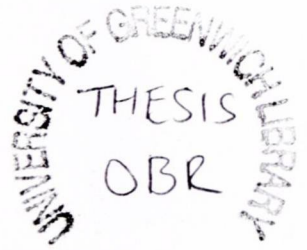
The Beautiful Gothic

An investigation into the use and development of the Beautiful and Death in Gothic literature



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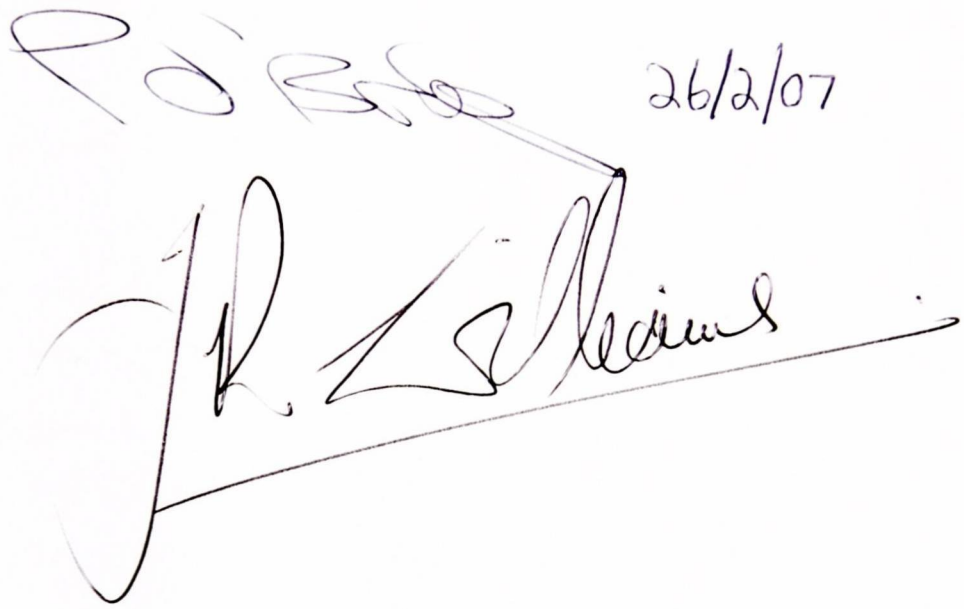
DECLARATION

I certify that this work has not been accepted in substance for any degree, and is not concurrently being accepted for any degree other than that of MPhil being studied at the University of Greenwich. I also declare that this work is a result of my own investigations except where otherwise identified by references and that I have not plagiarised another's work.



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ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to explore the ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful in Gothic literature. Using ideas proposed by Edmund Burke, I will argue that authors of the Gothic genre developed these ideas into a maturing relationship between the Sublime and the Beautiful, and then demonstrate how this relationship has close ties with death and resurrection. I will also explain how this relationship assists towards understanding death as something that has already occurred in the past, which I call the *Beautiful Death*. I will further argue how the development of the Beautiful helped to popularise the character of the vampire in fiction as it is recognised today.

Using Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* as a starting point, I will discuss how authors came to realise the necessity of the Beautiful in Gothic literature along with its charge of empowering the Sublime. I will trace what I understand to be the evolution of the Beautiful from Walpole's novel onwards until it becomes a force that first challenges the presence of the Sublime, and then arguably becomes more powerful than the Sublime. With this in mind I will demonstrate how the Beautiful Death is developed by authors into an independent force that is identifiable in strong, overpowering characters from Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* onwards. I will argue that the physical guise of the Beautiful is an important step towards the popularisation of the vampire in fiction.

As I will be focusing more on the Beautiful rather than the Sublime, my thesis will therefore primarily address the idea of whether or not the Gothic genre can be considered as a literature of the Beautiful as well as the Sublime and how, in using it, authors effected not only the idea of accepting death, but also established a relationship between their characters and death. I will discuss the latter in my conclusion using Carolyn Lamb's *Glenarvon*, by which point I will have demonstrated how death and the Beautiful are vital components of Gothic fiction, and how their presence was a vital influence upon the emergence of the vampire as a recurring character of proceeding fiction.

CONTENTS

Chapter One

Introduction

Themes and Texts

This thesis is concerned with how writers used the Gothic genre to develop their response to death, the Sublime, and the Beautiful and how, in turn, this response assisted in the popularisation of the vampire in nineteenth century fiction. I will consider the use and development of the Beautiful in Gothic literature and how it impressed not only upon the way that death was perceived, but also how it helped shape the characteristics that would become commonly associated with the vampiric figure of later fiction. I will argue that this is an original approach to the reading of Gothic from the middle of the eighteenth century up until the early nineteenth century.

The relationship that is developed by authors between the Sublime and the Beautiful plays a key role in Gothic fiction, and I will discuss how this relationship encourages two important developments in Gothic literature. First is the creation of what I have called the 'Beautiful Death', which involves the individual counteracting their present melancholies by resurrecting the memory of a dead, familiar, and untroubled past.* I will, for future reference, refer to the trope of substituting a Sublime present with the Beautiful Death of the past as 'Replacement'. Second is the physical representation of the Beautiful Death, which evolves in late eighteenth century Gothic literature and becomes closely aligned with the characteristics of the vampire as it is perceived today. I will discuss the use of this physical representation as a means by which authors empowered their villainous characters – otherwise deemed evil and corrupt – with the characteristics of the 'Beautiful Death' and whose presence both allured and controlled their victims. I will later argue that, by the early nineteenth century, the Beautiful Death came to be used for deceptive purposes as well as those used to

* From this point on, and aside from Philippe Aries' use of the term in his book *The Hour of Our Death*, any reference that I make to the 'Beautiful Death' will relate to this definition until I discuss its alteration in Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* in chapter four.

pacify death. An early example of this can be found in Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796) in which Lewis provides Ambrosio, the licentious monk of the title, with all the characteristics previously found in the Beautiful Death. I will use *The Monk* to demonstrate the origins of this physical representation and I will discuss how it influences the popularisation of the vampire in nineteenth century literature and beyond.

Initially the Beautiful Death may appear little more than a simple recollection of more favourable times, the practice of which is both commonplace and part of the human condition. Nevertheless I will demonstrate how the frequent use of the Beautiful Death by Gothic authors in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century would assist in the development of new attitudes towards understanding death, alongside popularising one of the most notorious characters of nineteenth century fiction. Although the vampire's roots in myth and folklore predate eighteenth century depictions, its origins are somewhat difficult to trace since, as Christopher Frayling notes, 'the lore is so synthetic' (Frayling, 5). From biblical references to rumours and stories voiced by the fireside, the vampire has acquired a multitude of fearful characteristics over centuries of hearsay and legend. Frayling writes:

> The vampire is as old as the world. Although we normally associate the myth with eastern Europe or Greece ... traces of vampirism are to be found in most cultures. Blood drained by the Lamiae, emissaries of the Triple Goddess Hecate; blood sucked by Lilith, the other woman in Adam's life; blood shed for dead Attis and mourning Cybele, the Great Mother; ... blood for healing, for fertility, for rejuvenation; blood as unclean; blood sacrifices to the Nepalese Lord of Death or the Mongolian Vampire God (Frayling, 4).

It is my intention, however, to reveal a crucial phase in Gothic literature where the vampire begins to acquire the essential qualities that define it in contemporary culture as a character capable of invoking desire as well as fear.

I believe the novels I include in my thesis, beginning with Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1765), demonstrate a progressive approach towards the physical representation of the 'Beautiful Death' in Carolyn Lamb's *Glenarvon* (1816). I will also discuss how I understand this novel to represent the early stages of an inspired

relationship with death instigated by the ideas of previous authors, and which would continue to influence ensuing art, literature and, much later, the medium of film.

The definition of the word 'Gothic' initially relates to the Northern tribes who launched numerous invasions of the Roman Empire in the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries. Linda Bayer-Berenbaum writes:

> The term was later applied by Renaissance critics to the style of architecture that flourished in the thirteenth century, because these critics thought that the style had originated with the Goths. This architecture was held in low esteem during the Renaissance, and the word *Gothic* therefore developed pejorative connotations suggesting the uncouth, ugly, barbaric, or archaic (Bayer-Berenbaum, 19).

Today, when not used in its strictly historical sense, the word 'Gothic' tends to be related to such things as darkness, castles, and jagged trees in haunted forests, but its definitions in today's culture remains diverse. The recent Gothic revival in popular culture has seen various modified versions of the term 'Gothic'. Gothic is now a household word, a fashion or style that is commonly affiliated with youth subculture and television programmes depicting teenage vampire slayers. Enter the word 'Gothic' into an online word search and you will come across any number of definitions ranging from internet stores advertising what is now considered as Gothic clothing (usually black and silk in design) and accessories spanning from Celtic designs and Satanic crosses, to clubs and philosophical debates concerning the subject of death. Witchcraft, gloomy facial make-up, over-dyed hair, and bands performing under the description of *Black/Gothic Metal* have become influential to the movement and have reformed a genre into a fashion accessory often depicted on the cat-walk. As popular culture continues its shift towards the ubiquitous influence of Gothic, the genre begins to effortlessly blend with daily routine. It is indeed difficult to imagine visiting a university or college in modern academia without happening upon the now clichéd 'Gothic Student', the supposed pariah who, rather than emanate impressions of individuality, is now just a small element of an ever-growing population loyal to fashion. In modern cinema directors such as Alex Proyas, Mariano Baino, and Tim Burton depict what we might understand as traditional Gothic landscapes. Dark edifices disappear into the night sky in the film *Dark City,* of 1996, and the headless

horseman charges through dark misty fields searching for his victim in *Sleepy Hollow*, of 1999. This is not to criticise a simplified notion of Gothic. It is true, however, that Gothic represents a far richer cultural tradition than the one that twentieth and twenty-first century film makers and popular culture may appear to reflect. Although Linda Bayer-Berenbaum's book was written over twenty years ago, her argument applies to the theme of this thesis, and to today's ever-changing culture:

> The Gothic revival, whether in popular culture or in older Gothic art forms, is not merely a whimsical fad unrelated to the tenor of our times, to the modern predicament. The return of the Gothic novel is not simply a romantic nostalgia for times gone by – for old creaking castles or Victorian mansions – but is an expression of some of the most exciting and most disturbing aspects of modern existence. In order to fathom the inherently modern appeal of Gothicism, we must look beneath the spiderwebs and trapdoors to the essence of the Gothic orientation. Gothicism is not merely a style; it entails a philosophy, and as a philosophy it speaks to the twentieth century (Bayer-Berenbaum, 12).

The Gothic genre was shaped to a considerable degree by fears of change in society that were precipitated by revolutions abroad. Andrew Smith has done important work in this area by looking at the links between Gothic and political ideology, as has David B. Morris, in the way he links theories of sublimity to political and social change from the late eighteenth century on. The outbreak of revolution in France in 1789 initiated the most popular period for Gothic fiction, which thrived in the 1790s. Fears of a collapse in the establishment and a subsequently lawless era were contributors to the rise of Gothic fiction. Fred Botting writes, 'Uncertainties about the nature of power, law, society, family and sexuality dominate Gothic fiction' (Botting, 5). Edmund Burke addresses these fears in his work, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). As Conor Cruise O'Brien notes in his introduction to Burke's *Reflections*:

> The spirit of total, radical innovation; the overthrow of all prescriptive rights; the confiscation of property; destruction of the Church, the

> nobility, the family, tradition, veneration, the ancestors, the nation – this is the catalogue of all that Burke dreaded in his darkest moments (Burke 1986, 10).

Burke was disheartened in his discovery that the occurrences in France were being favoured in England by a group known as The Revolution Society. The Revolution Society had been founded in 1788 to solemnise the centenary of the English revolution of 1688, which marked an historic shift in power from the monarchy to Parliament. Burke writes:

> It is no wonder therefore, that with these ideas of every thing (sic) in their constitution and government at home, either in church or state, as illegitimate and usurped, or, at best as a vain mockery, they look abroad with an eager and passionate enthusiasm (Burke 1986, 148).

Burke's reflections, partly a didactic essay concerning the principles, both legal and moral, upon which a civilised society should be based (primarily using England as an example), demonstrates the feelings of uncertainty and fear that had carried the threat of revolution across the water:

> The dislike I feel to revolutions, the signals for which have so often been given from pulpits; the spirit of change that is gone abroad; the total contempt which prevails with you, and may come to prevail with us, of all antient (sic) institutions, when set in opposition to a present sense of convenience, or to the bent of a present inclination: all these considerations make it not unadvisable, in my opinion, to call back our attention to the true principles of our own domestic laws; that you, my French friend, should begin to know, and that we should continue to cherish them (110).

Burke's *Reflections* were somewhat prophetic. Aidan Day notes that Burke 'argues that the drive for equality across the Channel would involve a drive towards violence and tyranny rather than peace and liberty' (Day, 14). With the fall of the Bastille in 1789 representing not only a victory for liberty, but also the fall of the ancient regime,

English society both political and cultural had suddenly come under indirect threat, and Burke's ensuing letter relates the fears for the stability of an entire nation:

> Your affairs, in spite of us, are made a part of our interest; so far at least as to keep at a distance your panacea, or your plague. If it be a panacea, we do not want it. We know the consequences of unnecessary physic. If it be a plague; it is such a plague, that the precautions of the most severe quarantine ought to be established against it (Burke 1986, 185).

The Revolution also spouted a wave of anti-Catholicism in France that was to contribute to Gothic motifs. Brought about, partly, by disdain for the privileges that had been allocated to the Church by the state along with its ties with the old regime, the role of the clergy subsequently came into question in the build-up to the revolution. Christopher Hibbert writes:

> The Church's great privileges, the scrupulously, not to say severely, businesslike manner in which many of its large estates were run, the number of absentee abbots and of well-endowed religious houses whose members were exclusively aristocratic, the gradual decline in belief of the virtues of a life of religious contemplation and the spread of scepticism among the influential middle class of the larger towns, all contributed to the growing spirit of anti-clericalism (Hibbert, 31).

The circumstances following the French Revolution of 1789 saw a great number of people fall to both the guillotine and the brutality of the mob, and the clergy bore much of this mercilessness. As a result of national reforms from 1790-1791, there followed a split between the Church (and therefore Pope Pius VI who was naturally opposed to such legislation) and its ties with Rome. Priests were now required to take an oath of loyalty to the state, which resulted in them being elected by the state or by their congregations rather than the Church. This fell under extreme protest from the Pope who suspended all those who took the oath, which in turn led to extreme public reaction. Hibbert writes:

> The Pope's unequivocal pronouncement against the Civil Constitution, made public in brief, led to serious disturbances in Paris where the people's anti-clericalism was fostered both by political clubs and by the theatres which, when not presenting plays celebrating civic virtue, put on others displaying the horrors of the Inquisition, the tribulations and hypocrisy of monastic and convent life, and the greed and dissipation of real and fictional leaders of the Roman Catholic Church. Outside the theatres and in the gardens of the Palais Royal effigies of the Pope were set alight on bonfires, a severed head was tossed through the windows of the Papal Nuncio's carriage, convents were broken into and nuns assaulted and revolutionary slogans were scrawled in church doors (Hibbert, 117).

By 1793-1794 such attacks on the Church had not abated and a programme of de-Christanization had begun:

> Religious monuments outside churches were destroyed; various religious ceremonies were suppressed; ecclesiastical plate and other treasures were seized in the name of the people; images of the Madonna were replaced by busts of Marat (Hibbert, 231).

Other critics have named additional reasons for the rise in popularity of Gothic fiction. Victor Sage argues:

> The French Revolution is by no means the only political event which has been cited as a determinant of the Gothic novel ... the French critic Maurice Levy came to the conclusion that the social and political revolution more importantly related to the Gothic writers was the so-called 'Glorious Revolution', the Protestant Settlement of 1688 (Sage 1998, xiii).

The importance of Protestant ideology in Gothic fiction is discussed further in chapter three.

Linda Bayer-Berenbaum offers an intriguing reason for the rise of Gothic fiction. Rather than authors reflecting the fears of revolution abroad and the collapse of governing institutions in England, Bayer-Berenbaum suggests that Gothic may have been an aesthetic expression of the revolutionary sentiment, and which thrived on mutiny rather than its fearsome effects on society:

> Gothicism allies itself with revolutionary movements because it cannot tolerate any restriction of the individual, and thus Gothicism is not merely revolutionary but anarchistic in its sympathies. As all forms of order disintegrate, the Gothic mind is free to invade the realms of the socially forbidden. The danger to civilisation that is likely to result does not deter the Gothic spirit, which is of course drawn to ruins and destruction anyway (Bayer-Berenbaum, 43).

The term 'Gothic' also applies to the development of a scholarly interest in Northern European culture of the Middle Ages from the late eighteenth century onwards. Alongside the vogue for 'Gothic horror' in literature, therefore, there was serious commitment to an aesthetic that was understood by intellectuals like Thomas Gray, William Blake, Henry Fuseli, through to Pugin and Ruskin to challenge the hegemony of Classicism established during the eighteenth century. Robert Miles argues that the foundations of Gothic lie within a larger, fragmented movement rather than an isolated, literary movement. Miles discusses the Gothic as a genealogy, as a 'general shift in taste around the mid to late eighteenth century' (Miles, 28) that influenced the way that the Gothic was to evolve. He writes, 'the origins of Gothic lie, not in Horace Walpole's mind, but in the aesthetic that preceded his novel.' (30) Miles goes on to write, 'many of the motifs, figures, topoi and themes that characterise Gothic writing find a previous expression within the Gothic aesthetic.'(30) Miles, however, does not include the Beautiful in this aesthetic.

I have named my thesis *The Beautiful Gothic* since it is the significance of the Beautiful in Gothic literature rather than the Sublime that will shape the greater part of my discussion. I therefore largely focus on texts that are not usually read in relation to the Beautiful. I will discuss the effect of the Sublime on the Beautiful and then chart the evolving relationship between both ideas and their contribution to the development of the 'Beautiful Death' in Gothic literature. Edmund Burke's essay, *A*

Philosophical Enquiry Into The Origin Of Our Ideas Of The Sublime And The Beautiful (1757) will be of major importance to the structure of my thesis. Burke's essay listed the fundamentals of what was considered Beautiful and Sublime. These ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful underwent significant changes up to and beyond the end of the eighteenth century and would subsequently become an important theoretical basis for Gothic authors who incorporated Burke's ideas into their work. Like the Sublime, the Beautiful was also represented in Gothic literature. For Burke, 'beauty is a thing much too affecting not to depend upon some positive qualities' (Burke 1998, 146). Describing the Beautiful as 'that quality or those qualities in bodies by which they cause love, or some passion similar to it' (128) the innocent heroine and the picturesque landscape are just two of the characteristics of Gothic literature that illustrate Burke's definition.

It is darkness, castles, subterraneous passages and graveyards, nonetheless that have become popular images when considering the Gothic genre, which is usually defined as belonging to the period 1765 to 1820. Maggie Kilgour, however, suggests a Gothic period that takes us to the end of the nineteenth century:

> One of the powerful images conjured up by the words 'gothic novel' is that of a shadowy form rising from a mysterious place: Frankenstein's monster rising from the laboratory table, Dracula creeping from his coffin, or, more generally, the slow opening of a crypt to reveal a dark and obscure figure (Kilgour, 3).

At the most basic level, it is this kind of imagery that contributed to Burke's definition of the Sublime. David Stevens' book *The Gothic Tradition* (2003), aims at explaining the fundamental characteristics of Gothic to students who are new to the genre. Stevens writes: 'a gothic tale may unfold against the background of a range of possible settings, although there are certain generic preferences – ruins, dungeons, darkness, for instance.' (Stevens, 54) In her introduction to Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796), Emma McEvoy summarises what the majority of critics understand as Gothic fiction:

> Its plots are proscribed and prescribed beforehand, and characteristically involve evil (Catholic) ecclesiastics, beautiful

> heroines, handsome heroes, separation, imprisonment in dungeons and convents, mazes of passages, the evil (sexual) older woman, wild scenery, castles, and ruins (Lewis, 17).

Many critics have understood the Gothic as formulaic in design. Focusing on Gothic motifs, Elizabeth Napier in her book, *The Failure of Gothic* (1987), argues that, 'Most of the novels gain resonance and continuity by making use of the same devices: ruined castles, secret panels, concealed portraits, underground passageways' (Napier, 27). Napier continues:

> Any honest reading of Gothic fiction shows that the pleasure – and not the despair – of the text arises fairly forthrightly from the repetition of a certain series of extremely conventional scenes, events, and landscapes. (28)

Napier goes on to examine the many failures that she understands as permeating throughout the Gothic framework. In particular she discusses the sacrifice of character for setting; the rapidity of many of the texts and the subsequent forfeiture of plot; interruption and exaggeration for effect within the narrative, and the authors' 'supposed' knowledge of history and location (here she refers to the works of Ann Radcliffe).

The Gothic, therefore, is commonly linked by critics to the Sublime, which was an idea connected to the unknown and the obscure, and which inspired powerful emotions in the individual that were often attached to fear; as Burke notes: 'Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger ... is a source of the Sublime' (Burke 1998, 86). Botting provides a summary of Sublime representation in Gothic literature:

> In Gothic fiction certain stock features provide the principal embodiments and evocations of cultural anxieties. Tortuous, fragmented narratives relating mysterious incidents, horrible images and life-threatening pursuits predominate in the eighteenth century. Spectres, monsters, demons, corpses, skeletons, evil aristocrats, monks

> and nuns, fainting heroines and bandits populate Gothic landscapes as suggestive figures of imagined and realistic threats (Botting, 2).

Becoming a prevalent device for Gothic novelists, the Sublime was a dominant force made more powerful through the presence of a victim. Murderers, tyrants, and even the threat of an approaching storm can be considered representative of the Sublime. As E.J. Clery notes: 'To imagine death, to imagine violence, supernatural agency, madness, uncontrollable passion: this is the art of the Gothic writer' (Clery 2000, 13).

Utilised as an expression of power of weakness, the Sublime is understood by many critics to take centre stage in Gothic fiction. The Sublime was developed to represent violence, madness, and uncontrollable passion as early as Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1765). Characters such as Walpole's 'Manfred' exhibited irrational behaviour, obscure temperaments, and had a capacity for brutal and bloody acts. Clery notes:

> There have been many different critical approaches to Gothic writing of this period. But one key element which has tended to be overlooked, no doubt because of its very obviousness, is the prominence of passion within the genre. While emotion was also an important ingredient in sentimental fiction, Gothic took its characters and readers to new extremes of feeling, through the representation of scenes and events well beyond the normal range of experience (Clery 2000, 13).

As it was set down in Burke's essay, the Sublime had at its epicentre the notion of death as the ultimate fear of obliteration. The weak, the defenceless and the innocent, on the other hand, represented the Beautiful. I will be arguing, however, that Gothic fiction came to challenge this hierarchy.

On frequent occasions, as in Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796), the Beautiful was represented by a female (in this instance by the character of Antonia). Like Burke, Kant also establishes the female as a representative of the Beautiful:

> without taking into consideration that her figure in general is finer, her features more delicate and gentler, and her mien more engaging and more expressive of friendliness, pleasantry, and kindness than in the male sex, and not forgetting what one must reckon as a secret magic with which she makes our passion inclined to judgements favourable to her ... certain specific traits lie especially in the personality of this sex which distinguish it clearly from ours and chiefly result in making her known by the mark of the beautiful (Kant, 76).

Arguing against this idea from a feminist perspective Kate Ferguson Ellis writes that 'the Gothic novel expanded the female sphere to the point where women could challenge the basis of their own "elevation"' (Ellis, xiii). Discussing the ways in which Gothic authors challenged the domesticated representations of women in eighteenth century society by rendering them strong, determined characters, Ellis argues that the Beautiful is not always affiliated with an innocent female victim. My discussion of alternative representations of the Beautiful 'victim' in Gothic literature will, therefore, demonstrate how they assisted in developing the relationship between the Sublime and the Beautiful.

Gothic explores areas that are beyond the pale, whether this is in terms of good taste, morality, or the readers' judgement of what is credible. Authors charged their work with a mixture of darkness, catacombs, ghosts, and tyrants, but beneath this surface of horrors was the evolving concept of the Beautiful, and during the course of this thesis I will discuss how the presence of the Sublime does not necessarily have to implicate emotions connected with fear, danger, or the unknown. In doing so, I will draw on the studies of Elisabeth Bronfen, Philippe Aries, and Adam Phillips as critics who have in various ways discussed these issues.

Philippe Aries writes:

> From the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, countless scenes or motifs in art and in literature associate death with love, Thanatos with Eros. These are erotico-macabre themes, or just morbid ones, which reveal extreme complaisance before the spectacle of death, suffering, and torture (Aries 1994, 56).

