

Women and Gothic

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Edited by

Maria Purves

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P U B L I S H I N G

Women and Gothic, Edited by Maria Purves

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A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

In 2010 I was invited to organise a one-day conference as part of the *Women and Words* celebration of women's creativity at Lucy Cavendish College, Cambridge. The title was *Women and Gothic*, and the aim of the conference was to explore women's relationship with the gothic: a relationship which has been, and continues to be, complex. The papers given on the day were utterly enlightening on this subject. They demonstrated the scope, the diversity, the intensity of the relationship: the ingenuity and genius employed, the anguish experienced and the risks taken, across the artistic spectrum, in its forging. When Cambridge Scholars Publishing asked if I would put together a book based on the proceedings of the conference I thought it might be valuable to represent the spirit of the conference and gather the fruits of our original enquiry into one volume. In keeping with the character of the conference which was modest in size but generous in purview, the number of essays included here is not large; I have selected essays that connect with each other, and presented them accordingly with the intention of letting the ecology of the relationship under question shine through.

So what is the nature (broadly) of women's relationship with the gothic? Scholarship has established several of its main features. Women writers and artists have used gothic professionally or expediently to make a political point, or to critique their culture. They have used gothic to explore different sides of their personalities, to promote subversive ideas of femaleness or simply to engender a discussion - albeit coded - of certain taboo aspects of the same. For many, no medium other than the gothic was possible: these are the women writers and artists whose work embodies the gothic and takes them into dark places.

These are some aspects of the nature of the relationship with regards to the crafting of the gothic by women. But women have also been shaped *by* the gothic, in fiction, art and film; therefore any discussion of the nature of the relationship must of course include insight into the way the gothic voices the sublimities of female experience, but is also used to darken and devalue them.

This volume does not set out to be a guide to or overview of its subject, but an illumination. Like the Cambridge conference, it peers into some overlooked areas, teases out some intricacies, rereads some lost authors,

and identifies and celebrates some under-appreciated art and achievement. Each essay constitutes a study of a particular area of interest which taps into wider critical concerns within the field of gothic studies, at the same time providing us with a unique insight into the relationship between women and the gothic from the eighteenth century onwards.

We begin with essays on women who shared a revisionary perspective of the gothic made possible by their marginalised position as travellers, writers, and aesthetes in the mid- to late-eighteenth century. In his essay “‘Still to be Seen’: Relocating the Gothic in the Fiction of Ann Radcliffe and the Travel Writing of Hester Piozzi”, Mark Bennett distinguishes between the optic of Addison—representing the enlightened, entitled male Grand Tourist—who dismisses and desubstantiates the presence of the gothic within the terrain of Southern Europe, and Piozzi, whose pioneering 1789 travelogue reinserts the gothic into the Grand Tour’s topography via “Gothically inflected meditation[s]” on the scenes she is viewing. This, argues Bennett, changes the toured terrain “from a locus for the traveller’s acculturating affirmation into a Gothic space that embodies the perpetual possibility of that subjectivity’s collapse”. Radcliffe’s *Sicilian Romance*, which Bennett calls “the first Gothic novel to directly situate its materials within that same cultural field [of touring travel]”, undercuts the Addisonian perspective by highlighting the Piozzian: Radcliffe’s traveller-narrator “indulg[ing], rather than delimit[ing], the Gothic potential” of a magnificent ruin in the Italian landscape with an imaginative response which allows the gothic to “overlay the contemporary”. Bennett goes on to show that Radcliffe’s (famous) explained supernatural is similarly positioned, “defer[ring] to enlightenment order at the same time as it re-emphasises the Gothic elements that complicate it”.

Like Piozzi, Elizabeth Percy *née* Seymour (1716–1776) was both writer and scenic tourist, and produced a travelogue. However she is best known for her “revival of a Gothic spirit at Alnwick Castle” as Laura Mayer says, and illustrates, in “‘Junketaceous Gothick’: Elizabeth Percy’s patronage of Alnwick Castle, Northumberland”. Mayer defends Elizabeth’s deliberate choice of Robert Adam’s (rarely executed) “light Gothick” style for the restoration of Alnwick—“an associational pastiche of classical motifs, battlemented cornices, and pseudo-Gothic Tudor arches ... a brazen new eclecticism”—in response to its dismissal in contemporary guidebooks and academic works as historically inaccurate, frivolous, and unworthy of preservation. Mayer also defends Elizabeth herself, a woman of fashionably Romantic sensibility who was labelled a tasteless and ostentatious amateur in design matters compared to her husband, a classicist celebrated for his architectural judgement.

Elizabeth Percy chose a form of gothic fantasy to retell her ancestral story at Alnwick, and rejected the restrained classicism favoured by her husband and other gentlemen of taste. The subsequent attack on her character and her restoration suggests that the choice was seen as subversive. Percy's experience underpins readings of the female gothic which recognise that through its anti-realism, gothic makes possible the disruption of patriarchal cultural structures. In "Imaginary Dimensions: Women, Surrealism and the Gothic", Kimberley Marwood takes up this reading with reference to surrealism, notably female surrealism. Marwood positions gothic as a precursor to surrealism: in existing scholarship it is accepted that the gothic novel provided surrealism's structuring metaphors, that gothic served to define surrealism because it resonated with surrealism's opposition to rationalism. Marwood takes a closer look at the several facets of gothic's appeal for surrealism. Then, noting how "Gothic influences in the work of surrealist women are frequently cited but rarely theorised", goes on to focus on three female surrealists—Dorothea Tanning, Ithell Colquhoun, and Valentine Penrose—showing how for them, the gothic operated as a locus of desire and of a re-imagination of the self, particularly the sexual self, and illustrating the ways in which these artists adopted the gothic as "a tool in the broad repertoire of themes and techniques they explored and experimented with." Marwood discusses Tanning's paintings on the theme of Ann Radcliffe, which harness gothic's "mysterious and unpredictable atmospheres"; and Penrose's collages which "build on the gothic ancestry of the collage form ... teasing out the inherent gothicism of the collage". She shows how these surrealist women have constructed literary and visual forms that have been said to almost transcend the comprehension of masculine rationality. Marwood points the different ways in which surrealist men and women have appropriated the conventions of the gothic, and champions the way in which the female artists portrayed in this study "encrypt their female characters into a web of association and connotation" that embraces the gothic's way of exploring and often sanctioning that which is not socially acceptable, rational, nor institutionally approved.

