reeve, among others.

make his novel appear realistic, but it can also mean that he is trying to faithfully show people's true characters, which includes the power-hungry, lustful and wrathful sides (leading to the fragmentation of the reader as I described above). We see here ties to Ancient Tragedy because it also comments on people's frailties, specifically their hubris, while immersing the reader/viewer and manipulating their emotions.

Walpole's novel (or perhaps novella might be a more appropriate classification for the brief tale) might seem simplistic when comparing him to the Gothic of the Radcliffe, Shelley or Lewis, since it relies heavily on hyperbolic supernatural events, such as a helmet falling from the ceiling and crushing a character. Further, his protagonist, Manfred, is not a well rounded or layered character, and instead consists of mainly one note: he is angry and entitled. His goal might not be purely evil, he does after all want to see his family line continue, but he does not struggle with his decision to abandon his wife and marry his would-be daughter-in-law immediately after his son's death. Walpole's female protagonists, however, are more nuanced and complex, specifically Isabella who is not unquestioningly submissive. Walpole's text depicts a tradition of a strong and courageous woman, which is further developed by Ann Radcliffe and Bram Stoker—but we also see this in Tragedy with characters such as Iphigenia, Antigone, Electra, and even in the villains like Clytemnestra and Medea. Walpole begins to hint at the sexual persecution that becomes a more important aspect of the Gothic in later novels. Isabella runs away from Manfred, she puts her desire above her duty to obey him,[13] and when compared

[13] Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* has a very similar plot and further develops the idea of the Gothic heroine. The female protagonist is a crucial point for Ellen Moers' discussion of the Gothic as the female *Bildungsroman* or picaresque, especially for Ann Radcliffe for whom "Gothic was a device to set maidens on distant and exciting journeys without offending the proprieties…because the Gothic castle, however ruined, is an indoor and therefore freely female space."

to Hippolyta (Manfred's wife) her strength becomes even more striking since Hippolyta would willingly step aside to let her husband marry his "daughter."[14]

Looking at the beginning of the Gothic—as established by the academic community—provides us with crucial information; for example, we see what conventions and themes becomes inextricably linked with the genre. But we can learn much about the Gothic by examining where it ends and looking backwards as opposed to looking at a somewhat a single novel and labeling it the start of a genre that has infinite permutations and even continues to evolve to this day. I chose *Dracula* as point from which to look backwards—and this might contradict my earlier point, since I am picking a single text and using it as a representation of many. Yet *Dracula* is an apt choice precisely because of its overt conventional structure; it is a plot and describes a mythical figure that continues to be adapted and reinterpreted up until this very day.[15] Yes, it is a novel written at the turn of the century, but it nevertheless is able to remain fresh, modern, and contemporary. The arc drawn between *Dracula* and Aristotle is broad, but the connection between these two disparate points raises our understanding and appreciation of both genres.

Common Gothic Themes

[14] Feminine sexuality and power is a prevalent theme in the Gothic: Cynthia Griffin Wolff's "The Radcliffian Gothic Model: A Form for Feminine Sexuality" (1979) discusses how the Gothic novel became a place where "'respectable' feminine sexuality might find expression. Unlike the picaresque form (which has changed even as the social extravagances it is intended to expose have changed). The Radcliffean Gothic model has survived virtually intact, attaining almost the status of cultural myth" (98). In the Gothic novel, Wolff describes the dichotomy of the virgin/whore, which society has accepted, and adds to it the devil/priest duality which gives women more sexual agency since they now have objects on which they can express their sexual desires, while remaining in a safe "inner space" (100). This combination of safe space and sexual object, gives "The Gothic take thus reinforced a woman's sense of herself as a essentially sexual creature, something that society has often been at pains to deny" (99).

[15] Dwight Codr's "Arresting Monstrosity: Polio, *Frankenstein*, and the Horror Film" (2013) also mentions *Dracula*. He claims that the film depiction of Frankenstein's creature changed from a handsome creature into a diseased monster during the polio epidemic of the 1930's. He also mentions how at the time vampirism "translat[ed] as a plague" (174). The iron lung which looked "rather like a coffin" connects the vampire to the polio epidemic (175). In the 1950's the trend shifted and these supernatural creatures became beautiful again. Codr's article draws our attention to the continuing fascination not just with supernatural creatures but specifically those from 19th century Gothic fiction, including the vampire.

Punishment for wrongdoing and reward for the righteous are prevalent themes in the Gothic. Here we see a link with Ancient Tragedy, Oedipus' blinding and the murder of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus (by Clytemnestra's son, and with the approval of her daughter) are two prominent examples. In the Gothic, religious institutions become tools used to inflict such punishment. Catholicism becomes a huge faceless representation for evil and corruption; this religion is conflated with all that is foreign, and basically not British, therefore wrong. Gothic novels emphasize the foreign attributes with the use of Catholicism and with foreign settings. Lewis, in *The Monk*, takes up the issue of religion; Ambrosio is a corrupt monk, but he begins the novel as a paragon of virtue. Ambrosio is tempted by Matilda, a Daemon and agent of Satan, and ultimately sells his soul to the devil.[16] One of the hallmarks of the Gothic is its preoccupation with the notion of good and evil, but Ambrosio does not spend much time debating or questioning his actions; he indulges his sexual urges, but his public reputation remains untainted throughout most of the novel. His punishment is similar to Walpole's Manfred since he is exposed and shown to be a fraud, and although he attempts to save himself by making a pact with the devil, he is shown no pity and dies "Blind, maimed, helpless, and despairing, venting his rage in blasphemy in curses, execrating his existence, yet dreading the arrival of death destined to yield him up to greater torments, six miserable days did the villain languish" (Lewis 442). Both Manfred and Ambrosio indulge their desire and are ultimately punished by outside forces, be it their household, their ancestors, or the devil. These pacts with the devil do not exist in Classical Tragedy, even though there are evil deeds that take place. With the lack of a

[16] A convention which also occurs in James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, and Goethe's "Faust," among others.

monotheistic religion Tragedy is able to explore more of the aspects that make people evil, even without the need of Satan intervening.

Lewis' novel also helps highlight a prominent distinction made within the Gothic—that between "male" and "female." *The Monk* is often regarded as part of the "male" Gothic because not only did a man write it, but it also has over-the-top elements, which give it the appearance of being more sensational, and therefore more superficial than the Gothic novels of the Brontë sisters, Mary Shelley or Ann Radcliffe (for example). It is Radcliffe herself who in her essay "On the Supernatural in Poetry" marks the difference between the uses of "horror" vs. "terror" in literature, two terms that have become aligned with the male and female Gothic, respectively. She says, "Terror and horror are so far opposite, that the first expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life; the other contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them" (47). She favors terror, which, according to her, awakens and heightens the senses and thereby allows the audience to achieve a more *cathartic* emotional release. Horror, on the other hand, only shocks and numbs the senses; another way to describe the difference would be to interpret horror as the witnessing of a gruesome murder, whereas terror is the knowledge that a murder is taking place in the next room or off stage. It is hidden violence, which is deemed more subtle and nuanced. Further, the latter is a more aestheticized experience; these two ideas are definitely related, but terror is more likely to cause *catharsis* in the Aristotelian sense, since horror focuses more on numbing, while terror awakens and makes the reader/audience feel and experience more deeply. This links to Ancient Tragedy in the sense that it too reserves the horrific scenes for off stage: Oedipus' blinding, Agamemnon's murder, Medea's infanticide, the audience hears about these acts and sees the aftermath, but not the deed itself.

The male Gothic also tends to focus on a tyrannical male villain, often in a religious institution; further, in such works the supernatural events are real, and cannot be explained away as illusions or dreams. *The Monk* is about a murderous, lascivious, hypocritical and devil-worshipping monk. There are depictions of murder, torture, rape and other acts of unspeakable violence, and at times these deeds are accomplished through the use of the supernatural, such as ghosts, daemons, transfiguration, witchcraft, and even the appearance of Satan himself. All these aspects would seem to align Lewis' text with the male, horror-based Gothic. However, making such a categorization or distinction within the genre, much like asserting that the Gothic is a genre that exists within a set time frame, is far too limiting. For instance, seeing *The Monk* as a purely sensational "male" Gothic novel obscures other crucial aspects of the text. I am not arguing that *The Monk* is misunderstood when it comes to the graphic depiction of violence—it does exist—one need only look at the episode of the bloody sheets, or the Bleeding Nun to get a sense of Lewis' complete comfort showing us the dead body. The novel is littered with them—highwaymen slaughtering entire families, villains poisoning those who get in their way and being slain by heroes in turn. But when coupled with the theme of familial relationships, specifically maternal love, the violent and grotesque qualities of the descriptions serve a purpose that goes beyond merely shocking the reader and numbing their senses. The violence and death that accompany the depiction of Agnes and her child, who are both sentenced to die by the Mother Superior of the convent, does not overshadow the purity of such love, but rather allows us to see a slightly more macabre interpretation of it—which is no less pure or significant; in fact, even though they are horrific depictions (by Radcliffe's definition), these scenes heighten such forms of love since we can see it shine even when surrounded by death and decay. Although such depictions may also be true in non-Gothic works, in the Gothic the focus is on eliciting the fear

and disgust. If we see such a depiction in a non-Gothic text, they are perhaps borrowing from the Gothic genre to cultivate an eerie mood and tone, which is not an uncommon event.

When Agnes is incarcerated in her cell/tomb, she gives birth to her son, who dies shortly after; the scene where the child dies is hidden from the audience. When dealing with the mother/child relationship between Agnes and her child, the horrendous acts that take place are not shocking in the same way as watching a murder, because the reader has to imagine the suffering not only of a painful drawn-out death, but the pain she goes through knowing that she is not the only one being sentenced to die, but her child as well. We must imagine the terror she feels as a woman and as a new mother, as she gives birth in complete isolation. Making the situation even darker is the knowledge that this sentence is carried out by a religious institution that was entrusted to protect and care for Agnes. The scene in which she is finally discovered displays the comingling of the purity and beauty of a mother's love with the macabre elements of the Gothic. Lorenzo (her brother) finds her talking to herself, cradling the corpse of her son to her bosom. We hear her say, "'I am very cold!...I shall be cold, cold as Thou art!' She looked at the bundle, which lay upon her breast. She bent over, it and kissed it: Then drew back hastily, and shuddered with disgust" (Lewis 370). Although the body of the child is concealed in a blanket, the reality of her newborn child's death is not hidden, or merely hinted at; rather, the horrific details of his condition are clear, down to the putrid smell of his decomposing body, which she nevertheless clutches, unwilling to fully comprehend the reality of her situation. She remains a mother, despite the fact that her one and only child is dead. She has unconditional love for her child, but there is also an element of "disgust" which seems just as understandable. This relationship is not sugarcoated and made to appear solely pure and sweet, it is also bitter. By displaying such pure selfless love in a Gothic context, we get a more macabre and tainted

version—but no less sacred or meaningful. The fact that the death sentence has been carried out (at least for the child) does not eliminate the importance or purity of such a relationship, but it does show that it can exist even when surrounded by death and decay, it can still contain these disgusting elements and be beautiful. The two emotional responses are not mutually exclusive, either for the characters or for the audience.

The baby remains at her breast as Lorenzo observes Agnes, and even while somewhat hidden by a blanket, it is never forgotten. It is her only companion as she awaits her death and she still speaks to it lovingly. Yet despite having just given birth and witnessing her child's death, she is still apparently lucid and clearheaded, again emphasizing her almost superhuman strength. She does not lose her sanity; Lorenzo does not stumble upon an incoherent and raving Bertha figure, a madwoman in a dungeon (in lieu of an attic). Rather, she is aware of her child's death but nevertheless continues to cradle it—showing that her role as a mother transcends even death. This mixture of purity and morbidity is further evident in Lorenzo's reaction. He looks at her from a hidden location in the tomb and observes her with both "disgust and pity. He trembled at the spectacle; He grew sick at heart; His strength failed him, and his limbs were unable to support his weight" (Lewis 369). Again, we hear the word "disgust" when looking at a mother and child—the same word used when describing Agnes' reaction after gently kissing her child. The audience knows that Agnes has been imprisoned in a convent against her will by her jealous and conniving aunt, and has now been sentenced to experience a cruel, drawn out death. Further, we know she is penitent and remorseful, and that she is entombed while expecting the child of a man who loves and wants to marry her—knowing all this, and as students of the Gothic genre, we hope for the happy ending, we hope that Lorenzo will see her holding her child, and see her

as the beatific model of the Madonna with child, but instead what Lewis creates is a macabre version of that tableau. She speaks aloud to the child, saying,

> *It* was once so sweet! *It* would have been so lovely, so like him! I have lost *it* for ever! How a few days have changed *it*! I should not know *it* again myself! Yet *it* is dear to me! God! How dear! I will forget what *it* is: I will only remember what *it* was, and love *it* as well, as when *it* was so sweet! So lovely! So like him! (Lewis 370) (my emphasis)

As she cradles and rocks her child, the baby is transformed into an object, a lifeless "it." It is nameless and she even acknowledges that what she holds is unrecognizably different from the living baby of a few days ago. Yet she continues to hold it, and what is even more remarkable is that despite the death of her child and her seemingly hopeless situation, she nevertheless evokes the memory and presence of Raymond, the father of her child, seeing him in the baby (at least when it was alive). In effect, Monk is using this lifeless, morbid body to highlight not only the importance of the mother/child relationship, but the family unit as well. Agnes continues to be devoted to her child, and her would-be husband even while incarcerated and on the verge of death. Through the depiction of Agnes and her child we begin to see how the classification of *The Monk* as a strictly male, horror-centered Gothic, might not be completely accurate. With her we see the duality of the mother/child relationship, the simultaneous darkness and light. Here we see a parallel between the Gothic and Tragedy in the interdependency of light and dark; for example, in blindness and utter destruction, Oedipus finally sees—he undergoes a second form of sight, much like Tiresias.

Turn of the Century Gothic: Beyond Morality

My reading of *The Monk* is meant to be in part a defense of the Gothic.[17] But even the authors of the Gothic did not avoid the topic; they took up arms and defended their chosen genre. Jane Austen defends the entire process of writing and reading novel in Book V of *Northanger Abbey* (which I will discuss further in subsequent chapter). Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) can also be read as a treatise on and defense of Art, specifically the novel, and the Gothic. Wilde explores the idea that there are certain spiritual risks associated with reading. His preface includes a few aphorisms on the nature of reading and writing. One is particularly applicable to the Gothic genre, "There is no such thing as a moral or immoral book" (Wilde xxiv). The "Yellow Book" which Dorian receives from Lord Henry is described at times like a corrupting influence. As Dorian reads it:

> After a few minutes he became absorbed. It was the strangest book that he had ever read. It seemed to him that exquisite raiment, and to the delicate sound of flutes, the sense of the world were passing in dumb show before him. Things that he had dimly dreamed of were suddenly made real to him. Things of which he had never dreamed were gradually revealed. It was a novel without a plot, and one with only one character, being, indeed, simply a psychological study. (Wilde 141)

This book has many similarities to the Gothic novel, especially its trait as a "psychological study," a feature that some critics of the Gothic agree is the core of the genre.[18]

However, although it appears that "Dorian Gray had been poisoned by a book" (Wilde 165), it is not the book which corrupts him, but his desire for experience; Dorian "felt keenly conscious of how barren all intellectual speculation is when separated from action and experiment. He knew that the senses, no less than the soul, have their spiritual mysteries to

[17] Yes, even I fall into that very common pattern familiar to many critics of the Gothic.
[18] For example, Elizabeth MacAndrew's *Gothic Tradition in Fiction* heavily relies on this reading of the Gothic, employing Freudian terminology in her analysis.

reveal" (Wilde 150). The idea that a book can be a corrupting influence is echoed in *Northanger Abbey* since Catherine is often mocked and chastised for letting her imagination take over her common sense, all due to the fact that she is a voracious reader of the Gothic. Lord Henry views Dorian as a subject he can observe; Lord Henry is an interior reader who observes Dorian but can interact with the protagonist and shape his decisions. The "Yellow Book," when combined with Lord Henry's influence and the existence of the supernatural portrait, allow Dorian to indulge without restrictions. But he book alone does not spur him into action; it gives him an example that due to other (supernatural) factors in the novel he feels free to experience. Indulgence becomes a central theme of Wilde's novel, which we also see in Austen's Catherine, who indulges her overactive imagination, a trait which helps connect the Gothic to Ancient Tragedy in that this is exactly what Tragedy asked of its audience, to indulge and experience each sensation and emotion to the fullest.

Aristotle Meets the Gothic: Weaknesses Become Strengths

As I stated previously, in this project I extend the historical framework of the Gothic by tracing some of its key concepts back to Greek and Roman Tragedy. I use Aristotle as a structural guide for the Gothic, exploring the similarities between what he deems an effective or successful Tragedy (or, when this proves relevant, Comedy or Epic) and the Gothic narrative. By examining Aristotle's "rules," we see many similarities between Ancient Drama and the Gothic, and through this Aristotelian lens we can take the focus off the overly conventional and sensational aspects of the Gothic and enable some aspects come to light, specifically the structural elements; how authors go about manipulating the reader's emotions (both first and

Exterior) is not something that depends entirely on supernatural creatures. Tragedy also aimed to manipulate the audience's emotions, but did so by focusing more on character and plot, not supernatural forces—which fall under the category that Aristotle termed spectacle. He says,

> The plot ought to be so constructed that, even without the aid of the eye, he who hears the tale told will thrill with horror and melt to pity at what takes place…to produce this effect by mere spectacle is a less artistic method, and dependent on extraneous aids. Those who employ spectacular means to create a sense not of the terrible but only of the monstrous,[19] are strangers to the purpose of Tragedy; for we must not demand of Tragedy any and every kind of pleasure, but only that which is proper to it. And since the pleasure which the poet should afford is that which comes from pity and fear through imitation, it is evident that this quality must be impressed upon the incidents. (Aristotle 37)

Of course, there are supernatural elements in Tragedy at times, typically seen in the *deus ex machina* that arrives at the end of a play and solves the problem, such as the magical chariot that arrives and helps Medea avoid punishment after she murders her children to exact revenge on her husband. In the Gothic the supernatural can be seen as a manifestation of the *deus ex machina*. However, in order for Aristotle's rules about spectacle to be violated by the use of the supernatural, it would have to be used purely for a sensational effect.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) gives us an example of the concept where despite having far-fetched and sensational supernatural elements, the novel still adheres to Aristotle's idea that the spectacle should be avoided because it is "less artistic." Shelley creates a Creature that is made up of partially decomposed corpses, a creature that is given life by a scientific experiment shrouded in secrecy. Yet he is still a complex character who is not entirely defined by his status as a supernatural creature—in essence what today we would call a zombie. He is

[19] What Radcliffe might term "horror" (as opposed to terror).

also an interior reader of the text, but in some ways he is a foil of Austen's Catherine since he reads his world as a completely uninformed reader. The Creature enters this new world as a newborn, unfamiliar with everything and with nobody to help educate him. So, one would expect him to automatically be afraid of his surroundings. But he does not even know to be afraid until he learns first-hand about the cruelty of mankind. As the Creature he also experiences varying heightened emotions, which he at first cannot even articulate. He is afraid, he is lost and confused, he feels abandoned, and eventually feels uncontrollable rage. This supernatural creature can still behave like the audience of a Tragedy—he is not a caricature or a stock character used solely to frighten an audience or become a substitute for a flawed or insubstantial plot.

The Creature is figuratively both reader and writer; this duality is a key component of his complexity and what keeps him from becoming simply a spectacle of horror. He experiences heightened emotions because he is new to the world and receives constant painful shocks. But then the tables are turned and he becomes the orchestrator, turning Victor into the interior reader who must decipher his surroundings and dread what lurks in the shadows. The Creature experiences pleasure and a release when toying with Victor and seeing him feel the emotional pain and overwhelming loss. This *catharsis* connects the Gothic to Ancient Theater in that spectator's emotional release was not purely limited to putting themselves in the protagonist's shoes and metaphorically experiencing their heartache, sorrow, fear and dread, but also in seeing that inflicted upon others from a safe and removed location. Although the spectator is not an agent in the same way, they still experience the emotions vicariously. We may notice some similarities between what the protagonist experiences and some aspects of our personal history, due to the fact that the character is as realistic as possible—Aristotle makes it clear that the

Tragic character must be good, aim at propriety, be true to life, and have consistency (Aristotle 40). But this sense of identification with the protagonist can only heighten the experience, not define it. Even if the audience has not experienced loss, pain, or fear (as unlikely as that may be), one should still be able to experience *catharsis* and pleasure by viewing or reading a work that seeks to emphasize these emotions and make the reader experience and indulge them.

Aristotle wrote about the theater, and in such a setting it is impossible to ignore the fact that spectators are a crucial part of the artistic expression—tragedy does not exist without them. Similarly, in order for the reader to immerse himself in the Gothic he needs to go into it knowing that it is an artificial situation; like the audience of Ancient Theater, we know it is a staged experience with certain parameters. This is what allows the exterior reader to have emotional immersion, but also critical distance. The correlation between the visual audience of Greek and Roman theater and that of the Gothic novel is not readily evident, and there exist key differences, perhaps the most evident being that viewing a play takes place in a group, whereas reading is for the most part an individual and isolated activity.[20] These two disparate dynamics undoubtedly have an influence on the reception, understanding and appreciation of the work itself—which in turn complicates the parallel I have drawn between the Gothic and Ancient Tragedy. Although I see the clear distinction between the individual vs. the group dynamic, rather than being an obstacle to the application of Aristotelian ideas to the Gothic, it further emphasizes the importance of the Aristotelian lens for the understanding of the genre since it unifies the audiences instead of separates them. Even though reading is an individual experience, when dealing with the Gothic, it is actually much more of a communal experience, not completely private and isolated. What unites the readers of the Gothic is similar to what brought together

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[20] It has become an increasingly individual activity, although in the 19th century reading was still very much a communal activity since books were read out loud for an audience.

spectators of Ancient Tragedy—authors who sought to engage not only with the audience on an intellectual level, but on an emotional one.

The Fragmented Reader: Of Good and Evil

Approaching the Gothic genre through the Aristotelian lens emphasizes the importance and manipulation of the audience. But it also sheds light on some interpretive problems previously associated with the Gothic, such as the propensity to find a moral or lesson in the story, or viewing them too strictly as psychoanalytic case studies. The one-sided moralistic interpretation of the plays/novels is problematic because both genres do not often present purely evil villains whom we as an audience are happy to see fall. Rather, they are more complex characters who elicit different reactions from the audience, and open the dialogue for various interpretations of their actions and the plays. Aristotle carefully describes such heroes and what ideal characteristics a hero needs in order to be an effective part of a Tragedy. He focuses much of his treatise on the idea of characterization, and the types of protagonists who take part in Tragedy and make it successful. For example, he comments that when a good man is dragged down due to adversity, "this moves us to neither pity nor fear; it merely shocks us" (Aristotle 35), and when a purely evil villain is brought down, he says,

> A plot of this kind would, doubtless, satisfy the moral sense, but it would inspire neither pity nor fear; for pity is aroused by unmerited misfortune, fear by the misfortune of a man like ourselves. Such an event, therefore, will be neither pitiful nor terrible. There remains then the character between these two extremes,--that of a man who is not eminently good

> and just, --yet whose misfortune is brought about not by vice or depravity, but by some error or frailty. (Aristotle 36)

Here, Aristotle highlights the importance of having a character that is not purely good or evil but a combination; he also emphasizes the need for texts to stay away from attempting to simply provide a "moral" for their audience. It is not the case that there is no moral to be found in the text; after all, hubris is often severely punished in Tragedy, but it is not simply about the moral. Such an experience is not enough to elicit strong feelings from the audience and thereby achieve the sought after *catharsis*. Aristotle conditions us to look for both, to need complexity and a mixture of good and bad. The Gothic follows analogous rules as well; this leads to the development of the fragmented reader—a distinctive type of reader that emerges in Ancient Tragedy (a spectator at this point), and is carried through into the Gothic genre.

This fragmented reader develops and is complicated in the Gothic genre because the complex and flawed Aristotelian hero is split into in two—there are "heroes" and "villains," but each of these figures respectively retain the flawed intricacies of the Aristotelian protagonists, such as Orestes for example. Applying his idea to the Gothic, we take away the propensity to read the Gothic through a moralistic lens. In the Gothic reader, we encounter someone who is encouraged not only to identify with the "hero," but also with the villain—at times perhaps even more so than with the hero, because often their characters are given more detail and development than their heroic counterparts. An apt example is Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*—fitting not only because of the dynamic between the hero and the villain, but also because Austen uses this text, among others, as a model for *Northanger Abbey*. In Radcliffe's novel, we get a confrontation between Montoni and Valancourt, and the former is simply more interesting than the latter. Although his evil deeds are thwarted in the end, the reader is drawn into his dark

machinations and at times may even wish to see him succeed. This allure of Montoni can be seen in similar Gothic characters such as Count Dracula, Melmoth, Ambrosio, Rochester, Heathcliff, Frankenstein's Creature, and the original Gothic "villain," Walpole's Manfred. We see in the Gothic hero/villain the hubris present in Classical heroes, which is not only responsible for their eventual downfall, but this trait is also the reason they remain sympathetic characters who elicit pity from the audience. Hubris is punished in the end, but it is also an attractive quality because it is at its core extreme confidence, a quality of strong and charismatic people. Aristotle goes into great detail as to which types of characters and "downfalls" create the most sympathy (and get a greater *cathartic* reaction) from the audience, and he concludes that it is not the most evil villain being punished or even the most righteous and pure man suffering misfortune, but someone who is most like an average person, someone with faults, but who also tries to do good. Such a character draws out of the audience a combination of pity, sympathy, recognition, and other emotions that ultimately add up to a fully *cathartic* experience. Gothic villains may choose to do evil, but the audience still sees their struggle, or finds other characteristics to sympathize with and transform them into sympathetic characters.

Robert Louis Stevenson's and Wilde's protagonists are of particular note because they become representative of the fragmentation of the reader, since they depict a shift from exterior judgment to introspection. The supernatural is still essential, but it becomes a tool to show clearly the protagonist's inner struggle. In *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, for instance, we see a physical manifestation of what is only hinted at in the earlier Gothic of Walpole and Lewis. In their novels the "villains" are still compelling characters because they indulge in their dark fantasies and unapologetically break society's rules. Stevenson shifts his focus to show the struggle that people go through due to their desire to be like Manfred or

Ambrosio, but they also realize that society has certain rules and expectations that prohibit them from being so self-indulgent. This is not to say that these societal boundaries are not present in the novels of Walpole or Lewis, for example, but those restrictions are eschewed by them, by making Manfred a lord who could impose his will on others, or (for Lewis) by using the existing negative attitude toward Catholicism as a superstitious and corrupt religion to explain Ambrosio's evil actions and make them almost expected for someone in his position (at least for British Protestant readers).

However, Stevenson does not make his protagonist a man of high rank or set his novel in a far off location where customs are expected to be different and strange. His protagonist is an average doctor, until we look closely and see that he is hiding a dark secret. His experiment, of course, goes horribly awry and once he realizes this and decides to retire Hyde, it is much too late. The theme of sin and finally relinquishing to temptation is present in Lewis' text, but a key difference in Stevenson's novel is the vacillation he experiences throughout the novel. Ambrosio, by comparison, decides to sin and never looks back.[21] Dr. Jekyll states:

> This brief condescension to my evil finally destroyed the balance of my soul. And yet I was not alarmed; the fall seemed natural…After all, I reflected, I was like my neighbours; and then I smiled, comparing myself with other men, comparing my active goodwill with the lazy cruelty of their neglect. And at the very moment of that vainglorious[22] thought, a qualm came over me, a horrid nausea and the most deadly shuddering… I began to be aware of a change in the temper of my thoughts, a greater boldness, a contempt of danger, a solution of the bonds of obligation. I looked down; my clothes hung formlessly

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[21] The same could be said of Hogg's protagonist, who believes that one sin is just as bad as ten, so once he sins one time he "went on sinning without measure" (Hogg 108).

[22] Or hubris in the context of Ancient Tragedy.

> on my shrunken limbs; the hand that lay on my knee was corded and hairy. I was once more Edward Hyde. (Stevenson 72)

This is an important scene because it depicts a few key aspects of the Gothic protagonist, a crucial one being the ultimate submission to the dark side, his "Hyde." Jekyll no longer needs to drink the potion to switch to his alter ego. Rather, he achieves the transformation through an interesting method, through the comparison with his fellow men—acknowledging the inherent need or even subconscious pull to compare ourselves to those around us and imagine what a day in their shoes might entail. He realizes that he is not much different from them, but he just has the opportunity to show outwardly what everyone has inside. This realization triggers the transformation, and this is a crucial part of the Gothic; it removes the veil[23] and allows the audience to see everything hidden underneath the surface.

Wilde takes up the theme of duality that we see in Stevenson, but turns it on its head with his hero, Dorian Gray, who also has the "terrible pleasure of a double life," which in essence already paints him as a fragmented interior reader (Wilde 198). Whereas Stevenson's novel describes Hyde's physical appearance by saying "There is something wrong with his appearance; something displeasing, something downright detestable…He must be deformed somewhere" (Stevenson 8), Dorian is a beautiful man in the bloom of youth; his beauty and youth become important issues in the novel because they show how a the villain does not have to be ugly or give any outward sign as to his "dark side." It is not only the ugly beast who reflects the dark desires, but the beautiful and prominent member of society. Furthermore, unlike many other Gothic predecessors Dorian is not relegated to a dank castle, monastery, or even the night (when

[23] Veil imagery is very prominent in the Gothic. George Eliot's "The Lifted Veil," Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Minster's Black Veil" and Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Case of Lady Sannox" among others, all use the veil to examine the hidden aspects of human nature, as well as society's hypocrisy. Eve Sedgwick talks about the issue in her essay "The Character in the Veil: Imagery of the Surface in the Gothic," where she takes issue with critics' eagerness to write purely about the "content" of the Gothic.

Jekyll allows Hyde free-reign), he has the ability to mingle with the upper crust of society. He does not need the assistance of a Daemon[24] to seduce innocent maidens; Dorian only needs his youth and beauty, and he does not bother questioning how or why he gets to keep them for years on end. After he realizes that the portrait changes while he remains the same, he says "but the reason was of no importance…If the picture was to alter, it was to alter. That was all. Why inquire too closely into it?" (Wilde 120). Ignorance may be bliss for Dorian at this point, but through his subsequent actions, and ultimate fate, we see that it is not the (supernatural) cause which matters but the effect on the interior reader, which is precisely why the supernatural may be an important part of the Gothic it is not the goal of the novel. Rather a tool that allows us to explore some aspects of human nature and society, which ultimately leads to the Exterior reader's awareness of his/her internal fragmentation.

As we see with Stevenson and Wilde's anti-heroes, the fragmented reader can identify and experience emotions that they would not seek out in everyday life by identifying with both the hero and the villain.[25] This is a cornerstone of the *catharsis* Aristotle discusses—the Theater was a place where people came to experience unpleasant emotions when viewing Tragedy. The theater was a safe place to feel horror, fear, pity, and sorrow, all emotions that audiences wanted to avoid in their real lives, but which nonetheless were necessary to experience as part of a healthy life because it made on more capable of handling those emotions if or when they did encounter them in real life. This may be the standard explanation, and it does explain the role of the theater in part, but there is (and continues to be) and indefinable element to experiencing these negative emotions. Although it might also be pleasant to experience joy or other similar emotions, in the context of Tragedy (and the Gothic) the emotional release needs to come from

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[24] In *The Monk*, Matilda performs witchcraft and gives Ambrosio a potion which will allow him to rape Antonia while keeping his identity secret.

[25] An apt example is the pairing of Creon and Antigone in *Antigone*.

fear, preferably terror rather than horror. This helps the audience capitalize on the safety of the aesthetic experience and location, whether it is in a Roman theater, or reading a novel alone. The vicarious aspect of the negative emotions is crucial because even though the audience may be familiar with the concept of these emotions and they have experienced them in small doses, they get to fully indulge in them when a completely new and unfamiliar (while simultaneously safe and controlled) world.

The reader is also fragmented in the sense that there are varying level of understanding that occur simultaneously. The exterior reader identifies with various characters; s/he is the person reading the text, or in essence "viewing" the play/action and sees it as an aesthetic piece of art. The interior reader is/are the protagonist(s) of the novel, whom I view as "stand-ins" for the exterior reader; they "read" their environment and experience a form of *catharsis* themselves, which in turn serves as an example for what the reading audience is expected to feel and experience. Both levels of readers, in addition to the narrator, in turn create a communal audience who experience *catharsis* in the Aristotelian sense. They feel a purgation of extreme emotions with a sense of relief and pleasure coming from that emotional release, together. In the context of Ancient Tragedy we have a real community, those who come to the theater to view and enjoy the play together. This form of community ceases to exist in the context of the novel when the act of reading becomes a much more private and individual experience, but we can still create a community with the text itself, with the characters and the narrators.

When examining the relationship between the levels of readers we see how in crucial ways the Gothic takes up where Ancient tragedy leaves off. Although the Gothic is not explicitly a spectator form of entertainment, it is still a form of art where the audience is being asked to be an active participant—more so than in other forms of art that do not have such a strong emphasis

on the experience and purgation of emotions. The reader is drawn into the world of the Gothic, often by framing devices, which allow them to suspend their disbelief when it comes to the reality of the story they are about to hear, and suspending disbelief heightens emotional vulnerability. Denis Diderot's *The Nun* (1796) is a particularly emblematic example of an author playing an elaborate trick or hoax on the audience; in Diderot's case on his close friend, the Marquis de Croismare, whom he wanted to coax back to the city with the tale of an abused nun, written in her own hand and collected by friends, finally making their way to the Croismare. Knowing his friend to be a kind and charitable man, he hopes that this story will make him return and jump into action. In order to ensnare his friend and make it impossible for him to refuse to lend his aid, Diderot weaves a tale of the desperate and abused nun sister Suzanne.

An unsettling exchange takes place between the novice Suzanne and her Mother Superior, who asks, "It has never occurred to you to run your hands over that lovely bosom, those legs, that body, that firm, soft, white flesh of yours?" Suzanne answers, "On ho, that is sinful, and if such a thing had happened to me I don't know how I could ever have mentioned it in my confession" (Diderot 147). This conversation between an innocent young woman and the person in charge of ushering her into a life devoted to God represents Diderot's interpretation of a common Gothic motif of the "damsel in distress"—a young woman abducted and sequestered from her family by an evil villain who attempts to steal her virtue. In this, Suzanne is similar to Radcliffe's Emily St. Aubert, Lewis' Agnes, among many others. Diderot takes up this convention and uses it to transform the convent from a place of spirituality to a location where religious fervor is a pretext for both brutal torture and predatory sexual behavior. In essence, it becomes a corrupt prison for Suzanne – a bastard child forced into a convent by her cruel and shame-filled mother. The Mother Superior becomes a warden who sublimates her sexual desire

for the young novices under the guise of religious exploration and Holy Communion. For Diderot the more pure, wholesome and virtuous a location should be, the more easily it can be corrupted and become a place of unspeakable horrors where people feel free to indulge their every sexual and violent desire. This juxtaposition is further emphasized when in the end a brothel is transformed into a place of hope and salvation, since Suzanne finds shelter and solace there after finally managing to escape the convent. Diderot's text is an example of a more calculated and precise ruse being perpetrated against a specific individual, but in a larger sense this is what the Gothic genre asks of its entire audience, to be "fooled" and to allow their hearts to beat faster when a damsel is in distress or when a villain is planning horrendous deeds because they "really" happened. This is a phenomenon can be further explored in *Northanger Abbey* where Catherine becomes the interior reader who guides us through her experiences. Through Catherine we begin to see that there are two types of suspension of disbelief, emotional and intellectual.