As Aries suggests, death in art and literature was beginning to be represented as a potentially beautiful occurrence and, although this may still not be represented as being the case by critics like David Punter and E.J Clery, I will demonstrate how Gothic authors would begin to develop this idea in their work. Aries goes on to add:

> Like the sexual act, death was henceforth increasingly thought of as a transgression which tears man from his daily life, from rational society, from his monotonous work, in order to make him undergo a paroxysm, plunging him into an irrational, violent, and beautiful world (57).

I will argue that Gothic authors succeeded in shifting the meaning of the Beautiful, therefore contributing to later nineteenth century (and twentieth and twenty-first century) debates on the nature of death and how we come to terms with it. I would argue that this was specifically so in relation to those who would – in some sense – argue for beauty in death. An important study in this respect is Elisabeth Bronfen's book, *Over Her Dead Body* (1996), and I will consider her psychoanalytical approach to death. However, I will not be concerned with the idea of masking the fear of death with the Beautiful as Bronfen suggests in her chapter, *Deathbed Scenes*, and I will depart from Bronfen's approach by discussing how masking death with beauty is an ineffectual method of coping with mortality. Rather I will address the use and development of the Beautiful by Gothic authors as, first, an accompaniment of the Sublime and, secondly, as a representation of death and resurrection, the significance of which will be discussed later in relation to the vampire.

From as early as Clara Reeves' *The Old English Baron* (1777) Gothic authors assisted in the growth of what Philippe Aries calls the 'Beautiful Death' in his book *The Hour Of Our Death* (1991). The 'Beautiful Death' of Aries is very much rooted in the nineteenth century. Aries' definition of the 'Beautiful Death' regards death as a beautiful occurrence and is connected to the happy expectations of the afterlife where the prospect of joyful reunions with loved ones outweigh the fear of dying. Arguing that 'Before death can be happy, it must be divested of the prejudices that distort it' (Aries 1991, 410), the 'Beautiful Death' of Aries is partly dependent upon the education of the individual. Aries maintains that the educated will have acquired certain 'prejudices' in the classroom that would significantly alter their views on death. Those who reside in the country, however, and whose social stature ranks

among the uneducated and poor will ultimately perceive death as an end to the adversities of destitution. Aries writes:

> Thanks to the Rousseauean myth of the corrupt town as opposed to the innocent country, close to nature, the man of the Enlightenment had his own way of expressing a physically observable fact: the striking contrast between a tradition of familiarity with death that was preserved in the country and among the poor, and a new attitude, more common in the towns and among the rich and well educated, which tended to magnify the significance and possibilities of death (Aries 1991, 410).

Here I depart from Aries' Historicist approach, however, by placing the origins of the Beautiful Death, not in cultural or religious ideas, but in the textual relationship between the philosophical ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful devised by Gothic authors who drew heavily – in the first instance – from ideas formulated by Edmund Burke.

Eclectic literary theory can often lead to specious, illogical, and random interpretations of a given subject, but I discovered that using a more diverse theoretical approach allowed me greater freedom to confront the unrestricted and evolving ideas of death, the Sublime, and the Beautiful. In chapters two and three I offer a largely literary historical perspective and I examine the influence of Gothic novels in their development of the Beautiful death. Chapter four, however, partly incorporates a Historicist approach and I look at the way society – in the years following the French Revolution of 1789 – influenced the characters and events in Matthew Lewis' *The Monk*. I explore Lewis' depiction of a sublime society and draw some references from Marilyn Butler's *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries* (1981) and from Romantic poets such as William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge in order to emphasise the significance of this society in his novel. I then consider the significance and failure of the French Revolution as an historical event that manipulated the role of the Beautiful Death in Gothic literature from an idea that was initially controlled by the victim up to Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), to something that began to be granted to the assailant from Lewis' *The Monk* onwards.

The concept of the Sublime attacking the Beautiful was the first thing that encouraged me to consider the presence of death in Gothic literature along with the relationship that I saw was being formed between the Sublime and the Beautiful. I observed that Beauty and death were being used in conjunction with each other from as early as Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron* (1777), and that the destruction of the Beautiful by the Sublime is something that is repeated throughout Gothic fiction. For example a Beautiful landscape is suddenly ravaged by a thunderstorm in Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, or an individual representing the Sublime attacks another who represents the Beautiful in Lewis' *The Monk*. Beauty also perpetually returns in some shape or form to be, once more, destroyed by the Sublime, as I will demonstrate in William Beckford's *Vathek* (1786).

In chapter two, *Before and After Burke*, I will first detail the essential components of Edmund Burke's essay on the Sublime and the Beautiful before discussing them in reference to other examples of Sublimity. I will also discuss how Burke acknowledged a possible relationship between the Sublime and the Beautiful in order to help illustrate the problems that I will be identifying in Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, of 1765, which is considered by many critics to be the first Gothic novel. Using Walpole's novel in correlation with the list of Sublime and Beautiful ideas detailed by Burke, I will examine how Walople's novel scraped the surface of a relationship between the Sublime and the Beautiful, which was to be developed thereafter by succeeding novelists.

Gothic literature provided an ideal literary genre within which to explore transgression, with its transcendence of physical laws and time, moral codes, and rationality that were set by either the social, cultural, or the political issues of the time. Exploring the idea that 'The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and that the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown' (Lovecraft, 423), the Gothic embraced the wild, the superstitious, the implausible, and the obscure; all elements associated by Burke with the Sublime. But I will argue that a novel of transgression requires boundaries to transgress. The novelist will define and even, as Michel Foucault argues, re-define these boundaries. In the case of *The Castle of Otranto*, the novel finds itself inhabiting an undefined space that requires new boundaries to feed its *raison d'être*, transgression. Noel Carroll writes:

> The issue of which novel is the first horror novel or the first Gothic novel can be argued and may well be undecided. One candidate might be Horace Walpole's *The Castle Of Otranto* (1764); however, it may be claimed that its tone ... is not quite right (Carroll, 55).

I will, however, offer a more considered approach towards identifying the problems with Walpole's novel and suggest possible reasons for why 'its tone ... is not quite right'. During the course of this chapter, therefore, I raise issues concerning the limitations of the Sublime in *The Castle of Otranto* and how transgression, like the Sublime, requires something to transgress. The Sublime required a victim to prey upon and repeatedly destroy, and I will argue that it was necessary to fix a limit within the space created by the Sublime in Walpole's novel, and that this limit would, in future Gothic novels, be represented by the Beautiful. I will use Michel Foucault's essay on transgression taken from his book, *language, counter memory, practice (1996)* in relation to Walpole's novel. My interest in Foucault's essay, however, lies in more than supporting the popular opinion that Gothic literature is a literature of transgression, and I will therefore be using his essay to demonstrate how transgression in *The Castle of Otranto* worked against, rather than with, the Sublime.

In chapter three, *The Rise of the Beautiful Death*, I offer possible solutions to the problems that I identify in the previous chapter concerning the limitations of the Sublime without the Beautiful. I examine the evolving relationship between the Sublime and the Beautiful and discuss the origins of the Beautiful Death and its function in Gothic literature. I use Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron* (1777) to demonstrate the early use of the Beautiful Death, and then I discuss its further development in Sofia Lee's *The Recess* (1783) in order to establish the importance of its growing relationship with the vampiric themes of death and resurrection.

For thematic purposes rather than chronological, I discuss William Beckford's *Vathek* (1786) previous to Lee's novel. I realised that, in returning to a discussion of the relationship between the Sublime and the Beautiful in *Vathek* after analysing its more developed form in *The Recess*, the continuity of the thesis would have suffered. In my discussion of *Vathek* I will, therefore, enforce the idea that the previous relationship between the Sublime and the Beautiful was still popular with Gothic authors while also maintaining the vampire imagery that is represented by the character of the Giaour. This discussion will further enable me to elaborate on the

distinctions between my theory of the 'Beautiful Death' and the ideas proposed by Bronfen. At this point I refer to Adam Phillips' book *Darwin's Worms* (1999) in order to further assist my analysis of death in Gothic literature. As with *Vathek* my leap forward in time to a discussion of Darwin and Freud was simply thematic rather than chronological. Phillips' book provided me with a concurring argument that consolidated my existing discussion of death, resurrection, and how we manage the notion of our own demise. Approaching from a literary historical perspective, Phillips discusses Charles Darwin's and Sigmund Freud's approaches towards understanding death, and proposes that death does not necessarily indicate the end of existence. With this in mind I again refer to Michel Foucault and his essay on language, which also develops the idea of a continued existence beyond death. As a preliminary discussion for themes I will explore further in Chapter Four, I use Victor Sage's book, *Horror Fiction in the Protestant Tradition* and discuss the theme of anti-Catholicism and Protestantism in Gothic literature and its relation to the Beautiful Death. Using Simon Critchley's *Very Little ... Almost Nothing* (2000) and Jean-Paul Satre's *Existentialism and Humanism* (1989), I also discuss the theory and presence of existentialism in Gothic literature and its influence upon the physical representation of the Beautiful Death, which I understand as being prevalent in Gothic fiction from Lewis' *The Monk* onwards.

Chapter Four, *Re-shaping the Beautiful Death*, concerns the development of the Beautiful Death by authors into a physical representation, and I will consider its influence on the popularisation of the vampire in nineteenth century fiction. I will discuss how the Beautiful is modified in later Gothic fiction to represent a more powerful force than the Sublime, thus challenging previous ideas relating to beauty and sublimity. 'Replacement' itself was to be significantly modified by Ann Radcliffe in the 1790's who began to popularise the process of merging the Beautiful with the Sublime; I refer to this method as 'Coalescence'. I will discuss how Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* ushers in a new development for the Beautiful Death towards its physical incarnation and confronts preceding ideas of what is considered Sublime and Beautiful. I will compare her use of 'Coalescence' with the eighteenth century artistic movement known as 'The Picturesque', in which both sublimity and beauty were often united to create a harmonious scene. I will suggest that the use of 'Coalescence' by proceeding Gothic authors inspires the creation of powerful, dominant and, ultimately, undead characters in Gothic fiction following

Radcliffe's novel. I will also argue how 'Coalescence' arouses an unhealthy fascination with such iniquitous characters in both their victims and us as readers. I use the character of Ambrosio from Lewis' *The Monk* to locate the origins of the Beautiful Death in its physical form, and I then discuss how the Beautiful Death begins to be modified from something initially used by the victim in times of peril, to something that is independently represented by a physical assailant.

Finally in this chapter I discuss Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya* (1806). I concentrate on three major characters in the novel who I understand to represent three progressive stages of the Beautiful Death in its developing physical form, and who I believe demonstrate the way in which the character of the vampire was evolving in gothic fiction.

In chapter five, *The Marriage of Life and Death*, I use Carolyn Lamb's *Glenarvon* (1816) to establish the alteration of the Beautiful Death into the more recognisable form of the vampire, before it is fully introduced by John Polidori in his short story, *The Vampyre*, published in 1819.

I end my thesis with Lamb's novel because I believe that I have reached a significant point in the literary development of my idea. The volume of literature depicting the vampire (following *Glenarvon)* in the form that we know it today is vast, and I see *Glenarvon* as the basis for the future development of both the Beautiful Death, and the popular vampiric figure that would frequent nineteenth century fiction and beyond.

I will now begin with some definitions of the Sublime and the Beautiful and then move on to discuss the relationship that was to be formed between them.

Chapter Two

Before and after Burke; the Sublime, the Beautiful, and Death.

> Death is an important matter for all – but, as yet, death is not a festival. As yet, mankind has not learned to make its most beautiful festival sacred (Nietzsche, 135).

> Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the Sublime, that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling (Burke 1998, 86).

The above passage, taken from Edmund Burke's seminal essay, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into The Origin Of Our Ideas Of The Sublime And The Beautiful* (1757), is perhaps one of the most familiar to critics and to those studying the Gothic genre. Burke's ideas helped to create a direction for the genre by placing the characteristics attributed to the Sublime and the Beautiful within a systematic framework.

Burke defines the Beautiful as 'that quality or those qualities in bodies by which they cause love, or some passion similar to it' (128). He provides various examples of Beauty which include objects that are 'small', 'smooth', of colours 'clean and fair' and of sounds 'soft' and 'delicate'. Thus, anything that inspires sentiments of love, affection, or anything that composes the mind, is a product of the 'Beautiful'.

Before Burke the Sublime had already been regarded as almost spiritual elevation brought about by fresh perceptions regarding the natural landscape. Fred Botting notes:

> Mountains, once considered as ugly blemishes, deformities disfiguring the proportions of a world that ideally should be uniform, flat and symmetrical, began to be seen with eyes pleased by their irregularity, diversity and scale (Botting, 38).

Previous to Burke's essay, the subject of the Sublime had been extensively investigated by many critics and authors. Botting refers to John Baillie's essay of 1747, *An Essay on the Sublime*, in which he writes 'Hence comes the Name of *Sublime* to everything which thus raises the Mind to fits of *Greatness* and disposes it to soar above her *Mother Earth*' (Botting, 40). Since the beginning of the eighteenth century graveyard poets such as Robert Blair, Edward Young, and William Collins explored the idea of fear, darkness, ghosts, and the subject of death. Robert Blair's *The Grave* (1743) is exclusively concerned with the subject. Blair writes:

> What is this world?
> What but a spacious burial-field unwalled,
> Strewed with death's spoils, the spoils of animals
> Savage and tame, and full of dead men's bones? (Wain, 530).

Edward Young's melancholic *Night Thoughts*, published between 1742 and 1745, approaches death with despondency and trepidation, and incorporates some of the characteristics that Burke will define as representative of the Sublime:

> How populous, how vital is the grave!
> This is creation's melancholy vault,
> The vale funereal, the sad cypress gloom;
> The land of apparitions, empty shades... (Wain, 462).

With homage to obscurity, irregularity, and terror, William Collins' unfinished poem, *An Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland* (1751) approaches the Sublime in a fashion similar to Burke's forthcoming treatment:

> To some dim hill that seems uprising near,
> To his faint eye the grim and grisly shape,

> In all its terrors clad, shall wild appear (Wain, 575).

The subject of the Sublime and the Beautiful, however, was not strictly an eighteenth century British phenomenon. Ideas on the Sublime are now thought to originate as far back as the third century to Cassius Longinus. * Like Burke, Longinus understands the Sublime as an idea that turns on 'the stimulus of powerful and inspired emotion' (Longinus, 121).

German philosopher Immanuel Kant understands the characteristics of the Sublime and the Beautiful in the following way:

> Tall oaks and lonely shadows in a sacred grove are sublime; flower beds, low hedges and trees trimmed in figures are beautiful. Night is sublime, day is beautiful (Kant, 47).

Although there was already a vast collection of critical investigation into the Sublime on offer, both Edmund Burke and Horace Walpole were to initiate a new phase in what came to be known as Gothic. It should be noted at this point, however, that Walpole never truly acknowledged Burke's influence. Timothy Mowl writes:

> Interestingly, Horace never mentions Burke's seminal study of these Romantic emotions, though he followed Burke's political career with interest and approval. But Horace was never notably generous about his sources (Mowl, 188).

According to Burke the 'Sublime', as an emotion attached to ideas of pain and danger, focuses upon 'fear', 'obscurity', 'power', 'vastness', and 'infinity' as qualities that are both unknown and dominant. Anything, therefore, that forces the mind into a state of bewilderment and inferiority or subjects the mind to ideas of danger or pain, is productive of what Burke calls the 'Sublime'. He describes the idea of death as the most fearful characteristic of the Sublime; it is understood by Burke as something that lies beyond even the boundaries of pain:

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* It is also believed by many to have been the work of an unknown Greek author writing in the first century.

> as pain is stronger in its operation than pleasure, so death is in general a much more affecting idea than pain...what generally makes pain itself, if I may say so, more painful, is, that it is considered as an emissary of this king of terrors (Burke 1998, 86).

Arthur Schopenhauer writes with a similar view on death: 'The greatest of evils, the worst thing that can threaten anywhere, is death; the greatest anxiety is the anxiety of death' (Schopenhauer, 465). Gothic authors, however, would come to challenge this perception of death by offering a new 'emissary of this king of terrors' in the form of the Beautiful.

Signifying excessive emotions, the Sublime came to form part of a literary genre that adopted adverse themes and plots that were contrary to Augustan reason. As Botting notes: 'It appears in the awful obscurity that haunted eighteenth-century rationality and morality' (Botting, 1). Transcending the boundaries of rationalism, Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* of 1765 made use of the Sublime as described by Burke while in the process setting a precedent that other writers would follow. Chris Baldick writes:

> Judged by the standards of Walpole's successors it is a rather clumsy production, but it did embellish for them a combination of themes, motifs, and settings: the merciless determination of the feudal tyrant to continue his family line, the threat of dynastic extinction, the confinement and persecution of a vulnerable heroine in a sinister labyrinthine building. These were to become the standard materials of Gothic as the tradition took shape (Baldick, 16).

While Walpole assisted in the birth of a new genre, his novel also encouraged succeeding writers to develop the genre further by investigating the Beautiful alongside the Sublime as Burke had done. The Beautiful, therefore, is as significant as the Sublime when examining the structure and theme of Gothic fiction, and I do not believe that it has sufficiently been noted that both the Sublime and the Beautiful essentially require the existence of each other. As Terry Eagleton notes, the Sublime is 'the lawless masculine force which violates yet perpetually renews the feminine enclosure of beauty' (Eagleton, 54). The process of how this alliance comes to be

forged must be thoroughly investigated if the Sublime and the Beautiful are to be understood as anything more than a list of components either to scare, intimidate or to comfort.

Before proceeding with a discussion concerning the relationship that is formed between the Sublime and the Beautiful, I shall first discuss an idea that is central to the structure of *The Castle of Otranto*, and to the evolution of all Gothic work: 'Transgression'. Transgression is a well established concept within the Gothic genre and is represented by the Sublime; I need to consider transgression here in order to suggest ways in which its significance may be revisited in the light of my theory regarding the role of the Beautiful in Gothic.

Transgression: Michel Foucault, towards a reading of *The Castle of Otranto*.

Without recourse to a measured growth in plot or character, Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* establishes 'transgression' as an issue at the outset. The novel tells the story of Manfred, prince of Otranto, whose sickly son is tragically killed at the beginning of the story by a giant helmet that has fallen from an unknown source. The ambitious Manfred, requiring an heir, seizes upon the idea of marrying Isabella, his son's betrothed (even though his own wife still lives). Isabella's reluctance to submit to Manfred's designs sends her into hiding within the castle and she becomes what is now considered to be the archetypal Gothic heroine, pursued through underground vaults and across graveyards. Along the way she is aided by a peasant boy, Theodore, who turns out to be the legitimate heir of Otranto and has his title restored towards the end with the aid of the ghostly intervention of his ancestor, Prince Alphonso the Good.

Walpole investigated transgression and the emotional impact of horror from the 'bleeding, mangled remains' (Walpole, 19) of Manfred's son, to sighing portraits, wandering ghosts, bleeding statues, dark subterranean passages, giants, and sporadic

claps of thunder. Nevertheless, even Manfred himself becomes 'almost hardened to preternatural appearances' (66).

Although successful in establishing a literature of excess, Walpole created a space beyond the boundaries of rationality by exceeding them. *The Castle of Otranto* consequently finds itself in this space with little else to transgress. 'Transgression' had been so extreme that the novel had guided the reader into uncharted areas of experience. Michel Foucault uses the term 'limit' to define what I have called 'boundaries'; he writes: 'Transgression is an action which involves the limit' (Foucault, 33). Without a crossable limit transgression is unable to exist, and therefore its purpose is lost. In transgressing one thing we give life to another, or take something we thought familiar to a new level of existence. Transgression incorporates a sense of change and, consequently, implies progression. For this progression to take place, the relationship between transgression and the limit must be clearly defined. Foucault notes:

> The limit and transgression depend on each other for whatever density of being they possess; a limit could not exist if it were absolutely uncrossable and, reciprocally, transgression would be pointless if it merely crossed a limit composed of illusions and shadows (34).

Transgression is comparable to a predatory animal. To kill one thing is not enough to sustain the existence of the animal, and it must continue to kill and feed if it is to survive. Like the animal transgression finds itself temporarily satisfied with its kill. There follows a period of satisfaction until, again, like the animal, transgression succumbs to hunger along with the necessity to hunt once more for its food.

Transgression cannot function without the limit, its food. For Foucault transgression is in danger of finding itself alone and without purpose or, in other words, not knowing where its next meal is coming from. Once transgression crosses the limit, it has nothing before it except a space, this time without another recognisable limit to satisfy its hunger. Foucault writes 'For its part does transgression not exhaust its nature when it crosses the limit, knowing no other life beyond this point in time?' (Foucault, 34). The nature of transgression is to transgress, just as the natural instinct of an animal is to find food in order to survive. Transgression relies upon the continuity of being able to both surpass the limit, and

then exist within sight of a new limit so that its instinct to transgress can continue. Once the limit is crossed and subsequently consumed, transgression loses its power if a new limit is not presented. As a result, it faces the threat of its own dissolution. We might say it is in danger of starvation. Foucault argues that transgression 'affirms limited being – affirms the limitlessness into which it leaps as it opens this zone to existence for the first time' (35). Once transgression has transgressed, there must be something waiting to carry it forward. A crucial aspect of this metaphor therefore resides in the perception that a relationship between hunter and prey must be established.

It is at this point that we need to look again at the role of the 'Beautiful' in Gothic literature and then compare it with the process that is being described by Foucault. Up to this point, the logic of Foucault's argument suggests that the process of transgression contains the seeds of its own obliteration or, to maintain the animal imagery, its starvation. How, then, is transgression to survive the act of transgression? The answer surprisingly resides as much in its relationship to the Beautiful, as to the Sublime. Foucault writes that transgression:

> proceeds to the limit and to the opening where its being surges forth, but where it is already completely lost, completely overflowing itself, emptied of itself to the point where it becomes an absolute void – an opening which is communication (43).

Ultimately, transgression is dependent upon the death of the limit. Equally significant here is the fact that for transgression to survive there must be not only death, but also some form of re-animation. It is in the area of re-animation, even redemption in which beauty, specifically the Beautiful Death, has a key role to play.

Gothic novelists after Walpole would develop this notion of predation, acknowledging the complex relationship between transgression and a limit to be destroyed. They would feed the animal with the food that it required by supplying it with a 'victim' and Burke's definition of the Beautiful was to become a suitable candidate for such a role. I am arguing, however, that, in the case of *The Castle of Otranto* this scenario was not fully established because the Beautiful is not sufficiently represented. The result is that transgression repeatedly returns to its

previous position before the limit and is unable to progress beyond it. As a result, therefore, the limit remains indestructible. As Foucault notes:

> transgression incessantly crosses and recrosses a line which closes up behind it in a wave of extremely short duration, and thus it is made to return once more right to the horizon of the uncrossable (34).

The Sublime, transgressive animal is therefore without a victim, and something that it can destroy once it finds itself in the space beyond the limit. It remains in a state of perpetual hunger. Foucault writes: 'toward what is transgression unleashed in its movement of pure violence, if not that which imprisons it, toward the limit and those elements it contains?'(34). Foucault suggests that in its moment of intensity transgression has one objective, and that is to exceed its imprisonment by destruction of the limit. I will now elaborate on why I believe Walpole never successfully arrives at this stage.

Death without the Maiden

Many textbook references to *The Castle of Otranto* tend to stress supernatural phenomenon as the key 'Gothic' features of Walpole's work. In her book, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (1995), Rosemary Jackson notes:

> It was with the publication of Horace Walpole's dream novel, *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), that the demonic found a literary form in the midst of Augustan ideals of classical harmony, public decorum and reasonable restraint (Jackson, 95).

Similarly, in his essay, *Varieties of English Gothic*, Gilbert Phelps says that 'Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* did little more than bring together the Gothic *dramatis personae*, atmosphere and machinery' (Ford, 114). It is nevertheless important to look again at the way in which Walpole's novel is considered.

Whatever he intended, Walpole's treatment of the Sublime lay not so much in the depiction of supernatural occurrences but rather in his main character, Manfred, who becomes almost impervious to the bizarre events that take place in the castle. When his domestics Jaquez and Diego claim to have witnessed a supernatural occurrence within the castle walls, Manfred exclaims 'Sot!..is it only a ghost then that thou hast seen?' (Walpole, 34). Walpole's casual approach to the supernatural directs our attention to Manfred rather than to the ghosts and giants of the novel. Amidst a plot teeming with supernatural incidents, therefore, the most shocking episodes are invested in Manfred's behaviour:

> he seized the cold hand of Isabella, who was half-dead with fright and horror. She shrieked and started from him. Manfred rose to pursue her ... Isabella, who gathered courage from her situation, and who dreaded nothing so much as Manfred's pursuit of his declaration, cried, Look my lord! See heaven itself declares itself against your impious intentions! – Heaven nor hell shall impede my designs, said Manfred, advancing again to seize the princess. At that instant the portrait of his grandfather, which hung over the bench where they had been sitting, uttered a deep sigh and heaved its breast (25).