Valentine Penrose's fairy-tale engagement with the gothic in *La Comtesse Sanglante* (1962), which clearly anticipates Angela Carter, resonates with the subject of Victor Sage's essay "On Narrative Curiosity". Using Perrault's seventeenth-century (pre-) gothic text *La Barbe Bleue* ("Bluebeard"), which as Sage says "has for its moral, a warning against curiosity. Not explicitly 'Female Curiosity', though this is indeed the main inference that has been most commonly drawn from the tale", Sage firstly

takes us through the pleasures of the prescribed narrative and how it can be played with, at the same time noting how female curiosity in Perrault is seen as a sign of the Fall, an expectation which Perrault's text "does not necessarily endorse: ie a notion of woman as 'the weaker vessel', and of 'curiosity', whether it be nosiness or simply a desire to know, as perverse, anti-rational." Sage then shows how in subsequent translations and reworkings of the Bluebeard tale, this curiosity is shaped and reshaped. In eighteenth-century Germany where the story is "Gothicized" under the influence of the Romantic movement, the "ambiguous moral" becomes "a more obviously aesthetic motif", and female curiosity is treated as "part of human reason"; whereas in England *Bluebeard's* ambiguous moral is transferred into a Christian context, taking us back to the notion of female curiosity as a sign of the Fall, until Radcliffe's *Udolpho*, "a rewrite of Perrault's tale", which is concerned with the drama of the act of knowledge. Although, Sage says, there are "two contradictory aspects of the Bluebeard story ... its brief flashes of common sense, and the long framing encyclopaedia of its horror", the story of its historical reinterpretations help us to see how curiosity in a narrative acts out the thirst for narrative itself, making the "reader's narrative curiosity inseparable from an awareness of experience"; demonstrating once again that in certain hands gothic performs as an active site, disrupting or offering an alternative to the fixed and static perspective.

Marie Mulvey-Roberts takes us to the visceral, gothic core of female curiosity in "The After-Lives of the Bride of Frankenstein: Mary Shelley and Shelley Jackson". In Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Victor decides to abort his experimental mate for the male monster, tearing the pieced-together creature apart. Mulvey-Roberts observes that "Victor failed to obliterate the monster's mate, for he never succeeded in wiping out her future herstories. He was defeated by those writers, artists and film-makers, who in becoming a new breed of resurrectionist enabled the bride of Frankenstein to live on and tell her tale." By linking the work of writers Shelley Jackson, Alasdair Gray, and Elizabeth Hand, and with a thematic emphasis on body parts, patchwork, and inter-textuality, Mulvey-Roberts shows how Mary Shelley's female monster "evolved through other texts as a pastiche, patchwork or nexus of inter-textuality" combining with cinematic representations to become "a family of female monsters made up of grotesque narrative protuberances derived from images, sequels and adaptations." Mulvey-Roberts investigates the hybridisation of the character at the hands of Jackson, Hand, and film director Erle C. Kenton—woman/child, woman/man; an amalgamation of screen goddesses; woman/animal—imaginative reconfigurations in which we see clear

reflections of Medusa, Pandora, vampire. But because she is made out of other women, she represents “a reminder of the importance of a female lineage and tradition”. The body parts of Shelley’s female monster, Mulvey-Roberts says, essentially represent an “unrealised narrative”; and the essay explores notions of writing and the body with reference to these Brides of Frankenstein. Mulvey-Roberts suggests that the realisation of that narrative perhaps occurs most clearly in the work of Jackson, and the surgical performance artist Orlan, both of whom explore in different ways the empowerment of the moment when the prohibited text of the inside of the female body is laid open to the curious gaze of its owner.

Orlan—described by Mulvey-Roberts as “a contemporary reincarnation of the bride of Frankenstein [who] speaks lucidly and articulately while lying on the operating table”—also speaks to the experience of gothic women writers. Like her, women gothicists were experimenting on themselves: they were the active site on which the gothic experiment—disruption of the fixed, dominant perspective—was taking place. This can be seen clearly in Andrew McInnes’s essay “‘Better Known as Rosa Matilda’: Charlotte Dacre’s Authorial Doppelganger”. For her violent and morally ambiguous 1806 gothic novel *Zofloya, or, The Moor*, Charlotte Dacre took the pen-name Rosa Matilda: a play on the names of the cross-dressing demon Rosario/Matilda in Matthew Lewis’ infamous 1796 gothic shocker *The Monk*. McInnes argues that Dacre’s authorial voice as Rosa Matilda “underpins her narrative’s inability, or unwillingness, to settle on any certain, unproblematic moral ground, by providing a subversively demonic counterpoint to Dacre’s moralising interjections” and makes it possible for Dacre to “[access] the sexually ambiguous, androgynous and demonic qualities of her literary forebear exactly in order to free herself - taking elements of a male-dominated culture and using them ... in her own writing.” Taking us through the novel McInnes points to a complexity which capsizes the established Female Gothic formula. Not only does the novel have a heroine-villain, Victoria, who blazes a bloody trail of destruction in much the same way as Lewis’ villain monk Ambrosio; but Dacre allows her conventionally moral narrative voice, which blames the crimes of the children in the novel on the loose morals of the parents, to be resisted by the eponymous Zofloya (the devil himself) who is according to McInnes “at once obviously immoral ... and the novel’s surest moral guide—emphasising the importance of personal agency over either maternal or infernal influence.” McInnes explores further this notable narrative subjectivity, wherein at the same time as condemning Victoria’s sexual violence there is a competing sensual pleasure in Victoria’s destructiveness which “stresses the impossibility of the narrator’s didactic

demands". McInnes argues that this style "should be read on an authorial level, as a conventionally moralistic narrator undermined by an alternative, Gothicised consciousness". He highlights Dacre's highly sophisticated treatment of human emotions (observable in all her novels), in particular the "slow, unconscious development of desire, outside of the control of the discriminating conscience".