Novels as Case Studies: Prototypical Readers

Austen produces a unique Gothic novel that is particularly instructive for analyzing the genre because it implicitly links the genre with Ancient Tragedy. On the surface, the novel is similar to the "Comedy of Manners" style that Austen is famous for, yet it is transformed into a Gothic text in the reader's mind. A patchwork narrative is created between the interpretive acts of the protagonist, the narrator, and the reader, and this community strengthens and validates the impact and importance of the Gothic because it forces the audience to behave as if they were watching a Greek or Roman Tragedy. Much like the writers of Ancient Tragedy, Austen

envelops the audience into a collective *cathartic* experience. *Northanger Abbey* provides critics with an opportunity to study an incredibly popular author writing within the conventions of a hugely popular (if mocked) genre; it reminds us that enduring popularity is impossible without the audience and a strong reading community, and it does so, while paying homage to Aristotle and the Classical Tradition.

We readers are asked to become like Catherine and believe that these evil acts are possible and that danger lurks behind every door.[26] The novel lacks any supernatural elements or other conventional Gothic "trappings" that mark it as a prototypical Gothic text, and aside from the location, an abbey, reminiscent of the setting of several Gothic tales (such as *The Monk* and *The Nun*), the classification of the novel as at all Gothic lies completely with the misapprehensions of interior reader, Catherine. Fantasy is important to Catherine, and indeed to all readers of the Gothic. The suspension of disbelief is necessary for readers and viewers of the Gothic (or Tragedy) to be able to fully immerse themselves in the performance and through that achieve the *catharsis*. It is crucial to buy into a fantasy world or we don't really *feel* the emotion. In *Northanger Abbey* the Abbey becomes a literal location where Catherine's wildest fantasies come true, but only in her mind. This is atypical of the genre, but it only serves to further emphasize the importance of audience perception and participation in the genre. She is never in actual danger, General Tilney is not really a wife-torturer, and the dangers she faces while in the country are typical of those of any other Austen novel, having a ruined reputation and a lack of marriage prospects—though that reality is terrifying enough. Yet she finds proof for all of her delusions by practicing and misapplying close reading strategies at every turn.

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[26] Critics have pointed out this feature in *Northanger Abbey*. Jonathan Lamb points out in his "Imagination, Conjecture, and Disorder" (2011) that "we might say that Catherine's directs impressions of things and the literal way she talks of them is cognate with the immediacy of the eyewitness on the image in Coleridge's dream or Kames's reverie, where the impression compels of itself" (62).

Austen's *Northanger Abbey* represents and analytically explores a psychologizing of terror, since not only does she not "show" any real horrific scene, there simply is no such scene to be shown, and instead it all takes place in her mind. This fact is what allows Austen to focus primarily upon the logic of the psychological process in a way detached from any real-world events. Austen, for example, focuses on depicting and describing anticipation, disappointment and frustration. Catherine does not just experience terror and horror, she also feels anticipation, suspense, hope, and even happiness when surrounded by the perceived "Gothic trappings," and *catharsis* comes about due to the set of complex and mingled emotions. She wants more than anything to visit the Abbey because it reminds her of the Gothic novels she has read, and this has been a pleasurable experience. Through Austen's text we can explore how emotional enjoyment is so central to the Gothic and how the intellectual connection between the reader and the text contributes to this primary emotional relationship. Even though Gothic novels were deemed silly, frivolous and not particularly intellectually stimulating, Austen's novel seemingly takes that to the extreme, offering itself as apparent satire, while in commenting on the depth and importance of the genre. We take a gifted British author, not only popular but also incredibly lauded, and she takes up the challenge of creating a quasi-Gothic text; she produces a text that is unmistakably Gothic—with all the trappings expected by readers of such texts—but what sets her work apart from those who preceded (and even succeeded her) is that the work is transformed into a Gothic novel purely in the reader's mind. In doing, so the novel comments on the idea of superficiality, not only showing that Austen's Gothic work is far from a superficial piece of fluff—but also that the Gothic genre as a whole is worthy of study because it creates a reader, and a community of readers, who are insightful "readers" of their environment, yet also clearly capable of making

serious errors. Her innocence is precisely what gives her the ability to perceive her world with so much keen insight—a trait that helps the exterior reader understand and appreciate the text.

We, as exterior readers, get a fuller combination of an intellectual and emotional experience because exterior readers are not as naïve as Catherine. Although we may thoroughly enjoy a Gothic novel and even allow ourselves to be immersed in it and experience terror and horror and other heightened emotions, we do not then believe that we are actually living in a Gothic novel. We are able to maintain achieve critical distance and explore the novel for what it is—a work of fiction. We can engage with the novel on a similar level as that of an audience of Ancient Tragedy. They believed what they saw as they were experiencing it—Aristotle discusses how making events and actions relatable and realistic to audiences is a mark of a successful and well-executed Tragedy—but they could also quickly divorce themselves from the play and appreciate it as art that entertained and instructed as well, which falls in line with Horace's definition of art and its role to both "instruct and delight." Crucially, however, they took away not any single, simple "moral," but the experience of having lived someone else's life and then better interpret their own world.

Catherine is an apt example for an interior reader of the Gothic because through her we see many of the attributes of the spectator of Greek Tragedy, as well as the reader of Gothic novels. Her perceived flaws—her naiveté and ability to let herself get "carried away"-- allow her to enjoy the experience of being immersed in the Gothic emotional/interpretive experience and even though she experiences fear, anger, frustration, and other unpleasant emotions, she welcomes them and in fact is disappointed when her experiences are not frightening or shocking enough. Her character suggests that some people enjoy and seek out negative emotions. When Aristotle describes the perfect Tragedy, he says it should "be arranged not on the simple but on

the complex plan. It should, moreover, imitate actions which excite pity and fear, this being the distinctive mark of tragic imitation" (Aristotle 35). Catherine strives to have her surroundings and in essence the novel as a whole, *Northanger Abbey*, fit into the mold that Aristotle has presented. It is a work that accomplishes what Aristotle describes as the goal of a great tragedy, including a variation of types of characters all working together to provoke a strong emotional release from the reader/audience. We gain an understanding not just by seeing Catherine as an interior reader, but also though our immersion in the psychology of these other players in the text.

Even though Catherine is a useful interior reader who allows us to explore *Northanger Abbey's* connection to Ancient Tragedy, according to Austen, she is also worthy of mockery because she is foolish. She is a reader who jumps to conclusions and takes everything at face value, without much insight or ability to think and analyze. Yet her errors are also strengths. She may not be an effective close reader because she relies entirely on their visceral reactions to the text. However, she is an informed interior reader, since she walks into Bath having read quite a bit, to the extent that her knowledge and love of a particular type of novel makes her stand out. She is clearly a bright and precocious character, yet she can also be seen as delusional in certain scenes. In order to fully understand *Northanger Abbey*, it is essential (like Catherine) to be familiar with the Gothic genre. Catherine is the type of person that Aristotle believes Tragedies were written for; like the audience of Ancient Tragedy, the Gothic audience allows itself to be swayed by the text, whether it is prose or a dramatic representation. Through Catherine, the exterior reader can experience *catharsis* repeatedly. Catherine seems addicted to the sensation of building up her emotion and fear and then experiencing the relief. In her case, *catharsis* is

slightly different, however, because she is experiencing that relief comes from realizing that her assumptions and fears were mistaken.

In the second volume, much to Catherine's delight, the party moves from Bath to Northanger Abbey. She finally gets to experience first-hand a Gothic location, which helps her come close to what she has read about. The location turns on a "close reading" switch in her, but unlike her situation at Bath where John Thorpe hunts her since he is under the misapprehension that she is a wealthy heiress, the danger is not present anymore. Catherine's ability (or shortcoming, depending on how you look at it) to judge things at face value in *Northanger Abbey* adds to the connection between Tragedy and the Gothic because it emphasizes the reader's role as someone who is initially supposed to let go and be guided by her perceptions and emotions. The Gothic novels Catherine has read in the past seduce her into desiring to experience heightened feelings when no real outside stimulus exists. There is no Montoni chasing her in a manor, but the promise or hint of this is enough to excite her senses and get her to experience heightened emotions. These emotions are an integral part of the Gothic experience; they are what make *Northanger Abbey* a Gothic novel. It takes place in the reader's mind (both first and exterior reader) and establishes that front as the focal point for the Gothic-reading experience. Austen highlights the fact that for many women it does not take much to turn what might be a typical everyday situation into a Gothic novel, because women on the marriage market had real fears and repercussions if they did not secure their own happy ending.

Braddon and Stoker's Readers

Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* continues the idea of the Gothic existing within the interior reader's mind, but makes the idea more complex with the addition of mental illness, or at least the guise of mental illness. Braddon's text explores the mental state of Lucy Audley; she is an interior reader who, unlike Catherine, keeps a great deal of information from the exterior reader, and her fellow protagonists. She helps connect the Gothic to Ancient Tragedy because she becomes a character who adheres to Aristotle's ideas related to character. She is closely observers and feels herself being read. Her actions are those of a woman who desperately wants to survive. Through her we also explore the impact of gender roles and more specifically marriage on the Gothic and its relationship to *catharsis* since her panic, fear, anxiety and ultimate release are all closely related to her strong desire (or more like vital need) to be married and comfortable. In the 19th century marriage was not just a custom, but also a necessity for most women, since often their salvation depended on it. Every woman needed to marry to have a chance at a respectable and somewhat comfortable life, as well as to fulfill her other goal and duty as a woman: motherhood. *Lady Audley's Secret* turns this idea and custom on its head. Braddon's novel is often critically overlooked due to its perceived over-the-top sensationalism. However, this novel helps critics see that the custom of marriage is often not a woman's salvation, but rather potentially the cause of her mental, emotional, and physical destruction. The novel is indeed sensational, but in being so it highlights the real and drastic repercussions women faced when married. Lady Audley marries, but despite having this sought-after status, the institution perverts her as she perverts it, by committing child abandonment, bigamy, murder, arson, and other heinous crimes. She is forced to choose between survival and her respectable marriage; emphasizing the fact that this custom does not ensure happiness or safety and security.

Ultimately, the novel is ahead of its time, arguing that women must be allowed some degree of independence, yet are harshly judged for it, and when they seek it, it even costs them their sanity.

Lady Audley is only one of the many personas of Helen Maldon, who later becomes Helen Talboys, wife of George Talboys. George leaves for Australia and she becomes Lucy Graham, a governess, who then makes an advantageous (albeit bigamous) marriage to Sir Michael Audley, becoming Lady Audley. But why does she feel the need to change her name and commit bigamy in the first place? She does not run away from her husband, nor does she change her identity the minute he leaves. She did not marry him against her will—but she did go through with the marriage contract with an understanding that both parties had obligations, and George simply was not fulfilling his end of the bargain. He left because they were having financial problems, but those problems did not go away when he left. He leaves her with a child, and she does not know when or if he will return. At this point, even though he may be attempting to play the role of the proper husband and provider, he has already broken the contract, leaving her in the care of her drunken, gambling father.

George is completely blind to the harm that he is doing to his wife and his marriage when he leaves—seeming to take on the role of savior. When we first meet him, he is on a ship on his way back home; apparently he has been the happiest, and friendliest passenger on board. In his mind he is arriving to a warm hearth and loving embrace of his wife. However, he happens to have a conversation with a woman on board who voices the concerns of anyone who has been separated from a loved one for an extended period of time. Are they well, or even still alive? Would they look the same? Have their feeling changed? Do they still love me? George is entirely too confident that even though he has been away (and left when things were not going well for his wife and family) that there will be pure bliss when he comes home. It is telling that a woman

is the one who has to remind him that although marriage may be a contract that links someone to you for life, people nevertheless change. She has these concerns because as a woman she is the vulnerable party. She can be divorced, she can be locked away, and she can be abandoned. It becomes more difficult for the tables to be turned and for George to sympathize, since men have the upper hand. It is unthinkable to George that his life would not have been waiting for him upon his return, almost as if time had stood still in his absence.

Despite the overly sensational aspects, there are some autobiographical connections to Braddon's life in her novel. She turns to writing to make money, and begins a relationship with John Maxwell, a publisher, with whom she lives out of wedlock, given to the fact that he was still married to his first wife, who was locked in a madhouse. Braddon did not have domestic respectability, but she had a way to make money and ultimately survive. They eventually married after Maxwell's wife died. The ultimate goal for women was to have a respectable and comfortable life, the kind of life that gave them the dominion of the tea table. This premise gives weight to Lady Audley's beliefs that she did indeed need to protect her marriage no matter what. Further, she provides a worthy adversary for Robert to track down and help him experience that building and staggered *catharsis*. He and Catherine are similar in that they are both hunting down a dark and dangerous secret, but whereas Catherine's is imaginary, his is real and indeed dangerous.

The hunt is continued in Stoker's *Dracula*. The novel, much like *Northanger Abbey* and especially *Lady Audley's Secret* explores the idea of hidden motives, the darker aspects of human nature, and the desire to indulge in dark thoughts and desires. In Stoker's work we also see traces of previous Gothic texts, signaling the longevity and historical perseverance of the genre, but he adapts them to reflect the world at the turn of the 20th century. Stoker explores the themes of

xenophobia, female sexuality, gender roles, religion, superstition, new and emerging science and technology. In the text we continue the idea of a central female interior reader. But unlike previous Gothic heroines, such as Walpole's Isabella, Radcliffe's Emily St. Aubert, Lewis' Antonia and Agnes, who all attempt to run from their aggressors, Mina chases the villain and hunts him down—she is not simply prey, but also a predator. Through female interior readers, we can examine new issues such as the way the Gothic uses female sexuality. Mina is representative of the ideal Victorian woman; she is sweet, kind, gracious, beautiful and dutiful; her ultimate goal is marriage, and service to her husband and children. As a woman, Mina can be used as the typical damsel in distress. Dracula targets her and when the men walk in on him feeding on her they see "Her white nightdress was smeared with blood, and a thin stream tickled down the man's bare breast, which was shorn by his torn-open dress. The attitude of the two had a terrible resemblance to a child forcing a kitten's nose into a saucer of milk to compel it to drink" (Stoker 313). This provocative scene strips away all of Mina's power. She is helpless and is officially tainted by drinking Dracula's blood. When Van Helsing attempts to "purify" her with a holy wafer it burns her skin, leaving a scar on her forehead and highlighting the fact that she is now "unclean."

Mina is a central interior reader because even though she is not the only narrative voice we hear, she is the one responsible for collecting and representing the other voices in a cohesive narrative thread (an idea I will explore further in Chapter IV). She is a Catherine figure who actually inhabits a Gothic world and must also rely on reading in order to decipher and make sense of her surroundings; she must become a good student and a quick learner in order to survive. The exterior reader sees this unfold and can, along with her, experience the heightened emotions and *cathartic* releases that come from realizing that their worst nightmares have come

to fruition. By tracing the highly detailed narrative of Mina (and her fellow protagonist/authors), we as exterior readers experience heightened emotions as well, but also maintain the critical distance.

Conclusion: What's at Stake?

What is at stake in the Gothic novel? When coupled with Aristotle, his *Poetics*, and the connection to Tragedy, we see that in the Gothic emotion and logic are coupled together; it is not necessarily a battle where one comes out victorious, but rather they each inform one another. Throughout each of the novels, inside each interior reader, there is a conflict between what s/he believes "reality" to be, and what they cannot deny they have seen or experienced—which is usually something that challenges their previously held beliefs and conceptions. How much the interior reader struggles against these two forms of reality varies. In *Northanger Abbey*, for example, Catherine is willing, even eager to buy into what she knows is not logical, but in *Dracula* (a novel with much more of a supernatural element), the protagonists all fight against the reality that the vampire does indeed exist. The struggle between emotion and logic however, only adds to the ultimate effect of the novel on its audience. If the interior reader were to accept the existence of the supernatural too easily, the premise becomes too unrealistic and therefore less effective. Aristotle hints at the importance of logic in his *Poetics* saying, "Within the action there must be nothing irrational" (41). Yet, the avoidance of irrationality exists for a specific purpose, not necessarily to achieve realism, but to have a greater effect on the audience and fully allow them to participate emotionally in the events without having to stop and ponder the logistics of what they are viewing. In *Lady Audley's Secret* a logical and thorough search for

facts only helps emphasize Lady Audley's gradual descent into insanity. Ultimately, the Aristotelian lens helps us explore some overlooked aspects of the Gothic, and conversely, through the lens of the Gothic we can appreciate the distinctions that Aristotle makes in a new light and can better understand his theories. In the next chapter I take up the terminology I set up here but focus on the interior reader and delve into their psychology and how that impacts our understand of gender, madness, marriage, and how protagonists manifest their affect for one another.

Chapter II
Hysterical Heroes & Heroines

What does it all mean? I am beginning to wonder if my long habit of life amongst the insane is beginning to tell upon my brain.

- Bram Stoker, *Dracula*

There is a pleasure sure, / In being mad, which none but madmen know!

- John Dryden, *The Spanish Friar*

Introduction

The central purpose of any work of Art is to elicit an emotional reaction from its audience. Taking this goal under consideration, Gothic literature is not much different than many other literary genres. However, one aspect that sets the Gothic apart is its uncanny ability to reinvent itself and transcend time. As I discuss in the previous chapter, it is limiting to view the Gothic in a too strict a historical sense because, unlike Romantic Poetry, the three-volume Victorian novel, or a Medieval Mystery play (for example), the Gothic cannot be pinned down to a specific time period, or even to too strict a formal set of generic rules. This last statement may seem contradictory, since the Gothic is thought to be one of the most conventional of genres. But these conventions paradoxically help it become more versatile; the list of potential Gothic conventions is so large, and covers so many aspects (setting, character type, plot points, tone, etc.). A text need not contain all the conventions at once or even a set number or combination in order to be considered "Gothic."[27] As I discuss in Chapter One, even though Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* is widely considered to be the first (British) Gothic text, it is limiting to think that the Gothic genre was fully established at any specific historical point, or cemented with any

[27] This is a controversial topic however, since some critics argue that this takes away any potential to truly define a genre, whereas others stress how this is precisely what makes a particular genre strong. Maximillian E. Novak and Robert Hume, whom I discussed in my first chapter, are representative of this central disagreement. I tend to side with Hume, who argues the latter idea.

particular novel. When one deconstructs what makes a novel Gothic, it becomes increasingly difficult not to see Gothic traits in varying genres, many of which predate Walpole's text.[28]

Further, Walpole's novel does not encapsulate all traits and conventions that we can now identify as Gothic. For instance, a convention that becomes increasingly connected with the Gothic is the distrust of religion, and foreigners—this is not a trait that we see clearly established in *Otranto*, where religion is seen as a positive force. Although many scholars do tend to place the Gothic in a particular historical period,[29] the Gothic is more of an adjective, something that manifests itself in an atmosphere or tone that encourages a connection with the audience that leads to an intense *cathartic* release. This release is achieved in part by having the reader maneuver between emotional immersion and critical distance. I contend that this distinctive trait in the Gothic is due to its (ability to) manipulate, control and fully display the affect of the interior reader. I explore the affect of the characters through their descent into madness, which is ushered in by their incremental loss of control over their lives and surroundings. In this chapter we will peer into the character's world, not to psychoanalyze it, but to understand and experience his or her psychological transformation. The spectacle and madness in the Gothic is tantamount to Oedipus' blinding; we see the repetition of the cycle, which begins with the loss of control, then the realization of this fact, and finally the complete indulgence of the emotions that rise. In the connection with Ancient Tragedy we can also disprove a common misconception about the Gothic because the emotion and spectacle do not come from supernatural elements, but from the loss of control and the realization that total control is unachievable.

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[28] Some examples include Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. Some of Charles Dickens' works, for example, contain Gothic elements (*Bleak House*, *Great Expectations*) without being classified as entirely Gothic.

[29] I go into greater detail regarding this historical perspective in Chapter I.

A Method to Their Madness: Stoker, Braddon, and Austen

I have chosen my primary texts, Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (published 1818, written 1799), Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), because chronologically, the texts punctuate the 19th century. Each text is not a snapshot in time, representing the style of writing popular at that particular time period. Rather, each goes beyond itself both chronologically and generically. For example, Austen's text is published early in the 19th century, and it does indeed contain elements of the "Comedy of Manners," made popular by Austen, and representative of the style of the early 19th century novel. Yet much of the novel also looks back to the Gothic novels of the mid to late 18th century, adopting their conventions and tone, albeit through a satirical lens. Austen keeps the fiction of Ann Radcliffe, Eliza Parsons, Regina Maria Roche and Eleanor Sleath, among others, alive and in the Zeitgeist of her text. *Dracula* also looks back in its style; in the novel we see conventions that go back as far as those found in the "Northanger Horrid" novels, such as the portrayal of a damsel in distress, albeit that the damsel can also be a man in Stoker's retelling. We also have not only the presence of a supernatural creature, but also the development of him as a fully rounded character with needs and desires—something we see almost a century earlier in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818). Even the vampire figure himself looks back to much earlier literary manifestations such as John Polidori's "The Vampyre" (1819) and even Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Christabel" (1797). *Dracula* also looks forward in its themes; the battle with Count Dracula is a representation of the battle of the old Victorian way of life and the quickly

approaching 20th century.[30] Stoker may not have invented the vampire figure, but he is responsible for the most well known adaptation of the myth, and this myth continues to spawn cinematic adaptations.[31]

Lady Audley's Secret lacks the conventional supernatural elements of the typical Gothic novel. Instead, it is a psychological and Sensational Gothic text which; while removing common Gothic "trappings," still helps the genre to evolve and (emphasize key conventions). If we accept my classification of it as Gothic, Braddon's text negates the supposition that the Gothic needs to include supernatural elements. A novel can be Gothic due to the particular intensity of its emotional manipulation of the interior readers. Lady Audley proves to be a master manipulator, and even though she is the epitome of feminine beauty and charm, she is still a dangerous threat to society because her beauty is coupled with ambition and a relentless will to survive. In some ways she is similar to Count Dracula; they are both not just trying to survive, but eventually become hunted by those who see them as threats to the status quo.

In my primary texts we see how the Gothic often contains echoes of the past, and the genre is also cannibalized by future writers/artists who take what they need from their predecessors. However, what sets the Gothic apart is that often what is incorporated in future texts is not necessarily what is praised, but rather what is criticized. For example, instead of shying away from the overly sensational and supernatural, Gothic texts continued to use those conventions. In doing so, the earlier text is not discarded; rather it is paid homage and celebrated.

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[30] Stephen D. Arata's article "The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization" makes such an argument, where the Vampire and his un-British facial features, accent, and attire, become representative of the "hordes" of foreigners immigrating to England.

[31] The 1992 adaptation, *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (directed by Francis Ford Coppola), is perhaps one of the best-known cinematic versions, but prior to that Bela Lugosi's 1931 performance helped transform the Count into the debonair figure with which most modern audiences are familiar. Further, Stoker's protagonist was recently reincarnated for the 21st century in NBC's drama *Dracula*, starring Jonathan Reese Meyer's as the Count, a young and charismatic manifestation that breathes new life into the figure, 116 years after the publication of Stoker's text. These are just three of the dozens of adaptation found on the Internet Movie Database (imdb.com).

In addition to the reimagining of conventions and perceived "weaknesses," the Gothic also has continuous reanimation because of how it can "infect" other genres and become integral in their formation and evolution. Two examples are Detective Fiction and the Sensation Novel. Both these genres have their roots in the Gothic. Sensation fiction aims to shock its readers by focusing on taboo subject matter such as murder, sex, and adultery, aspects that are also found in the Gothic—and for which it was mocked. Detective fiction deals with similar issues, but the driving force of the novel is the unraveling of the mystery through logical and methodological deduction, an aspect we see in many Gothic texts, *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* being two prominent examples; Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* merges the Gothic genre with the Sensation Novel, and it also incorporates aspects of the nascent Detective genre.

We see a constant rebirth, evolution, and manipulation of various features of what we call Gothic. However, one aspect of the genre that is important and consistent is the idea of setting. Yes, setting is a part of most fiction, but what sets the Gothic setting apart is its role as one of the catalysts for the protagonist's (interior reader's) descent into madness—which leads to the *catharsis* of the interior and exterior reader.[32] Setting is one of the most recognizable Gothic conventions; the decaying castle on the cliff set against the backdrop of the dark and stormy night is a cliché because it does occur (in varying but similar manifestations) in prominent Gothic texts (such as *Dracula*, but we also see it in *The Monk*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Jane Eyre*, to name a few). But the setting does not have to be dark or bleak in order for it to be Gothic. Rather, in order for the setting to elicit strong emotions from the protagonists, it needs to make the characters feel like they have lost control. This loss of control can happen in a haunted castle, or

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[32] Setting acquires agency and becomes a character. The structure itself elicits the emotional reaction from the character. I explore this idea further in Chapter III.

a perfectly civilized English manor, and it eventually leads to unrestrained affect, and ultimately, madness.

Variations of Affect: Aristotle and Beyond

My exploration of affect's effect on the Gothic and its longevity begins with Aristotle. When describing what needs to occur in order for *catharsis* to take place, we can see that it is indeed through the audience's processing of affect that they achieve the emotional release. His perspective in relation to how people experience *catharsis*, however has many limitations, which are rooted in part in who he saw as this "audience." First, his audience was homogeneous, made up almost entirely of men. Further, when Aristotle discusses the *cathartic* reaction that the audience is supposed to experience, it is described as a universal, equally experienced reaction. The pity and fear he describes, for example, are feelings that he expects to be experienced by his entire audience simultaneously and to the same degree. He connects the desire to imitate with the universal pleasure felt by the audience, saying,

> First the instinct of imitation is implanted in man from childhood, one difference between him and other animals being that he is the most imitative of living creatures, and through imitation learns his earliest lessons; and no less universal is the pleasure felt in things imitated. (Aristotle 17)

Aristotle assumes that we want to see the same things imitated and that the pleasure experienced is also equal. However, we can see interior readers experience *catharsis* at different times and at different levels of intensity. Yes, the intense release of negative emotions is still experienced, but I contend that it is much more nuanced in the Gothic as opposed to Greek and

Roman Tragedy as described by Aristotle. In the Gothic, *catharsis* is a staggered, sequential and cumulative process. It is an experience that builds and that varies because not everyone experiences it the same way, and each step along the way, each minor or major event or shock paves the way for the next one. Throughout the text not everyone will experience the same climax, but instead experience a more personal and individualized release.

Further, for Aristotle gender is a non-issue. However, the Gothic from its inception and beyond has been targeted to a more diverse audience made of up both men and women. Even though the genre was not something that women were encouraged to read, they were (and remain) a large part of the reading audience, and were of course prominently displayed in many Gothic works.[33] Reading practices since Aristotle have evolved from the universal model to a considerably more individual one in that the reader's personal reactions to a text are valued. At the turn of the 20th century, Sigmund Freud ushers in a more personal interpretation of affect that taps into the reader's psychology. Unlike Aristotle, he does include women in his understanding of affect and interpretation, but for him men and women are homogenous entities to be separated into two homogenous groups, Oedipus and Elektra.

The Gothic: (R)Evolutionary Realism

Despite the shift from universal to individual interpretation and experience, Greek and Roman Tragedy still share many affinities with the Gothic, specifically in how they go about achieving the *cathartic* release from their audience. One key commonality, for instance, is that the "horror" happens off-stage, making the audience imagine it. Pity and fear can be achieved

[33] Many Gothic texts feature female protagonists (e.g. the novels of the Brontë sisters), yet women were discouraged from reading such novels; such suspicion of the Gothic is depicted in Austen's *Northanger Abbey* where the female protagonist is shamed and mocked for her Gothic reading habits.

through the use of the supernatural, but even the Gothic (a novel often synonymous with supernatural elements) cannot wholly depend on ghosts and daemons to scare its audience. Those types of texts, according to Radcliffe,[34] fall short of what the genre should achieve. Although Radcliffe was not explicit about borrowing the concept from Aristotle, she and Aristotle both hold the belief that there must be a high degree of reality in a work of art (either a novel or a play). Aristotle argues that the story cannot be too unbelievable because audiences will not be able to relate to the situation or empathize with the protagonist: "Within the action there must be nothing irrational" (Aristotle 41).

The form of reality represented is a common point of discussion in literary criticism. Realism is often related to the impact that fiction has on the reading audience, and what role or responsibility that gives the writer. Gender and class become increasingly important in the development of fiction and realism. For example, in *English Fiction of the Romantic Period*, Gary Kelly comments on the impact that the more literate public has on the literature of the time. As the interest of readers begins to change, literature becomes more accessible. With the emergence of serialized publication (which was crucial to Charles Dickens' success) literature no longer belongs solely to the upper classes who could afford to buy books. Novel readers begin to come increasingly from the professional and middle classes. The larger accessibility then raises questions of what should be represented and how it should appear in the text. Due to this increasing evaluation of fiction, some forms are seen as more valuable than others. Despite the growing accessibility and popularity of popular fiction, defenders of the novel at first were in the minority. People were still concerned that the novel would become an instrument to show decadent or aristocratic culture, and a tool used to glamorize libertinism and sentimentalism.

[34] In Chapter I I discuss Radcliffe's views on horror vs. terror, where she sides with terror, which does not depend on oversensationalization in order to engage with its audience.

Interestingly, a fear that accompanied the popularity of the novel is something that was deemed a strength in the context of Ancient Tragedy. There was a perceived danger in putting ourselves in another's shoes, and causing "contagion," by making people care about things that did not deserve their attention. This is precisely what Greek and Roman Tragedy valued; the ability to sympathize was a strength, not a weakness, or perceived as unnecessary or an act of frivolity.

From this evolving society, social and historical novels began to present a unified national identity, while simultaneously commenting on the nature of the individual self, and reflecting the growing anxiety toward morality and women; the novel is transformed into a tool for social criticism. Austen is a pivotal author of the 19th century, but in many ways she is representative of what some authors did not want the novel to become. In George Eliot's essay "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists" she describes typical female-authored novels, which are eerily similar to Austen's novels, specifically *Emma* (1815).[35] But despite the disagreement about what types of novels women should or should not write, women were nevertheless beginning to have a larger stake in the creative and reading communities. Although many 18th century (and early 19th century) novelists are women, Eliot notes that they are not taken seriously, evidenced by the fact that she (like the Brontë sisters) chose a man's name as a pen name. She thinks women writers with the least talent get the most praise and that society is flooded with mediocre writing such as frivolous romances, making it is difficult to notice the good writing.

Although written long after the texts I am discussing, Henry James' treatise on the novel, *The Theory of Fiction* (1920), makes some points that nevertheless are applicable to the Gothic and its connection to Aristotle. He argues that the English novel is making progress, but it is also becoming more vulgar because although literature is becoming more accessible, the reader is

[35] She describes these novels as a mixture of "the frothy, the prosy, the pious, or the pedantic" (35). The heroines of these texts are "the ideal woman in feelings, faculties, and flounces" (Ibid).

unreflective and uncritical.[36] The English novel, when compared to the more established French novel, is more naïve and it needs to take itself seriously so the public can take it seriously. This is precisely what Eliot wants to achieve not just for the novel, but more specifically the female-authored novel. Further, we know that this is something that Austen struggled with as well, and in Chapter V of *Northanger Abbey* the narrator contemplates the value of the novel. In fact, the novel as a whole can be read as a young author's struggle to not just establish herself as a writer, but also her ideas as to what truly defines a "novel."[37] In her case, this is complicated by the addition of Gothic tropes and conventions, so she asks herself what is a novel, and how does the Gothic then fit into that definition and the canon at large? Roland Barthes in "Writing and the Novel" (1953) speaks of narration as something that should stand up to reason, since it is how society possesses the past and its possibility.[38] This concept is strikingly similar to Aristotle's viewpoint that nothing should be "irrational" in Tragedy. Realism is also inherently linked to the author and his or her goals (or skills) as a creator of fiction. Wayne Booth used the term "implied author" to expose the fact that there is always going to be an understanding between the reader and the authors,[39] that the author does indeed exist, and the novel no matter how realistic, is a work of fiction. This shared understanding helps create a community of readers that mimics the audience of Ancient Tragedy. The Gothic audience is united, but they nevertheless maintain their individualism, which allows them to experience *catharsis* in a staggered manner.

Imitation is crucial for Aristotle because at its core it is the reason that art (Drama) is successful and gives pleasure to its audience, and this becomes connected to the novel,

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[36] He says literature "must take itself seriously for the public to take it so" (43).
[37] I go into further detail of Austen's contemplation on novels and writing in Chapter IV where I explore how Gothic narratives are created.
[38] He says, "the world is not unexplained because it is told like a story" (204).
[39] The relationship between readers, authors, and narrators is a concept I will explore further in Chapter IV.

specifically with the discussion of the role of realism in it. Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis* argues that the novel is a representative record of human experience. He concludes that realism appears in all periods, whenever characters of all types can be treated seriously without being segregated by class and style, and when all aspects of life are represented. Therefore, even a "sensationalist" novelist like Mary Elizabeth Braddon can be considered an innovator who contributes to the development of the realist novel, because she provides new aspects for the depiction of the anxieties of the Victorian era. *Lady Audley's Secret* deals with issues such as class, upward mobility, and child abandonment. Wayne Booth' s *The Rhetoric of Fiction* is especially apt when evaluating more sensationalist or scandalous works because he talks about the fact that although all true novels must be realist and authors should be objective, true art should also not cater to the tastes of the audience. He argues that we cannot know what a narrative is except in relation to what it does, and while the purposes of readers and writers vary, they are inseparable from questions of value and meaning. The idea of morality, however, does not need to be explicit in the novel in order for it to be successful. Georg Lukács in *The Theory of the Novel* argues that the novel is both *in* and *of* history; it is a kind of History. The novel becomes a sign of the changing times, it shows what will happen in the future of Western civilization; it is a representative record of human experience.

Even though the Gothic may not be synonymous with a "realistic" representation of life, as we see from these critics of fiction, and also from Aristotle, even the Gothic cannot be exempt from having some degree of plausibility. Reality is woven into the fabric of Gothic texts, even the ones with highly fantastic and supernatural elements, such as *Dracula.* In his working papers for *Dracula*, there is evidence that Stoker wrote extensive notes on the rules that the vampire needed to follow, and according to Christopher Frayling's assessment of Stoker's notes, he was

also "evidently keen to establish an aura of 'authenticity' around his story, by getting all the dates and timetables right, so that, as he put it in his opening words to *Dracula*, his history 'may stand forth as a simple fact'" (Frayling 350). Stoker did so by meticulously studying the train timetables, maps, newspapers, and businesses that were open at the time, etc. His goal was to reproduce them convincingly in his novel in order to achieve a combination of realistic and unrealistic events, creating an uncanny combination of familiarity and eerie tone. Ultimately, the goal is to give the exterior reader the ability to put himself or herself in the shoes of the interior reader. This allows us to remove ourselves from our daily lives, at least briefly, and experience emotional immersion and release along with the protagonists.

Rules and Authenticity

Stoker's attempt at authenticity is represented in his text from the beginning; he weaves in the presumption of authenticity in his use of the framing device. The "found manuscript" is a common Gothic motif[40] and Stoker adapts it by declaring that the entirety of the text has been collected and edited by a protagonist (Mina Harker):[41]

> How all these papers have been placed in sequence will be made manifest in the reading of them. All needless matters have been eliminated, so that a history almost at variance with the possibilities of later day belief may stand forth as a simple fact. There is throughout no statement of past things wherein memory may err, for all the records

[40] Such a device can be found in the "Northanger Horrid" novels, which explains Catherine's reaction to "finding manuscripts" which she believes will reveal the dark secrets of the Tilney family. This motif is reminiscent of the epistolary narrative style of Samuel Richardson (*Clarissa, Pamela*, etc.). It goes back even further to Cervantes and *Don Quixote*.

