

Sensibility, Enlightenment and
Romanticism: British Fiction,
1789 - 1820

Nicola Lloyd

PhD Thesis
Cardiff University
September 2013

Summary

This thesis is a study of the discourse of sensibility in Romantic-period fiction. It suggests that sensibility was not, as has often been assumed, merely a transient and fashionable mode that peaked in the mid eighteenth-century before its association with radicalism and subsequent demise in the 1790s. Instead, it was redirected and refashioned during the first decades of the nineteenth century, functioning in effect as a metanarrative for the Romantic novel. The discourse of sensibility was both a formative influence on and a central ideological component of literary Romanticism and this thesis reads it as a creative, protean and self-conscious force that is capable of challenging many of our assumptions about the Romantic period.

Analysing representative fictions by Ann Radcliffe, Charlotte Dacre, William Godwin, Sydney Owenson and Walter Scott, each chapter traces the complex interactions of eighteenth-century discourses of moral philosophy and perception in the sub-genres of the gothic novel, the Jacobin novel, the national tale and historical fiction. In doing so, the evidence of sensibility's pervasive influence destabilises any notion of discrete and fixed generic categories by suggesting widespread correlations and overlaps. Likewise, this generic assimilation and mutation that operates under the banner of sensibility proposes a challenge to conventional notions of Romantic aesthetic unity and

spontaneity, suggesting instead a self-conscious and experimental engagement with genre.

Finally, the novels considered depict a hybrid model of sensibility in which Enlightenment formations of feeling and perception as a means of social coherence coexist with Romantic models of alienated selfhood. As a result, the exploration of the discourse of sensibility in the Romantic novel provides an opportunity to reassess the complex and often contradictory relationship between the aesthetics of Enlightenment and Romanticism.

Acknowledgements

First I would like to thank Anthony Mandal for his supervision and support. His patience, advice and critical engagement have been invaluable and he has been unfailingly generous with his time, resources and understanding.

Also to be thanked are Jane Moore and Heather Worthington for their input and advice and Martin Coyle for his assistance in preparing the initial research proposal, as well as for guidance during the later stages.

For financial assistance I am grateful to the School of English, Communication and Philosophy at Cardiff University for funding for conference attendance and research trips. Thanks are also due to Nicola Bassett, Haley Miles and Rhian Rattray for their administrative support. I must also thank my colleagues in the Welsh School of Architecture for their understanding and flexibility, especially during the final stages of the project.

To Rob Gossedge, thanks are due for critical intellect and sound judgment (not to mention composing his own acknowledgement); I count myself lucky to have had the benefit of his advice.

Finally, my biggest debts are to my family and friends for their tireless encouragement and kindness, which have gone well beyond the call of duty.

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Chapter One

Introduction: Sensibility and the Romantic Novel

We have been accustomed to associate with our ideas of this character the amiable virtues of a Harley, feeling deeply the distresses of others and patient, though not insensible, of his own. But Fleetwood [...] feels absolutely and exclusively for [...] Fleetwood himself [...] In short, the new Man of Feeling, in his calm moments a determined egotist, is, in his state of irritation, a frantic madman.¹

Walter Scott (1805)

When it comes to the category of the ‘Romantic novel’, Walter Scott’s scathing review of William Godwin’s *Fleetwood* (1805) is significant in a number of ways. First, the very act of Godwin’s engagement with the paradigm of the eighteenth-century sentimental novel in his self-styled reworking of Henry Mackenzie’s *The Man of Feeling* (1771) is surprising, to say the least. Not only would Godwin – as a central figure in the movement of Jacobin rationalism – seem highly unlikely to engage with the literary tradition of novelistic sensibility, the fact that he was doing so in 1805, apparently well beyond the peak of a genre that is generally supposed to have met its demise in the final decade of the previous century, is unexpected. Second, the idea that Scott – pioneer of the realist form of the historical novel – would engage in such an impassioned defence of an outmoded genre founded in excessive and improbable displays of private feeling poses a challenge to our understanding of the nineteenth-century novel.