One interesting aspect of *Zofloya*, as McInnes points out, is the way that Dacre comments on the conventions of mother-daughter morality tales by allowing Victoria to blame her own transgressive behaviour on her mother's adultery. "That which the mother makes possible" is a potent theme in the gothic and is touched upon in many of the essays in this volume: mothers real (biological mothers), and mothers metaphorical (authors, who give life to their characters). The psychological complexities of the mother-daughter relationship have always been fertile compost to the dark soil of the gothic imagination. Chrisy Dennis takes maternal advice in the gothic as her theme in "'Be wary then: best SAFETY lies in FEAR': Chastity Versus Desire in Mary Robinson's Gothic Novels". Mary Robinson has for centuries been better known for her scandalous life as a well-known eighteenth-century actress than as a writer of fiction, but her novels deserve wider reading, as Dennis shows. Dennis illustrates, through a reading of Robinson's two best-known 1790s novels, how Robinson used fiction to override conventional morality-tale maternal advice by criticising women's education which, Dennis observes, "places chastity or propriety at its core", and by challenging conduct literature and novels that promote the idea of "virtue rewarded" and do not discuss female desire in any helpful way. Robinson makes it clear in her fiction that women need to be knowledgeable about sexual matters so as not to become victims of their own innocence. Dennis argues that Robinson destabilises the trope of maternal transmission, suggesting that mothers, or substitute mothers "are tied by cultural conventions that value purity and chastity above all other considerations". Her novels, as Dennis shows, are full of girls who are unprepared to deal with their own desire and are thus at the mercy of the machinations of men which, "upheld by the secrets of women", Dennis says, ultimately hold in place "Church, State and the laws of marriage and inheritance."

We stay with the moral role of the gothic in our next essay—"A Castle, a Commissary, and a Corpse: Overcoming the Gothic Threat in the Novels of Frances Burney"—in which Eleanor Crouch argues that Burney uses the gothic in her novels "to throw into relief misguided values, and that it is against these Burney has her heroes and heroines strive." Crouch gives a close reading of four of Burney's novels—*Cecilia*, *The Wanderer*, *Camilla*

and *Evelina*—showing how, through the use of gothic motif, Burney critiques the values of the past and “the threat of emergent value systems” which she felt “impinged on individual freedom”, and “created gothic scenes in order to shock misguided characters (or readers) back to right-thinking.” In “[demonstrating] the socially-responsible nature of her protagonists even in the face of the unnerving”, Crouch argues, Burney was addressing the fears of contemporary commentators who felt that gothic novels were a threat to the moral wellbeing of the nation. Crouch also observes that at times, like Jane Austen, “Burney appears to deliberately lambaste the gothic.”

Reading this study it seems strange that Burney’s novels have rarely been associated with the gothic. My contribution to this volume is a revisionist study of another novelist not traditionally thought of as gothic: when she is thought of at all, that is. Early twentieth-century writer Mary Webb wrote several popular Hardy-esque, rural-primitivist novels which, I argue, despite being unfashionable for a very long time, have much to offer our study of gothic. In “The Gothic Genius of Mary Webb” I look at the heroines in Webb’s three most successful novels to show that Webb was continuing into the twentieth century the ideology of earlier gothic writers who used the gothic to reconfigure the power margins for girls and women. At the same time, Webb added masterful touches to familiar gothic motifs, such as the haunted house. And in her most memorable character Prue Sarn, the hare-lipped heroine of *Precious Bane*, Webb created a new type of gothic heroine altogether: one who is both Radcliffian prototype and the embodiment of many of the revelations that awaited earlier heroines of the female gothic behind the gothic veil.

Webb sets *Precious Bane* in the eighteenth century only to disrupt that century’s idea of the attributes of a romantic heroine. Prue’s ability to read and write, which sets her apart in the poor, superstitious, cruel rural community in which she has been raised, wins her the novel’s only desirable man, Kester Woodseaves, an educated man of sensibility, and thus provides her with the means of escape. Clare Broome Saunders looks at another example in a gothic novel where education is promoted as a form of escape: this time from the horror of incarceration. In “Incarcerating the Sane: The Asylum and Female Powerlessness in Nineteenth-Century Gothic Fiction”, Broome Saunders explores “the horrors of a social system where ‘madhouses’ were often profit-making businesses” and women could be incarcerated in an unregulated way. Two gothic novels by authors who concerned themselves with the issue—Mrs Costello and Wilkie Collins—form the focus of this study. Broome Saunders highlights the way “actual depictions of a flawed medical system” in these works serve to

highlight issues such as the importance of women's education, and the inequality in male/female power relations, at the same time giving us a clear picture of "the deep seated anxieties about the treatment of madness that were running through mid-nineteenth century society".