[41] Mina's role as editor of the text will be further discussed in Chapters III and IV, where the emphasis will be on Stoker's manipulation of emotion (through the narrative style) and the deciphering that interior and exterior readers must undertake.

> chosen are exactly contemporary, given from the standpoints and within the range of knowledge of those who made them. (Stoker 5)

The introduction is written in the voice of a character and it attempts to emphasize the reality of the situation and that the text contains purely fact-driven events. We as exterior readers know that we are in fact reading a text, an artifact that we can hold in our hands and turn its pages. Seeing the book as an aesthetic object draws the reader into the narrative and makes it even more real because we see this mimicked within the text itself with the creation of what is in essence an epistolary novel detailing the group's hunt of Dracula.[42] In this sense we see similarities with Aristotle's view of fiction (drama in his case), since a degree of reality is deemed necessary in order for the audience to properly engage and experience heightened emotions. There needs to be a set of rules (at least implicit ones) for fiction, including the Gothic, and Stoker creates and adheres to such a structure, making his vampire follow some kind of set "reality." This reality in turn impacts the rest of the cast, who must also follow the rules in order to track him and ultimately kill him.

It is easier for Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* to maintain the aura of authenticity because the novel lacks supernatural elements. But this does not mean that the novel lacks a monster that needs to be tracked and destroyed. A delinquent and defective member of society is often thought to be easily recognizable and thereby effortlessly excluded from society and turned into an outcast. However, the most dangerous delinquent members of society are those that go beyond hiding in plain sight, and are even admired and praised.[43] Lady Audley is such a character. She is a master actress and manipulator who is transformed into an outcast by the

[42] This concept will be explored in much greater detail in Chapter IV where I delve into the reading community created between the interior and exterior reader and the narrator; they create not only a community, but also multiple levels of narration.
[43] Here we see some echoes of Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

society. Robert, her nephew by marriage, is transformed into a detective, and also the judge and jury, who investigates her past and tries to expose her secret life and crimes. Much like Stoker, Braddon also made it a priority to have the text reflect a realistic view of the world:

> Braddon's novel itself still has much to offer modern readers: a complex mix of intriguing characters, a suspenseful detective plot, and trenchant commentary about Victorian society. For Victorian readers, the wealth of casual detail about every day life included in the novel marked its events as up-to-date and plausible; for readers in the twenty-first century, the novel offers us a glimpse into the concerns and conditions of the emerging Victorian information culture. (Braddon 9)[44]

The similarities between Stoker's and Braddon's goals are striking, and they are emphasized even further by noting that both texts have Gothic elements that one might assume would make it impossible for the text to be considered "realistic." Stoker uses a supernatural vampire myth, and Braddon depends on sensational elements that transform an epitome of femininity into a raving murderous madwoman. Austen's *Northanger Abbey* gives us the closest representation of a realistic text because the premise is so similar to Austen's other novels. We get a glance into the life of Catherine, a young lady visiting family friends in Bath. Remarkably, it is Catherine who attempts to transform the text/experience into something unrealistic by trying to make her situation fit into the Gothic mold. In Catherine we have a Gothic spin on the typical Austen heroine who is preoccupied with courtship and marriage. Of course, marriage is also important to Catherine, which helps ground her narrative in the same type of social reality as that of other Austen heroines. However, Catherine equates her love for Tilney with that of the Gothic: "Her passion for ancient edifices was next in degree to her passion for Henry Tilney—and castles and abbies made usually the charm of those reveries which his image did not fill" (Austen 102). In

[44] From Natalie M. Houston's introduction to the Broadview edition (2003).

Northanger Abbey, rather than trying to bring reality into the Gothic text, the opposite takes place and the Gothic is desperately trying to be infused into the heroine's mundane world. The effect is similar however, because we as exterior readers benefit from the balance of reality with Catherine's Gothic fantasies. We allow ourselves to suspend our disbelief and experience her cycle of anticipation and disappointment.

Devious Wives and the Descent into Madness

The treatment of emotion in Gothic fiction, in addition to being linked with the semblance of reality in the text, is also connected with specific social circumstances, specifically the dynamic between men and women in courtship and marriage. The mixture of reality, society, and gender relationship is represented in the damsel in distress figure, which is a cornerstone of the Gothic genre. She appears in the "Northanger Horrid" novels Austen references throughout the text. Radcliffe provides us with a concrete example in Emily St. Aubert, the young and beautiful woman kidnapped and placed in the clutches of the evil Montoni. In other Gothic texts, such as Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (also mentioned in *Northanger Abbey*) the convention takes on sexual undertones where a woman's virtue is threatened as her freedom is taken away. These damsels play dual roles: on the one hand they are weak, subservient characters who have little agency, since they are abducted and held against their will by the (often more compelling and interesting) villain. On the other, they are perhaps more compelling than the female characters of other genres of fiction in that they are in situations that go beyond the typical "marriage plot." Gothic women are placed in drastically unfamiliar situations where they are called upon to go beyond their basic duties as women and assist in their rescue. In each text I discuss, we see

women who face an anxiety that, like the Gothic genre, (transcends) time because it stems from a lack of control over their own lives.

Throughout Western history women are viewed as unable to control their emotions, a belief that is emphasized through their relationships. These stereotypical views link Gothic women to those in Greek and Roman Tragedy, where female figures are often monstrous. Often their monstrosity comes from their choice to turn their back on their "duties" as women. Euripides' Medea rebels against her husband and turns her back on her duties as a mother. Aeschylus' Clytemnestra also represents the monstrous woman, but what makes her situation even more notorious is the fact that she undermines her role as wife and mother while simultaneously asserting her sexual independence by taking on a lover and ruling in her husband's place while he is at war. The thirst for power makes these women even more subversive and dangerous. A quintessential example is Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth—who owns her sexuality and uses it to manipulate her husband in an attempt to upturn and control the established hierarchy.

Early Incarnations of "Gothic" Heroines: Clytemnestra and Lady Macbeth

I look back to Aeschylus' *Oresteia* (ca. 458) and Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (ca. 1605), written hundreds or thousands years before my primary texts, because through these examples we can begin to see early incarnations of figures and themes that become essential to the Gothic. Through these examples, we get a different glimpse at the evolution of the genre, which highlights the idea that the Gothic cannot easily be pinned down to too specific a historical period. The *Oresteia* and *Macbeth* portray women who disrupt the status quo as witches. In the

Gothic, the idea of a woman being a witch takes on a more metaphorical dimension, but in these two texts they are quite literally deemed witches due to their powers over men.[45] When heroic females seize these "magical" powers for themselves, they are vilified. Ancient literature makes villainesses of women such as Clytemnestra, Circe, Helen, Erichtho, and Medea, who are proficient in the dark arts. Not until Lucan (writing in 39-65 AD) is a woman called a witch, and Lucan's Erichtho is the most repulsive creature imaginable. Erichtho hails from Thessaly, the city known for magic, and she knows the "barbarous secrets,/ loathed by the gods, of the filthy practice of witchcraft– / ritual sacrifice on sinister altars, and faith in/ Pluto and ghosts of the dead" (Lucan 466-69). Early linkages of female sorcerers with the underworld would later translate in a Christian worldview into claims that witches consorted with Satan.

Although the plays' settings range from Classical Argos to eleventh-century Scotland, the similarities between the heroines are striking. I do not mean to imply a direct influence of Aeschylus on Shakespeare, since no evidence exists to demonstrate that Shakespeare knew of the *Oresteia*, although he may have been familiar with the story of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra. Where both playwrights excel is in their psychologically astute renderings of women who practice the "dark arts," and of how these "weird" sisters use their natural wiles and (assumed) supernatural powers to destabilize the state. Both Aeschylus and Shakespeare tap into deep-seated cultural fears and superstitions, which make powerful women anathema, as dangerously disruptive as they are fascinating in their defiance of gender hierarchies. Witchcraft runs throughout the plays, manifesting itself not only through communion with dark spirits, but also through the deceptive use of feminine sexuality and manipulative rhetoric. In this sense we also see similar vilification of women in my chosen primary Gothic texts; it is particularly highlighted

[45] Prototypes for significant Gothic figures can be found not only as far back as Greek Tragedy, but they are carried through historically; these prototypes do not necessarily jump straight from Ancient Drama to the Gothic.

in *Lady Audley's Secret*, where we see that what might have originally been deemed "witchcraft" is now transformed into a more socially acceptable (and realistically plausible) label of insanity.

Witchcraft (real and metaphorical) plays an integral part in the *Oresteia* and *Macbeth.* In the first play of Aeschylus' trilogy, the *Agamemnon*, Clytemnestra curses her husband from the moment she opens her mouth. Even after her death, in the third play *The Eumenides*, the Furies (who are on her side) continue to plead her case and spread the blood pollution unleashed by an unavenged mother. In Greek society, the Furies were a triad of powerful women who emerged to avenge a kin murder. They were vital to society because they provided a deterrent to murder. This demonic trio of magical women resurfaces in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, in which the "weïrd sisters" become primary agents of divination, albeit not the executors of the ultimate vengeance. They prophesy, seemingly uncannily, Macbeth's future. Even though Lady Macbeth also possesses some inherently wicked desires, she misunderstands their premonitions and takes it into her own hands to make sure the prophecy of Macbeth's kingship comes to fruition. Lady Macbeth's magical powers of visionary perception transform into verbal forms of sorcery, which she envisions as "spirits" she wants to "pour in [Macbeth's] ear" (*Macbeth* 1.4.26). Furthermore, she facilitates the murder of King Duncan by drugging his bodyguards with poisons in their wine. These two figures continue to be representative of the destruction that can come to society when the balance of power is tipped in women's favor.

Much like their Gothic counterparts in my primary texts (Catherine, Mina, Lady Audley) neither Clytemnestra nor Lady Macbeth is categorized as a "witch" by their society. Indeed, in the Greek world the term "witch" did not yet exist. It is not until the Roman world (ca. mid first-century AD) that "witches" were classified as *women* who deal in occult practices. The Greeks instead had *agurtes* and *mantis,* itinerant priests and diviners of low social status who possessed

"magical powers."[46] Even rulers were known to solicit their powers, which included both healing and cursing magic, as well as the ability to dispel ancestral guilt and interpret signs and oracles. In *Macbeth* the epithet "weïrd" ascribed to the witches signifies their knowledge of fate, as well as their magical powers of enchantment and their mysterious nature. It also connects the witches with the Fates (Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos), another threesome of women in antiquity whose duty consisted of spinning out the thread of life, only to slit the thin-spun thread at the time of death.

These women's powers need not come from supernatural forces. Clytemnestra deploys deception from the beginning of the *Agamemnon* and she uses these rhetorical strategies to weave her spells. She seduces her husband when he returns from war, manipulating him into displaying his hubris. He believes he is hearing a speech displaying a happy welcoming, when in reality everything she proclaims has a double meaning, and she deceptively foretells his death. In the *Agamemnon* there is also a heightened concern with the visual, yet Clytemnestra appears to be the only person who can see the future clearly. The watchman opens the play by announcing the fire signals, which Clytemnestra refers to as the "gorgon's eye." For the rest of the kingdom these lantern pyres offer signs of hope, but for Clytemnestra (and the audience) they constitute a subtle warning about what is to come. Since she has put upon herself the identity of a mother-fury seeking to avenge her daughter Iphigenia's sacrifice (whom Agamemnon ritualistically murdered in order to secure favorable winds for the journey to Troy), the bonfires are an omen of Agamemnon's impending death.

When Agamemnon returns from war, with the captive and captivating Cassandra in tow (his prisoner, concubine, and war prize), Clytemnestra hides her true rancor toward him and verbally seduces him into walking on the red tapestry—which is representative of his ancestors.

[46] The Sybil figure/oracle could be considered a female counterpart.

Her "welcome" speech can be interpreted not just as deception and seduction, but also as a curse, since in effect he is acknowledging that he deserves more glory than his due, and this arrogant presumption to immortal power brings on the wrath of the Gods. Though he admits that it would be a shameful act to walk on the sacred carpet, Clytemnestra still convinces him to stride boldly forward toward a destined destruction she herself engenders, but which he cannot envision or forestall. Thus far she has not actually cast a spell or displayed any supernatural characteristics—but she is able to weave a rhetorical spell for her husband. In this we see a connection to Lady Audley's keen ability to manipulate the men in her life. But there are also connections to Mina Harker and her desire to display her intelligence for the men, especially the learned Professor Van Helsing. Catherine may lack both magical and rhetorical powers, but she is nevertheless a destabilizing force (a potential outsider or outcast) due to her intellect and expansive knowledge of the Gothic and her ability to read that Gothic framework into the reality she inhabits.

After her death, Clytemnestra does achieve status as a supernatural creature. Her son Orestes kills her in order to avenge his father and she joins the world of the unavenged dead and becomes a spectral presence. Ruled only by the thirst for revenge and defined solely as an avenging mother, she sets in motion her own doomed fate. Ironically, being a mother is also the ultimate cause of her downfall, since the agent of her destruction also springs from her womb. The avenging furies emerge to right the wrong of Orestes' kin murder and in death Clytemnestra becomes the leader of the furies, rousing them and stoking their wrath. However, these vengeful female spirits are unable to fulfill their duty since they, like Clytemnestra, are ultimately stripped of their powers by the god Apollo, who acts like judge and jury in the *Eumenides* and sides with Orestes. In the battle between Apollo and Clytemnestra, we see what is at the core of the battle between Robert and Lady Audley. As a man, he assumes complete control and usurps any power

she might possess. Acting as judge and jury, both Apollo and Robert sentence the women to a fate where they must be exiled away from society so they can no longer disturb it. They have no right to seek justice.

Like Clytemnestra, Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth also at first epitomizes strength and conviction. Although Clytemnestra enacts a mother's rage and Lady Macbeth a wife's boundless ambition, their methods are almost identical. Both women suffer humiliating defeats when disrobed of their powers, a loss of power, which leads to madness and death. One can almost imagine Lady Macbeth or Clytemnestra ending up in the same asylum Lady Audley calls her "living grave," each locked up either by their children or other members of society who classify their behavior as harmful to society and therefore insane (Braddon 396). In both the *Oresteia* and *Macbeth*, women's association with witchcraft and divination is also closely linked with insanity. For both Clytemnestra and Lady Macbeth, their close proximity to blood drives them mad. In Greek culture, the idea of *miasma* describes a state of pollution contracted by contact with blood, a murderer, or a corpse. Clytemnestra becomes infected with this pollution when she kills Agamemnon. Even though in her own mind she thinks her actions justified, her rationalization of the deed does not absolve her from *miasma*. Lady Macbeth also comes into contact with blood the moment she returns the daggers used in the murder to the guards' sides. Haunted by the sight of "so much" blood, she cannot thereafter wash away the "damned spots" from her "little hand" (*Macbeth* 5.1.40, 35, 52). Lady Macbeth's fixation on the bloody stain of these foul murders progresses inevitably to full-blown insanity and suicide.

Moving from the world of Ancient Greece to the seventeenth century, we have a more defined idea of witches and witchcraft, a concept associated with women, although not necessarily femininity. The English term for witches predates *Macbeth*, having originated in

Anglo-Saxon variants, the feminine version of *wicca*, or sorcerers. The term is applied solely to women who dealt in occult or satanic practices, these "witches" were considered supernatural powers who communicated with evil spirits; their magical powers and spells enabled them to "bewitch" by wrapping one in visions and fantastical sights. Shakespeare wrote *Macbeth* in a climate in which witches were not only feared and hated, but were also found to be strangely fascinating. King James (1603-25), for instance, studied the occult, issuing his own *Demonology* in 1597, in which he acknowledges his belief in witchcraft. When Shakespeare, therefore, created the opening fog-shrouded "heath" scene of *Macbeth*, it was intended as a flattering acknowledgment of King James' obsession with witchcraft and a courtly nod toward his Scottish heritage and ability to unite the thrones of England and Scotland, albeit as Banquo's lineal descendant, not Macbeth's. The witches prophesy Macbeth's ascent to the throne, but it is Lady Macbeth who takes upon herself to make certain the prophecy comes true. Rhetorically manipulative, Lady Macbeth, like Clytemnestra, deploys her sexuality and becomes a seductress whose behavioral deceptions are designed, like spells the witches cast, to arouse Macbeth to an evil act of regicide. What Lady Macbeth "envisions," she challenges Macbeth to enact.

The witches' powers and grotesque nature, "so withered and so wild in their attire" (*Macbeth* 1.3.40), place them on the fringe of society, on a "heath," where they confront Macbeth with their "prophetic greeting," lauding him as Thane of Cawdor and "King hereafter." Already sexually ambiguous, for "you should be women,/ And yet your beards forbid me to interpret/ That you are so" (*Macbeth* 1.3.45-47), Banquo proclaims, these "creatures" foreshadow how Lady Macbeth herself will claim a "masculine" will and "unsex" herself in order to effect her desire for power. Mistrustful of what they see, both Banquo and Macbeth initially are reluctant to believe the witches, all too well aware of the mysterious malignancy of

these “hags” and their connection to the satanic realm. By contrast, when Lady Macbeth merely reads her husband’s letter telling about the witches’ prophecy, she immediately senses her affinity with these powers of darkness, taking their prophecy as inevitably predictive of predestined outcomes. Lady Macbeth embraces this “mandate,” seeking to achieve this “destiny” as soon as possible. Neither questioning nor doubting the predestined kingly ordination, she thinks only of how best to speed up the accomplishment and, consequently, plans how she will manipulate her husband to murder King Duncan. Although Lady Macbeth never contacts the “imperfect speakers,” they become her “invisible” allies when she uses them to justify her malicious design, achieved through a series of deceptions and seductions. She verbally manipulates Macbeth, seduces him with feminine wiles, yet challenges and taunts his manhood by assuming her own “masculine” powers, while she skillfully disguises her own latent desires to achieve her goals. In Lady Macbeth we see a prototype of the “power behind the throne” figure, and we see hints of *Dracula*’s Mina in her as well. For Mina possesses an ability to influence the decision of men with her knowledge and power, while somehow maintaining the guise of dutiful (powerless) wife.

In many aspects Lady Macbeth is more masculine than feminine. Motivated, intelligent, even ruthless, she does not view herself as Macbeth’s subordinate, but rather his “partner in greatness.” Perceiving in Macbeth a “womanly” weakness and irresolution, she assumes a dominant superiority by taking charge of the conspiracy. Whereas he is “too full o’ th’ milk of human kindness” (*Macbeth* 1.5.17), she denies her feminine motherliness by threatening to tear the suckling babe from her breast and bash its brains out, were she to commit herself to the murderous deed. Referring to her home as castle “battlements,” she transforms Duncan’s “refuge” into a battleground where libations of wine offered up in welcome transform into shed

blood. Although she takes no part in the murder, she equates her rhetorical manipulations to Macbeth's "keen knife." Lady Macbeth sees even the "womanly" arts of manipulation and seduction in masculine terms. Whereas Macbeth hesitates and struggles against the witches' prophecy and his own moral conscience, Lady Macbeth pragmatically pursues her resolute and determined ambition. Admiringly, even Macbeth acknowledges her superior strength of will: "bring forth men-children only!/ For thy mettle should compose nothing but males" (*Macbeth* 1.7.73-75). Although Macbeth still sees his "Lady" as a woman capable of giving birth, and even succumbs to her sexual taunting, Lady Macbeth herself willingly relinquishes all rights to motherhood, the pinnacle of womanhood, to achieve her political goals. Lady Macbeth deploys these strategies of identification with maleness, a power and strength she does not innately possess. Yet, like the witches (and Clytemnestra), she also exudes and even embraces her femininity as a seductive lure that disguises and deceives not only Macbeth but also King Duncan. There are clear connections to Lady Audley, the only mother in the Gothic texts I examine, who also chooses to abandon her child and (like Clytemnestra) murder her husband due to her "madness", in order to not just survive, but do so in the lap of luxury.

Due to women's perceived inherent weakness, in order to wield power, it must be either hidden or disguised through men.[47] Lady Macbeth constantly conceals her true feelings, but when she is stripped of her powers, everything simmering beneath the surface suddenly erupts and she becomes a palpitating sentient being trapped in her own mind. Dreams and visions mark the beginning of her descent into madness. These visions vividly manifest her guilt, stemming from her contact with Duncan's blood and the ensuing pollution. In this new state she loses her identity as a prophecy-driven power monger, an identity that had been dependent on her ability

[47] Acting and deciphering acting is related to reading one another's affect, topics that I will discuss further in Chapter III.

to use rhetoric and seduction to achieve all her political goals. Aware of the possible repercussions, Lady Macbeth proceeds nonetheless in her manipulative plan. She attempts to quell Macbeth's – and her own– thoughts of impending madness and instructs him, "these deeds must not be thought/ after these ways; so it will make us mad" (*Macbeth* 2.2.30-31). Lady Macbeth holds the gift of foresight and is aware of the monstrous consequences they will inevitably suffer, yet she does not have the power to use her witchcraft and wisdom to her advantage. Locked into her deeds and her own tortured consciousness, her visions and nightmares haunt her and lead her to self-imposed roaming around the castle at night, a frail shadow of her former self and now beset by terrifying sensations she tries to suppress. Her madness is a disease that overpowers her because she loses the ability to control her affect, a pattern we see repeated in Gothic heroes and heroines as well—the boiling over of affect and the impact that has on a person's psyche.

Witches: Then and Now

Witches in Greek and Roman literature, or women who possess wicked abilities, can be classified into three groups: goddesses, mortal young women, and elderly women. They are all either of childbearing age or past childbearing in the developmental stages of womanhood, never young maidens. In all cases a witch poses a threat to men and all society, but witches of childbearing age, the category to which Clytemnestra belongs, are especially dangerous because they not only possess magical abilities, they also exude a seductive femininity to which men are susceptible. In Homer, the demi-goddess Helen not only allures, but can also manipulate men with *pharmakon*, drugs and potions. In Aeschylus and Seneca, witches are also mortal women of

childbearing age. Since they do not possess innate "magical" powers, they use incantations, spells, the evil eye, and other instruments of enchantment to exact vengeance on their husbands. Childbearing "witches" have the advantage of being desired and accepted in society as wives or lovers, whereas the post-childbearing witches are marginalized by men who both despise and fear them. A rare moment and exception in which a witch uses her powers for men's benefit occurs in Apollonius' *Argonautika*.

In the *Argonautika*, although Medea initially uses her sorcery to defeat the bronze man, later she will use those same powers to exact revenge on the faithless Jason. Defined in general as threats to male society, women must be contained, but witches whose powers already distinguish them from the helplessly meek virgins become special objects of fear. The weak and powerless virgin is another figure that also appears frequently in the Gothic, and Catherine straddles the line between the witch and the meek in that she is not an outwardly manipulative (metaphorical) sorceress, but she is a troublesome figure who possesses a particular kind of knowledge than is deemed acceptable. When she talking with her new friends the Tilney's she feels ashamed of her knowledge, because after all, "To come with a well-informed mind, is to come with an inability of administering to the vanity of others, which a sensible person would always wish to avoid. A woman especially, if she have the misfortune of knowing any thing, should conceal it as well as she can" (Austen 81). Catherine may not devolve into full-blown madness, but there are moments when she is on the precipice and one can imagine her becoming mentally unbalanced, such as when she allows her imagination take control of her behavior.

Other Classical texts also show that dangerous women are not all relegated to the role of unwanted outcast, and these women (much like Lady Audley) are perhaps even more dangerous and detrimental to society. For example, Book IV of Homer's *Odyssey*, which recounts the

earliest history of a "witch," introduces us to Circe, who controls the realm of the dead and manipulates nature. When she first appears, Circe is singing and weaving, two actions ambiguously typical for virtuous women[48] yet suspiciously unsettling since weaving can indicate a deceptive woman and singing imply incantation.[49] Singing in and of itself bewitches a man, as seen when Odysseus hears the Sirens. Circe uses song, spells, and *pharmakon*, to turn men into animals and fierce animals docile. Circe's immense power is emphasized in that Odysseus can only be saved from this fate because the Olympian gods give him *molu*, a drug not available to mortals. Circe also disrupts society by keeping Odysseus from his *nostos*, homecoming. Although he is destined to return to Ithaca and restore order to his kingdom, Circe hinders his plan, thereby showing how the witch once again sabotages society. So, too, Clytemnestra disrupts the ideal social order by depriving Argos of its king and placing herself in his stead—as Gothic heroines disrupt the social order through gender role reversal.

Women as practitioners of magic suffer the fate of hated outcasts. Although itinerant priests (*agurtes*), and diviners (*mantis*) also are marginalized in society, in literature they are not treated as the main sources of the magical arts. Women exist as sorcerers, in part because their gender already causes them to be regarded with suspicion. Even when society looks down on male *agurtes* and *mantis*, their services are still sought out. The Emperor Nero hired itinerant priests and diviners to dispel any *agos*, bloodguilt he contracted through the murder of family members. In Fritz Graf's *Magic in the Ancient World*, he describes the growing specialization of magic and the secret initiation rites, which granted select individuals sacred knowledge, yet he does not mention that women participated.[50] Women may only be initiated into mystery cults

[48] Something we also see in a paragon of female virtue: Odysseus' wife, Penelope.
[49] This also connects to Penelope.
[50] Graf mentions how in Cicero's *Laws*, which governed religious legislation, women could not make sacrifices, especially at night, nor could they initiate people except for the goddess Ceres (59).

such as those of Demeter and Bacchus. Even after magic becomes more specialized, women cannot lay claim to these positions of reverence. In Vergil's "Eclogues," a man gives the enchantress the *pharmaka* she needs for her sorcery. Ironically, this "gift giving" is probably more common than a woman performing the entire spell on her own. Magic is always practiced on the outskirts of society, and men never admit that they execute dark arts. Because they already exist on society's margins, or at least occupy subordinate positions, solely because of their sex, women are more frequently expected to have innate magical knowledge, so men easily assign them the label of "witch."

Once divested of their control over witchcraft and their ability to manipulate, these female provocateurs (Clytemnestra and Lady Macbeth) begin to face the consequences of their deeds, thus beginning painfully tragic descents into madness. The moments when they exhibit their greatest strength are turned against them, and the mercilessly shed blood, which once signified their success, torments them. Masterfully orchestrated by these consummate practitioners of the female arts of witchcraft, these illusory triumphs ultimately prove deadly, standing perversely and inversely in opposition to everything women, much less queens, represent in ancient Greek and Renaissance society. Little evolved, at least with respect to gender ideologies, in the fifteen centuries, which separate Clytemnestra and Lady Macbeth. In both the *Oresteia* and *Macbeth*, the women's greatest crime seems to be their reversal of gender roles.[51]

Witchcraft, divination, sexuality, rhetorical manipulation, nothing ultimately can protect these powerful women from the *miasma* which they incur through their bloody acts. At the moment of their deaths, each woman realizes, in vain, the terrible mistake each makes in ignoring "prophetic" apparitions. Clytemnestra correctly divines that "You [Orestes] are the

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[51] In her essay, "Clytemnestre: Mythical Harpy or Feminist Paragon?" Veronique Desdain asserts that Clytemnestra's "main sins seem to consist in her refusal to adopt the passive behavior expected of women and in her strong sense of self," a statement readily applicable to Lady Macbeth (Desdain 119).

snake I gave birth to, and gave the breast," and Lady Macbeth makes the painful realization that "What's done cannot be undone" (*Libation Bearers* 928; *Macbeth* 5.1.68). Even though witchcraft and wit gives them confidence in their abilities to outsmart not only their husbands, but also their patriarchal society, in the end Clytemnestra and Lady Macbeth are brought down by their own hands. Clytemnestra leads Agamemnon to his doom, never envisioning the bloodbath of wrath she unleashes or the spirit possession that will haunt her. Clytemnestra ensnares herself in a net of intrigue, for "deception was the woman's part," only to fall victim to the disguises and stratagems her own son deploys against her. Lady Macbeth, once more manly than Macbeth, perversely finds herself condemned like a naked wraith to wander the castle, weeping in horrified remembrance at the bloody stain she cannot eradicate from her mind or her hands. Once the teasing temptress and mistress of disguise, whose "false face must hide what the false heart doth know," Lady Macbeth commits herself to an eternal communion with darkness– her own mad visions and the demonic spirits haunt her, while she executes one last staged Satanic ritual of self-slaughter (*Macbeth* 1.7.83).

Gothic "Sorceresses"

The figures of Lady Macbeth, Clytemnestra, and the many other Classical and early modern manifestations of the dangerous woman—conveniently termed "witch"—are all precursors to the idea of the Gothic heroine who creates unbalance in the societal and patriarchal hierarchy. Gothic heroines such as Lady Audley put their own self-interest above that of their children, in effect not only rejecting the importance of motherhood, but making the argument that sexuality and femininity are not there for the purpose of child-bearing. *Dracula* continues

this trend with the vampire women who attempt to seduce Jonathan Harker; they are representations of lust and sexual desire, completely removed from the goal of producing children. As Lucy Westenra begins her transformation from mortal to vampire, she transforms from the proper, innocent, beautiful woman (the potential "Angel in the House") into a monstrous, sexual, wanton woman that must be destroyed in order to re-establish order and the patriarchal hierarchy, because as a vampire, the men are under her control. In Stoker's text we have the luxury of the term "vampire" to describe these women who upset the social structure, if not for that term, as with the Classical texts, "witch" would have sufficed as well since they have such similar character arcs.

I begin with *Dracula* because it shows the culmination of over a century of Gothic conventions—and as I mention in Chapter I, we can often learn much about a genre, not by simply by exploring its beginning, but also where it ended. *Dracula* represents the genre's ability to build on the success of the texts that preceded it, which for the Gothic means emphasizing what others might see as points of criticism. In *Dracula*, we see the gender role reversal from the beginning when Jonathan Harker becomes the damsel in distress. He is not abducted, but rather ensnared and sequestered by the Count, and it becomes clear that he is not free to leave. When the three vampire women accost him, he is the passive creature who is unable to resist the advances of the much stronger overt sexuality of his attackers. The relationship between Jonathan and his wife Mina further emphasizes this reversal of gender roles and the transformation of the typical marriage. Even though Jonathan begins the novel as the epitome of the proper British man, with a promising job, responsibilities, and potential to have his "Angel in the House," and children in the near future, Mina quickly becomes the "logical male" who, like Jonathan before his emasculation at Castle Dracula, relies on train timetables, shorthand,

transcription, and other new technological tools and advances. Mina is described as having a "man's brain," by Professor Van Helsing, which is of course high praise, since for him it means she is intelligent and logical and able to divorce her intellect from her emotions (Stoker 207). The vampire women (what Lucy ultimately becomes) are in a way less threatening than Mina because they are just purely sexual beings, and they can be easily relegated to the "other."[52] These women do not need to be understood and accepted into society, they just need to be destroyed so the threat can be removed. They simultaneously possess an overt sexuality, but they are sex without procreation.[53] Even the creation of new vampire life is robbed from the female vampire, since it is the (male) Count who can create a vampire; in essence he is the mother and father of the vampire race with the sole power of creation,[54] completely disorganizing and uprooting the basic structure on which culture has been built for centuries.

Mina reverses the gender roles when she rescues Jonathan at the convent. The first part of the novel is told from Jonathan's perspective, and this section comes to a close when he finally escapes the Count's castle. We later see him again through Mina's perspective after the nuns contact her and she goes to see her fiancé. She says, "I found my dear one, oh, so thin and pale and weak-looking…He has had some terrible shock, and I fear it might tax his poor brain if he were to try to recall it" (Stoker 99). He is completely surrounded by women and at their mercy. Mina is the strong one in the couple, physically and intellectually. He has lost complete control

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[52] Stephen D. Arata's article "The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization" (mentioned above) equates Dracula with the fear of the "other" taking over England. Further, Bridget Marshall's "The Face of Evil: Phrenology, Physiognomy, and the Gothic Villain," emphasizes the use of non-British facial features to denote evil in the Gothic, through the use of Cesare Lombroso's theory of Social Darwinism (the belief that certain physical characteristics are inherent in criminals).

[53] Several articles focus on the prominence of female sexuality in *Dracula* and the discomfort this causes for Victorian society. Some examples include, Phyllis A. Roth's "Suddenly Sexual Women in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*," and Christopher Craft's "Kiss Me With Those Red Lips: Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*."

[54] In this vision of creations and mother/fatherhood we see clear parallels to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Victor's complete control over the "birth" over his Creature.

of his mind, a trait highly valued in the text, to the point where we get echoes of Lady Macbeth wandering around the castle in her nightdress, mumbling to herself about her apparitions. At first Jonathan is described as the ideal Victorian man, in large part because he is intelligent and has a logical and stable profession. But his brain has been attacked, which makes him less credible and therefore, he is placed in more of the feminine and weaker role. Mina goes on to describe their reunion, saying, "When he kissed me, and drew me to him with his poor weak hands, it was like a very solemn pledge between us" (Stoker 101). Here the description is similar to that of Lucy when she is becoming a vampire and Dracula is sapping her strength. He is thereby equated with another woman in the text who succumbs to the Count because she is simply too weak to resist (even when receiving blood transfusions from four strong and healthy men).

In the Gothic we see the threat of female power not just with the clearly villainous characters (Dracula's women or Lady Audley), but even with a seemingly positively coded female central figure). Mina is a more troublesome character even than a vampire because, unlike the female vampires or even the Count, she cannot be either destroyed or swept under the rug and ignored; she can evolve and is forced to evolve. She takes on dual roles: she follows the "rules" by being a loyal and dutiful wife to her Jonathan, but she also rescues him (and the other men); she is a paradoxical woman with a man's intellect. She is not a supernatural creature, rather she is representative of the trend taking place in society, women who need to seek out education and employment; Mina educates herself in order to be a good wife. She says,

> When we are married I shall be able to be useful to Jonathan, and if I can stenograph well enough I can take down what he wants to say in this way and write it out for him on the typewriter, at which also I am practicing very hard. He and I sometimes write letters in shorthand, and he is keeping a stenographic journal of his travels abroad. (Stoker 55)

Through her education and relationship with Jonathan, Mina has one foot in each realm. She still wants to be just a wife, but also cannot ignore that she can offer more; in her we see glimpses of the "New Woman."[55] When given the opportunity to impress Van Helsing (the most educated and intelligent character) she says, "I could not resist the temptation of mystifying him a bit—I suppose it is some of the taste of the original apple that remains still in our mouths—so I handed him the shorthand diary… I was almost ashamed"[56] (Stoker 164). She has an inner battle where she admits feeling proud of her achievements and intelligence, and also feeling reluctant to show them off. In the cultural context of the late 19th century it makes sense that she would be unwilling to overtly display her intelligence and independence; these are not traits that are esteemed in the marriage market; they are not expected or valued in women because it challenges the status quo, leading to unbalance and ultimately chaos.

The Gothic Marriage Market

The shame that comes along with knowledge and power in women is echoed in *Northanger Abbey* with Austen's heroine, Catherine Morland. It is an attitude that does not diminish in the near century that separates Austen and Stoker's texts. Through Catherine we can contextualize the concept of women's knowledge and power over men and how that factors into their anxiety over their marketability and their anxiety. Catherine represents the average Gothic reader in that she is female and actively participates in the reading experience, meaning that she allows herself to get carried away when reading and has the ability to place herself inside the

[55] The "New Woman" is a term that came about in the late 19th century. It defines an educated, independent, feminist woman (in Europe and the United States).
[56] Here we see Biblical undertones as well with a veiled reference to the apple and tree of knowledge and the repercussions associated with the fall.