¹ *Edinburgh Review*, 6 (April 1805), 182-93 (pp. 192-93).

This suggests a need for a rethinking of the Romantic novel's relationship to the eighteenth-century discourse of sensibility and this thesis aims to provide an alternative account. It contends that it was not, as has often been suggested, merely a transient and fashionable discourse that peaked in the mid eighteenth-century before its association with radicalism and subsequent demise in the 1790s. In fact, the discourse of sensibility can be read as a metanarrative for the Romantic novel. Considering it in this way offers some important insights into the complex and fraught category of Romantic fiction. As Miriam Wallace has recently observed, to 'claim prose fiction [of the years 1785-1832] as "Romantic" raises as many questions as it answers'.² Defining the Romantic novel is problematic in terms of period designation, genre and its engagement with the traditional aesthetic tropes of Romanticism. In considering the role of sensibility in the novel between 1789 and 1820, this thesis hopes to improve our understanding of the Romantic novel, especially within the context of its Enlightenment heritage. By tracing the complex interactions of eighteenth-century discourses of moral philosophy and perception in the novel of the early nineteenth century, it seeks to destabilise the binary of Enlightenment and Romanticism, suggesting sensibility as a hybrid form of Enlightenment sociability and Romantic selfhood.

The thesis discusses the work of five major novelists of the Romantic period: Ann Radcliffe, Charlotte Dacre, William Godwin, Sydney Owenson and Walter Scott. Given that the discourse of sensibility is ubiquitous in the fiction of this era, the work of any number of writers could have appeared here. However, in order to demonstrate the latitude of sensibility in the period, it seems appropriate to consider the work of writers

² Miriam L. Wallace, 'Enlightened Romanticism', in *Enlightening Romanticism, Romancing the Enlightenment: British Novels from 1750 to 1832*, ed. by Miriam L. Wallace (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 1-20 (pp. 8-9).

from a range of fictional sub-genres. As such, chapter two discusses Ann Radcliffe and Charlotte Dacre within the context of the gothic novel and sensation, chapter three considers the interaction between sympathy and the Jacobin novel in the fiction of William Godwin, and chapters four and five examine the role of sensibility in the national tales of Sydney Owenson and the historical novels of Walter Scott. However, these authors do not feature merely as representatives of a variety of sub-genres. Their prominence as literary figures and pioneers of their respective strands of the novel means that their fiction demonstrates numerous and diverse intertextual affiliations, suggesting that a widespread and interactive process of sentimental reconfiguration was taking place at this time. Each of the authors discussed was responsible for various innovations and experimentations with the novel form in the Romantic period and, as such, engage in a self-conscious interrogation of the discourse of sensibility and its implications for fictional representation.

A Brief History of Sensibility: Terminology, Philosophy and the Cultural Context

The terms of ‘sensibility’, ‘sentiment’ and ‘sympathy’ are notoriously problematic; in fact, the very act of grouping the three together is potentially contentious. Given the immensely complex formulation of the terms in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it is not possible to offer a comprehensive account of their etymologies here but it is necessary to offer some working definitions in order to clarify the way they are used throughout the thesis. ‘Sensibility’ is perhaps the most equivocal term because it functions as a marker of genre (as in the ‘novel of sensibility’), as an early critical designation for the period between the Augustan and Romantic eras and as an aesthetic

term in its own right. In *Keywords*, Raymond Williams notes that the earliest use of the term sensibility (dating from the fifteenth century) was in order to define ‘physical feeling or sense perception’.³ However, it was not until the eighteenth century that its use became widespread as a signifier of acute perception of emotion. Williams points out that this usage extended beyond this delineation of an individual physical or emotional condition to become ‘a social generalization of certain personal qualities, or, to put it another way, a personal appropriation of certain social qualities’.⁴ This interaction with ‘social qualities’ meant that sensibility also belonged to the wider field of taste and cultivation: to be able to feel acutely was an indicator of refinement and civility. Eighteenth-century uses of sensibility, then, ‘ranged from a use much like that of modern *awareness* (not only *consciousness* but *conscience*) to a strong form of what the word appears literally to mean, the ability to feel’, to a capacity for aesthetic appreciation of literature, art, landscape and so on.⁵