The supernatural resolution to the above passage almost serves to end the tension that has been created by Manfred's lust for Isabella, which alone lends him an overwhelming and disturbing power that far exceeds the threat posed by the supernatural:

> The spectre marched sedately, but dejected, to the end of the gallery, and turned into a chamber on the right hand. Manfred accompanied him at a little distance, full of anxiety and horror, but resolved. As he would have entered the chamber, the door was clapped-to with violence by an invisible hand. The prince, collecting courage from this delay, would have forcibly burst open the door with his foot, but found that it resisted his utmost efforts. Since hell will not satisfy my curiosity, said Manfred, I will use the human means in my power for preserving my race; Isabella shall not escape me (26).

Demonstrating the power of the Sublime (Manfred) over a representative of the Beautiful (Isabella) Walpole had set in motion what would become the familiar Gothic trope of the despotic villain terrorising the vulnerable heroine. In shifting the emphasis from the Sublime supernatural to the Sublime disposition of Manfred, however, Walpole's novel never properly requires the role of the Beautiful as it was to be established in subsequent Gothic writing. As Linda Bayer-Berenbaum argues:

> The Gothic fascination with death and decay involves an admiration for power at the expense of beauty ... Those factors which conquer life and disintegrate matter become the object of great admiration (Bayer-Berenbaum, 27).

Manfred never succeeds in attaining the status of a feared tyrant. His attempts to govern those who, theoretically, should yield to his every command are regrettably unsuccessful. He consequently becomes the starved predatory animal who, while in sight of food, is unable to capture and consume.

It may also be argued that Walpole fails to deliver a fully Gothicised text because he tends to launch the reader into scenes without a premeditated escalation in tension and suspense. We therefore experience only a muted form of terror from something that we might, in other circumstances, have found horrific or fearsome, and it remains the case that Walpole deals with the supernatural as a matter of almost incidental theatrical routine. As a result the power of the Sublime is never fully established as existing beyond the rational world:

> The moment Theodore appeared, the walls of the castle behind Manfred were thrown down with a mighty force, and the form of Alfonso, dilated to an immense magnitude, appeared in the centre of the ruins (Walpole, 112).

As E.J. Clery observes:

> Set beside a murderous flying helmet a simple ghost almost begins to look commonplace. Suddenly, without fanfare, the supernatural has

> slipped back into the realm of truth, though now it can only be the looking glass truth of fiction (Clery 1999, 84).

At best, Walpole's novel only tentatively begins to explore the possibility of replacing the known, rational world by a space inhabited by the unknown, irrational world of Gothic fear and horror. As such, *The Castle of Otranto* does little more than prepare the ground for future writers to mould the Gothic into what was to become a genre of literature dealing with an increasingly sophisticated treatment of the Sublime and the Beautiful. In comparison with later Gothic texts, therefore, *The Castle of Otranto* is a relatively crude experiment that suggests possible methods to be explored by subsequent authors. Present in Walpole's novel, for instance, is the idea of juxtaposing the past and the present in a manner that is investigated further from Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron* onwards. As Maggie Kilgour notes:

> Walpole's text offers a myth of reconciliation of past and present, which suggests the past can be revived in a way that will be empowering and liberating for the present (Kilgour, 18).

Kilgour later writes, 'The return of Alphonso at the end of *The Castle of Otranto* suggests one positive model for the return of the past' (30).

The significance of *The Castle of Otranto* for Gothic is partly due to its innovative style within a society that compared itself to the ancient Roman Empire. David Punter writes:

> The Augustans saw their period of natural history as analogous to this past age, in that it too seemed to them a silver age; that is it seemed poised between golden achievements in the past and possible future collapse into a barbarian age of bronze. In Augustan thinking, the barbarians are forever at the gates; the writer's role is to maintain the defensive fires of culture ... Augustanism was perforce conservative; reason was again the dominant mental faculty, and was the main barricade against invasion and the death of civilisation (Punter, 28).

While this is undoubtedly true, I am arguing that *The Castle of Otranto* is equally important for the way in which it may alert us to a possible relationship between the Sublime and the Beautiful. Burke asks, 'If the qualities of the sublime and beautiful are sometimes found united, does this prove, that they are the same, does it prove, that they are any way allied, does it prove even that they are not opposite and contradictory?' (Burke 1998, 158). He answers to the contrary and maintains that the Sublime and the Beautiful are not the same. He offers an example of black and white; he writes, 'Black and white may soften, may blend, but they are therefore not the same' (158). Despite his answer, however, he has raised the issue of a possible alliance between the Sublime and the Beautiful. Exploring a similar train of thought, Gothic authors were to take the Sublime and the Beautiful and establish a more complex and intimate relationship between them than either Burke or Walpole were prepared to allow. The Sublime and the Beautiful remain, of course, dissimilar to one another in many ways, but it is this distinction that helped form the relationship that was to become a major feature of Gothic literature, one which Burke clearly sensed, even if he was not prepared to confront.

Walpole's preface to the second edition of *The Castle of Otranto* demonstrates his awareness of the potential relationship between the Sublime and the Beautiful: 'In my humble opinion, the contrast between the sublime of the one,' [the princes and heroes] 'and the naivete of the other' [the domestics] 'sets the pathetic of the former in a stronger light' (Walpole, 10). At an early stage in the novel Walpole draws us into a lengthy, comical scene between an impatient Manfred and his two domestics, Jaquez and Diego whose dialogue is rendered unintelligible due to their recent encounter with a giant whom they have discovered in the castle:

> I! My lord! Said Jaquez, I saw nothing; I was behind Diego;- but I heard the noise.-Jaquez, said Manfred in a solemn tone of voice, tell me, I adjure thee by the souls of my ancestors, what it was thou sawest (35).

Manfred replies: 'Peace, dotards! ... follow me; I will know what all this means' (36).

A most effective use of the Beautiful, as we have understood it through Burke, is in the presence of the female as a representation of feebleness and fragility since, as Burke writes: 'The Beauty of women is considerably owing to their weakness, or

delicacy, and is even enhanced by their timidity' (Burke 1998, 150). But Walpole's novel never fully realises the role of feminine Beauty in this respect. The character of Isabella as the supposed persecuted heroine, for instance, remains unconvincing. She progressively exhibits authority that fails to arouse an appropriate level of sympathy in the reader; her resolute nature and unreserved disdain of Manfred therefore remains inconsistent with the term 'victim': 'can I wed the father?' she says; 'no madam, no: force should not drag me to Manfred's hated bed. I loathe him, I abhor him' (Walpole, 91). Even though 'Her gentleness had never raised her an enemy' (28), Isabella's alleged delightful temperament is lost to the stark authority of her character. Kate Ferguson Ellis notes:

> If the Gothic heroine is distinguished from others of the same period by her determination to follow her own vision, then Isabella's initiative is surpassed by that of the villain's own daughter (Ellis, 59).

Manfred's daughter, Matilda, also demonstrates a measure of fortitude that effortlessly abandons her father's influence by allowing his prisoner, Theodore, to escape. Matilda exclaims:

> Young man ... though filial duty and womanly modesty condemn the step I am taking, yet holy charity, surmounting all other ties, justifies this act. Fly; the doors of thy prison are open (Walpole, 72).

Walpole's novel does not, however, entirely lack the sentiment attributed by Burke to the Beautiful. In preparation for her impending demise Matilda passionately declares, 'weep not for me, mother! I am going where sorrow never dwells' (111). It is these tender quasi-Christian sentiments in the light of extinction that assist in creating emotions relevant to the Beautiful; as Burke writes: 'Those which engage our hearts, which impress us with a sense of loveliness, are the softer virtues; easiness of temper, compassion, kindness and liberality' (Burke 1998, 145). Nevertheless her demonstration of character up to this point ostensibly stifles the moment of Matilda's death.

This is not to suggest that artless femininity is continually representative of a Beautiful victim. As Kate Ferguson Ellis writes:

> To be sure, the entire Gothic genre moves beyond the traditional assumption of the Genesis myth that female innocence without a male protector was not "sufficient to have stood" ... and once they decide to break with the commands of an authority figure they once obeyed, they develop some "courage never to submit nor yield" of their own (Ellis, 131).

As I will discuss in the following chapter, Gothic authors expand the representation of the Beautiful into other areas outside feminine beauty that are still equated with Burke's original ideas.

Following the publication of *The Castle of Otranto* authors would develop the Sublime by giving it a role to play opposite the Beautiful. What had been proposed by Burke, and tentatively used by Walpole, would become a major preoccupation of other writers in the Gothic genre. Such progression, however, also required the development of the Beautiful. The Beautiful, therefore, would likewise be given a critical role in Gothic literature, and its initial usage would assist in linking the Sublime to the idea of death. This was to be achieved when the Sublime destroyed the Beautiful, its antithesis, only to then itself die. But death would in some paradoxical way hold the key to the perpetuation of the Sublime, and to the creation of a new boundary by which transgression might be repeatedly resurrected. Death becomes the all-important key in the relationship between the Sublime and the Beautiful and, as a result, it will become necessary for both of them to die. This process is comparable with Burke's observations concerning one of the many characteristics of the Sublime; of 'infinity' he writes:

> There are scarce any things which can become the objects of our senses that are really, and in their own nature infinite. But the eye not being able to perceive the bounds of many things, they seem to be infinite, and they produce the same effects as if they really were so (Burke 1998, 115).

The infinite seems so because we cannot see the point at which something (like a mountain disappearing beyond the clouds) ends. The power of the infinite, therefore, resides in the sense of an interruption to its continuation. This may be thought of as

the death of a continual line that would otherwise constitute infinity. We sense the infinite most keenly at the point where it is interrupted, or in other words, where it disappears from our mortal (and therefore finite) view. If we take that moment of interruption to be analogous to death, then we can see that death becomes a key player in empowering the idea of infinity (the Sublime). Arguably this moment does not occur in Walpole's novel since the process requires the presence (and death) of a sufficient representative of the Beautiful. I have called this procedure the 'Necessary Death', and its use by Gothic authors will facilitate the relationship between the Sublime and the Beautiful. This procedure will form a part of my discussion in the following chapter.

Chapter Three

The Rise of the Beautiful Death

Si vous vous faites brebi Le loup vous mangera * (Lamb, 242).

Dying
Is an art, like everything else.
I do it exceptionally well. *Sylvia Plath* (Green, 626).

Maggie Kilgour writes:

> As a means of recovering a world of freedom, lost through the rise of the modern world, the gothic looks backwards to a kinder simpler paradise lost of harmonious relations that existed before the nasty modern world of irreconcilable opposition and conflict ... the gothic tries to use its necromantic powers to raise it (Kilgour, 15).

Kilgour later writes, 'By reviving the dead, recalling to life an idealised past, the gothic tries to heal the ruptures of rapid change, and preserve continuity' (30). Similarly David Punter argues:

> In the 1770s and 1780s, several kinds of new fiction arose to challenge the realist tradition, but what they all had in common was a drive to come to terms with the barbaric, with those realms excluded from the Augustan synthesis, and the primary focus of that drive was the past itself (Punter, 52).

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* 'If you become the lamb the wolf will eat you.'

While Kilgour and Punter make significant observations regarding one of the popular themes of Gothic fiction, I am arguing that authors would also understand the past as a means of managing the irrevocable approach of death. Nigel Barley argues that, 'Death does not just exist. In order to have coherence and to find its place, it has to be integrated into a wider scheme of things' (Barley, 151). For Gothic authors the past becomes a fitting candidate for representing the otherworldliness of death along with its vital connection to memory, which renders the past instantly attainable. As Barley suggests, one way of integrating death into a 'wider scheme of things', is 'to imagine death as being like something else that is more readily accessible' (151). As a genre, therefore, whose basis extends beyond the rejection of Augustan principles, Gothic authors informed their readers with a didactic method of writing. The fundamental tools of terror and the supernatural accompanied an underlying missive regarding the readers' response. Robert Miles writes:

> unlike the 'familiar' novel which deals in the troubled present ... Gothic romance turns to the past, presents an ideal, virtuous picture, a series of dramatic tableux impressing themselves in the heart of the passive spectator/reader, touching the moral sense, and so turning the Gothic aesthetic into a scene of instruction (Miles, 37).

Miles alerts us to a significant Gothic device and its effects upon readers:

> What was important was a readerly predisposition to the visionary in the literal sense of a passive surrendering to trains of ideas, the mind's 'shews' impressing themselves on the heart (36).

In a related observation Elizabeth Napier discusses what she perceives to be an unqualified authoritative diction in many works of Gothic. Napier recognises a literary approach that seemingly imposes ideas on its readers:

> The strident tones and crude attempts at emphasis, often through typographical devices of capitalisation, italics, and spacing, reveal a mingled determination to be explicit about the moral lessons to be gained from such tales of adventure and an uncertainty about the

> relevance of those 'lessons' to the narrative that has produced them (Napier, 14).

While it might be argued that poetic licence allows for such liberties to be exercised, Napier contends that such techniques are misleading:

> the tendency of the narrative voice to make confident generalisations about human behaviour has a ... stabilizing effect, because it suggests ... that the reader is in the hands of a thoughtful and wise director (15).

However, aside from representing an experiment in instruction and tuition as Miles and Napier propose, Gothic authors began to indirectly address rather than explain a subject in which very few, if any, are qualified, but with which all are familiar. Such 'confident generalisations' therefore become buried beneath the search for ways of treating the cold threat posed by death and to engage a subject for which there is no 'thoughtful and wise director'.

The investigation into death was assisted by fresh perspectives on the nature of the Sublime and the Beautiful in addition to realising the potential relationship that could exist between them with the assistance of a Necessary Death. In order to better understand the concept of the Necessary Death, it will be helpful to address its significance beyond Gothic fiction before we examine its role in the genre.

D.J. Enright notes that, 'If there were no life about, there would be no death' (Enright, 1). A co-dependency, therefore, exists between life and death and determines the fashion of our existence. Our life's ambitions are therefore achievable goals that are arguably governed by death; this idea may in turn provide us with the unconscious drive to succeed previous to its arrival. Without death, then, would our perceptions of life be altered, and would we be as resolute in attaining our life's goal if we had an eternity in which to succeed? It is the case that most of us do not contemplate death on a daily basis; the persistent, gloomy forethought of our demise would, after all, most likely induce a life of melancholy; nor do we rush to accomplish our objectives because we fear death may intervene before the job is done. It is also the case that mistakes made in youth are often repeated at a later time in our lives because we either disregard previous errors, or we are too inflexible to admit our faults. Yet death remains as the eternal sentinel who prompts us to take steps in

recognising the sub-standard conduct of our past and leaves us with the understanding that the time in which to foolishly repeat such errors is limited. Death, therefore, debatably offers the opportunity to reflect and develop. As Schopenhauer notes:

> Now everyone carries in his memory very many things which he has done, about which he is not satisfied with himself. If he were to go on living, he would go on acting in the same way by virtue of the unalterability of his character (Schopenhauer, 508).

This is an issue that William Godwin tackles in his Gothic novel *St Leon* (1799) in which the title character learns how to produce the elixir of life and gains immortality. With his existence unending St. Leon realises the disadvantages of endless life: 'every added year has still subtracted something from the little poignancy and relish which the bowl of human life continued to retain' (Godwin, 356). His life now lacks the definition provided by death; as Nigel barley notes: 'Death sits as a sort of boundary, a collective headstone and footstone, marking off and defining both ends of the human condition' (Barley, 14). Those whose considerations he once held dear also become subjected to St. Leon's diluted passions. In reference to his wife and children he states:

> When I considered for the first time that they were now in a manner nothing to me, I felt a sensation that might be said to amount to anguish. How can a man attach himself to any thing, when he comes to consider it as the mere plaything and amusement of the moment! (Godwin, 165).

The success of the Gothic genre owes much to the idea of linking death with Beauty. Forming a relationship that was based on destruction and resurrection, Gothic authors shaped the means by which death was to be understood as something that did not imply an end to life in the traditional sense. Beauty in Gothic literature would be defined by its absence in the present, and authors would exploit the common assumption that we inevitably miss the precious moments that once held some significance in our lives. The aphorism that 'all good things come to an end' assists in understanding the development of the Necessary Death in Gothic fiction as well as

the evolving role of the Beautiful as a product of this development. Later writers of the Gothic genre begin to explore the idea of a Necessary Death, and they use it as a means of activating both the Sublime and the Beautiful. Like the Sublime, the Beautiful becomes more powerful when it is destroyed. Once destroyed the Beautiful becomes an enclosed and comforting dead space in the past that can be resurrected by the memory of the individual. This procedure signifies the concept of the Beautiful Death, an early example of which is provided in Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron* (1777).

The Old English Baron

David Punter examines Reeve's treatment of the supernatural in comparison to Walpole's handling of ghosts and the horrific in *The Castle of Otranto*. He discusses their management of spectral occurrences and their inability to terrify on the page:

> to treat ghosts in a matter-of-fact way is in itself to demystify them; even to make them 'appear' requires a certain development of narrative techniques ... Walpole and Reeve share an inability to get round this problem (Punter, 49).

Focusing on the supernatural, as is the case with many critics of Gothic literature, Punter does not discuss further reasons for the failure of the Sublime in *The Castle of Otranto*. Subsequently his discussion of *The Old English Baron* does not explore the potential of the Beautiful and its developing relationship with the Sublime.

Clara Reeve considers her novel a remedial narrative in light of Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, and in her preface she debates what she understands as its shortcomings: 'the machinery is so violent that it destroys the effect it is intended to excite' (Reeve, 3). Referring to Walpole's failure to inspire feelings of terror in the reader, Reeve argues:

> we can conceive, and allow of, the appearance of a ghost; we can even dispense with an enchanted sword and helmet; but then they must keep

> within certain limits of credibility. A sword so large as to require a hundred men to lift it; a helmet that by its own weight forces a passage through a courtyard, into an arched vault big enough for a man to go through; a picture that walks out of its frame; a skeleton ghost in a hermit's cowl:– when your expectation is wound up to the highest pitch, these circumstances take it down with a witness, destroy the work of the imagination, and instead of attention excite laughter (3).

Reeve constructs her novel with the aim of amending these deficiencies, which she does by developing the Beautiful, and *The Old English Baron* marks a shift in significance for the Beautiful as Reeve moves away from the ideas proposed by Edmund Burke. Reeve begins to depict the Beautiful as an idea that has a defining life-giving power of its own. The early implication by Reeve is that the acceptance of death is mitigated by the idea that it has already occurred in the past.

The story concerns Edmund who is a peasant boy residing in the house of a wealthy family some distance from his parents. He is soon discovered to be of noble birth. As his history unfolds we are told of the murder of his real parents by Lord Lovel, who is a relative of Lord Fitz-Owen, the current master of the house. Edmund's noble rights are restored to him at the end of the novel.

Before exploring the potential of the Beautiful and its connection with death, Reeve demonstrates how the relationship between the Sublime and the Beautiful is ultimately made redundant if the latter (represented here by Edmund) is portrayed as too powerful, as was the case with the females of Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*. Early on in the narrative Edmund suffers relentless harassment from Lord Fitz-Owen's sons who are envious of their father's love for the boy. Attempting at every opportunity to discredit him in the eyes of their father, their endeavours are nonetheless futile against a seemingly indestructible victim:

> Various arts were used by Edmund's enemies to expose him to danger; but all their contrivances recoiled upon themselves, and brought increase of honour upon Edmund's head ... They laid many schemes against him, but none took effect (Reeve, 23).

Early on Reeve introduces us to the Beautiful Death and the idea that the agreeable memories of the past can be resurrected in order to replace the Sublime of the present. The novel begins with the arrival of Sir Phillip Harclay, who, after spending many years away, returns to visit his friend. He discovers, however, that many changes have taken place since his departure. The things that were dear to him have gone and they now exist only in the past and in his memory. While no forceful destruction of the Beautiful by the Sublime has taken place, the unpleasant circumstance of coming to terms with such a loss becomes a source of the Sublime. The present becomes a painful experience for Harclay:

> This world ... has nothing for a wise man to depend upon. I have lost all my relations, and most of my friends, and am even uncertain whether any are remaining (6).

Reeve uses the character of Harclay to demonstrate the process of resurrecting the Beautiful. We soon see evidence of this resurrection in the guise of a dream in which Harclay sees his friend:

> He was then transported to his own house, where, going into an unfrequented room, he was again met by his friend, who was living, and in all the bloom of youth, as when he first knew him (11).

Reeve proceeds with establishing Edmund's link with Harclay's past. Upon first seeing him, Harclay announces:

> I will confess to you, that the first thing that touched my heart in his favour, is a strong resemblance he bears to a certain dear friend I once had, and his manner resembles him as much as his person (15).

Edmund's presence verifies for Harclay that death does not signify the end for his friend, Edmund's real father; he says, 'Every time I look on you ... reminds me of your father; you are the same person I loved twenty-three years ago – I rejoice to see you under my roof' (78). For Harclay the past has returned.

Edmund is arguably a central figure in the development of the Beautiful in *The Old English Baron*. With his real identity effectively murdered by Lord Lovel, Edmund's true identity is contained in the past. When a room is discovered, the contents of which has significant ties to Edmund's ancestry, he undergoes a significant transformation. Upon observing a portrait of his parents, he is struck with the apparent kinship that commences the restoration of his true identity; 'I am,' he says, 'struck with the resemblance myself; but let us go on; I feel myself inspired with unusual courage' (46). The man that returns from the room is no longer Edmund the peasant (he is soon to be renamed Seagrave). Edmund returns from the room as a revenant rises from the grave, and here Reeve depicts an early example of what we may identify as the 'undead' vampire that soars in later fiction. Far from representing a supernatural being with a craving for blood, Edmund nevertheless has returned from a death-like stasis to feed upon the guilt of the murdering Lord Lovel, whose dispossession of ill-gotten spoils represents a source of sustenance and justice for the persecuted Edmund. Lord Lovel exclaims, 'I am childless, and one is risen from the grave to claim my inheritance' (91).

From Reeve's novel onwards, Gothic authors would begin to popularise the technique of 'Replacement'. Whether it was due to unlawful incarceration or the lack of faith in religious or social order, the function of replacing a sublime moment with the Beautiful Death would become a major feature of Gothic fiction. However, while Reeve realised the value of the Beautiful Death, she had not fully investigated the potential of the Necessary Death and its role in consolidating the function of the Beautiful Death. The destructive capabilities of the Sublime over the Beautiful victim would therefore be developed by later writers such as William Beckford in 1786 whose novel, *Vathek*, explores further the potential relationship between the Sublime and the Beautiful, which evolves from their Necessary Death.

Vathek

Vathek illustrates how, by the 1780s, the Necessary Death comes to play a crucial role in the developing relationship between the Sublime and the Beautiful in Gothic

fiction. Still integrating Burkean ideas of Beautiful objects as being, among other things, small, delicate, and fragile, Beckford transforms these qualities into victims of the Sublime and in turn demonstrates how their destruction is used as a means to empower the Sublime.

The destruction of the Beautiful in *Vathek* solicits both our sympathy and the instant recognition of the brutal force that destroyed it. Scenes representing the Beautiful are rapidly and often ruthlessly destroyed by a representative of the Sublime only to return repeatedly at later intervals to be destroyed again. Beckford creates a Beautiful scene: 'The expedition commenced with the utmost order and so entire a silence, that even the locusts were heard from the thickets on the plain of Catoul' (Beckford, 44) and then destroys it:

> The three days that followed were spent in the same manner; but on the fourth the heavens looked angry: lightnings broke forth in frequent flashes; re-echoing peals of thunder succeeded; and the trembling Circassians clung with all their might to their ugly guardians (44).

The Sublime is thereby constantly provided with a victim. The predatory animal that we discussed in the previous chapter as representing transgression finally has an endless supply of food. Such an image of predation finds a place early on in the story. Here the Beautiful is represented by sinless children who are unaware of their fate while the symbol of the Sublime, in its capacity to return and feed on the Beautiful, is perhaps knowingly embodied by Beckford within what appears to be a character who resembles the vampire, and who is known only as the 'Giaour'. The Giaour's promise to impart the secrets that lie beyond death are conditional. He tells Vathek: 'Know that I am parched with thirst, and cannot open this door, till my thirst be thoroughly appeased; I require the blood of fifty children (23). Beckford then emotively depicts what is arguably the most disturbing chain of events found in the novel:

> The lovely innocents destined for the sacrifice added not a little to the hilarity of the scene. They approached the plain full of sportiveness, some coursing butterflies, others culling flowers, or picking up the shining little pebbles that attracted their notice. At intervals they

> nimbly started from each other for the sake of being caught again and mutually imparting a thousand caresses (25).