Broome Saunders traces the emergence of sensation fiction to the serialised publication of *The Woman in White* in 1859–60. Sensation fiction, she argues, "recovered devices from the Gothic fiction earlier in the century—extreme situations of imprisonment and uncanny events, exotic sinister villains—while demonstrating concern with the anxieties and horrors of the contemporary". This transference of gothic significance to society's brutal realities naturally made for more a richer, more complex gothic vision in terms of settings and characterization; as Broome Saunders illustrates when she says that "sanity and insanity appear in confusion in *Woman in White*—the characters all seem tainted with insanity". This type of complex psychological Victorian gothic representation was also a trademark of the poetry of Christina Rossetti, as Serena Trowbridge argues in "'The Wordless Secrets of Death's Deep': Christina Rossetti's Gothic". Although Rossetti is primarily read as a poet whose work is religious or devotional in character, in fact, Trowbridge observes, she "internalised many Gothic tropes" and "from her heroines to her graveyard aesthetics" there are unmistakable traces of Radcliffe, Lewis, and Edgar Allen Poe, while some poems draw directly upon the novels of Charles Maturin. Trowbridge points "the recurring themes of fear and the flight from evil" in Rossetti's devotional poetics, but is particularly interested in Rossetti's "considerable exploration of fear within the world: a fear of evil, particularly within the society in which she was situated, and including social injustices, but also of the world's seductiveness." A feature of Rossetti's style according to Trowbridge is "self-examination which divides the inner self from the outer" and "demonstrate[s] a more complex understanding of the world: an understanding more akin to that of Maturin than of Radcliffe." Trowbridge analyses Rossetti's use in several poems of gothic tropes and motifs such as doubles and madness, thresholds and ghosts, the uncanny; and shows how, although her poems often feature fallen women, Rossetti refuses to condemn. Indeed, argues Trowbridge, "she engages, in both literary and theological terms, with the very notion of womanhood, constructing images which refer to Gothic types without adhering so closely that they become stereotypes."

In the final essay in this collection we revisit the theme of women and the uncanny which Rossetti explores so tantalisingly in her poetry. This uncanny, however, is of the musical variety and is very specifically feminine, having much to do with the female singing voice. In "The

Female Musical Uncanny in the Fiction of E. T. A. Hoffmann”, Val Scullion and Marion Treby acknowledge that much critical attention has been given to Hoffmann’s treatment of inspirational musical female muses: what is interesting to them, however, is the uncanny nature of these muses, and the role of their voices as agents of “instant and long-term change” in the stories. Scullion and Treby identify strong use of the feminine semiotic (a pre-language musicality) in Hoffmann’s writing which imparts a feminine style and renders the uncanny elements in Hoffmann’s narratives extremely potent. Scullion and Treby identify as a possible influence on Hoffmann the fascination with uncanny acoustics in late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century Europe and discuss the various musical instruments such as the glass harmonica played predominantly by women “which were designed to reproduce the harmonious sounds of nature and invoke the etheriality of the spiritual”. Hoffmann’s women reproduce that uncanny sound—a sound which, according to the authors, “[disturbs] the air through vibration, resonant frequency or strangeness, which set the skin bristling”—articulating as it does the unsaid and the unheard, “a primal kind of music associated with the harmony of nature which is sensed through an individual’s body and mind, yet is indicative of a human sensation common to all.” However, as this essay shows, Hoffmann is at pains to demonstrate the catalytic power of this uncanny female voice. There are abundant examples in the stories of “male music lovers ... falling under the spell of, or falling foul of, the female musical uncanny”. Moreover men who do not give due respect to the powerful effects of uncanny female voices are ridiculed.

Hoffmann’s treatment of the female voice, Scullion and Treby argue, shows a partiality towards the feminine in the feminine-masculine dynamic; and partiality in the gothic to the feminine and the female, wherever that dynamic asserts itself—in culture, or in the imagination—seems to be a recurring theme of this collection, perhaps because women’s relationship with the gothic is at heart one of mutual empowerment. Hoffmann’s female musical uncanny provides a fitting note on which to end. As described in the final essay, it is a phenomenon which disturbs and sends tremors through the atmosphere; articulates the unsaid and the unheard; is spiritual, primal, and catastrophically resonant. In short, a perfect metaphor for women’s relationship with the gothic.

—Maria Purves, September 2013.

“STILL TO BE SEEN”:
RELOCATING THE GOTHIC IN THE FICTION
OF ANN RADCLIFFE AND THE TRAVEL
WRITING OF HESTER PIOZZI

MARK BENNETT

Through its frame narrative, Ann Radcliffe's *A Sicilian Romance* is arguably the first Gothic novel to directly assert a significant relationship with the contemporary field of touring travel. My aim in this essay is to understand this innovation in terms of developments in the discourses organising this culturally significant field. In particular, I want to suggest that Radcliffe's subtle relocation of the Gothic herein is enabled and influenced by the revisionary perspectives of female travel writers.

The travel tradition most relevant to *A Sicilian Romance* is that of the Grand Tour. This significant and influential approach to the Mediterranean is aptly described by Edward Chaney as a tradition wherein “young men ... Patronised a museum set in a picturesque landscape.”¹ Joseph Addison's *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy* exemplifies this arrangement. Addison's Italy is “the great School of Music and Painting”, which also “contains ... the noblest Productions of Statuary and Architecture” alongside “Cabinets of Curiosities, and vast collections of all kinds of Antiquities.” The landscape is conceived as a stable archive, conveniently arranged before the traveller's gaze. This quality is affirmed as the author notes his approaching it through the works of “Classic Authors”² arranged into appropriate collections, pre-inscribing the terrain in a way that familiarises and appropriates it for the traveller.

This approach can be described through Edward Said's concept of Imaginative Geography, which organises a terrain through “a restricted number of typical encapsulations” that “shape ... the encounter” so that “something patently foreign and distant acquires ... a status more rather than less familiar.” Crucially, this organisation also performs an evaluative function, being “not so much a way of receiving new information as ... a method of controlling what seems to be a threat to some established view

... accommodating things to itself as either ‘original’ or ‘repetitious.’”³ Thus, the significance and resilience of the traveller’s ideal material, such as the acculturating contents of an Italy imagined as a transcendent archive, is affirmed. Meanwhile, disruptive presences can be situated as secondary and subordinate; impositions without inherent substance or validity. It is in this way that Italy’s potentially Gothic elements can be strategically countered by the Grand Tourist. For Addison, it is the sites and markers of modern Catholicism that constitute the greatest threat to his enlightened Imaginative Geography. His descriptions of these endow them with a proto-Gothic character that anticipates later writing: the figures of Catholicism are “fiery zealots” and “men of dark tempers” who gather together in religious communities in order to associate with “companions as gloomy as themselves.”⁴ However, Addison’s writing consistently desubstantiates this Gothic presence, denying it a significant stake in his Imaginative Geography. For example, Addison associates Catholic spectacles with the superfluous and excessive layering of barren signifiers. Describing the decoration of churches with emblems of miraculous intervention, he writes:

This Custom spoils the Beauty of several *Roman* Catholic Churches, and often covers the Walls with wretched Daubings, impertinent Inscriptions, Hands, Legs and Arms of Wax, with a thousand idle Offerings of the same nature.⁵

Actual beauty is thus obscured by the imposition of a charnel arrangement of fragmentary wax effigies presenting insubstantial representations of already chimerical events. The Gothic quality that results enhances the transience of these markers through an implicit association with decay, reassuringly undermining both the solidity and validity of their presence. Meanwhile, the offerings’ “idle” character provides an implicit comment on the activity of their makers, who provide the Grand Tourist’s classical landscape with such competing glosses. An association with “idleness” ensures that the contrast remains reassuring: whilst the Grand Tourist’s travel is also a form of “travail”—working to identify, appraise and organise the terrain’s content—these markers exist “idly”, in an ephemeral disarray: they are transient and insubstantial, it seems, because they do insufficient work to produce or organise meaning.⁶ Elsewhere, Addison similarly distinguishes between the relative value of classical and later, Catholic, antiquities. The former astound with their cultural fecundity, it being “almost impossible to survey them without taking new Hints and Raising different reflections.” The superstitious and proto-Gothic character of the latter, however, once more sees them subordinated, being “so

embroiled with Fable and Legend, that one receives but little Satisfaction from searching into them.”⁷

Such an Imaginative Geography thus confidently orders and evaluates its objects, configuring the landscape in a way that affirms the privileged perspective of the enlightened traveller. “Proto-Gothic” elements may manifest within this arrangement, but their strategic recognition invalidates their significance; preventing their successful incorporation within the terrain. However, the success with which this perspective is maintained proceeds to a great extent from the particular subjectivity and cultural entitlement of the male traveller. Conversely, the participation of female travel writers in the Grand Tour’s masculine Imaginative Geography may be both ambiguous and potentially revisionary.

Hester Piozzi’s successful 1789 travelogue, *Observations and Reflections in the Course of a Journey Through France, Italy and Germany*, provides an excellent example of this. *Observations*, as William McCarthy observes, “is about the postures that one may adopt towards one’s experiences. More specifically it is about the postures that have been adopted by Piozzi’s predecessors.” Therefore, its “strength is revisionary”, as Piozzi not only examines the traditional objects of Grand Tourism, but critically reflects upon that tradition itself.⁸ This revisionary quality draws upon Piozzi’s largely unprecedented status as a female Grand Tourist and, moreover, a female Grand Tour travel-writer. As Ellen Moers observes, Piozzi’s was an “unconventional, distinctly female travel book.” Moers suggests—correctly, as this essay shall argue—that these qualities were part of the *Observations*’ influence upon Radcliffe.⁹ In fact, Piozzi’s text is one of very few female-authored travelogues in the eighteenth century, and the first female account of the Tour written in the form of a continuous prose narrative. McCarthy observes that “as a published travel writer Piozzi ‘appears to have had but two female predecessors’.”¹⁰ These are Lady Mary Wortley Montagu’s *Letters from Turkey* (1763) and Anna Miller’s *Letters from Italy* (1776),¹¹ neither of which offers as complete an account of the conventional Tour trajectory, or does so in the prose form adopted by influential male accounts such as Addison’s *Remarks* or Thomas Nugent’s *The Grand Tour* (1749). Piozzi is conscious of this break with tradition as her preface defends a refusal to “throw” her “thoughts into the form of private letters.”¹² Piozzi’s pioneering position is also ambiguous, however. As Kristi Siegel observes:

Early women travel writers skirted a delicate course. To get an audience a woman needed to provide material that was reasonably exciting; to keep an audience, she needed to remain a lady.¹³

The position occupied by a female traveller is therefore very different to that of an Addisonian Grand Tourist. Instead of assuming an entitlement to imaginatively configure and appropriate the terrain, women may find themselves writing in such a way as to excuse the fact of their writing at all. Accordingly, Piozzi's preface self-deprecatingly acknowledges the “daring” and “presumption” with which she has chosen to place her text “before the Public.”¹⁴ This position may be intriguingly ambivalent, however, as the preface that respectfully demurs is nevertheless occasioned by the very transgression it apologises for. A writer like Piozzi recognises the conventions governing the field of travel writing at the very moment she crosses them: in inhabiting it, she cannot fully inhabit them. What may result from this is a liminal position that nevertheless provides the opportunity to critique the Tour's Imaginative Geography. We can witness this in *Observations* as Piozzi encounters conventions that mediate access to the landscape's acculturating contents. A renowned picture is housed in a refectory “to which no woman could be admitted.” Piozzi therefore remains outside “while the gentlemen [visit] the convent without molestation.” She then informs the reader that:

I might put on men's clothes and see it whenever I pleased ... though all of them would know me ... If such slight gratifications however ... can be purchased no cheaper than by violating truth in one's own person ... it were better surely die without having procured to one's self such frivolous enjoyments.¹⁵

