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Female Virtue In Gothic Literature 1780-1810

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FEMALE VIRTUE IN GOTHIC LITERATURE 1780-1810



'The Nightmare', Henry Fuseli (1781)

22,713 words excluding references, appendices and bibliography

PHILIPPA CATNACH

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**RESEARCH
DEGREES
WITH
PLYMOUTH
UNIVERSITY**

FEMALE VIRTUE IN GOTHIC LITERATURE 1780-1810

by

PHILIPPA CATNACH

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Abstract

Philippa Catnach

FEMALE VIRTUE IN GOTHIC LITERATURE 1780-1810

My thesis analyses presentations of the concept of female virtue in Gothic literature between 1780 and 1810 particularly by drawing on literary texts supplemented by contemporary non-literary sources in order to set out the background and definitions of my work. The word 'virtue' has come to mean 'goodness' or 'morality' but looking at eighteenth-century usage it has often been gendered female and nearly always had a sexual quality: female morality was irrevocably intertwined with a sexual code of conduct. Daughters (perhaps most famously in the mid eighteenth-century Pamela in Richardson's popular 1740 novel of the same name) were reminded that their most important attribute was intact virginity and wives were constantly retold that their worth relied upon their chastity and therefore their ability to bear legitimate children. While these ideologies were enduring throughout the entirety of the long eighteenth century, they could almost be considered requisite to the myriad of Gothic works published particularly during the disorder of the French Revolution. Due to the political and social uncertainty of the times the Gothic novelists felt called upon to either seek to protect patriarchal values or use the upheaval to abandon traditionally restraining concepts of female virtue. My first chapter ('Virtue Explored: The Concept of Virtue in Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian*') introduces how the idea of virtue was defined and propagated in the eighteenth century – particularly by looking at contemporary conduct books – and whether or not Radcliffe embraces or rejects these conservative ideals of female sexual virtue. I examine Radcliffe's development of female virtue away from a wholly sexual construct towards a more progressive and nuanced model. My second chapter ('Virtue Transgressed: Sexual Transgression in Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*') builds on the first by taking the concepts of virtue I looked at with Radcliffe and exploring how the frequent Gothic theme of rape or sexual transgression plays into ideas of female virtue. My research seeks to highlight that Lewis uses the sexual transgression of his female characters (with the rape of Antonia and the pre-marital sexual relationship between Agnes and Raymond) to shock the reader with unabashed portrayals of controversial material but does predominantly define female virtue within traditional boundaries. The final chapter of my thesis ('Virtue Abandoned: Desire in the Fiction of Mary Wollstonecraft and Charlotte Dacre') looks at revolutionary fiction by two controversial female writers and how they present a breaking away from traditional sexual purity concepts. By examining a sample cross-section of Gothic literature between 1780 and 1810 I aim to answer how far the works were transgressive of traditional values and sexual politics or whether they were, in actuality, complicit in further promulgating conservative, patriarchal female virtue concepts. I argue that although to a modern reader the Gothic novels here researched may not seem overtly 'feminist', they are – in their re-modelling of female virtue, their unconventionally free but scandalous representations of female sexual transgression, and their abandonment of conformist female sexual codes – innovative and often defy the tide of conservative literature largely circulated at the time.

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Introduction

What we now term 'The Age of Enlightenment' – roughly spanning from the late seventeenth to early nineteenth centuries – was heavily invested in female sexual politics, and could as easily be termed 'The Age of Virtue'.¹ Middle-class women were encouraged to read improving books and novelists endeavoured to load their fiction with ideals of female virtue. The definition of 'virtue', and in particular the eighteenth-century definition, is elusive and yet while studying concepts of gender in the eighteenth century it is a word which crops up time and time again, predominantly gendered female and nearly always sexual.² Whereas masculine virtue could refer to a number of favourable attributes, the more commonly discussed female virtue was primarily a domestic quality and like the word 'honour' often connected with notions of chastity or female sexual purity. Pocock has noted that a precedent for virtue to also be seen in civic terms was beginning to develop ('the ideal of the citizen [was] virtuous in his devotion to the public good and his engagement in relations of equality and ruling-and-being-ruled'³). Drawing on Pocock and Kramnick, Dana Harrington explains that the eighteenth-century ideal for virtue was not only gendered, but also played into an ideology of civic duties:

The eighteenth century inherited from its classical and humanist predecessors a concept of virtue defined in terms of public service to the state or *polis*. This "civic" concept of virtue subordinated private or personal interests to the public good and assumed that ethical excellence was attained

¹ See the books of Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*; Vivienne Jones, *Constructions of Femininity*; Harriet Guest, *Small Change*; and E. J. Clery, *The Feminization Debate*.

² For example, see my discussion of Richardson's use of the word in my first chapter and Sade's exploration of the word in his novel *Justine*.

³ J. G. A. Pocock, 'Virtues, Rights, and Manners: A Model for Historians of Political Thought', *Political Theory*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (Sage Publications, August 1981), pp. 353-368 (p.365)

through political action in the public realm (Pocock, *Civic Humanism* 85-87, Kramnick, 630).⁴

Eighteenth-century virtue, then, is not a private quality but a public service; men were educated to a masculine virtue that would serve them in the public sphere as well as protect national interests and women were encouraged to a domestic virtue defensive of family values. Although virtue is a public service or duty, the separate spheres ideology (a dominant retrospective theory of eighteenth-century gender concepts) largely confined that female duty to the private sphere. Of this ideology Barbara Caine states:

The emphasis on sexual difference which became so marked in the eighteenth century was closely connected with the equally marked emphasis on the contrast between public and private spheres: the expanding masculine public sphere of political, civic, and intellectual life, and of industry and commerce, formed a counterpoint to the feminine private sphere, which centred on family life and on the care and early education of children.⁵

Harrington further clarifies that feminine virtue, as a domestic but ultimately civic quality, was used to maintain a healthy domestic economy and smooth family life; I would extend this to include sexual virtue – a quality which housekeeping and conduct books placed in high, if not top, priority.

This sexually-centered feminine virtue was developed throughout the eighteenth century to form a female sexual purity agenda; Karen Harvey notes that the ‘key moment was the eighteenth century, when the desiring, appetitive early-modern woman was

⁴ Dana Harrington, ‘Gender, Commerce, and the Transformation of Virtue in Eighteenth-Century Britain’, *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* (Routledge, The Writing Program, Syracuse University, Published Online, June 2009), p.34

⁵ Barbara Caine, ‘Women’, in *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age: British Culture, 1776-1832*, ed. by Iain McCalman (Oxford: Oxford University Publishing, 2001), pp.42-51 (p.43).

replaced by her prudish, passive and constrained nineteenth-century successor.⁶ The concept of female virtue being tied TO sexual purity was by no means a new concept to the eighteenth century; in the seventeenth century (originally published in 1673 but here re-printed in an eighteenth-century edition) Milton writes on the subject:

I mean that too, but yet a hidden strength,
Which if Heav'n gave it, may be term'd her own:
'Tis chastity, my Brother, chastity:
She that has that is clad in complete steel,
And like a quiver'd nymph with arrows keen
May trace huge forests, and unharbour'd heaths,
Infamous hills, and sandy perilous wilds,
Where through the sacred rays of chastity,
No savage fierce bandite, or mountaneer
Will dare to foil her virgin purity
[...]
No goblin, or swart fairy of the mine,
Hath hurtful pow'r o'er true virginity.
[...]

[...] but when lust,
By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and foul talk,
But most by lewd and lavish act of sin,
Lets in defilement to the inward parts,
'The soul grows clotted by contagion,
Imbodies, and imbrutes, till she quite lose
The divine property of her first being.⁷

This extract highlights chastity not only as a female responsibility but also as a guard to the soul. Milton states that chastity is 'clad in complete steel' and that no evil force has 'pow'r o'er true virginity,' suggesting that no truly virtuous woman can be overcome. Furthermore, he proposes that lost chastity is not just a blemish to character but a 'contagion' to the 'divine' and 'sacred' nature of the female soul, irrefutably linking female virtue to sexual

⁶ Karen Harvey, *Reading Sex in the Eighteenth Century: Bodies and Gender in English Erotic Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.4

⁷ John Milton, 'Poems &c Upon Several Occasions', in *Paradise Regain'd [and other poems]* (London: Thomas Street, 1751), pp.197-8

purity. Male writers did not have sole dominion of this moralising field of virtue. In the early 1700s Lady Frances Norton (an aristocrat and religious poet) published a collection of moral essays which echoed this common view: '[t]hus Chastity is the Nourisher of Virtue, and the Gardiner of the Temple of Sanctity.'⁸ In a similar vein, Samuel Johnson compiled a dictionary in the eighteenth century based on earlier uses of words and the section on virginity and virtue is particularly illuminating:

VIRGIN. f. [*virgo, Latin.*]

1. A maid; a woman unacquainted with men - Gertsis
2. A woman not a mother - Milton
3. Any thing untouched or unmingled - Derbam

[...]

VIRGIN. a. Befitting a virgin; suitable to a virgin; maidenly - Cowley

TO VIRGIN. v.n. [*a cant word.*] To play the virgin - Shakespeare

VIRGINAL. a. [*from virgin.*] Maiden; maidenly; pertaining to a virgin

[...]

VIRGINITY f. [*virginitas, Latin*] Maidenhead; unacquaintance with man - Taylor

[...]

VIRTUE. f. [*virtus, Latin*]

1. Moral goodness - Pope
2. A particular moral excellence - Addison

[...]

5. Efficacy; power - Atterbury

[....]

Virtuous a. [*from virtue*]

1. Morally good - Shakespeare
2. Chaste – Shakespeare.⁹

Here we can see that writers before and during the eighteenth century were beginning to merge virtue with female chastity; this list suggests Shakespeare, for example, uses 'virtuous' synonymously with 'chaste' and virginity is set up unanimously as the feminine

⁸ Frances Norton, *The Applause of Virtue: in Four Parts. Book I. Consisting of Several Divine and Moral Essays Towards The Obtaining of True Virtue* (Printed for John Graves, 1705), p.98.

⁹ Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 13th edn (London: Printed for James Duncan & Son, 1792), pp.940-1

quality of being 'unacquainted with men'. Previous to the eighteenth century it seems it was vaguely accepted that virtue might mean something different for men and women. However, arguably it wasn't until the eighteenth century that a full female sexual purity agenda began to form.

The female sexual purity agenda was particularly cemented with the emergent popularity of conduct manuals from the beginning of the eighteenth century. Many writers, such as Hester Chapone and Thomas Gisborne contributed to conduct literature, but possibly the most notable author of such books was James Fordyce who penned the oft-reprinted *Sermons to Young Women* in 1765 and *The Character and Conduct of the Female Sex* (1776).¹⁰ These works laid out the expected domestic duties of women but were particularly clear in the importance of chastity, and that chastity was a gendered construct which irrevocably involved the idea of 'virtue'. Fordyce shows the gendered nature of virtue when he states '[t]he men were sincere, magnanimous, and noble; the women were patterns of chastity, dignity, and affection'¹¹ – clearly the two sexes were asked to have different aims and feminine virtue was distinctly chaste. Again, Harrington notes:

By positioning women as the moralizing agents of society, middle-class intellectuals such as Fordyce were able to provide an ethical grounding to keep in check the unbridled pursuit of the selfish passions with which trade and commerce were linked. Rather than posing a threat to civic virtue (as aristocratic women were often represented as doing), middle-class women and the domestic sphere were depicted as essential to maintaining the "calm," "disinterested" passions thought to be essential to a healthy public

¹⁰ Fordyce was an extremely popular conduct book writer and a search for 'James Fordyce' on Eighteenth-Century Collections Online has 78 hits as of 05/06/2015. Search for 'Sermons to Young Women' by James Fordyce on ECCO has 44 hits by various publishers, and 5 editions with publisher Millar and T. Cadell alone as of 05/06/2015. Just between 1785 and 1800 ECCO shows 'Sermons to Young Women' to have been reprinted 5 times (1787, 1793, 1793-4, 1796, 1800).

¹¹ James Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women: in Two Volumes*, Vol 1, 6th edn (Dublin: Printed for James Williams, in Skinner-Row, 1767), p.107

life in an increasingly commercial society. [...] The growing sense that middle-class women were crucial to maintaining the ethical equilibrium that allowed their male counterparts to participate in a commercial society was reinforced by essentialist arguments insisting on the separation of public and private spheres along gendered lines.¹²

E. J. Clery echoes this view when she asserts, 'the perception [was] that the status of women in society was rising and that women were gaining an increasing influence over men and altering the manners and morals of the nation'.¹³ The theory that in the eighteenth century women and female virtue were seen as important, domestic, "moralising" agents is a strong one: the full title of Fordyce's book gives hint to this (*The Character and Conduct of the Female Sex, and the Advantages to be Derived by Young Men from the Society of Virtuous Women*) and he expresses opinions which follow this rhetoric when he discusses 'the benefit to be derived by Young Men from the society of Virtuous Women'.¹⁴ These conduct books persistently linked female virtue to sexual virtue and arguably laid the foundation for the rest of the eighteenth century for a concept of virtue that was loaded, gendered, and ultimately politicised.¹⁵

Popular writer of the first half of the eighteenth century Samuel Richardson re-worked these prevalent and pervasive conduct manuals into what could arguably be termed conduct fiction; his hugely successful 1740 novel *Pamela* paved the way for portraying ideals of female virtue throughout the entirety of the eighteenth century. Richardson's contribution to eighteenth-century female virtue ideals is significant in that not only were

¹² Harrington, p.42

¹³ E.J. Clery, *The Feminization Debate in Eighteenth-Century England: Literature, Commerce and Luxury*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p.1.

¹⁴ Fordyce, James, *The Character and Conduct of the Female Sex, and the Advantages to be Derived by Young Men from the Society of Virtuous Women*, 2nd edn (Printed for T. Cadell, 1776), p.2

¹⁵ See conduct book Anon., *The Whole Duty of Woman*, 9th edn (Newburyport: Printed by Blunt and Robinson, 1793). This manual sets out the expected duties of women at various stages in their lives with chapters such as 'Reputation', 'Chastity' and 'Virginity'.

his novels very successful but they were also highly influential and spawned many imitations (as well as more satirical pieces such as Fielding's *Shamela* and Haywood's *Anti-Pamela*).¹⁶ The protagonist of *Pamela* has a notion of virtue that is utterly dependent on her virginity, and though it is stable in this sense, what it means for a woman to be truly 'virtuous' is constantly negotiated in this novel. In my own work I would like to explore how this mid-eighteenth-century Richardsonian concept of virtue (echoed by conduct books of the period) is used or subverted by the Gothic novels of the 1790s, particularly by comparing Lewis's and Radcliffe's respective definitions of virtue and in what ways the notion had evolved from that of the earlier part of the century.

Through examining eighteenth-century conduct literature (be it manuals or novels such as Richardson's) we not only see the *effects* of a female sexual purity agenda that was rapidly gathering pace throughout the century (for example an increasing desire to tie ideas of virtue with chastity) but also the *causes* of this phenomenon. In a patriarchal mercantile society the need to ensure property is passed through a legitimate male lineage is paramount and the fear of a corruption of this status quo can be felt in many works before, during and after the eighteenth century. In a rebuttal of Mandeville's famous 1724 piece 'A Modest Defence of Publick Stews' an anonymous writer asserts:

That tho' Fornication is not so heinous a Crime as Adultery, in Respect of some Consequences attending Adultery; yet they both proceed from a vitiated, corrupt Mind; directly violate the Moral and Revealed Law; and naturally tend to Ruin and Confusion.¹⁷

¹⁶ The ideals I discuss here are largely those of the middle classes; even among the literate working classes books were expensive commodities and therefore the majority of the audience of *Pamela*, it can be assumed, would have been middle class.

¹⁷ Anon., *A Modest Defence of Chastity* (Northampton: Printed and Sold by W. Dicey, 1726), pp.41-2

The writer's anxieties may appear to be moral ones on first glance, however it is the 'consequences' (most likely to mean bastardry) and 'ruin and confusion' of the patriarchal order that are the focus of this extract. What was already an established rhetoric by the beginning of the eighteenth century became an absolute imperative in the chaos of the 1790s, Sir Francis D'Ivernois wrote:

The French revolution has thrown into confusion the laws regarding individual families, no less than that of the great family of the state. Nor is this all. To complete their work, they have, as much as in them lay, sapped paternal authority, [...] by depriving the[m] of the double power of rewarding in their wills the filial care and affection of their children, or punishing a bad son with disinheritance*; by permitting illegitimate children to share the inheritance with the legitimate and by continually repeating that even the latter do not belong to their parents.

*The decree of the 7th March 1793 abolished the power of parents to distribute their property to their heirs in a direct line, and gave to all the children an equal right of inheritance in their effects. A subsequent decree gave parents a power to dispose of one tenth of their fortune. But another gave illegitimate children a right, in certain cases, to claim a third part of the inheritance.¹⁸

Though this was a French decree, with the execution of Louis XVI in January 1793 followed by these drastic changes to the inheritance laws of France, the threat to the institutions of monarchy and patrilinear primogeniture were also felt in neighbouring Britain; it became vital for conservative thinkers to protect patrilinear legitimacy by controlling female sexual transgression, thus the female sexual purity agenda was heightened.¹⁹ At the same time, Gothicism rapidly gained in popularity and by the end of the century up to forty percent of

¹⁸ Sir Francis D'Ivernois, *Historical and Political Survey of the Losses Sustained by the French Nation [...] In Consequence of the Revolution and the Present War* (London: Printed for J. Wright, 1799), pp.29-30

¹⁹ For more on the connections between Britain / England and Revolutionary France see Clive Emsley, 'Repression, 'Terror' and the Rule of Law in England during the Decade of the French Revolution', *The English Historical Review*, Vol 100, No 39 (Oxford University Press, Oct, 1985), 801-825; Richard Whatmore, 'Treason and despotism: The impact of the French revolution upon Britain', *History of European Ideas*, Vol. 34, No.4 (2008), 583-586

the novels produced could be classed as “Gothic”.²⁰ Paulson summarises these correlations; ‘[t]he Gothic did in fact serve as a metaphor with which some contemporaries in England tried to come to terms with what was happening across the Channel in the 1790s.’²¹ In light of the growing unease during the trouble in France many Gothic works responded to this public interest, reflecting on the violence and uncertainty of the Revolution, and ‘[b]y the time *The Mysteries of Udolpho* appeared (1794), the castle, prison, tyrant, and sensitive young girl could no longer be presented naively; they had all been sophisticated by the events in France.’²² Moreover, after Britain’s own overthrow of the last Catholic monarch in the Glorious Revolution of 1688, France’s Catholicism presented a further source of condemnation; ‘[w]hile Gothic narrative pretends to describe Catholic deviance and horror on the Continent, it ultimately and fundamentally exposes England itself, reflecting and refracting eighteenth- and nineteenth-century concerns about the self through the lens of alterity.’²³ Not only did these Gothic novels describe themes presented by the French Revolution, as they were often set in far off (Catholic) lands and in times long past, there was a new found freedom of expression through the narrative distancing of “them” and “us”. As with many other types of novel the position on legitimacy, transgression and virtue was not unanimous: a conservative writer could staunchly defend traditional ideals and promote the female sexual purity agenda, whereas a progressive writer could offer presentations of liberal female desire and shake off the shackles of conservative female virtue.