Beckford juxtaposes the innocence of the children with the horror of their fate as sacrificial victims to be hurled into:

> The dreadful chasm, at whose bottom the portal of ebony was placed, began to appear at a distance. It looked like a black streak that divided the plain (25).

Beckford's *Vathek* illustrates how the Sublime in Gothic literature of the high Romantic period is beginning to be altered from its previous associations with pain and danger, to representing death and resurrection in the same manner as the Beautiful. Once the Beautiful is destroyed by the Sublime, the latter finds itself temporarily occupying the same position as it did in Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*; it is without a victim. Unlike its role in Walpole's novel, however, the Sublime is later resurrected once the Beautiful is likewise restored. A link between the Sublime and the Beautiful is thereby forged, and the survival of each becomes ironically dependent upon the Necessary Death of the other.

Beckford establishes the Necessary Death as a significant unit in the Sublime/Beautiful relationship. He also offers the character of the vampire for consideration as a possible participant in this relationship, the suggestion of which will be taken up by later authors such as Charlotte Dacre and Lady Carolyn Lamb. However Beckford, unlike Reeve, is still a long way from proposing a clear sense of how death might be pacified and understood. Vathek's ambition to understand death is foiled because ultimately it remains obscure and it might be argued that, sentenced to eternal torment, all knowledge of death is effectively denied him:

> Such shall be the chastisement of that blind curiosity, which would transgress those bounds the wisdom of the Creator has prescribed to human knowledge; and such the dreadful disappointment of that restless ambition, which, aiming at discoveries reserved for beings of a supernatural order, perceives not, through its infatuated pride, that the condition of man upon earth is to be – humble and ignorant (120).

In *Vathek* the Beautiful exists to allow the Sublime to transgress, but the key issue remains, and is summarised by Foucault who asks:

> can the limit have a life of its own outside of the act that gloriously passes through it and negates it? What comes of it after this act and what might it have been before? (Foucault, 34).

This is where the Beautiful was to have a key role to play. Eventually the Beautiful would no longer solely represent a victim of the Sublime; rather it would be modified to transform death into a thing of apparent beauty. In later eighteenth and nineteenth century Gothic literature, therefore, death might be depicted as a thing of bizarre beauty, linked to an idea of perpetual return, which is made possible through the use of memory. As Arthur Toynbee notes:

> Though a dead body cannot be kept alive by physical measures, the memory of the dead, as they were when they were truly alive, can be transmitted to succeeding generations (Toynbee, 75).

The vampire of nineteenth century Gothic fiction, unlike Beckford's vampiristic Giaour, was to make a point of offering death as a specious reward of eternal life, opposing the Christian belief of the need to move on in a spiritually fulfilled state to a completely new realm of existence. As Gothic evolves from Walpole's novel, it begins to explore this contentious area within the space of fiction. Linda Bayer-Berenbaum writes:

> The vampire is an interesting example of the Gothic distortion of a religious notion and the attempt to express overtly what Christianity had implied. In the vampire the spirit does not depart after death but remains with the body, preventing decay and forcing the deceased to return at night to the world of the living to suck blood as a form of sustenance. The living dead is a more immanent expression of the religious notion of life *after* death. The vampire is neither dead nor alive; he is both ... Like the saint or the survivor, he is all-suffering, a perverted Christ figure who offers the damnation of eternal life in this

> world rather than the salvation of eternal life in the next (Bayer-Berenbaum, 35).

One of the key motifs of Gothic novels is anti-Catholicism. Fred Botting writes:

> Opposed to all forms of tyranny and slavery, the warlike, Gothic tribes of northern Europe were popularly believed to have brought down the Roman Empire. Roman tyranny was subsequently identified with the Catholic Church, and the production of Gothic novels in northern European Protestant countries often had an anti-Catholic subtext (Botting, 5).

This sub-text was not strictly confined to northern European Gothic literature. Authors such as Anne Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis use lecherous monks, priests, and tales of incarceration in monasteries and nunneries to generate themes of anti-Catholicism alongside an existential arc that also begins to filter into Gothic ideology. In a period where Christianity was a profound concern for all classes, Gothic authors begin to substitute the power of religion as a means to pacify death, with the power of the self. Aidan Day writes:

> Eighteenth century England was a Christian country. Most educated laymen were greatly concerned about religion. The greatest volume of printed book production still consisted of sermons and other devotional works. The reading matter of such poor people as were literate was very largely religious. At the end of the eighteenth century most of their dwellings would have contained a Prayer Book and bible and little, if anything, else (Day, 31).

In his 1945 lecture on existentialism, Jean-Paul Sartre notes that existence precedes essence. He defines 'essence' as the idea of a thing before it is created. Arguing that man is in existence before his essence was conceived, he writes that 'Man simply is', and that he 'is nothing else but that which he makes of himself' (Sartre, 28). Gothic novelists such as Sofia Lee begin to explore a similar theme with the Beautiful Death when their characters undertake the responsibility of managing their fate without

god's intervention. *The Recess* demonstrates a fresh approach towards death in Gothic literature and Lee's quasi-existential approach is later revisited by authors such as Ann Radcliffe. Sartre notes that:

> If, however, it is true that existence is prior to essence, man is responsible for what he is. Thus, the first effect of existentialism is that it puts every man in possession of himself as he is, and places the entire responsibility for his existence squarely upon his own shoulders (Sartre, 29).

Simon Critchley writes: 'Religious disappointment is born from the realisation that religion is no longer (presuming it was ever) capable of providing a meaning for human life' (Critchley, 2). Critchley later writes:

> if God is bracketed out as the possible source for a response to the question of the meaning of life, then the response to that question must be sought within life (24).

Such a rationalist approach towards life, although still bordering on existential, is likened to Protestant ideology. Victor Sage writes:

> it seems obvious that the penetration of Protestant theology into every aspect of English culture since the Settlement acts as a most intimate, and at the same time a most objective, conditioning factor in both popular belief and literary culture (Sage, xiii).

Sage continues: 'The Protestant assumption of internalised conscience ... is the badge of identity in English culture' (xv). The 'internalised conscience' or, as Martin Luther had called it, the 'separation of the office and the person', celebrates the strength of individual perception. The power of individual judgement within Protestant doctrine permits the detachment of the individual and encourages decisions to be based upon personal conviction rather than conform to established beliefs. Sage writes:

> Thus the common factor in the Protestant tradition, the cement as it were, of this nebulous and divergent culture, is the assumption that individual testimony has a special value (27).

By the mid to late eighteenth century, Protestant theology was fast becoming affiliated with rationalism. As Brian Inglis notes:

> By this time they (the Protestants) were adopting a more aggressively hostile stance. They were no longer simply casting doubt on the evidence for the supernatural; they were beginning to doubt whether the supernatural existed – even that it could exist ... Protestantism and scepticism therefore became irrationally linked (Inglis, 145).

Such radical doctrine becomes implemented by authors into the Beautiful Death. In a similar fashion to Protestantism's 'Internalised Conscience', what began marginally with *The Recess* was an alteration in the way that characters behaved in times of peril in contrast to more accepted Christian orthodox approaches to life, death and beyond; Critchley writes:

> The great metaphysical comfort of religion, its existential balm, surely resides in its claim that the meaning of human life lies outside of life and outside humanity and, even if this outside is beyond our limited cognitive powers, we can still turn our faith in this direction (Critchley, 2).

However, a personalised, controlled and perhaps rational attitude towards the subject of death was beginning to be investigated by Gothic authors whose characters were restraining the Sublime. Where I have identified this method of restraint as the Beautiful Death, Schopenhauer distinguishes it as 'will':

> Even the freshness and vividness of recollections from earliest times, from early childhood, are evidence that something in us does not pass away with time, does not grow old, but endures unchanged. However, we were not able to see what this imperishable element is. It is not

> consciousness any more than it is the body, on which consciousness obviously depends. On the contrary, it is that on which the body together with consciousness depends. It is, however, just that which, by entering into consciousness, exhibits itself as *will* (Schopenhauer, 496).

In this Sofia Lee's *The Recess* (1783) establishes a precedent for others to follow.

The Recess

E.J. Clery writes of *The Recess*:

> The reader is plunged into a strange world without bearings, prompting from the start imagination, curiosity and wonder. We are told *what* the Recess was – an underground series of man-made rooms linked by passages and staircases, into which the sun only dimly penetrates through painted glass casements – but not *where* or *why* (Clery 2000, 44).

The Recess tells the story of two sisters, Matilda and Ellinor, who are illegitimate daughters of the Roman Catholic Mary Queen of Scots. Their identity is kept secret and they are raised in an underground location known only as the Recess.

Secluded for years in the Recess, Matilda and Ellinor soon venture to the world outside and encounter new experiences and emotions in a sublime environment that will persecute and imprison them. In the opening pages, Matilda says 'We learnt there was a terrible place called the world where a few haughty individuals commanded miserable millions' (Lee, 8). Entering into violent and unsympathetic surroundings, Matilda and Ellinor suffer the destructive bent of the Sublime and, like Beckford, Lee demonstrates the efficacy of the Necessary Death. The Beautiful is destroyed by the Sublime:

> Prepared by a mental calm for the happiest repose, sleep asserted a claim to those hours fear and fatigue had long possessed ... The loveliness of the weather, though the autumn was far advanced, made this less dangerous ... The next morning entirely reversed the scene, and destroyed at once our comfort and tranquillity: with the moon the weather changed, and the wind becoming entirely contrary, that deadly sickness incident to voyagers, seized alike in Miss Cecil and me, absorbing even the sense of danger (115).

A sequence such as this may be read as depicting the way the Sublime, made manifest in the change of the weather, returns to carry out its work of destruction. In this sense, Beauty furnishes a recurring feast for the Sublime. The act of transgression does not therefore cease to exist as it might be seen to in Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*. It is a perpetual process of death and resurrection fed by the equal persistence of the Beautiful. The reference here to the seasons serves to emphasise the cyclical process. Death, as something that now feeds from the life it destroys, is a fearful and destructive force, a vampiric strength that is seemingly indestructible and relentless in its hunger for the Beautiful. As Schopenhauer notes:

> The plant and the insect dies at the end of the summer, the animal and man after a few years; death reaps unweariedly. But despite all this, in fact as if this were not the case at all, everything is always there and in its place, just as if everything were imperishable (Schopenhauer, 478).

Clery writes: 'The origin of the Recess lies in the prohibition of romantic passion, and it has come to serve as a shelter from criminal passion' (Clery 2000, 45). The Recess, however, represents more than a 'shelter from criminal passion' for Matilda and Ellinor.

Once abandoned for the pressures and terrors that await them in the world, the Recess becomes a static, tensionless place in their past that is comparable to a state of death. The Recess is the only safe haven the sisters have known and the desire to return to its tranquil surroundings remains throughout the novel. A similar idea would be examined by Sigmund Freud more than a century later culminating in his celebrated theory of the 'Death Instinct':

> The attributes of life were at some time evoked in inanimate matter by the reaction of a force of whose nature we can form no conception. It may perhaps have been a process similar in type to that which later caused the development of consciousness in a particular stratum of living matter. The tension which then arose in what had hitherto been an inanimate substance endeavoured to cancel itself out. In this way the first instinct came into being: the instinct to return to the inanimate state (Freud 1991, 311).

Separation from the Recess leads to its resurrection in the memory of Matilda and Ellinor. Death, therefore, is not feared because of its association with a past that is repeatedly resurrected and which represents a boundary that has already been crossed. Subsequently the power of memory enables the sisters to perceive death as something desired. Matilda says, 'death presented himself in every form dear to me, while I vainly invoked him to take my own' (Lee, 179). Adam Phillips notes:

> Freud's notion of the death instinct suggests, at its most minimal, that we can want (or need) something we know nothing about, and that we are most drawn to what we think of ourselves as trying to avoid (Phillips, 106).

In a reversal of ideas, Matilda and Ellinor are already familiar with death as something that constitutes the past and is subsequently sought rather than avoided. The idea of death becomes separated from the progression of time. The future becomes redundant, and its threatening pledge of death likewise outmoded. Death becomes an internal thought process in which resurrection is made possible through reflection of the past. Therefore it might be implied that death in *The Recess* is no longer feared in the way it traditionally tends to be. This is another 'boundary' challenged by Gothic authors.

Exploring their individuality for the first time, Matilda and Ellinor are forced into autonomous roles for which neither is prepared while Lee, subjecting them to perpetual danger, mercifully allows her heroines sporadic, gleeful interludes of contemplation in which the potential of the Beautiful Death is realised. The existence of the Recess suggests that there is a physical and mental environment that possesses

all the tranquillity and composure seemingly untried by society. It is 'a calm retirement from the odious forms and cares of life' (Lee, 34). The Recess exists in the happy memories of Matilda who reflects upon its enclosed, familiar qualities with fondness: 'This landscape then bounded our wishes; in its narrow circle is contained all necessary to existence, in ourselves all essential to happiness' (97).

Knowing of the dangers that may unfold, Matilda deliberates upon the subsequent loss of both something and someone very dear to her memory:

> By what strange caprice is it, everything seems dear to us the moment we know we must lose it! Involuntary tears filled my eyes when the hour of my departure arrived. As much a stranger to the worlds as if just born into it, how could I promise to myself years as peaceful as I had experienced in the Recess? Long habit has the art of giving charms to places, or rather, it is the people who inhabit them. It seemed to me, as if in quitting the place where the dust of Mrs. Marlow was interred, I quitted likewise her idea; every spot I looked on was marked by some noble sentiment, or tender emotion of that dear lady; but I was unjust to myself, for I have carried in my heat, through every scene of life, her respectable image (66).

Mrs. Marlow, a mother figure to them during their childhood, becomes inexorably linked to the Beautiful Death and to the same enclosed past that contains the happy memories of the Recess. Although lost to physical death, Matilda's memory of Mrs. Marlow assures her resurrection and continued existence within a place whose limited boundaries (in accordance with Burkean aesthetics) create a beautiful certainty that provides reassurance for Matilda since, as she later remarks, 'To fix on anything certain appears to the exhausted soul a degree of relief' (313).

Death in *The Recess* is suggested not only as a release from the pains of existing; also on offer – in a fashion not unlike that already proposed by Reeve in *The Old English Baron* – is the possibility of resurrection and renewal:

> Oh! That in thy tomb, thou quiet sleeper, sighed I, may be interred with my name all the painful part of my existence! That renovated to a new

> and happier being, I may emerge again into a world which still opens a flowery path before me (Lee, 218).

Though at one level, this suggests being resurrected from Earth into an orthodox Christian heaven, rebirth into this world is also implied. In this instance it might be argued that the living death to which Ellinor might be referring has already happened, since Matilda and Ellinor first entered the world like the undead emerging from the crypt.

The Recess indicates an all-important shift in meaning for both the Sublime and the Beautiful within the Gothic tradition. If previously the most Sublime notion of all was death, then Reeve's novel illustrates that this viewpoint has been radically reassessed as early as 1783. Where Edmund Burke considered death to be the 'King of Terrors,' Lee transforms it into a thing of Beauty. If in Burke's words 'we submit to what we admire, but we love what submits to us' (Burke 1998, 147), then death, as something identified in his essay as, 'a much more affecting idea than pain' (86) now begins to be desired rather than feared.

In a scene similar to Harclay's arrival in Reeve's *The Old English Baron*, Matilda returns to the once familiar surroundings of Kenilworth Castle and discovers that much has changed. Sensing that death is continually occurring in her own life, her awareness of the decay of time at first serves to increase Matilda's responsiveness to mortality:

> Humbly I solicited entrance at a gate which once flew open whenever I appeared; but, ah, though the exterior was the same, how strange seemed the alteration within!– No more did the liveried strain of domestics assemble to the distant winding of the huntsman's horn.– No longer did I rest in gilded galleries, whose pictures sides delighted one sense, while their coolness refreshed another. No longer could I, even in idea, behold the beloved, the noble owner, whose gracious mien endeared the welcome it conveyed – a change which jarred every feeling had taken place (sic). A numerous body of diligent mechanics were plodding in those halls in which Elizabeth had feasted, and their battered sides hardly now informed us where the rich tapestry used to

> hang ... By incidents of this kind, one becomes painfully and instantaneously sensible of advancing into life (Lee, 274).

Here Matilda neither masks death, nor does she find any relief in the undetermined idea of a heaven beyond. Instead she soon confronts the pain caused by the Sublime and resurrects the Beautiful Death of the past or, to return to Protestant ideology, uses her 'internalised conscience' to impede the perpetuation of time and to resurrect desirable moments from where its laws have no value:

> Alas, in yet untried youth, the prospect that is unknown ever adds to its own charms those of imagination; while in maturer life, the heart lingers on all which once delighted it, hopeless of finding in the future, a pleasure fancy can ever compare with those it reviews on the past (280).

Jonathan Dollimore notes, 'time has no absolute existence but is merely a category of consciousness necessary for perception' (Dollimore, 177). Lee's examination of time and its relationship with the Beautiful Death in her novel strongly suggests an element of command within Matilda's response to the surrounding world. There are moments when time becomes insignificant to the point where it is temporarily arrested in its journey towards death. Matilda notes: 'Methinks, while I expiate on these trifles, time seems suspended, and the scene still living before me' (Lee, 6). Matilda willingly resurrects the memory of the Recess to compensate for the gradual demise of the present:

> While I dwell on the moment which called to being this finer and more poignant sense, sensibility, memory retraces its dear emotions with a softness time itself can never extinguish (158).

Similarly, Ellinor observes her sister's unhappy existence in a perpetually expiring present:

> Beloved Matilda, born as you were to woe, you saw but one bounded prospect of the infinitude the globe presents to us; the horrors of this

were unknown to you ... Is this to live? Ah no! It is to be continually dying (222).

The use and mastery of time will become a prominent characteristic of the Beautiful Death of later Gothic novels particularly in relation to its physical development, which I shall consider in the next chapter.

In the novels so far considered, we have examined the development of the Beautiful and its transformation into death and resurrection. We may see how this gradual process influenced the emergence and popularisation of the vampire in Gothic fiction along with the challenging concept of identifying it as an embodiment of the understanding and beautification of death.

By way of summarising my argument to this point, I shall first consider the nineteenth century views of Charles Darwin and Sigmund Freud on death, whose theories are significant in refining and expanding further my concept of the Beautiful Death. I will then consider the views of some more recent critics.

Adam Phillips, Darwin, Freud, and the Beautiful Death

Adam Phillips writes, 'For both Darwin and Freud the idea of death saves us from the idea that there is anything to be saved from' (Phillips, 115). Darwin and Freud, like many Gothic authors writing a century before, considered the idea of death as something to be explored in life since, as Matilda notes in *The Recess*, 'by dealing with death we become stronger, perhaps even better people' (Lee, 122).

Darwin and Freud were writing in a growing secular society where science had already progressed towards explanations that were previously left to the Church. Darwin had theorised upon the evolution of man and had argued that our origins differed somewhat from the Christian orthodox view of Adam and Eve. His argument for 'Natural Selection' announced a challenge to conventional beliefs and contended

that all species were entwined in a struggle for existence rather than exclusively created:

> Natural selection ... leads to divergence of character and to much extinction of the less improved and intermediate forms of life. on these principles, I believe, the nature of the affinities of all organic beings may be explained ... On the view that each species has been independently created, I can see no explanation of this great fact in the classification of all organic beings; but, to the best of my judgement, it is explained through inheritance and the complex action of natural selection, entailing extinction and divergence of character (Darwin 1998, 100).

For many, nineteenth century science was concerned with the individual not as a return to Romantic subjectivity, but with the role of the individual without god. This focus upon the scientific growth of man challenged the philosophical and religious ideals that had been addressed in previous centuries. Phillips writes:

> Without a divine sanction to their lives – without a deity or deities to placate or impress – what self-justifying stories can people tell themselves, in order to keep going? This was the crisis of faith, in both their religions, that Darwin and Freud were born into as men of the nineteenth century ... In their writings we see religious traditions and sensibilities struggling to transform themselves into secular, scientifically informed ways of life. The new world of late nineteenth-century Europe was a world possibly without God, not one that was closer to his divine purposes (Phillips, 116).

When one considers the world in terms of its disease, war, death and suffering, then a decline in faith is perhaps inevitable. The ensuing sense of religious abandonment we may feel leads to a self-governed approach towards successfully managing such distressing issues as I discussed in relation to Matilda and Ellinor of *The Recess*. We may seek our own explanations and justifications for the evils of the world. In modern society, for instance, murder, war, famine and death infiltrate our daily

routine as though it were the air we breathe and we are forced to grasp the reality of death and the realisation that it surrounds us at every moment. Arguably the fear of god no longer applies in a world that fears itself, and faith can offer little condolence in the light of the daily chaos that regrettably accompanies our existence. Yet such familiarisation with cruelty and death on a recurring basis regulates our perceptions of such horrors, and provides the human psyche with the resistance that is required in order to survive, endure, and to ultimately accept the approach of our own death, and this is the case in point. Darwin and Freud's intention was 'to render ageing, accident, illness and death not alien but integral to our sense of ourselves; to find out whether loss is still the right word' (Phillips, 118). Experiencing a sense of death in our own lives renders our demise more acceptable. Zygmunt Bauman notes:

> Though we never live through our own death, we do live through the deaths of the others, and their death gives meaning to our success: we have not died, we are still alive (Bauman, 34).

To die and survive death while still living challenges our perceptions of what death may imply. Schopenhauer, for instance, argues for the indestructibility of our inner nature and contends that while individual death suggests closure, the continuation of the species at the same time suggests immortality. The individual and the species are united in the will to live:

> it is thus evident that the human individual perishes, whereas the human race remains and continues to live. But in the being-in-itself of things which is free from these forms, the whole difference between the individual and the race is also abolished, and the two are immediately one. The entire will-to-live is in the individual, as it is in the race, and thus the continuance of the species is merely the image of the individual's indestructibility (Schopenhauer, 496).

Darwin and Freud attached a great deal of importance to the way we cope with the idea of death in our own lives. Phillips first uses Darwin's preoccupation with the common earthworm taken from his book, *The Formation of Vegetable Mould Through the Action of Worms, with Observations on their Habits* (1881), as a means

of establishing Darwin's idea of how we can experience death while still living. Phillips asks: 'What, if anything, about nature newly conceived should we now elaborate, or admire, or even, indeed emulate' (Phillips, 36). The idea of comparing the behavioural patterns of human beings with those of earthworms may at first appear groundless. Darwin's concern with the function of the earthworm, however, serves as a significant contribution to our discussion of the Beautiful Death since his argument is strongly linked with the idea of the past and resurrection.

Phillips notes: 'The anxiety informing all Darwin's observations and conjectures is that everything disappears' (45). Darwin is troubled by the thought that death implies complete non-existence and that the death of something or someone leads to eventual decline into nothingness. He nevertheless reassesses this dilemma when his studies lead to the discovery of examples in nature that challenge that unsettling theory. Phillips first analyses Darwin's discussion concerning the formation of coral after the land is destroyed by 'subterranean causes'. For the benefit of our discussion, we can compare the subterranean causes with the Sublime in its destruction of the Beautiful. Darwin writes that, as the land disappears:

> the coral building polypi soon again raise their solid masses to the level of the water; but not so with the land; each inch lost is irreclaimably gone (Phillips, 45).

Characters of Gothic fiction are faced with the regular predicament of losing something that is dear to them. The fundamental issue here, however, is that these characters are given the ability to replace that which is thought irretrievable. Therefore nothing that is dear to the individual is ever 'irreclaimably gone' while the memory functions as a system of replacement. The Sublime, or in this case Darwin's 'subterranean forces' unceasingly destroying the land, is overcome by the use of the Beautiful Death. Phillips asks:

> what kind of creatures are we – what is human nature like? – if we are inspired by the survivors who flourish? If we go with the coral, so to speak, we still can't ignore each inch of land 'irreclaimably gone' (46).

That which is 'irreclaimably gone' is capable, then, of being resurrected and it is here that the link between human nature and the practices of the earthworm become most apparent. Darwin is concerned with what occurs naturally in the soil and how this process of resurrection is duplicated in human habit. Moving onto his analysis of earthworms, Darwin understands their instinctual behaviour as fundamentally representing what is within our nature to perform. It is human nature to seek the things we once loved and lost to death and to reclaim those precious moments from the past. Searching for examples of other aspects of nature that equate with our own approaches to death, Darwin discovered such an approach in the behaviour of earthworms. Phillips writes:

> Indeed it is worm burial that accounts for something Darwin has 'repeatedly observed': 'fragments of pottery and bones buried beneath the turf in fields near towns'. Worm burial preserves and restores ... 'The explanation of these facts .... is due to the digestive process of the common earthworm (48).