Gothic text. This becomes a mockable attribute in the context of Austen's novel because she is portrayed as a bit of a fool who thinks herself a part of a Gothic novel, which is foolish both because she is in actuality in a mundane environment, and also because she (according to Austen) falls short of what a Gothic heroine should be. But perhaps what makes Catherine the subject of the most ridicule is that she is willing to indulge in what is judged to be frivolous entertainment, which she has the audacity to take seriously, and unlike Mina, she does not internalize her embarrassment. Catherine is even more dangerous than Mina because she does not waver as easily. She only begins to feel shame when the men point out that she should not take such books seriously or waste her time reading them. After she is chastised, "The visions of romance were over. Catherine was completely awakened. Henry's address, short as it had been, had more thoroughly opened her eyes to the extravagance of her late fancies…Most grievously was she humbled" (Austen 146).

Catherine's knowledge of the Gothic is the one characteristic in which she excels (lacking any real beauty, wit, wealth or talent) and the derision she receives from the (male) characters is reminiscent of the lack of respect the genre as a whole received throughout much of its history. The obnoxious Mr. Thorpe tells her, "Novels are all so full of nonsense and stuff; there has not been a tolerably decent one come out since *Tom Jones*, except *The Monk*; I read that t'other day; but as for all the others, they are the stupidest things in creation" (Austen 32). It is odd that he groups together one of the first "official" novels with a Gothic novel. It is perhaps not the Gothic that Thorpe disagrees with, but perhaps with the female-authored Gothic that Catherine favors. Further, the talk of novels is intermixed with other frivolous topics, such as talk of other acquaintances, hats, ribbons, and other topics that a flawed Austen character would indulge in, not the heroine, but the women and girls who go into town to admire the soldiers in

their uniforms. Despite the questioning and complicating of gender roles and social structures throughout their texts, both Austen and Stoker's texts end with the reestablishment of social norms and the status quo. In these endings where women are engaged, married, and mothers, we begin to see that the anxiety over the marriage market is indeed in the undercurrent of both the hyperbolic supernatural elements (in Stoker's work) and the teasing and mockery (of Austen).

Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* takes hold of this undercurrent and makes it clear and visible. In her text, Braddon shows how any semblance of power that women hold is in fact an illusion. So Braddon's text is in the end the most revelatory about the gender dynamics that are at the heart of the ideological structure and the readerly appeal of Gothic fiction. We see the inequality early in the text when Lady Audley's first husband George Talboys, says of her father, "He was a drunken old hypocrite, and he was ready to sell my poor little girl to the highest bidder. Luckily for me, I happened just then to be the highest bidder" (Braddon 59). He laments her lot in life, specifically that she was a commodity to be sold or traded, but he nevertheless participates in the transaction that he deems disgusting. Helen Talboys (as Lady Audley was known at this point) was still sold to someone without a say in the matter—here we see echoes of Iphigenia (Clytemnestra's daughter) and her complete powerlessness to be used by her father as he deemed fit, which unfortunately for her, meant she would make a fitting sacrifice. Lady Audley marries Sir Michael Audley because her first husband George Talboys abandons her and their child in order to travel to Australia and try to get rich. He leaves a note saying that he will be wealthy upon his return, or he will not come back and she should try to survive without him. George sees this as a noble sacrifice, but she interprets it as cold-hearted abandonment, and this traumatic event becomes the catalyst for Lady Audley's duplicitous behavior, and ultimately her madness.

Her insanity begins with the forced bifurcation of her character, a process that is repeated several times throughout the text. She is expected to be beautiful and friendly and kind, but not too much. When she smiles at people she is reproached, to which she responds, “I suppose you mean to infer by all that, that I’m deceitful. Why, I can’t help smiling at people, and speaking prettily to them. I know I am no *better* than the rest of the world, but I can’t help it if I’m *pleasanter*. It’s constitutional” (Braddon 108). Here we see Lady Audley position herself in a defensive stance, and basically say that she is not doing anything wrong—it is just part of who she is—but we can take that even further and say that not only is it who she is, but who she was trained to be. Women were educated to be the best possible “bait” that they could be to hook or ensnare a husband. But in this scenario we see echoes of Browning’s “My Last Duchess” (1842),[57] in that society, husbands expect wives to tone down if not completely do away with the coquettishness once they reaches the finish line and are finally married. Women are expected to feel shame for stepping outside of what is expected of them when it comes to not just intelligence, as we see with Catherine and Mina, but also beauty and allure, as we see with Lady Audley, and even to an extent Lucy Westenra. It is not the excess of the particular attribute in itself that becomes troubling, but the implications that excess has on the skewing of power dynamics.

Her physical beauty is often described throughout the text; it is both child-like and sinister. Before the reader knows anything about her dark deeds (the attempted murder of her first husband, her bigamy, or child abandonment), we are asked to be suspicious of her, and this is at this point due *solely* to the type of beauty that she possesses. When George (her first

[57] Robert Browning’s poem where the Duke explains his displeasure at the over eagerness and friendliness of his (now deceased) last wife to an representative of a potential next wife; in essence a thinly veiled warning about what is expected from her, and what happens to those who displease him.

husband) views the portrait that her second husband commissioned of his pretty young wife, it is described:

> No one but a pre-Raphaelite would have painted, hair by hair, those feathery masses of ringlets with every glimmer of gold, and every shadow of pale brown. No one but a pre-Raphaelite would have so exaggerated every attribute of that delicate face as to give a lurid lightness to the blonde complexion, and a strange sinister light to the deep blue eyes. No one but a pre-Raphaelite could have given to that pretty pouting mouth the hard and almost wicked look it had in the portrait…in his portrait of her, [Lady Audley] had something of the aspect of a beautiful fiend. (Braddon 72)[58]

Lucy Audley is not only strikingly beautiful, but also girlish, to the point of being childishly naïve and easily infantilized. Her new husband views her as an innocent child-woman; we are told that, "the generous baronet had transformed the interior of the grey old mansion into a little palace for his young wife, and Lady Audley seemed as happy as a child surrounded by new and costly toys" (Braddon 55). Ultimately, she is not in a place where she is allowed to become a woman, but rather is encouraged to stay in perpetual childhood. She becomes a unique adaptation of the damsel in distress since she is held captive not by an evil villain, but by a kind and generous man who wants her to play a specific and limited role.[59] The transformation of Lady Audley into an infantilized creature in effect echoes the danger Jonathan faced when swarmed by the vampire "brides," or the danger all of Lucy Westenra's suitors faced when she transformed from mortal to vampire. Lady Audley becomes a beautiful sexual being but without a clear purpose (child-bearing). This status gives her (and the vampire women) entirely too much power over men, which means that they must be destroyed or locked away. Further complicating

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[58] In this description we also see a parallel to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and the ability for art to represent a person's true character, what they most want to hide from the world.
[59] The concept of "role-playing," acting for others and for oneself will be further explored in Chapter III.

this idea and adding to the corruption of the idea of marriage, is that she is also a sexualized child. Sir Michael Audley, after all, has a young (but adult) daughter already, the jealous Alicia, who before his marriage was proud to be the keeper of the keys and act as the Lady of the house. Her stepmother strips her of this title, but Sir Michael encourages them to spend time and play together. Instead of drawing a clear line between daughter and wife, he tends to infantilize the wife and turn her into another daughter.

Even though on the surface there is hyper-feminization of Lady Audley, Braddon also plays with gender role reversal. In her text, however, the men have feminine traits at the start and gradually become more masculine, thereby reestablishing the status quo and proper patriarchal hierarchy as the novel progresses.[60] Once Robert understands that Lady Audley is outmatched due to his superior male intellect and perseverance, he even pities her, saying,

> She is anxious; and she questions her stepdaughter in that pretty, childlike manner which has such a bewitching air of innocent frivolity. Poor little creature; poor unhappy little golden-haired sinner; the battle between us seems terribly unfair. Why doesn't she run away while there is still time? (Braddon 269)

As Lady Audley is cornered and Robert is close to exposing her secrets, she is nevertheless seen in a childlike manner by the man who is pursuing her, which shows him in a negative light since he appears to be hounding a delicate and defenseless child. His mercy is also seen in the fact that

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[60] Scholarship on *Lady Audley's Secret* has focused on the awakening of Robert's masculinity and his transformation from a feminine dandy to a self-assured and confident man who serves a purpose in society. For example, Herbert G. Klein's "Strong Women and Feeble Men: Upsetting Gender Stereotypes in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*" (2008) and Vicki A. Pallo's "From Do-Nothing to Detective: The Transformation of Robert Audley in *Lady Audley's Secret*" (2006) make such arguments. Klein states: "the previously weak and indolent Robert most demonstrates male supremacy. Indeed even savageness, until he has vanquished his foe—the person who has wronged his friend and uncle" (Klein 164-65). Yet, he complicates the idea later by arguing that, "men on the whole fare somewhat better than women in this novel, and this is due to the fact that they are often given characteristics that are usually thought of as feminine" (Klein 173). Although I agree with the latter part of the argument, I disagree that the men "fare better" due to their feminine characteristics, since I believe those characteristics are for the most part eliminated from Robert as the story progresses.

his goal is not necessarily to punish her, but just to get her out of his uncle's life. Lady Audley is far from frail and becomes even more conniving and manipulative once she begins to fear that she is being pursued.[61]

The Excess of Affect & the Descent into Madness

In *Lady Audley's Secret*, Robert does not necessarily feel the urge to punish Lady Audley, but just remove her from his uncle's life—sweep her under the rug so she cannot harm him or the rest of society. His urgency to get her out of Audley Court is due not only to the fact that she is committing bigamy and perhaps even murder, but also that he suspects that she is insane. The latter is the most dangerous because it has the potential of infecting the Audley bloodline and drastically corrupting the established domestic order. In this sense, we begin to see the fear men have not only of women, but of madness, and of course of mad women because madness represents the monstrous being brought into the domestic sphere; in this form, the "other" becomes more terrifying than the typical Gothic supernatural creature or monster.[62] Lady Audley is particularly dangerous because her insanity is shrouded by her beauty and allure, which makes it difficult for some to notice her mental instability.[63] Her husband is too enamored by her beauty, and her stepdaughter is too blinded by pure jealousy to notice any insanity.

[61] In Chapter III I explore the various ways Lady Audley manipulates the men around her through her use of affected feminine behavior and "acting."

[62] George Levine's article "Translating the Monstrous: *Northanger Abbey*" (1975) makes such an argument about Austen's text. He says, "The monstrousness is part of Jane Austen's literary imagination, a domestic but more serious monstrousness than that of, say, Lewis's *The Monk*, because it is a social commonplace" (336). I contend the same could be said for the monstrous in *Lady Audley's Secret*, or even Stoker's text. The "madwoman" infects the proper British home and causes disorder and fear.

[63] Jessica Cox's article "From Page to Screen: Transforming M.E. Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*" (2001) explores varying manifestations of Lady Audley and notes that **"**The madwoman of previous genres, such as Charlotte Brontë's Bertha Mason, is transformed in the sensation fiction of the 1860's from a hideous monster into a picture of beauty and apparent innocence who uses her femininity to

Just as the idea of witches and dangerous women has evolved such the Classical period, so has the conception of what constitutes insanity and madness, which at first was closely connected to depression—a concept that still remains true, but in our modern society the breakdown and categorization gets increasingly precise. The term "depression" first appeared in writing as early as the mid-17th century. However, it was not until the late 18th century when it began to appear more frequently, until it eventually replaced melancholia or melancholy as the standard term. The symptoms that we now associate with depression were discussed as early as the 5th and 4th centuries B.C.E., in the writings of Hippocrates.[64] At that time however, what we would term depression was thought to be either an affliction caused by the gods as punishment for bad behavior, or an illness due to an imbalance of one's humours. The idea that depression was a form of divine punishment was continued into Christianity. In the 17th century, John Donne wrote that "God has accompanied, and complicated almost all our bodily diseases of these times, with an extraordinary sadness, a predominant melancholy, a faintnesse of heart, a cheerlessness, a joylessness of spirit" (Wolpert 7). In 1773 William Cowper said he was "plunged into a melancholy that made him almost an infant" because he was "deserted by God" (Wolpert 7). It was not until late in the 18th century when the medical community began to see depression as a disorder of the brain, instead of a problem in the soul or blood.

From the time of Hippocrates until the 18th century, melancholia was thought to be caused by an excess of black bile. In total there were thought to be four humours in the human body, the other three being yellow bile, blood, and phlegm. Each humour controlled different

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achieve her own ends, a ploy never before used in women's literature" (Cox 25). This is an exaggeration since as we have just seen with Lady Macbeth and Clytemnestra, among other Classical heroines, the use of the mixture of femininity and innocence in order to achieve one's ambitions is not a "never before" used tool. Cox and Levine seem to be slightly at odds here since Levine identifies the beautiful monster as far back as the early 19th century, but I agree with Cox's point that emphasizes Lady Audley's femininity, which I contend hides her madness from certain people.

[64] In his *De Aere Aquis et Locis* he attributes melancholia to an excess of black bile.

characteristics, and they needed to be in the correct proportions for optimum health. Since melancholia was believed to be a byproduct of excess bodily fluids, the logical treatment would be a draining of those fluids. This procedure, known as bloodletting, was begun by Hippocrates, and continued to be the main treatment for temperamental disorders for centuries to come. The Greek physician Galen (129-200 CE) built upon Hippocrates' work; he also believed that an imbalance of humours was the cause of melancholia, and continued to proclaim that bloodletting was a legitimate treatment. But he added to Hippocrates' theory, saying that a change in diet and/or climate was also a possible treatment for melancholia. Paradoxically, for the Greeks and Romans, melancholia was not only considered a type of illness, it was also seen as a natural state of being for certain people. Black bile was credited for fueling creativity, and artists were thought to be naturally prone to melancholia, which eventually became engrained in their personality.[65] The melancholy artist often saw himself as superior due to his "creative" temperament. British physicians and writers continued this portrayal of the creative yet melancholy mind. Timothie Bright's *Treatise of Melancholie* explored the depiction of clinical depression in *Hamlet*. He believed that the "black clothes, moody unsociability, cynicism, suicidal ideas, sudden changes of mood with starts of activity, and irresolution" were clear signs of melancholia (Madden 128). Bright's treatise brings up an important idea connected to depression. He highlights the fact that the stigma associated with depression has not always existed. Although melancholia could be seen as an illness, it also had a certain fashionable appeal. Like Hamlet, many Greek heroes and philosophers were often depicted as conflicted and melancholy. Aristotle suggested that there was "a touch of mad genius in melancholia" which made it a slightly enviable condition (Wolpert 4).

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[65] Recent scholarship argues against this belief, notably Peter Kramer's *Against Depression* (2006) where he argues against the "common favorable belief about depression…that it inspires great creative efforts" (232).

Robert Burton (1577-1640) continued the tradition of the melancholy yet brilliant artist in his treatise *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621). He believed that those suffering from melancholia were also blessed with the most wit. He also added to the study of melancholia by including a discussion on the physical disorders and guilt felt by the afflicted. Burton was one of many physicians and writers who wrote about, studied, and compiled information on melancholia in order to better understand their own state. Burton said, "I write of Melancholy, by being busy to avoid Melancholy" (Wolpert xi). In the 17th century, the idea of the languishing depressed poet continued to be in vogue. John Milton refers to his own melancholia in some of his poems. In "L'Allegro" (1632) he refers to his state as "loathed Melancholy," yet he closes his poem "Il Penseroso" (1638) with the lines "these pleasures, Melancholy, give,/ And I with thee will choose to live" (Madden 125). Around the same time Milton and Burton were writing about their melancholic temperaments, humoral theory began to fade in favor of chemical and mechanical explanations for melancholia. Despite this new theory, the treatment remained the same, mainly bloodletting. It was around this time that the socio-economic reasons behind depression and melancholia were also beginning to be explored. It was believed that after the opening of grammar schools,[66] more people were literate and educated, yet they still did not have a legitimate opportunity for social or economic advancement, which led to feeling despondent. Surprisingly, after centuries of talk and study on depression, melancholy was still a rather nebulous term that could be taken to mean several different ailments. It was used to describe an imbalance of humours, but also a natural reaction to grief, as well as a type of illness, which was associated with lack of appetite, despondency, fear, and restlessness. However, by the 18th century it had at least been divided into two main subcategories: those who feared death, and the

[66] One of the earliest of which dates back to around the 7th century (King's School in Rochester).

despondent. It was also around this time that there began to be a separation between the study of hypochondria and that of depression.

The first time "depression" appeared in print was in 1665 in Richard Baker's *Chronicle of the Kings of England*. This was the first time the word depression was used to convey a type of temperament. However, it was in the 18th century that the word "depression" began to be used more consistently in lieu of melancholia. Samuel Johnson was instrumental in this change in terminology. Johnson, like Burton before him, wrote about depression because he felt he was susceptible to it, and greatly feared giving into it and becoming insane as a result. It was also around this time that there was a shift from seeing melancholia as a blood disorder to a mental disorder. Johnson first used the word as a direct substitution for melancholia in his 1752 *Rambler* where he says he "observed their depression." In 1761 in a diary entry he wrote of being "under great depression," and in 1763 in a letter about William Collins he stated that "[Collins] languished some fears under that depression of mind which enchains the faculties without destroying them" (Jackson 145-46).

Case Studies

Robert Audley classifies Lady Audley as mad. I disagree with this assessment. Looking at the history of insanity we see how the science (at least at its inception) is often used to help classify and label women who do not fit into their specific roles (which dates back at least to Lady Macbeth and Clytemnestra). An imbalance of the humours, melancholia, neurasthenia, hysteria--these are all terms used to describe psychological imbalances, but they often refer specifically to women. In *Lady Audley's Secret*, madness plays a central role in the plot. It is

explicitly connected not only to women, but becomes even more feminized since it is connected to child bearing. Lady Audley explains that her madness is not only hereditary (passed down from mother to daughter), but that it is a disease that lies dormant until after childbirth.[67] In today's society we might diagnose this as a case of post-partum depression or psychosis, both of which result from a severe hormonal imbalance. Today, there are medications and therapies to treat these disorders, but in the 19th century it becomes an illness that completely unhinges a woman for the rest of her life. There is no cure for her, the answer is institutionalization; in essence the message is that she is the disease and society needs the cure, so she is quarantined away from everyone else.[68]

In the modern era madness becomes more of a disease of affect. When someone's affect is "off," they understand that emotions exist, but they do not know how to express them because they do not authentically feel them—they are reduced to mimicking what they believe the "correct" emotion is.[69] This is especially clear in *Dracula* where the Count even asks Jonathan for advice about how to act in order to fit in so he does not stand out as much. People who are unable to express their emotions appropriately and/or read those of others form the basis for

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[67] Lady Audley describes meeting her mother in an asylum: "Her madness was an hereditary disease transmitted to her from her mother, who had died mad. She, my mother, had been, or had appeared sane up to the hour of my birth; but from that hour her intellect had decayed, until she had become what I saw her…the only inheritance I had to expect from my mother was—insanity!" (358-59).

[68] Jill Matus' article "Disclosure as 'Cover Up': The Disclosure of Madness in *Lady Audley's Secret*" (2001) makes a similar argument. She states that "the novel reveals how Victorian notions of morality and constructions of maternal madness coalesce in defining the 'right' woman by representing her 'other' in terms of specifically gendered pathology" (Matus 335). Further she states that, "madness is intimately related to moral dissolution, itself a gross, sensual indulgence" (Matus 338). Although I agree with her first point, I do not agree that madness is necessarily related to morality. Rather, that madness is related to her (or any character's) inability to control and manage their affect. Although this can also be seen as a moral question, the loss of control becomes more difficult to resist when their agency is taken away.

[69] The DSM IV calls this as a "Personality Disorder," which is defined as "an enduring pattern of inner experience and behavior the deviates markedly from the expectations of the individual's culture. This pattern is manifested in two (or more) of the following areas: 1.Cognition (i.e., ways of perceiving and interpreting self, other people and events). 2. Affectivity (i.e., the range, intensity, liability, and appropriateness of emotional response)."

many categories of mental disorders, such as psycho/sociopathy.[70] This is reflected in my chosen texts because the monstrosity comes from the relationships between characters and their interactions, not necessarily from the fact that they are real "monsters." The monsters are the people or creatures who destroy order in society. Lady Audley's madness emphasizes how men can pass down property, money and titles, whereas women pass down madness, and of course beauty, which can also be problematic. Lady Audley is not evil or coldhearted, she is no Lady Macbeth driven mad by her lust for power and realization of the lengths she will go to achieve it; she knows that "power" is simply not something that she can obtain, not in the same sense that a man obtains it. Rather, she seeks security; she needs a husband because she wants to survive. The final chapter, where we learn about Lady Audley's death, is called "Peace." We are asked to believe the world makes sense again because this insane and corrupted woman is finally not just locked away, but dead. But the specter of Lady Audley can never truly depart because through her life she exemplifies the dangerous and shaky ground on which all women stand. Even though they are trained that marriage is their ultimate goal, it is not always their salvation—an idea that is evident as far back as Aeschylus. The women in Gothic texts must walk this fine line between being one-dimensional passive artifacts used by other people, and bucking tradition and expectations by not simply giving in to what their captor or pursuer wants. Lady Audley encapsulates both of these traits, and both are displayed overtly.

The struggle between the cool control Lady Audley tries to maintain as she hides her secret, and her frustration and anxiety all finally come to the surface when she is confronted by Robert Audley—the "detective" of the text. When Robert finally corners Lady Audley and makes her confess, she responds in an excited outburst: "It is great triumph, is it not? A

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[70] The DSM IV classifies this as an "antisocial personality disorder" that is often characterized by disregard for, or violation of, the rights of others. Asperger's syndrome is a particularly intriguing variant of this tendency.

wonderful victory! You have used your cool, calculating, frigid, luminous intellect to a noble purpose. You have conquered—a MADWOMAN!" (Braddon 340).[71] Lady Audley self-identifies as a madwoman, but also with her sarcastic tone judges Robert for taking advantage and preying on someone who is damaged. Further, in her accusation we see the juxtaposition between men and women (intellect vs. emotion) that is also emphasized and manipulated in *Dracula* and *Northanger Abbey* where women are judged for having an excess of both; they feel shame in return for exhibiting either excess emotion or intellect, but Lady Audley points out the injustice behind the excessive power men wield over women, not only in her actions, but also by straightforwardly telling Robert, "'You have brought me to my grave, Mr. Audley,' she cried; 'you have used your power basely and cruelly, and have brought me to a living grave'" (Braddon 384). She exaggerates her past treatment because she is in fact the one who tried to not only have him committed, but also even attempted to kill him by burning him in his bed. In her situation, we see hints of Brontë's Berthe, another inconvenient wife locked away out of sight, and another marriage contract broken not by the wife, but by the husband.[72] But whereas Berthe is locked in an attic, Lady Audley continues to be surrounded by her luxurious goods and her husband pays a generous amount to keep her in comfortable surroundings—she is not a convict in a spartan cell. Lady Audley finally releases her emotions when she is brought to the asylum; she allows her affect to boil over and she completely loses the filter that has kept her emotions controlled.

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[71] Matus contends that "her final confession, emphasizes her bid for a life of greater power and comfort, which the keys of Audley Court now symbolize" (Matus 335). Although I agree that Lady Audley is making a desperate final attempt here, I contend that it is not necessarily "power," but rather just life and the opportunity to be a wife and fulfill the role she and all women were raised to fill.

[72] Some criticism on *Lady Audley's Secret* argues that the novel is ahead of its time in arguing for female equality. One such article is Nicole P. Fisk's "Lady Audley as Sacrifice: Curing Female Disadvantage in *Lady Audley's Secret* (2004). She argues that "Braddon presents extraordinarily modern ideas about female equality in *Lady Audley's Secret*, but she masks those ideas well in a seemingly conservative nineteenth-century novel" (Fisk 26). However, Lady Audley does not seek to be on equal footing with Robert or her husband, she wants to be allowed to be simply his wife and enjoy the social privileges that come along with that status.

Conclusion: The Spontaneous Overflow

The overflow of emotion is particularly highlighted when it comes from a character known for his/her emotional control. In Stoker's text, Professor Van Helsing undergoes a complete breakdown in a cab. Dr. Seward describes the scene:

> The moment we were alone in the carriage he gave way to a regular fit of hysterics. He has denied to me since that it was hysterics, and insisted that it was only his sense of humour asserting itself very terrible conditions. He laughed till he cried, and I had to draw down the blinds lest anyone should see us and misjudge; and then he cried and laughed again; and laughed and cried together. Just as a woman does. I tried to be stern with him, as one is to a woman under the circumstances; but it had no effect. Men and women are so different in manifestation of nervous strength or weakness! (Stoker 157)

In this scene the most controlled, educated, and stern character loses complete control, and when in such a state he is compared to a woman. Insanity and hysteria again becomes a gendered phenomenon. But what we see happening with Van Helsing is an excess and overflow of affect, he simply has too many emotions to contain and suppress at that particular moment (after he helps kill the vampire Lucy). Van Helsing shows that madness is not necessarily something that only women can succumb to, nor is it necessarily a sign of weakness.

In my three primary texts we see overlapping traits between the protagonists, especially as they each begin their descent into madness; they each begin to lose their hold on reality by being unable to control their lives, their environments, and ultimately their emotions. Even though the level or duration of insanity is not the same for each character, Catherine emerges

from derangement after being reprimanded, Jonathan and Van Helsing also need a little nursing back to health, whereas Lady Audley is sequestered in an asylum and dies alone and unloved, each character's madness is brought about by similar circumstances. Even without supernatural intervention they all experience shocks, terror and horror, which take a toll on their mental stability. In each of these texts the line between male and female is blurred through the feminization of men, and with the combination of male and female the Gothic answers Freud's categorization of men and women as universal and homogeneous groups. Characters turn the tables on one another in other to exploit gender-based weaknesses. Men and women read social cues differently[73] and the texts play with social hierarchy. The fact that the basic patriarchal structure is disrupted by women who believe themselves overly intelligent, or who abandon their roles as proper wives and mothers, who creates chaos in society by upsetting traditional gender roles—this is concept as we see with Classical texts through the 20th century is shown to be disastrous for all involved. Women's mental breakdown is an example of how not everyone experiences the release at the same intensity or at the same time. Rather there is growing suspense and this suspense is tied to the excess of affect. By taking up the theories of Freud and Aristotle but showing their flaws and gaps, the Gothic proves to be more than just purely conventional. Madness and various forms of mental instability transform a text into a Gothic one, not necessarily a supernatural creature or force.

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[73] The topic of reading and misreading one another will be taken up in more depth in Chapter III.

Chapter III
Oedipus, Edifice, Artifice

All the world's a stage,/ And all the men and women merely players;/ They have their exits and their entrances,/ And one man in his time plays many parts.

- William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*

Act well your part; there all the honour lies.

- Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Man*

Seldom, very seldom, does complete truth belong to any human disclosure; seldom can it happen that something is not a little disguised or a little mistaken.

- Jane Austen, *Emma*

Introduction

Following the previous chapter where I focus on the interior of the protagonist's minds, in this chapter I widen that scope and discuss not just the characters, but also their environments. Part of this larger environment includes the literal landscape, the world that the characters inhabit, the manors, castles, madhouses, and abbeys. These locations set the stage for a second, interior landscape, that contains the acting and deception where the characters play roles for one another, and even for themselves. The masks and artifice are adopted because the characters seek to control their own affect, and to manage that of others; this is especially important for the Gothic "villains" who seek to manipulate and control others. Yet as we begin to see, all characters, even the "heroes," have the ability (or seek to have the ability) to control and manage the affect of those around them. Lastly, when exploring the stage, its players, and their often deceptive interactions, we can see how the interior readers go about deciphering their environment and the actions of those around them.

I explore how characters go about reading and acting for one another. Beyond that, I look at how they read their surroundings, and conversely, how their surroundings impact their minds. By studying the interactions between interior readers and their environments we get a microcosm

of the Gothic experience, which can help explain why the genre has such a large emotional impact on its audience, an impact that helps explain its longevity and popularity. Seeking to create an emotional impact on the audience is not a goal exclusive to the Gothic—many if not most forms of art seek to accomplish the same—but we can begin to differentiate between art in general and the Gothic in that the Gothic strives to elicit seemingly negative emotions from its readers. Yet these emotions are nonetheless pleasurable and welcome; this goal connects the Gothic to Ancient Tragedy. However, even that is not enough to truly make the Gothic stand out among other similar forms of art. A key aspect that makes this connection significant is the staged quality that they both share. I am not claiming that Austen, Braddon, or Stoker were familiar with or modeled their novels on Greek or Roman Tragedies, or Aristotle's aesthetic principles. The value of linking the Gothic to Ancient Tragedy (when divorced from a historical perspective) is being able to study each interior reader as an actor who trying to actively deceive and manipulate and is also aware of his/her status as an actor within a text.

One key attribute that helps bridge the gap between Tragedy and the Gothic is the emphasis on reading, misreading, and deciphering. Taking Sophocles' Oedipus as an example, we see how the cursed character is given information and clues to avoid his fate, but is unable to decipher their meaning until it is too late— which is especially ironic and tragic given that he is known for being able to solve riddles. Oedipus and the other characters must decipher the events as they occur. The same is true for the Gothic, and in my chosen texts the characters have to decipher and must do so while they are being purposefully deceived by others, or even by their own imaginations. This added challenge further hinders the character's ability to logically and correctly read their environment. Characters model the critical distance necessary to decipher a

situation, but are also deeply immersed emotionally and must maneuver through their emotions in order to see through the deception.

The characters in *Northanger Abbey*, *Lady Audley's Secret*, and *Dracula* transform one another into detectives, doctors and even psychologists, to understand the motivation behind their actions and see through the deception. How characters go about staging, (mis)reading, and deciphering emotions can provide critics with case studies as to how the Gothic achieves the emotional impact on its audience, because we see it modeled by the characters. We, as the exterior readers, may not understand the actions at the same time as the interior readers, but this relates to the staggered and sequential nature of *catharsis*, which changes the definition from that given by Aristotle in his *Poetics*. As I discuss in previous chapters, for Aristotle, the audience experiences the play's impact simultaneously, and they each feel the release with the same intensity. In the Gothic this reaction is much more nuanced, and the stage for the expression and manipulation of heightened emotion is the conventional Gothic location.

Location and Conventions: The Agency of Objects

In Chapter II I discuss the characters' loss of control and how it gives way to hysteria and insanity. This lack of control is connected to the setting because it invites the excess of affect. A building need not be officially a "madhouse" in order to house the mentally disturbed. The location (a convent, abbey, manor, etc.) provides the interior reader with a metaphorical location, much like the theater, where *catharsis* can take place. In these locations themes from Greek and Roman Tragedy, such as tragic blindness, also come to the forefront. The Gothic novel is a place where actions, reactions, and motivations all become suspect because we cannot know whom we

can or should trust. It is a genre well known for its spectacle and overabundance of emotion, but by reading the genre through the lens of Ancient Tragedy we can see just that not only are there a myriad of heightened emotions within a the text, but that these emotions are staged, and take place on a metaphorical stage.

The Convent: The Unprotected Ingénue

Previously I discuss Denis Diderot's *The Nun* in the context of the framing device of the found manuscript—Diderot uses it in an attempt to lure a friend back so he can save the poor Sister Suzanne. The novel is also useful when exploring the concept of location as stage. In *The Nun* the location (a secluded convent) combines with the Gothic theme of corrupt Catholicism; in the context of the Gothic genre, Catholicism is an institution rife with corruption or simply ridiculous. We need only look at the portrayal of the Catholic villagers as foolish and superstitious in Stoker's *Dracula*, the use of the inquisition in Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, and of course the depiction of the evil and lecherous monk Ambrosio in Lewis' *The Monk*—to name a few. *The Nun* continues this tradition, and in the text the convent becomes a nexus for religious and sexual desire as well as violent sadism. Diderot takes a different approach in that the aggressors are women, women who are by definition supposed to be pure, chaste, and kind. This is in stark contrast to other Gothic texts with prominent religious themes. For example, *The Monk* portrays women in a traditionally passive and victimized role. When Ambrosio rapes Antonia he does it with the aid of dark magic, which completely immobilizes her and puts her in his control. Matilda, his daemon lover, obtains this magic from him to show her devotion:

> Receive this constellated myrtle: While you bear this in your hand, every door will fly open to you. It will procure you access tomorrow night to Antonia's chamber: Then breathe upon it thrice, pronounce her name, and place it upon her pillow. A death-like slumber will immediately seize upon her, and deprive her of the power of resisting your attempts. Sleep will hold her till break of morning. In this state you may satisfy your desires without danger of being discovered; since when daylight shall dispel the effects of the enchantment, Antonia will perceive her dishonour, but be ignorant of the ravisher. Be happy then, my Ambrosio, and let this service convince you that my friendship is disinterested and pure. (Lewis 245)

In *The Nun* the convent is place that permits and even encourages hypocrisy. It becomes a perfect stage for the nuns to act like pious and devout women, while simultaneously indulging their sexual and sadistic desires. Suzanne's wanton Mother Superior in some ways supersedes Ambrosio's devious ways because she does not admit to herself that she is corrupting a young nun, rather, she tries to awaken lust in her victim; she tries to bring her down to her level and make her complicit. Ambrosio values his spotless reputation, but the Mother Superior does not seem to care about maintaining an appearance of propriety. When comparing these two religious figures, both in positions of authority, we see that Diderot's villain[74] has even less shame than

[74] The "villain" becomes an increasingly difficult figure to pin down. In the context of the Gothic the preconception is that villains are immediately recognizable. In "The Face of Evil: Phrenology, Physiognomy, and the Gothic Villain" (2000), Bridget M. Marshall mentions highlights this point, saying,

> The faces of Gothic villains – witches, werewolves, vampires, and other spirits – are not simply human faces, but faces of evil. Evil as physically manifested become central to our understanding of the villain, who is always in someway marked not only for the other characters, but also for the reader, buy some sort of physical deformity. In the nineteenth century, the markings of evil were not merely fictional devices, but were based on the contemporary sciences of phrenology and physiognomy. (161)

However, this is far from a concrete rule. We may see telltale physical characteristics in certain Gothic villains, such as Count Dracula or Frankenstein's Creature. But some are not as easily identifiable, and may even completely contradict such an argument. Marshall cites Wilde's Dorian Gray, saying that such a Gothic villain "provides a new challenge to the phrenologist" (171). But the female Gothic villain inhabits an even more ambivalent space because, as is seen with Lady Audley, she can have all the desired

Lewis'. But the question becomes, does she need to feel shame? She is in a completely cloistered environment, segregated from the outside world and does not see a need to keep her "affair" secret. Suzanne recounts her first private meeting with the Mother Superior, saying, "she undressed me. She said a hundred nice things to me and lavished on me a thousand caresses, which somewhat embarrassed me, why I don't know, for I did not understand quite what was happening" (Diderot 126). We see here that paradoxically, the molestation is hidden, even when she is experiencing direct pleasure from her "victim." At first Suzanne is too innocent to understand what is transpiring between them; her innocent eyes, in addition to the fact that these acts are taking place behind convent walls, help mask the Mother Superior's predatory behavior.