²⁰ See Jerrold Hogle, ed. *Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.42

²¹ Ronald Paulson, 'Gothic Fiction and the French Revolution', *ELH*, Vol. 48, No 3 (Autumn, 1981), 532-554, p.534

²² Paulson, p.537

²³ Patrick R. O'Malley, *Catholicism, Sexual Deviance and Victorian Gothic Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.32

Where many Gothic novelists of the eighteenth century retained a feminine virtue that was inextricably bound to female sexual purity, popular contemporary writer Ann Radcliffe seems to take a more holistic look at the construct. In her novel, *The Italian*, Radcliffe comprehensively explores female virtue through her heroine Ellena who, although a modest virgin, does not possess a virtue that relies exclusively on virginity. However while some critics view Ellena as an independent – even feminist – character, Radcliffe’s feminine virtue is largely confined to traditional and conservative eighteenth-century gender constructs.²⁴ Radcliffe’s opposite and adversary within the Gothic genre, Matthew Lewis, penned the popular (but scandalous) 1796 novel *The Monk* which also examines female virtue. With Lewis’s character Antonia we find an epitome of both the Gothic trope virtuous heroine and a champion of the values of conduct literature; her virtue, much like her literary predecessors’ (for example Pamela of Richardson’s novel) is almost dependent on her virginity, and debatably *is* her sexual purity. With her rape she is robbed of her honour: the sexual transgression forcibly performed on her body and her subsequent death highlights the symbiotic nature of Lewis’s (and many of his contemporaries’) notion of virtue and chastity. Although many Gothic novels of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries present a traditionally virginal heroine, radical writers Mary Wollstonecraft and Charlotte Dacre abandon conservative portrayals of virtue and explore active female desire.²⁵ This lack of adherence to the traditionalist norms would perhaps have been even more controversial

²⁴ See Michasiw, ‘Ann Radcliffe and the Terrors of Power’ and Delucia ‘From the female gothic to a feminist theory of history’

²⁵ Although Lewis does somewhat display active female desire in the case of Agnes she is more a victim of circumstance (Raymond asks Lorenzo, and the audience, to ‘consider [their] circumstances’). She is young, in love, and eventually hoping to marry Raymond, her sexual transgression is more a small false step in the normalised order, whereas Wollstonecraft and Dacre’s characters (although Wollstonecraft’s do show a little philosophising and circumspection) more actively pursue their sexual desires.

than Lewis's depiction of male lust, graphic violence and rape as while these images can disrupt the patriarchal legitimacy institute, they were not as dreaded as rampant or uncontrolled female sexuality. The liberty of Gothicism in its ability to escape some of the constraints of other genres (as it was considered less realistic) can emerge in divergent forms – it can revel in violent or extreme imagery that would not normally be considered proper but ultimately retain a safe, conservative message, or it could push at all the expected boundaries and transgress ideals of female virtue.

I will be looking at emerging eighteenth-century ideals of virtue against a backdrop of 1790's Gothicism through a feminist lens by unpacking what a selection Gothic novels from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries reveal about perceptions of female virtue. As Tyson asserts, 'feminist criticism examines the ways in which literature (and other cultural productions) reinforces or undermines the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women.'²⁶ I am not only looking to examine the links between ideas of female virtue, sexuality and sexual transgression but the wider consequences of these themes for women and whether or not patriarchal dominance is largely upheld or destabilized in the literary works in question. Furthermore, I hope to expose how my chosen Gothic novels engage with the female sexual purity agenda and whether they remain loyal to – or break away from – the patriarchal construct of a socially "functional" female virtue.

²⁶ Louis Tyson, *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*, 2nd edn, (New York: Routledge, 2006), p.83

Chapter One, Virtue Explored:

The Concept of 'Virtue' in Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian*

'Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies.'
(King James Version Bible, Proverbs 31:10)

Ann Radcliffe is arguably the most influential Gothic writer of the eighteenth century, if not of all English literary history.²⁷ Radcliffe's work has been subject to scrutiny through most modern critical theories and, as Ellen Moers points out, 'the Gothic fantasies of Mrs. Radcliffe are a locus of heroism which, ever since, women have turned to feminist purposes.'²⁸ Many critics now view the contexts of Radcliffe's writing through gendered perspectives and have tended to explain the Gothic of the 1790s novels along gendered lines; however, although much critical focus has been placed on male and female Gothic, and other gendered theories of the eighteenth century such as separate sphere ideology, few have noted the trend in relation to the concept of virtue in the era.²⁹ For a word that is used so much both in Gothic novels as well as other writings of the period, and often in a gendered way, a dominant 'male and female virtue' theory has not been much explored. Moreover, not only is the theory of eighteenth-century gendered virtue relatively untapped

²⁷ See Ellen Moers, *Literary Women* (London: The Women's Press Limited, 1986), p.125; Sue Chaplin, *Gothic Literature: Texts, Contexts, Connections* (London: York Press, 2011), p.15.

²⁸ Ellen Moers, *Literary Women* (London: The Women's Press Limited, 1986), p.126. For example for feminist theory see Jo Ellen DeLucia, 'From the Female Gothic to a Feminist Theory of History: Ann Radcliffe and the Scottish Enlightenment', *The Eighteenth Century*, Vol 50, No. 1 (University of Pennsylvania Press, Spring 2009), 101-115; for nationalism see Cannon Schmitt, 'Techniques of Terror, Technologies of Nationality: Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian*', *ELH*, Vol 61, No.4 (John Hopkins University Press, Winter 1994), 853-876; and a review of queer theory see Rictor Norton, 'Queer Gothic', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, Vol 32, No.1 (Duke University Press, Winter 2008), 96-8.

²⁹ For more information on male and female / horror and terror Gothic see Yael Shapira, 'Where the Bodies are Hidden: Ann Radcliffe's "Delicate" Gothic', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, Vol 18, No 4, (University of Toronto Press, 2006) 453-476 (p.463). See also E.J. Clery, *Women's Gothic: From Clara Reeve to Mary Shelley* 2nd edn. (Horndon: Northcote House Publishers, 2004), p.9, and Ann Radcliffe, 'On The Supernatural in Poetry', text taken from *New Monthly Magazine*, Vol 16, No 1 (1826), 145-152
<http://www.litgothic.com/Texts/radcliffe_sup.pdf> For 'Separate Sphere Ideology' See Barbara Caine, 'Women', in *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age: British Culture, 1776-1832*, ed. by Iain McCalman (Oxford: Oxford University Publishing, 2001), pp.42-51 (p.43).

when compared to the dominant and pervasive critical perspectives of separate sphere ideology and gendered Gothic, but the connection between gendered virtue and (gendered) Gothic has perhaps not received the critical attention it merits. In order to examine gendered concepts of virtue in Radcliffe's novels, as well as 1790s Gothic fiction as a whole, through a feminist perspective it is important to determine whether or not the ideas of feminine virtue portrayed largely conform to patriarchal ideals or whether they undermine them. While many critics have claimed that Radcliffe and her heroines are feminist, or at least contain feminist tendencies, her work cannot be extrapolated that easily. Instead of a simplistic feminist reading, in her novel *The Italian* we can see a progressivism in Radcliffe's complex development of traditionally conservative eighteenth-century depictions of female virtue played through a heroine who, while fulfilling certain patriarchal ideals, is advancing a more holistic portrayal of what it meant for a woman to be 'virtuous'.

In the eighteenth century, virtue, and in particular female sexual virtue, was a prevalent theme. The virgin heroine is a stock character of 1790s Gothic literature and the virtue her authors are so keen to describe of her is, if not synonymous with, very closely tied to her embodied virginity. In Lewis's novel, *The Monk*, Antonia's central (and debatably *only*) characteristic is her sexual purity – instead the focus of character development is on Ambrosio's desiring exactly that quality, and his ultimate possession of it.³⁰ With Sade's novel *Justine*, the title character is almost a carbon copy of Antonia: her value, her desirability, and her core beliefs all lie in her sexual virtue. However, Sade's work is almost

³⁰ See Matthew Lewis, *The Monk* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp.382-387. The focus of the narrative, particularly at this point, is largely if not exclusively on Ambrosio's desire for Antonia's virgin body. The narrative voice in this scene of the novel is Ambrosio's and he makes strong Faustian remarks such as '[n]either heaven or earth shall save you from my embraces' (p.382). After the rape again the focus rests on Ambrosio's ruin / downfall from sin rather than Antonia's response as the victim. My second chapter also focuses on this.

satirical in his challenge of this enduring concept and the reader is invited to question the true meaning of virtue when one of the novel's many sexually deviant villains asks:

“is it not a ridiculous extravagance to attach so much value, as you do, to the most pointless of things? How can a girl be so simple as to believe that virtue can depend on the degree of width of one part of her body?”³¹

Yet, even while Sade is questioning the blurring of virginity and virtue he never moves far from the remit of virtue as a primarily sexual construct and instead uses a dichotomous system of physical virtue (or virginity) and moral virtue (or modesty/interior purity): ‘[t]hat girl’s physical and moral virtue is still intact, whereas this one only remains virtuous in her sentiments’ (Sade, p.230). Sade does not detach from female virtue as a sexual construct, instead he divides that concept into the physical and moral: for Sade, female virtue is still sexual morality. Similarly, conduct books throughout the long eighteenth century rarely distinguish female virtue from a long-standing sexual purity code; while they do often elaborate on the simplistic ‘virtue as virginity’ concept they stray only into the wider concerns of female sexual conduct. The ninth edition of *The Whole Duty of Woman* printed in 1793 describes the importance of female ‘reputation’:

Brighter than polished silver, more valuable than Peruvian ore, more precious than the pearl in the sea, than the diamond in the bowels of the earth, or all the shining treasures of the mines of Potosi, is reputation to a woman.³²

Here, like many conduct manuals and novels, the ‘reputation’ of a woman is compared to a desirable, and importantly valuable, treasure. For this writer mere virginity does not equate to virtue, a virtuous woman must also embody chaste values – she must be the entire package.

³¹ Marquis de Sade, *Justine, or the Misfortunes of Virtue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p.33. All other references are from this edition and presented in the body of the text.

³² Anon., *The Whole Duty of Woman*, 9th edn (Newburyport: Printed by Blunt and Robinson, 1793), p.17

By contrast, Radcliffe's use of female virtue is more holistic than that of her contemporaries Lewis and Sade; her heroine Ellena may be of impeccable, irreproachable sexual conduct and the model of eighteenth-century female politeness and manners, but her characteristics are more varied. Cannon Schmitt points out, '[i]nsofar as Ellena can be said to develop at all (like most heroines in early Gothics, her virtue is as static as it is complete), she moves through the novel in the direction of doubt: doubt of others and of self.'³³ Although her virtue is complete it is not entirely static; Ellena is constantly negotiating and renegotiating her view of the world around her as well as her own interiority. In this sense her character can be said to have more depth than the typical archetypal Gothic heroine (for example Antonia of *The Monk* or Isabella of *The Castle of Otranto*) and she is not solely a singular sexual trope. One particular example of her careful – almost painful – analysis of her own virtue is in her initial delay of her nuptials to Vivaldi:

Her very virtues, now that they were carried to excess, seemed to her to border upon vices; her sense of dignity, appeared to be narrow pride; her delicacy weakness; her moderated affection cold ingratitude; and her circumspection, little less than prudence degenerated into meanness.³⁴

Of course, from the reader's perspective, this handwringing simply further highlights Ellena's complete perfection – not only is she virtuous, but she is also acutely self-aware. Furthermore, the virtues listed while not sexual in themselves, serve to protect her sexual virtue: her 'moderated affection' and 'circumspection' defend her against a premature sexual attachment that would threaten her honour. While probably revealing as much about general contemporary ideals as Radcliffe's novel, a surviving unofficial chapbook version of

³³ Cannon Schmitt, 'Techniques of Terror, Technologies of Nationality: Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian*', *ELH*, Vol 61, No. 4 (Johns Hopkins University Press, Winter 1994), 853-876 (p.867)

³⁴ Ann Radcliffe, *The Italian* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 2011), p.205. All other references are from this edition and presented in the body of the text.

The Italian, titled *The Midnight Assassin*, was published in 1814 and, because of the short nature of the genre, had to convey the heroine's character within a few choice words. The qualities the author chose to highlight are illuminating: '[o]f all the modest, and enchanting females [...] Amanda Lusigni was the most attracting.'³⁵ & Appendix A Nonetheless, even the fact that she is internalising her own virtue through Radcliffe's judicious use of Ellena's thought processes is important – the narrator or another character is not *telling* us she is virtuous (the reader is not even fully free to make that judgment based on the plot events) but Ellena is allowed to decide her own character and conduct. Radcliffe presents a heroine who retains an element of autonomy in her own developing sense of virtue: through broadening the borders of female virtue we begin to see a heroine who is not the singular dimension virgin plot pawn of many late eighteenth-century Gothic stories. Although other authors of the style and period were writing heroines who had somewhat developed outside of their chastity – Eliza Parsons for example arguably created her heroine of *The Castle of Wolfenbach* (Matilda) as a model of a multitude of genteel virtues – sexual purity concepts are often at the forefront of imaginations of virtuous heroines. Parsons even in her creation of a fuller mode of female virtue is explicit in ensuring Matilda's foremost virtue is a sexual one:

For although I had never received any particular lessons on delicacy or modesty, yet there is that innate virtuous principle within us, that shrinks involuntarily from any thing tending to violate that sense of decency we are all, I believe, born with.³⁶

Radcliffe goes further in her detachment of virtue from sexual purity – although Ellena must be modest and chaste to qualify as a Radcliffian heroine, her virtue is much more removed

³⁵ Anon., *The Midnight Assassin; or, Confession of the Monk Rinaldi* (London: Printed and Sold by Dean and Munday, 1814), p.7

³⁶ Eliza Parsons, *The Castle of Wolfenbach, A German Story*, ed. by Diane Long Hoeveler (Kansas City: Valancourt Books, 2007), p.13

from her sexual behaviour than many contemporary heroines. Ellena may fit all the criteria of a conduct book – modestly dressed (veiled), sexually pure, doting towards her family and a talented seamstress – but she extends beyond this list of standards and becomes a thinking, feeling, aware version of virtue that is a living ideal rather than an inert paradigm. Fundamentally, Radcliffe has breathed life into the portrait of female virtue.

Not only is Ellena self-governing in the development of her virtue, and that virtue is more than a simple sexual characteristic, but at times Radcliffe uses her to subvert traditional gender dynamics. An example of this destabilisation of gender constructs can be found in Ellena’s calm and collected nature opposing Vivaldi’s rash behaviour and tendencies to superstition. Traditionally, superstition and enjoyment of fairy tales and fables was always supposed to be a feminine attribute practiced by women, servants and children: ‘little Tricks of Female Superstition [...] often [...] handed down, by the Tradition of credulous Nurses and old Women.’³⁷ However, it is quickly made clear in Radcliffe’s novel that Vivaldi is ‘not altogether indisposed to attribute to a supernatural cause the extraordinary occurrences’ (*The Italian*, p.81).³⁸ Conversely, at several points in the novel Ellena is described to have ‘strength of mind’ (*The Italian*, p.97) and ‘prepare[s] her mind to meet [her circumstances] with fortitude’ (*The Italian*, p.96). Ellena’s virtue of a collected, sensible disposition is a traditionally masculine one, and she is unashamedly composed throughout the majority of the novel; Vivaldi, on the other hand, despite all his chivalry and courage often requires calming – even from his servant Paulo – and has assumed a

³⁷ Anon., *The History of the Life and Adventures of Mr. Duncan Campbell*, 2nd edn (London: Printed for E.Curl, 1720), p.6

³⁸ For a more in-depth view of Vivaldi’s superstition see chapter 7 of *The Italian*.

traditionally feminine fault. Radcliffe's sense of virtue, then, has broken out of traditional gender constraints and she begins to construct a female virtue that is composed out of both traditionally feminine and masculine traits – essentially selecting her idea of what it means to be virtuous.

Similarly, the concept of 'The Sublime' in the eighteenth century was often reserved for men – women and the lower classes were excluded as not truly capable of understanding sublimity.³⁹ Women were sometimes offered the lower notion of sensibility as a consolation prize but even then many considered the true and pure feelings of sensibility a masculine quality, with femininity relegated to base counter-sensibility or a foolish misunderstanding of sensibility as excessive emotion. Clery asserts 'Radcliffe appears to accept the established model of tragic drama which includes its contrasting features of 'masculine' sublimity and 'feminine' sensibility.'⁴⁰ However, there are many points in *The Italian* which show Ellena actively embracing the sublime. Ellena finds comfort while imprisoned at San Stefano in the mountain ranges and forests beyond her window and Radcliffe explains she 'beheld thence an horizon, and a landscape spread below, whose grandeur awakened all her heart. The consciousness of her prison was lost, while her eyes ranged over the wide and freely-sublime scene without' (*The Italian*, p.102). Following this revelation of Ellena's sublime view follows a minute description of the natural scene and pays homage to traditional sublimity through a mixture of awe, terror, and the pantheism of seeing God in nature. Ellena is able to access the masculine world of sublimity and although

³⁹ For a discussion of the male sublime and female beautiful (particularly Kant's and Burke's ideas) see Ian Balfour, 'Torso: (The) Sublime Sex, Beautiful Bodies, and the Matter of the Text', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol 39, No 3 (John Hopkins University Press, Spring 2006), 323-336

⁴⁰ Clery, *Women's Gothic*, pp.5-6.

in Radcliffe's work this is still an upper-class virtue (Paulo, for example does not understand Vivaldi's exclamations of the sublime), it is no longer exclusively male.⁴¹ Radcliffe is re-negotiating the gendered terms of virtue.

Radcliffe's use of virtue, however, like many other works from the eighteenth century does not completely escape gender divisions. By comparing Ellena's virtue with Vivaldi's within a context of a cultural gender binary of virtue in wider eighteenth-century literature, we can observe the gendered precincts which fragment the 1790s concept of virtue. Ellena and Vivaldi are not judged by the same standards; Ellena, despite some escape from traditional gendered virtue, is at times defined in terms of passivity and chastity where Vivaldi is commended for his chivalric courage and righting wrongs:

Vivaldi, [had] a glow of countenance, which announced the courage and exultation of a virtuous mind. [...] "I will defend the oppressed, and glory in the virtue, which teaches me, that it is the first duty of humanity to do so. Yes, my Lord, if it must be so, I am ready to sacrifice inferior duties to the grandeur of a principle, which ought to expand all hearts and impel all actions. I shall best support the honour of my house by adhering to its dictates" (*The Italian*, pp.36-37).