The term ‘sentiment’ in the seventeenth century applied to both opinion and emotion but, again, it was not until the mid eighteenth century that the term ‘sentimental’ became widely used. The famous letter from Lady Bradshaigh to Samuel Richardson in 1749 demonstrates its immense popularity: she asks his opinion of the word ‘*sentimental*, so much in vogue among the polite’ observing that ‘[e]verything clever and agreeable is comprehended in that word. I am frequently astonished to hear one is such a *sentimental* man; we were a *sentimental* party; I have been taking a *sentimental* walk’.⁶ As Williams

³ Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana, 1976; repr. 1983), p. 280.

⁴ Williams, *Keywords*, p. 281.

⁵ Williams, *Keywords*, p. 281.

⁶ Lady Bradshaigh, Letter to Samuel Richardson, 1749, in *The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*, ed. by Anna Laetitia Barbauld, 6 vols (London: Phillips, 1804), IV, 282-83.

points out, '[t]he association with sensibility was then close: a conscious openness to feelings, and also a conspicuous consumption of feelings'.⁷ These very definitions draw attention to the conflicting nature of sensibility and sentiment: they were, then, simultaneously indicators of intense private feeling and of the public performance of feeling within the fashionable 'cult' of sentiment.

The aesthetic and the moral are interrelated in the formation of sensibility, and it was closely allied to the philosophical concept of 'moral sense'. The term was coined in the early eighteenth century by the British philosopher Anthony Ashley Cooper, better known as the Third Earl of Shaftesbury, who suggested that one's moral sense was capable of perceiving moral qualities much as the other senses might perceive sight, sound and so forth. One of the leading figures of the Scottish Enlightenment, Francis Hutcheson, expanded upon Shaftesbury's philosophy in emphasising the feeling of pleasure and moral approval incited by perceiving an act of benevolence or virtue. Both Shaftesbury and Hutcheson opposed the view of Thomas Hobbes, Bernard Mandeville and John Locke (among others) that human nature was fundamentally self-interested and self-serving; instead, they emphasised innate and natural sociability and benevolence. As Evan Gottlieb points out, Hutcheson's version of moral sense was highly significant because it 'made benevolence available to all orders of society', laying 'the foundations of a civil society on altruistic, rather than self-interested, moral grounds'.⁸

The developing prominence of theories of sociability in British philosophy in the wake of the theories of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson had a profound influence on the work

⁷ Williams, *Keywords*, p. 281.

⁸ Evan Gottlieb, *Feeling British: Sympathy and National Identity in Scottish and English Writing, 1707-1832* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2007), p. 29.

of David Hume. In his *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40), he proposed sympathy as the fundamental basis for human nature, stating that

[n]o quality of human nature is more remarkable, both in itself and in its consequences, than the propensity we have to sympathize with others, and to receive by communication their inclinations and sentiments, however different from, or even contrary to our own.⁹

Hume is vague about defining sympathy but central to his conception is the idea that the communication ‘of the passions appears to be unmediated’ and involuntary; ‘people assume each other’s psychological states through an occult process of the transmission of feelings’.¹⁰ This transmission takes the form of both oral communication and non-verbal signifiers of emotion: feeling, in effect, can be transmitted via a single word or look.

Unlike Hume, Adam Smith did not subscribe to this idea of transmission of emotion.

Instead, in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1756; revised 1790) he proposed imagination as the key facilitator of sympathy:

As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves would feel in the like situation. Though our brother is upon the rack, as long as we ourselves are at ease, our senses will never inform us of what he suffers. They never did, and never can, carry us beyond our own person, and it is by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations [...] It is the impressions of our own senses only, not those of his, which our imaginations copy.¹¹

⁹ David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 3 vols (London: Noon, 1739-40), II, 72-73. All further references are to this edition.

¹⁰ Gottlieb, *Feeling British*, p. 31.