It is shocking and unexpected for such a scene to take place in a convent between an innocent nun and someone in a position of authority. Ironically, according to the Mother Superior, she does not wish to harm Suzanne, but is still attempting to act like a "proper" Mother Superior. She knows that Suzanne has not shown any inclination toward monastic life, since she previously tells her confessor, "My body is here but my heart is not, it is out there, and if there had to be choice between death and perpetual incarceration, I would not hesitate to die" (Diderot 77). So the Mother Superior uses this as an excuse and motivation; she thinks she is simply trying to entice Suzanne into being comfortable and accepting her lot in life—that is how she justifies her actions. This is not an unheard of approach; earlier Suzanne explains "A novice-mistress is always the most indulgent sister who can be found. Her object is to hide from you all the thorns of the vocation, she subjects you to a course of the most carefully calculated seduction" (Diderot 26). Of course, an outside observer (the audience) can tell that the Superior

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feminine traits, and still be capable of evil deeds. Even *Dracula* contains contradictions to this idea that villains are outwardly identifiable. The vampire women, and even Lucy, are described as incredibly sensual and desirable creatures who nevertheless pose threats to men and the patriarchy. When examining *female* Gothic villains, they are perhaps even more dangerous in that they can be both beautiful and evil.

is taking full advantage of Suzanne's innocence for her own sexual pleasure. But in her mind, her sexual advances are simply an attempt to get Suzanne excited about her path, especially since she is being forced into this situation against her will. This thought process absolves her of all wrongdoing and makes her out to be a good and effective Mother Superior. She faces an inner battle between her duty to the new nun, and her desire to intimately possess the young nun. The convent however allows her to blend these two forces. She can tell herself that she's doing her duty and keeping her vows, while indulging her sexual desires, and this is not the first time. Suzanne enters a situation that has repeated itself several times; she is replacing the Superior's former favorite, who expresses a mixture of sexual jealousy and concern when witnessing the fawning of the Mother Superior on Suzanne. The Mother Superior takes up the role of any "good" Superior by making the transition from secular to religious life as smooth as possible, but always with sexuality simmering beneath the surface. When Suzanne commits any kind of infraction, which ordinarily requires physical punishment, she refuses because it was "dreadful… for her to have to punish anybody." She kissed her and said "what soft, white skin she has! Such a lovely figure! Lovely neck and hair!... Oh what a beautiful bosom! And so firm! And could I let it be torn by spikes? No, no, nothing of the kind" (Diderot 123). Even kindness is all part of the role that the Mother Superior plays in order to deceive Suzanne and maintain the appearance of a pure and chaste nun.

Perhaps Suzanne is particularly susceptible to the advances of the Mother Superior because her experiences with her are so drastically different from what she experiences at her first convent. The first convent also proved to be a location that shielded those inside from any punishment and was a hotbed of physical and psychological torture worthy of de Sade. When she expresses her lack of desire to be a nun here, in return she is "confined to my cell, silence was

imposed on me, I was kept from everybody and left to myself; it was clear to me that they were resolved to settle my fate regardless of me" (Diderot 30). She is abandoned and experiences a complete lack of control over her life. Her desire for a normal secular life is snatched away. Instead she is confined, and the nuns, her parents, the monsignor, all tell themselves that they are doing something to make her life better, when in reality they simply don't care what becomes of her and want to keep her out of sight. In this holy place she is locked in her room and a group of nuns assault her. The scene is horrific, she is tied up and beaten then thrown in a dark underground cell and says, "I screamed for help… my feet were bleeding and my legs bruised… my first instinct was to put an end to myself I tried to throttle myself, I tore my clothes with my teeth, uttering fearful cries and howling like a wild animal" (Diderot 65). Her eventual submission begins a transformation, which ends with her being a woman who is also focused on self-interest much like the other nuns and her Mother Superior. She is finally granted a transfer, but we see the second convent simply substitutes one form of abuse with another.

Even before Suzanne has such traumatizing experiences, she has a complete aversion to the cloistered life. She wants freedom, independence, but also safety and quiet. When she finally takes her vows, against her will, she says, "the bells were rung to inform the world that a woman was about to be condemned to misery… I think there was something very solemn and touching about them for an innocent young girl not drawn in other directions" (Diderot 32). Suzanne can still recognize the beauty of the religious ritual; her ordeal has not robbed her of her ability to see religion as something positive, it is just not positive for her. Yet, after suffering over and over again and being subjected to not only physical torture but also sexual advances, she begins to judge the entire institution, not just the individuals who harm her. She judges them saying, "Where is the dwelling-place of hatred, disgust and hysteria? Where is the place of servitude and

despotism? Where are undying hatreds and passions nurtured in silence? Where is the home of cruelty and morbid curiosity?" (Diderot 103). She criticizes the convent as a place that cannot help but be disruptive and oppressive because it hides the transgressive acts and protects the perpetrators. Sadistic cruelty and lust cannot exist in the convent without turning it into, as Suzanne puts it, a place for "a fanatic or a hypocrite" (Diderot 103). Toward the end of her ordeal, Suzanne begins to realize that the convent allows these women to indulge their most evil desires, and that they are able to escape any kind of punishment because they can effectively play the part of good women. They even fool her at first, but as she becomes more adept at reading them and seeing through their disguises and attempts at manipulation, she realizes how truly evil they are, and makes the decision to escape, no matter the cost.

Even the pure and seemingly incorruptible Suzanne subtly submits to the corrosive influence of the convent. She is plagued by suicidal thoughts while forced to endure isolation and torture, thinking, "How often have I wished that my mother had strangled me at birth" (Diderot 86). Her desire for a peaceful secular life is overtaken by a darker desire to end her own life. Suzanne endures years of physical, sexual and emotional torture, and in the end, it does have a serious impact. It may not corrode at her will and make her give in and devote herself to monastic life, nor does it make her end her life, but she does lose her innocence. She does eventually manage to run away from the convent, but she ends up in a brothel. And in one of her final letters she states, "I am a woman, and perhaps a bit coquettish, who can tell? But it is a result of our nature, and not of artifice on my part." (Diderot 189). Her purity and innocence are gone by this point, and she becomes an actress in this new situation. We can speculate whether or not she might have, if she had remained in the convent, eventually become one of those nuns who use the convent walls to both help mask and give license to their predatory desires. She has

changed enough to view herself as a sexual being, and has begun to see her gender, if not her nun's habit and location, as justification for her actions. What truly perverts the nun's acts is that they believe their own act and think they are fulfilling their duty as nuns by forcing Suzanne to submit. Of course, their methods are cruel and corrupt, but it allows them to satiate their most deviant sadistic desires, while seemingly being "good" nuns.

Diderot's novel does not portray the convent as a prison just for those held there against their will, rather he transforms it into a place where those who are supposed to be pure, chaste and benevolent allow their most deviant desires go unchecked and to take control. It is place that transforms those who reside in it and from where there is no escape. As Suzanne describes it, "Put a man in a forest and he will turn into a wild beast, but in a cloister, where a feeling of duress combines with that of servitude, it is worse still. There is a way out of a forest, there is none out of a cloister; a man is free in the forest but he is a slave in the cloister" (Diderot 136). Suzanne feels completely powerless, and even though this she is a feeling is familiar with, having come into the world as proof of her mother's adulterous affair and being despised by her family since birth, yet it is not until she enters the convent where the rampant violent and sexual cravings of the women who surround her are allowed to run amuck, that she realizes that the aberration of the secular world cannot compare to what happens behind convent walls. She recognizes that the convent is the epitome of imprisonment because it uses the misapprehension that all who enter its walls do so voluntarily and with the purpose of serving God, as a cloak to shelter itself against any interference from the outside world. This realization, in addition to brutal physical torture and pernicious sexual molestation, eventually transforms Suzanne into a cold and hardened woman. With Suzanne we see an example of the Gothic's ability to transform a location into a stage where the interior readers are performing for and reading one another. We

as exterior readers can see through their deception, as can Suzanne (eventually), but she is trapped in the situation and location.

The Abbey: The Overprepared and Disappointed Actress

In *Northanger Abbey*, Catherine also faces a lack of control, but not to the same extent as Suzanne because for her, this happens when she realizes that her reality cannot compare with the fantasy she has built up in her imagination. In a way, however, it is similar to Suzanne's situation in that the reality does not coincide with what one imagines—the convent should be a place of spirituality and prayer, not abuse and molestation. But although Suzanne was shocked by the treatment she received, she was not expecting to enjoy her life in a convent, so it for her she knew her reality would be torturous, even if she did not imagine the extent of the abuse she would have to endure. Catherine comes face to face with a similar disappointment when she sets eyes upon Northanger Abbey for the first time. Unlike Suzanne who is disappointed by looking at the building which to her represents her prison, Catherine sees Northanger Abbey and feels disappointed because it is *not* imposing and terrifying. It is not just the location, but the expectations of the interior reader that help transform it into a potential Gothic stage. Catherine describes the discouraging moment:

> But so low did the building stand, that she found herself passing through the great gates of the lodge into the very grounds of Northanger, without having discerned even an antique chimney…To pass between lodges of a modern appearance, to find herself with such ease in the very precincts of the abbey, and driven so rapidly along a smooth, level

> road of fine gravel, without obstacle, alarm or solemnity of any kind, struck her as odd and inconsistent. (Austen 117)

Catherine immediately notices the flaws in the edifice, which stem from the modernity of the abbey, so different from the ancient and decrepit one she expected. It is indeed inconsistent with the expectation she had built up from her extensive reading. Yet despite the initial disappointment, she is still unwilling to let go of her fantasy of the Gothic and as she enters the abbey she continues to seek out evidence that this place will in fact provide her with the experience she craves. As she enters the abbey she comments, "An abbey!—yes, it was delightful to be really in an abbey!—but she doubted, as she looked round the room, whether any thing within her observation, would have given her the consciousness. The furniture was in all the profusion and elegance of modern taste" (Austen 118). Catherine explores and judges the abbey as if it were a set she was walking into, which she expects will serve as the location for her Gothic adventures. She had anticipated what the abbey would look like down to the very furniture. Ironically, sets for Greek and Roman tragedies were in fact sparse, but for Catherine (and perhaps many modern audiences) the set, the props, the backdrop, are all vital to the experience—and for her it is lacking in Northanger.

Step by step we can see her growing disappointment, which is heightened by the fact that she refuses to let go of the vision she had in her mind since she read her first Gothic text. She had pictured not just a certain type of building from the outside, an imposing and haunting edifice, as well as the type of furniture, but she even goes so far as to envision the state of disarray within the house: "To an imagination which had hoped for the smallest divisions, and the heaviest stone-work, for painted glass, dirt and cobwebs, the difference was very distressing" (Austen

118). Catherine has a great attention to detail,[75] a trait no doubt honed through the act of enjoying and perhaps even close reading the Gothic novels she treasures. She even latches on to the weather, and the prominent Gothic convention of the "dark and stormy night:"

> The night was stormy; the wind had been rising at intervals the whole afternoon; and by the time the party broke up, it blew and rained violently. Catherine, as she crossed the hall, listened to the tempest with sensations of awe; and when she heard it rage round a corner of the ancient building and close with sudden fury a distant door, felt for the first time that she was really in an Abbey. (Austen 121)

Despite the overwhelming evidence she constantly discovers that all should help her realize that she is in fact not a heroine in a Gothic story, she nevertheless refuses to let go of this fantasy. We see that such a Gothic education makes her susceptible to not just having wildly unrealistic expectations, but also to misreading simple situations; in contrast to Suzanne who tends to under read situations, Catherine over reads due to her Gothic education. She is clearly disappointed with the reality of the abbey, but this does not stop her from actively trying to make her reality fit into her expectations. This process of exaggerating her situation makes it clear that she cannot accurately read her surroundings, and also metaphorically transforms the abbey into a madhouse where she is the lunatic raving about murdered wives, secret chambers, and forbidden pathways.

The Courtly Manor: Method Acting and Complete Immersion

[75] Critics note Catherine's ability to read, but in terms of social cues. D. N. Gallon notes how when faced with an awkward situation (such as the relationship between her brother and Isabella), Catherine has an "instinctively correct response" (803). Catherine indeed seems to have more of an innate ability to read people and perhaps not as clear of a view of her environment, but both are related. She recognizes the hidden villain in General Tilney and John Thorpe, even as she is mocked for her delusions of grandeur.

Northanger Abbey is a place that Catherine dreamed of visiting and inhabiting, much like Lady Audley, who dreamed of living in a grand manor. She wanted a life that had "'No more dependence, no more drudgery, no more humiliations…every trace of the old life melted away—every clue to identity buried and forgotten (Braddon 53). Her old life was one where her father in essence sold her to her husband, who in turn abandoned her soon after the birth of their child. At first it appears as though Audley Court represents all the rewards that come to women who possess the feminine gifts that make them desirable in the marriage market; it displays the wealth, security and status that are the goals of any woman who marries well. Braddon's text opens with a description of the manor, which sets it apart as a significant and imposing structure:

> It lay low down in the hollow, rich with a fine old timber and luxuriant pastures; and you came upon it through an avenue of limes, bordered on either side by meadows, over the high hedges of which the cattle looked inquisitively at you as you passed, wondering, perhaps, what you wanted; for there was no thoroughfare, and unless you were going to the Court you had no business there at all. At the end of this avenue there was an old arch and a clock-tower, with a stupid, bewildering clock, which had only one hand, and was therefore always in extremes. Through this arch you walked straight into the gardens of Audley Court… to the left there was a broad graveled walk, down which, years ago, when the place had been a convent, the quiet nuns had walked hand in hand. (Braddon 43)

In the description we see some hints of the traditional Gothic with the reference to the convent, echoes of Diderot's text (among others). But what transforms Audley Court into a Gothic setting is the focus on its spatial isolation. One can imagine Austen's Catherine being thrilled to set eyes upon the Court because it appears old, decaying and isolated, just what she expected from

Northanger Abbey. For Lady Audley, it also is a place that at first represented all her dreams coming true because it lives up to her expectations when it comes to an advantageous marriage. Lady Audley's previous persona, Helen Talboys, learned that marriage is not always the happy ending that women are taught to expect—even if not happy in the romantic sense, she expected to be financially taken care of after her marriage. She continued to have hardships even after she was married—George's money only lasted through their honeymoon. Once married to the rich Sir Michael, she sees no real need to change behavior that has at least this time earned her an advantageous match, her girlish flirtation and feigned innocence. She has already staged her persona and has to remain true to it.

Throughout the text she is not only compared to a child, but we also get a vision of her as an alluring witch. As Robert, Alicia's cousin and friend of George Talboys (her first husband), watches her make tea he describes the scene, saying,

> She looked very pretty and innocent, seated behind the graceful group of delicate opal china and glittering silver. Surely a pretty woman never looks prettier than when making tea. The most feminine and most domestic of all occupations imparts a magic harmony to her every movement, a witchery to her every glance. The floating mists from the boiling liquid in which she infuses the soothing herbs, whose secrets are known to her alone, envelop her in a cloud of scented vapour, through which she seems a social fairy, weaving potent spells…At the tea-table she reigns omnipotent, unapproachable. What do men know of the mysterious beverage…to do away with the tea-table is to rob a woman of her legitimate empire. (Braddon 222)

Lady Audley is a "witch" and "fairy" who possesses "secrets" and "weaves spells." Yet, she continues to be described as "innocent," and we get the sense that Robert, the man who is the

most suspicious of her, is being bewitched even as he views the scene—his suspicion and mistrust of her seems to evaporate with the mist from the tea table, and she is making him see her as nothing more than a beautiful woman and wife—but simultaneously he is aware that this is happening to him, that he is being entranced and bewitched, but he is powerless to stop it.[76] The last phrase of the quote is of particular interest, especially when paired with the prior allusion to weaving. Robert Audley deigns to give women a "legitimate" empire, but this activity is not something that could actually help women earn a living and survive. Lady Audley was Lucy Graham, a governess after her first husband left, which is not a particularly acceptable mode of employment, although much better than that of a "fallen woman," which could have also been her fate. Women are told that the tea table is their proper kingdom, but they need to be married in order to take part in it, and not just any marriage; when she was Helen Talboys she could not have spent the years George was away making tea and patiently waiting for his return.

Robert oversimplifies the hardships and choices that women need to make in order to survive. The allusion to weaving brings to mind Homer's Penelope, another literary heroine who was at a similar crossroads. Their husbands left, both on seemingly honorable journeys, but whereas Penelope was left with a kingdom, Helen Talboys had nothing. We can wonder what Penelope would have done if she did not have such a financially stable life. Perhaps she would have just chosen the richest suitor at the first opportunity. But the connection between the two women, regardless of their motivations, is in their intelligence and ability to play a game and manipulate the men around them in order to protect themselves. Lady Audley receives the most

[76] In "Translating the Monstrous: *Northanger Abbey*" (1975), George Levine discusses Austen's text, but the assertions can also be readily applied to Braddon's novel. He comments that "The monstrousness is part of Jane Austen's literary imagination, a domestic but more serious monstrousness than that of say, Lewis's *The Monk*, because it is social commonplace" (336). This is carried through the 19th century however, and is seen in Braddon, and even Stoker because women are becoming increasingly independent, which is perceived as subversive and dangerous behavior.

ardent criticism from Alicia Audley her stepdaughter, who deeply resents her stepmother's rise from humble beginnings. And we see yet another contradiction to what women are taught regarding marriage; they are encouraged to make the most advantageous match possible, but if the rise is too high, they are judged for it. Ultimately, she does not fit the proper mold for a wife. Lady Audley does not seem to belong in any world, her proper marriage was basically (in her mind) annulled by her husband when he deserted her, and she could not survive and be a respectable member of society as an unmarried woman, but when she does make an advantageous match, it is deemed too good for her. She is forced to become increasingly duplicitous when confronted with Robert the "detective," to avoid retuning to the same desperate situation in which she found herself after George left for Australia. What was once perhaps innocent behavior becomes more staged for the purpose of manipulation.

The isolation she experiences when living with her drunken father and infant son in a poor run down shack was unbearable, and her situation becomes equally suffocating when Robert begins to suspect that she is not quite what she seems, and begins to investigate her past and her motivations. He transforms into a detective and becomes representative of all her secrets coming to light—a life that she attempted to bury along with the body of Helen Talboys when she faked her death. While residing in the opulent manor she is transformed from the picture of the ideal wife, beautiful, pure, innocent, into a raving madwoman. The catalyst to the transformation is the combination of Robert's investigation and the realization that everything she has gained can be easily snatched away. We can see her fear and gradual transformation in the shifting descriptions of her rooms and her interaction with her possessions. At first, when Robert first comes into contact with Lady Audley, her room is described as a "Fairy-like boudoir," emphasizing the aura of innocence and beauty that Lady Audley so expertly cultivated

for the benefit of her husband (Braddon 69). This act is precisely what won her the comfortable lifestyle she now had, which was drastically different from that of her life with George Talboys. Audley Court may not have been beautiful from the outside, but she nevertheless enjoyed her own beautiful surroundings:

> It's a tumble-down looking place enough outside; but you should see my lady's rooms—all pictures and gilding, and great looking-glasses that stretch from the ceiling to the floor. Painted ceilings, too, that cost hundreds of pounds, the housekeeper told me, and all done for her. (Braddon 67)

The juxtaposition between the humble exterior and the opulence of her own rooms serves to highlight the impact that Lady Audley's presence has had on Audley Court. It may not have been a complete renovation she sought, but her selfishness and preoccupation with putting forth a certain picture and persona are nevertheless clear. She wanted to be comfortable and have the tangible proof that she was precious, valued, and valuable, not just to her husband, but in general, and this became part of her elaborate set design.

At first, the opulence and extravagance of her surroundings appears directly proportional to the innocence associated with Lady Audley's character. As long as she feels safe in the knowledge that all of that wealth and those materials goods are safely in her possession, it is easy for her to keep up the act of the pure and innocent wife:

> The innocence and candour of an infant beamed in Lady Audley's face, and shone out of her large liquid blue eyes. The rosy lips, the delicate nose, the profusion of fair ringlets, all contributed to preserve to her beauty the character of extreme youth and freshness…her fragile figure, which she loved to dress in heavy velvets and stiff rustling silks, till she looked like a child tricked out for a masquerade. (Braddon 90)

Even early in the text, we begin to see that although she is successful at putting forth this act, we nevertheless become aware that it is indeed an act. It is something that requires a lot of effort on her part because it does not come naturally, she is acting throughout every minute she spends inside Audley Court, and she uses her surroundings as an elaborate set to help convince her audience of her authenticity.[77] She is able to fool her husband, and to an extent even her stepdaughter, who sees her as shallow and foolish (when she is far from both, adeptly hiding dark secrets). But Robert is not as easily fooled, and it is not because he is an inherently suspicious person, or even a curious one. Rather, his relationship with George (Lady Audley's first husband) and the trauma associated with George's sudden disappearance that emphasizes Robert's rampant misogyny. It is this trait that makes him immune to her charms and the act she so skillfully presents to the world. Robert's hatred of women in essence gives him the critical distance of an audience member who can look at a performance with a critical eye and remain emotionally distant.

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[77] Lynn M. Voskuil's "Acts of Madness: Lady Audley and the Meanings of Victorian Femininity" (2001) recounts a trip the actress Ellen Terry made to an insane asylum in 1878 in order o prepare for her role of Ophelia. At first she is disappointed because she believes "'real' madness…appeared to have nothing to teach her" (611). But was drawn to one inmate who seemed authentic. Voskuil argues that Terry's interaction depicts how authenticity is made up of two ideas that are apparently at odds: "the tangible, empirically verifiable real thing…[and] intangible qualities—beauty, pity, pathos" (611). She argues that women have "special associations" with authenticity, making them natural actresses. Taking Lady Audley as an example we see that she does indeed use both qualities to her benefit; she can create the tangible set that allows her to transform into her "character" and manipulate her audience, and even her own emotions. She can inhabit her character fully, always keeping her "real" character (the wife of George Talboys) hidden deep beneath her façade.

Lady Audley becomes representative not just of a form of authenticity, but also the punishment doled out to women who break society's rules. In the 19th century an increasingly convenient method used to deal with such women was to hide them away in madhouses (such as the one Terry visited to conduct research for her role). Lady Audley is placed in a private institution, but Voskuil argues not because of her actual crimes, or for any real insanity, but because "as actress, Lady Audley rejected the role of authentic wife" (634). Although I agree this trespass plays an important role in Lady Audley's ultimate punishment, it is a little more complicated in that she in fact did not reject the role, but adopted the role out of necessity. The role of authentic wife, she believed, has been taken from her when George abandoned her. Further, she was indeed being an authentic wife to Sir Michael, up until the moment her secret is discovered, which causes her incarceration. The problem is, this is a sympathetic view of Lady Audley, and one that the patriarchal status quo did not endorse.

However, since he is in essence living inside the performance he cannot simply be an observer, and he is emotionally involved since his love for his friend George is what drives him to indulge in his animosity toward women. It becomes the fire that drives him in his investigation. He matter of factly states: “I hate women…they’re bold, brazen, abominable creatures, invented for the annoyance and destruction of their superiors” (Braddon 229). But even before this point when he lets go of any pretense about his attitude toward women, he links his distrust of women and specifically Lady Audley, to the house—the set where her performance is most effective. He says:

> Foul deeds have been done under the most hospitable of roofs, terrible crimes have been committed amid the fairest scenes, and have left no trace upon the spot where they were done. I do not believe in mandrake, or in blood-stains that no time can efface. I believe rather that we may walk unconsciously in an atmosphere of crime, and breathe none the less freely. I believe that we may look into the smiling face of a murderer, and admire its tranquil beauty. (Braddon 171)

He sees through her façade and recognizes that even though she may appear to be the perfect wife in the domestic surroundings, it is not at all surprising that she could be hiding the power to do horrible, violent deeds. Here Lady Macbeth comes to mind in the sense that not only was she involved with the murder of the King (although perhaps not directly, she nevertheless got blood on her hands, literally and metaphorically), but what made that situation even more depraved was that not only was it regicide, but the murder of a guest in their house. This lack of respect and the severe punishment that goes along with it can be traced back to antiquity, where the violation of the rules of hospitality (*xenia*) was severely punished. We see an example of this in Aeschylus’

Agamemnon when Clytemnestra kills her husband while he is in the bath[78]—this is as bad as it gets since he was more than a guest, he was the lord of the house and deserved the utmost respect and consideration, and Clytemnestra is eventually punished for the disrespect not just to her husband but to the gods.

Original Actresses: The Classical Fear of the Feminine

In all these texts, regardless of the type of edifice it becomes a home for the interior readers and due to this certain rules need to be observed; when they are broken the consequences are severe. Several key Classical examples illustrate the impact of breaking the bond between host and guest. In Homer's *Odyssey* the notion of *kleos* (glory) found in *The Iliad*, is transformed into the desire for *nostos* (homecoming). One episode that blatantly violates the concept of *xenia* is when the Cyclops Polyphemus attempts to eat his guests; this shows complete disregard for the gods. When Odysseus tells Polyphemus:

> But now we in turn we come to you and are suppliants…
>
> respect the gods, O best of men…
>
> We are your suppliants,/
>
> and Zeus the guest god, who stands behind all strangers with honors
>
> due them, avenges any wrong toward strangers and suppliant. (Homer 9.266-271)

[78] There is a parallel in the watery grave imagery of Agamemnon and George Talboys; Agamemnon is butchered violently by his wife in the tub, and George's wife pushes him into a well hoping to cause his death. Not only do these women seek to murder their spouses, but do so in a way that simultaneously or immediately hides them from view, as if they are unable to witness their handiwork. Water becomes significant in *Macbeth* as well, since it is linked to Lady Macbeth's monomania with the bloodstains, and water becomes powerless and unable to wash away her guilt.

He responds: “The Cyclopes do not concern themselves over Zeus of the aegis,/ nor the rest of the blessed gods, since we are far better,” which in essence seals his fate (Homer 9.275-276). As *The Odyssey* progresses we see that monsters are not just found in the wilderness, they are present even in civilized Ithaca. The suitors are guilty of many of the same offenses the Cyclopes commit. They are devouring Odysseus’ livelihood, and in a way they are eating away at the established culture in Ithaca. The swineherd Eumaios says, “The fattened swine are devoured by the suitors,/ who have no regard for anyone in their minds, no pity/…but at their ease forcibly eat up his property, and spare nothing” (Homer 14.81-92). Not only are they metaphorically cannibalistic, but also when Odysseus gives them the opportunity to display their *xenia* when he returns in disguise as beggar, in essence giving them the chance to show that they too belong in a civilized society, but they respond by calling him a “wretched stranger” (Homer 18.327). They completely fail this test by showing no better *xenia* than the Cyclopes. This attitude makes it acceptable and even necessary to expel them from society. The massacre of the suitors was as socially acceptable as blinding Polyphemus since both were cannibalistic monsters.

The women of *The Odyssey* have a significant connection to Lady Audley because they are (for the most part) outside the confines of culture. They try to lure Odysseus away from his *nostos*. In the text being a woman automatically categorizes one as a foreigner, and in many instances women’s characteristics are literally merged with those of monsters. Skylla and Charybdis are two examples. In both of their descriptions the word “evil” is used. Charybdis, “sucks down the black water./…may you not be there when she sucks down the water,/ for not even the Earthshaker could rescue you from that evil” (Homer 12.104-107), and Skylla’s “howling is terror./ Her voice indeed is only as loud as a new-born puppy/ could make, but she herself is an evil monster” (Homer 12.85-87). The fact that the sound Skylla makes is compared

to a puppy's cry is evocative of feigned purity and innocence that nonetheless masks a great evil—as with Lady Audley. Sexism and fear of women in the Ancient world are not only seen in the depiction of Scylla and Charybdis, but also in Agamemnon's speech in the underworld. He makes it clear that "there is no trusting in women," a statement that is eerily similar to that of Robert (Homer 11.456). Calypso is one of the few women Odysseus meets on his adventures who is not physically monstrous. However, despite the fact that she loved, cared for, and helped Odysseus, the hatred for women is so deep that even she is described as a "dread goddess" (Homer 7.246).

The island of Ogygia is the second to last place Odysseus visits before reaching Ithaca. Calypso breaks the rule of *xenia* by transforming the men on her island into animals. This violation and lack of respect for her duties as a host makes Hermes seek out Odysseus and provide him with the help he requires in order to not fall under her spell (a magic herb that will make him immune to her potions). We see a parallel here with Robert, who also becomes immune to the charms of his aunt. Yet he fully recognizes the fact that he is in danger and under her power when in her house. He says, "What I am in her hands…What am I in the hands of this woman, who has my lost friend's face and the manner of Pallas Athene? She reads my pitiful, vacillating soul, and plucks the thoughts out of my heart with the magic of her solemn brown eyes" (Braddon 275). He ascribes to her the power of a goddess, but to him this power is not unique to Lady Audley, or even to "evil" women since he groups all women together as power hungry manipulators: "What a world it is, and how these women take life out of our hands. Helen Maldon, Lady Audley, Clara Talboys, and now Miss Tonks—all womankind from beginning to end" (Braddon 256).

Robert's distrust and strong dislike of women is only further emphasized when in Audley Court, in large part because he can abstain from being in contact with women when he is not visiting his uncle, and his investigation only makes it more necessary for him to communicate with and depend on women, such as Clara Talboys, his friend's sister, and the woman he eventually marries. Lady Audley may not be a goddess and possess magical powers, but she does have a lot of influence over her husband and uses her powers of deception and her skill as an actress to protect what is hers, and what she views as vital to her existence. Robert is aware that "She would be capable of using her influence with my uncle to place me in a mad-house…he remembered the horrible things that have been done by women, since that day upon which Eve was created to be Adam's companion" (Braddon 289). Again, Robert is heavily inclined to distrust all women, but with special emphasis on Lady Audley, who, before his eyes and under the roof of Audley Court, her carefully arranged state, has transformed from the picture of innocence and frailty to a manipulative and dangerous harpy. He notes that "She looked upon that beauty as a weapon, and she felt that she had now double need to be well armed" (Braddon 347). But as he begins to seek out the truth and hold her up to scrutiny, it becomes increasingly difficult for her to continue the charade and she lets her true emotions come to the surface, at first just with her trusted confidante Phoebe Marks who notes that "An unnatural crimson spot burned in the centre of each rounded cheek, and an unnatural lustre gleamed in her great blue eyes. She spoke with an unnatural clearness, and an unnatural rapidity… [Phoebe] began to fear that my lady was going mad," and eventually she reveals the truth to Robert as well (Braddon 324-25). The power that the house holds transforms it in turn into a prison for Lady Audley because it imposes on her the need to play a particular role and hold on to a feigned identity when in the house. As we see through the change in her outward demeanor and her acting (and

increasing inability to be a convincing actress), this becomes increasingly difficult to do, and the location drives her to excesses in affect, and in effect into madness. While in the house she is in essence trapped and has nowhere to flee from Robert's incessant observation.

Imagined Madhouses

Lady Audley's transformation from a calm and controlled (if not girlish) demeanor into a raving madwoman is echoed in Jonathan's mental decline in Stoker's text. Jonathan appears to be a completely rational man, but even as he approaches the castle he becomes more susceptible to madness, or at least perceived or imagined madness. The Castle is indecipherable to him, which is evident from the beginning. As he approaches it he says:

> I stood in silence where I was, for I did not know what to do. Of bell or knocker there was no sign; through these frowning walls and dark window openings it was not likely that my voice could penetrate. The time I waited seemed endless, and I felt doubts and fears crowding upon me. What sort of place had I come to, and among what kind of people? (Stoker 21)

The novel asks the reader to question if Jonathan is already mad before he enters the castle (a question even he considers), or if the institution itself either hastens madness or becomes the catalyst for it. Jonathan is forever changed due to his stay in the castle. He begins to suspect that he is a captive, and that something is not quite right with the Count long before he finds any definitive proof. His suspicion grows as his mental stability begins to falter, and this happens as he begins to lose the ability to differentiate between dreams and reality. He says, "My only doubt was as to whether any dream could be more terrible than the unnatural, horrible net of gloom and

mystery which seemed closing round me" (Stoker 38). The idea that his reality could be even more terrifying than his dreams puts him off balance, and the Count takes advantage of this by having Jonathan conform to his way of life, since he in under his roof, and on his stage. Jonathan says, "I am beginning to feel this nocturnal existence tell on me. It is destroying my nerve. I start at my own shadow, and am full of all sorts of horrible imaginings" (Stoker 38).

The location begins to take on a life of its own and for Jonathan merges with the character of the Count. He conflates the two when writing in his journal and attempting to make sense of his surroundings: "What manner of man is this, or what manner of creature is it in the semblance of man? I feel the dread of this horrible place overpowering me: I am in fear—in awful fear—and there is no escape for me; I am encompassed about with terrors that I dare not think of" (Stoker 39). Yet, despite attempting to approach his situation logically and scientifically, when he begins to find things odd, his isolation and the eeriness of the location makes him begin to doubt his sanity. The questioning of one's sanity is a thread carried throughout *Dracula*, and ultimately characters must make the conscious decision to suspend their disbelief, but this is complicated by the fact that the Count, as well as other central characters, are putting on a façade, they are acting for the benefit of others—much like Lady Audley, some have to act in order to survive. The group that sets out to hunt Dracula clings to logic, science and technology in the hope that it will prove that their nightmare is not true, that there is a logical explanation to everything, but they are in fact all players on a stage, which they do not understand and for which they do not know the rules. They try to explain supernatural events and creatures scientifically because paradoxically, they think that if these creatures are real it means that they are insane.

When he begins to realize the strangeness of his situation and the eeriness of the location Jonathan tries to reassure himself, saying, “I fear I am myself the only living soul within the place. Let me be prosaic so far as facts can be; it will help me to bear up, and imagination must not run riot with me” (Stoker 30). He is still trying to find the balance between critical distance and emotional immersion, and the reference to the imagination is reminiscent of the chastising that Catherine receives in *Northanger Abbey* from Henry Tilney. Through this inner battle that he has with himself, he in effect becomes the embodiment of both Catherine and Tilney by noticing the Gothic dangers that surround him, and also trying to snap himself out of it with logical, scientific thought—clinging to his journal and his record-keeping as a talisman which he hopes will ward off any hint of the supernatural or unexplainable. In the hybridization of Tilney and Catherine we also see a feminization of Jonathan.[79] He conflates the idea of insanity with the imagination, and more specifically the indulgence of the imagination—something that Catherine is also guilty of, and about which she is made to feel ashamed. Austen’s Catherine, like Stoker’s Jonathan and Braddon’s Robert, becomes a detective looking for “facts” as she searches the abbey, but whereas the protagonists of *Dracula* are running from the horror of their reality, that is precisely what Catherine most hopes to find: a reason for her excessive affect and validation for her overactive imagination. Robert also may tell himself at first that he wishes to exonerate his aunt (to spare his uncle) but his love for and desire to find out what happened to his friend George eventually supersedes the familial connection to his uncle, and piece by piece he dismantles Lady Audley’s complex set pieces.

The Staging of Emotions: Masks and Artifice

[79] Gender role reversal in relation to Mina (his wife) is explored further in Chapter II.

Now that the stage is set we can explore the acting of the central characters.[80] Perhaps the central unifying factor between the Gothic and Ancient Tragedy is the audience's shared awareness that the characters are just players on a stage (a metaphorical one in the case of the Gothic). Yet despite this awareness, audiences nevertheless willingly suspend their disbelief and allow themselves to be emotionally swayed by the events that transpire on this stage. The characters of the Gothic novel, however, (exemplified in the texts I have chosen to explore), take this a step further because characters are well aware that they are being observed, not by the exterior reader, but by other characters in the text—in essence they are all actors who continue to act while becoming aware that they are on a stage surrounded by other actors. The knowledge that the characters are being observed sets up the "observer's paradox," a term used most in the social sciences that describes how once a group has realized that they are being observed, their behavior changes, which in turn affects the data collected. In *Northanger Abbey*, Catherine comes under the watchful eye of Henry Tilney, who chastises her for her flights of fancy and overactive imagination; she in turn attempts to rein in her imagination and suppress her inquisitive nature, which she might not have otherwise done if he had encouraged her, or even just ignored her. But once she is aware of the observation, she also turns her keen eye inward and her self-observation causes her to experience embarrassment and shame even without Tilney needing to point out her flaws. When Tilney discovers that she has been searching for the General's wife (who she supposes is locked up in some room), she feels "the rising shame of having harboured for some minutes an absurd expectation, [to which] was then added the shame

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[80] Perhaps one of the most well-known critical articles on the Gothic is Eve Sedgwick's "The Character in the Veil: Imagery of the Surface in the Gothic Novel." Sedgwick breaks away from the prevalent critical viewpoint that the Gothic was all about the inner turmoil and psychology of the characters, and instead examines the surface (i.e. veils). I follow her example, but rather than focusing purely on veil imagery, I see all the characters as wearing some kind of "veil" and trying to keep hidden from the intense scrutiny of other characters.

of being caught in so idle a search" (Austen 120). *Dracula* and *Lady Audley's Secret* depict a more intrusive form of spectatorship because a character is being tracked down, investigated, and even hunted. Even though Catherine too may feel uncomfortably observed, which causes her to behave unnaturally, at worst she feels embarrassment due to Tilney's watchful eye. In Stoker's and Braddon's text, the hunted have much more to fear, and therefore make a much stronger effort to keep up their act and evade their pursuers. Those being pursued (Dracula and Lady Audley) purposefully change their behavior to hide their tracks and true motivations in order to deceive and escape from their persecutors.