Unlike the use of passive, defensive words to describe Ellena's virtues (for example 'circumspection'), antithetically, active, traditionally masculine phrases define Vivaldi's virtuous qualities ('courage', 'defend the oppressed'). Even the word 'announced' is more forthright than Ellena's delicate internal revelation that the reader is allowed to spy. Vivaldi's virtue is a public exhibition, Ellena's a private, gentle disclosure. Michasiw provides one theory for this difference:

The shift from heroine to hero is crucial. Vivaldi may not be an ideal figure after the fashion of Radcliffe's heroines, but neither is he subject to the

⁴¹ See volume 2, chapter 2 of *The Italian*

systematic miseducation of women. He has a degree of social mobility, physical activity, and legal status denied heroines, and he has learned to curb the hot-headed aristocratic excess that has disposed him to superstition.⁴²

This suggests that it is the existing rigid social structures which prevent a universal virtuous hero(ine) and create the gendered lines. Culturally, these structures would have had a significant impact on female authors and their heroines of the eighteenth century: with the more progressive works in these areas such as the writings of Wollstonecraft and Haywood condemned, and even professional female writing viewed suspiciously by the more conservative, women and the presentation of women came with constraints. In a chapter from her book *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* titled 'The Prevailing Opinion of a Sexual Character Discussed,' Wollstonecraft acknowledges the social limitation to the concept of female virtue:

To account for, and excuse the tyranny of man, many ingenious arguments have been brought forward to prove, that the two sexes, in the acquirement of virtue, ought to aim at attaining a very different character: or, to speak explicitly, women are not allowed to have sufficient strength of mind to acquire what really deserves the name of virtue.⁴³

For Wollstonecraft, women are trapped into a 'different character' of virtue by 'the tyranny of man' and this erroneous goal of female virtue is clearly outlined in her chapter title as *sexual* virtue. In light of this context outlined by Wollstonecraft, and more recently Michasiw, the question of Radcliffe's work then becomes whether Ellena's virtue is token and exclusively *yoked* to social expectations, or whether Radcliffe is writing a female virtue as her own response to the larger cultural conversation of female virtue during the period.

⁴² Kim Ian Michasiw, 'Ann Radcliffe and the Terrors of Power', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, Vol.6, (1994), 327-346 (p.343)

⁴³ Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Printed in Great Britain: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013), p.14

Although restricted by what Shapira calls ‘the prism of decorum,’⁴⁴ Ellena is not fettered by her female virtue in Radcliffe’s novel, she is exalted by it. Radcliffe invests in a female virtue that is not a shackle but the great point of honour for her heroine and this is perhaps most evident in the creation of a female utopia in the convent of Santa Maria della Pietà:

[The abbess] encouraged in her convent every innocent and liberal pursuit, which might sweeten the austerities of confinement, and which were generally rendered instrumental to charity. The Daughters of Pity particularly excelled in music; not in those difficulties of the art, which display floral graces, and intricate execution, but in such eloquence of sound as steals upon the heart, and awakens its sweetest and best affections. It was probably the well-regulated sensibility of their own minds, that enabled these sisters to diffuse through their strains a character of such finely tempered taste, as drew crowds of visitors, on every festival, to the church of Santa della Pietà. (*The Italian*, p.339)

The abbess of this convent is described as ‘a shining example to governesses of religious houses, and a striking instance of the influence, which a virtuous mind may acquire over others’ (*The Italian*, p.338) and the peace and happiness this convent offers for Olivia and Ellena is diametrically opposed to the cruel environment of San Stefano. The activities the nuns participate in are all female accomplishments commonly encouraged by eighteenth-century conduct books and the convent is a female sanctuary where arguably the virtuous heroine and equally virtuous mother feel most at home. Ellena’s virtue is not a cursory nod to decorum principles, it is a well-thought out, negotiated, core of her character and she is comfortably situated in the community of traditional, domestic female virtue of Santa Maria della Pietà. The gendered virtue has not only been allowed by Radcliffe but *created* in an intricate system of explorations between Ellena and Vivaldi, and the ‘good’ convent Santa della Pietà with the ‘bad’ convent of San Stefano. Ellena actually condemns the manners of

⁴⁴ Yael Shapira, ‘Where the Bodies are Hidden: Ann Radcliffe’s “Delicate” Gothic’, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, Vol 18, No 4, (University of Toronto Press, 2006) 453-476 (p.454)

those who reside at the San Stefano and places herself as a virtuous opposite when she reflects that she 'was not less surprised than embarrassed to observe, in the manners of young people residing in the convent, an absence of that decorum, which includes beneath its modest shade every grace that ought to adorn the female character' (*The Italian*, p.106). Ellena is not traditionally virtuous because Radcliffe had no other choice, nor is she virtuous because even female characters were doomed to 'miseducation', she is fully involved in and reflective of her virtue. Radcliffe is making a statement out of Ellena's female virtue.

Importantly, virtue for Radcliffe (whether male or female) was not only gendered but distinctly English. Gothic novels of the 1790s are well-known for their themes of nationality and anti-Catholicism and Radcliffe ties this into her increasingly complex system of virtue:

[The abbess] was dignified without haughtiness, religious without bigotry, and mild, though decisive and firm. She possessed penetration to discover what was just, resolution to adhere to it, and temper to practice it with gentleness and grace [...]. Her religion was neither gloomy nor bigoted; it was the sentiment of a grateful heart offering itself up to a Deity, who delights in the happiness of his creatures; and *she conformed to the customs of the Roman church, without supposing a faith in all of them to be necessary to salvation. This opinion, however, she was obliged to conceal, lest her very virtue should draw upon her the punishment of a crime, from some fierce ecclesiastics, who contradicted in their very practice the very essential principles, which the Christianity they professed would have taught them.* [My emphasis] (*The Italian*, p.338)

That Ellena (despite the story being set in Italy) embodies an English heroine is implicit throughout the novel – with Moers commenting '[s]tability and integrity are indeed the major resources of the Radcliffe heroine; her sensibility and decorum never falter; and however rapid or perilous her journeys, the *lares* and *penates* of proper English girlhood

travel with her'⁴⁵ – but here, for the first time in the narrative, virtue is explicitly Protestant and therefore connected to England. The abbess not having full faith in the customs of the Roman church is 'her very virtue', instantly linking Protestantism with the word virtue and leaving Catholicism as its opposite. Schmitt explains:

Ellena parallels sentimental heroines in her possession of model traits; like those heroines, though, Ellena is recognizable as English only because she is defined against the foreign. If sentimental novels advanced the cause of England and Englishness by means of opposed characters, presenting in a domestic setting a distinction between English virtue and Francophilic vice, the Gothic at once retains and intensifies this opposition by setting its action in an anti-nation and pitting its protagonists against monstrously "other" anti- types.⁴⁶

With the French Revolution intensifying in the 1790s, the same time as the boom in Gothic literature, and the fear that England would suffer a similar fate, it is hardly surprising that the Gothic stories often reflect a fierce nationalism and reject all things stereotypically 'French', particularly the Roman church. French contemporary Charles-Francois Dumouriez sums up the nationalistic threat felt by the British; '[o]f all the European powers, England is the most threatened by the revolutionary genius. No power feels more fatally the pernicious influence of the French revolution.'⁴⁷ Expanding on Dana Harrington's model of eighteenth-century virtue as civic service, 'good' characters must be English and Protestant, rejecting the unstable politics of the continent.⁴⁸ Edmund Burke's popular work *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) highlights the fervour of British patriotism:

We have not (as I conceive) lost the generosity and dignity of thinking of the fourteenth century; nor as yet have we subtilized ourselves into savages. We are not the converts of Rousseau; we are not the disciples of Voltaire; Helvetius has made no progress amongst us. Atheists are not our preachers;

⁴⁵ Moers, p.138

⁴⁶ Schmitt, p.860

⁴⁷ Charles-Francois Dumouriez, *The Political State of Europe Speculatively Delineated in February 1798 Wherein The Probable Consequences of the French Revolution*, Translated by Silas James (London: Printed for Richardson, Wright, Harding, Shepperson and Reynolds, and H. D. Symonds, 1798), p.88

⁴⁸ See Dana Harrington, 'Gender, Commerce, and the Transformation of Virtue in Eighteenth-Century Britain', *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* (Routledge, The Writing Program, Syracuse University, Published Online, June 2009)

madmen are not our lawgivers. [...] In England we have not yet been completely embowelled of our natural entrails; we still feel within us and we cherish and cultivate, those inbred sentiments which are the faithful guardians, the active monitors of our duty, the true supporters of all liberal and manly morals. We fear God; we look up with awe to kings; with affection to parliaments; with duty to magistrate; with reverence to priests; and with respect to nobility.⁴⁹

This extract sets a rational, dutiful English against a foreign 'other' and particularly interesting is Burke's use of the phrase 'manly morals' correlating a masculine virtue with Englishness. Earlier in his *Reflections*, Burke describes the attempted flight of the Queen of France in an imaginative display which can be paralleled with the Gothic (English-style) heroine's plight at the hands of an unvirtuous or barbaric (non-English-style) villain. The 'Englishness' of the virtue of the heroes and heroines can be seen to be conservative of eighteenth-century English values. Jingoistically, the novels present heroines who are sexually pure and therefore there will be no question over the legitimacy of their families (another common theme in 1790s Gothic literature). This quality is shown to be linked to an Englishness that is rejecting a French revolution which questions traditional legitimacy and monarchy. For the eighteenth-century British reading public, it was important for the (sexually) desirable heroine to embody Englishness to her core in order to maintain a familial status quo when she is ultimately elevated to the role of wife and mother. For Radcliffe's notion of virtue, this has two implications that ultimately play out in a loop: she has broadened the definition of female virtue outside of a literal virginity (unlike Lewis) to incorporate many aspects including nationality; however, this could be seen in the interest of sexual and conservative purposes. That is to say Radcliffe's more extensive idea of virtue is both still dependent on, and propagating of, conforming female sexuality.

⁴⁹ Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Philadelphia, Printed by D. Humphreys, 1792), p.89

Not only is Radcliffe's depiction of virtue (and that of many of her contemporary Gothic novelists) complicated by notions of nationalism, but it also exists in a balance with discussion of class. Most of the characters in *The Italian* statically belong to a class, and are even somewhat defined by it: Paulo is the rustic working class servant, Vivaldi the landed gentleman and therefore traditionally out of Ellena's marriage market (at least pre-revelation that Ellena indeed has noble blood), and the Marchese and Marchessa are staunchly aristocratic. The only leveller of class appears to be found in the convents and monasteries – where the nuns and monks largely exist outside traditional class boundaries – but even then Schedoni's and Olivia's aristocratic origins are a key plot driver. Within this traditional set up used in the novel an individual's class is everything and it is never far from the characters' minds; this is not unusual for a 1790s Gothic novel and Radcliffe employs the often used Gothic plot device of revealing a comparatively lowly-birthed hero(ine) to indeed be a displaced aristocrat or even royal. Similarly to its use in fairy tales, this device was often utilised to allow the protagonist more agency throughout the narrative but a less scandalous rise to power at the end of the novel where a class-progressive marriage would have been frowned upon by many readers. Furthermore, by ensuring that marriage is only within class strata and that power remains with the upper-classes, a conservative need is fulfilled and revolutionary politics which could disrupt traditional legitimacy and class systems are not encouraged. Ellena, however, is an interesting and fluid character with regards to class: although she is (necessarily) disclosed as noble, she is not a straightforward aristocrat-in-thinly-veiled-disguise. At most points in the novel she is probably best described as middle-class: the point is made that she is not high enough to marry Vivaldi but is decidedly higher

than servants Beatrice and Paulo. Her virtues can be seen as middle-class and address the requirements of conduct books, which were largely aimed at the reading women of the upper middle classes; she is polite, chaste, pious and enjoys reading the “correct sort” of books provided by Olivia. Interestingly, Ellena’s class is further complicated by the fact that she makes an income from her embroidery – female professionalism was not normally considered proper for middle-class women in the eighteenth century and it is why Ellena’s work must be kept clandestine with her pieces being sold secretly. Again, although skilled embroidery was encouraged as a virtue in many conduct books in the period, Radcliffe is further broadening the perception of female virtue into the traditionally masculine sphere of commercialism. This is particularly interesting when considering the earning power of Radcliffe and some of her female contemporary authors; that is to say that they made money from writing these heroines in the first place.⁵⁰ By making it acceptable (albeit in secret) for her virtuous heroine to earn money (traditionally the preserve of men or working-class women), Radcliffe is renegotiating what is allowed within the realm of female virtue and, in a progressive move, the goal-posts are moved wider.

Despite Radcliffe’s occasional homages to gender conservatism, it is notable that Ellena is allowed more personality traits and at a few points in the novel is afforded traditionally masculine-framed qualities such as a ‘strenuous equality of mind’ (*The Italian*, p.73) and ‘tranquillity of an elegant mind, her dark blue eyes sparkled with *intelligence*’ [my emphasis] (*The Italian*, p.10). Some critics have even gone as far as to suggest that Radcliffe and her heroines display decidedly feminist qualities; Delucia asserts:

⁵⁰ ‘A grateful public rewarded Mrs Radcliffe by making her the most popular and best-paid English novelist of the eighteenth century’ (Moers, p.91)

Radcliffe critiques the gendered gauges used to manufacture history and, in doing so, interrogates the relationship between a society's mode of production and the progress of women. Her fiction refuses universalizing and reductive claims about women's progress and poses an alternative to the rhetoric of imperial expansion, which insinuates that the British Empire will not only transform territories economically but also free women from the savage bonds of oppression.⁵¹

Here, Delucia claims that Radcliffe rather than following gendered constructs is posing a challenge to them, and, going further, her fiction is looking to advance female progress and emancipation from the 'savage bonds of oppression'. Michasiw mirrors this view:

Thus she can demystify the assumption of individual power by the corrupt and, *pari passu*, observe the direct linkage of female subjection to a feminine ideal privileging conduct rather than knowledge.⁵²

More directly linked to the concept of virtue, Michasiw suggests that Radcliffe hopes to develop the feminine ideal away from conduct towards a more traditionally masculine ideal of knowledge. However, rather than highlighting the inequalities of this system of masculine and feminine ideals (and therefore virtues), Radcliffe is arguably investing in her own creation of female virtue. Ellena's virtue is not a passing acknowledgement of the limitations of the time, nor does she seem a simplistic tool in a feminist propaganda agenda – the heroine of *The Italian* is Radcliffe's idealised model of feminine virtue. Although undoubtedly influenced by societal constraints, Radcliffe carefully, painstakingly, crafts a female virtue that both pays tribute to traditional conservatism and advances outside of female sexual purity concepts. With statements such as '[t]hus innocent and happy in *the silent performance of her duties* and in the veil of retirement, lived Ellena Rosalba' [my emphasis] (*The Italian*, p.14) and 'Ellena followed unresistingly, like a lamb to the sacrifice' (*The Italian*, p.74) as well as listed virtues such as 'dignity', 'delicacy' and 'circumspection'

⁵¹ Joellen Delucia, 'From the female gothic to a feminist theory of history: Ann Radcliffe and the Scottish enlightenment', *Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation*, Vol.50, (Spring, 2009), p.113

⁵² Michasiw, p.343.

(qualities which while not identical with sexual purity are protective of it) it is difficult to view Radcliffe – as Michasiw, Delucia and other critics seem to imply – as advancing of a feminist ideal. It seems, as quoted at the beginning of the chapter, that rather than Radcliffe herself writing for feminist purposes, her writing has been retrospectively '*turned* to feminist purposes.'⁵³ Nonetheless, Radcliffe's construction of female virtue may not be decidedly feminist, but it is progressive: Ellena is a fully formed character with self-awareness and self-actualised development and through her heroines she moved the ideals of female virtue outside of the narrow, patriarchal-conservative remit it was previously confined to by the status quo. Radcliffe enabled her heroines to escape a concept irrevocably pinned to a sexual purity that served predominantly, if not exclusively, in the interests of patrilinear legitimacy concerns, and consequently the virtue of her heroines took on a rounded, developed and progressive formation.

⁵³ Moers, p.126. My emphasis.

Virtue Transgressed:
Sexual Transgression in Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*

"Heaven nor hell shall impede my designs"
*(Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*)*

Jurist Matthew Hale, who although writing in the seventeenth century was still widely read throughout the eighteenth, notoriously wrote '[i]t is true rape is a most detestable crime, [...] but it must be remembered, that it is an accusation easily to be made and hard to be proved'.⁵⁴ & Appendix B This is just one of a cornucopia of publications from the long eighteenth century grappling with the topic of rape; novels, poems and legal writings mirrored a public fascinated with the intricacies of the crime. Towards the end of the century the amount of rape trial documents published sharply increased, correlating with the crescendo of Gothic writing: the theme of rape is particularly prevalent in Gothic literature, so much so that sexual transgression became a trope within the style.⁵⁵ Notably, eminent critic George Haggerty asserts, 'a Gothic trope is fixed: terror is almost always sexual terror.'⁵⁶ Eighteenth-century Gothicism borrows heavily from the ideas of female virginity and sexual virtue that were often inextricably bound with the concept of rape. The multifarious conduct books circulated in the period warned about the religious importance

⁵⁴ Matthew Hale, *Historia Placitorum Coronae. The History of the Pleas of the Crown*, Vol 1 (London: published from the original manuscripts by Sollom Emllyn, printed for T. Payne, 1778), p.635. Although Hale is a seventeenth century jurist his work is still relevant throughout the long eighteenth century and was re-printed many times. As of 16th March 2015 searching for work authored by 'Matthew Hale' in Eighteenth Century Collections Online, with date filters of 1700-1800, there are 67 hits including many different editions and re-prints.

⁵⁵ As of 31/01/2016 searching the phrase 'rape trial' on Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO) with date parameters of 1700-1900 returns 1914 hits. Searching for the same terms within date parameters of 1790-1800 returns 394 hits – this represents about 20% of the total of 1914 hits across two centuries but published just within one decade.

⁵⁶ George E. Haggerty, *Queer Gothic* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), p.2

of a virtue with a 'price far above rubies'⁵⁷, and both Gothic novels and other literature portraying rape paid homage to the female sexual purity agenda. Corrinne Harol has one suggestion as to why these works not only have this pre-occupation with sexual transgression and codification of a sanctified female sexual purity when she notes, '[f]emale chastity, so the story goes, matters to men because it guarantees patrilineal legitimacy [...]: the virgin girl will seamlessly transition into the chaste wife and bear her husband's legitimate heirs'.⁵⁸ An anonymous, eighteenth-century writer also subscribes to this theory:

[Adultery] is generally supposed a greater crime in the Woman than the Man. Because she not only imposes a spurious Breed on her husband's Family; makes a Foreigner Heir to his Estate; [...] but makes the son of a Man his Heir, who has done him the greatest Injury.⁵⁹

Female sexual virtue concepts protect patrilineal legitimacy and as rape transgresses female virtue it therefore threatens legitimate inheritance. This chapter argues that much eighteenth-century Gothicism (here looking at *The Monk* as an example) engaged with rape because it jeopardised the enduring concept of female virtue and therefore in turn could destabilise established patriarchal primogeniture systems.