An element of the Gothic is already present at this Catholic site. Male tourists may enter freely and exercise their judgement upon its contents in the manner of Addison, but Piozzi cannot do so “without molestation.” The confident organisation and appraisal of sites like this—and the negation of any Gothic unease they might anticipate—is revealed to be contingent upon a particular subject-position. Piozzi's refusal to approach the object from the supposed safety of a sham-masculinity develops this further. To cross-dress would affirm Piozzi's disempowerment: staging the female spectator as a spectacle herself, with undertones of “violation”.¹⁶ As such, Piozzi's authority as an observer would suffer more limitation from her cross-dressing than from being denied a sight of the artwork. Instead, her resistance elevates the truth of a limited perspective, subject to disruptions and lacunae, over the stability of a conventional alternative, wherein she must unavoidably be disempowered. Significantly, this apparent deference to the site's gendered demarcation enables a subtle critique as the absent artwork is replaced, in Piozzi's text, by a scrutiny of the conventions that mediate its appraisal. This manoeuvre harnesses the

ambiguity identified by Siegel, but also exemplifies the argument made by Elizabeth Bohls in her influential account of *Women Travel Writers and the Language of Aesthetics*. Bohls notes that masculine travel formats that may be “inhospitable” to women travellers, but that these writers could nonetheless “find ingenious means to disrupt and reconceive them.” Crucially, Bohls often finds this occurring when women’s writing “tampers with the gender of the perceiver” in a way that “tends to expose the interests that inform supposedly disinterested acts of aesthetic appreciation.”¹⁷ This seems to be what occurs in Piozzi’s *Observations*. Here the traditions of judgement and appraisal that produce the Imaginative Geography of the Grand Tour are revealed to involve the exclusion of alternative viewpoints. It is only possible to see in this way “in men’s clothes”: something which Piozzi renders visibly ridiculous.

A posture of scepticism towards the conventions and assumptions that underpin the Grand Tour’s Imaginative Geography is in fact typical of Piozzi’s text, where it distinguishes her own responses to the disruptive and potentially Gothic contents that the Addisonian perspective confidently dismisses. This is partly visible above, as Piozzi’s description of the Venetian convent’s inaccessible refectory highlights the uneasy quality of being caught in a subject position the masculine tourist bypasses. Elsewhere Piozzi has limited faith in the archival topography projected by more conventional Grand Tourists, writing that “counting churches, pictures, palaces, may be done by those who run from town to town, with no impression made but upon their bones.”¹⁸ Not only is there little acculturation and subjective affirmation to be gained from such an itinerary, Piozzi also critiques the ability of the Grand Tourist’s optic to organise and evaluate its objects; for Piozzi, “description tangles, not communicates.”¹⁹ This scepticism informs Piozzi’s responses to the Gothic materials she encounters. Whereas an Addisonian approach is capable of maintaining a hierarchical organisation that subordinates these, Piozzi’s revisionary perspective has less faith in their suppression.

This is exemplified when Piozzi compares the characteristic foci of Gothic feudalism and enlightened neo-classicism in a manner clearly informed by a contemporary Gothic imagination:

Gothic and Grecian architecture resembles Gothic and Grecian manners ... tyranny and gloomy suspicion are the characteristics of the one, openness and sociability strongly mark the other ... to the gay portico succeeded the sullen drawbridge, and to the lively corridor, a secret passage and a winding staircase.²⁰

However, instead of desubstantiating the Gothic component of this opposition, Piozzi is drawn into a meditation upon its survivability and the scope of its agency:

It is difficult ... to withhold ... respect from those barbarians who could ... change the face of art, almost of nature; who ... left behind them ... a settled system of feudatorial life and aristocratic power, still undestroyed in Europe.²¹

In place of the insubstantial blemish presented in Addison’s strategic recognition, Piozzi identifies the Gothic with a resilient and integral incorporation in the travelled terrain, which its presence fundamentally, rather than transiently, reconfigures. This recognition of the Gothic disrupts the stable Imaginative Geography in a way that may be appropriately described by Homi Bhabha’s theorisation of Hybridity; a process in which “‘denied’ knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority—its rules of recognition.”²² Thus, in Piozzi’s meditation, the Gothic acquires the substance and significance that an Addisonian perspective would associate with its classical opposite. The result is a destabilisation of this perspective’s capacity to organise and appropriate its objects. We can see this in another Gothically inflected meditation, this time in response to the Pompeian ruins:

How very horrible the certainty, that such a scene may be all acted over again tomorrow; and that we, who today are spectators, may become spectacles to travellers of a succeeding century ... mistaking our bones for those of the Neopolitans.²³

Here the crucial polarity of an empowered spectator and appropriated spectacle is caught in a perpetual slippage. This Hybrid disturbance in the topography’s “rules of recognition” promises an ongoing and uncanny repetition, transforming the toured terrain from a locus for the traveller’s acculturating affirmation into a Gothic space that embodies the perpetual possibility of that subjectivity’s collapse.

The revisionary perspective that proceeds from Piozzi’s gendered ambivalence thus situates the Gothic as a significant presence within the Grand Tour’s topography. Ann Radcliffe’s early familiarity with Piozzi’s revisionary travelogue is not unlikely, given her extensive enthusiasm for the genre as revealed in Rictor Norton’s excellent biographical study. Norton includes Piozzi amongst the travel literature that “made an important contribution to Ann Radcliffe’s evocation of the exotic past” throughout her career; though, as this essay aims to argue, such literature

also played a key role in Radcliffe's relocation of the Gothic within a cultural present.²⁴ Accordingly, Piozzi's innovative relocation of the Gothic within the Imaginative Geography of Grand Tourism is quickly followed by the first Gothic novel to directly situate its materials within that same cultural field—and perform their emergence there.

The preface to *A Sicilian Romance* (1790) adapts the Walpolean device of an ancient manuscript, but, whereas Walpole's text is abstracted within the antiquarian space of a British library, Radcliffe embeds hers in the terrain it describes. In this way the contemporary topography of Grand Tourism becomes adjacent to that of the Gothic, whose initial marker is the ruin observed by Radcliffe's traveller.²⁵ The recognition of this ruin, meanwhile, is clearly Piozzean rather than Addisonian: far from being subordinated or dismissed, the "magnificent remains" are "still to be seen", confronting the modern traveller with a resilient and absorbing object. Accordingly, the narrator indulges, rather than delimits, the Gothic potential of this presence: "'Thus,' said I, 'shall the present generation—he who now sinks in misery—and he who now swims in pleasure, alike pass away and be forgotten.'"²⁶ This response echoes Piozzi's Pompeian mediation, as the Gothic becomes an active site, undercutting the traveller's privileged perspective and enlightened particularity.