For many characters of the Gothic genre, especially those in *Dracula*, approaching their lives from a logical, methodological, and scientific point of view also serves as an attempt to take control of their own emotions; viewing their life as an experiment imposes rules and structure where there appears to be none. In *Dracula* the characters focus on facts in order to track down and kill the vampire. Jonathan's journal follows this method as well, as when he states, "12 May.—Let me begin with the facts—bare, meagre facts, verified by books and figures, and of which there can be no doubt. I must not confuse them with experiences which will have to rest on my own observation and memory of them" (Stoker 35-36). It is an attempt to (paradoxically) divorce the examination of emotion and affect from emotions, and study them as objectively as possible. It is a difficult task to undertake because even observers often find it difficult to remove their own emotions, prejudices, biases, etc., from their observation and diagnosis.

However, just as it is difficult to have entirely clear data once the subject is aware of the observation, it is also nearly impossible for "patients" to observe themselves with complete objectivity. The characters use this approach to reassure themselves that they are sane when they no longer feel in control of their environment. Through their struggle to maintain their sanity in

an environment that challenges all their assumptions, we see a vacillation between certainty and terror. The casts of *Dracula*, Catherine Morland, and Lady Audley and Robert Audley are appropriate "patients" for study because they all become increasingly aware of their surroundings and communicate to themselves and others their observations. All the events (and the characters themselves) are fictional, to be sure, but we nevertheless can see how they struggle with knowledge, their own and others, and their reaction to such knowledge, and all of this takes place in a controlled, albeit fictional environment. In Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*, before Lady Audley becomes the wife of Sir Michael Audley she has already transformed herself several times over. Lady Audley is only her latest persona. People find themselves playing roles in the Gothic because it allows them to manipulate the emotions of those around them, while attempting to insulate themselves from harm. After George leaves for Australia and Helen Talboys is left destitute and becomes Lucy Graham, a governess, who then makes an advantageous (albeit bigamous) marriage to Sir Michael Audley, becoming Lady Audley. But why does she feel the need to change her name and commit bigamy in the first place? She does not run away from her husband, nor does she change her identity the minute he leaves. She did not marry him against her will—but she did go through with the marriage contract with an understanding that both parties had obligations, and she gradually reached the conclusion that George simply was not fulfilling his end of the bargain. He left because they were having financial problems, but those problems did not go away when he left. He leaves her with a child, and she does not know when or if he will return. At this point, even though he may be attempting to play the role of the proper husband and provider, he has already broken the contract, leaving her in the care of her drunken, gambling father. As Helen changes her name and her identity into "Lucy," a name representative of light, but also connected to Lucifer, the ultimate fallen angel,

she begins to weave the first layer of mystery and deceit that continues to grow as the narrative progresses.

Lady Audley's Grand Performance

We see a transformation of Lady Audley from someone who is (seemingly) honest and guileless into a master actress and manipulator, now using her original innocence as a carefully manipulated tool. At first, she is described as having "nothing whatever in her manner of the shallow artifice employed by a woman who wishes to captivate a rich man" (Braddon 49). Yet this is not quite accurate. It is not that she was pure and innocent at first, but rather she was just a convincing actress. When she discarded her life as Helen Talboys, the abandoned wife of George Talboys, she did so in the hopes of finding a better life—which for a woman meant marrying well. Portraying an innocent and pure child-woman was part of her act. She puts on the act of the proper housewife and "Angel in the House," who is also an infantilized woman—but it is clear that there are cracks in this mask, first evident in her melancholia and the depth to her character. When she plays melancholic tunes on the piano, Robert notes, "It was one of the many paradoxes in her character, that love of sombre and melancholy melodies, so opposite to her gay, frivolous nature" (Braddon 122). Yet she is also clearly a gifted actress, though Robert begins to note her talents, as he notes the cracks in her façade. After Robert tracks down the histories of Lucy Graham and Helen Talboys and has concluded that Lady Audley is a talented liar. As he sits with his uncle, who is waiting for his Lady to return from her morning calls he think, "Good heavens! What an actress this woman is. What an arch trickster—what an all-accomplished deceiver. But she shall play her pretty comedy no longer under my uncle's roof" (Braddon 273). It is a gradual

discovery, much like the gradual and building quality of *catharsis* in the Gothic. Even though he is trying to find out her secrets and is constantly being foiled since she is one step ahead, he still sounds slightly impressed at just how gifted she is when it comes to acting and manipulation. At the end Robert comments, “She had been transformed from a frivolous childish beauty into a woman, strong to argue her own cause and plead her own defense” (Braddon 302). However, she has not actually transformed, she was never frivolous or childish, but she managed to keep her calculation and strength hidden—once exposed, however, that comes to the surface. She no longer has the ability or desire to hide that part of her character; acting like a spoiled fairy-like child woman will no longer help her. This is not a drastic change since earlier, when still vacillating between just what “act” will best serve her purposes as Robert continues his inquisition, he notes,

> She had recovered herself from any shock which she might have sustained a few minutes before, and it was in her usual manner that she asked this question. Her face expressed the mingled bewilderment and curiosity of a puzzled child, rather than the serious surprise of a woman. (Braddon 279)

At this point we see that she is still trying to contain her overflow of affect in order to maintain her persona—to stay in character—for the benefit not just of her husband, but more importantly for Robert.

Lady Audley is never a one-dimensional character, but she is skilled at behaving like one. As she realizes that Robert is carefully scrutinizing her, we get a clearer sense of her as an actress whose every gesture is calculated. Robert observes her closely and describes her precisely as an actress, a trait that is drawn out due to her precarious situation:

> She flung her beautiful head back upon the soft cushions and took a book from the table near her. Insignificant as this action was it spoke very plainly of ever-recurring fears—of fatal necessities for concealment—of a mind that in its silent agonies was ever alive to the importance of outward effect. It told more plainly than anything else could have told, how complete an actress my lady had been made by the awful necessity of her life. (Braddon 312)

To Robert's trained and inquisitive eye, even the simple act of picking up a book can give him insight into her acting abilities. Lady Audley is forced to be more outward with her deception and artifice, and as she becomes more overt it becomes even easier for Robert to see through her mask because he is becoming more aware of her artifices and loses that ability to be subtle. Acting becomes a suit of armor for her. Herbert Klein's article "Strong Women and Feeble Men: Upsetting Gender Stereotypes in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*" (2008) also comments on Lady Audley's cunning acting ability, claiming, "Her ostensible sociability and considerateness hide her unflinching self-centeredness. Lady Audley gives Sir Michael the illusion that she conforms to the Victorian ideal of womanhood and that he can play the ideal Victorian male, but in reality she violates gender, social and moral boundaries" (Klein 170-71). Yet acting stems here, in contrast to Klein's perspective, not necessarily out of pure self-centeredness, but out of simple necessity—in fact all characters in the text are acting for the benefit of those around them.

As she loses the ability to stay in character as easily as before Robert began his persecution, Audley Court is transformed for her into an institution or prison where paradoxically she needs to lock herself away in order to protect her ability to inhabit the manor. She goes into her bedroom and locks the door to "guard against the chance of any one coming in

suddenly and observing her before she was aware—before she had had sufficient warning to enable her to face their scrutiny" (Braddon 345). Even though she is surrounded by beautiful and expensive possessions, as soon as her mask comes under scrutiny she becomes a prisoner. Her nephew is now her warden and her home her prison. Lady Audley has enough self-awareness to realize that she is becoming a prisoner rather than the lady of the house, and this causes her to seek Robert's destruction. It becomes a fight to the death, and her greatest weapon is her acting ability, which allows her to manipulate her husband.

When Lady Audley is placed in the asylum at the end of the text, once everyone can see through her disguise, Robert attempts to label her as "mad." But such a classification is problematic. At this point in history, as Braddon was well aware, many so-called advances were being made in England dealing with mental health and the treatment of the insane. James Cowles Prichard's *Treatise on Insanity* (1835), for example, classifies different forms of madness, drawing distinctions between monomania, melancholy, intellectual vs. moral insanity, and partial insanity. In this male-dominated profession, many of these new innovations, rules, and regulations made it easy for men to lock away their wives for a myriad of reasons. The 1828 Madhouse Act, attempted to regulate the conditions inside asylums, perhaps to help assuage some of the husband's guilt.[81] But the institution at this point attempted to make it culturally and

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[81] Elaine Showalter's "Victorian Women and Insanity" (1980) discusses the misogyny behind the treatment of insanity in the 19th century. Men (such as Charles Dickens) praised the achievements made in the humane treatment of the insane. However, although it may be true that the treatment had improved, there was a clear imbalance between the sexes when it came to who was classified as insane. The madhouse became a place where "visitors to the Victorian asylum saw madness domesticated, released from restraint" (158). The asylum provided a place where the insane could be swept under the rug, under the guise of "treatment." Further, even as so-called improvements were being made in the housing of the insane, women were particularly susceptible to being deemed insane and locked away out of sight in a madhouse. Showalter notes:

> Women, particularly if they were disobedient, aggressive, or unattractive, we're often perceived at displaying the signs [of insanity] and were usually so guilt ridden about the deviation that they could readily be persuaded to accept psychiatric labels for their emotions and desires." (180)

At first, it appears as though insanity is not just about gender, but also class since that first "Women were seen as more full vulnerable since they were uneducated and untrained; later in the century, when

socially acceptable as well as convenient to sweep certain women under the rug. Dr. Mosgrave, the man entrusted with diagnosing Lady Audley, does not believe that she is in fact mad. He says,

> I will see the lady if you please, but I do not believe that she is mad…Because there is no evidence of madness in anything that she has done. She ran away from her home, because her home was not a pleasant one, and she left it in the hope of finding a better. There is no madness in that. She committed the crime of bigamy, because by that crime she obtained fortune and position. There is no madness there. When she found herself in a desperate position, she did not grow desperate. She employed intelligent means, and she carried out a conspiracy that required coolness and deliberation in its execution. There is no madness in that. (Braddon 383)

We can see that Lady Audley is in fact a woman concerned with her own survival,[82] and who uses her charms in order to move up the social ladder. Yes, beauty is a visible and beneficial gift, but her acting is truly what makes her rise and obtain her position—once she loses the ability to

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theories of hereditary predisposition came to the fore, educated women were criticized as carriers of psychological disease" (180). They were targeted because society thought they needed to be controlled. In Lady Audley's case we see how "wealthy patients were often cared for at home or in the more luxurious private madhouses" (160). Regardless of the type of establishment we see that it was easy for women to be labeled mad and be removed from society.
The development of the treatment of madness from the middle ages changes from a rare circumstance to something more commonplace (as in the 19th century). Diane Karp's "Madness, Mania, Melancholy: The Artist as Observer" (1984), traces the development of the depiction of the insane from the time when it was understood to be a demonic possession through the 20th century where "the gap between medical and biological discoveries and the care of the mentally ill has been closing" (22). Her main claim however centers on the fascination artists have when it comes to depicting and studying the insane. In *Dracula* we get the more clinical and expected depiction of the insane in the zoophagous patient Renfield in Dr. Seward's asylum. In such a situation Dr. Seward does more than house Renfield, he studies and even attempts to psychoanalyze him. With Lady Audley and Dr. Mosgrave we see a distinction in how male vs. female patients are treated. Even though Lady Audley is said to be insane, her asylum is a form of house arrest, with no hope of a "cure" or an attempt at treatment. She is there to be housed until her death.

[82] In fact some critics even see Braddon's text as a "significant proto-feminist nineteenth-century narrative" (Cox 24). Jessica Cox's "From Page to Screen: Transforming M.E. Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*" (2005) comments on the tendency to soften Lady Audley when adapting the novel into film, thereby eliminating some of the qualities that make Lady Audley a strong female character. For example, the contentious relationship between Alicia and Lady Audley is transformed into a "positive, supportive relationship" (26).

be a convincing actress, she must fall. Yet even she seeks to blame madness in order to excuse her behavior, a type of madness that is transmitted from mother to daughter, and which does not manifest until after childbirth. The Doctor says, “Madness is not necessarily transmitted from mother to daughter…I do not think there is any proof of insanity in the story you have told me…the best thing you can do with this lady is to send her back to her first husband; if he will have her” (Braddon 383). The main concern appears to be not even necessarily to punish Lady Audley, or even “cure” her, but to reestablish the social order and status quo.

However, after further consultation, where the doctor interviews Lady Audley and learns the details of her history, a scene which neither the exterior reader, Robert, or even the narrator is privy to, the Doctor changes his mind and states:

> There is latent insanity! Insanity which might never appear; or which might appear only once or twice in a lifetime. It would be *dementia* in its worst phase perhaps: acute mania; but its duration would be very brief, and it would only arise under extreme mental pressure. The lady is not mad; but she has the hereditary taint in her blood. She has the cunning of madness, with the prudence of intelligence. I will tell you what she is, Mr. Audley. She is dangerous! (Braddon 385)

Here modern audiences might recognize the term “temporary insanity,” which is often used as a defense in criminal trials. Lady Audley also apparently seeks to take advantage of this label. It is clear and even satisfying that the Doctor recognizes her intelligence, because it is this trait that she had to hide the most when she was acting like “Lady Audley,” but also the trait that she most depended on, since it allowed her to manipulate and evade Robert’s grasp for as long as she did.

Deciphering: Reading Through Masks

Northanger Abbey, Lady Audley's Secret, and *Dracula* provide us with interior readers who live in a state of limbo where they can feel completely sure about something, only to be told they are wrong. This applies not only something as small as realizing that someone you thought good could betray you, but also something as broad as finding out that the laws of nature are not quite as concrete as you once believed—whether it is a supernatural creature or a woman who seeks escape an unhappy marriage and live in luxurious surroundings. A character who thinks he is walking through a thick fog can in actuality be the one who has all the answers. In Stoker's *Dracula*, most characters are in complete ignorance that creatures such as vampires can exist, but Professor Van Helsing is aware. Yet instead of laying all the facts out on the table for everyone else involved in the hunt (and for the exterior reader), he hands out information in small morsels—even when it is to the detriment of their mission. *Lady Audley's Secret* does not contain such a world-altering revelation, but there is an almost as shocking paradigm shift when we discover that a creature who has seemed to be the epitome of what a desirable woman and wife should be, can actually be every man's worst nightmare; Lady Audley may not be an immortal and terrifying supernatural creature, but she is a being who can greatly damage society at large.

Catherine's Close Reading

Throughout the first volume of Austen's text, we get a sense of Catherine as a character who is incredibly eager to take part in adventures like those she has read about in her Gothic novels; her novels have trained her to be suspicious and curious and she is eager to put those

skills to use in a fitting location. For Catherine—and by extension for the prototypical Gothic reader—the Gothic is a tourist attraction. The locale, the place itself becomes a symbol for what the Gothic genre is meant to be; it is manufactured and affected horror, something to be enjoyed in order to feel heightened emotions and *catharsis*. Part of Catherine's disappointment stems from the fact that these desires are constantly delayed due to her meddling friends Isabella and John Thorpe, who monopolize her time and attention while she is staying at Bath. As soon as a trip to Northanger Abbey is announced, she is thrilled to have such an experience so near at hand. However, what she does not yet realize is that she has *already* been part of a Gothic novel. Throughout her time at Bath, Thorpe mercilessly pursues her. He is a man whom she distrusts and dislikes and her so-called friends in essence kidnap her and take away her freedom and autonomy. This behavior align Thorpe with Lady Audley's pursuer Robert, with the main difference that Robert does not pursue Lady Audley sexually, but rather to avenge his friend and protect his uncle. On the other hand, Thorpe contains many characteristics that would align him with Gothic villains, the principal one being his desire to control others. When Catherine makes plans to spend the day with Henry Tilney and his sister, John Thorpe and his sister instead show up at and tell her that they have spoken to the Tilneys and that they had to cancel their plans. Catherine is disappointed, but agrees to go on an outing them since she believes the Tilneys were otherwise detained. It is not until she is in the carriage with the Thorpes and sees the Tilneys walking toward her home that she realizes that Thorpe has lied to her—which he freely admits—and she begs to be let out of the carriage so she can meet the Tilneys, feeling mortified that they would think she disregarded their plans. In essence, Thorpe abducts her and she tells him,

> Pray, pray stop, Mr. Thorpe—I cannot go on.—I will not go on.—I must go back to Miss Tilney.' But Mr. Thorpe only laughed, smacked his whip, encouraged his horse, made

> odd noises, and drove on; and Catherine, angry and vexed as she was, having no power of getting away, was obliged to give up the point and submit. (Austen 62)

This interaction could have been taken directly out of one of Catherine's favorite Gothic novels. But what makes her blind to this is her location; she is only expecting to be the victim of a Gothic villain if she is indeed in a Gothic setting. With Catherine we see a combination of misreading and exaggeration, which is also under and over reading situations. When being abducted by the Thorpes, she also does not completely understand that this is a temporary situation, and not a "real" abduction, and in her mind she exaggerates the repercussion, thinking that her new friends (the Tilneys) will never forgive her for abandoning their plans.[83] But at the time it feels real, and traumatic to her.

While at Northanger, Catherine repeats a cycle of disappointment that is possible due to her constant misreading. First, she feels anticipation and apprehension, which causes fear and terror in her, but then when her emotions are at a point where she is about to feel the final *catharsis*, she is instead disappointed and vows to not let her imagination run away again and let her make a fool of herself—even though most of the time she is the only witness to her foolishness. But despite the promises she makes to herself, she cannot help but fall into the same trap several times because she wants to indulge in Gothic experience. Catherine makes many errors during her stay at Northanger. Throughout her stay she experiences the cycle of

[83] Catherine's exaggerations have been a source for much critical exploration. For example, in "Describing what never happened: Jane Austen and the History of Missed Opportunities" (2006), William Galperin argues that the way she views her surroundings "projects an alternative history that collapses immediately under the weight of sheer impossibility" (359). Although her imagination does tend to exaggerate, to her the idea that General Tilney is an evil man is not an "impossibility," her Gothic education has taught her as much—and in the end we find out that even though he did not murder or incarcerate his wife, he does share some qualities with certain Gothic villains (such as greed and a thirst for power and control). Her imaginings are not quite impossible, and they may even be probable. Tara Wallace picks up on this idea in her article "Northanger Abbey and the Limits of Parody" where she states that Austen's text is "representative of a new kind of novel based on probabilities and psychological realism" (262). We do get a sense of Catherine's thought process and psychology, but what this approach ignores is the impact that the location itself and her education as fervent reader of the Gothic have on her imagination and the way she deciphers her surroundings.

disappointment with no fewer than four misreadings. First, she sees a chest in her room and automatically assumes that there must be some secret locked inside, but it is empty. She makes the same mistake when she notices another piece of furniture with a "manuscript" inside—which ends up being a laundry list. Once the furnishings in her room are fully studied, she progresses to lurid musings concerning General Tilney and his late wife. She begins to see him in the light of a wife-murderer, placing characteristics on him of the villains she has read about, simply because he does not like to speak of her, or walk down what was her favorite path in the garden; her fear of the General is enough to make the crimes she imagines real. She then slightly changes the plot and begins to believe that the wife is in fact not dead, but shut up in the house—reminiscent of not only of some of the plots of the "Northanger Horrid novels," but also the yet to be written *Jane Eyre*.

As Catherine reads her environment and creates her narrative she also experiences sequential and building *catharsis*. This represents a shift from the singular impact universal impact of Ancient Tragedy, discussed in Chapter II. Although suspense does build in Greek and Roman Tragedy as well—for example, in *Oedipus* the audience recognizes the mistakes that Oedipus does not, but they each experience the suspense simultaneously and are expected to react the same way—this is not true in the Gothic, which is more individual. In Catherine, we do not see stupidity or foolishness, but also a realistic (if a bit childish) learning process. The process of cognitive and emotional development that we see in Catherine grows out of Tragedy, but is highlighted and more fully developed in the Gothic. It is rare to learn a lesson from the first attempt, and Catherine indulges her suspicions because she is in fact a curious person, a curiosity that is encouraged and developed due to her insatiable hunger for reading and exploring Gothic tales. Further, in Catherine's world the scenarios she imagines must be real—they need to

exist in some ways to justify her obsession with them and her complete lack of any other "talents." Catherine shows that not only is she a student of the Gothic, but also a determined investigator, like Robert or Mina. When she is finally alone in her room at Northanger Abbey:

> She was struck by the appearance of a high, old-fashioned black cabinet, which, though in a situation conspicuous enough, had never caught her notice before…it was certainly a very remarkable coincidence!...To return to bed, however, unsatisfied on such a point, would be in vain, since sleep must be impossible with the consciousness of a cabinet so mysteriously closed in her immediate vicinity…it was entirely empty…Well read in the art of concealing a treasure, the possibility of false linings to the drawers did not escape her, and she felt round each with anxious acuteness in vain. (Austen 122-24)

The Gothic serves a purpose for her that goes beyond the need and craving for entertainment and the *cathartic* release that accompanies the Gothic. Even though Catherine makes error after error when she is at Northanger due to the fact that she lets her imagination run away with her, she also has keen insight when needed. Paradoxically, this keen insight can also be attributed to her Gothic education; it is responsible for both her foolishness and her perception, she can see what her brother and others cannot. Catherine's perception cannot be turned inward; she cannot stop herself from luxuriating in her own delusions. But what she can curb, if not completely stop, is being deluded by the people around her. She can see through Thorpe; he does not charm her. She eventually wakes up when it comes to Isabella, after having been fooled by her throughout most of her stay at Bath. Through her interactions with the other characters we see that our own selves and emotions are equally if not more difficult to read and decipher at times than our surroundings or the motives and personalities of the people around us. The *cathartic* release is there for the

exterior reader, but not necessarily for Catherine.[84] Even at the end of the text when Isabella is revealed to be a shallow and opportunistic woman, and General Tilney shows his true colors as a cruel and vindictive tyrant, Catherine is not given any credit by any of the characters for knowing this before others realized—only the exterior reader can give her credit for her perception and ability to decipher her surroundings even while misreading others. In *Lady Audley's Secret* and *Dracula*, however, the act of deciphering and detecting is much more overt, focused, and goal oriented. It is more explicitly thematized in the texts themselves.

Training and Close Reading the Close Readers

In *Dracula*, not only do the Count's actions have to be deciphered, but also the deciphering itself sometimes is murky and unclear, especially when Professor Van Helsing is in charge of disseminating information. The rest of the characters decipher the actions of their enemy and the actions and the revelations of Van Helsing. He implores his friends to trust him, even though he is aware that his hypotheses sound incredible and even ridiculous. He says,

> Well, I have a good reason now for all I want to do. You have for many years trust me; you believe me weeks past, when there be things so strange that you might have well doubts. Believe me yet a little, friend John. If you trust me not, then I must tell what I think, and that is not perhaps well…there are strange and terrible days before us. Let us not be two, but one, that so we work to a good end. Will you not have faith in me?" (Stoker 150)

He asks for blind faith, which is completely counterproductive to the act of investigating and deciphering. This type of suspension of disbelief is differentiated from that of other forms of

[84] The reaction of the exterior reader will be explored in further detail in Chapter IV.

fiction in that the characters bring attention to the fact that it is necessary, and this explicit foregrounding makes the exterior reader aware of the process as well. Van Helsing is asking his fellow hunters to cease exploring and questioning, when n that is precisely what they know they should not do. Asking for trust breeds an environment where everything is questioned, even the once trustworthy Professor. After the four men (Dr. Seward, Professor Van Helsing, Arthur Holmwood, and Quincey Morris) track down and kill the vampire Lucy, they finally realize that such a supernatural creature does indeed exist. after going through this traumatic experience, Dr. Seward records in his diary,

> I was almost willing to accept Van Helsing's monstrous ideas; but now they seem to start out lurid before me as outrages on common sense. I have no doubt that he believes it all. I wonder if his mind can have become in any way unhinged. Surely there must be *some* rational explanation of all these mysterious things. Is it possible that the Professor can have done it himself? He is so abnormally clever that if he went off his head he would carry out his intent with regard to some fixed idea in a wonderful way. I am loath to think it, and indeed it would be almost as great a marvel as the other to find that Van Helsing was mad; but anyhow I shall watch him carefully. I may get some light on the mystery. (Stoker 182)

Van Helsing's sanity is questioned due to his ability to see and decipher what others cannot (or have not been able to yet). This questioning and suspicion of the character who sees and understands the hidden, is carried even further in *Lady Audley's Secret*, where Lady Audley almost successfully turns Robert into a Cassandra figure. As he gets closer to finding out her true identity and the dark deeds she perpetrated in order to arrive at her current position, she manipulates her husband into thinking that perhaps Robert is mad—becoming a Tiresias or

Cassandra figure. He is unrelenting in the pursuit of Lady Audley, recognizing early that she is a skilled actress who is adept at controlling the men around her,[85] and that her husband is under her spell. Robert however, thinks to himself, "I will make her meet my eyes, and I will read her as I have read her before. She shall know how useless her artifices are with me" (237). Robert is eventually able to recognize when Lady Audley "drop[s] her mask for a moment" and this happens because of his relentless pursuit (174). Although she is accustomed to acting, it is a part of her everyday life, she is not accustomed to having people peer underneath the mask and see her real character—this is precisely what Robert (Catherine, and the cast of Dracula, all first and exterior readers) seek to do. We see that the sustained scrutiny of the characters leads to insight.

Interior readers close read not just one another and their environments, but also literal written materials. Letters become representative of a fixed rather than flexible object that can be read and interpreted. One of the effects of this manner of story telling is that it helps with both the piecing together and the telling of a story, and it is a convenient way to perpetuate the cycle of deceit and deciphering, the unraveling of secrets, or tragedy and illumination, as Aristotle describes it. In *Northanger Abbey*, the letter is an imagined one, but nevertheless makes a large impact on the interior (and even interior) reader. Catherine imagines the lost manuscript in the locked chest, which she believes to hold the secrets of the late (or imprisoned) wife of General Tilney. Even though this turns out to be a figment of her imagination, the artifact nevertheless acts as a tangible key that opens the Gothic world and its possibilities. Further, in *Lady Audley's Secret* letters and letter writing become increasingly important as the narrative progresses and Robert becomes an increasingly astute detective. Letters become not just a record of his investigation, but also objects that he can scrutinize and examine in order to find out her secrets.

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[85] From Natalie Houston's introduction: "The novel repeatedly associates not just Lady Audley, but all women, with artifice and theatricality, thereby critiquing assumptions common in dominant Victorian discourse about natural femininity" (Braddon 24).

It is his reluctance to throw away a letter, which initially gives an impetus to his investigative tendencies, a trait that has been dormant until the disappearance of his friend George. When in possession of a letter from his cousin Alicia Audley, Robert ponders throwing it away it, but instead, "put the note back into its envelope, and afterward thrust it into a pigeon-hole in his office desk marked *important*" (Braddon 89). This letter, as well as a letter from his friend, becomes a piece of evidence, which eventually become the nails in Lady Audley's coffin. A particularly crucial letter was written by his friend, which contains a description of his wife (which the exterior reader is not privy to). The letter is summarized thus:

> Written almost immediately after George's marriage, contained a full description of his wife—such a description as a man could only write within three weeks of a love-match—a description in which every feature was minutely catalogued, every grace of form or beauty of expression fondly dwelt upon, every charm of manner lovingly depicted…If George could have known for what purpose this description would serve when he wrote it…surely his hand would have fallen paralyzed by horror. (Braddon 231)

We see echoes of Oedipus in this scene where past actions have unforeseen and unintended consequences. But in addition we see how in an era before fingerprinting, photography and other vital tools used by detectives, a hand-written letter becomes the piece of evidence so incriminating that she even attempts to destroy it. Lady Audley's beauty is so singular that such a letter might as well be a digital photograph. But another letter is the truly damning piece of evidence. Before Robert had suspicions about his pretty young aunt, he sees a letter written in her hand and notes the:

> pretty, fairy-like note, written on shining paper of a peculiar creamy hue…it is the prettiest, most coquettish little hand I ever saw…Yes, here it all is—the feathery, gold-

shot, flaxen curls, the penciled eyebrows, the tiny straight nose, the winning childish smile, all to be guessed in these few graceful up-strokes and down-strokes. (Braddon 101)

The letter makes a strong impression on him because it encapsulates Lady Audley's feminine charms and beauty. Lady Audley is aware that her script is recognizable and steals back her letters that were among George's possessions. She thinks she has outsmarted Robert and saved herself from being identified as Helen Talboys. Yet when Robert continues to investigate her background he comes across someone who is in possession of one of Helen's notes. When he hears this, "Robert Audley's pale face flushed a vivid crimson as he stretched out his hand to receive the papers. 'The person who stole Helen Maldon's love-letters from George's trunk in my chambers might have spared themselves the trouble" (Braddon 267). This letter is so damning that it might as well have been a written confession. All of these letters are put into the "important" slot of Robert's desk, and as his collection grows, so does his conviction and desire to hunt down Lady Audley and make her pay for her crimes.

Conclusion: Restructuring the Chaos

In all of these Gothic texts, *catharsis* is achieved not through the use of the supernatural, but rather through the incremental revelation of the truth by thoroughly realistic means. Artifice helps in the incremental revelation because it defers actions and heightens the suspense, until the truth is uncovered and the hunt is over. The Gothic gives readers (interior and exterior) the opportunity to live in a world where laws are turned upside down, laws that are either man-made or natural, and they need to closely read their environment and one another. However, in the end,

order must be reestablished—Catherine realizes she is not in a Gothic text, and she marries Henry Tilney, a man who can educate her, Lady Audley is placed out of sight in an asylum, and dies, and Dracula is killed. This cycle takes its cue from Greek Tragedy Trilogies, such as Sophocles' *Oedipus Cycle* and Aeschylus' *Oresteia*. In each of these trilogies, despite the death and destruction, and the upheaval society endures in the first two plays, order is restored in the third when the guilty are punished and removed from society, the lesson is learned and in combination with *catharsis*, the audience experiences illumination. These genres are actually rather conservative in that the overflow of emotion is repacked in the closing play.[86]

Part of the repacking the emotion and reestablishing order involves putting women back in their place. Vicki Palo's article "From Do-Nothing to Detective" (2006) stresses the connection between Robert's emerging prowess and Lady Audley's shrinking power, saying, "As Robert proceeds in his quest, his surveillance of Lady Audley intensifies, and as a consequence she falls increasingly under his power" until she eventually completely succumbs (Braddon 472). The transfer of power from Lady Audley to Robert reestablishes the accepted social structure and signals the conquering of the mad and dangerous woman.[87] Further, there is an inverse reaction between Lady Audley's social standing and that of Robert. When she is stripped of her excessive influence, Robert's grows (to a proportionate amount). As Palo states: "At the novel's end, he has become a pattern member of society: a successful barrister, a

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[86] As Nicole Fisk points out "in the end, Lady Audley serves as a sacrifice: even though she is prevented from exercising her female independence by being locked away in an asylum, she has opened the way for the remaining female characters to achieve domestic power and to fashion a new life" (24). The perception of Lady Audley as a sacrificial lamb or Polyxena figure (the woman murdered as a war prize for Achilles after the Trojan War) emphasizes the injustice of her treatment, which is not to say that she is not a criminal—she did in fact commit bigamy and attempt to murder her husband—but these action can be seen through a somewhat kinder lens because there were after all many mitigating circumstances.

[87] Lady Audley is particularly dangerous, more so than the lunatic and raving mad woman because as Jessica Cox points out: "The mad woman of previous genres, such as Charlotte Brontë's Bertha Mason, is transformed in the Sensation fiction of the 1860's from hideous monster into a picture of beauty and a apparent innocence who uses her femininity to achieve her own ends, a ploy never before used in women's literature" (25). She can hide in plain sight and be an effective manipulator.

landholder, and husband. All traces of his previous asocial behavior have disappeared just as surely as Lady Audley herself has, and he is now a 'model citizen' of his time" (Braddon 475). In these texts, the overflow is restrained when the villain is defeated and the status quo is reestablished.

Northanger Abbey removes the Gothic trappings entirely and in its place a typical Austen narrative closes the text where the heroine finds a suitable marriage, and (we assume) a happy life ensues. *Lady Audley's Secret* kills off the wicked Lady Audley and attempts to erase her from memory: "The dark story of the past fades little by little every day, and there may come a time in which the shadow my lady's wickedness has cast upon the young man's life, will utterly vanish away" (Braddon 446). Her portrait is covered, and in fact the entire manor, the representation of both her highest achievement and her asylum, is closed and forgotten. In *Dracula* not only is the Count killed but also order is restored in the social hierarchy and gender roles. As the novel closes we find out that:

> It is an added joy to Mina and to me that our boy's birthday is the same day as that on which Quincey Morris died. His mother holds, I know, the secret belief that some of our brave friend's spirit has passed into him. His bundle of names links all our little band of men together; but we call him Quincey. (Stoker 326)

Mina is now a mother and not in a position equal to the men. She has given birth to a representation of the fraternal bond between all the men who helped hunt down and kill the Vampire. Once social order is restored, it does not mean that the need for artifice and deciphering is gone, but rather it takes on a familiar and benign form, until the next hunt.

Interior readers maneuver their way through one another's deception and acting, and in doing so they not only indulge in the Gothic experience, but are also forced to examine it. They

become trained as readers and audience members who can straddle the line between emotional immersion and critical distance. The fact that they are aware of their own acting, and that of others transforms the text into a stage, with props and elaborate sets that also have an impact on the acting of the characters. In the following chapter I explore this idea further, but take the focus out one more step further and include the exterior reader and the narrator in the equation, creating an even larger community. Together we not only experience the text, but also can even explore the text as an artifact in and of itself—a book that is created by the Gothic community.

Chapter IV
Shifting Alignments: Whom Do We Trust?

Motionless we traverse countries we fancy we see, and your thought, blending with the fiction, playing with the details, follows the outline of the adventures. It mingles with the characters, and it seems as if it were yourself palpitating beneath their costumes.

- Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*

Every reader finds himself. The writer's work is merely a kind of optical instrument that makes it possible for the reader to discern what, without this book, he would perhaps never have seen in himself.

- Marcel Proust, *Time Regained*

Introduction

Reading is an intimate and individual experience; holding a book in one's hands, turning its pages, and being fully absorbed in the act of reading is an experience treasured not only by exterior readers, but it is mimicked by protagonists in the texts themselves. Characters write their own narrative, compile it, revise it, edit it, and even disseminate it for general consumption. In this chapter I focus how this "publication" of stories within stories occurs, more specifically by examining the narrators of each text and how they tell their stories. Narrators provide a bridge for the interior and exterior readers because they symbolically have a foot in both worlds. Much like the exterior readers, they are observers of the events that unfold in the text; like us, they are unable to have a direct impact on the protagonists or events, but they are embedded in the text (to varying degrees) and become part of the story. In the previous chapters I have set up the study of the protagonist (interior reader) in concentric circles, starting by exploring the inner world of the protagonists (Chapter I), then moving on to how they interact with one another (Chapter II), and finally with their environment (Chapter III). This chapter builds on these discussions by taking the final step outside the text and uniting the readers that exist within the text with those who are outside, thereby creating a community of readers.

In Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, the community of readers consists of the narrator, Catherine, and the exterior reader. The narrator acts as a creation of the author, but also in crucial ways as an observer and critical reader of the text. He or she comments on Catherine's actions, her character, and her readings and misreadings.[88] In Braddon's text the narrator also becomes part of the reading community, he (or she) appears to be an observer who is present and witnessing the events as they unfold, like an unnamed character; s/he is even privy to information that some protagonists and the exterior reader do not have. In Stoker's novel there is an even more distinct reading community because there is no longer a single narrator, but rather, through the epistolary narrative style, every character gives his or her own point about the events. Yet what makes *Dracula* more complex than the traditional epistolary novel is the constant reminder to the exterior reader that a text is being created as it is being more and more widely read and as it grows in length and depth. This final text consists of a patchwork narrative created by every character, yet still provides a linear narrative without redundancies or even many discrepancies in the retelling of events. Further, even though there is not a single narrator for the text as whole, there is an author (or at the least editor) who controls the shape of the novel and by extension the meaning and ultimate interpretation of this ever-shifting text—Mina Harker. In *Northanger Abbey* and even more so in *Lady Audley's Secret* and *Dracula*, we can see that composition of narrative is an interpretive act. These texts highlight the idea that there is simply no purely objective way to state "facts," and they do so while altogether divorcing the "authorial voice" from the interpretive equation. It is the narrator as character and the protagonists who make the compositional/editorial and ultimately interpretive choices.

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[88] The narrator is also an intriguing character because she openly mocks Catherine and her love of the Gothic novel, yet there are key moments when the narrator declares a "call to arms" in defense not only of the novel genre, but also of the Gothic novel.

In Chapter I the discussion centers on viewing protagonists (interior readers) as stand-ins for the Gothic reader and case studies for the Gothic reading experience; they are guides and models for the exterior reader. This chapter builds on that idea, but examines interior and exterior readers through a slightly different lens. For example, we have seen that Austen's Catherine can be the naïve Gothic reader who lets her knowledge and love of the Gothic take over and influence her reality; she lacks critical distance and lets herself take things at face value, and much like a hero of Ancient Drama, she can suffer from tragic blindness. But like a typical Gothic reader, she can also have keen insight. Through some of her misreadings, she sheds light on the ulterior motives of some protagonists that are hidden to others. She misreads a carriage ride and views it as abduction, but correctly reads Thorpe's brutish and cruel nature through that same interaction. In all these texts, with the addition of the narrators and the expansion of the reading community we have even more opportunities to choose to either take things at face value or to become suspicious. In essence, we have another observer/character who is close reading with us, and voicing their interpretation, but this is yet another layer for the exterior reader to interpret and close read for themselves. Through the patchwork narrative created by this mini-reading community, we experience the immediacy of the emotion felt by the interior readers—they share with us their thoughts and fears as they experience them, which gives their emotions and reactions an unprocessed quality.

***Northanger Abbey*: The Mocking Narrator**

Both the Gothic and Satire are widely read and popular genres that know how to please their audiences, but they nevertheless have a history of not quite measuring up to the more

respected "serious" forms of literature, like poetry and fiction based in Realism. There is a large chasm between the Matthew Lewises and the Charles Dickenses of the world. However, it is difficult to deny that both Satire and the Gothic have made significant contributions to literary history,[89] and both have also crept into other literary genres, thereby influencing and helping shape more "respected" forms of literature. Satire, much like the idea of Literary Realism, is not an easily defined concept, in part because there are many ways it can be manifested. At its core is a genre that aims to expose and comment on some of society's flaws. It can be separated into two main categories: Horatian and Juvenalian. The former tends to be playful and lighthearted, whereas the latter is harsher, at times displaying outright scorn for the topic it satirizes, but of course there are times when there is overlap between the two. Gilbert Highet, in his *Anatomy of Satire,* describes Satire as a genre which "pictures real men and women, often in lurid colors, but always with unforgettable clarity… where other patterns of literature tend sometimes to be formal and remote, satire is free, easy, and direct" (Highet 3). Although I agree with his assessment that Satire depicts people in a certain unflattering, yet unflinching light, I do not believe it is necessarily any more free or easy than any other form of literature.

However, this contradiction raises a common misconception often connected with the discussion of Satire—that it is less serious and less difficult to craft than some (or most) other genres. Even Aristotle, as he was weighing the qualities of Comedy, Epic, and Tragedy, clearly came out in favor of Tragedy, followed by Epic, and in last place, Comedy because it aims "at representing men as worse" than in real life (Aristotle 14).[90] He believed that there is less art in such a representation because it does not provide the audience with something to aspire to, only

[89] Chapter I contains a more thorough breakdown of the history of the Gothic genre and its far-reaching impact on literary history.
[90] Although the section that deals specifically with Comedy is lost, Aristotle most likely focused on satirical comedies (such a Satyr plays).

to ridicule. We see a similar lack of respect or appreciation when discussing the Gothic, which was dismissed as too sensational, overly formulaic, and simply not serious enough. The genre seemingly preferred to shock and scare its audience, as opposed to making it consider "serious" topics. Satire is also dismissed for falling short of high art and instead simply mocking and ridiculing, as opposed to enlightening. Both the satirist and the author of Gothic literature need to ground their work in reality. Satire is described as a place where "almost anything may happen at any moment. Satire sometimes looks at reality as a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing, deserving nothing but a bitter laugh" (Highet 11). But without the connection to reality, the audience cannot understand the satirizing or experience any emotional connection (and ultimately the *cathartic* release).

In Austen's text, we enter a realistic literary world that attempts to authentically replicate the environment of England during the turn of the 19th century. In some ways the text is no different from any of Austen's other works, with its focus on a particular heroine's life, trials, eccentricities, and charms. Yet from the onset the audience realizes that this is no typical literary heroine; she is utterly lacking in charms, grace, or any other socially redeeming qualities, and not because she is evil or somehow unworthy of respect, but because she is plain and undeserving of any kind of attention. We know this because the narrator informs us, and rather than turn away from Catherine in search of a more worthy subject, the narrator keeps her focus on Catherine, seizing any opportunity to remind us how she is indeed so unworthy of our interest. The narrator channels the voice of the public who deems her unworthy. The narrator refers to her sarcastically as "my heroine" several times throughout the text, but following it with statements like: "Not one, however, started with rapturous wonder on beholding her, no whisper of eager inquiry ran around the room, nor was she once called a divinity by any body" (Austen 13). However,

through the constant derision Catherine receives due to her social awkwardness and several logical missteps, we begin to see that she is actually quite insightful—in her own way. Through Catherine, we as exterior readers develop the crucial ability (for Gothic readers) not just to immerse ourselves in a Gothic experiences—Catherine is an excellent model for such behavior—but we also get not so subtle reminders that it is just as important to maintain critical distance (and critical thought) when embedded in such an experience (either in real life, as we see in Catherine's experience, or, what is more likely for the exterior reader, through a text). In the community created by the narrator, Catherine, and the exterior reader, we get a closer approximation to the idea of what could be a truly ideal Gothic reader.

Brontë's Lucy Snowe: The Unreliable Narrator

Catherine's lack of suitability as Gothic heroine is more striking when compared to a similar Gothic heroine who is more easily classified as a more conventional female Gothic protagonist. *Villette* (1853), much like Austen, evokes archetypal Gothic novels such as Walpole's *The Castle of Otronto* (1764), Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and Lewis' *The Monk* (1796), Brontë also harkens back to conventions of Gothic texts to cultivate an air of mystery. In this text, however, the narrator is merged with the heroine, and Lucy Snowe (the protagonist) adds to the mysterious environment through her unreliability as narrator. Brontë employs many Gothic conventions, such as the haunted chamber, large imposing architecture, the damsel in distress, the fear of the foreigner, the domineering villain, and the tempestuous stormy environment. These Gothic conventions map Lucy's psychological development and growing independence throughout the novel. *Villette* is representative of the Victorian Gothic,

the second wave of the 19th century. Lucy is the foreigner who at times appears to prefer her solitude and independence to companionship. In the Gothic, when someone does not wish to be part of a larger community, they become the “other,” something that needs to be feared and ultimately dominated (Emily Brontë’s Heathcliff, in *Wuthering Height* is another prominent example). Typically the status quo is reestablished at the end of a Gothic text. Yet due to the ambiguous ending of the novel we are not quite sure if this actually occurs, and if it does not—if Lucy does not marry and instead continues to live and work in complete independence,[91] this makes her a much more subversive heroine compared to Catherine.

Partly due to its ambivalent treatment of its heroines/protagonists the Gothic becomes a paradoxically conservative, yet revolutionary literary force. It proudly displays acts of subversive behavior, but also punishes that behavior severely in order to reestablish social borders. In Gothic novels, when people transgress, the end nevertheless reestablishes social norms. For example, Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho* revolves around the young maiden Emily, her love Valancourt, and the evil Montoni, who keeps her locked in his dark castle. Montoni wants to marry Emily so he can take control of her inheritance, yet she shows incredible strength by refusing him and attempting to escape, which is not typical behavior for a delicate damsel in distress. Ultimately, she does come into control of her inheritance, but she also marries Valancourt, which reestablishes the social norm. The mixture of subversiveness and convention, as well as independence and community, attracted Brontë to the Gothic. At first glance, her novel does not appear to embody the hyperbolic supernatural events of a typical Gothic novel. There is, for instance, nothing comparable to Lewis’ *The Monk*, where Ambrosio is seduced by Satan who sends Matilda, a Daemon in the form of a beautiful woman, to expose his hypocrisy, and the by

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[91] Lucy waits for her fiancé to return to her, but as she looks toward the horizon and sees the ship, she also notices a storm approaching and it is left unclear whether or not he will make it back to her safely.

extension, the hypocrisy of the Catholic Church. But Brontë realizes that although these fantastic elements are staples in Gothic fiction, they are not the driving force behind the genre. Instead, psychological terror and horror are the only truly necessary aspects of the Gothic, since it is, "The literature of nightmare. Among its conventions are found dream landscapes and figures of the subconscious imagination. Its fictional world gives form to amorphous fears and impulses common to all mankind" (MacAndrew 3). Here we see a clear line of demarcation between Catherine and Lucy. Lucy does indeed inhabit a Gothic text and her reactions to her surroundings are therefore not exaggerated. But when looking only at the heroine herself, there are not many dissimilarities. Lucy is also not particularly beautiful (though clever). If we define an appropriate or ideal Gothic heroine as one who has free rein at times, but reestablishes the social norms at the end, Catherine supersedes Lucy.

When we are introduced to Lucy and her family, she is enjoying a peaceful, if lonely life with her godmother and her family in Bretton, similar to Catherine's plain and peaceful life. Suddenly there is a sharp shift in her story, which jars readers from the expectations they cultivated in the previous chapters and places them in a new and unknown place. This structure foreshadows Lucy's future travels and the narrative style of the novel; it is quick, jarring, and without explanation. Here again, we note a striking similarity to Catherine and her entrance into what is an unfamiliar world. After Lucy reemerges in a new location, the reader is uncertain about her past and what led to her current situation. She says, "I will permit the reader to picture me" and paints a pleasant picture of a happy childhood (Brontë 35). Yet she adopts storm and shipwreck imagery when explaining her current, unhappy circumstances in which she is completely alienated from her family. She says, "I must somehow have fallen over-board, or that there must have been [a] wreck at last" (Brontë 35). Although we assume that Lucy has a clear

recollection of her past, she speaks as if she were piecing together her story from a fragmented memory. This fragmented story-telling also foreshadows the type of narrator that Lucy becomes throughout the novel, which adds to the mysterious and Gothic tone of the novel. It emphasizes the concept of the novel as a text within a text—the exterior reader is aware that s/he is reading a novel, and up to a point, the interior reader (and narrator) is also aware that she is creating a narrative.

Lucy reappears as the caretaker of Miss Marchmont. She does not give an explanation as to how she came to be her caretaker. But we do learn that Lucy is easily lulled into a dull and complacent existence, and needs to be "goaded, driven, stung, forced to energy" (Brontë 38). At several points throughout her life, the shock of a storm or another Gothic intervention provides this much-needed stimulus. Although there are many similarities between Lucy and Miss Marchmont, ultimately we see that Miss Marchmont is resigned to her bleak existence, but eventually we learn that Lucy still has some hope to achieve happiness. Yet at first when Lucy is living with her, she is disconnected from the outside world and isolated from nature. She says, "I was almost content to forget [nature]" and "I demanded no walks in the fresh air" (Brontë 37). At this point in her life, Lucy is completely numb, saying, "two hot, close rooms thus became my world; and a crippled old woman, my mistress, my friend, my all" (Brontë 37). She completely lacks the inquisitive and curious nature of Austen's Catherine, who seeks out answers and adventures. By juxtaposing these two prototypical Gothic heroines, we see that Austen's satirical take on the Gothic indeed raises her heroine above what we might call a more "authentic" Gothic heroine. Austen truly becomes the champion for the novel and the Gothic through Catherine and her narrator who mocks while highlighting Catherine's hidden strengths.

Brontë's Lucy is nevertheless a helpful case study because she embodies both the roles of the narrator and the heroine. She becomes a blatant manifestation of what the narrator tries to obscure in Catherine. A storm wakes Lucy up and reminds her of the wild and exciting outside world. Like Catherine, both seek out adventure and agency. Yet at this point Lucy is afraid of the storm, she says, "I listened, and trembled; Miss Marchmont slept" (Brontë 39). As she sews near Miss Marchmont, she thinks, "Epidemic diseases, I believed, were often heralded by a gasping, sobbing, tormented, long-lamenting east wind. Hence, I inferred, arose the legend of the Banshee" (Brontë 38). The fear of the tempestuous weather will eventually dissipate and signify the growth of her individuality and independence. The figure of the Banshee also reemerges in the end of the novel, when she gazes at the storm that might kill her fiancée. Although *Villette* does not portray a real vampire or monster, the figure of the Banshee is also a terrifying creature who, for Lucy, becomes equated and merged with storms, and whom she eventually conquers. Immediately following the storm Miss Marchmont dies, and despite her fears Lucy ventures outside the world in which she has become comfortable and complacent. Even though her life was not particularly happy or fulfilling, it was all she knew. She is ushered toward her new destination by rough seas on her voyage to London. She says,

> As dark night drew on, the sea roughened: larger waves swayed strong against the vessel's side. It was strange to reflect that blackness and water were round us, and to feel the ship ploughing straight on her pathless way, despite noise, billow, and rising gale. (Brontë 57)

The weather helps signify the movement form one world to another, which makes her think of "the Styx, and of Charon rowing some solitary soul to the Land of Shades" (Brontë 51). The Gothic elements evoked become internalized and psychological. Lucy is leaving behind the timid

and complacent part of her personality and embracing an adventurous and independent spirit, and the rough seas are the first indication of the "birth pangs" of the new Lucy Snowe. In these moments of transition from one life to another, we do get a sense that Lucy is intended to be a more conventional Gothic heroine. She faces raging storms as she leaves one life for another, whereas Catherine only wishes for such tumultuous experiences. Yet even though they might be only in Catherine's head, and while Tilney and the narrator act as if it is all in her head, for a moment, when she is telling herself the horror stories of General Tilney and his murdered wife, they are real to her. This makes us wonder, just how "real" does the danger have to be in order for the protagonist to be scared. If she believes it, is that not enough?

When Lucy arrives in Villette, the weather is gray and gloomy, but she is happy. In the past such ominous weather would have disheartened her, but now she confidently walks out into the street and begins her new life. She says, "The sky too was monotonously gray; the atmosphere was stagnant and humid; yet amidst all these deadening influences, my fancy budded fresh and my heart basked in sunshine" (Brontë 61). After weathering the storm as she watched Miss Marchmont and the storm on her way to Villette, she has not only conquered her fear of storms, she even embraces them and seeks out thunder and rain. She says,

> One night a thunderstorm broke; a sort of hurricane shook us in our beds: the Catholics rose in panic and prayed to their saints. As for me, the tempest took hold of me with tyranny: I was roughly roused and obliged to live. I got up and dressed myself, and creeping outside the casement close by my bed, sat on its ledge, with my feet on the roof of a lower adjoining building. It was wet, it was wild, it was pitch, it was pitch-dark…I could not go in: too resistless was the delight of staying with the wild hour, black and full of thunder, pealing out such an ode as language never delivered to man—too terribly

> glorious, the spectacle of clouds, split and pierced by white and blinding bolts. (Brontë 109)

Storms act upon her with a force like human agency; she is molded and changed by them. This decision reaffirms her independent spirit. She turns her back on the religion that surrounds her, which further isolates her and highlights her status as a foreigner, and she instead turns to a natural phenomenon that terrified her in the past. Lucy has grown as an independent individual, but she still lacks the desire to the part of a larger community.

The haunted chamber is also a pivotal part of the Gothic novel, and like the tempestuous storms, it is a tool for tracking Lucy's development as an individual. Domineering architecture is inextricably linked with the villains of the Gothic. Like in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* the imposing castle, nunnery, monastery, or in the case of *Villette*, the school becomes an integral character in the novel. Bertrand Evans has made/pointed out the intrinsic connection between the castle and the villain saying, "The gothic villain was born as adjunct to the ruinous castle. His nature and his function were strictly dictated by his origin" (Evans 9). The disapproving demeanor of Monsieur Paul and the constant spying of Madame Beck are evocative of the Gothic villain, and they serve the purpose of providing a foil for the heroine to rebel against. We can see in them what Catherine pictures in General Tilney. However, they are not the typical Gothic villains who imprison the damsel against her will (like Radcliffe's Montoni). Yet there are hints of the villain in the way Lucy is constrained, such as when Monsieur Paul tells her to shut herself in the garret to practice for the play. The first time she enters the garret she says,

> Something in that vast solitary garret sounded strangely. Most surely and certainly I heard, as it seemed, a stealthy foot in that floor…I turned: my light was dim; the room was long—but, as I live! I saw in the middle of that ghostly chamber a figure all black or

> white; the skirts straight, narrow, black; the head bandaged, veiled, white. Say what you will reader—tell me I was nervous, or mad; affirm that I was unsettled by the excitement of that letter; declare that I dreamed: this I vow—I saw there—in that room—on that night—an image like—a NUN. (Brontë 245)

In the passage Lucy addresses the reader, which is a common practice for her (and evocative of Austen's narrator), but at this point we have become increasingly suspicious of her as a narrator. In the next chapter we can already see her gradual progression as she begins to conquer her fear of the garret. When she needs to get dressed to go to the theater, she finds that her dress has mysteriously been placed in the attic, so she,

> Plunged in. The reader may believe it or not, but when I thus suddenly entered, that garret was not wholly dark as it should have been: from one point there shone a solemn light, like a star, but broader. So plainly it shone, that it revealed the deep alcove with a portion of the tarnished scarlet curtain drawn over it. Instantly, silently, before my eyes, it vanished; so did the curtain and alcove: all that end of the garret became black as night. I ventured no research; I had not time nor will; snatching my dress, which hung on the wall, happily near the door, I rushed out, relocked the door with convulsed haste, and darted downwards to the dormitory. (Brontë 256)

As a damsel in distress, Lucy resembles *The Mysteries of Udolpho*'s Emily, who also, although terrified, ventured alone into a cavernous castle. Emily did so in an attempt to gain her freedom, and Lucy did so to be closer to her family, since she needed the dress to accompany Graham to the theater. When Lucy is isolated and alienated from normal society she reverts into old behavior where she is not as confident and willing to explore outside her comfort zone. Just as with Miss Marchmont, when Lucy became accustomed to being practically alone with an invalid

as a companion, it saps her courage and left her complacent and enervated. But "The crétin being gone, I was free to walk out. At first I lacked courage to venture far from the Rue Fossette, but by degrees I sought the city-gates" (Brontë 158). It is not oppressive weather that saps her energy, but having to be the sole caretaker for someone else by herself, which is reminiscent of her work with Miss Marchmont.

As Lucy regains her courage, she seeks human contact, even if it is with a Catholic priest. Yet she still longs for the company of her family, and runs out into the storm, and she observes that,

> If the storm had lulled a little at sunset, it made up now for lost time. Strong and horizontal thundered the current of the wind from north-west to south-east…my heart did not fail at all in this conflict; I only wished that I had wings and could ascend the gale. (Brontë 164)

Shortly after this, she faints and the reader, like Lucy, is confused to find her in a new location in the next volume. As before, storms mark a transition from one part of her life to the next and mimic the narrative structure of the novel. There are several instances in Lucy's life where the reader has no idea what transpired, and these mental fugue states are often foreshadowed by stormy weather.[92] She awakens in what appears to be her old home, and weeps out of pure happiness at having found her family at last. Although Lucy is an independent character, she still requires being accepted and welcomed in a family, which is true in the Gothic, since it not only celebrates independence, but also ultimately wishes to establish social norms, which cannot abide a woman being completely independent. We see this asserted in Austen's text as well with

[92] These fugue states are evocative of the reading and deciphering that internal and external readers of the Gothic genre undertake. With Lucy we see how it is an inescapable part of the Gothic reading experience since she needs to decipher her own life and experiences because she cannot be trusted with accurately remembering and understanding them.

Catherine and Tilney—she falls in love with the man who chided and tried to "educate" her throughout the text.

Throughout the novel, the tempestuous weather imitates Lucy's narrative style as well. She is an unreliable narrator who keeps the reader in a constant state of turmoil and uncertainty. Here we see a narrative trope that Stoker takes up with Professor Van Helsing—purposefully creating an air of mystery even though s/he may have more answers to give. This also adds to the Gothic environment of the novel. The reader's inability to trust the narrator allows her to vicariously play the role of the Gothic heroine trapped in a castle where she cannot trust her own senses at times. The narrator in *Northanger Abbey* embodies this to a point because, unlike Lucy or Van Helsing, she cannot mislead or withhold information from the external reader. Her sarcasm and mocking tone invite the reader to trust her, but coupled with the fact that she describes foolish behavior, toward the end of Catherine's story, we begin to wonder if the narrator is perhaps being too harsh and unable to see Catherine's strengths. Even the apparent reliability of an anonymous external narrator may produce interpretive ambivalence in the end. The uncertainty cultivated by Lucy continues up until the end of the novel, and the final storm allows her to leave the ending ambiguous. Although the reader might get the impression that she will be happy regardless of Monsieur Paul's fate, it is unclear. As Lucy watches this final storm, she says, "The skies hang full and dark—a rack of sails from the west; the clouds cast themselves into strange forms…the wind shifts to the west. Peace, peace, Banshee" (Brontë 495). But her ability to dominate her fears of the storm is in the forefront in the closing scene of the novel. She recalls the image of the Banshee which first appeared when she was taking care of Miss Marchmont and was isolated from society and letting her fears completely control her life.

Villette's Gothic elements allow Lucy to grow into a strong and independent woman with a complicated and interesting psyche. She does so by not only dominating her fear of storms, but also conquering the terror she feels in the garret and toward the nun, whom she even tries to confront. However, unlike Radcliffe's Emily, or even Brontë's own Jane Eyre, Lucy is not fully enveloped into the status quo by the end of the novel. Furthermore, the reader is not completely sure about what Lucy truly wants. Her ability to obfuscate, which is evident throughout the novel, continues until the end. Lucy does not want the reader to know everything about her life, and allows us to "imagine" her life, like she did when she mysteriously vanished from Mrs. Bretton's house and emerged with Miss Marchmont. Again, the reader gets the sense that she does so almost out of consideration for us, so that we need not be encumbered by the truth and the tragic circumstances of her existence, saying, "Let them picture union and a happy succeeding life" (Brontë 496). If Lucy were a typical Gothic heroine, it would be clear to the reader that Monsieur Paul returns and they marry. Our understanding heavily relies on how the story is told to us, either by the characters themselves, but perhaps even more emphasis and weight is given to the narrator, who as an observer as well (yet also participant), we trust to have a clearer and more accurate view of the events. In *Northanger Abbey*, the narrator tries to convince us of Catherine's lack of suitability, but we begin to question her judgment as we see Catherine develop into an adept close reader and good judge of character.

Austen's Untrusting Narrator

There are striking similarities in the heroines of *Villette* and *Northanger Abbey*, both receive little respect from the members of their communities, but a main difference is in how

much of an impact that makes on the heroines. Lucy Snowe is fiercely independent and the judgment of others does not seem to have much of an impact on her. She does not have a judgmental narrator making snide comments about her lack of beauty or charms, but instead acts as her own narrator, and she does not share all her thoughts with the external reader or other characters. Catherine exists in a more community-centered world where other's opinion matters greatly. Unlike Lucy, she may not exist in a typical Gothic world, but her experiences show how the marriage market can transform even the ordinary town of Bath into a Gothic experience. She also engages with ghosts and villains—and although the former is imaginary, the latter is real. Theses heroines highlight the impact of the community of "readers" and the impact this group has on individuals and experiences. In *Lady Audley's Secret* and *Dracula* the effect is even more striking because it has actual life and death consequences. The community of readers does not stop at judging the internal reader, but actually hunts him or her down, needing to eradicate them from society as opposed to coopting them as in the case of Lucy and Catherine.

The narrator in *Northanger Abbey* begins by creating an environment that makes us (the exterior reader) aware of two layers of text simultaneously—the layer that exists within Catherine, her "education" as reader of Gothic texts, and also the additional layer (that the text itself (the novel *Northanger Abbey*) is an object unto itself.) The narrator achieves this with Chapter V, where she raises a call to arms for the Novel, and which can be interpreted more specifically as a defense of the Gothic. The narrator defends the novel by (bringing forth) the criticism associated with the genre, but also immediately defending it by pointing out the absurdity of the criticism. For example, she states: "there seems almost a general wish of decrying the capacity and undervaluing the labour of the novelist, and of slighting the performances which have only genius, wit, and taste to recommend them" (Austen 23). The

narrator appears incredulous that a genre that has so many commendable traits could be looked down upon so much. In this statement, there is also tacit encouragement of Catherine and the fact that she chooses to live within the covers of books in general. She is an author in a sense as well, because even though they may appear like delusions, she also weaves a story for herself when she enters Northanger Abbey. Despite her many faults, she does put her "education" to use. As the narrator is building the case for the defense of novels, we also get reminders that Catherine is deeply affected by her reading. We get a sense of this when her reaction to Tilney is described, after they have a brief discussion about novels: "This mysteriousness, which is always so becoming in a hero, threw a fresh grace in Catherine's imagination around his person and manners, and increased her anxiety to know more of him" (Austen 22). She reacts to the traits that would make him an appropriate hero in her beloved novels. This may seem like it does not contribute to the championing of novels because it paints Catherine in an unflattering light—more preoccupied with her life lived in novels than her real life. But the narrator continues the defense of novels by stating:

> Yes, novels;--for I will now adopt that ungenerous and impolitic custom so common with novel writers, of degrading by their contemptuous censure the very performances, to the number of which they themselves are adding—joining with their greatest enemies in bestowing harshest epithets on such works, and scarcely ever permitting them to be read by their own heroine, who, if she accidentally take up a novel, is sure to turn over its insipid pages with disgust. Alas! If the heroine of one novel be not patronized by the heroine of another, from whom can she expect protection and regard? (Austen 23)

In this statement, not only do we see a comment on the criticism hurled on the novel by authors, the ones who should be defending novels the most, but we also get a sense of the intertextuality

that we see displayed in *Northanger Abbey*, which is represented in a sense of camaraderie among the protagonists (in this case heroines) of novels. They are united in a sorority of sorts where they understand and strengthen one another because protagonists, much like authors, need to be collaborative in order to give credibility to their profession. Even though Catherine may be preoccupied with novels, this should not necessarily be seen as a point of derision—she should have allies regardless, in other protagonists, and in writers themselves. This thought is continued, saying, "Let us not desert one another; we are an injured body…no species of composition has been so much decried. From pride, ignorance, or fashion, our foes are almost as many as our readers" (Austen 23). It is evident to the narrator (who lives within the pages of a novel) that it is imperative that they stick together in order to raise the status of their profession.

The narrator's defense of the novel brings attention to the novel as artifact, what she is talking about is precisely what the exterior reader is holding in her hands, what guides Catherine and helps her create the novel in her head—which is different from the novel that the narrator creates for us. The differences lie in the plot of the story, as the narrator traces Catherine's awkward fumblings throughout Bath and then at Northanger Abbey. Catherine's novel shares a similarity with the narrator's, in that they both do not have much confidence in Catherine. However, our "heroine" nevertheless weaves a much more sensational tale. If it were not for her hyperbolic assumptions, the narrator would not have much to mock—it is a symbiotic relationship that nonetheless produces the double narrative within *Northanger Abbey*. The interest in fiction (specifically the Gothic) is pivotal in the creation of these two story lines, not only is it influential for Catherine's perspective, but it also woven into the text in a way that challenges preconceived notions about fiction. The novel is defended not only by the narrator, but also by Catherine:

> I read a little [History] as a duty, but it tells me nothing that does not either vex or weary me. The quarrels of popes and kings, with wars or pestilences, in every page; the men all so good for nothing, and hardly any women at all—it is very tiresome; and yet I often think it odd that it should be so dull, for a great deal of it must be invention. The speeches that are put into the heroes' mouths, their thoughts and designs—the chief of all this must be invention, and invention is what delights me in other books. (Austen 79)

Fiction is given precedence over what might be seen as more "serious" forms of writing, and even in such cases fiction is inevitably a part of it because all writers, even those of History, need imagination. Even though she may enjoy reading and be a well-read character, it does not make her an adept close reader, until she must read her environment and those who surround her. As she transforms her life into a novel (a quality the narrator mocks), she actually puts into practice what she has learned and fulfills her potential as a reader and a heroine.

Catherine is the champion for imagination, yet is harshly judged and mocked for her excess of it, by other protagonists and by the narrator. Henry Tilney, who is ultimately the character who has the kindest view of Catherine (they are engaged by the end of the novel), mocks her by poking fun at her engagement with the Gothic. Tilney also enjoys Gothic novels, but is happy to mock Catherine for her admiration because he believes that whereas he has the ability (as a man) to differentiate between fact and fiction, she does not, or at the least has a more difficult time doing so. He asks, "Are you prepared to encounter all the horrors that a building such as 'what one reads about' may produce?—have you a stout heart?—Nerves fit for sliding panels and tapestry?" (Austen 114). In fact, Catherine does not have the steady nerves for this situation, because even though Northanger Abbey is not in reality a typical Gothic location—she transforms it into one due to her reading and her ability to indulge her imagination. Tilney can

see this narrative being spun in her head, but only the narrator is privy to just how far she indulges in it, and together they write the story of the delusional Catherine. Even as she tries to reassure herself, saying, “Oh! but this will not happen to me, I am sure”, she wants the opposite to be true; we know this because we see her jump at every opportunity to prove this statement wrong (Austen 115).

The narrator exists in part to guide the exterior reader through Catherine’s world, so they can be in on the joke when it comes to her misreadings and foolish behavior. She lets us know that it is acceptable and even expected to have a low opinion of Catherine. The narrator is quick to point out when Catherine should have learned her lesson, but has not. After one of her many realizations that she has read too much into a scene, “She felt humbled to the dust. Could not the adventure of the chest have taught her wisdom?...Nothing could now be clearer than the absurdity of her recent fancies” (Austen 126). These are not Catherine’s words, but the narrator’s, who is pointing out how low and foolish she should feel, and thus indicating the judgment that the exterior reader should echo. The narrator continues, “I bring back my heroine to her home in solitude and disgrace; and no sweet elation of spirits can lead me into minuteness. A heroine in a hack post-chaise, is such a blow upon sentiment, as no attempt at grandeur and pathos can withstand,” further bringing our attention to the fact that she cannot possibly compare to authentic Gothic heroines (Austen 172). The narrator mocks as a way to bring our attention to Catherine’s early misreadings, but Catherine does learn and develop as a reader throughout her journey. The narrator may continue to try to ridicule her, but the exterior reader, after listening to her, and also observing Catherine for him/herself begins to see that the narrator may at times be too harsh on our “heroine.”[93] As we begin to disconnect from the opinion of the narrator the

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[93] The readings and misreadings of Catherine are covered more in depth in Chapter III.

community becomes more complex because we have several opinions about the same event, and the narrator herself becomes an object of critique for the external reader.

Toward the end of the novel Catherine is faced with a new piece of writing to study and analyze, and she can deftly maneuver through it. She received a letter from Isabella Thorpe, a young woman who had acted like a friend to her and had even gone so far as to accept a proposal from Catherine's brother, only to break her word when Captain Tilney showed her some attentions. She says in the letter to Catherine: "That young man whom, of all others, I particularly abhor, has left Bath. You will know, from this description, I must mean Captain Tilney" (Austen 159). She is pretending to be glad to be rid of Tilney and get back in the good graces of Catherine's brother; in effect, her brother is her backup after Tilney stops showing interest in her. After reading the letter the narrator tells us,

> Such a strain of shallow artifice could not impose even upon Catherine. Its inconsistencies, contradiction, and falsehood, struck her from the very first. She was ashamed of Isabella and ashamed of having ever loved her. Her professions of attachment were now as disgusting as her excuses were empty, and her demands impudent. (Austen 160)

The narrator admits that such a letter did not fool Catherine, but she needs to add that "even" to remind us that this is indeed surprising for the naïve and easily influenced Catherine. She can after her trials and tribulations change the perspective of the narrator, ever so slightly, and the exterior reader can also note the insight that Catherine has when dealing with this duplicitous person. Yet the narrator continues to mock and have a foot in the world of the novel, and outside by recognizing the growth that Catherine has made as a character.

***Lady Audley's Secret*: A New Genre and the New Detective**

Who is the narrator of *Lady Audley's Secret*? This question is never fully answered in the text, and it serves as a useful framing device for bridging the gap between the Gothic and the Detective genre; this narrator draws the reader in and makes him a part of the story, while remaining unobtrusive. Rather, more like a host, he may not actually participate, but he makes us comfortable and invites us into the scenes. He is an ambiguous and hidden character who at times appears to be an observer of the events, someone who is actually present. Yet he is never named or even addressed. Although this is typical of third-person omniscient, what further complicates the character is that even though he speaks as if he were physically present in the room, he also appears to be in several places at once, and knows what is happening at Audley Court and in Robert's rooms. He may not judge characters as harshly as Austen's narrator, but also does not seem to be altogether unbiased either and at times even shows pity toward Lady Audley. It appears as though he has more information than he gives the reader, as if everything has been revealed and he is retelling a story knowing how it will end. It is also clear that he inhabits the same world as Robert at the same time, and he brings attention to the act of writing, and his creation of this new narrative, saying,

> We hear every day of murders committed in the country. Brutal and treacherous murders; slow, protracted agonies from poisons administered by some kindred hands; sudden and violent deaths by cruel blows, inflicted with a stake cut from some spreading oak, whose very shadow promised—peace. In the county in which I write, I have been shown a meadow in which, on a quiet summer Sunday evening, a young farmer murdered the girl

> who had loved and trusted him; and yet even now, with the stain of that foul deed upon it, the aspect of the spot is—peace. (Braddon 91)

The narrator is still unseen but less judgmental than in *Northanger Abbey*; in fact, he even exhibits deference toward Lady Audley and is impressed by Robert. But he does not judge or give his opinions about the facts of the "case." This lends itself to being more of an early detective novel[94] because of the neutrality helps give Robert agency.

The narrator in Braddon's text frames the story from beginning to end, and at times is even obtrusive, much like the Austen's narrator. However it is for a different purpose, not to judge, control and manipulate the exterior reader, but to present information. The narrator is significant in that he is the representative for the community, someone who is fooled by Lady Audley, but who also would resent her for disrupting societal norms and structure. In a sense he acts like a Chorus in a Greek tragedy, involved, but distant. As with the chorus of a Greek Tragedy, the audience (exterior readers) does not completely identify with and agree with them, rather they provide another perspective through which to view the events. The narrator plays the role of judge and jury, but not detective. The detective is Robert, and the narrator allows Robert to develop that persona. As exterior readers we take on both roles when deciphering both the narrator and Robert.