Gothicism, which peaked during the uncertainty of the French Revolution, often anxiously seeks to control sexual transgression (in this case rape) partly because it is frequently concerned with themes of family, legitimacy and aristocracy. Sarah Oliver further explains the patrilineal legitimacy phenomenon in her thesis:

More intricately, the dire warnings to women embedded in representations of rape in 'conventional' or 'familiar' rape stories demonstrated ways in

⁵⁷ King James Version, Proverbs 31:10

⁵⁸ Corrinne Harol, *Enlightened Virginity in Eighteenth-Century Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p.1

⁵⁹ Anon., *The Present State of Matrimony: Or, The Real Causes of Conjugal Infidelity and Unhappy Marriages. In a Letter to a Friend*. (London: Printed for John Hawkins, at the Falcon in St Paul's Church-yard, 1739) p.12

which eighteenth-century novels textualised male anxiety. That is, the trope encapsulated economic, cultural and religious priorities that were intended to validate the importance of chastity and 'proper' female sexual behaviour in the exchange of property and the preservation of family honour.⁶⁰

Sexual virtue, and indeed literal female virginity, in eighteenth-century Gothic literature is used as a vessel of fetishism – the “need” for it was established in the contemporary dogma and once it is held up on a pedestal it can be internalised and fetishized. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines ‘fetish’ as ‘[s]omething irrationally revered [or] [...] [a]n object, a non-sexual part of the body, or a particular action which abnormally serves as the stimulus to, or the end in itself of, sexual desire.’⁶¹ Female sexual virtue was fetishized in that a disproportionate focus was placed on it in representations of female sexuality; an excessive devotion to it was required to maintain the normalised patrilineal legitimacy concepts and control female desire. Matthew Lewis’s 1796 Gothic novel *The Monk* presents a particularly rich example of a fetishizing of female sexual purity and explores contemporary attitudes to rape with its narrative of the monk Ambrosio’s devouring of innocent Antonia. By drawing on the Gothic tropes of a virgin heroine and the sexual transgression of rape, *The Monk* provides a depiction of female virtue that is ultimately conservative in that it conforms to eighteenth-century expectations of female sexual purity. In this chapter I compare Lewis’s sentencing of Antonia to a traditional rape narrative that eventually results in her death, with his (relative) forgiveness of Agnes’ sexual transgressions in order to demonstrate how sexual transgression of female virtue is handled in this Gothic novel, particularly in comparison to real-life popular eighteenth-century rape trial documents. I argue that while Agnes is given partial reprieve for her role in young love’s sexual transgression, her severe punishment at the hands of the Abbess and the extensive focus on Antonia’s loss of ‘virtue’

⁶⁰ Sarah Oliver, ‘The Rape of Mary Raymond: A Radical View of Rape in Mary Hays’s *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney* and *The Victim of Prejudice*’ (University of Plymouth Doctoral Thesis, 2007), p.25.

⁶¹ Oxford English Dictionary, ‘fetish’

(or virginity) due to her rape followed by her subsequent murder largely convey a patriarchally conservative view of female virtue.

That concepts of female sexual virtue and virginity became bound with sexual transgression is evident even in eighteenth-century legal definitions. Hale informs his readers that '[r]ape is the carnal knowledge of any woman above the age of ten years against her will, and of a woman-child under the age of ten years with or against her will'.⁶²

However, this definition is complicated by the addition of certain conditions:

[I]f the witness be of good fame, if she presently discovered the offence and made pursuit after the offender, shewed circumstances and signs of the injury [...] if the place, wherein the fact was done, was remote from people, [...] if the offender fled for it [...] [it] give[s] greater probability to her testimony, when proved by others as well as herself.⁶³

If the crime deviated from this list Hale states that the 'circumstances carry a strong presumption, that her testimony is false or feigned'.⁶⁴ It not only transpires that 'good fame', or the lack thereof, could distort even the definition of the crime of rape, but also the fact that Hale claims the crime should be confirmed by others inherently suggests that the victim's testimony cannot be relied on in itself. Frances Ferguson further explores this dilemma:

As crimes go, however, [rape] is remarkable for focusing attention on mental states and their apprehension. While the intention to do harm is requisite for conviction for a number of crimes, the legal debates surrounding rape claim that the mental states of two persons are crucial-the intention of the accused and the consent or nonconsent of the victim'.⁶⁵

⁶² Hale, p.628

⁶³ Hale, p.633

⁶⁴ Hale, p.633

⁶⁵ Frances Ferguson, 'Rape and the Rise of the Novel', *Representations*, No. 20, Special Issue: Misogyny, Misandry, and Misanthropy (University of California Press, Autumn, 1987), 88-112, p.88

She goes on to explain that the criminal status of rape hinges on consent otherwise the act is simply sexual intercourse; that is to say that the intention of the victim to not engage in sexual activity must be examined alongside the intention of the perpetrator to override that victim's lack of consent. Therefore, unlike most other crimes, the physical evidence of the fact of sexual intercourse must be corroborated with evidence of intentionality.

For this interdependency of sexual purity concepts and rape to become ingrained in eighteenth-century literature there had to be a new perspective on the crime of rape itself. From a historical vantage Durston writes:

During the medieval period, rape was often seen as being primarily a crime against (another man's) property, that is as a form of theft. [...] By the mid-seventeenth century, legal definitions had altered [...] [r]ape had become a 'sexual' crime in which it was the woman's innocence that was at issue. By the eighteenth century, it was clearly the complainant who was the crime's victim.⁶⁶

This shifts rape into a philosophy where the act of transgression is more than a physical theft but now also a robbing of underlying concepts of purity and innocence; '[r]ape, that is, dramatizes a problematic [...] relationship between the body and the mind.'⁶⁷ Harol explores this in depth with regards to Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*:

Mr B.'s pursuit of Pamela's body instigates the narrative, but the objective of the novel is the loftier (by its own standards) investigation of Pamela's interiority. The narrative action converts Mr B. from an admirer of Pamela's body into an acolyte of her virtue and thus relocates feminine social value from virginity (and embodiment) to virtue (and interiority). [...] While her virtue depends upon preservation of her virginity (while she remains unmarried), it ultimately transcends physicality.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Gregory Durston, 'Rape in the Eighteenth-Century Metropolis: Part 1', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 28 (2005), 167-179, p.169.

⁶⁷ Ferguson, p.99

⁶⁸ Corrinne Harol, 'Faking It: Female Virginity and Pamela's Virtue', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, Vol 16, No 2 (University of Toronto Press: Jan 2004), 197-216 (pp.197-8).

The 'feminine social value' still largely relies on virginity but also involves incentive and interiority; physical virginity is not forgotten but is loaded with the theoretical concept of virtue. In many eighteenth-century works the terms 'virtue' and 'virginity' are used interchangeably, for example in *Pamela* the protagonist's parents make the synonymy of the terms clear, 'we fear – you should be *too* grateful, – and reward him with that Jewel, your Virtue, which no Riches, nor Favour, nor anything in this Life, can make up to you'.⁶⁹ Here 'virtue' doesn't just imply pre-marital virginity but *means* it. However, contemporary writer Wetenhall Wilkes suggests that there is a subtle distinction between virginity and virtue by stating that chastity (a term widely understood to mean virginity outside of marriage and fidelity within) is 'not only an ornament, but also a guard to virtue'.⁷⁰ Virtue and virginity then are not semantic substitutes but rather virginity is the physical guard to the interior, transcendent virtue underneath. Again referring to Richardson's work, Harol points out that '[t]he "Pamela controversy," though centred on the truth status of Pamela's words (and virtue) not on her body (and virginity), in fact emerges from anxieties about the epistemological reliability of medicine and thus about the possibility that women may elude male power / knowledge structures.'⁷¹ Intact physical virginity was difficult to prove, any "proof" of it (for instance blood after first copulation) tends to be retrospective, and it was easy enough to fake. Therefore, the examination of Pamela's interiority, particularly by reading her private journal, but also by observing her behaviour becomes just as much a "proof" of her virginity as any other uncertain medical premise. The two concepts of

⁶⁹ Samuel Richardson, *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.14

⁷⁰ Wetenhall Wilkes, 'from A Letter of Genteel and Moral Advice to a Young Lady', in *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity*, ed. by Vivien Jones (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 29-35, p.29.

⁷¹ Harol, 'Faking It', p.199.

virginity and virtue then are not synonymous but symbiotic: sexual virtue signifies virginity, and for virginity to be complete it also requires virtue.

Where Richardson, in the 1740s, captured the burgeoning development of this virtue requirement, it is further established within the 1790's Gothic obsession with female virtue concepts. The interlacing of virtue and virginity is prevalent in *The Monk* and Antonia's 'excess of timidity'⁷² and modest behaviour (for example veiling in public) are markers for her intact virginity. Where virtuous behaviour is often presented as the observable manifestation of virginity it is also highlighted as a desirable, in particular sexually desirable, quality. Emma McEvoy notes about *The Monk* that, '[t]he deliberate eroticization of modesty in the work is disturbing [...] the text seems to have a Sadean fixation on female morality, and the idea of the pure woman.'⁷³ Notably Ambrosio exclaims just before Antonia's rape "'[c]an I relinquish these treasures, and leave them to another's enjoyment? No Antonia; never, never!"' (*The Monk*, p.383). Here virginity is fetishized on the grounds that Antonia has never been 'enjoyed' by another man; she is reduced to a sexually desirable object, a treasure to be relished, and the implication is that once her virginity has been lost her desirability is compromised. Peter Brooks notes:

The virginal Antonia first attracts him by her contrast to Matilda: after his first view of Antonia, Matilda appears by contrast "disgusting" and "a prostitute" (pp. 243-44). Yet if he is aroused by Antonia's purity, his desire can conceive this purity only as something to be despoiled. In the etymological spirit of seduction, he is attracted by the idea of being the agent of corruption of innocence, of bringing the plague of erotic knowledge to a being not yet sensually aware. Seduction is inevitably destruction, and when deep in the

⁷² Matthew Lewis, *The Monk* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.12. All other references are from this edition and presented in the body of the text.

⁷³ Emma McEvoy, 'Introduction', in *The Monk* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.xxiv

sepulchre he last accomplishes her rape, he is seized with revulsion: "The very excess of his former eagerness to possess Antonia now contributed to inspire him with disgust . . ." (p. 368).⁷⁴

At this point, just before and during the rape, her virginity seems less about marriage and legitimacy and more about a fetishized desirability – treasures are not necessarily useful but they are desirable. This is also noted in the sensationalising of the rape scene:

[H]er alarm, her evident disgust, and incessant opposition, seemed only, to inflame the Monk's desires, and supply his brutality with additional strength. [...] [T]he Ravisher [...] clasped her to his bosom almost lifeless with terror, and faint with struggling. He [...] proceeded from freedom to freedom, and in the violence of his lustful delirium, wounded and bruised her tender limbs. Heedless of her tears, cries and entreaties, He gradually made himself Master of her person, and desisted not from his prey, till He had accomplished his crime and the dishonour of Antonia. (*The Monk*, pp.383-384)

Lewis makes it clear that Antonia's opposition actually further drives Ambrosio's sexual desire for her; Antonia is expected, as a modest virgin, to have 'incessant opposition' to the monk's plans and it is this that increases his desire. The rape is presented animalistically with Antonia as Ambrosio's 'prey' and the physical assault is highlighted with the phrase 'wounded and bruised her tender limbs'. The scene both sensationalises the sexual violence as well as showing a fetishizing of Antonia's repugnance to the crime.⁷⁵ Lewis's novel is often considered 'horror Gothic' in contrast to Radcliffian-style 'terror Gothic', in that it includes gratuitous violence and achieved rape scenes (rather than panning over attempted rapes). However, although Lewis includes the rape scene and it is sensationalised, notably the moment of the rape is described in more abstract terms ('Master of her person' and 'the dishonour of Antonia') than the surrounding language and indeed many other of the physical violence descriptions. This effect can be seen in duplicate with Sade's aptly titled

⁷⁴ Peter Brooks, 'Virtue and Terror: The Monk', *ELH*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (The Johns Hopkins University Press, Summer, 1973), 249-263 (p.259)

⁷⁵ Referring back to the *Oxford English Dictionary* definition at the beginning of the chapter, the fetish here is an irrational focus on Antonia's purity.

1791 novel *Justine, or the Misfortunes of Virtue*, where the author seems to have few reservations in explicitly describing rapes and sadistic sexual acts but at the moment Justine is raped and loses her virginity as a result the text pans away from the scene; Justine is unconscious at the time and awakes to find herself ‘bruised, bloodied ... and dishonoured’.⁷⁶ Similarly, in Cleland’s infamous *Fanny Hill* Mrs Brown attempts to sell Fanny’s virginity without her consent to an elderly client; although the attempted rape scene is traumatic it is ultimately unsuccessful: Fanny escapes to give her virginity willingly to the love of her life Charles. Even in these notorious and scandalous works it seems that the rape of a virgin was still somewhat taboo and the transgression of the sacred female virginity was shocking to the eighteenth-century reading public.

Antonia’s virtue and female sexual purity are not only presented as desirable, but also the motivating factor for her subsequent rape. Lorenzo is struck by her excessive modesty and similarly Ambrosio is fixated by her beauty and innocence. Even before the rape Antonia is established as the cause of her defilement: ‘[h]e then quitted the House, while his Enchantress hastened to her Mother, ignorant of the mischief which her Beauty had caused’ (*The Monk*, p.250) – although unintentionally, she is an ‘enchantress’ no less and her beauty (which is previously described originating not from symmetrical features but modesty) is the cause of her downfall. Immediately following the rape Ambrosio cries out:

“And who am I to thank for this? What seduced me into crimes [...]? Fatal Witch! was it not thy beauty? Have you not plunged my soul into infamy? Have you not made me a perjured Hypocrite, a Ravisher, an Assassin! [...] ‘Tis you, who will cause my eternal anguish!” (*The Monk*, p.385)

⁷⁶ Marquis de Sade, *Justine, or the Misfortunes of Virtue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p.48.

Not only does Ambrosio, whose thoughts are the dominant narrative voice at this point in the novel, directly blame Antonia's beauty but he also accuses her of seduction and, moreover, goes on to decry his own undoing as a result of the rape. A similar view can be found in other literature of the period, for example Fordyce's popular conduct book warns 'avoid Dangerous Connexions, If that be not done, what is there on earth, or in heaven, that can save you? [...] She can have no right to expect it, who throws herself into the broad way of temptation.'⁷⁷ This establishes that women have 'no right' to 'expect' safety if they choose to be around the wrong sort of men, that the temptation will be too much for the man to overcome and rape is almost presented as an inevitability. The viewpoint that '[s]ince every woman was the guardian of her `chastity', according to the rape trope, she had `allowed' the rape to happen'⁷⁸ is echoed throughout the long eighteenth century and an earlier general conduct and house-keeping book titled *The Ladies Library* states 'she who will secure her Chastity must never let it come to a close Siege'⁷⁹. Not only is virginity fetishized in *The Monk*, but even in the case of rape the commonly-held contemporary view that the woman is entirely responsible for the protection of her virginity is upheld. Furthermore, with loaded language Lewis describes the moment after Antonia's rape, '[h]e raised her from the ground. Her hand trembled, as He took it, and He dropped it again as if He had touched a Serpent' (*The Monk*, p.387). As the serpent is symbolic of Eve's downfall in the Garden of Eden this statement compares Antonia with temptation; Ambrosio's culpability in the rape is diminished by the insinuation that he was tempted into the crime.

⁷⁷ James Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women: in Two Volumes*, Vol 1, 6th edn (Dublin: Printed for James Williams, in Skinner-Row, 1767), p.92

⁷⁸ Sarah Oliver, p.26

⁷⁹ Anon., *The Ladies Library*, Vol. 1, (London: Published by Mr Steele, Printed for Jacob Tonson, 1714), p.193

Even though Lewis hints that the temptation of Antonia is a driving (and therefore causal) factor in her own rape, the rape trope (which Oliver describes in her thesis) is more complex than this. Importantly, for the crime described in the novel to be taken seriously at all, and to elicit eighteenth-century reader sympathy, certain conditions must be met. Notably Antonia's rape can be defined as (by eighteenth-century cultural standards) the "right" type of rape. As Durston points out '[c]omplainant credibility went to the heart of rape cases. [...] Chastity played a crucial role. Women of bad reputation had little prospect of success'.⁸⁰ Additionally, Durston continues, '[m]any eighteenth-century commentators were also firmly wedded to the view that, physically, rape was almost impossible if a fully-grown woman was absolutely determined to preserve her virtue.'⁸¹ Antonia fulfils these criteria: she is a virgin, and she must be left orphaned, drugged and dragged into a secret below-ground vault before the monk can successfully rape her. Randolph Trumbach remarks that in the case of rape, '[o]nly constant heroic resistance was credible,'⁸² and Antonia's absolute struggle is made clear:

She struggled to disengage herself from his arms: Her exertions were unsuccessful; [...] She shrieked for assistance with all her strength. [...] Antonia's shrieks were unheard: Yet she continued them, nor abandoned her endeavours to escape, till exhausted and out of breath She sank from his arms upon her knees, and once more had recourse to prayers and supplications. (*The Monk*, p.383)

Interestingly, the only section of the book where Antonia is allowed to be active is in the preservation of her virginity; indeed she must be active and she must be a virgin for many eighteenth-century readers to even consider this a true rape. Ultimately, the novel is

⁸⁰ Gregory Durston, 'Rape in the Eighteenth-Century Metropolis: Part 2', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 29 (2006), 15-31, p.15.

⁸¹ Durston, Part 2, p.25.

⁸² Randolph Trumbach, *Sex and the Gender Revolution: Volume One, Heterosexuality and the Third Gender in Enlightenment London* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p.304

conservative in this aspect and in the fact that although Lorenzo still loves Antonia after her ordeal, she must die. Rachel Carnell speaks of this occurrence within Richardson's *Clarissa*:

Ultimately, however, the novel's tragic ending contains Richardson's challenge to the political public sphere within a pessimism that would have paralysed real reform of women's position. Although Anna Howe's story allows for a certain optimism, its narrative subordination to the central tragedy guarantees the reader's focus on the fact that Clarissa has few morally viable options other than death.⁸³

After Antonia's rape much of the focus is on her lost marketability; essentially virtue had a price on the marriage market and both Antonia and Ambrosio acknowledge that loss. Antonia cries "[a]m I not undone, undone for ever?" (*The Monk*, p.384) and Ambrosio recognises that 'She could never hope to be creditably established; She would be marked with infamy, and condemned to sorrow and solitude for the remainder of her existence' (*The Monk*, p.387). This opinion is mirrored in contemporary texts such as 'The Genuine Trial of John Motherhill' which notes:

The council [...] expressed his astonishment that any man should be so lost to every feeling [...] as to be the total destruction of an innocent young lady, merely for momentary gratification! [...] [H]ad he even robbed her of every shilling she was possessed of, the offence should appear of little consequence, compared to that of robbing her of her virtue; but she is now, (although innocent) a subject for calumny to point her finger at! [...] [T]hough the injured lady may be as chaste as unsunned snow, she will never more be considered immaculate.⁸⁴

This statement admits that rape in the eighteenth century was an almost unique crime in that its atrocity lay in the 'total destruction' of a woman's future prospects despite her being legally innocent.^{Appendix C}

⁸³ Rachel K. Carnell, 'Clarissa's Treasonable Correspondence: Gender, Epistolary Politics, and the Public Sphere', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, Vol. 10, No. 3, (University of Toronto Press, April 1998) 269-286 (p.285)

⁸⁴ John Motherhill, 'The Genuine Trial of John Motherhill for a Rape on the Body of Miss Catherine Wade. Before Mr Justice Ashurst On Tuesday the 21st of March, 1786. Taken in Short Hand by Mr Wilkinson.' (London: Printed for R. Randall, 1786), p.6

The virtue rhetoric that is displayed in *The Monk* is by no means straightforward. Antonia is the pinnacle of conservative female virtue: she is modest, kind and most importantly sexually pure; but that virtue is transgressed when Ambrosio robs her of her virginity. Although Antonia experiences the traditionally “correct” rape (that is to say she has no opportunity to resist), as the jurors of the Motherhill trial ominously warned, she can never be considered truly spotless. Her capacity to be raped highlights Antonia’s failure in the woman’s duty (outlined in the *Ladies’ Library* manual) as a guardian of her own chastity and she still suffers the same consequences – her ‘ruin’ – as any other rape victim (fictional or otherwise).⁸⁵ This is a conservative presentation of female virtue which suppresses the woman’s ownership of her own sexual desire and objectifies that virtue into a possession, that although expected to be protected by the woman, is in due course bought by a man in legitimate marriage or forcibly taken through rape. Although a much later text, Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897) similarly vilifies involuntary female sexuality:

My own heart grew cold as ice, and I could hear the gasp of Arthur, as we recognised the features of Lucy Westenra, but yet how changed. The sweetness was turned to adamant, heartless cruelty, and the purity to voluptuous wantonness. [...] [B]y the concentrated light that fell on Lucy’s face we could see that the lips were crimson with fresh blood, and that the stream had trickled over her chin and stained the purity of her lawn death-robe. [...] When Lucy – I call the thing that was before us Lucy because it bore her shape – saw us she drew back with an angry snarl [...] then her eyes ranged over us. Lucy’s eyes in form and colour; but Lucy’s eyes unclean and full of hell-fire, instead of the pure, gentle orbs we knew.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ It is important to note that although I say ‘fictional or otherwise’ the ‘ruin’ of raped women was a social construct and, furthermore, despite what literature and art suggested real rape victims were not all necessarily doomed to a Hogarth-narrative / Clarissa-style death or condemned to prostitution. There is little data or (auto)biographical detail of rape victims and in particular their lives after trials.