The abstraction that might be achieved through the manuscript device is thus problematised by its link with the ruin as a direct presence within the terrain. Meanwhile, the aesthetic containment that might operate upon the ruin is progressively undermined by the ability of the manuscript to repopulate and reactivate it. At first Radcliffe's initial description of the scene subjects it to the framing discourse of the Picturesque, carefully drawing in its borders to present an object of aesthetic consumption:

It stands in the centre of a small bay, and upon a gentle acclivity, which, on one side, slopes towards the sea, and on the other rises into an eminence crowned by dark woods.²⁷

In accordance with Picturesque orthodoxies, the ruin is placed within the middle-distance and screened to the side and rear. Such compositional strategies would have been familiar to Radcliffe through the tour-books of Gilpin and others, where they serve to frame and contain Gothic materials: emphasising their subjection to and within the natural landscape which hems in and over-mantles them.²⁸ In this way, as Malcolm Andrews writes, the Picturesque composes the ruin as "an image of Nature's levelling of haughty tyranny ... a potent emblem of liberation from Gothic feudalism."²⁹ The Picturesque thus echoes the attitude of the Grand

Tourist (within whose arena Radcliffe applies it) so that the Gothic is denied substance and significance within the Imaginative Geography of enlightened travel.

Still, in accordance with the Picturesque tendency to stabilise landscape through a de-historicising and de-populating approach, Radcliffe then emphasises the ruin’s “ancient grandeur ... contrasted with ... present solitude.”³⁰ History is only inertly present, as an aesthetic quality of the static scene. This register is soon abandoned, however, as Radcliffe’s Piozzean imagination commences the Gothic site’s reactivation. The traveller’s meditation repopulates the ruin with the ghosts of its history before these give way to the literal presence of a “venerable” friar, whose advent begins to blur the boundary between the site’s Gothic past and touristic present.³¹ It is this friar who then introduces the manuscript history that completes the Gothic’s transition from aesthetic stasis to narrative activity within the contemporary field. The preface thus presents dual registers for the Gothic’s delimitation—the abstraction of the manuscript and the Picturesque aestheticisation of the ruin—but these complicate each other so that whichever is adopted, the other ensures that the Gothic is “still to be seen.” As in Piozzi, the Gothic presence in Radcliffe’s travel terrain possesses a Hybridity, resisting containment through “rules of recognition” that are incommensurate with each other. What finally occurs through the preface is not the Gothic’s subordination, but its ascendancy as the appearance of the manuscript recasts the terrain of contemporary tourism as the field of Gothic narrative (recasting the Addisonian pre-inscription of the landscape as a classical archive). The traveller’s Piozzean imaginative response to the ruin is then completed as the Gothic emerges to overlay the contemporary.

The narrative that ensues famously centres on an instance of the explained supernatural. This device has been critically debated in terms of its potential to indicate either capitulation with or subversion of the rational ideals of an enlightened modernity. Important to both perspectives, however, is the fact that Radcliffe juxtaposes the Gothic with the contemporary in a way that provokes these questions. This is achieved, in part, through the Gothic’s reinsertion in the field of touring travel. Accordingly, the novel’s use of the explained supernatural intriguingly mirrors the implications of its preface. The Gothic’s transition from containment to a transformative presence within the landscape is here repeated as the narrative that emerges from the preface’s ruin bears witness to this same process: the buried mother’s suppressed presence and history themselves emerge from the ruined wing of the Mazzini castle to re-assert their place within the world of the narrative.

However, the initial explanation of the castle's disturbing phenomena actually works to dismiss the Gothic presence. The marquis's deceitful claim that the manifestations are of ghostly origin fittingly desubstantiates their threat to the coherence of the domestic world he presides over. Like an Addisonian traveller, the marquis divests the Gothic of a robust and significant presence. Instead it is cast into a history framed as a closed narrative, according to which, the castle of Mazzini, like Otranto, is haunted by the ghost of a rival: Henry della Campo. This unfortunate (it is claimed) has been murdered in a "chamber of the southern buildings" at the behest of the present marquis's grandfather who, like the ancestor of Walpole's Manfred, has usurped the della Campo family's political power and "consequence in Sicily."³² Located within this already familiar pattern, the Gothic is provided with a closure and abstraction that echoes the manuscript device adapted in Radcliffe's preface. As there, however, the Walpolean model is complicated as the eventual explanation of this supernatural presence actually explodes the Gothic's closure and recasts it as a far more disturbing actuality within the immediate temporal and geographical world of the narrative. Not only does the fact of Louisa Bernini's incarceration negate the abstraction the marquis achieved through his ancestral ghost story, its disturbing potential is further emphasised in the process; as Rictor Norton observes, "this natural explanation surpasses in horror the supernatural terrors it has given rise to."³³ Moreover, this transition does not, in fact, divest the material of its conventional Gothic trappings: Walpole's narrative of usurpation is rendered directly, rather than spectrally, present in the form of the mother whose position has been taken by the villainous Marchesa. In another echo of female travellers such as Piozzi, Radcliffe's explained supernatural defers to enlightenment order at the same time as it re-emphasises the Gothic elements that complicate it.

Radcliffe's narrative thus re-enacts the implications of its preface. The transition from abstraction to immediate presence emphasises the relocation of the Gothic as a resilient component within the contemporary field of touring travel that is effected through a Piozzean optic. In both cases, Radcliffe's Gothic asserts its resilience, remaining as a Hybrid presence, "still to be seen" within the field of enlightened modernity and the Imaginative Geographies it maintained.

Notes

¹ Edward Chaney, *The Evolution of the Grand Tour: Anglo-Italian Cultural Relations since the Renaissance* (London; Portland: Frank Cass Publishers, 1998. xi).