The narrator in Braddon's text draws the reader's attention to the novel as artifact—to the fact that Robert is creating a narrative and even a literal text as he undergoes his investigation. At times he makes his presence known and calls attention to the novel as an artifact: "At about twelve o'clock on the morning following that night upon which the events recorded in *my last*

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[94] The transformation of Robert into a detective is a common point of analysis with *Lady Audley's Secret*. Some recent articles include "From Do-Nothing to Detective," "From Page to Screen: Transforming *Lady Audley's Secret*." However, my aim is not to prove this but add to it by exploring not simply Robert's transformation into a detective, but how this contributes to our understanding of Gothic reading and reading communities.

chapter had taken place, the Baronet's nephew strolled out of the Temple, Blackfriars-ward, on his way to the City" (Braddon 73, my emphasis). He ends the novel by explaining what happens to Lady Audley, who has become the unresolved remainder of the text, and ultimately society. Lady Audley needs to be pushed aside, hidden, and ultimately killed. She is something that cannot exist in a proper society because she represents chaos. He closes by saying: "I hope no one will take objection to my story because the end of it leaves the good people all happy and at peace. If my experience of life has not been very long, it has at least been manifold" (Braddon 446).

Lady Audley's death becomes part of everyone else's happiness. This misogynism and mistrust of women is theme found not only in the Gothic, but it also helps connect the Gothic to the Detective genre, through one of its precursors, the Crime Fiction of the 18th century. It helps shed light on the theme of sexual double standard. I have explored this idea in relation to the reversing of gender roles in the Gothic, but it is even more significant in the Detective/Crime genre because it breeds an environment where women are often seen as suspicious and untrustworthy creatures, and this is the tone that Robert continues in his own narrative. In many 18th century novels women were typically depicted as the epitome of virtue and chastity; the heroines in Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, as well as Henry Fielding's Sophia in *Tom Jones*, are all women who border on perfection. However, in the crime fiction of the era, women are portrayed as ultimate villains. Both of these types of stories were marketed for the purpose of moral instruction, since they show how good deeds are rewarded and wicked deeds are ultimately punished. The discrepancy and double standard between men and women becomes even more demarcated when examining how female criminals are portrayed and punished for crimes committed by both sexes. Sandra Clark asserts in her study on women and crime that

"Certain aspects of legislation in the period… criminalized the behavior of women differently from that of men" (Clark 41). Surprisingly, when men and women both suffer from crippling poverty, it does not act as an equalizing force between the sexes; instead women become the target of the upper classes as well as the men of their own class. This is particularly emphasized in Braddon's text because Lady Audley mimics George's behavior and ventures out to find a better life, yet he is called a hero while she is a villain.

Women suffer more at the hands of the criminal justice system because their "gender-based weakness, their inherently greater sinfulness and their susceptibility to diabolic temptation…makes them, at least in the eyes of moralists, more, not less, criminally culpable" (Clark 41). The combination of women's perceived inherent weakness and their susceptibility to evil is present in the 18th century characters of Daniel Defoe's Moll Flanders, John Gay's Mrs. Peachum, and William Hogarth's Moll Hackabout. These heroines represent the array of criminal behavior committed by women. Their ultimate fates and punishments display how women must be neutralized to maintain order in the established patriarchal power structure—a theme present in the Gothic as well. The men in these works, despite being the catalysts for the women's crimes, are rarely punished; more often they are rewarded for their own crimes, which is also exactly what happens with George in *Lady Audley's Secret*. These stories of these 18th century heroines highlight the lack of change or progress for women in the century that followed. Although some punishments endured by the 18th century working class are not quite applicable to Lady Audley since she had the good fortune to suffer "high class" punishments, she nevertheless embodies the idea that her gender makes her innately untrustworthy—a concept present even in Austen's text, which will be followed in Stoker's as well. When we as exterior readers are deciding whom to trust, the deck is clearly stacked against any female protagonist.

Even though we can also discern that this point of view is dated and has been somewhat eroded over time, it nevertheless emphasizes the complex gender and power dynamics present in the reading community.

Feminine Criminals, Outcasts, and Outlaws: Whom Do We Trust?

In the 18th century both men and women of the poor working-class broke the law simply to survive. Women were more likely to commit non-violent crimes such as petty theft, as opposed to men who became highwaymen and used violent means to rob. Despite this disparity in the type of criminal behavior committed by men and women, more sinister motivations are often associated with women's crimes; their desire to survive is depicted as selfish and self-centered. We see this mirrored in Lady Audley, that the necessity for crime is not an issue relegated to the poor working classes. Lady Audley when she was still Helen Talboys was not a member of this class, but unless you were fortunate enough to be born into the wealthy or aristocratic class, dropping into this highly unfortunate class was always a looming threat. This fear is what forces her to disguise her identity and in effect lie to everyone in her new life. The fact that she could make a steep and dangerous drop from her already low social standing was in the back of Helen Talboy's mind when her husband left her with her drunken gambling father; in this precarious situation she truly was a few steps from becoming Moll Flanders.

The criminal narratives of Daniel Defoe, John Gay, and the engravings of William Hogarth, use the heroines in their works as examples of what behavior must be avoided, and what one must do to redeem oneself after a lapse in virtue. However, the tone of their works sends a different message. Defoe begins his narrative showing how Moll Flanders enters the

world as a direct result of women's vice. She is the product of a city that turns a blind eye to the reasons behind the crippling poverty, and instead chooses to "solve" the problem by incarcerating, punishing, and executing. There were no social systems in place for alleviating the poverty, and the problem is only worsened when more laws were created that criminalized more behavior that was essential for the poor to survive. This is evident in the laws which outlawed sweeping, receiving certain perquisites, and other acts which gave the poor working class a little "extra" income. Women were more severely affected by these new laws because even though men were complicit in their crimes, such as prostitution, men were not punished. Peter Linebaugh states, "Since prostitution was criminalized by legal practice, the buyers of sexual favours had, in effect, the power of imprisonment over sellers" (Linebaugh 340).

Hogarth's "moralizing art" displays the inequality and hypocrisy of British society. He depicts how the poor are targeted by the upper classes, and among the lower classes women were especially victimized. Cosmopolitan centers are portrayed as a world of lecherous men and corrupt women; a world that not only produces but even welcomes and thrives on vice and crime. Moll Hackabout in Hogarth's *Harlot's Progress* shows how even a woman born to respectable parents is still easy prey to the vice and crime of the city. If Moll Hackabout is pulled down into the criminal subculture of the city, a woman such as Moll Flanders, or even Helen Maldon (later Helen Talboys) stands no chance against repeating her mother's mistakes and following her footsteps to prison; even in *Lady Audley's Secret* the looming and ominous threat of the connection between mother and daughter is ever present and is even labeled an inherited trait. In this case, the advances to modern medicine help emphasize women's corrupt nature. It is not just lack of moral fortitude (as with Moll) but an inescapable biological trait. Since Moll is born in Newgate prison, she is perceived as innately wicked and incapable of leading a

respectable and honest life. At first Moll appears to fight against what society expects from her by working and ingratiating herself to a wealthy family—and this is familiar to the beginning of Lady Audley's journey. The main difference is that whereas in Moll's world all of society vilified her, for Lady Audley Robert becomes the main persecutor. Her social position, wealth, and husband provide some protection from his investigation and persecution, but even that is not enough in the end.

Moll, much like Lady Audley, fantasized about becoming a gentlewoman even before she was aware of what that meant; she had a visceral reaction against a life among the poor and working-class. However, she was born into a life where that goal was impossible to obtain. Her only opportunity to raise her status was through marriage, but unlike Pamela or Clarissa who fight for their virtue as if their lives depended on its preservation, early in her life, Moll relinquishes the only part of her that makes her "valuable." By accepting money, her first sexual relationship is also her introduction into her life as a prostitute. She later admits that the money was not necessary since she would have behaved exactly the same without compensation, saying, "if he had known me, and how easy the Trifle he aim'd at, was to be had, he would have troubled his Head no farther, but have given me four or five Guineas, and have lain with me the next time he had come at me" (Defoe 64). Referring to her virtue as a "trifle" even for someone in Moll's lower station was largely underestimating its value. This behavior, and especially her statement declaring how little she valued her virtue, helps Defoe depict Moll not simply as an unvirtuous and wicked woman, but also as someone who can be cold and calculating, not merely a victim of her base birth and circumstances. Moll weighs the advantages of marrying one brother over another, she regrets relinquishing her virginity to the elder not because she feels ashamed, but

because she realizes it would have been more advantageous to marry the younger, and now must find a way to trick him on their wedding night.

After Moll is widowed and abandons her first children she attempts to have a respectable life, but it becomes clear that her only option is a life of crime. Moll's rationalization of her criminal behavior proves Clark's assertion that "Diabolical temptation is probably the commonest way of suppressing agency" (Clark 55). The idea that the devil ensnared her is a way to absolve herself of responsibility. Moll says, "I went out now by Day-light, and wandered about I knew not whither, and in search of I knew not what, when the Devil put a Snare in my way of a dreadful Nature indeed" (Defoe 257). Moll also blames her victims themselves for her crimes. She says, "there is nothing so absurd, so surfeiting, so ridiculous as a Man heated by Wine in his Head, and a wicked Gust in his Inclination together" (Defoe 294). Even in a work that is intended to morally instruct, Moll cannot help but mitigate her crimes and excuse her behavior by blaming it on the devil or simply the stupidity of others. At times it reads more like a manual about how to be a successful criminal instead of a moral tale about what behavior should be avoided and how to lead a moral and honest life. The novel is replete with incessant sums, tallying, and accounting; everything in Moll's world is seen in terms of monetary value. By merely by looking at a piece of linen, plate, or article of clothing, she can calculate its financial value. When faced with something that has intrinsic value but cannot easily be converted into money (such as a horse), it has no value for her. Poverty is originally the main motivation behind the theft and crime of the working class, but Moll continues stealing after she has accumulated significant wealth. Her greed as well as her desire to feel the thrill and excitement that accompanies her crimes makes her continue her dishonest life. Moll's constant excuses and

reasoning behind her crimes only show that despite her claims of being repentant for her crimes, in actuality she does not accept full blame for her actions.

Moll may be a criminal, a liar, a thief, a whore, but she is never stupid—much the same can be said for Lady Audley. She knows that in order to be readmitted into society and more importantly reap the (monetary) rewards she must adopt a repentant persona. Clark says, "Confession and penitence figure strongly in the sympathetic accounts of criminal women" (Clark 56). For Moll it is just another disguise, such as wearing widow's weeds or beggar's garb in order to be an efficient criminal. Here we see yet another connection to the necessity Lady Audley feels to disguise herself and play a role for those around her. When compared to her excuses for her crimes, the constant reassurance to the reader that she is writing her story "for the sake of the just Moral of every part of it, and for Instruction, Caution, Warning and Improvement to every Reader," seems very hypocritical (Defoe 409). Toward the end of her memoir, by examining her behavior once she is transported to America and supposedly relinquishes her life of crime, the assertion of her "repentance" seems blatantly untrue. Moll is arrested, incarcerated, and almost executed for stealing some lace. However, little is said about her treatment of her many illegitimate children, and their ultimate fates. When her children become an inconvenience (which is usually immediately after their birth), she relinquishes them and they disappear from her narrative. Eventually, when she meets one of her children in America, she entirely erases the rest of her brood from her past. It is understandable that she would give up her children to her wealthy in-laws after her first husband dies, but she never mentions an interest in their welfare or that of her other children. In the latter part of her memoir when she reaches her "repentant" phase there are moments when she could have admitted she had children, and was saddened by having to leave them, but she chose to refrain from mentioning them at all. Despite giving birth to many

children, she only expresses concern for the welfare of one of them, whom she pays to board, but after she can no longer afford the £5, he also completely disappears from her memoir.

Even though Moll arrives in America with substantial means, when she realizes that her mother has left her an inheritance, she cannot rest until she claims it, even if it means dredging up her dark incestuous past. When she sees that her son is the gatekeeper to her inheritance she tells him, “I had no Child but him in the World,” which is the ultimate evidence that she is more interested in money than in truly admitting and repenting her previous sins (Defoe 421). In addition to portraying Moll as a cold and heartless mother who loves money more than her children, the institution of marriage is also heavily mocked in *Moll Flanders*. This ridicule only further displays that crime is in reality the only option for lower-class women, they cannot find respect and an honest life even in marriage. Marriage is something performed purely for convenience and to gain money, and it is easily cast off (like children) when it becomes inconvenient. Even when Moll finds someone who apparently cares for her enough to even to deny the existence of their marriage, she still sees him as an inconvenience and wishes she could simply abandon him. When her wealthy son offers to take care of her she “Began secretly now to wish that I had not brought my *Lancashire* Husband from *England* at all” (Defoe 419). She manipulates both her husband and her son, she makes sure they never meet (while her previous husband/brother lives) and keeps secrets from them, all of which does not seem like the behavior of a repentant woman who wants to lead a respectable and honest life.

The institution of marriage is further satirized in Gay’s *The Beggar’s Opera*. The play completely reverses the idea of respectable behavior for women. Marriage is a laughable and reviled institution for the Peachums. Mrs. Peachum encourages her daughter to “have relationships” with men in order to use them, but she warns her to never marry. Mrs. Peachum

tells her daughter, “I am not against your toying and trifling with a customer in the way of business, or to get out a secret…but if I find out that you have played the fool and are married…I’ll cut your throat, hussy” (Gay 54). Mrs. Peachum’s relationship with her “husband” is emblematic of a purely symbiotic union. Even though she has been “married” to Mr. Peachum many years, if her marriage becomes inconvenient at one point, or if she stood to gain by having him hanged, she would willingly turn him over to the authorities. The antagonism of men toward women in the *Beggar’s Opera* gives it two levels of irony. First, Gay’s work is a harsh commentary against the aristocracy, specifically against powerful men such as Sir Horace Walpole. The men and women of the criminal class are united in their hatred and contempt for the aristocracy who are revered for their crimes. Gay shows that men of all classes are guilty of the same crimes, but those in power are rewarded while the poor are punished. On another level, within the poor class there is rivalry between men and women. Women of all classes are portrayed as innately manipulative, deceptive, and cruel. Poverty is not an equalizing force between the sexes since even within the working class women are punished more than their male counterparts. Moll Flanders is transported, Moll Hackabout dies due to her vices, Polly and Lucy are betrayed by Macheath, and yet they beg their fathers to spare him and he is miraculously saved at the last minute. The overall harsh tone against women does not focus on just Mrs. Peachum or the conniving prostitutes who ensnare Macheath and lead him to his death. Even Polly, the pure and kind female character asserts that, “A woman knows how to be mercenary, though she hath never been in a court or at an assembly. We have it in our natures” (Gay 54). She places her entire gender in the same company as the men who keep the poor and working-class underfoot.

The men in these texts, ranging from Moll's Lancashire husband, Macheath, or Moll Hackabout's customers, emerge unscathed despite living the same lifestyle as their female counterparts. Barnwell stands out as the only man who is punished, but the tone of play still sends the message that he is the hero and Millwood is the villain. Ultimately, these texts do instruct the reader, they educate him about the unfair double standard, which vilifies women and exalts men for the same criminal behavior.

Silencing Women's Voices: Braddon's Continued Double Standard

The discussion of the double standard between men and women in the context of crime fiction, as well as how women are singled out and punished, is relevant to the discussion of not just *Lady Audley's Secret* but also the role of the narrator and the narrative of Detective fiction she deploys with Robert Audley. These 18th century texts document crime and the injustice suffered by women. In Braddon's text Lady Audley is robbed of her voice when it comes to creating the narrative—this is left completely in the hands of Robert and the narrator. The latter is not as intent on vilifying her as the former, but nevertheless, through her we see that women have not made much progress from the circumstances Moll Flanders had to endure. They are still heavily reliant on men and their protection, and they are still easily marginalized and vilified by society. Crime fiction and Detective fiction are not identical, but they are closely related. Detective fiction adds the layer of trying to logically solve and even understand the crime, not just showing us the crime and punishing it. Further, through the implementation of the detective genre in the text we get a sense and a modeling of the reading experience, more specifically the close reading experience, and in his example we see how Lady Audley's agency and power is

stripped away.

Robert begins a ritual and method for undergoing his work as an amateur detective—becoming in the process a more adept close reader and critic. For example, we know that, "He sat for a long time contemplating the written page…and placed the paper in that very pigeon-hole into which he had thrust Alicia's letter—the pigeon-hole marked *Important*" (135). We are drawn into the text by becoming aware of the text as artifact and record, something we can consult along with the narrator and Robert. The written records become an object that is transcribed for the reader; it is an object for individual consumption and he is collecting all the materials, but at this point we are as much in the dark about the events as Robert. The narrator already knows more information, but does not share it; he is urging us to think about these events and scraps of evidence, just like Robert. Similar to *Northanger Abbey*'s narrator's musing on the novel genre, we have a contemplation of the detective as profession: He talks about what his newfound "profession" has made him realize, and we cannot help but note how in fact what he is training himself to do is to close read people, situations, and texts:

> Upon what infinitesimal trifles may sometimes hand the whole secret of some wicked mystery, inexplicable heretofore to the wisest upon the earth! A scrap of paper; a shred of some torn garment; the button off a coat; a word dropped incautiously from the over-cautious lips of guilt the fragment of a letter; the shutting or opening of a door; a shadow on a window-blind; the accuracy of a moment; a thousand circumstances so slight as to be forgotten by the criminal, but links of steel in the wonderful chain forged by the science of the detective officer. (Braddon 152)

The exterior reader is signaled to think and sort out what Robert is thinking and how the evidence is taking shape.[95] Robert creates a community of readers by bringing our attention to his plan, and the narrator adds to it by highlighting the change in Robert; he goes from "a handsome, lazy, care-for-nothing fellow, of about seven-and-twenty" (Braddon 71) to someone with "a certain dogged, iron-like obstinacy that pushed him on to the fulfillment of his purpose" (Braddon 124). This change does not occur quickly, but we can see it catalogued by Robert in his systematic recordkeeping. The first change we note in him is his attention to detail—and the narrator brings our attention to this. For example, he says, "Robert Audley noticed a bruise upon her delicate skin…it was not a bruise, but four slender, purple marks, such as might have been made by the four fingers of a powerful hand that had grasped the delicate wrist a shade too roughly" (Braddon 123). As Robert begins to note these little details he also begins to document his findings; his lazy casual nature begins to erode and he gradually adopts the vocabulary of the detective. He is trained as a lawyer, but up until this point he has not much use for his training. He asks her, "Lady Audley, did you ever study the theory of circumstantial evidence?" (Braddon 152). Further, he thinks about his investigation in terms of a trial, finally putting to use his legal training: "This woman would be good in a witness-box…it would take a clever lawyer to bother her in a cross-examination" (Braddon 164).

Robert also feels conflicted in his new role as detective. Not quite sure if he wants to pursue Lady Audley, asking himself, "Why should I try to unravel the tangled skein, to fit the pieces of the terrible puzzle, and gather together the stray fragments which when collected may

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[95] This is reminiscent of the portrait of Gothic protagonist as described by Deidre Lynch in "Gothic Libraries and National Subjects" (2001): "while surrounded by books, ink, and paper the protagonists of Gothic fiction embark on their projects of memory and mourning" (29). The idea that internal readers are in effect writing their own stories as we read them is highlighted in my reading of my primary texts. I focus on the actual tangible artifact that is created and how that creation helps shape our understanding of the internal readers, even as it helps them do the same.

make such a hideous whole?" (Braddon 186). In this statement he not only shows his reluctance to continue, but also points our attention to the narrative he is creating, this methodology guides his approach to his investigation as well. He says, "I must trace the life of my uncle's wife backwards, minutely and carefully, from this night to a period of six years ago. This twenty-fourth of February fifty-nine. I want to know every record of her life between to-night and the February of the year fifty-three" (Braddon 240). He struggles because of the relationship that Lady Audley has with his uncle, but the creation of a narrative, the methodology of simply following "facts" serves to divorce his investigation from the emotion associated with his hunt, giving him critical distance along with emotional involvement.

***Dracula*: Convention and Compiling the Patchwork Narrative**

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is one of the most well-known Gothic novels, featuring one of the first incarnations of the vampire figure, a myth that has never quite disappeared from our collective consciousness. The novel has received much critical attention, but I explore a perspective that adds to our understanding of the text; I examine the novel as a female-written text.[96] Stoker creates a patchwork narrative from the thoughts of the main characters. This is an effective technique for the Gothic tone of the novel since the reader does not fully know all the details and is invited to experience it along with the protagonists of the novel, not knowing what lurks on the next page. However, I argue that what makes *Dracula* a female-driven (and written) text is that it is Mina Harker who collects, chooses, edits, and disseminates (in a way, even publishes) the narrative. She is often relegated to the background of the story, and the men even

[96] Not literally of course, but rather I explore how a woman takes on the role of "writer" within the text itself.

make the conscious decision to exclude her from the hunt, and this proves to be a grave mistake that almost dooms their mission. In essence, through her intervention we get a woman's view of the events, and her contribution proves to be more significant than even Professor Van Helsing's knowledge. Critics have pointed out the feminization of the male characters in the text, and the hyper-sexuality of some of the women.[97] Yet by examining Mina as the composer of the text, it is not quite so easy to place women in the Victorian categories of the "Angel in the House," the "Fallen Woman," or even in the recent incarnation of the "New Woman." Mina straddles all these worlds and possesses skills and qualities from all three, and I argue that one of her many skills is author, of *Dracula*.

Mina does not easily fall into the typical role of Victorian woman. Even though she is engaged to be married, she is educated; she is her husband's helpmate but also feels pride in her own accomplishments and intelligence. Unlike her friend Lucy Westenra, descriptions of her do not focus on her beauty and ability to attract suitors.[98] Despite being intelligent, capable, and integral in the hunt for Dracula, she nevertheless feels embarrassed, and it is an internalized shame because the men do seem to genuinely value her input. Although they nevertheless relegate her to the background when the fight gets too "dangerous," it is quickly evident that she is essential to their quest—leaving her out of the planning and the discussions gives Dracula an advantage. Mina anticipates problems that the most learned men did not, for example Dr. Seward says, "Although I have kept the diary for months past, it never once struck me how I was going to find any particular part of it in case I wanted to look it up?" and Mina (without needed instruction) solves this problem by transcribing the notes and composing them, in an order that

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[97] Phyllis A. Roth's "Suddenly Sexual Women in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*," and Christopher Craft's "Kiss Me With Those Red Lips: Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*."

[98] In a way, she is similar to Catherine in her lack of apparent physical attributes, and instead more of a focus on intellect.

she knows will help the group (Stoker 196). She shows how despite the impressive natural of this new technological advance, it is almost useless for their purposes, but she transforms it into a vital tool. In the end, she is referred to as "once more our teacher," putting her in a traditional role for women who were at least somewhat educated—a governess (306).

However, this also reduces Mina to a form of tool or technology, like the many that are paraded in *Dracula* as cutting edge such as the typewriter, the phonograph, and the reliable train schedules, among others. Even though we do not see much of a resemblance between Mina and the women of ill repute of 18th century crime fiction, both are still in essence commodities and subservient to men. However, the real tool is the narrative, a narrative that she diligently helps create, and proliferate. The narrative of *Dracula* builds as it is read and because it is read. It begins simply as many epistolary novels do, with Jonathan Harker's first-person journal. The strict methodology of note taking, logical reasoning and compilation of facts is ever present in the novel; Jonathan opens the novel and he becomes not only the first interior reader we encounter, but also a detective (much like Robert Audley). When he first begins to suspect that the count is more than meets the eye, he writes, "To be sure, there were certain small evidences, such as that my clothes were folded and laid by in a manner which was not my habit…but these things are no proof, for they may have been evidences that my mind was not as usual…I must watch for proof" (Stoker 45). Originally, "the detective-story element of the story was evidently to be stronger during the early stages: there are references in subsequent notes to 'tracing the criminal' and to the conundrum caused to the Count's trackers because they are 'in want of a clue to whereabouts'" (Stoker 340). The detective methodology draws our attention to the narrative as a tangible object. The acts of writing, reading, transcribing, studying, deciphering, etc. are all mentioned often, we are made aware that the novel is an object, something to be held

and read, not just by us, but by the characters within the text—we are equals in that sense. The epistolary narrative technique gives us a seemingly more authentic view into the interior reader's mind, and this belief is strengthened by the fact that Jonathan seems unafraid to share his weaknesses and fears, despite the fact that the journal is apparently meant to be shared. Yet we can ask the question, just how much is actually meant to be shared? His wife Mina will ultimately be the collector and organizer of all the documents, everything that he has written has been shared completely with her, and she has in effect acted as editor, and has taken control of his experience, deciding what will be shared and how it will be organized.

Collection of Narratives in Dracula

The narrative of *Dracula* is made up on journal entries, newspaper clipping, interviews, memorandums, transcripts, etc. but Mina puts them all in a deliberate order. She (sometimes with the help of her husband) transcribes, and collects all of the materials, which at this point does not differentiate *Dracula* too much from a typical epistolary narrative, yet what does make it stand out is the fact that the narrative itself influences and impacts the text as it is being composed. It is more than just a record because as it is being composed it is also being read and distributed, and those who are reading it are also contributing to it. From early in the text the idea that people can be known through their writing is emphasized. Mina and Jonathan communicate through writing, and she finds out about his ordeal with the Count through his journal, not from him directly, since he is too distressed to speak when she first sees him. She says, "It does not read like him, and yet it is his writing" (Stoker 73). Jonathan's journal starts the narrative and it is clear that it is a dangerous piece of writing for the count—it begins to establish the threat he represents, and

Jonathan realizes that "I am sure this diary would have been a mystery to him which he would not have brooked. He would have taken or destroyed it" (Stoker 44).

Despite acting as editor for the narrative, Mina is still segregated from the events because she is a woman. Even she brings our attention to her role as wife throughout the text, and how it supersedes her role as editor or contributor to the hunt. She says, "My household work is done, so I shall take his foreign journal, and lock myself up in my room and read it" (Stoker 161). Her reading of the journal is pivotal because it will inform her future entries, which in turn will influence the rest of the cast since they will read it as well. She is instrumental in the weaving of the narrative. She tells (and in effect educates) Professor Van Helsing about what Jonathan went through and it is all done through writing, not orally; she tells him, "I shall give you a paper to read. It is long, but I have typewritten it all. It will tell you my trouble and Jonathan's. It is the copy of his journal when abroad, and all that happened. I dare not say anything of it; you will read for yourself and judge. And then when I see you, perhaps you will be very kind to tell me what you think" (Stoker 166). The fact that she goes to the effort of typing his journal instead of just giving Van Helsing the original copies is particularly significant because this simple act emphasizes the creation of a text; now there exist two copies of Jonathan's journal—which is what the exterior reader first reads when s/he picks up *Dracula*, now we have a scene where Van Helsing is replicating that moment when we (the reader) examines Jonathan's writings.

Later, his journal will be copied yet again, and what will be added to it is the exchange between Mina and Van Helsing where she gives him the journal, and the scene will be repeated when other characters sit down to read through Jonathan's journal, and in essence sit down to begin to read *Dracula*. Of course, they are more emotionally invested in the proceedings than the exterior reader, but they nevertheless are able, through their reading and compiling and

proliferating of the text, to cultivate some critical distance—they need it in order to comprehend and analyze the narrative as they contribute to it. The progress made as each character reads and adds to the narrative is also recorded in the text. After Van Helsing reads Jonathan's journal (provided by Mina), he says, "I have read your husband's so wonderful diary. You may sleep with out doubt. Strange and terrible as it is, it is *true*! I will pledge my life on it… His brain and his heart are all right; this I swear, before I have even seen him; so be at rest" (167). Here, not only does Van Helsing begin to piece together the narrative, but the writing itself also become representative of Jonathan as a person, to the point where he feels confident enough to diagnosis Jonathan without actually meeting him. Not only does Van Helsing "meet" Jonathan through his journal, but Mina as well, she tells him:

> "You do not know me," I said. "When you have read those papers—my own diary and my husband's also, which I have typed—you will know me better. I have not faltered in giving every thought of my own heart in this cause; but, of course, you do not know me—yet; and I must not expect you to trust me so far." (Stoker 196)

They are all cognizant that they are creating a narrative, and even as they close read it, they realize when suspense is being created and resent the fact that they do not get all the information up front. Dr. Seward notes, "I have an idea that Van Helsing thinks he knows too, but he will only let out enough at a time to whet curiosity" (Stoker 170). This is a well-known narrative device, and not only is it being used (by Van Helsing), but Dr. Seward can recognize it as he reads the collective novel.[99] Even though suspense is inevitably created, the focus always remains on creating and reading the collective narrative, Van Helsing instructs, "Read all, I pray you, with the open mind; and if you can add in any way to the story here told do so, for it is all-

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[99] This is reminiscent of the role of the narrator in *Lady Audley's Secret* who does not give away all the information up front but instead urges the external reader and Robert to think and discover for themselves—while also cultivating an air of mystery.

important. You have kept diary of all these so strange things; is it not so? Yes! Then we shall go through all these together when that we meet" (Stoker 194). At this moment even more characters go through the act of sitting down and reading the narrative from the beginning. This gives them answers, but also (as with the exterior reader) brings up even more questions.

> We must all have the knowledge and all the help which we can get…I can see that there are in your record many lights to this dark mystery…we need have no secrets amongst us; working together and with absolute trust, we can surely be stronger than if some of us were in the dark. (Stoker 197)

Mina adds to the narrative not only through her own diary, but also by helping others with theirs. For example, Dr. Seward keeps his journal via phonograph, and he is embarrassed to admit that while it is convenient, he does not know how he would find a particular entry. Mina says, "boldly… 'you had better let me copy it out for you on my typewriter'" (Stoker 196). It is a huge help for Dr. Seward and the cast as a whole, but still feels like she is being "bold" for suggesting her invaluable assistance. She takes on the role of not just transcribing but recording as well, making sure that there are no gaps in the narrative. She quickly writes in her journal,

> Let me write this all out now. We must be ready for Dr. Van Helsing when he comes…In this matter dates are everything, and I think that if we get all our material ready, and have every item put in chronological order, we shall have done much…I used manifold, and so took three copies of the diary, just as I had done with all the rest. (Stoker 198)

Not only does she tell us how she is making copies for general consumption, she also points out the several types of technology she deftly uses, and notes that there is a particular methodology that she undertakes in order to compile the contributions in an effective way, which is similar to what we saw with Robert and his investigation of Lady Audley—tracing

development systematically and chronologically. She takes on the role of detective, more so than the men in her group because although they too are hunting and investigating the Count, they do not go through the thought process of compiling and making sense of all of the information, they do not think about how to best present the information to others. Mina not only compiles the group's narrative, but studies other texts: "I shall look through the evening papers since then, and perhaps I shall get some new light. I am not sleepy, and the work will help to keep me quiet" (Stoker 199). Clippings from the newspapers are also placed within the text as well, if she thinks they are relevant to their purposes.

Throughout the text several characters point out that Mina is "knitting together in chronological order every scrap of evidence" (Stoker 199).[100] Further, several times we see characters "read everything; so when we meet in the study we shall all be informed as to facts, and can arrange our plan of battle with this terrible and mysterious enemy" (Stoker 208). But there are omissions, after studying the text as a whole; it is remarkable that there are omissions. For example, we do not get descriptions of the same event from multiple sources—which is odd given that all the characters seem to be diligent about their journals. An answer could be that there were multiple descriptions, but Mina chose the most informative one to include in the overall narrative, again, pointing to her power and strong influence over the understanding of the other characters. She in effect becomes the narrator of the text, and prefers a linear as opposed to layered text.

Mina's importance as chief editor, composer, narrator, publisher, and even detective is further emphasized when we note what happens when the men try to exclude her from the proceedings and no longer allow her to transcribe and compile the narrative. She says, "It is

[100] Here we see a parallel with Homer's Penelope.

strange to me to be kept in the dark as I am today; after Jonathan's full confidence for so many years" (Stoker 225). Adding,

> They all agreed that it was best that I should not be drawn further into this awful work, and I acquiesced. But to think that he keeps anything from me!…I shall put a bold face on, and if I do feel weepy, he shall never see it. I suppose it is one of the lessons that we poor women have to learn. (Stoker 226)

She is nonetheless obedient when the men make these decisions for her, and even invokes her lot in life as a woman as justification for their behavior. Here she is reminiscent of both Catherine and Lady Audley in the lack of respect men have for her; she is clearly underestimated, and also we see the need for women to play a role for the men in her life in order to keep put them at ease and keep them comfortable. When they do exclude her, the Count manages to begin to transform her into a vampire, and they are completely blind to the transformation because they relegate her to the outskirts of their investigation and therefore do not pay attention to her. After they realize what is happening, they say, "Our dear Madam Mina is once more our teacher. Her eyes have seen where we were blinded. Now we are on track once again, and this time we may succeed" (Stoker 306). It is clear that she is vital to their investigation and the narrative cannot be completed without her, but also by referring to her as their "teacher," she is relegated to the typical role for women who worked.

Conclusion: Who and How do We Judge?

Jonathan closes the narrative, just as he opened it. But as he does so, he once again brings our attention to the novel as a tangible object. He says:

> I took the papers from the safe where they have been ever since our return so long ago. We were struck with the fact, that in all the mass of material of which the record is composed, there is hardly one authentic document, nothing but a mass of type-writing, except the later notebook of Mina and Seward and myself, and Van Helsing's memorandum. We could hardly ask anyone, even did we wish to, to accept these as proofs of so wild a story. (Stoker 326-27)

The bundle of papers that he holds in his hands is the same that we have in our hands as we read these lines. We saw and experienced the creation of the text, and as we did so, we saw the interior readers struggle with the balance between critical distance and emotional immersion. But it is the creation of the text that allows them to channel their emotions and give order and logic to situations that seem to lack it completely. The creation of the Gothic community within the text is reflected in the creation of the narrative itself, and this process allows for the transformation of emotion into judgment because it creates a cast of close readers and analysts, not just people who are experiencing everything and allowing their emotions to simmer on the surface. Even Catherine learns to be a close reader, and even (gasp!) control her emotions. Toward the end *Northanger Abbey* she is described as "the anxious, agitated, happy, feverish Catherine,-- said not a word; but her glowing cheek and brightened eye made her mother trust that this good-natured visit would at least set her heart at ease for a time" (Austen 179). Although she may still be agitated on the inside, she manages to control her emotions with only a slight hint as to the turmoil inside. The narrators help provide a bridge for this transition because they have a foot both inside and outside the text. They have more of an ability to have the simultaneous immersion and distance. In *Dracula* this becomes more complex because we do not have the type of narrator that we have in Austen's or Braddon's texts. The narrator is in essence every

character, with Mina's overarching guidance. But we see how despite the lack of narrator, each character gradually is able to achieve the distance as they become more informed (thanks to Mina).

As with the Crime narrative of the 18th century, and the typical Gothic text, the repackaging of emotions is tied to the reestablishment of the status quo. Her future husband, signaling a relationship where she will benefit from his instruction, scolds Catherine. Lady Audley is quietly sent away and dies. Count Dracula is killed; Mina and Jonathan have a child. These people (mostly women) are made sense of—they are if not killed, categorized and understood. The emotion that was associated with them is removed and logic takes its place. These people, the ones who survive (Catherine, Robert, Mina, etc.) are now better readers due to the fact that they were forced to undergo situations where their emotions were being brought to the surface, and needed to be controlled and repackaged. They learned from that experience, we were all as a community guided through that experience by the narrators, and emerged as better close readers. This experience mimics that of the audience in Greek and Roman Tragedy—we all went through an intimate and moving experience, and through it, improved.

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