⁸⁶ Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), p.225

Despite Lucy's lack of consent in her transformation from 'purity to voluptuous wantonness', she is portrayed animalistically ('angry snarl') and her sexual transgression demonised ('hell-fire'). However, *The Monk's* seemingly clear-cut notion of utterly condemning all female sexuality is complicated by the addition of Agnes and Matilda. Wendy Jones sees Lewis's novel as progressive in its forgiveness of female sexual transgression:

The Monk therefore endorses good desire simply because it is good, even when it is transgressive or threatening to established authority. Agnes and Raymond break two important rules- unforgiveable breaches in most other contemporary novels. They attempt to elope after Agnes's family has forbidden their union and they make love before marriage [...]. Both elopement and sex before marriage, even between engaged couples, were transgressive according to sexual codes that governed the behaviour of both the middle and aristocratic ranks. Although Agnes and Raymond must expiate their sins through intense suffering (and characteristically Agnes suffers far more than Raymond), they are eventually absolved by both religious and secular authorities. [...] Moreover, *The Monk* presents their transgressions in a sympathetic light; textual affect is all on their side. Raymond's account of his seduction of Agnes is an eloquent description of the natural, forgivable impulses to which they succumbed.⁸⁷

Here Jones notes that Lewis distinguishes between 'bad' desire and 'good': even though conflicting with societal norms she reads the young lovers' eventual absolution as a non-conservative validation of a transgressive desire which would counter traditional portrayals of female virtue. Melanie Griffin also does not interpret Agnes's story as a traditional one, but instead of focusing on the character's pardon as a symbol of her progressiveness she

⁸⁷ Wendy Jones, 'Stories of Desire in *The Monk*', in *ELH*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (The Johns Hopkins University Press, Spring, 1990), 129-150 (p.141)

deduces Agnes's punishment as an unjust regime of corrupt Catholicism rather than as a purging of sin:

Lewis places Agnes, her infant, and their figurative "Hell" deep inside the church. This "sinner" was not shunned and abused out in the cruel and sinful world; she was imprisoned inside the very structure which should have shown the most mercy. Lewis's symbolism is meant to expose a religion that appears healthy and beautiful on the outside, but is loathsome, wretched, and cruel within.⁸⁸

Agnes's punishment, in this reading, is more an exposé of a cruel religion than a conservative warning of transgressive female sexuality. However, although Agnes does get a traditional marriage ending (usually reserved for the virginal heroine), and the church's treatment of her is shown to be disproportionate, her suffering is much more powerful than her consolation prize wedding – she is locked in an underground tomb and found weeks later, practically starved to death, desperately cradling her rotting infant's corpse: the punishment for her transgression is not just perfunctory but of extreme severity. Some may maintain that Agnes escapes the (potentially) worse fate of death, but while this was untypical for a sexually transgressive female character of the long eighteenth century it was not unheard of – Moll Flanders lives to marry, Marquise de Merteuil (of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*) may have her face marked by small pox but does not die and Fanny Hill ends up rich and married to her sweetheart. Jones rightly points out that for the same crime Raymond is barely, if at all, punished while Agnes suffers disproportionately; even the language used to describe the transgression shows that Agnes's loss of virtue and subsequent pardon is more conservative than first seems. Raymond begs Lorenzo for his forgiveness after taking Agnes's virginity, "[r]eflect upon our situation, our youth, our long

⁸⁸ Melanie Griffin, 'Is Nothing Sacred?: Christ's Harrowing through Lewis's Gothic Lens', *Orbis Litterarum*, 64:3 (Printed in Malaysia: Blackwell Publishing, 2009) 167-174, p.172.

attachment: Weigh all the circumstances which attended our assignations, and you will confess the temptation to have been irresistible; you will even pardon me when I acknowledge, that in an unguarded moment the honour of Agnes was sacrificed to my passion” (*The Monk*, p.186). The ‘honour’ of virginity appears to be a female possession (Raymond does not say ‘our honour’) and this female virginity/virtue (here the terms are used synonymously) is ‘sacrificed’ to the male passion. Again, virtue is portrayed as an inherently female object that is bartered for the interests of male passion. When this objectified virtue is not willingly given it is forcibly taken, as in the case of Ambrosio and Antonia. Likewise, after Agnes’s and Raymond’s transgression she laments to him “And ‘tis by you, whom I adored, that I am covered in infamy! ‘Tis by you that I have been seduced into breaking my vows to God, that I am reduced to a level with the basest of my sex!” (*The Monk*, p.187). Not only is this statement strikingly similar to Antonia’s lament to her rapist, highlighting that loss of virtue is ultimately the same whatever the circumstances, but also, even though Agnes does end up marrying Raymond, her status as a non-virtuous woman places her amongst ‘the basest of [her] sex’.

The other female figure who could be considered to complicate Lewis’s conservative narrative of female sexual virtue is Matilda. Matilda is an active and rampantly sexual female character who is not properly punished in the novel (although it is suggested that her time will come). She openly declares to Ambrosio, “I lust for the enjoyment of your person. The Woman reigns in my bosom, and I am become a prey to the wildest of passions” (*The Monk*, p.89). Interestingly although she puts these wild sexual passions down to womanly behaviour this is somewhat a misnomer because unrestrained sexual

desire is at many other points in the novel said to be a masculine quality: for example, when Ambrosio has sexual relations with Matilda he is said to be in the 'full vigour of Manhood' (*The Monk*, p.90) and it is the full realisation of Matilda's masculinity which deflates Ambrosio's desire for her. Furthermore Matilda cannot be truly counted as a figure of transgressed/transgressive female virtue because she is both not a feminine character (her qualities are masculine and she first appears as the boy Rosario) and she is a demonic figure in allegiance with satan (arguably agents of Lucifer cannot be truly considered female) – the normal rules don't apply. Where Matilda cannot represent the pitfalls of a lack of virtue, Beatrice – or the Bleeding Nun – shows a conservative Hogarthian-style consequence of transgressing traditional societal constructs of female virtue: she starts off sexually transgressive, progresses to becoming a murderess before dying a bloody death and doomed to haunt a castle. Lewis may shock both modern and eighteenth-century readers with his lustful novel of romances, intrigues, sexual transgression and horror but the messages of virtuous femininity are conformist.

Lewis's novel depicts rape as a crime that disorders the eighteenth-century ideals of virginity, virtue, marriage marketability and legitimacy and uses Gothic tropes such as the ravaging of a virtuous heroine to conform to patriarchally-vested attitudes towards female sexual purity. At the heart of these concepts Lewis writes a literal virginity which is necessary to the order of society; this virginity is marked by Antonia's virtue and feminine modesty which is in turn fetishized, in particular as an "untrodden ground" concept. It is possible that by drawing attention to the innocent, helpless Antonia and describing her violent rape Lewis is attempting to undermine the opinion that the fault of rape ultimately

lies with the woman; however, although Ambrosio is punished for his crimes at the end of the novel, he is punished for an entire cohort of offenses and most particularly for resolutely signing over his claim to Heaven with a pact with the devil. Satan reveals to the monk, “[h]ad you resisted me one minute longer, you had saved your body and soul. The guards whom you heard at your prison-door, came to signify your pardon” (*The Monk*, p.440), showing that both Heaven and Earth could forgive the rape and murder of a virgin. Antonia, on the other hand, while innocent, is described as an ‘enchantress’, her modesty and virginity are fetishized for the sensationalised rape scene, and ultimately she must die. It seems her role is little more than that of an erotic pawn in the story of a monk’s spectacular Faustian downfall; the focus is shifted from the female victim and her experience of the crime towards the consequences of her loss of virginity. Sexual transgression (attempted or achieved) could then be simultaneously used in a working dichotomy as a fantasy involving wanton spoiling or a possessing of virtue, and as a horror warning of the disorderly crime of rape which threatens female innocence, legitimacy and ultimately patriarchy. Although – similarly to the Catherine Wade case – there was little Antonia could have done to prevent her rape, and although she was virtuous, her downfall is the same as that of any raped woman and her prospects are still destroyed. The fact that she is innocent is negated by her inability to follow that conduct book rule of protecting her own chastity, whatever the stakes or circumstances, meaning Lewis has trapped his heroine in the conservative catch-22: no rape victim is truly a worthy victim. Although the reader is provided with Agnes – who while transgressive of normative female virtue ideals does not die – and the novel is usually seen as transgressive itself with a contemporary writer decrying that it ‘depict[ed] [...] to the world the arts of lewd and systematic seduction, and [...] thrust[ed] upon the nation the most open and unqualified blasphemy against the very code and volume of [...]

religion'⁸⁹, by predominantly utilising traditional models of sexual violence and presenting the dire consequences of rape Lewis fetishizes the conquered female body and ultimately the portrayal is in fact a conservative one. The emphasising of deep-rooted male and female fears of compromised legitimacy and ruined futures allows Lewis to capitalise on the sheer dread of rape to both construct a thrilling, popular and enduring Gothic novel but also retain traditionalist values.

⁸⁹ Anonymous [Thomas Mathias], *The Pursuits of Literature: A Satirical Poem in Dialogue. Part the Fourth and Last.*, 2nd edn (London: Printed for T. Becket, 1797), p.ii

Chapter Three, Virtue Abandoned:

Desire in the Fiction of Mary Wollstonecraft and Charlotte Dacre

"I was perfectly sick and ready to die with desire" (Cleland, Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure)

Desire, in its most general meaning – whether explicit or implicit – permeates through all fiction, and as the desiring subject is a political subject, many cultures both past and present fear this desiring subjectivity and therefore seek to control it. Long eighteenth-century fiction is no exception to the rule that '[t]he power of vicarious experience in fiction also led to the desire to control—or at least to wield carefully—the aesthetic of mimetic representation, and novels as well as more obviously obscene texts increasingly became objects of critical and legal speculation.'⁹⁰ The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines desire as 'that feeling or emotion which is directed to the attainment or possession of some object from which pleasure or satisfaction is expected; longing, craving; a particular instance of this feeling, a wish.'⁹¹ In its simplest terms, desire is what someone *wants*, whether this is politically, economically or sexually. Although it is common to think of desire in purely sexual terms, the political, the economic and the sexual are all irrevocably linked: who you desire has financial implications and political ones. Barbara Taylor points out, '[e]very political agenda is driven by unacknowledged and unacknowledgeable wishes as well as by more or less realistic ambitions: desire in the social/political sphere is no more reason-governed than desire in any other area of life'.⁹² In particular, female desire (sexual and otherwise) has long been politicised and controlled – the dominant patriarchal discourse requires a biblical subjugation of female desire

⁹⁰ Carrie Shanafelt, 'Vicarious Sex and the Vulnerable Eighteenth-Century Reader', *Literature Interpretation Theory*, 24:4, (Routledge, 2013) 261-277 (p.264)

⁹¹ Oxford English Dictionary, 'desire'

⁹² Barbara Taylor, 'Misogyny and Feminism: The Case of Mary Wollstonecraft', in *Constellations*, Vol. 6, No. 4, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1999), 499-512 (p.499)

to a male one and wives were taught 'submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.'⁹³ As discussed in the previous chapters, the eighteenth century developed a concept of female virtue that was rooted in chastity and sexual purity to serve patriarchal functions of legitimacy and therefore attempts to control female sexual conduct. Nancy Armstrong notes that 'of the female alone did [literature] presume to say that [...] subtle nuances of behavior indicated what one was really worth.'⁹⁴ Roxanne Eberle succinctly summarises how Armstrong shows the economic drivers behind these concepts: 'in Armstrong's formulation, all depends on the acquisition of an economic man; the heroine "purchases" the status of wife with her well maintained chastity and the promise to obey a complex set of behavioural rules.'⁹⁵ As these 'behavioural rules' relied on female chastity (and the female sexual purity agenda), female desire, then, becomes an economic exchange dependent on a prescribed set of 'virtuous' behaviours and anything that falls outside of those narrow remits is perceived as transgressive. Christine Roulston argues that 'within the eighteenth-century bourgeois ideology, there is a decreasing space for the representation of female desire. As Poovey has argued, it is the absolute negation of female desire that is presented as ultimately and fundamentally desirable.'⁹⁶ Revolutionary (and at the time scandalous) writers Mary Wollstonecraft and Charlotte Dacre transgressively betrayed the socially acceptable presentations of feminine virtue in their portrayals of actively desiring women who disobeyed conformist, restrictive rules of desire, modesty, and (in Dacre's case) race-relations. Wollstonecraft breaks away from traditional female sexual purity concepts by developing a female virtue that is not reliant on chastity (and modesty) and Dacre presents female characters who boldly defy – or even abandon – the sexual purity agenda altogether.

⁹³ King James Version Bible, Ephesians 5:22

⁹⁴ Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p.4

⁹⁵ Roxanne Eberle, *Chastity and Transgression in Women's Writing 1792-1897* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2002), p.3

⁹⁶ Christine Roulston, *Virtue, Gender and the Authentic Self in Eighteenth-Century Fiction: Richardson, Rousseau, and Laclos* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 1998), p.6

The presentation of female desire that transgressed the status quo was so dreaded by late eighteenth and early nineteenth century society that when writers such as Wollstonecraft and Dacre did indeed step outside the 'chastity-as-virtue' rhetoric to explore a more nuanced female desire they faced scorn, criticism and were even ostracised to a degree: the poem *The Unsex'd Females* (1798) by Richard Polwhele contains many references to Wollstonecraft and much of Dacre's writing was conducted under the pseudonym Rosa Matilda. An early nineteenth-century reviewer denounces both Dacre and Wollstonecraft in one sweep writing:

The lady now under review, who cherishes, I believe, all the extravagant notions of Mary Wollstonecraft, has apparently endeavoured, also, to adopt her vigorous mode of expression. All this may be excusable in a female, but any mind tinctured with morality can never for a moment tolerate the giving publicity to such scenes, heightened by the most florid descriptions, as are delineated in the progress of *Zofloya the Moor*.⁹⁷

The author strongly criticises 'giving publicity' to 'such scenes' of transgression as those presented by the desiring characters penned by Dacre and Wollstonecraft and it is clear that the abandoning of traditional values of female virtue, along with the fact Dacre and Wollstonecraft were *female* writers publishing these texts in the masculine *public* sphere, was shocking to a contemporary audience. Benjamin Heath Malkin, a contemporary of Dacre's and Wollstonecraft's, shows that what was feared about Wollstonecraft's notorious writing on modesty was the social implications of transgressed or transgressive female virtue:

The practice of virtue and the exercise of reason ought to be the object of both [sexes]; yet as the different formation of the body, the difference of strength and constitution in the sexes prove they are not destined to the same employments [...] Mrs Wollstonecraft, though generally aware of this distinction, occasionally forgets it [...]. [H]er observations on sexual modesty, which have given more offence to her readers, [has] rendered mothers more fearful of putting her book into the hands of their daughters, than any other part of her work. Modesty is undoubtedly the virtue of the species; and consists in purity of mind and simplicity in character [...] Philosophically speaking, it is as essential to the perfection of the male, as of the female character; but while the customs of society allow one sex to deviate from its

⁹⁷ Anser Pen-Drag-On, ed., *Scribbleomania, or, The Printer's Devil's Polichronicon. A Sublime Poem* (London: Printed for Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, 1815), pp.142-3

laws without severe reprobation, the other, whose adherence to its principles is from peculiar circumstances more immediately connected with the welfare of mankind, must submit to some restrictions of their natural freedom.⁹⁸

Malkin connects fear of female desire (or here expressed as a lack of 'sexual modesty') to societal concerns (assuming that 'the welfare of mankind' is referring to undamaged patrilineal legitimacy inheritance). Female desire was to be apprehended as it compromised society's norms and therefore not only were presentations of desire reprehended, but also the women themselves who epitomised unfeminine desires (that is to say outside of the female domestic sphere) by making their work public were criticised. To cope with the horror of public presentations of female desire it was often re-packaged into female desirability: the male (character and reader alike) in most fiction of this period is positioned as the desiring subject and the female as the desired object. Not only is the female stripped of her desiring subjectivity but her very desirability hinges on her supposed lack of (particularly "inappropriate") sexual desire. Female desire is controlled by being wrapped up in concepts of virtue and her marketability as a desirable object, as Roulston further explains 'the revealing of the virtuous self involves a veiling of the desiring self [...] [s]pecifically in terms of the female subject, desire is precisely the thing that, although acknowledged must be overcome.'⁹⁹ Gothicism during this period can be seen as a release of these repressed transgressive desires:

The genre of the Gothic has long enabled both its practitioners and its readers to explore subjective desires and identities that are otherwise repressed, denied or forbidden by the culture at large [...] The array of culturally repressed subjectivities at the end of the eighteenth century in England, at a time of lip-service to Enlightenment rationality, of a political paranoia fuelled by the Terror in France, and of the increasing dominance of a bourgeois domesticity, is of course enormous.¹⁰⁰

Wollstonecraft and Dacre employed a genre that was particularly useful for expressing the transgressive, unashamed display of female desire, both sexual and non-sexual, without restraint –

⁹⁸ Benjamin Heath Malkin, *Essays on Subjects Connected with Civilization* (London: Printed by E. Hodson, 1795), pp.263-4

⁹⁹ Roulston, p.187

¹⁰⁰ Anne Mellor, 'Interracial Sexual Desire in Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya*', in *European Romantic Review*, Vol 13, No.2 (Routledge, 2002) 169-173 (p.169)

and in doing this they made a stand against the attempted naturalisation of a narrow, patriarchally-controlled concept of female desire.