The digestive process of the earthworm has reassuring prospects. Not everything, once supposedly deceased, can be classified as permanently erased from existence. The process of digestion and regurgitation in earthworms mirrors our own response to death. Phillips notes, 'There is a behaviour, a nature in worms that's consoling; that things can be resurrected, regurgitated' (55). As with Gothic authors some hundred years before, Darwin is encouraged by the idea that the dead can be resurrected from the past.

Elisabeth Bronfen's discussion of repetition has an important role to play in Darwin's examination of the behavioural pattern of earthworms. She writes:

> The resemblance repetition effects is a rhetorical category, in which the bringing of one term close to another meets the resistance of being distant, of being other (Bronfen, 324).

With repetition comes change since 'Repetition does not merely imitate but also reproduces something new out of an earlier body' (Bronfen, 325). In relation to death, if repetition reproduced the same effect then it would merely be repeating the

same pain and the same fear. Any repetition of death, therefore, must permit some form of alteration, since it is not the fear of death that we wish to repeat. Bronfen writes:

> A repetition which succeeds perfectly may become fatal because the space of difference between model and copy has been eliminated, collapsing both terms into one entity, abolishing the singularity of each separate term (325).

Bronfen refers to the studies of Rimmon-Kenan, she writes that he 'distinguishes between constructive repetition, as a strategy emphasising difference, and destructive repetition, as one emphasising sameness' (325). The Beautiful Death allows for 'constructive repetition' to flourish in its alteration of death from something fearful to something desired. Such a procedure is exemplified by the vampire of later gothic fiction such as Glenarvon in Lady Caroline Lamb's *Glenarvon* (1816). Regurgitating the earth, earthworms restore something previously lost beneath the surface. While in essence the same soil is being resurrected by the earthworm, it is somehow different upon its return. The soil has seemingly returned from death and has undergone a process of 'constructive repetition'. The process is equally structured with the vampiric corpse who returns from the grave as a being who appears the same, but also is somehow different.

In his book *Vampires, Burial, and Death* (1988) Paul Barber, like Darwin, examines the concept of resurrection and how it can be connected to the natural world. Barber investigates how the environment (including the weather) can instigate the very real process of a corpse seemingly returning from the dead. He discusses how the event of the body being discovered away from its grave was often perceived as supernatural and vampiric by many eighteenth and nineteenth century European cultures:

> Once we see clearly that the exhumed vampire was merely a dead body, undergoing a process of decomposition that rendered it monstrous and threatening, we find that most of our information about it begins to make sense. And that included even the belief that the vampire leaves the grave. Bodies emerge from the earth, with or without help, for many reasons (Barber, 134).

Among many others, Barber cites the following as possible reasons for the unearthing of a corpse:

> People who have decided the body is a vampire and wish to kill it ... Erosion uncovers bodies ... Flooding uncovers bodies: the coffin or the body, being buoyant, sometimes pops to the surface in floods, coming up through waterlogged ground (137).

Here, the dead body, seen to be emerging of its own accord, returns as the same body but with a terrifying variance conceived by the individual, a 'constructive repetition'. The reasons for the return of the body are sometimes unknown and thus create monsters in the imagination of the superstitious. The dead body is therefore altered in the mind of the observer into something beyond human. As Barber notes:

> if he (the observer) does not understand the causes, he will not report simply that an inexplicable event has occurred but will deduce a causative process incorrectly, attributing it to whatever forces are provided by his philosophy. In effect, he reconceives the events to fit them into his belief-system. Such events are attributed, then, to gods, demons, or (in the case of the vampire) the volition of the corpse itself (135).

Both Darwin's and Barber's arguments leans towards a secular approach to the subject of death and resurrection, without recourse to the Christian belief in the continuation of the soul after the death of the body. The above quote demonstrates the distorted views of death that are subject to personal fears or convictions. Gods, demons and vampires aside, however, there are no correct or incorrect assessments of death since it remains beyond perception. Without any true knowledge of death, faith offers the possibility of coming to terms with the end of existence in a way that suggests eternal peace; the idea is somewhat comforting, yet unfounded. Religious conviction tenders the stability of possessing a means to perceive death as a form of enlightenment and is based upon our will to cast aside any distinctive impressions of death. Individuality is overlooked in the wake of mass conformity and, for many, this is sufficient in understanding the role that death plays in life. I believe, however, that

subjectivity is the key to understanding and accepting death. The plentiful array of belief systems in the world today indicate that someone may or may not be telling the truth and, until the facts of death are discovered, it can only ever be truly regarded with subjectivity as a means of consolation, an example of which is discoverable in Romanticism (considered by many to have taken place between 1770 and 1848), and the Beautiful Death of Gothic fiction.

Our experience of losing loved ones and our awareness of the cyclical process of life and death in nature familiarises us with the fact that there will come a day when we too will die; it is part of the human condition to know that death will some day play its definitive role. Death is accepted because it is inevitable, but it is also partly our idiosyncratic approach to death that separates us from other species; we share a fascination with death and the past. As Arthur Schopenhauer notes:

> The animal lives without any real knowledge of death; therefore the individual animal immediately enjoys the absolute imperishableness and immortality of the species, since it is conscious of itself only as endless (Schopenhauer, 463).

Darwin theorised that we unconsciously mimic what comes naturally to the earthworm; Phillips notes: 'the way they struggled for survival had spin-offs for other parts of nature' (Phillips, 57). In effect we are as Darwin's worms, forever playing the part of the archaeologist unearthing and resurrecting dead societies, arts, cultures, cities and ruins of the past. Our fascination with the past is perhaps conducive to the idea that we are capable of better understanding death and resurrection without dependence on a higher power. Phillips writes of earthworms:

> They preserve the past, and create the conditions for future growth. No deity is required for those reassuring continuities. It is worms that keep the earth abundant; and, indeed hospitable to people's needs: the need to conserve and thereby reconstruct the past (56).

Rather than commenting upon the insignificance of a deity Phillips, through Darwin, is suggesting that reassurance in the face of death can be found within the self as well as turning to other more traditionally Christian orthodox approaches towards dying.

This is another example of how the subjectivity of the Beautiful Death of Gothic fiction and, to some extent, Protestantism's 'internalised conscience' may serve to demonstrate the redundancy of divinity where 'no deity is required for those reassuring continuities'.

In his final remark on Darwin before moving onto Freud, Phillips approaches the idea of what I have been referring to as the 'Necessary Death'. Phillips writes: 'Like Freud, Darwin is interested in how destruction conserves life; and in the kind of life destruction makes possible' (63). Had Darwin, Freud, or Phillips formulated some ideas on the subject of death in Gothic literature, it would have been interesting to read their interpretation of how Gothic authors illustrated this 'kind of life destruction makes possible', which will form the basis of my discussion in the following chapter. Phillips then considers Freud.

As we discussed earlier in the chapter, Freud argued that the aim of all life is to return to a state of death. This claim formed part of his essay, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1919). With the tensions of life therefore creating a complexity from which we wish to escape, as we discussed in relation to the sisters of *The Recess*, Freud postulates that we desire death (on an unconscious level) in order to evade the anxieties of living. Freud's death instinct primarily concerns the death of an inner part of the self while the individual is still living, which in turn creates a sensation of satisfaction. Phillips writes:

> For Freud the struggle ... was to satisfy oneself, and essential to this satisfaction was to die in one's own way; from inside as it were (9).

Since they have continued to exist after acknowledging death, a living, conscious being may, therefore, die within life and recognise the survival of death.

The conception of dying 'from inside' highlights a focal feature of the Beautiful Death that we examined in *The Recess*. Death has already occurred in life, it can therefore be accepted while simultaneously understood as something that does not signify the end. This continued existence, following a death of the self, hints towards the concept of immortality. Later Gothic authors from Charlotte Dacre onwards would use the Sublime and the Beautiful to explore the idea of immortality in characters who represented the Beautiful Death. This will be examined in the following chapter.

Aside from his interest in the way that we seek death, Freud was also, like Darwin, interested in the idea of resurrection. Freud writes:

> it is impossible that all this loveliness of Nature and Art, of the world of our sensations and of the world outside, will really fade away into nothing ... Somehow or other this loveliness must be able to persist and to escape all the powers of destruction (Freud 1990, 287).

Freud discusses transience as something that does not necessarily signify temporality, rather he understands it as something that can die and return. This is something that we have explored in Beckford's *Vathek* with the idea of the Sublime destroying the recurring Beautiful. Freud writes: 'As regards the beauty of Nature, each time it is destroyed by winter it comes again next year' (Freud 1990, 288). While Nature exists in this way, and while it is in our nature to survive, death will never be deemed wholly conclusive. In essence, death will cease to be fearful for as long as we continue to mimic both Nature and the behaviour of the common earthworm. Zygmunt Bauman notes that it is our nature to purposely remove things from existence in order to continue living with the knowledge that we have survived death:

> Things do not die because of old age, metal fatigue, disintegrating beyond repair – not of 'natural causes'; not because death is inescapable. They disappear long before they reach the point of 'natural death'; indeed, well before they begin to show signs of 'senility' ... They could be infinitely durable, nay immortal, if we wished them to be. But we *do not wish* them to be immortal (Bauman, 188).

The lifespan of the human being is, at best, disappointing and is something of a morbid concern. To realize that our life continues beyond the death of others offers albeit a morose consolation but, as Bauman suggests, we have at our disposal the ability to end the existence of our surrounding possessions well before they have the opportunity to continue in existence past our own death. In a vain and asinine attempt to either outlive or defy death, some of our possessions are renewed, signifying

resurrection; others are simply placed conveniently upon the rubbish tip, signifying our ability to survive.

Like Darwin, Freud used a form of 'constructive repetition' to develop his argument concerning loss and return. Phillips discusses Freud's observations of a small child who symbolises the disappearance and return of his mother using only a reel of string which he repeatedly throws over the side of his cot only to then wind it back. The scene devised serves to create the consolation in knowing that the return of the child's mother is subject only to his will rather than the decision to return being left to his mother. As Phillips notes: 'This retrieval that is a form of memory is good; not because it wishfully stops time – monumentalising the past – but because in their view', that is Darwin and Freud's, 'it sponsors change' (Phillips, 126). The process of the disappearance and return of his mother is repeated, it has been altered in the child's favour. 'Constructive repetition' allows for the child's absolute control over the outcome. The very idea of practising this form of disappearance and return possesses, for Phillips, a certain air of despondency:

> It is as though, whatever else they are, all the quotidian experiences of loss, all the disappearances of everyday life, are like rehearsals, or conjectures, or foreshadowings: ironic speculations about the hidden drama of one's own death; getting in practice for one's own absence (Phillips, 124).

More than a simple rehearsal for death, however, the child's game simulates the desire to understand and control something that is beyond perception. The game implies that the child, at such an early age, is unsatisfied with aspects of his life that are outside of his control. The idea of *fate* remains unsubstantiated, and a significant aspect of our existence is in maintaining a comfortable portion of control over our existence; this control extends to death. The child's game is an analogy of the desire to override chance and assumption. The child will decide when his mother will return, and this routine is continued in adulthood as we cast yet another functioning household application into the bin thereby enforcing our control over death in our lives. The same procedure is effected with the use of the Beautiful Death by victims in Gothic fiction. The Beautiful Death is not a preparation for death; rather it is to

assist in the understanding that death does not inevitably imply the 'absence' of which Phillips writes.

Freud's 'death instinct' and Darwin's study of a dead past that is capable of being resurrected (albeit by a common earthworm) were ideas that had been explored in Gothic fiction since the 1770s in the guise of the Beautiful Death. By the time Darwin and Freud had undertaken their studies on death, the Beautiful Death had been developed by authors into a power that defined the strength of the individual in being able to understand, accept, and control death.

Before I proceed with the further development of the Beautiful Death in late eighteenth century Gothic fiction, I will first consider the views of some more recent critics on how death is often masked by beauty.

The Veil of Deception

We may be able to happily shield our eyes from things that may offend us, but this does not imply that these distasteful images have entirely disappeared; instead we have only temporarily hindered their intrusion into our lives. In the same manner, to mask death with beauty is not sufficient in distancing the prospect of dying from our daily deliberations since it still acknowledges that death will occur at some moment in the future. I have been arguing, however, that Gothic authors were beginning to identify death with the past rather than the future.

Elisabeth Bronfen's work helps to indicate a crucial tension that begins to emerge in the depiction of death within the evolving genre of Gothic fiction in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. On offer seems to be a genuine discovery of the Beautiful Death to set against the notion of death as the terrifying obliteration of everything. However, there is also recognition that beauty may simply be a mask of self-deception.

In investigating Freud's death instinct, Bronfen writes that death can be:

> conceptualised as the return to a symbiotic unity, to the peace before the difference and tension of life, to the protective enclosure before individuation and cultivation (Bronfen, 65).

Bronfen also arrives at an understanding of the past as not merely a symbol of undeath, but also a representation of the Beautiful: 'The creation of Beauty allows us to escape from the elusiveness of the material world into an illusion of eternity (a denial of loss)' (64). Bronfen later writes:

> In this final confrontation with the past events of one's own life, the dying person not only reduplicated her or himself but also senses the unforgettable or the eternal quality of these "remembered events" (80).

Bronfen then discusses the various approaches towards masking death: 'One form of masking death was a cultivation of the world of memory, supporting the notion that the precious dead are not really dead, in fact continue to live' (87). In a similar argument Zygmunt Bauman notes that 'Offensive thoughts must be suppressed. Failing that, they must be prettified or otherwise disguised, so that their ugly look would not vex us' (Bauman, 12). Discussing a nineteenth century perspective of death, Philippe Aries writes:

> Death is no longer death, it is an illusion of art. Death has started to hide. In spite of the apparent publicity that surrounds it in mourning, at the cemetery, in life as well as in art and literature, death is concealing itself under the mask of beauty (Aries 1991, 473).

This is to suggest an idea of death as that depicted by Charles Baudelaire in his poem *The Death of Lovers* (1857):

> We will have beds imbued with mildest scent,
> And couches, deep as tombs, in which to lie,
> Flowers around us, strange and opulent,
> Blooming on shelves under the finest skies.

Approaching equally their final light,
Our two hearts will be two great flaming brands
That will be double in each other's sight –
Our souls the mirrors where the image stands.

One evening made of rose and mystic blue
We will flare out, in an epiphany
Like a long sob, charged with our last adieus.

And later, opening the doors, will be
An Angel, who will joyfully reglaze
The tarnished mirrors, and relight the blaze (Baudelaire, 277).

Aries takes many of his examples concerning his definition of the Beautiful Death from the diary of the La Ferronays family. This narrative was penned by various members of the family around the early part of the nineteenth century and deals with the Romantic view of death, which attempts to perceive it as a Beautiful occurrence. The La Ferronays family are compelled to cope with death resulting from persistent ill health that has burdened the family. Death becomes something that is accepted through necessity and is arguably masked or romanticised by the La Ferronays family as a means of managing the anguish of losing a loved one. The La Ferronays' son, Albert, writes: 'I often feel the desire to immerse myself in the sea in order to be surrounded by something immense' (Aries 1991, 416). Aries notes that it is 'the immensity of death' (416) to which Albert is referring, an idea that is comparable with Burke's discussion of the Sublime as something that is vast and immeasurable. Death as beauty, on the other hand, becomes romanticised at Albert's death-bed by his wife, Alexandrine, who writes: 'His eyes, already fixed, were turned toward me ... and I, his wife!, felt something I would never have imagined: I felt that death was happiness' (Aries 1991, 419). The happiness felt by Alexandrine is not only effected by the welcomed end to her husband's suffering; rather her happiness seems to be the result of witnessing death itself. She later refers to the happy memories she has of her husband in order to overcome the painful idea of his death:

> Sometimes ... I feel a painful desire to get away from myself, to break out, to try somehow to recapture one moment of the happiness I have lost: his voice, his smile, his eyes (Aries 1991, 421).

However, to mask death by memory and the Beautiful (as Bronfen and Aries suggest) is simply not enough to assuage the fear posed by dying. The notion of masking is itself evidence that whatever is being masked is being done so with good reason; in this case fear. A fear of death, therefore, is far removed from being understood and accepted. As Arthur Toynbee notes:

> The key, for each one of us, to the relation, for him, between life and death is, I believe, the extent of his familiarity with death and the stage in his life at which he has become familiar with it – supposing that he has not had the misfortune to remain unfamiliar with death until he is brought up against it (Toynbee, 260).

Death is feared not only because it signifies the unknown, but because it implies an end to life. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross writes: 'It is inconceivable for our unconscious to imagine an actual ending of our own life here on Earth' (Kubler-Ross, 16). Our past, those we have loved, the experiences that have come to define us as what we are; all are to be terminated with the arrival of death. It is no wonder, then, that the subject of death is something that is often linked with fear. Kubler-Ross goes on to note that: 'Man has to defend himself psychologically in many ways against this increased fear of death and increased inability to foresee and protect himself against it' (28). She offers a solution by suggesting that 'We can attempt to master death by challenging it' (28) since 'if we cannot anticipate life after death, then we have to consider death' (29).

Our ability to contemplate our own death places us in an advantageous position. Toynbee argues:

> man has foreknowledge of his coming death while he is still alive, and, possessing this foreknowledge, has a chance, if he chooses to take it, of pondering over the strangeness of his destiny (Toynbee, 63).

Understanding death can lead to its acceptance and also, as Kubler-Ross suggests, a psychological defence against something that would otherwise be beyond our control. Kubler-Ross discusses death on a mass scale in terms of casualties of war and those inflicted with disease, but it is to the capabilities of the individual that she looks to for coming to terms with death:

> Though every man will attempt in his own way to postpone such questions and issues until he is forced to face them, he will only be able to change things if he can start to conceive of his own death (Kubler-Ross, 31).

The Beautiful Death allows for such an approach towards death to be nurtured by the individual psyche. Death thereby becomes accepted rather than masked as a result of fear. Ernest Becker understands masking as a form of repression. He argues that, 'repression takes care of the complex symbol of death for most people. But its disappearance doesn't mean that the fear was never there' (Becker, 20). The individual cannot deny the absence of fear simply because it has been repressed, nor can the person deny 'one of their concepts because he represses his consciousness of its truth' (Becker, 20). Masking death merely serves to provisionally conceal the fear of death beneath notions of Beauty. The initial fear of death is temporarily stifled, but its presence has not entirely been eliminated. Becker goes on to write:

> there is a growing body of research trying to get at the consciousness of death by repression that uses psychological tests such as measuring galvanic skin responses; it strongly suggests that underneath the most bland exterior lurks the universal anxiety, the "worm at the core."* For another thing, there is nothing like shocks in the real world to jar loose repressions ... Recently several people suffered broken limbs and other injuries after forcing open their airplane's safety door during take-off and jumping from the wing to the ground. The incident was triggered by the backfire of an engine. Obviously underneath these harmless noises other things are rumbling in the creature (21).

* Becker previously discusses the studies of William James, who referred to death as the 'worm at the core'.

Redefining death was an alternative route by Gothic authors towards its understanding, and this helped in further understanding the idea that death can be considered as beautiful.

Jonathan Dollimore suggests that the imagination is integral to the process of dying:

> in a forever inaccessible space beyond representation, we fantasise an excess which forever disrupts representation. Except that even to speak of a beyond is too metaphysical, so we imagine an outside which is always already inside (Dollimore, 127).

The past is available to every individual as a fantasy, as an 'outside which is always already inside', since it is already rooted in the human psyche. As Karl S. Guthke writes:

> What is past at the moment of death is preserved in unending memory here on earth; what has died remains alive as remembered and cherished by those who survive and by their descendants, ad infinitum. Life, once it is over, becomes part of history (Guthke, 254).

With all the possible benefits it may generate, however, masking death with Beauty can never lead to its acceptance without first highlighting an important issue; namely that death requires masking because it is feared. If one was to replace a bad experience in the present with a good memory from the past, it does not thereby ensure the removal of the bad experience; it is still there; it has merely been temporarily obstructed by a happy memory. Likewise beautifying death does not remove the warning that it proffers, that we will at some stage in our lifetime encounter it for the first and last time. Gothic authors from Clara Reeve onwards confronted this concern by investigating modified approaches towards understanding and accepting death rather than judging it as a terrible fate to be disguised.

Death is feared partly because of its irrefutable connection to the future, and Michel Foucault's views are of significance here in understanding the similarities that language has with death and reinforces my theory that the only way to truly demystify and accept death is to send it to the past.

When words are used in either speech or text they are being resurrected from the past; they have already been spoken or written. In effect we are using something that has already died. The parallels that may be drawn between language assist in demonstrating why a future death can never truly be tamed by masking it with Beauty, since to tame something we have no true conception of is next to impossible. Like our attempts to understand the future, our grasp of death is unstable and open to conjecture. At best we might perceive the future with optimism and attempt to include the moment of our death and the possibility of an afterlife as part of this favourable outlook. Michel Foucault argues that to speak of misfortunes that may occur in the future maintains their safe distance. Contemplating the future in this way may help to circumvent the ominous presence of death. The realisation of death occurring in the future is, therefore, provisionally avoided. Foucault writes:

> The gods send disasters to mortals so that they can tell of them, but men speak of them so that misfortunes will never fully be realised, so that their fulfilment will be averted in the distance of words (Foucault, 54).

At first glance this approach bears the traits of masking. The ability to speak of disasters and of death allows for only a temporary respite since to distance death in this way is to recognise its gradual advance. Furthermore it is the case that when referring to something in which our knowledge is inhibited, we can only ever produce conjecture. But on further consideration we can see how Foucault's approach may also identify language and death with the past and resurrection rather than the future:

> Before the imminence of death, language rushes forth, but it also starts again, tells of itself, discovers the story of the story and the possibility that this interpretation might never end. Headed toward death, language turns back on itself; it encounters something like a mirror; and to stop this death which would stop it, it possesses but a single power; that of giving birth to its own image in a play of mirrors that has no limits (54).

Before its death language is imitated. Once it is spoken it is lost somewhere in a mirror image of its own making and is able to continue. Just as a breath is lost in the wind, language is lost to ensuing silence, but this does not imply that it has ceased to exist. Like the spoken word restores language to life, the written word can also be resurrected whenever, for example, we read words in a book that were written a century before.

The existence of language suggests that there can be no death where there is duplication and, 'so as finally to escape death, another language can be heard – the image of actual language' (Foucault, 54). Since the thing that has seemingly died has been reproduced, it can subsequently be resurrected in order to be used again. Foucault writes:

> from the day that men began to speak towards death and against it, in order to grasp and imprison it, something was born, a murmuring which repeats, recounts, and redoubles itself endlessly (55).

By speaking of death, we bestow upon it the same characteristics as the language that we use to examine it. To speak of death in this way, therefore, is to deny it; it is to contain it in an undead region that, like the past, can be readily accessed. As Foucault notes, 'language is made into an image of itself and transgresses the limit of death through its reduplication in a mirror' (57). A word is no sooner uttered before it flies into the past where it remains awaiting resurrection.

Ultimately there is no place for the existence of language in the future since it cannot exist without first being conceived. One cannot simply utter a word without its conception; one cannot imagine an unspoken language in the future without first imagining its resonance, its syllables and its meaning, and once this occurs, then it is already a language that has been conceived. Like language, therefore, a future death can be nothing but obscure, the masking of which offers only a transitory reprieve. Foucault's theory of language and its connection with death reminds us that a future death can never be truly controlled and understood by the individual. We may well feel reassured by the ability of language to represent undeath because it is capable of being resurrected, but we also feel its inadequacies in being able to explain a future death.

Foucault's theory goes towards supporting the ineffectiveness of masking death and consolidates my contention that, if a future death is ever to be tamed, it will help to understand it first as something that has already occurred in the past, that is, a Beautiful Death.

I will now discuss the progression of the Beautiful Death and its development by authors into character-based representations, which becomes prevalent in later novels.

Chapter Four

Re-shaping the Beautiful Death

> I show you the fulfilling death; the death which shall be a spur and a promise to the living (Nietzsche, 135).