² Joseph Addison, *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy in the Years 1701, 1702, 1703* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1705), “Preface” (no other pagination given).

³ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, [1978], 2003), 58–59.

⁴ Addison, 516.

⁵ Addison, 62.

⁶ Johnson’s *Dictionary* would subsequently offer an appropriate definition of “idle” as “unactive; not employed”, and cite Addison himself in support of this. The quotation Johnson selects (from Addison’s 1708 essay on “The Present State of the War” [of the Spanish Succession]) associates Idleness with transience on a much more dramatic scale: “Supposing, among a multitude embarked in the same vessel, there are several that in the fury of a tempest will rather perish, than work for their preservation; would it not be madness in the rest to stand idle, and rather chuse [sic] to sink together than do more than comes to their share?” The two subjects—the quality of Catholic memorials and Britain’s need to support Marlborough’s campaigns—are very different, but the association between Idleness and persistence or survival in both instances is perhaps interesting. See Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, Vol 1 (London: W. Strachan for J. and P. Knapton; T. and T. Longman; C. Hitch and L. Hawes; A. Millar; and R. and J. Dodsley, 1755), 1039.

⁷ Addison, 303, 301.

⁸ William McCarthy, *Hester Thrale Piozzi: Portrait of a Literary Woman* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 150, 155.

⁹ Ellen Moers, *Literary Women* (London: The Women’s Press, 1978), 128.

¹⁰ McCarthy, 148.

¹¹ McCarthy’s list of Piozzi’s predecessors is not complete—it omits, for example, the anonymous *Journey to the Highlands of Scotland by A Lady* (1777). Like Montagu and Miller (whose “skill” the author modestly yearns for), this text adopts an epistolary form. It also undertakes exactly the kind of demure deferral Piozzi refuses: the author claims her letters were brought to publication by an anonymous “literary gentleman”, who notes the female traveller’s limitations, but finds that some of her observations are “worthy of being made public.” See Anon. *A Journey to the Highlands of Scotland by A Lady* (1777), edited by Barbara Britton Werner (Kansas City: Valancourt Books, 2010), 2, 4.

¹² Hester Lynch Piozzi, *Observations and Reflections Made in the Course of a Journey through France, Italy and Germany*, 2 vols (London: A. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1789), Vol 1, vi.

¹³ Kristi Siegel, “Intersections: Women’s Travel and Theory”, *Gender, Genre, & Identity in Women’s Travel Writing*, ed. Kristi Siegel (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 2.

¹⁴ Piozzi, Vol 1, iv.

¹⁵ Piozzi, Vol 1, 172.

¹⁶ Chloe Chard has demonstrated the risk of such eventualities to women on the Grand Tour, whose transmutation into spectacle may devalue their position as spectators. See Chloe Chard, "Women Who Transmute into Tourist Attractions: Spectator and Spectacle on the Grand Tour", *Romantic Geographies: Discourses of Travel, 1775–1844*, ed. Amanda Gilroy (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

¹⁷ Elizabeth Bohls, *Women Travel Writers and the Language of Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 9–10.

¹⁸ Piozzi, Vol 1, 66–67.

¹⁹ Piozzi, Vol 1, 58.

²⁰ Piozzi, Vol 1, 126.

²¹ Piozzi, Vol 1, 126.

²² Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, [1994], 2007), 162.

²³ Piozzi, Vol 2, 35.

²⁴ Rictor Norton, *Mistress of Udolpho: The Life of Ann Radcliffe* (London: Leicester University Press, 1999), 72–74. Norton also reveals that the young Radcliffe probably met Piozzi at the house of her uncle, Thomas Bentley. For her own part, Piozzi was a reader of Gothic fiction, including the work of Mathew Lewis, William Beckford and Mary Shelley alongside Radcliffe's. She took this literature seriously (*Vathek* "is a mad book, to be sure ... yet there is a sublimity about it") and was deeply engaged by *Frankenstein* in particular (see McCarthy, 66–67). Her comments on Radcliffe's own novels were not always flattering—"The Mysteries of Carlton House surpass those of Udolpho and her novels are about as like [*Macbeth*] as Peppermint Water is to good French Brandy" (see McCarthy, 65; Norton, 102). Such comments are not unmixed with respect, however. Radcliffe remains the best practitioner of Gothic in Piozzi's view and the comparison of Montoni with the Prince Regent cuts both ways, perhaps saying as much about the contemporary relevance of Gothic materials as it does about their abstraction.

²⁵ Sicily did not form part of the typical tour itinerary for most tourists. This was due both to the tour's typical culmination farther north at Rome, and the difficulty of making an additional sea journey to the island. Visitors increased during the century, however, and a number of Sicilian travelogues were published in the 1770s. See Jeremy Black, *The British Abroad: The Grand Tour in the Eighteenth Century* (Stroud: Sutton, [1992], 2004), 48–50.

²⁶ Ann Radcliffe, *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), ed. Alison Milbank (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 1.

²⁷ *Sicilian Romance*, 1.

²⁸ See, for example, William Gilpin's aesthetic response to the ruins of Tintern Abbey in his *Observations on the River Wye*. Here "nature has now made [the ruin] her own", as Ivy "has taken possession of many parts of the wall": the Gothic

site is besieged by an overgrowth that reads as overthrow. William Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye* (London: R. Blamire, 1782), 33.

²⁹ Malcolm Andrews, *In Search of the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760–1800* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 46. Michael Charlesworth makes a similar point when he notes that the Picturesquely viewed Gothic ruin is, politically speaking, “a cause for delight and rejoicing” on the part of a modern, enlightened (and Protestant and Hanoverian) audience. See Michael Charlesworth, “The Ruined Abbey: Picturesque and Gothic Values” in *The Politics of the Picturesque*, eds. Stephen Copley and Peter Garside (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 69.

³⁰ *Sicilian Romance*, 1.

³¹ *Sicilian Romance*, 1.

³² *Sicilian Romance*, 1.

³³ Norton, 59.

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