One of the more obvious ways in which Dacre and Wollstonecraft challenge the pervading patriarchal ideals of female desire is in their overt presentation of female sexuality. Wollstonecraft's description of Maria's and Darnford's relationship in her unfinished novel *Wrongs of Woman* is, at times, richly erotic:

He took, with more ardour, reassured, a half-consenting, half-reluctant kiss, reluctant only from modesty; and there was a sacredness in her dignified manner of reclining her glowing face on his shoulder, that powerfully impressed him. Desire was lost in more ineffable emotions, and to protect her from insult and sorrow - to make her happy, seemed not only the first wish of his heart, but the most noble duty of his life. Such angelic confidence demanded the fidelity of honour; but could he, feeling her in every pulsation, could he ever change, could he be a villain? [...] So much of heaven did they enjoy, that paradise bloomed around them; or they, by a powerful spell, had been transported into Armida's garden.¹⁰¹

Eroticism, though frowned upon by polite society, was not unusual in eighteenth-century novels; what is interesting here is that there is a desiring relationship between the characters and Maria is not involuntarily or unknowingly being forced into the position of a mute desired object. Although her kiss is 'half-reluctant', Wollstonecraft makes clear that the impediment is society's notion of modesty and does not originate in Maria's desire. Going further, Wollstonecraft does not only place modesty as an obstacle, but subverts the concept entirely and gives Maria's 'glowing face' (a traditionally erotic, even post-coital image) the sacred dignity: it is Maria's passion, her female desire that is elevated. Similarly, Dacre's female characters in her transgressive 1806 novel *Zofloya* are also allowed to indulge in the sexual and the erotic: 'ardent consuming desire'¹⁰², 'Victoria was susceptible only of novel and seducing sensations' (*Zofloya*, p.29), 'pleasure flushed triumphant in

¹⁰¹ Mary Wollstonecraft, 'The Wrongs of Woman, or, Maria. A Fragment', in *Mary and The Wrongs of Woman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp.90-1. Subsequent references given in parenthesis in main body of the text.

¹⁰² Charlotte Dacre, *Zofloya, or The Moor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.28. Subsequent references given in parenthesis in main body of the text.

her animated cheek, and shone in her wild eyes with an almost painful brilliancy' (*Zofloya*, p.30), and 'she enjoyed the fruits with a voluptuous pleasure' (*Zofloya*, p.106). Again, Victoria and Megalena are not purely aesthetic objects designed for the sexual arousal of the male characters and reader, instead they have agency in their desire, and this agency is important in that it challenges the passivity of the female sexual purity agenda.

Despite Dacre's bequeathing Victoria, Megalena, and to some extent Laurina, with sexual subjectivity, it is important to note that there are women in her novel who conform to traditional objectified femininity; notably Amamia and Lilla:

Pure, innocent, free even from the smallest taint of a corrupt thought, was her mind; delicate, symmetrical, and of fairy-like beauty [...] with the palest hue of the virgin rose (*Zofloya*, p.133).

This description of Victoria's antagonist could be compared to any other traditional portrait of ideal eighteenth-century femininity, for example Richardson's Pamela, Sade's Justine or Lewis's Antonia. Interestingly, the opposing portrayals of female desire (and desirability) are constantly pitted against each other in Dacre's novel: dark, ambitious Victoria is compared with fair, meek Lilla and chaste Amamia with wanton Megalena. Likewise, the men in *Zofloya* do not all conform to a set ideal of manhood; indeed, the picture painted of Victoria's brother, Leonardo is a traditionally feminine one:

his hands were clasped over his head, and on his cheek, where the hand of health had planted her brown-red rose, the pearly gems of his tears still hung – his auburn hair sported in graceful curls about his forehead and temples, agitated by the passing breeze – his vermeil lips were half open, and disclosed his polished teeth – his bosom, which he had uncovered to admit the refreshing air, remained disclosed, and contrasted by its snowy whiteness the animated hue of his complexion. [...] His cheeks became suffused with deepening blushes, and his eyes, with which he longed to gaze upon her, were yet cast bashfully towards the earth (*Zofloya*, pp.103-104).

This example is reminiscent of classical pastoral beauty such as that of Perdita in Shakespeare's play *The Winter's Tale*. It seems therefore that Dacre offers a spectrum of male and female characters

who embody either predominantly traditionally 'masculine' or 'feminine' qualities – so, for example, we have the masculine female Victoria and her feminine male brother Leonardo. Perhaps rather than creating a sexual femininity (as, arguably, Wollstonecraft does) Dacre allows some of her female characters a 'masculine' sexual desire and therefore provides them with sexual agency and subjectivity. Moreover, not only are Victoria, Megalina and Laurina bestowed with agency in their 'masculine' sexual desire but also, interestingly, the text hints at unaccountability of some female sexual transgression; '[e]arnestly did Laurina desire to be virtuous, earnestly did she pray for fortitude to preserve her from the power of temptation [...] – no friendly hand extended to save her, no guardian angel hovered nigh' (*Zofloya*, p.11). At this point Laurina desperately wants to satisfy traditional female virtue requirements – or even the 'shew' (*Zofloya*, p.42) of them as in the case of Signora di Modena – but is not aided with any heavenly resources and instead is abandoned to her instinctive desires. In some ways this is similar to Lewis's depiction of the inevitability of Raymond and Agnes's sexual transgression in their young, enraptured passion. The fact that Laurina, although chastised by the narrator for her failure as a mother to protect her children from their fates, is not fully culpable for her sexual transgressions is significant because it means that not only is female desiring subjectivity allowed to be presented in the novel but also further shows conservative female sexual virtue as unattainable for some women.

Instead of creating a separate identity for female desire, Dacre's women are full and complex characters with differing balances of traditionally masculine or feminine traits. Both Kim Michasiw and James Dunn have noted the effect of Dacre's whole characterisation, with Michasiw observing that Dacre attends to 'Victoria's development with remarkable attention to psychological

detail [...] creat[ing] a more nuanced character than Radcliffe manages with her fully formed heroines,¹⁰³ and Dunn concurring:

She explores through her heroines the violence of female sexual desire, and she articulates their full range of doubts, regrets, justifications, and indulgences, in a way that conforms neither to the usual masculine Romantic images of women (as evanescent temptresses or omnipresent mothers) nor to what Anne K. Mellor describes as the prevailing counter-ideology of feminine Romanticism (emphasizing the rationality of women and the values of domesticity and common sense).¹⁰⁴

Wollstonecraft, although providing multi-dimensional characters, arguably approaches female desire slightly differently in her fiction. Barbara Taylor (largely speaking of Wollstonecraft's political work *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*) states that the 'aim then of the feminist enterprise as Wollstonecraft inaugurated it (as Gubar might have said but does not) was less to free women than to abolish them.'¹⁰⁵ There is much evidence to support Taylor's claim, for example Maria (and seemingly Wollstonecraft) laments "'Why was I not born a man, or why was I born at all?'" (*Wrongs of Woman*, p.123) and the novel makes clear that Wollstonecraft believes that society has gendered desire:

Maria impatiently wished to see her fellow-sufferer; but Darnford was still more earnest to obtain an interview. Accustomed to submit to every impulse of passion, and never taught, like women, to restrain the most natural, and acquire, instead of the bewitching frankness of nature, a factitious propriety of behaviour, every desire became a torrent that bore down all opposition (*Wrongs of Woman*, p.84).

However, Wollstonecraft's concept of female desire is more complex than Taylor's deduction allows. Although she does not see an *essential* difference between men and women, Wollstonecraft does believe that their duties are different: in her 'Utopian dreams' (*Vindication*, p.25) the sexes are 'friend[s]' (*Vindication*, p.24) and 'fellow[s]' (*Vindication*, p.25), rather than exposing a belief that womanhood should be abandoned for manhood. Wollstonecraft's portraits are not an amalgamation of various traditionally-set masculinities or femininities, but show the journey of

¹⁰³ Kim Michasiw, 'Introduction', in *Zofloya, or The Moor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.xxvii

¹⁰⁴ James A. Dunn, 'Charlotte Dacre and the Feminization of Violence', in *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, Vol. 53, No. 3 (University of California Press, Dec., 1998), 307-327 (p.307)

¹⁰⁵ Barbara Taylor, p.500.

development within the (female) individual and the gradual revelation of her true desires.¹⁰⁶ When Wollstonecraft states that her character Mary is 'neither a Clarissa, a Lady G-----, nor a Sophie'¹⁰⁷ she is defying the archetypal, Richardsonian representation of ideal femininity; but she also indicates that her protagonist is not a static characterisation of womanhood and female desire (or lack thereof). Wollstonecraft continues this idea in the preface to *Wrongs of Woman* when she points out:

In many works of this species, the hero is allowed to be mortal, and to become wise and virtuous as well as happy, by a train of events and circumstances. The heroines, on the contrary, are to be born immaculate; and to act like goddesses of wisdom, just come forth highly finished Minervas from the head of Jove. (*Wrongs of Woman*, Author's Preface)

Men and women, then, should both be allowed to be works in progress, and their desires should be as individual as themselves without expecting women to be born having already attained an 'immaculate' state of virtue – Wollstonecraft does not truly advocate abandoning one set of prescribed ideals for another, but rather promotes individuality of expression and desire.

In addition to discussing female sexual desire, both Dacre and Wollstonecraft explore female desire in other sections of life; interestingly, both authors often use erotically evocative language even while presenting non-sexual desires. Victoria's desires in *Zofloya* do often stem from lust (first for Il Conte Berenza, then for Henriquez and increasingly for Zofloya himself). However, they are manifest in many ways; she desires to be envied in Venice, to remove Berenza as an obstacle, to murder Lilla her love rival, and she also desires revenge on her mother. When in the presence of Zofloya, the means by which Victoria hopes to achieve her desires, the language of the novel becomes more overtly erotic:

¹⁰⁶ See Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Printed in Great Britain: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013), particularly pages 17 and 24.

¹⁰⁷ Mary Wollstonecraft, 'Mary, a Fiction', in *Mary and The Wrongs of Woman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), Advertisement.

She was now on the point of betraying her inmost thoughts, her dearest wishes, her dark repinings, and hopeless desires; of betraying them, too, to an inferior and an infidel! (*Zofloya*, p.149)

Here Victoria's 'wishes' are sexualised into 'dark repinings' and progressively the eroticism is turned from her interiority and projected onto the person of Zofloya:

Scarce had his silver tones sunk on her ear in thrilling cadence, than she felt even eager to express to the Moor her inmost thoughts: excessive, yet confused pleasure filled her heart [...] Indescribable pleasure dilated the bosom of Victoria, as she listened to the honied accents of the delicate Moor. (*Zofloya*, p. 151-156)

Although Victoria doesn't, at this point anyway, consciously recognise Zofloya as a sexual suitor, the language is brimming with eroticism. There are many reasons for this: he is mysterious, seductive and due to his race forbidden to Victoria. Nevertheless, one such reason he is so highly eroticised could be due to his status as the potential key to Victoria's desires. George Haggerty has also noted that Victoria's desire for Zofloya, although sexualised, is not entirely a sexual one:

Victoria's desire for the Moor is symptomatic of the loss that she suffers in the opening of the novel. She finds in his dark majesty the very contours of the subjectivity that her mother always already denied her. But of course it is a subjectivity defined in loss, and it leads her to an even more grasping, devouring desire, the very reverse of the consolation that the Radcliffean mother could offer.¹⁰⁸

Here Haggerty claims that Victoria's desire is rooted in loss, however much of her desire (particularly surrounding Zofloya) culminates from potential gain – the gain of her desires. This sexualised longing for power would have been seen as unfeminine and unvirtuous; women were not encouraged to desire a life outside of domesticity, and virtue ideals (such as modesty, bashfulness and circumspection) were constructed to be conducive to a private, domestic life. Like Dacre, Wollstonecraft also presents female desires which are not sexual ones but which have been sexualised. The desire that particularly permeates Wollstonecraft's fiction, both narratively and extra-diegetically, is that of reading and writing:

¹⁰⁸ George E. Haggerty, *Mothers and Other Lovers: Gothic Fiction and the Erotics of Loss*, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, Vol. 16, No. 2, (University of Toronto Press, January 2004), 157-172 (pp.167-8)

She read them [Darnford's marginalia] over and over again; and fancy, treacherous fancy, began to sketch a character, congenial with her own, from these shadowy outlines (*Wrongs of Woman*, p.78).

The image of her reading her prospective lover's marginalia is sexualised by the fact that she devours these fragmented notes 'over and over again'; as Roulston has articulated, '[w]riting becomes the site of desire, as the other is recreated and reinvented through the epistolary narrator.'¹⁰⁹ In the eighteenth century this desire in women was 'condemned for intruding in a male domain'¹¹⁰ and Wollstonecraft herself was often criticised for this transgressive desire:

The index to the 1798 issue of the *Antijacobin Review*, for example, lists Wollstonecraft under "p" for "prostitute", a human creature distinct from normal, "modest" women because she takes active pleasure in her profession.¹¹¹

Maria's desire in *Wrongs of Woman* is heightened to an erotic frenzy, possibly as an expression of Wollstonecraft's own frustrated desire to read and write without censure; one eighteenth-century reviewer sarcastically retorted that Wollstonecraft's *Rights of Woman* was 'the manual and vademecum of every romantic Miss'¹¹² revealing the contempt for both female readers and writers of overtly political or transgressive material. Curbing of female non-sexual desire and restricting female sexual desire serve the same function – to redirect women's ambitions back to a private, domestic sphere that ultimately assists the female sexual purity agenda. If women are conditioned to domesticity then they are better placed to carry out their role in producing legitimate children. This is why Wollstonecraft's public desire to write (and the *non-sexual* desires of the characters created by Dacre and herself) are seen as akin to prostitution and therefore an issue of rebelling against traditional female *sexual* virtue.

¹⁰⁹ Roulston, p.xvi-xvii

¹¹⁰ Gary Kelly, 'Introduction', in *Mary and The Wrongs of Woman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.xxi

¹¹¹ Claudia L. Johnson, *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender and Sentimentality in the 1790s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p.11

¹¹² Anon., *Literary Memoirs of Living Authors of Great Britain*, Vol 1 (London: Printed for R. Faulder, 1798), p.218

Dacre and Wollstonecraft transgress traditional portraits of female virtue by providing heroines that are both sexually and otherwise desiring (of unrestricted reading and writing, socially, of power). Further to this, desire is political and both depends upon and influences power structures within society: in order to preserve hegemonic power norms some facets of desire must be controlled. Some examples of such power structures include class, race and gender; transgressive desire disrupts the balance that the dominant groups in a particular society wish to maintain. Gaze and the battle between subjectivity and objectivity are two ways in which both Dacre and Wollstonecraft use desire to transgress and subvert power structures in their novels. As Roulston points out, '[f]emale figures tend to be revealed through the gaze of another – generally a man'¹¹³; traditionally the male character and reader has desiring subjectivity to view the desirable objectified female at his pleasure (with or without her consent / knowledge). The late eighteenth and early nineteenth century culture of this male gaze is apparent through, for example, the prevalence of nymphs (being pursued or observed by men) and eroticised 'exotic' women (peeked at through a hidden harem) in literature and art. ^{Appendix D} James Dunn notes of Dacre:

[S]he seems to say, but let us see what it looks like beyond the stock feminine props of persecution and victimization; let us make women the subject rather than the object of a toxic erotic agony.¹¹⁴

Similarly, Taylor says of Wollstonecraft:

As objects of desire and derogation, women are denied any independent intellectual or moral existence: they are merely, to use Wollstonecraft's word, "chimeras" of the male erotic imagination, manufactured into social existence through romantic conventions and cultural codes.¹¹⁵

Both Dacre and Wollstonecraft determine to make women the subject of their own desires, transgressing the control much of the contemporary literature had over female desire as an objectified state determined by a male desiring subjectivity.

¹¹³ Roulston, p.xix

¹¹⁴ Dunn, p.308

¹¹⁵ Taylor, p.504

One particular way in which Dacre subverts the traditional male gaze is through her interesting use of orientalism and the power struggle between Victoria and Zofloya. Edward Said states in *Orientalism*:

The Orient is one of Europe's deepest and most recurring images of the Other [...] The relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony.¹¹⁶

Here, not only does the West set up the Orient as an 'Other', 'almost a European invention'¹¹⁷ of difference and exoticism, but there is a power in this relationship. As Western consumers of literature and art experience 'The Orient' through the Western interpretation of it, all things 'Oriental' become the objects of Western gaze. Moreover, Oriental (usually female) subjects were subjected to further objectification in eighteenth and nineteenth century works through the West's overt sexualisation of them. Catherine Spooner and Emma McEvoy clarify some of Said's arguments and note this sexualisation:

In his foundational text, *Orientalism* (1978), Said argues that the Western imagination of the East has systematically served to legitimise the process of colonisation since at least the eighteenth century. Said examines how binaries such as civilised/savage, black/white, Christian/pagan, human/animal were deployed in Western literature to master and control the Orient. More than this though, he suggests, 'European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self' (Said 1978: 3). The Orient was not simply Other in this context, but a projection of the repressed desires of the European self. To be savage, black, animal or wild in orientalist terms was not necessarily negative then, but frequently a site of ambivalent (often sexual) desire, eroticism / exoticism and fantasy.¹¹⁸

Again this desiring exoticism of the Orient is employed to 'gain control'; just as the male gaze objectifies the female subject the Western gaze objectifies the Oriental subject – and an object without its own desires is more easily controlled than a desiring subject. Dacre challenges her

¹¹⁶ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2005), pp.1-5

¹¹⁷ Said, p.1

¹¹⁸ Catherine Spooner; Emma McEvoy, *The Routledge Companion to Gothic* (Routledge, 2007), p.97

societal norms when the orientalist gaze is moved from a desiring male perspective of the objectified 'exotic' female to Victoria's desire for Zofloya's Moorish person. Using contemporary travelling surgeon William Lempriere's turn of the nineteenth century text *A Tour From Gibraltar* as an example of traditional male orientalist gaze, we can see how the female subjects are objectified and eroticised:

One of my new patients being ready to receive me, I was desired to walk into her room, where, to my great surprise, I saw nothing but a curtain drawn quite across the apartment similar to that of a theatre which separates the stage from the audience.¹¹⁹

The gaze here is particularly obvious with the utilisation of the theatre performance metaphor. As Lempriere enters the harems of various Oriental princes there is an erotic atmosphere of the forbidden, as only his being a doctor allowed him into these private female spaces. The curtain separating the woman and Lempriere is a common trope in Orientalist texts with a titillating sense of peeping partially obscured glimpses of an 'exotic' (usually at least partly naked) woman. Dacre destabilises this traditional orientalist image by throwing the gaze onto the male figure of Zofloya¹²⁰:

[S]he beheld advancing a Moor, of a noble and majestic form. He was clad in a habit of white and gold; on his head he wore a white turban, which sparkled with emeralds, and was surmounted by a waving feather of green; his arms and legs, which were bare, were encircled with the finest oriental pearl; he wore a collar of gold round his throat, and his ears were decorated with gold rings of an enormous size. Victoria contemplated this figure with an inexplicable awe, and, as she gazed, he bent his knee and extended his arms towards her. While in this attitude, her mind filled with terror, she looked upon him with dread, and essaying to fly, she stumbled and awoke. (*Zofloya*, p.136)

In this dream sequence, not only is the gaze of both Victoria and the reader firmly placed on Zofloya, but along with the rich descriptions of the luxurious commodities that surround his person he is objectified. Furthermore the image is eroticised by his bare arms and legs and the way that Zofloya

¹¹⁹ William Lempriere, *A Tour From Gibraltar*, 3rd edn (Richmond: Published by William Pritchard, 1800), p.98. See also William Beckford, *Vathek* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) for more examples of eroticised Orientalist harem portrayals. For gaze (from a female perspective) on 'Oriental' women in eighteenth-century hamam settings see Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's letters.