Fred Feldman, in his philosophical study, *Confrontations with the Reaper* (1992) refers to two differing perceptions of death from two groups of philosophers whom he calls 'Terminators' and 'Survivalists'. The former believe that death signifies a complete erasure from existence. Once death occurs, therefore, all implications pointing to prior existence are eradicated. In contrast the 'Survivalists' (whose theory Feldman himself shares) are of the opinion that once something has died, it still exists beyond death in some way. Feldman writes:

> When I say that a thing "ceases to exist" at a time, what I mean is that for some period of time up to that time there was such as thing as it; subsequently there is no such thing. So, for example, imagine that I have a little wooden table. Suppose I break off the legs and then chop up the tabletop for rekindling. Suppose I burn all the resulting wood and scattered the ashes. Then the table no longer exists. Of course, all the atoms from which it was made still exist. But the table no longer exists. Instead of the table, we now have scattered ashes and dispersed smoke (Feldman, 90).

Similarly, Arthur Toynbee, in his discussion of funereal customs, maintains that death does not imply the complete eradication of the self. He maintains that something – if only an acknowledgement of the deceased from those left behind – remains after death:

> however diverse man's funerary rites have been, they have all had a common significance. They have signified that a human being has a dignity in virtue of his being human; that his dignity survives his death (Toynbee, 60).

Our initial analysis may place Gothic authors firmly in the 'Survivalist' category since our discussion has highlighted that death in Gothic fiction does not unavoidably mean an end to existence. With the roots of the Beautiful Death established in the past, Gothic authors demonstrated that existence is able to remain locked in this past away from the throes of time. On further reflection, however, Gothic authors would appear to have much in common with both 'Terminator' and 'Survivalist' groups. Feldman goes on to discuss the Greek philosopher, Epicurus (341-270 B.C.), whose argument follows a similar path to the 'Terminator' theory and how close his theory comes to the termination thesis. Epicurus believed that we do not exist at the moment of death. It follows that death can incite neither pain nor fear since the individual would have no recourse to such aforementioned sensations or emotions. Feldman writes:

> Death is nothing to Epicureans. They do not fear or hate death. They do not view death as a misfortune for the one who dies. They think death is no worse for the one who dies. They think death is no worse for the one who dies than is not yet being born for the one who is not yet born. They say that ordinary people who look forward to their deaths with dismay are in this irrational (Feldman, 143).

In this case the Beautiful Death combines the 'Survivalist' theory of a continued existence after death with the 'Terminator'/Epicurean theory, which affirms that death is painless and should not be feared.

As we have discussed in relation to Lee's *The Recess,* it seems clear that, by the late eighteenth century, there were a significant number of writers who felt that death required a new definition in literature, and one that superseded the fearful, destructive force that was present in Walople's *The Castle of Otranto* and Beckford's *Vathek.* An influential author in this respect is Ann Radcliffe, whose novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) demonstrates alternative approaches to how the Sublime might be

perceived and who effected a subsequent amendment to the Beautiful Death that would be developed by following authors.

The Mysteries of Udolpho

In his essay, *Varieties Of English* Gothic, Gilbert Phelps writes:

> Mrs Radcliffe handles her Gothic material in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* more successfully than Walpole, creating a more convincing sense of mystery and suspense, so that, for what it is worth, it can probably be called the first modern thriller (Ford, 115)

Ann Radcliffe's Gothic was a justification of the supernatural. Far from the unexplained manifestations of ghosts and giants of Walpole's treatment, Radcliffe adopted the approach of endowing her readers with rationalistic denouements, a technique that arguably weakened the obscurity of the unknown in ensuing novels such as *The Italian* (1797) for readers already accustomed to her style. Her rationalistic slant nevertheless approaches the Sublime in a manner not previously explored by Gothic authors. Radcliffe's eventual vindication of the Sublime remains a product of her approach throughout *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. The Sublime, therefore, although often indisputably associated with Burkean precepts, is also regularly absolved by its association with the Beautiful.

Using a passage from Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* in which the character, Blanche de Villefort, stares intently through a set of windows, David Punter observes that she is unable to view anything through the darkness, and that 'this very obscurity stimulates her imagination to produce a world over against the inadequacy of reality' (Punter, 75). Blanche de Villefort is subject to her own imaginary creation:

> the windows, which were numerous and large, descended low, and afforded a very extensive, and what Blanche's fancy represented to be, a very lonely prospect; and she stood for some time, surveying the grey

> obscurity and depicturing (sic) imaginary woods and mountains, vallies (sic) and rivers, on this scene of night (Radcliffe 1998, 471).

Immersed in a moment of strong emotion, Blanche de Villefort creates a similar effect to what Longinus calls 'Phantasia'. In his essay on the Sublime, Longinus uses the term 'Phantasia', to describe an imaginary, vivid reconstruction of the past resulting from a sudden emotional burst from the individual. Longinus implies that strong emotion can also be a serviceable sensation as oppose to injurious. For Burke, this strong emotion is tantamount to experiencing the Sublime since it is 'productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling' (Burke 1998, 86). In this case, the Sublime becomes an effective conduit for the Beautiful.

What Punter fails to observe in his discussion of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is Radcliffe's subversive approach to the nature of the sublime. For Blanche de Villefort the Sublime becomes productive of the Beautiful. This process is a predominant feature in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and marks a significant step forward in the evolution of the Beautiful Death.

Emily St. Aubert lives with her parents in the idyllic settings of Gascony. Following the death of her parents, Emily becomes entrusted to the care of her unpleasant aunt, Madame Cheron. Her aunt's marriage to an Italian nobleman, Montoni, leads to Emily's relocation and effectual imprisonment in his castle, Udolpho. After several unpleasant encounters in the castle, Emily escapes to the chateau of Le Blanc, which turns out to have ominous connections with her past.

Showing many similarities with the eighteenth century artistic movement known as the picturesque, Radcliffe's landscapes begin as imaginative and Beautiful:

> The green woods and pastures; the flowery turf; the blue concave of the heavens; the balmy air; the murmur of the limpid stream; and even the hum of every little insect of the shade, seem to revivify the soul, and make mere existence bliss (Radcliffe 1998, 8).

Alexander M. Ross notes:

> The use and popularity of the picturesque owed much to the fact that, for the artist or novelist, it provided a way of showing landscapes and

> their contents to viewers or readers in a fashion that seemed to them organised and sensibly pictorial. It was by and large how they considered the world should look when seen within picture frames or within the covers of a novel: representative and recognisably pleasant (Ross, xiii).

Scenes such as this continue in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* until the foreboding presence of the castle is established in volume two:

> As the twilight deepened, its features became more awful in obscurity, and Emily continued to gaze, till its clustering towers were alone seen, rising over the tops of the woods, beneath whose thick shade the carriages soon after began to ascend (Radcliffe 1998, 227).

Radcliffe employs a similar style already employed by Clara Reeve and Sophia Lee as Emily St. Aubert summons the agreeable memories of her past in an attempt to contest the horrors of the present:

> The pleasant, peaceful scenes of Gascony, the tenderness and goodness of her parents, the taste and simplicity of her former life – all rose to her fancy, and formed a picture so sweet and glowing, so strikingly contrasted with the scenes, the characters and the dangers, which now surrounded her (386).

As with previous novels such as Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, the idea of death is also pacified in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*:

> severe, indeed, would be the pangs of separation, if we believed it to be eternal. Look up, my dear Emily, we shall meet again (80).

The moment of death is regarded with contentment by Emily's father, St. Aubert:

> let my consolations be yours. I die in peace; for I know, that I am about to return to the bosom of my Father, who will still be your Father when I am gone (80).

Dying 'without a struggle, or a sigh' (82) St. Aubert both acknowledges and accepts his fate without fear.

However, it is Radcliffe's further development and revision of the Beautiful Death that separates *The Mysteries of Udolpho* from previous Gothic works. Radcliffe acquires an appreciation of the Sublime and the Beautiful in a manner not sufficiently realised by former authors. She begins to merge the Beautiful with the Sublime and creates what I call a 'Coalescence' of both ideas. E.J. Clery notes:

> In Radcliffe, the idea of destructive passions is countered by moral precept as one would expect; but also far more interestingly and seductively by representing the exaltation of creative passions. Strong feelings can be safely indulged, she suggests, because of their sublimation in aesthetic experience (Clery 2000, 61).

The Mysteries of Udolpho is a milestone in the evolving relationship between the Sublime and the Beautiful, and Radcliffe's approach will have a profound effect upon how ensuing authors would use the Beautiful Death. Radcliffe's use of 'Coalescence' would assist in popularising a new breed of character in Gothic fiction beginning with Matthew Lewis' focal character, Ambrosio, in his novel *The Monk*, two years later.

Coral Ann Howells discusses Radcliffe's approach to the Sublime and touches upon the similarities she shares with ideas posed by Edmund Burke: 'Her novels are pervaded by sublime images closely associated with feelings of fear and a kind of elation won through acute tension and anxiety' (Sage 2003, 146). Although Howells' treatment of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* does not include a discussion of Radcliffe's use of the Beautiful, she does however touch upon a crucial development in the novel:

> Mrs Radcliffe's method of presenting her material is a complex mixture of external and internal techniques. Sometimes she works entirely by externals, describing characters, situations and scenery to the reader ... At the other extreme she may use her own modified

> version of indirect interior monologue, showing how a character's mind and emotions are interacting in the very process of registering experience ... More frequently she combines internal and external methods so that scenery or incidents arouse the reader's emotions while at the same time they reflect the feelings of characters involved (146).

Gothic authors were already challenging previous ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful. Linda Bayer-Berenbaum argues for the alliance of divergent ideas in Gothic fiction:

> A number of common themes in Gothic tales also echo the drive for inclusiveness and for the proximity of contrasting extremes, most particularly the combined God-devil images, where, in the context of greater power, absolute good and evil are wed (Bayer-Berenbaum, 135).

This juxtaposition of ideas raises the enquiry as to whether or not there is a fixed inventory that exemplifies the Sublime and the Beautiful, which was implied by Burke. Is there a universal list of philosophical and psychological precepts that scare us or move us to passion, or is it possible that these ideas can be regulated before any conclusions are attained? Burke had already noted:

> if the sublime is built on terror, or some passion like it, which has pain for its object; it is previously proper to enquire how any species of delight can be derived from a cause so apparently contrary to it (Burke 1998, 165).

Already the use of the Beautiful Death in Gothic literature had proposed a way of considering death that challenged Burke's ideas concerning the most Sublime thing of all. Radcliffe was to investigate the idea that the Sublime and the Beautiful can co-exist within the same object. This was an issue that, as we discussed in chapter two, was raised and then dismissed by Burke. The idea is considered in more depth by Kant who uses the term 'splendid' to describe objects that share both Sublime and

Beautiful qualities. Kant advances the idea that there is room for the potential reassessment of what is understood as Sublime and Beautiful:

> St. Peter's in Rome is splendid; because on its frame, which is large and simple, beauty is so distributed, for example, gold, mosaic work, and so on, that the feeling of the sublime still strikes through with the greatest effect; hence the object is called splendid (Kant, 49).

To what extent, then, is it possible to manipulate the mind's responses to certain phenomena? Could we gaze, for instance, upon a distant silhouette in the fog without perceiving it as Sublime? Are the impressions we receive from the Sublime and the Beautiful innate, or are they merely products of our environment along with instructions indirectly passed on by our peers; or are our reactions defined by others around us? C.E. Vulliamy notes that, 'It is in the dark that ghostly activities are most pronounced, and in the dark that apparitions of the dead are most frequently seen or imagined' (Vulliamy, 8). As a child, however, I recall being rather fond of the dark; does this fondness, then, question what is supposedly Sublime and Beautiful? This is an issue tackled by Baudelaire in his poem, *Hymn to Beauty* (1861) in which he contemplates the true nature of Beauty and its ability to affect the idea of power and command in a way previously attributed by Burke to the Sublime:

> O Beauty! Do you visit from the sky
> Or the abyss? Infernal and divine,
> Your gaze bestows both kindness and crimes,
> So it is said you act on us like wine...
>
> Are you of heaven or the nether world?
> Charmed Destiny, your pet, attends your walk:
> You scatter joys and sorrows at your whim,
> And govern all, and answer no man's call (Baudelaire, 45).

Baudelaire concludes that discovering the true meaning of Beauty is insignificant in light of the spiritual elevation that it provides in aiding his appreciation of the

obscurity and mystery of the Sublime, which becomes a central concern in Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*:

> What difference, then, from heaven or from hell,
> O Beauty, monstrous in simplicity?
> If eye, smile, step can open me the way
> To find unknown, sublime infinity?
>
> Angel or siren, spirit, I don't care,
> As long as velvet eyes and perfumed head
> And glimmering motions, o my queen, can make
> The world less dreadful, and the time less dead (45).

Could we, then, recognise an allegedly ferocious animal as Beautiful and as something that inspires us with affection rather than fear? Can a beast of the wild be seen as anything other than a beast? Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) offers an example of how we can be moved to pity, affection, and compassion for an otherwise hideous and murderous being. Frankenstein's creation is considered an abomination. Constructed from body parts of the deceased, the mere concept of a monster unleashed and roaming the countryside would surely represent a sufficient topic for fear and horror, and yet Shelley is able to induce compassion in the reader rather than fear through the monster's emotive desire for acceptance in a society that recoils rather than receives.

In *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, the reader is asked to reconsider what is Sublime or Beautiful, and Radcliffe demonstrates that replacing the Sublime with the Beautiful was no longer a vital utility of the Gothic engine. Radcliffe approaches this idea by using the 'internal technique' discussed by Howells, and Kant's idea of the 'splendid'. In Radcliffe's novel the Beautiful, therefore, eventuates from an otherwise Sublime spectacle or idea that would previously have been replaced. One is not destroying the other; one is not empowering the other, and one is not replacing the other:

> the gloom of the woods; the trembling of their leaves, at intervals, in the breeze; the bat, flitting on the twilight; the cottage-lights, now seen,

> and now lost – were circumstances that awakened her mind into effort, and led to enthusiasm and poetry (Radcliffe 1998, 6).

Radcliffe contains the Sublime within a manageable environment (the imagination expressed through poetry). Clery writes: 'More often, imagination is a resource for the heroine, allowing her to moderate passions into sentiment, or translate emotion from worldly objects to ideas of the divine' (Clery 2000, 78). So that we may better understand Radcliffe's use of the imagination in this way, we will briefly return to the ideas that were popularised in the picturesque movement.

The picturesque, as understood by such theorists as William Gilpin, was the combination of imagination and reality that fused the Sublime and the Beautiful to create a harmonious picture of nature. Alexander M. Ross writes:

> For many of the novelists and even for some of the theorists, the picturesque was a rather vague aesthetic classification which seemed to bridge the gap between Burke's two concepts of beauty and sublimity. Because it possessed, for example, intricacy, irregularity, and roughness, it appeared to be distinct from either the vastness and gloom of Burke's sublime or the delicateness and smoothness associated with his concept of beauty. Unlike the sublime, which drew upon terror for its effect, the picturesque, like beauty, produced pleasure. Because of the vagueness of its classification, however, the qualities assigned to it often encroached upon those normally characteristic of both the sublime and the beautiful (Ross, xiii).

Rather than reproducing their observations on canvas, artists of the picturesque would create landscapes inspired by ideas that made resounding impressions on their mind. As Ross notes, 'What a place brings to mind is often as important as its physical appearance' (11). Transient aspects of nature such as bolts of lightening or freak storms would often be ominously depicted above beautiful environments. William Turner demonstrates the destructive power of the Sublime over the Beautiful in his painting, *Buttermere Lake with part of Cromack Water, Cumberland: A Shower* (1798) This affirmation of power had been prevalent in Gothic fiction from as early as Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1765). Artists like Turner and John Constable

combine light, dark, beauty, and sublimity to create either a threatening or unifying effect in which both ideas are brought together to create what Kant may have called 'splendid'.

E.J. Clery writes:

> It is argued that Radcliffe is a true original, derivative neither of Walpole (who is too laughably extreme) nor the German horror-novelists (who exaggerate the passions) (Clery 2000, 84).

Radcliffe's 'picturesque' Gothic offered the opportunity for authors to experiment with the Sublime and the Beautiful in a way that had been popularised on canvas. Shifting the Sublime/Beautiful relationship of landscape to the intrinsic faculty of the imagination inherent in her characters, Radcliffe demonstrated the potential power of the Beautiful when combined with the Sublime, and in this we may understand how she is perceived as a 'true original'. It is likely that Radcliffe was no stranger to the picturesque movement or to the works of contemporary theorists such as William Gilpin. As Ross notes:

> a novelist like Mrs. Ann Radcliffe could, without travelling abroad, draw upon a wide variety of painted landscapes to illustrate the wild fictional terrain on which characters like Emily St. Aubert and Montoni played out the melodrama of their lives (Ross, 24).

Subsequently in *The Mysteries of* Udolpho, the Sublime and the Beautiful are commonly explored in the same paragraph in the same manner as they are detailed on a 'picturesque' canvas. Radcliffe's characters examine the Sublime and, instead of encountering fear, they discover a conduit for the Beautiful. St. Aubert says:

> The evening gloom of woods was always fanciful to me...I remember that in my youth this gloom used to call forth to my fancy a thousand fairy visions, and romantic images, and, I own, I am not yet wholly insensible of that high enthusiasm, which wakes the poet's dream (Radcliffe 1998, 15).

Radcliffe demonstrated how fear can be confronted and managed. Her use of 'Coalescence' helped develop the Gothic genre into a union of Sublimity and Beauty. As Noel Carroll Writes:

> works of horror cannot be construed as either completely repelling or completely attractive. Either outlook overlooks something of the quiddity of the form. The apparent paradox cannot simply be ignored by treating the genre as if it were not involved in a curious admixture of attraction and repulsion (Carroll, 161).

The popularity of Radcliffe's novel influenced proceeding authors such as Matthew Lewis to likewise reassess the use of the Sublime and the Beautiful. It is ironic, then, that *The Mysteries of Udolpho,* with its picturesque settings and inspired moments of Beauty generated by the Sublime, should inspire Lewis' novel within which is the creation of one of the most notorious villains of eighteenth century Gothic fiction. Radcliffe's 'Coalescence' allowed for a careful re-evaluation of how the Sublime and the Beautiful could function as a unified pair, and the Beautiful Death would likewise be adopted by Lewis as an amalgamation of both ideas fused into one character. Lewis demonstrates how the Beautiful Death may be used to conceal the iniquitous machinations of villainous, overpowering characters who will later become frequent guests of Gothic narrative. Such characters would also generate an unhealthy fascination in the reader, which has continued ever since. It might be argued in this case that Radcliffe's use of 'Coalescence' was not necessarily a step in the right direction for the expansion of the Beautiful Death since it offered authors the opportunity to explore its potential as a corrupt, powerful, and mesmerising force. It is by this route, therefore, that Gothic fiction became the kind of vehicle it did for the development of the vampire in its nineteenth century form as a character who represents both the Sublime and the Beautiful, and who has control over their victims' present and their past.

The Beautiful Death would shortly be given a leading role in Gothic fiction, and one of its earliest appearances was in Lewis' Ambrosio, the monk, and who is the title character of his infamous novel.

The Beautiful Death made flesh.
Romanticism and Matthew Lewis' *The Monk*

The sense of a ruling body over a populace without hope for power or salvation becomes a prominent feature of Gothic fiction from the 1790s onwards. Gothic authors, partly perhaps responding to dashed hopes for democratic reform in France after the revolution of 1789, began to reflect a sense of debilitation in their victims from Lewis' novel onwards. The power of the Beautiful Death was transferred from the victim to those who represented the elite of society. Thus we see mostly Counts, Countesses, Monks et al, possessing an almost supernatural hold over those they encounter. The innocent victim no longer has control over the Beautiful Death of the past and, severed from sanctuary, the victim is left unaided and vulnerable and easily subjugated by those gifted with a seemingly higher power. Authors like Lewis began to represent the characteristics of the Beautiful Death in the assailant. Characters representing the Beautiful Death from Lewis' novel onwards, therefore, are not always depicted as amiable or genteel characters that are prepared to assist those in need. Rather, in an almost Marxist approach, innocence and vulnerability are exploited by the elite. An early example of this is to be found in *The Monk* of 1796.

The Monk concerns Ambrosio, the title character, who is held in the highest regard by the public. His meeting with a young lady, Antonia, who attends one of his sermons, triggers his lustful intentions. When his sexual advances are rejected, Ambrosio murders her. Popular Gothic motifs remain an important part of Lewis' novel as bandits, the supernatural, the persecuted heroine, and the use of Catholicism to represent corruption advance the narrative towards its bloody conclusion.

The influence of former novels became a subject for discussion when *The Monk* was published. Angela Wright notes that:

> The tracing of Matthew Lewis' numerous 'borrowed' sources in *The Monk* began swiftly after the novel's publication. In 1797, for example, an article in the *Monthly Review* took pleasure in identifying in *The Monk* a number of plot motifs taken from, amongst other sources, Smollett's *Ferdinand Count Fathom*, Cazotte's *Le Diable amoureux* (1772), and numerous German romances (Horner, 39).

Lewis himself claimed to have been inspired to write his novel after reading Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* published two years earlier. On first glance it may appear to be the case that the style and structure of Gothic literature has come full circle. *The Monk* shares many similarities with Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* published thirty-one years previously. In both novels the supernatural takes a secondary role to the evils generated by their chief characters. While the supernatural does play an important role in the continuity of the plot, it is nevertheless to the diabolical nature of Ambrosio that our attention is chiefly drawn, and to the disturbing understanding that his behaviour could well reflect the primitive and otherwise restrained appetites of the human psyche. In a way similar to Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* and the exploration of his character, Manfred, it is the characterisation of the monk and the depiction of the very real evils that are inherent within the society he lives where Lewis truly succeeds in shocking the reader, rather than relying on subterraneous passages and haunted castles. Ambrosio's actions are similar to Manfred's pursuit of Isabella. Likewise, Ambrosio lusts after and attacks the Beautiful victim, Antonia. David Punter writes that Ambrosio's fantasies are 'represented as running riot precisely because of the lack of stimulus offered by the limited environment of the convent' (Punter, 75). In reference to the relationship between Ambrosio and Antonia Angela Wright notes, 'it is not the male authority to blame, but the female's irresistible beauty' (Horner, 45). Both Punter and Wright focus upon Ambrosio as a man with strong sexual desires. Lewis' representation of Ambrosio, however, develops his character beyond these desires into a figure whose presence suggests an almost superhuman demeanour. Where Walpole's novel never fully realised the power of the Sublime in his character Manfred, Lewis intentionally selects a notably pious figure and transforms him into a murderous monster in order to maximise the horror of his acts. It is, therefore, Lewis' progressive step forward from Radcliffe's use of 'Coalescence' and his subsequent development of a physical incarnation of the Beautiful Death in the guise of Ambrosio that separates Lewis' monk from Walople's Manfred and also Radcliffe's scheming character, Montoni.

Upon its publication, the novel fell under substantial criticism, most notably from Samuel Taylor Coleridge who, in 1797 made the following observation in the *Critical Review*:

> wearied with fiends, incomprehensible characters, with shrieks, murders, and subterraneous dungeons, the public will learn, by the multitude of the manufacturers, with how little expense of thought or imagination this species of composition is manufactured (Sage 2003, 39).

Coleridge concludes his critique with, 'the author is a man of rank and fortune. – Yes! The author of *The Monk* signs himself a legislator! We stare and tremble' (43). With such flagrant reproaches of blasphemy (at the time considered a political crime punishable by either a fine, flogging, or incarceration) and charges of obscenity being made from other influential lobbies, Lewis, who had recently been made a member of parliament, decided to excise and modify particular excerpts of sexual explicitness in his novel.

In Lewis we are given to understand (in a way similarly explored by Sophia Lee's *The Recess* and the Romantic Movement) that society manifests Sublimity, and mankind is portrayed as a product of this society.

Since the early seventeenth century, the Roman Empire – specifically in the time of Augustus – had become the model for a well ordered and highly cultured modern society. By the middle of the eighteenth century, there were further developments of this ideology in response to Britain's imperial expansion and growing wealth. Marilyn Butler notes that: 'The artefacts and styles which went out of fashion were those that reflected unacceptable aspects of contemporary life – luxury, formality, hierarchy' (Butler, 22). Adam Ferguson's *Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767) had continued to look more favourably to earlier societies like the Roman Republic. With an advanced society, however, followed discipline and rules which, in turn, were seen to represent an order of oppression and tyranny that was often linked to the institutions of the day (such as the church or the monarchy) by critics and Gothic authors alike. The American War of Independence (1775-81) served to fuel the feelings of dissatisfaction with contemporary society in England and was seen by many as a vindication of human rights over an oppressive system that was strongly opposed by Thomas Paine in his essay, *Common Sense* (1776). Paine argues for equal rights and a republican government. With the French Revolution of 1789 inspiring further disdain for contemporary society in Britain in the works of many writers and critics such as William Blake's *Songs of Innocence* (1783-84, although they were not

distributed until 1789-90) and Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), the move into the 1790's saw a host of literature generated by feelings of anti-slavery, equality, and a preference for the pastoral over advanced society encouraged by Romantic writers of the period. Aidan Day writes:

> Blake may well be understood as having seen contemporary society as a hierarchically oppressive system that, in its denial of civil rights, particularly to married women, succeeded in trapping women within an institution that was a practical and mental prison (Day, 23).