¹²⁰ For another example of the gaze being placed on a male 'exotic' figure see Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*.

addresses her by bending his knee and extending his arms in the manner of a suitor professing love. Where the objectified oriental woman's virtue will often be examined in the course of the voyeuristic gaze at her body, by subverting the gendered orientalist gaze Victoria has escaped, at this moment, scrutiny of her sexual virtue. Again, Lempriere continues:

Their ideas of delicacy did not at all correspond with those of our European ladies, for they exhibited the beauties of their limbs and form with a degree of freedom that in any other country would have been thought indecent [...]. This apparent laxity of conduct in the Moorish ladies does not proceed from a depravity in principle. As the female sex in this country are not entrusted with the guardianship of their own honour, there is no virtue in reserve. (Lempriere, pp.251-2)

The nakedness of the women of the harem is annexed to a description of their virtue: to observe an objectified woman is to observe her virtue (or lack of) and Victoria is freed from this by becoming the subject.

Along with the objectification of an orientalised male, Dacre pushes this idea further by expressing female desire for the black male body:

Most of the texts which overtly represented such interracial alliances confined themselves to legitimating a white male desire for the black female body. They depended on the already widespread cultural practice in the British West Indies of sexual liaisons between white male slave-owners and their black female slaves. [...] But all these texts focus on the sexual desires of males, either of a white male for a black female or a black male for a white female. None tell the story from the position of a female subjectivity. More to the point, the very possibility that a white female might sexually prefer the black male body to the white male body was one that British culture in the late eighteenth century either denied or abhorred.¹²¹

In a somewhat revolutionary step, Dacre both subverts the stereotype of the sexualised and orientalised woman but also, perhaps more importantly, expresses transgressive female desire. *Zofloya* is by no means the only text (or real-life occurrence) from this period to depict a white woman's desire for a black man: Shakespeare's *Othello* published two centuries beforehand features

¹²¹ Mellor, pp.169-170

a black man's love for a white woman, eighteenth-century celebrity Olaudah Equiano married local girl Susannah Cullen of Ely in 1792, and *The New Wonderful Magazine* (1794) contains a handful of other real life accounts of such marriages. Equiano, who was used as a voice of the abolitionist movement, also 'saw interracial marriage [...] as a desirable expression of human nature'¹²² and noted that in the colonies it seemed:

as if it were no crime in the whites to rob an innocent African girl of her virtue; but most heinous in a black man only to gratify a passion of nature, where the temptation was offered by one of a different colour, though the most abandoned woman of her species.¹²³

Interestingly, here Equiano appeals to the common understanding of female virtue as a means to propose his (at the time) radical ideas of interracial marriage: that black women had the capacity to possess innate female virtue and white women the capacity to lose it – meaning impeccable sexual virtue in women was a (necessary) levelling field between them. However, although *Zofloya's* portrayal of a relationship between a black man and white woman is not unique, it is highly unusual in its placing of female desire at the centre; in most of the other accounts the reader views the black man's desire for the woman – Othello, as the protagonist, is the driving desire and Equiano the voice of his marriage. Furthermore, Roxann Wheeler explains why presentations of a white man and black woman were less radical than the inverse:

Literary representation also suggests that the success of these fictional marriages hinges on the domestic ideology of marriage as much as on the racial origin and high rank of the characters. In England, marriages in the upper and middle ranks largely concerned the transmission of property, the transference of liquid capital, and the assurance of women's subordinate position in society. As the epigraph from *Pamela* confirms, a woman's rank was conformable to the class position of her husband because of masculine privilege and not vice versa—a phenomenon that reflected the legal definition that there was one body in marriage: the man's. The racial identity of these Other women is, to a large extent, inconsequential in marriage because she is

¹²² Werner Sollors, 'Introduction' in Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, The African, Written by Himself*, ed. By Werner Sollors (London, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), p.xxvi

¹²³ Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, The African, Written by Himself*, ed. By Werner Sollors (London, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), p.78

a woman. In these novels, we can see the overdetermined meanings attached to Christianity and masculine privilege through the body of the heroines. Christian marriage confers acceptable identity on Other women; it is an ideological site safe for depicting an apparently natural racial subordination through the submission of the heroines. Englishwomen are noticeably absent from these interracial romances as they were from novels like Defoe's, which focus on the economic relations of colonialism. At mid century, a European woman's desire for a dark-skinned, non-European, non-Christian man appears scandalous, if not inexplicable, despite the numerous testimonies, fictional and otherwise, of European men's attraction to Other women.¹²⁴

With the eighteenth-century patriarchal view of marriage the male desire is the forefront and therefore overshadows the racial identity of the female body; if anything a black woman is even more likely to be objectified through the paradigms of exoticism. That Victoria, in Dacre's novel, is given her own desiring subjectivity, and chooses a black man to confer that on, is a drastic re-writing of the long-eighteenth-century understanding of desire.

In Dacre's transgressive writing, not only is Zofloya eroticised through progressive presentation of female desire and gaze, but there is power play between his character and Victoria's as they battle through hierarchical power structures. On the one hand Victoria is white and upper class, but on the other she is also a woman; likewise, although Zofloya is black and a servant, he also has noble origins and supernatural powers. At the beginning of Zofloya's and Victoria's relationship, it seems as if Victoria has the power when he says "I will yield to your desire" (*Zofloya*, p.180). However, towards the conclusion of their relationship, the power balance tips in favour towards Zofloya; Victoria 'felt that she was no longer mistress over herself or her faculties' (*Zofloya*, p.232) and exclaims "how completely I am in your power" (*Zofloya*, p.234). There is a constant see-saw effect of power negotiations between the two characters, but ultimately it is Victoria's desire which proves to have the true power in the novel; Zofloya remarks "but yet I cannot, Victoria, compel thee,

¹²⁴ Roxann Wheeler, 'The Complexion of Desire: Racial Ideology and Mid-Eighteenth-Century British Novels', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 32, No.3 (Johns Hopkins University Press, Spring 1999) 309-332 (p.328)

nor so dearly do I covet thee, will thy forced compliance satisfy me” (Zofloya, p.266). Just as Ambrosio’s desire for Antonia in *The Monk* is his downfall, Victoria’s desires are hers – but her failure is not, perhaps, as important as the fact that her desires are allowed a voice: where Antonia is viewed through her rapist’s lust, Victoria’s desires are focussed through herself alone without the need for a male mediator.

Wollstonecraft, like Dacre, acknowledges the connection between power and desire in her fiction – from the advertisements to her works it is clear that she intended to challenge these power structures: 'my main object, the desire of exhibiting the misery and oppression, peculiar to women, that arise out of the partial laws and customs of society' (*Wrongs of Woman*, Author's Preface). Wollstonecraft’s novels reflect a world where a man’s desires not only triumph over a woman’s in the name of female virtue, but his are the only desires which are even allowed to be heard; as the judge put it to Maria, '[w]hat virtuous woman thought of her feelings?' (*Wrongs of Woman*, p.174). The novel follows Maria’s plight at the hands of her tyrannical husband George Venables whose degenerate desires (for Maria’s money, for gambling and drinking, for prostitutes, and for Maria herself even though it is clear that she shows no sexual desire for him) always seem to trump Maria’s. Indeed, the reader learns that George has his wife imprisoned and their baby taken from her precisely because she shows resistance to his sexual and economic desires. Wollstonecraft, unlike Dacre, does not subvert the gender power structures but instead shows the injustice of them. As Gary Kelly notes, '[n]o matter which of the sketched endings Wollstonecraft might finally have preferred, however, it is clear that, as the novel's title indicates, its purpose is protest more than a programme for reform.'¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Kelly, p.xxx

Another way in which both Dacre's and Wollstonecraft's writings are transgressive is in their breaking with the traditional eighteenth-century female sexual purity agenda with fully rounded female characterisation separate from chastity constructs. As discussed in the previous chapters, where male virtue was seen to embody multi-faceted qualities, female virtue was often synonymous with chastity. Dacre and Wollstonecraft explore female characters who make their own sexual choices and therefore exist outside of the normalised eighteenth-century ideal of a virtuous woman – Dacre contrasts the antithetical characters of the sexually pure Lilla with the libidinous protagonist Victoria, whereas Wollstonecraft makes a marked point of exhibiting a type of female virtue in her characters Mary and Maria which is distinct from female sexual purity concepts. Roxanne Eberle has noted a trend in transgressive female sexuality in this time period when she writes, '[b]eside the "rise of the domestic woman" we find the ascension of a sexually transgressive but articulate speaking subject.'¹²⁶ This quote acknowledges two dichotomous female portraits: that of the chaste, domestic female ideal, and the sexually desiring transgressor that interestingly emerged together and opposing. In *The Monk* we have Ambrosio's simultaneous desire for the virginal Antonia and the sexually active Matilda; in Sade's gothic works we see the misfortunes of the chaste Justine and the triumphs of her transgressive sister Juliette; Eliza Parson's novel *The Castle of Wolfenbach* holds up the virtuous Matilda against her shamelessly coquettish love rival Mademoiselle de Fontelle; and later in Stoker's *Dracula* we have the 'proper' Englishwomen contrasted with Dracula's voluptuous vampire women. Dacre continues this tradition of splitting female characters into "bad"/sexual and "good"/pure with her conflicting characters Lilla and Victoria: where Victoria is dark, Lilla is fair, where she is tall, Lilla is petite, and where she is sexual, Lilla's only sexuality comes from her objectified virginity. Lilla is described in terms of delicate purity and innocence, whereas Dacre makes clear that with Victoria 'no mild, no gentle, no endearing virtues, were depicted there' (*Zofloya*, p.76). Victoria embodies active female desire while Lilla represents traditional 'devoted

¹²⁶ Eberle, p.4

femininity'¹²⁷; James Dunn astutely remarks that 'Victoria's rage is less at Lilla herself than at Henriquez for prizing feminine emptiness.'¹²⁸ He continues this idea further by also looking at Dacre's presentation of male desire:

Dacre's male characters, in contrast, tend to desire only what is thoroughly mediated by cultural norms, particularly regarding feminine attractiveness and virtue. Many of them are ineffectual Platonists whose impossibly high standards for wifely purity leave them either perennial bachelors or deluded cuckolds.¹²⁹

Although Dacre is using the traditional framework of male desiring subjects lusting over culturally normalised sexually pure ideal femininity, the fact that she unashamedly thrusts her protagonist Victoria into the limelight, and the reader ultimately follows her exciting romp rather than Lilla's story of purity, is significant. Wollstonecraft, however, is much less subtle in her declarations about female virtue. In her earlier work of fiction she sarcastically retorts, '[s]he was chaste, according to the vulgar acceptance of the word, that is, she did not make any actual *faux pas*' (*Mary*, p.7) but makes the point even more obvious in her last novel, '[a] false morality is even established, which makes all the virtue of women consist in chastity, submission, and the forgiveness of injuries' (*Wrongs of Woman*, p.172). Unlike Dacre, Wollstonecraft's female characters aren't transgressive because they are heedlessly libidinous (although they do express, and act on, their sexual desires); instead they are transgressive because she portrays them as virtuous, but detaches that virtue from their chastity.

Wollstonecraft and Dacre both transgress the traditional eighteenth-century concept of female virtue in their respective novels, but in differing ways: Dacre unabashedly portrays the romps of a woman who has abandoned the ideals of virtuous femininity, whereas Wollstonecraft adapts

¹²⁷ Haggerty, p.168

¹²⁸ Dunn, p.314

¹²⁹ Dunn, p.318

the concept of virtue itself. Interestingly, *Zofloya* does contain a moral framing device and Dacre begins her narrative indicating an author's responsibility to deduce a moral from a story:

The historian who would wish his lessons to sink deep into the heart, thereby essaying to render mankind virtuous and more happy, must not content himself with simply detailing a series of events – he must ascertain causes, and follow progressively their effects; he must draw deductions from incidents as they arise, and ever revert to the actuating principle. (*Zofloya*, p.3)

Further to this, she wraps her novel up with a statement affirming divine retribution; '[s]uch are the retributions of a just Providence, which, though sometimes tardy, are generally sure, even in this world' (*Zofloya*, p.256). However, as Mellor has pointed out:

In the context of this cultural paranoia concerning interracial sexuality, it should not surprise us that when a female writer wished to explore the passionate desire of a white woman for a black man, she felt constrained to frame her novel – as many Gothic novels are framed – within a pat Christian moral. In reading Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya, or The Moor*, published in 1806, however, we should not take this moral over-seriously.¹³⁰

Dacre must justify her narrative of transgressive desires within cultural moral reasoning in order to protect herself from total condemnation. Moreover, this shoe-horned morality and that Victoria meets a grisly end is almost immaterial; the fact that Victoria is able to express her desires, sexual and otherwise, and remains unrepentant to the end, is not only significant, but arguably the main point. Towards the close of the novel Victoria defiantly exclaims, "'do I repent me of that which I have done? No – I regret only the state to which circumstances have reduced me'" (*Zofloya*, p.246); perhaps this statement could be taken as an example to contemporary women, that female desire in itself is not to be repented. James Dunn also finds Dacre's expression of desiring female subjectivity of crucial significance:

Beautiful but merciless women are of course nothing new in the literature of eros, and most of Dacre's femmes fatales meet violent and ignominious ends. But, then again, so do her "virtuous" characters. Vice may not be crowned with happiness here, but neither is virtue. [...] In fact, the very term femme fatale is no longer adequate in Dacre's world: some of her women are fundamentally "good" and some

¹³⁰ Mellor, p.171

fundamentally "evil," but beyond good and evil her women are all what might be called "desiring subjects."¹³¹

Dacre's lack of a clear moral system of punishment in her novel, is transgressive in itself – "proper" novels, such as of the Richardsonian type, were meant to show that vice is punished and virtue, particularly female sexual virtue, is rewarded either in this world or the next¹³². The rampant female desire exhibited in *Zofloya* is a defiance of the codified eighteenth-century concept of objectified female virtue.

Wollstonecraft's ideas on the reward or punishment of female virtue are more complex still than Dacre's and are intertwined with her views on theodicy. As Daniel Robinson's useful paper puts it, '[t]heodicy attempts to prove the consistency of the notion that (1) there is an omnipotent God (2) who is wholly good and (3) that there is evil and suffering in the world.'¹³³ As mentioned above much fiction of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries manages to sidestep confrontation with theodical dilemmas by simply applying a rhetoric of "good things happen to good people". In a typical Gothic novel, although the heroine will be challenged and may suffer throughout the narrative, their virtue is nearly always rewarded in the end; for example Parsons ties up *The Castle of Wolfenbach* with '[t]hus, after a variety of strange and melancholy incidents, Matilda received the reward of her steadiness, fortitude, and virtuous self-denial. A consciousness of performing her several duties ensured her happiness.'¹³⁴ Where Sade inverts this notion and Dacre ignores it entirely, Wollstonecraft attempts to reconcile the recognition that in the real world misfortunes commonly befall "good" women with her notion of a just God. In her earlier novel *Mary*, Wollstonecraft 'essentially creates a female Job who suffers but patiently maintains her faith in the

¹³¹ Dunn, p.318

¹³² Although Clarissa in Richardson's novel of the same name, and Antonia in Lewis's *The Monk* do die following their rapes, both authors make clear that they receive their Heavenly reward.

¹³³ Daniel Robinson, 'Theodicy Versus Feminist Strategy in Mary Wollstonecraft's Fiction', in *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, Vol. 9, No. 2, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, January 1997) 183-202 (p.184)

¹³⁴ Eliza Parsons, *The Castle of Wolfenbach, A German Story*, ed. by Diane Long Hoeveler (Kansas City: Valancourt Books, 2007), p.202

divine justice of providence and achieves a kind of Christian heroism through her notion of benevolence on earth.¹³⁵ Mary has a relatively miserable life of middle-class suffering (neglectful parents, an unloving husband, the death of her only true friend, and the death of her lover) with only fleeting moments of happiness. The reader is set up to empathise with Mary, and recognise her as a virtuous, albeit unconventional, heroine – therefore it may seem strange that her patient suffering is not rewarded in the end; instead, the reader must be satisfied with Mary's exclamation '[i]nscrutable are the ways of Heaven!' (*Mary*, p.40). In *Mary* it appears that Wollstonecraft is attempting to balance portraying what she considers a truly virtuous heroine with a portrayal of the sufferings of women in a patriarchal society; by the time she writes *Wrongs of Woman* her emphasis is much more on the latter point. Robinson goes on to explain this apparent abandonment of theodicy principles in her last novel:

Maria does not ponder the existence of evil but accepts it as a consequence of being born a woman. Therein lies Wollstonecraft's feminist strategy: evil is a fact of female existence, and Wollstonecraft uses the language of suffering to expose the futility of theodicy and the reckless asceticism of providential resignation. [...] Wollstonecraft is no longer interested in questioning the divine will of providence because the answer is no longer relevant to the issues at hand. [...] In *The Wrongs of Woman*, she clearly has arrived at an understanding that theodicy may soothe a theologically troubled individual but does little to assuage the evils of society.¹³⁶

Wollstonecraft, not only changes the meaning of female virtue from a construct with purely sexual connotations but also moves away from a dogma that “good” (or obedient / non-transgressive) women will always be rewarded.

Both Wollstonecraft and Dacre contribute to late eighteenth / early nineteenth-century Gothic by providing their readers with female protagonists who have transgressed societal concepts of virtuous femininity. Through their abandonment of a female virtue dependent on chastity, and

¹³⁵ Robinson, p.190

¹³⁶ Robinson, pp.199-200

portrayal of active female desire, the characters of their respective novels challenge their contemporary patriarchal cultural norms. Where Radcliffe widened the concept of female virtue away from a simple chastity construct, Dacre and Wollstonecraft push their presentations of women even further by allowing them to explore their desires, both sexual and otherwise – and in this sense they are truly transgressive of societal expectations of femininity.

Conclusion

By examining a sample of late eighteenth to early nineteenth-century Gothic texts – from “Monk” Lewis and traditional Gothic writer Radcliffe, to more radical writers such as Wollstonecraft and Dacre – what becomes clear is that the genre heavily engaged in a relationship with the concept of female virtue; what is not as clear is *how* these examples complicate the notion. In my introduction I outlined what I have termed a ‘sexual purity agenda’ which names a phenomenon that seemed to sweep through eighteenth-century literature (particularly prevalent in increasingly popular conduct manuals) creating a model of ideal womanhood that was largely based on chastity. Writing about eighteenth-century philosopher Hume, Catherine Gardener notes:

We should recognize that for Hume's contemporaries the issue of chastity would have been an evident and important one. The sort of audience that Hume would have had in mind for the *Treatise* would have already accepted female chastity as a socially imposed virtue and - even if they would not have used those terms - recognized the artificiality or social utility of the virtue of female chastity.¹³⁷

This highlights not only the importance placed on female chastity but also the social utility of such a ‘virtue’. As explored in my introduction and previous chapters, it has long been understood that in a patriarchal world there is a dependence on a female sexual purity that would ensure legitimate male heirs inheriting property, capital and family honour. The Gothic novels of the eighteenth century frequently indulged in the issues of inheritance and legitimacy – almost every work contains some thematic example of this usually in the form

¹³⁷ Catherine Villanueva Gardner, 'Chastity and the Practice of the World in Hume's *Treatise*', *Hume Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (November 2006), 331-345 (p.332)

of a displaced, but ultimately aristocratic hero or heroine. Suzanne Desan (speaking of the impact of the Revolutionary politics of the time) states:

[T]he Revolution rocked the economic, legal, and cultural bases of the patriarchal, lineage family. Two striking transformations stand out: the decline of parental, especially paternal, authority; and the challenge to marital indissolubility and male authority within marriage. These changes demanded new family strategies for the long term.¹³⁸

The Gothic novels I examine address, or at least note, the changing dynamics of established patrilineal family inheritance by engaging with – or challenging – female virtue norms.

Amidst the political unrest and general social uneasiness, many Gothic novels nostalgically looked back to times where social order was clear: inheritance was passed lineally through the male line and preserved by a series of immaculate wives, and the classes kept to themselves. However, while nostalgic conservatism is strongly maintained, and the displaced hero/heroine is always revealed to be truly aristocratic and therefore able to marry an appropriately matched spouse, the rising bourgeois influence of the middle classes is often weaved into this conservatism. Although the hero(ine) of the Gothic novel, we are always told, is aristocratic, they could be easily recognised as following decidedly middle-class values: a strong (arguably middle-class) sense of meritocracy is present and (for example in the case of the Marchesa di Vivaldi of *The Italian*) the protagonists are expected to prove their entitlement to the benefits of aristocracy. This is particularly true for female characters, and the qualities they were expected to demonstrate possession of to allow them access to the rights of the upper class often depended on middle-class ideals of female sexual purity. Again, in *The Italian* Ellena begins the novel appearing middle class and –

¹³⁸ Suzanne Desan, 'The Social Revolution in France Revolutionary Families', *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 40, No. 4, (Summer 2007), 996-1003 (p.998).

although by the end it is revealed that she is not only blessed with aristocratic tendencies but also real titles – the entire novel trials her obedience to the middle-class values laid out in conduct books: modesty, virtue, circumspection and knowing one's place. Chastity is the chief of female values expected of eighteenth-century heroines and debatably it serves both middle-class and aristocratic purposes, making it ideal for proponents of conservatism.

On surface value it would seem that the upper classes would have more vested interest in female chastity to secure their land, capital and titles for blood heirs, but as Gardner notes:

For the aristocracy, good breeding would have also secured their reputation, and it would appear that a few dents need not have damaged a female aristocrat's reputation irrevocably. For the middling classes, on the other hand, reputation was needed to secure class status, as well as to contribute to the economic security of the business or profession.¹³⁹

This phenomenon can be observed in the fact that aristocratic socialite Georgiana Cavendish was allowed to raise her illegitimate daughter (alongside her legitimate children and her husband's illegitimate child), while when it became apparent that Wollstonecraft had never been married to Imlay when she had their daughter, hers and Godwin's reputations were damaged. The period novel that particularly highlights this marriage of the classes in the common cause of chastity is *Pamela*; although Richardson's heroine has an official working class background, she is representative of middle-class values and perhaps more importantly social mobility. While Pamela's ascension through the class system was scandalous to many, she was by and large accepted by the eighteenth-century reading public because she adhered to the established social code: she was allowed to rise even

¹³⁹ Gardner, p.338

above a middle-class station because she was inherently of middle-class 'value'. Booker writes:

Richardson confronts his contemporaries' anxiety about the threat of such servants with an embodied social virtue whose elevation is carefully supervised. Pamela's worthiness is a gift from her masters, as she informs us on the novel's opening page: "as my lady's goodness had put me to write and cast accounts, and made me a little expert at my needle, and otherwise qualified above my degree, it was not every family that could have found a place that your poor Pamela was fit for" (11). Richardson's emphasis on the notion that Pamela's accomplishments are granted rather than seized ensures her participation in the master's social program. By depicting Pamela as a resistant recipient of social advancement, Richardson retains control over emulation, bringing her subversive potential under the authority of the master's hand.¹⁴⁰

Pamela is permitted social mobility because she embodies a socially useful female virtue that is endorsed and, as Booker suggests here, controlled by the upper classes. Similarly the values of chastity and modesty present in the Gothic novels looked at in this thesis appease both the upper and middling classes – they are diplomatic in their observance of this universal social code of chastity and often conservative in their nostalgic obedience to female virtue concepts which serve to protect patriarchal legitimacy.

That these female virtue concepts written copiously about often became categorically synonymous with chastity is observable in many texts of the eighteenth century (again I have discussed this in relation to *Pamela* in particular in my second chapter) but Jennifer Golightly clarifies further when she notes:

Chastity was the basis for all other virtues in a woman. Without chastity, any other quality a woman might possess was nullified. With chastity, a woman

¹⁴⁰ Kristina Booker, 'Richardson's *Pamela*, Defoe's *Roxana*, and Emulation Anxiety in Eighteenth-Century Britain', *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 2, (University of Pennsylvania Press, Spring 2014), 42-62 (p.46)

lacking the most basic virtues - compassion, intelligence, benevolence - could nevertheless be universally esteemed.¹⁴¹

While this is clear in many works of the long eighteenth century (again, arguably true of *Pamela's* heroine), many of the Gothic novels I have examined appear to be branching away from this simplistic approach to a more refined, holistic view of female virtue. Although Lewis's Antonia fits Golightly's description of traditional female virtue by needing only to be chaste to be a 'good' heroine, his Agnes complicates this simplicity. Similarly, Radcliffe extends female virtue constructs with her heroine's feminine virtue that is intelligent, prudent and encompasses many facets. Dacre takes a different approach: instead of moulding and developing existing concepts of female virtue her protagonist Victoria is given powerful sexual agency and is not only 'bad' because she is unchaste but also because she is selfish, unkind and vengeful. Wollstonecraft, even more progressively, moves away almost entirely from the 'chastity as virtue' equation by attempting to redefine female virtue itself independent of sexual purity. The Gothic novels were not just using existing tropes of a chaste female virtue but rather building on the picture of what it meant for a heroine to be virtuous, thus expanding the notion of female virtue altogether. However, it must be noted that in all but the most radical texts (such as Dacre and Wollstonecraft's work) it was requisite for the protagonist to be a virgin and the new model of virtue being proposed in most of the novels here examined has not strayed far from the patriarchal ideals of female sexual purity and modesty. Even Dacre's Victoria, while radical in its presentation of an appetitive and burgeoning female protagonist driving the plot, is severely punished for her crimes – amongst which is her lack of chastity.¹⁴² Of the writers explored in this thesis only

¹⁴¹ Jennifer Golightly, *The Family, Marriage, and Radicalism in British Women's Novels of the 1790s: Public Affection and Private Affliction* (Plymouth: Bucknell University Press, 2012), p.62

¹⁴² However, Victoria is also a murderer and practitioner of black arts – far more serious crimes than sexual transgression.

Wollstonecraft truly challenges the accepted ideal that a woman's virtue relied upon her chastity; her characters Mary and Maria lament that they are born into a society where worth is measured by traditional markers of modesty and outside of her fiction Wollstonecraft deplores the gendered sexual double standard that she believed held women back from achieving equality.¹⁴³

The Gothic writers here encountered were using established models of female virtue from conduct books published throughout the long eighteenth century (such Fordyce and Gisborne) and evolving them into a more complex system of feminine ideals of virtue. These reconsiderations of female virtue are envisioned along a scale of progress towards a new model of a virtue that is not so tantamount to chastity: from Lewis's virginal Antonia, through his forgiven Agnes and Radcliffe's nuanced Ellena, to Dacre's actively sexual Victoria, ultimately leading to Wollstonecraft's progressive Mary and Maria. While none of the presentations of female virtue from the Gothic novels examined are what we could explicitly term feminist today, the writers used themes of sexual transgression (rape, incest, and sexual liaisons) to explore conventional ideas of female virtue, question absolute ideals of chastity, and in the case of Wollstonecraft outright refute it. When considered alongside contextual documents of the eighteenth century, such as conduct books and rape trial transcripts, many of these writings were pioneering in their portrayals of sexual transgression as well as their re-modelling of a more rounded female virtue.

¹⁴³ See *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.

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Appendices

Appendix A



Figure 1 - Anon., *The Midnight Assassin; or, Confession of the Monk Rinaldi* (London: Printed and Sold by Dean and Munday, 1814)

The image is from the chapbook and shows an illuminated sleeping woman, dressed in white, unaware of her assassin hovering over her. In both *The Italian* and this hackneyed chapbook version there are sexual undertones to this scene.

Appendix B

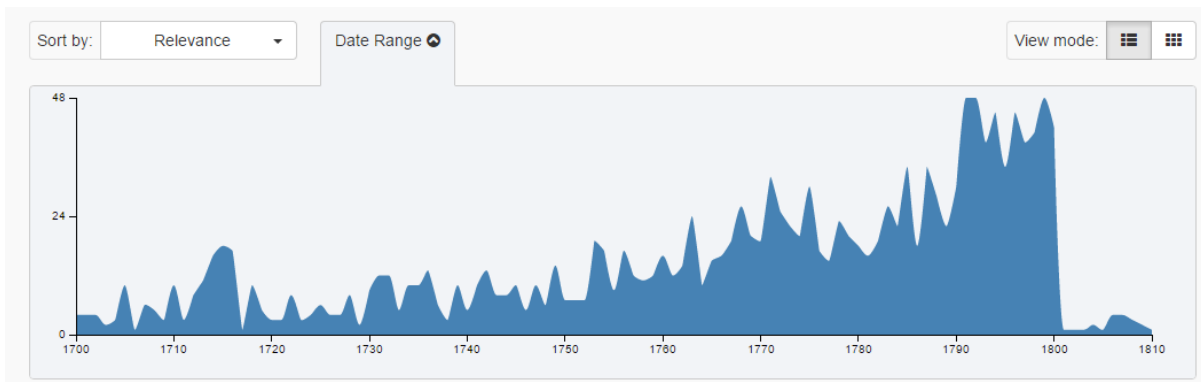


Figure 2 – Screen Shot graph showing publication output volume against date on ECCO as of 11/01/2016 with search parameters ‘Matthew Hale’ and ‘1700-1810’

This graph shows that although a seventeenth-century writer, there was a steady incline of publications of, and references to, his work throughout the eighteenth century with a substantial peak between 1790 and 1800.

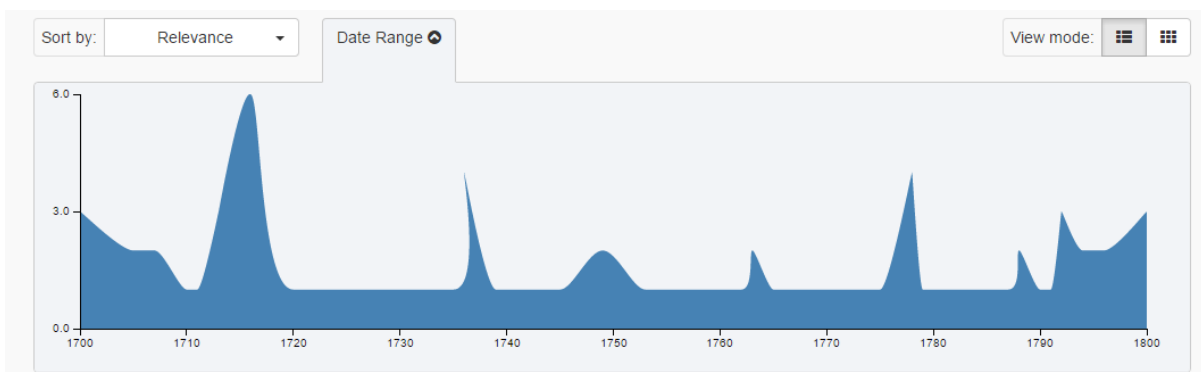


Figure 3 – Screen Shot graph showing publication output volume against date on ECCO as of 11/01/2016 with search parameters ‘Matthew Hale’ and ‘1700-1810’ but limited to works authored by Hale himself.

Looking at the reprint output of works authored by Hale within the same dates there seems to be sustained interest in Hale’s writing during the century (suggesting regular re-prints year on year) with noticeable spikes around certain dates. Interestingly there is increased re-publication throughout the 1790s as a whole.

Appendix C

In this case between Wade and Motherhill the accused was acquitted. The victim, Miss Wade, was said to be of 'very deficient' intellect ('Trial of Motherhill', p.12) and returned to her home with injuries consistent with a rape struggle, including inflamed genitalia, and ripped clothes. The man, who Wade confirmed as her assailant, was arrested when he was found following her with blood and dirt on his clothes and reportedly said to Wade's father, "I have been a very wicked wretch and deserved to be hanged a long time" ('Trial of Motherhill', p.12). The only defence offered by Motherhill's representation was 'the evidence for the prosecution having proved what we meant to have called witnesses for – That from the number of common women continually about the streets, it was possible to mistake' ('Trial of Motherhill', p.14). Eighteenth-century rape cases rarely got to court and defendants were rarely convicted, Durston points out:

[R]ape seems to have been an offence that only rarely got to court, and was difficult to prosecute successfully when it did. Even in the early 1800s, three times as many murder trials came before the English courts as those for rape. There were good reasons for this. Legally, the definition of rape was uncertain and, even more importantly, it was hard to substantiate with admissible evidence. Magistrates were reluctant to commit men accused of the crime for trial, grand juries often refused to indict them when they did, and, if indicted petty juries were frequently unwilling to convict them. As a result, and even by modern standards, there was probably massive under-reporting of the crime. (Durston, p.168)

The Catherine Wade case became very famous; from reading the details it seems astonishing that a jury found him innocent. The text states '[t]hey [the jury] had been consulting together for almost half an hour, and appeared somewhat embarrassed respecting the verdict they should give. [...] They addressed the court requesting to know if any punishment could be inflicted on the prisoner short of death. They were informed that there was no alternative but death or acquittal; when expressing their doubts about some particulars, they, in a few minutes, brought in a verdict NOT *Guilty*' ('Trial of Motherhill', p.15). When the only outcomes of rape trials were capital punishment or freedom, and with only circumstantial evidence, many juries found it difficult to pronounce the death sentence. The death penalty for rape was repealed in the UK in 1841.

Appendix D – The Male Orientalist Gaze in Literature and Art of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries



Figure 4 - Louis Jean François Lagrenée, 'Venus and Nymphs Bathing' (1776)

Nymphs were a common subject for Romantic period art and literature (particularly poetry). Here is a traditional representation of nymphs where they are frolicking naked unaware of any observation. Although they are fictional beings and not literally being observed, they are still presented as aesthetic objects through a gaze for the viewing pleasure of the onlooker/ art consumer.

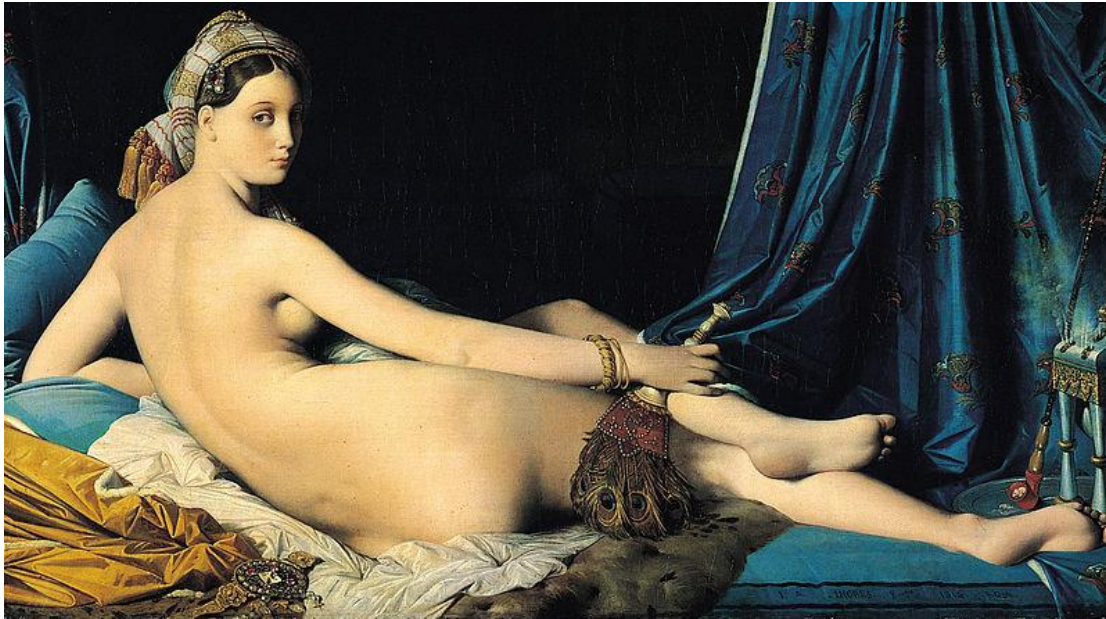


Figure 5 - Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, 'The Grand Odalisque' (1814)

A common ally of Orientalism is the presentation of luxury; the Turkish concubine/wife in this painting is dripping in expensive, luxurious items such as the brightly coloured silks and the peacock tail fan. The fact this woman is placed amongst all these commodities, places her as one of many objects, rather than a subject. Furthermore, although she is looking right at the gazer (unlike the unaware nymphs) she is denied her own subjectivity and is not in command of her representation – with her back to the observer and a quick glance over her shoulder, it feels more as if her private space has been intruded on.



Figure 6 - Jean-Leon Gerome, 'Terrace of the Seraglio' (1898)

A later portrayal of a harem, this representation is a peek into a female space where women are relaxing naked and unaware of their intrusion.



Figure 7 - Jean Geiser, 'Postcard' (c.1910s)

Although a twentieth-century photograph, this representation of Orientalism is particularly interesting. The woman's face is obscured (in concurrence with Middle-Eastern traditions) and therefore plays into the hidden/forbidden Oriental stereotype, but her naked breasts are revealed and therefore she is overtly sexualised. She seems posing for the photograph, rather than the glimpsed women of the other examples, but is not expressing herself as a subject, instead she has been placed into a pose that is designed for the gazer's erotic stimulation.