A sense of dissatisfaction with both society and man, and the subsequent penchant for nature is epitomised in William Wordsworth's *Lines written in early Spring* (1798):

> I heard a thousand blended notes
> While in a grove I sat reclined
> In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
> Bring sad thoughts to the mind.
>
> To her fair works did nature link
> The human soul that through me ran,
> And much it grieved my heart to think
> What man has made of man.
>
> Through primrose-tufts, in that sweet bower,
> The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;
> And 'tis my faith that every flower
> Enjoys the air it breathes.
>
> The birds around me hopped and played,
> Their thoughts I cannot measure,
> But the least motion which they made –
> It seemed a thrill of pleasure.

The budding twigs spread out their fan
To catch the breezy air;
And I must think, do all I can,
That there was pleasure there.

If I these thoughts may not prevent,
If such be of my creed the plan,
Have I not reason to lament
What man has made of man? (Wordsworth, 208).

Within society was 'evidence everywhere that urban life, however sophisticated, had made no secure advances over poverty and hunger, crime and injustice, disease and premature death' (Butler, 28). In his book *Rights of Man* (1791/2) Paine discusses the power of the government over the people arguing that 'All hereditary government is in its nature tyranny' (Paine, 172). A society understood as tyrannical is a society that may be identified as characteristic of the Sublime. As Burke writes, 'power derives all of its Sublimity from the terror with which it is generally accompanied' (Burke 1998, 108).

Nature was perceived as a return to the imaginative prowess of the individual where both the mind's eye and the celebrated Romantic subjective 'I' become intertwined. As Day notes, 'It is this kind of focus on and celebration of subjectivity that is sometimes seen as the distinctive Romantic innovation' (Day, 47) and, as we have discussed in relation to the use of the Beautiful Death, is also a central Gothic concern of authors such as Reeve, Lee, and Radcliffe. Poets of the Romantic period expressed a connection between Nature and the imagination that allowed them to reflect upon their own memories and emotions via a spiritual observation of their environment as understood by William Wordsworth in his poem *Tintern Abbey* (1798):

Five years have passed; five summers, with the length
Of five long winters! And again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain springs
With a sweet inland murmur...

Though absent long,

These forms of beauty have not been to me
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye;
But oft, in lonely rooms, and mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart,
And passing even into my purer mind
With tranquil restoration (Wordsworth, 240).

Objects of Nature are brought to the forefront by Romantic poets. Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Nightingale* (1798) challenges preceding writers who perceive the bird as a melancholic symbol. Coleridge instead understands the bird as a product of unfettered nature, and uncorrupted by the imaginary narrative of previous writers and poets. For Coleridge the Nightingale's reputation therefore arises from a product of human melancholy rather than the characteristics of the bird:

And hark! The Nightingale begins its song,
'Most musical, most melancholy' bird!
A melancholy bird? Oh! Idle thought!
In Nature there is nothing melancholy.
But some night-wandering man whose heart was pierced
With the remembrances of a grievous wrong,
Or slow distemper, or neglected love,
(And so, poor wretch! Filled all things with himself,
and made all gentle sounds tell back the tale
of his own sorrow) he, and such as he,
first named these notes a melancholy strain… (Coleridge, 264).

In Coleridge's *France: An Ode* (1798) written nine years after the failure of the French Revolution, there is a strong suggestion that liberty is to be found in Nature rather than anything that man himself can instigate:

Ye woods! That listen to the night-birds singing,
Midway the smooth and perilous slope reclined,

> Save when your own imperious branches swinging,
> Have made a solemn music of the wind!...
> O ye loud Waves! And O ye forests high!
> And O ye Clouds that far above me soared!
> Thou rising Sun! thou blue rejoicing Sky!
> Yes, every thing that is and will be free!
> Bear witness for me, wheresoe'er ye be,
> With what deep worship I have still adored
> The spirit of divinest Liberty (Coleridge, 244).

With fear of revolution and chaos defining an uncomfortable era in British history, society's faults were brought to the forefront of literature and criticism. This in turn supplied an outlet for the dark side of the human psyche to manifest itself in numerous fictional characters in positions of power such as Walpole's Manfred, Beckford's Vathek, Radcliffe's Montoni, and Lewis' Monk, Ambrosio.

In volume one, chapter two of *The Monk*, the friar remarks: 'Man was born for society. However little he may forget it, or bear to be wholly forgotten by it' (Lewis, 53). The Sublimity of society is subsequently depicted by Lewis in the behaviour of Ambrosio, whose conduct becomes an envoy for the disheartened opinions of romantic writers, critics, and politicians, which were being aimed at human nature and its propensity for corruption. In Burke, however, we are directed towards the idea that the Sublime is perhaps a fundamental necessity of society.

Burke argues that one of the passions belonging to society is 'imitation':

> It is by imitation far more than precept that we learn every thing; and what we learn thus we acquire not only more effectually, but more pleasantly (Burke 1998, 95).

Imitation thus acts as a stimulus that 'forms our manners, our opinions, our lives. It is one of the strongest links of society' (Burke 1998, 95). Terry Eagleton, however, argues for a confrontational force in society that challenges the detrimental effects that may be fashioned by an idea such as 'imitation':

> The very conditions which guarantee social order also paralyse it: sunk in this narcissistic enclosure, men of affairs grow effete and enervated ... some countervailing energy is therefore necessary, which Burke discovers in the virile strenuousness of the sublime (Eagleton, 53).

Burke later stresses the possible shortcomings of imitation if it was the sole occupation of man, and argues that it would leave society without the capacity to develop. Burke turns to the Sublime nature of man and his desire for power as a possible solution to a static society:

> Although imitation is one of the great instruments used by providence in bringing our nature towards its perfection, yet if men gave themselves up to imitation entirely, and each followed the other, and so on in an eternal circle, it is easy to see that there never could be any improvement amongst them ... To prevent this, God has planted in man a sense of ambition, and a satisfaction arising from the contemplation of his excelling his fellows in something deemed valuable amongst them (Burke 1998, 96).

As Eagleton writes, 'The sublime is on the side of enterprise, rivalry, and individuation: it is a phallic 'swelling' arising from our confrontation of danger' (Eagleton, 54). Despite the Freudian reference, Eagleton is arguing from a characteristically Marxist/materialist viewpoint which serves to highlight the prevailing issues of power that are represented in the monk, Ambrosio, and his influence over the masses.

It can be argued that characters such as Ambrosio are necessary to society's endurance. But Lewis achieves more than representing the fundamentals pertaining to the continuation and growth of society as mentioned by Burke and Eagleton. Lewis constructs a relationship between the Sublime and the character of a monk, whose corruption and wickedness are temporarily concealed beneath the graceful garb of the church. Longinus identifies a similar relationship between figures of power and the Sublime. He writes, 'rhetorical figures by their nature reinforce the sublime, and in their turn derive a marvellous degree of support from it' (Longinus, 137). Ultimately, Lewis depicts a society where characters such as Ambrosio are primarily respected

rather than feared. The masses are beset by Ambrosio's presence, and Lewis demonstrates that society, like man, does not always function with absolute perfection.

The monk is as corrupt as the society into which he was born; he says 'Am I not a man, whose nature is frail, and prone to error?' (Lewis, 40). His self-descriptive statement applies also to the society from which he originated. Ambrosio becomes the unknowable, untameable force that threatens the innocence represented by Antonia. Her admirer, Lorenzo, offers her a warning not unlike the one given to the sisters of *The Recess* before their venture into the world: 'What pity, that you must soon discover the baseness of mankind, and guard against your fellow creatures, as against your foes' (21). Lewis unashamedly depicts the capabilities of mankind in *The Monk* and confirms it as the subject of a self-made society that breeds corruption, hypocrisy, and murder. In a world populated by bloodthirsty bandits, lecherous monks, sexual obsession and rape, there is no end to the dangers of, in Wordsworth's words, 'What man has made of man'.

Lewis depicts a society that makes monsters as well as men and whose emotional response (in Burke's words), 'does not arise from any sense of Beauty which they find in their species...but from a law of some other kind to which they are subject' (Burke 1998, 89). Burke later notes:

> Beauty, and the passion caused by Beauty, which I call love, is different from desire, though desire may sometimes operate along with it: but it is to the latter that we must attribute these violent and tempestuous passions (128).

Ambrosio subsequently experiences desire for Antonia rather than love:

> A smile inexpressibly sweet played around her ripe and coral lips, from which every now and then escaped a gentle sigh or an half-pronounced sentence. An air of enchanting innocence and candour pervaded her entire form; and there was a sort of modesty in her very nakedness, which added fresh strings to the desires of the lustful monk (Lewis, 300).

Ironically, monsters such as Ambrosio begin to exhibit the characteristics of the Beautiful Death and are revered by those in their presence.

Ambrosio's power over the masses is established in a sermon at the beginning of the novel:

> He was a man of noble port and commanding presence...there was a certain severity in his look and manner that inspired universal awe, and few could sustain the glance of his eye at once fiery and penetrating (18).

These features of awe and admiration brought about by Ambrosio's 'commanding presence' are traits that we have, through Burke, come to associate with the Sublime; as Robert Miles notes, 'Ambrosio is the supernatural source of the Sublime made flesh' (Miles, 155). Ambrosio, however, is more than a representation of the Sublime. Noel Carroll's contention, while concerning what he defines as a monster (he gives such examples as vampires and Frankenstein's creation) offers an interesting observation regarding the appeal of characters with such gruesome distinctions:

> They are attractive, in the sense that they elicit interest, and they are the cause of, for many, irresistible attention ... just because they violate standing categories (Carroll, 188).

Nevertheless I am arguing that Ambrosio and, as we shall discuss, characters such as the vampire, are a source of fascination beyond the assertion that 'they transgress standing categories of thought' (Carroll, 188). Ambrosio is representative of those who, as Carroll writes, are 'outside the natural order of things as set down by our conceptual schema' (189). It is the case though that a certified madman may also be classified as 'outside the natural order of things' if his behaviour is compared to our ideas of what is socially acceptable. But this does not necessarily imply that he will possess the overwhelming presence demonstrated by Ambrosio, vampires, or Frankenstein's monster. In this case our daily perceptions incur a fine line between 'victim' and 'victim of our fascination'. The madman becomes a source of fascination resulting from the judgements passed by those he encounters, and he becomes victimised by society simply because he is 'different'. Arguably this is not the case

with those representing the Beautiful Death. Rather than becoming the subject of fascination for those who would exclude him from society, Ambrosio's presence commands the absorption of the masses instead of suffering their rejection.

At an early stage in the story Antonia is already captivated by Ambrosio; his presence is effecting emotions in Antonia that are not fully explored by theorists such as Burke. Rather than representing a force of the Sublime who invites sensations of awe, Ambrosio's company is almost crucial to Antonia: 'As the door closed after him, it seemed to her as had she lost some one (sic) essential to her happiness' (Lewis, 20). With the monk separated from a decadent society not just by the walls of the church, but by his seemingly benevolent guise, the characteristics of the Beautiful Death are used by Lewis towards the seduction and domination of the innocent Antonia. Unlike previous Gothic victims from Sophia Lee's *The Recess* onwards, Antonia has no control over the Beautiful Death. There are no periods of reflection upon happier times in *The Monk* since the Beautiful Death is now being physically represented in Ambrosio, whose presence for Antonia overrides' the perfidy of the world' (21).

Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* demonstrated the potential of representing the Beautiful Death as a physical character who was both desirable and evil. In a reversal of power, the Beautiful Death now had control over the victim.

Using Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya* (1806), I will discuss the further development of this physical representation in three of the novel's major characters, and I will consider how this physical incarnation is developed by Dacre to represent a power over the past as well as the present (the latter being the case with Ambrosio). The last character I will discuss (Zofloya himself) will demonstrate the relationship that was being formed in Gothic literature between the Beautiful Death and the character of the vampire.

From Folklore to fiction: Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya*

Escape into the Beautiful Death of the past remains an important aspect of the Gothic victim's liberation from an unsatisfactory present. The Beautiful Death,

however, is now becoming an instrument for those from whom the inflicted previously fled.

The move towards portraying the character of the vampire in fiction was accelerating. Gothic authors had begun representing the Beautiful Death as a dominant and irresistible presence. Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya* (1806) offers a significant example of this development in progress.

Unfortunately Dacre's novel did not attract the volume of literary criticism that favoured other Gothic works of the day. In her introduction to *Zofloya*, Kim Ian Michasiw offers a reason why the novel may have been overlooked:

> *Zofloya's* insistence on linking race-based slavery to illicit sexual attraction, to murderous indulgence in the forbidden, and to Satanism is a particularly provocative act in the year before abolition (Dacre, 24).

Similarly, E.J. Clery asks:

> How could a woman publish a work which features as its heroine a murderous nymphomaniac who gives her body and soul to the devil disguised as a black servant, and sign her name to it (Clery 2000, 100).

Clery adds: 'The novel is a complete departure from the dominant sentimental discourse, displaying instead a steely-eyed intention to shock' (107). Dacre wrote her novel during a time of Humanitarian compassion. Aidan Day writes:

> The fashionableness of humanitarian sympathy was apart of the ground-swell of radical political feeling in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the period which saw first the American War of Independence and then the French Revolution (Day, 12).

With wars of liberty and revolution abroad, English culture and society was stirred by feelings of compassion for the underprivileged and misrepresented. Society's ills were being assessed by critics and poets already railed against the continuation of slavery. Dacre's novel, sensitive to the relationship that exists between Zofloya the

moor and the character of Victoria, may have stretched the bounds of credulity with many readers whose opinions may not have yet attained the level of compassion reached by poets such as William Blake. Blake's poem, *The Little Black Boy* (1789), stresses the equality between black and white and demonstrates the spiritual compassion of the little black boy for the white boy when both are in the presence of God without their distinguishing skins:

> My mother bore me in the southern wild,
> And I am black, but O! my soul is white;
> White as an angel is the English child,
> But I am black, as if bereav'd of light (Blake, 68).

The little black boy is taught by his mother that 'these black bodies and this sunburnt face/Is but a cloud, and like a shady grove' (68) and, upon entering the kingdom of heaven, he will share equality with the white boy. The little black boy, in an exemplar display of compassion and disregard for skin colour, promises to protect the white boy:

> Thus did my mother say, and kissed me;
> And thus I say to little English boy.
> When I from black and he from white cloud free,
> And round the tent of God like lambs we joy,
> I'll shade him from the heat, till he can bear
> To lean in joy upon our Father's knee;
> And then I'll stand and stroke his silver hair,
> And be like him, and he will then love me (69).

Blake's extremist stance became more prominent when, in his retrospective poem *America* (1793-94), he celebrates the victory of the American colonies over British rule. The 1790s generated vast quantities of poetry and prose dedicated to the opposition of slavery. In 1792 Anna Laetitia Barbauld compiled her poem *Epistle to William Wilberforce* after his proposed Bill to Parliament for the discontinuation of importing slaves to Britain was refused:

> Cease, Wilberforce, to urge thy generous aim –
> Thy country knows the sin and stands the shame!
> The preacher, poet, senator, in vain
> Has rattled in her sight the Negro's chain,
> With his deep groans assailed her startled ear
> And rent the veil that hid his constant tear,
> Forced her averted eyes his stripes to scan,
> Beneath the bloody scourge laid bare the man,
> Claimed pity's tear, urged conscience's strong control
> And flashed conviction on her shrinking soul…
> She knows and she persists – still Afric (sic) bleeds;
> Unchecked, the human traffic still proceeds;
> She stamps her infamy to future time
> And on her hardened forehead seals the crime (Barbauld, 20).

With Zofloya being both a servant and a moor, then, any suggestion of relations beyond servant and mistress may well have lost favour with a public yet to arrive at the radical views posed by contemporary poets. Michasiw writes that Dacre, although reasonably well known in her day:

> vanished from view. She has no entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography* in which one encounters any number of obscure novelists. And, in our century, though drawing occasional critical acclaim, she has served as a screen onto which scholars have projected symptomatic guises (Dacre, xiii).

Hence the majority of critics have merely compared Dacre to other novelists of her time. Michasiw notes for instance that Montague Summers understands Dacre's life as 'a minor mirror of Ann Radcliffe's' (xiv).

It is partially expected, however, given the ubiquity of certain prevailing Gothic motifs and themes within the genre, for critics of Gothic to compare authors. Michasiw herself discusses the similarities between Dacre's character, Victoria, and Radcliffe's Emily St Aubert. Clery also makes the following observation of *Zofloya*:

> The book courted comparisons with *The Monk*, with a clear intention to trump the other work for salaciousness and horror. There is a reversal of sexes in the principal parts; otherwise the circumstances are similar, but heightened (Clery 2000, 107).

The story of *Zofloya* concerns a young vindictive girl by the name of Victoria, whose desires toward another man (Berenza) lead her into the power of Zofloya, a servant who helps her attain the love of Berenza. Zofloya's control over Victoria intensifies as the novel advances and towards the end we discover that he is in fact the devil. Victoria's life is forfeit and, although her ensuing death bears more than a passing similarity to the death of Ambrosio in Lewis' *The Monk*, *Zofloya* is much more than the mere progeny of previously acclaimed Gothic works, as the above critics suggest.

Dacre steers away from the traditional use of the Beautiful employed by earlier authors. Where previously the Beautiful was used in conjunction with the past and with reflection, Dacre demonstrates the potential for identifying the Beautiful as a means of distraction and instead diverts attention away from the past. Like Antonia in Lewis' *The Monk*, the victims in Dacre's novel are without reflection, they do not resurrect images of the Beautiful past to counter the Sublime of the present. Imprisoned within a room, Victoria, unlike Emily St. Aubert who suffered under similar circumstances in Castle Udolpho, harnesses the Beautiful in order to expel, rather than encourage the use of reflection:

> Here she found some drawing utensils. The surrounding scenery, beautifully romantic, furnished ample enjoyment for her pencil; and, with mixed sensations contending in her bosom, she seated herself by an open window, and endeavoured by occupation to banish reflection (Dacre, 48).

What one would consider representative of the Beautiful is often mentioned, but then abandoned. Describing the disposition of Berenza, Dacre writes:

> he could not gaze enraptured on the accurate formation of a limb, waste his hours in contemplating incessantly a beautiful form, or resign

> his independence, while admiring some harmonious combination of feature or complexion (72).

In a similar style to Radcliffe's reassessment of the Sublime in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Dacre emphasises an arbitrary approach to the Beautiful signifying that whatever represents the Beautiful for one, does not necessarily imply the same for another. This was an issue also discussed by Immanuel Kant. In his introduction to Kant's *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime (1764)*, John T. Goldthwait notes how Kant made the following hand-written comment in his own copy of *Observations*; Kant observed that:

> Everything goes past like a river and the changing taste and the various shapes of men make the whole game uncertain and delusive. Where do I find fixed points in nature, which can not be moved by man, and where I can indicate the markers by the shore to which he ought to adhere (Kant, 8).

Kant's desire for 'fixed points' signifies the changeable, subjective facets of individual taste and offers an altered examination of the ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful proposed by Burke. For instance I may gaze sombrely upon the darkened side of a mountain and consider it a fearful image. Another may look upon that same mountain and identify elements of the Beautiful that I have not observed simply because my mind is determined upon it representing the Sublime. In his introduction, John T. Goldthwait argues, 'An important question in modern aesthetics has been whether beauty itself is objective or subjective. Does it lie in the object, or does it spring up in the mind?' (21). For Kant, it is the individual rather than the object that is his principal interest. His essay begins with this assumption:

> The various feelings of enjoyment or of displeasure rest not so much upon the nature of the external things that arouse them as upon each person's own disposition to be moved by these to pleasure or pain (45).

It is important to note that Burke also touches upon this theme in his discussion of Beauty in relation to proportion and argues that one individual's idea of proportion

should not coincide with another's. He further argues that if we restrict ourselves to one definition of the Beautiful, then we would find it difficult to consider other examples:

> If you assign any determinate proportions to the limbs of a man, and if you limit human beauty to these proportions, when you find a woman who differs in the make and measures of almost every part, you must conclude her not to be beautiful in spite of the suggestions of your imagination (Burke, 134).

Continuing with this theme offers an alternative approach to previous uses of the Beautiful in Gothic literature. Like Lewis, Dacre represents the Beautiful Death as a physical manifestation. However, rather than merely reproducing the characteristics of Lewis' Ambrosio in her novel, Dacre's physical representations share similarities with the vampire in a way that surpasses the more crude examples of Edmund's ostensible resurrection in Clara Reeves' *The Old English* Baron, Beckford's Giaour in his novel, *Vathek*, or the emergence of the sisters Matilda and Ellinor from their underground labyrinth in Sophia Lee's *The* Recess.

Dacre first builds a sub-plot involving a love affair between Victoria's mother (Laurina di Conari) and Count Ardolph, a German nobleman whose presence, at first glance, is comparable to Lewis' monk, Ambrosio: 'his presence diffused around a spirit, a vivacity, and an interest, of which before the assembly had seemed unconscious' (Dacre, 7). Ardolph is 'blest' (sic) 'or rather cursed, with abilities to astonish and enslave' (7). Like Ambrosio, Ardolph has the power to inspire overwhelming emotions within whoever comes into his presence: 'There was that in the air and striking appearance of the count, which created at once a sensation of awe and admiration' (6). Ardolph's objective is destruction. He moves from family to family in search of new innocent female victims. His desire for Victoria's mother reflects a hostile and libidinal nature also found within Ambrosio. In a move forward from Lewis' monk, however, Count Ardolph has control over both the present and the past. In his presence Laurina di Conari is defenceless to the point where 'Infatuated by his seductions, Laurina sought, eagerly sought, to evade reflection' (25). Unlike the character of Antonia from Lewis' novel, who eventually comes to fear Ambrosio, Laurina wishes to remain with Ardolph. Ardolph, therefore, finds in Laurina a

powerless, subservient victim who is without fear. Moving beyond mere seduction, Ardolph's mesmerising presence revokes Laurina's ability to pursue reason:

> Such a seducing influence did he still possess over her mind, that there were moments where she literally forgot there was a being in the world but himself (44).

Laurina becomes something of a willing casualty who is enwrapped in the mystery and power of Count Ardolph, in whom the Beautiful Death is represented. This power is realised further in the character of Megalena who symbolises the next stage of the Beautiful Death.

As a jilted lover Megalena is vengeful. Her dominance of Leonardo (Victoria's brother) leads him (at her bidding) to murder her former lover, Berenza. Before encountering Megalena, Leonardo is depicted as a tragic, melancholic character whose past suggests anguish, and whose present state of vulnerability renders him a suitable victim for Megalena:

> tears involuntarily filled his eyes, and coursed each other down his cheeks: he closed those eyes, filled as they were with tears, and ruminated over the sorrows of his youth (103).

Like Ardolph, Megalena possesses the ability to vanquish thoughts of the past from Leonardo. Upon encountering her 'every consideration but of the object before him vanished from his mind' (104). Megalena's presence is sufficient for Leonardo to dismiss his past: 'They soon reached the villa, and a smothered sigh, as he entered it, was the last tribute paid to his neglected home' (104). Megalena's company eradicates any thoughts that Leonardo may tender regarding his former life. Her power is commanding: 'She sedulously endeavoured to banish from his mind all painful recurrence to the past' (110). Leonardo is powerless in her presence:

> So unimpaired was her power over his soul, such was the awe, almost the terror, which he involuntarily felt, while sinking abashed beneath the powerful glance of her eye (112).

Megalena impresses upon Leonardo the idea that she is introducing him to new sensations: 'She had bewitched and enslaved his heart, she had awakened his soul to new existence' (106). As a child first opens its eyes onto the world, Leonardo experiences a deluge of untitled sensations:

> The bland seductress Megalena possessed over him an unlimited power; she had caused a new world to open on his view ... feelings and ideas, unknown before, swelled in his bosom (109).

In a crucial step forward from Ardolph's seduction of Victoria, the art of Leonardo's seduction begins to be linked with the presence of blood as Megalena beguiles Leonardo into murdering Berenza:

> You tremble young man; but let us hope, she added with a horrible smile, that you will not always be this dismayed at the thought of blood (123).

While connotations with the vampire at this point in the novel remain inconclusive, Megalena's methods of seduction begin to conjure up vampiric images as her penchant for blood and death are gradually infused into the mind of Leonardo with an almost ongoing vampiristic conversion. Megalena is the femme fatale moving from place to place draining her victims:

> to be frank with thee, my dear, my resources diminish daily; this place affords me no longer the exhaustless mine I once imagined it would; the Venetians have become wary (123).

The past represents a feeding ground for the vampiristic Megalena where Leonardo's memories of his former existence are drained as though it were his life-blood.

It is the title character himself, however, who is most comparable to the vampire (even though Zofloya is later revealed by Dacre to the devil incarnate) as we recognise it from later nineteenth century fiction. As with Ardolph and Megalena, Zofloya dictates an enigmatic and unaccountable presence. Victoria:

> desired to banish all hostile reflection; and gazing upon the attractive Moor, she saw such unconquerable fascination, that her eyes sought the ground (148).

As a result 'the sensation she experienced was inexplicable' (172).

In a way not suggested in the characters of Ardolph and Megalena, however, it is implied that Zofloya has returned from the grave when Latoni, a domestic who despises and envies Zofloya, later confesses to his supposed murder claiming to have stabbed Zofloya and plunged him into a river some time before. Zofloya's resurrection invokes a similar response to Edmund's return from the secret room in Reeve's *The Old English Baron*, although Edmund's death in Reeve's novel was never fully implied. The ensuing alteration in Zofloya's character is discerned by those closest to him, in this case Victoria:

> she could not help thinking that Zofloya, before his sudden disappearance, and Zofloya, since his return, were widely different from each other ... it occurred to her that the figure of the moor possessed a grace and majesty which she had never before remarked; his face too seemed animated with charms till now unnoticed (145).

We may assume from Latoni's confession that Zofloya's life had ended before the devil had taken possession of his body. Combining his powerful presence with his seemingly undead status, the resulting character shares many similarities with the vampire implicating a presence that surpasses the limitations of mortal man, and whose penchant for blood establishes his compulsion to feed. Zofloya says to Victoria: 'It is of more worth to me than language can describe; it is of equal value to me with yourself, for it is a part of you – your precious blood' (147). The blood comes to represent a corporeal symbol of what is really being taken from Victoria, not necessarily the life-force, but her individuality: 'remember, poor Victoria,' Zofloya says, 'that independently of me, thou canst not even breathe!' (227).

To Victoria, Zofloya appears 'not only the superior of his race, but of a superior order of beings' (149). Aside from his ability to 'put reflection and consideration to flight' (248), Zofloya has absolute ascendancy over Victoria's perceptions of time and space:

> Know you not, beautiful Victoria, that we are among the Alps, the boundaries of your native kingdom! – how we came hither is surely not material for you to know,- but we are safe.'
>
> 'But I have no remembrance of our journey. - If I recollect aright, it was evening when we last parted; -it appears evening still, though late, - in what time then.' ... But how! - Have my faculties been so long suspended? ... and it is to you alone that I am now indebted for their restoration?- Oh Zofloya! I perceive too clearly, how much, how compleatly (sic) I am in your power!' (234).

From Dacre's novel onwards, innocence is no longer the subject of destruction, but something to be exploited by the independent, controlling force of the Beautiful Death. Exploring the idea of death, resurrection and blood in her novel, Dacre exploits the combination of powers that we have come to define as the Beautiful Death and highlights an important movement towards depicting the vampire in Gothic fiction. Following in the steps of *The Monk*, Dacre continues the technique of manipulating the Beautiful Death into an instrument of disguise, allowing for the scourges of humanity to go undetected beneath a deceptive façade. Her mélange of blood and power is of vital importance in tracing the growth of the Beautiful Death into a figure of vampiristic supremacy, and emphasises the emergent idea in Gothic fiction that death may be understood as Beautiful.

During the course of this thesis I have analysed how authors used the Gothic genre to develop their response to death, the Sublime and the Beautiful. This development was aided by, first, the use of the Necessary Death as we discussed in Chapter three, and then by the subsequent creation of what I have called the Beautiful Death. We have also examined how the escalating physical development of the Beautiful Death from Lewis' *The Monk* onwards further assisted authors in altering what was considered by Edmund Burke to be the most Sublime thing of all, into something represented as Beautiful and desirable.

Using Carolyn Lamb's novel, *Glenarvon* (1816) I will now conclude with how the Beautiful Death came to embody the character of the vampire in its most popularly recognisable form before becoming fully characterised (and referred to by name) three years later in John Polidori's short story, *The Vampyre* (1819). I will also discuss how Lamb's novel proposes a seminal relationship with death, which will

play a significant role in later works by authors such as Theophile Gautier, Edgar Allen Poe, and Bram Stoker.

Chapter Five

The Marriage of Life

and Death

> This is, as I see it, the capital fact about the relation between living and dying. There are two parties to the suffering that death inflicts; and, in the appointment of this suffering, the survivor takes the brunt. (Toynbee, 271)

Glenarvon: tale of a vampire

When I first began my thesis I was of the opinion that the character of the vampire marked an end to the Necessary Death*, which I had established as significant towards prompting the victims' use of the Beautiful Death. Once the power of the Beautiful Death had been transferred by later authors from victim to assailant, it seemed to follow that the Necessary Death was no longer required. The growing presence of the vampiric figure in Gothic literature – as a character embodying the qualities that we have come to appreciate as the Beautiful Death – would thereby render the necessity of death redundant, and the old relationship between the Sublime and the Beautiful likewise outmoded. Following Radcliffe's use of 'Coalescence', the Sublime and the Beautiful had been merged by authors to generate characters with exceptional powers over their victims; as Linda Bayer Berenbaum notes:

> a paradoxical pleasure in pain can motivate torture, affecting the victim as well as the villain, as portrayed in a great many Gothic novels where

* The Necessary Death formed the basis of our discussion in chapter three where the death of the Sublime and the Beautiful are required in order for their relationship to continue.

> the victim is often paralysed by his attraction to his tormentor. As a result of his fascination, the victim becomes even more passive, thus increasing the contrast between victim and assailant (Bayer-Berenbaum, 30).

However, as my ideas developed through my examination of *The Monk* and *Zofloya*, I became aware that the Beautiful Death, now represented by a somewhat vampiric character, was still dependent upon the Necessary Death, and that the relationship between the Sublime and the Beautiful was still existent; death was still a major developing feature of Gothic fiction. I will be suggesting, therefore, through *Glenarvon*, that the power of the vampire is partly dependent upon the metaphorical death of its victim in the shape of emotional decay, and that its power partially relies on the forgotten, cherished past of others. It is with this in mind that I understand Lamb as constructing a fresh relationship with death.

To identify Glenarvon as a representation of the vampire in its orthodox, bloodsucking form is an effortless task given Lamb's graphic depiction of the title character:

> She attempted to close her eyes; but dreadful dreams disturbed her fancy; and the image of Glenarvon pursued her even in sleep. She saw him – not kneeling at her feet, in all the impassioned transports of love, nor radiant with hope, nor even mournful with despondency and fear; but pale, deadly, and cold: his hand was ice, and as he placed it upon hers, she shrunk as from the grasp of death, and awoke oppressed with terror (Lamb, 172).

Partly autobiographical, the story of *Glenarvon* functions as an analogy of Lamb's (represented by Lady Calantha in the novel) real-life preoccupation with Lord Byron (represented by Glenarvon) following their short-lived relationship. In a daring exploitation of roguish behaviour by Glenarvon: 'Others who formerly felt or feigned interest for me ... were either unhappy in their marriage, or in their situation' (Lamb, 178), Lamb blends what she perceived at the time as fact (resulting from her experiences with Lord Byron) with vampire mythology. In her introduction to *Glenarvon* Francis Wilson discusses the fundamental process of contagion and

reproduction in vampire lore, which verges on the genuine effects of Lamb's separation from Byron:

> For having once been kissed by the vampire the victim becomes a vampire herself, forced to leave her old life behind in order to impersonate his bloodsucking desire (Lamb, 20).

Vampire mythology and real-life seemingly become intertwined and the repercussions of Lamb's broken union with Lord Byron are recorded by her cousin, Harriet Leveson Gower: 'poor Caroline ... is worn to the bone, as pale as death and her eyes starting out of her head' (Lamb, 21).

In Lamb's novel, Glenarvon:

> lives underground with those followers he has seduced, he is regularly presumed dead, and he only appears occasionally, usually after dark. His "love is death" ... and it also results in his victims' imitation of him (Lamb, 371).

At various stages Lamb offers clues regarding Glenarvon's true identity: Glenarvon says, 'I am not what I seem ... I am not him whom you take me for' (140). Later Calantha recounts to Glenarvon a recent dream in which she engages a monk dressed in black, and who imparts a warning. Calantha recalls:

> he shook his head; and then looking fiercely at me, bade me beware of Clarence de Ruthven (for so he called you). I never can forget his voice. "All others you may see, you may converse with; but, Calantha, beware," he said, "of Clarence de Ruthven: he is a ... he is a ..." (204).

Some twenty-five pages later Glenarvon again provides an insight into his true identity: 'All that follow me come to this pass; for my love is death' (229).

In her introduction, Wilson notes:

> In *Glenarvon*, Lamb applies Edmund Burke's psychological Sublime, in which 'the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other' (20).

In as much as Lamb infuses her novel with both the Burkean 'psychological Sublime' and the Beautiful Death, she also begins to suggest a relationship between life and death, which was hinted at by previous authors such as Clara Reeve, William Beckford, and Ann Radcliffe. We have discussed how the Necessary Death assisted the continuing relationship between the Sublime and the Beautiful. We have also examined how the subsequent creation of the Beautiful Death eventually allowed for certain liberties to be exercised by its physical incarnations such as Ambrosio, Count Ardolph, Megalena, and Zofloya. However, in adopting a reformed approach to that of Lewis and Dacre, Lamb effectively begins to further tighten the gap between life and death by uniting the victim with the character of the vampire in a relationship that is based upon co-dependency rather than domination and submission.

Lamb's *Glenarvon* offers a fresh perspective on the liaison between victims and those representing the Beautiful Death, which is revisited by authors throughout nineteenth century Gothic literature and beyond. Lamb demonstrates how assailants such as Glenarvon are capable not only of depriving victims of their past, but also restoring them in edited form in a ploy of seduction, and as a precursor to feeding: 'She, surrendering her soul to the illusive dream of a mad and guilty attachment, boasted that she had found again the happiness she had lost' (Lamb, 162). Early in the novel, Lamb lays the foundations for the impending relationship that will take place between Calantha and the vampiric Glenarvon. Her passions are prepared by Lamb for the arrival of Glenarvon; Calantha declares: 'your Calantha will never acknowledge a master; will never yield her soul's free and immortal hopes, to any earthly affection' (35). Calantha's happiness has been vanquished by 'the loneliness of her situation' (195) and the Necessary Death of the passions once felt for her husband creates the perfect milieu in which Glenarvon's presence, along with his relationship with Calantha, is able to flourish.

Lamb's novel initially functions as a process of decay. The story abruptly establishes the theme of death and implied resurrection in its opening pages:

> The deserted priory had fallen into ruin, and Belfont abbey, as yet unclaimed by its youthful master, and pillaged by the griping hand of its present owner, exhibited a melancholy picture of neglect and oppression. – No cheerful fires blaze in its ancient halls; no peasants and vassals feast under its vaulted roofs. – Glenarvon, the hero, the lord of demesne is dead: - he fell on the bloody field of Culloden: - his son perished in exile (5).

Given the title of the novel, the alleged demise of the family of Glenarvon so early in the plot institutes the idea of death and resurrection as a significant theme to be explored with Glenarvon's introduction later in the narrative.

From the novel's outset we are familiarised with Calantha's innocence:

> her eyes had never even glanced upon the numerous pages which have unfortunately been turned by the hand of profaneness and impurity; even the more innocent fictions of romance had been withheld from her (54).

We then follow her experiences of love, neglect, and ultimate decline into melancholy and static death-like existence resulting from the inattentive behaviour of her husband. In a less than subtle manner, Lamb establishes an unhappy environment suitable for Glenarvon's arrival. Calantha's world is disordered. With her only experience of love being a wife to Lord Avondale, Calantha is inexperienced and alone.

Before encountering Glenarvon, Calantha's marriage to Lord Avondale exposes her to new feelings and perceptions:

> Eager to oppose and conquer those opinions in his wife ... he tore the veil at once from her eyes, and opened hastily her wondering mind to a world before unknown ... At first she shrunk with pain and horror, from every feeling which to her mind appeared less chaste, less pure, than those to which she had long been accustomed; but when her principles, or rather her prejudices, yielded to the power of love, she broke from a restraint too rigid, into a liberty the most dangerous from its novelty, its wildness and its uncertainty (54).

Calantha's inauguration into untrodden freshness and hitherto unexplored areas of emotion and experience remain, however, short-lived. Very soon Avondale's neglect of her induces a change of attitude:

> While politics and military movements engaged Lord Avondale wholly, and the rest of the family seemed to exist happily enough in the usual course, she longed for she knew not what. There was a change in her sentiments, but she could not define it. It was not as it had been once (104).

Calantha subsequently yearns for something that she is unable to describe: 'there was something gone which, had it never existed, had never been missed and required' (107). Upon first encountering Glenarvon, the fervour of his music initiates the restoration of her former passions: 'It seemed like the strains of other times, awakening in the heart remembrances of some former state long passed and changed' (120). Upon considering Calantha's relationship with Glenarvon, one is reminded of Charles Baudelaire's *The Vampire* (1857):

> You invaded my sorrowful heart
> Like the sudden stroke of a blade:
> Bold as a lunatic troupe
> Of demons in drunken parade,
>
> You in my mortified soul
> Made your bed and your domain:
> - Abhorrence, to whom I am bound
> As the convict is to the chain (Baudelaire, 65).

Glenarvon acts as a viable alternative to Avondale and has the means to resurrect and control the dormant passions of Calantha's past while at the same time offering the specious gratuity of immortal existence. The future no longer proposes death. As Kant notes in his discussion of the Sublime: 'If it is projected into an incalculable future, then it has something of the fearsome in it' (Kant, 50). Affected by her association with Glenarvon, the future for Calantha becomes entirely absent from her

deliberations: 'while Lord Glenarvon was near her, no remorse obtruded – no fear occurred – she formed no view of the future' (Lamb, 200). Glenarvon's power over her, however, still remains subject to Calantha's weakness and, in a somewhat modified version of events to Lamb's factual union with Lord Byron, her treatment of Glenarvon and Calantha's relationship comes to rest on equality. Both parties respectively confess to their vulnerability without the other. Upon returning Calantha to Castle Delavel, Glenarvon announces:

> I give up that which I sought, and won, and would have died to retain ... that which would have made life dear, and which, being taken from me, leaves me again to a dull blank, and dreary void (263).

Later, Calantha declares in a letter to Glenarvon:

> I am frightened, Glenarvon: we have dared too much. I have followed you into a dark abyss; and now that you, my guide, my protector, have left my side, my former weakness returns (273).

Rather then deny death, Gothic authors such as those we have discussed demonstrated, through the use of the Beautiful Death, how death could play a functioning role in the life of the individual. Death was not necessarily the 'King of Terrors' and neither was it inexorably linked to fear and dissolution, and Lamb had gone on to establish that death, in all of its threatening enterprise, is just as vulnerable as the life it perpetually stalks. As Glenarvon admits to Calantha: 'I cannot live without you. – Mine you are – mine you shall ever be' (177).

Since it is the living that are left to deal with death, its role must be re-assessed by the living outside of fiction if it is to be in any way defused of its traditionally fearful grip on life. As Nigel Barley writes:

> Death is the Ultimate Universal Fact from which there is no escape, its harsh reality resisting any theory or doctrine that would shape or domesticate it. There is no way around death, no negotiation possible. We even realise that our own attempts to deny it are ultimately futile (Barley, 47).

Far from being considered as an intimate friend, therefore, Gothic authors such as Lamb demonstrate how it is possible to perceive death as a life companion. In a relationship that mirrors the early association that Gothic authors developed between the Sublime and the Beautiful, we may see how both life and death require the existence of each other. With death being the only absolute in life, we are left with the choice of either masking it with the veil of deception, or forming a relationship that is capable of, as Freud would show, existing beyond literature.

In destroying all of the notes that he had made up until 1929 Freud tailored the death of his past, and in doing so he made certain that subsequent biographers were deprived of crucial information concerning his life. Adam Phillips notes that Freud:

> already looking at his life from the point of view of his impending death, did not want people to know how he had become not only who he was, but who he would become (Phillips, 71).

In fashioning his own death and controlling his past along with the actions of others eager in its pursuit, Freud arguably becomes a representative of the Beautiful Death. Rather than fear death, Freud acknowledges its presence in life and uses it for his own means by directing his past away from the manipulation of others. By bringing forward the idea of his own death, Freud deprived it of its ultimate hold on life. The inevitability of death is subsequently dashed as Freud wilfully befriends its destructive capabilities in order to find some reprieve in his own life, and he demonstrates that such an approach towards death is not necessarily confined to the behaviour of fictionalised characters such as Lamb's Calantha.

Conclusion

The novels that I have discussed in this thesis have sought to illustrate the Beautiful as a vital component of the Gothic engine from 1765 through to 1816. During the process of demonstrating the importance of the Beautiful in Gothic literature throughout this period, this thesis also established the presence of a stable and long-lasting relationship that existed between the ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful. In tracing the progression of this relationship we discovered the 'Beautiful Death', the use of which enabled protagonists of the Gothic novels discussed above to deal with the idea of death. This thesis has also examined the significant role that this relationship played in the rise and popularisation of the vampire in nineteenth century fiction.

My second chapter, *Before and after Burke*, dealt with the shortcomings of the Sublime in Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, and therefore established the ground upon which the foundation and development of the Beautiful could be discussed in the following chapters. By using Foucault's essay on transgression, it was possible to show how Walpole's novel stopped short of realising the potential of the Beautiful, the effect of which led us into the next chapter and into further discussion regarding how the potential of the Beautiful was recognised by future Gothic writers.

My next chapter, *The Rise of the Beautiful Death*, demonstrated how writers began to develop a relationship between the Sublime and the Beautiful, which was hinted at by Burke and only touched upon by Walpole. Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron* enabled me to show how authors had begun to reassess the role of the Beautiful in Gothic literature, and I was thereby able to establish how they initiated its progress from its representation in *The Castle of Otranto* into an evolving idea that would come to challenge the power attributed to the Sublime. I also established that, by this time, the Beautiful was already beginning to be affiliated with death and resurrection

and therefore possessed the familiar traits that came to exemplify the character of the vampire in later fiction.

Sophia Lee's *The Recess* made it possible for me to identify the Beautiful as a tool used by the victim-in-peril to challenge the threats represented by the Sublime. I named this procedure the 'Beautiful Death', the use of which confirmed the connection between the Beautiful, death, and resurrection. With this in mind I was able to examine the innovative attitudes towards death as seen from the focal characters of *The Recess*, and to thereby offer a progressive argument that recognized the strength and will of the individuals concerned when faced with a representation of death. This idea established the Beautiful Death both as a significant feature of Gothic fiction and a consequent match for the imposing power of the Sublime. In addition to *The Recess* this chapter also focused on Adam Phillips' *Darwin's Worms*. Alongside stressing the Gothic engine as a major influence on ideas concerning death and resurrection, it was also my intention to demonstrate how such concepts prevailed. Therefore, although the themes and issues discussed by both Darwin and Freud were conceived a century or so later than many of the novels and ideas that I discuss, their contentions helped to clarify and strengthen many of my key terms and theories and thereby established their continuing significance and relevance in the next century and beyond.

In my next chapter, *Re-Shaping the Beautiful Death*, I discussed how Gothic writers such as Ann Radcliffe in her novel, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, began to further challenge the precepts from Edmund Burke's original enquiry into what he considered Beautiful and Sublime by uniting them, rather than preserving them as separate philosophical ideas. Also on offer in this chapter is a detailed account of how such fresh approaches by Radcliffe to beauty and sublimity were continued and expanded further by Mathew Lewis', *The Monk*, which resulted in the physical evolution of the Beautiful Death as exemplified by the chief character, Ambrosio. As we discussed, this physical evolution further consolidated the characteristics that would influence the popularisation of the vampire in later fiction.

Using Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya* I was then able to trace the development of vampiric characteristics in the characters of Count Ardolph, Megalena, and finally Zofloya within whom the ideas of death, resurrection, power, and feeding are all present.

My final chapter, *The Marriage of Life and Death* discusses the final developments of the vampiric character before it is embodied and referred to by name in John Polidori's *The Vampyre*. Carolyn Lamb's *Glenarvon* was not only useful in demonstrating the physical culmination of themes and theories that I discussed in previous novels, it was also an invaluable source in communicating an important relationship that emerged between vampire and victim, which was to flourish in proceeding novels dealing with similar subject matter.

Looking back over the volume of Gothic literature covered in this thesis, we see an array of diverse styles and themes that are used by authors to convey their interpretation of the Gothic engine. Bayer-Berenbaum argues:

> A Gothic novel is not merely a collection of the characteristics that typify the genre but a unique entity of its own in which the Gothic landmarks merely set the scene and tone. In other words, each work has its own way of presenting the Gothic vision, its own personal brand of characters and images, incidents and assessments (Bayer-Berenbaum, 73).

Recurrent themes such as castles and subterraneous passages aside, we have identified an unfolding structure in Gothic fiction establishing the Beautiful and death as crucial components of Gothic development. In overlooking the significance of the Beautiful in Gothic fiction, critics have instead mostly focused upon Gothic as a literature of shadows and ghosts. While such definitions apply to a genre that most assuredly focused upon the depraved and the chaotic, it needs reinstating that Gothic authors from Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* developed their novels with a strategy that superseded the established primary ingredients of darkness and phantoms. Far from the intention of overwhelming their readers with transgression merely for the sake of it, authors were determined to supply transgression with a companion in the shape of the Beautiful. The relationship that followed was to represent the magnitude of death and Beauty. Given the general theme of isolation, persecution and fear in the majority of Gothic novels, it follows that the subject of the Sublime would be the focus for many critics. Bayer-Berenbaum writes:

> Pain and fear are essential as both a cause and a symptom of intensification. The value of intensity leads Gothicism to an admiration for absolute power and to a preference for power over beauty (Bayer-Berenbaum, 144).

As we have discussed throughout this thesis, this is not necessarily the case with Gothic fiction. In the conflict that arose between the Sublime and the Beautiful leading to the Necessary Death, it was the Beautiful that would be hailed as the victor. Initially representing a power in the guise of the Beautiful Death, the Beautiful was redefined and became a source of undoing for the Sublime by characters who considered themselves in uncompromising positions of danger and fear of death. It would then later be developed by authors into a physical guise. The individual representing the Beautiful Death was subsequently able to conceal the powerful presence of sublimity, which was dependent upon a charming and alluring subterfuge. The Beautiful is the crucial force that helps the Sublime to function, and this is sufficiently recognised in Lamb's *Glenarvon* in which Calantha – identifiable as the Beautiful – offers a partnership with death – represented by Glenarvon – which permits his powers to thrive.

Finally, in writing this thesis, I hope to have demonstrated how the Gothic genre owes its continuing popularity to the presence of the Beautiful and death. Upon recalling our discussion of *The Castle of Otranto* we should perhaps pay close attention to how the novel's shortcomings owed much to the absence of the Beautiful. There was no suitable victim for Manfred to dominate. We should consider the consequences that may have transpired if the Beautiful had never been amply represented in Gothic fiction. Gothic literature without the representation of a victim is tantamount to the human lung without oxygen. Without a suitable candidate for destruction the historic genre of Gothic fiction may have been reduced to an ephemeral moment in a century best known for Classicism and Romanticism, with a brief mention granted to another genre with nonsensical linear plots, ghosts, and some darkness incorporated for good measure. This is not to suggest the failure of Gothic without a representation of the Beautiful. Rather it is to base much of the reputation and popularity of the genre upon themes that reflect the human condition, which I have accredited to the use and development of the Beautiful and death by authors,

while also maintaining the Gothic as a vital influence upon the emergence of the vampire in popular fiction.

I believe that Caroline Lamb's *Glenarvon* marked the beginning of a new relationship with death, the influence of which is still manifest in contemporary literature, art, and film, and the vampire constitutes a befitting character with whom such a relationship can prosper. As Gothic fiction proceeds into the nineteenth century and beyond, the theme of love and death will become more closely intertwined as the vampire makes its increasingly unambiguous appearance in fiction following John Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819). Authors would also continue to develop the Beautiful Death in characters outside of vampire lore. Spectres, monsters, doubles and alter-egos would therefore continue to occupy a key role in the Gothic genre, the endurance of which will be due partly to its ironic dependence on the Beautiful, and death.

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