¹¹ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (London: Millar; Edinburgh: Kincaid and Bell, 1759), p. 2. All further references are to this edition unless specified.

In Smith's construction, sympathy is based less on perception than on imagination. However, it nonetheless places emphasis on the impression of the senses: the difference in this case is that it is the impression of our own and not of the sufferer's that we copy. This thesis assumes that the constructions of sensibility and sympathy are interrelated. Taking sensibility to mean the capacity for feeling based on perception, I read sensibility – or, as it might be termed in the philosophical discourse of the period, moral sense – as the precursor to sympathetic identification. I therefore use the term 'sensibility' to imply acuteness to feeling via perception which operates as part of the process of sympathy. In other words, in order to feel sympathy one must possess sensibility in order to perceive feeling in others. 'Sentiment' is used almost synonymously with sensibility but places less emphasis on perception and more on more general forms of feeling. 'Sentimental' is used variously to denote systems or societies in which the ideology of sensibility is at work and to draw attention to literary conventions associated with the mid-eighteenth-century novel.¹²

While Smith's philosophy received considerably more public attention than Hume's the discourse of sympathy was widespread from the mid-eighteenth century until well into the nineteenth. Gottlieb notes that Edmund Burke appropriated a series of sympathetic constructions in his *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757) and he famously reflected the tenets of Scottish Enlightenment sympathy in his well-known declaration in *Reflections on the Revolution*

¹² Christopher Nagle uses 'capitalization [...] to distinguish the broader cultural movement and stylistic mode of Sensibility from its merely local manifestations in the texts from the era' and to emphasise the fact that sensibility operated on a far wider level than as a mere generic marker for a sub-genre of fiction, Christopher Nagle, 'From Owenson to Morgan: History, Sensibility, and the Vagaries of Reception' in *The Wild Irish Girl*, in *Anglo-Irish Identities, 1571-1845*, ed. by David A. Valone and Jill Marie Bradbury (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2008), pp. 199-219 (p. 217). While I conform to Nagle's argument about the significance of the discourse in the period, I eschew any capitalisation on the grounds of stylistic consistency, capitalising neither 'sensibility' nor 'sentimental' at any point in the thesis.

in France (1790) that '[t]o be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society [...] is the first link in the series by which we proceed towards a love to our country and to mankind'.¹³ The potential of sympathy to promote widespread identification and sociability took on renewed significance in the aftermath of the French Revolution and during the Napoleonic Wars. The discourse of sensibility is essentially grounded in the relationship between the individual and society in its emphasis on private feeling as a means of engaging with public systems of sociability based on affect. As such, it took on increased political significance during the revolutionary decade of the 1790s in which the capacity for excessive individual feeling might lead not only to sympathy with the revolutionary cause in France but, worse still, to the mobilisation of radical communities within Britain itself.¹⁴ It is a testament to the malleable nature of sensibility that it was simultaneously appropriated by the conservative movement of the 1790s, perhaps most significantly by Burke in his sentimental account of the sufferings of Marie Antoinette in his *Reflections* and his emphasis on local and familial bonds as a means of inspiring and reinforcing patriotism. In the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, sensibility took on a more domestic focus, playing a fundamental role in the formation of Britishness famously identified by Linda Colley in her influential *Britons: Forging the Nation* (1992). In the wake of the 1801 Act of Union, which incorporated Ireland into the United Kingdom of Great Britain, the formations of sympathy articulated by Hume and Smith took on new significance in terms of how cross-cultural identification based on

¹³ Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* [1790] (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 47.

¹⁴ Gary Kelly writes of 'the debate, initiated in the 1790s in Britain in response to the French Revolution, between rights and duties, or between the claims of the individual to freedom of action and authenticity of being and the claims of society on the individual to conform to social and institutional codes and conventions', Gary Kelly, 'Jane Austen and the English Novel of the 1790s', in *Fetter'd or Free? British Women Novelists, 1670-1815*, ed. by Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski (Athens, OH and London: Ohio University Press, 1986), pp. 285-306 (p. 285).

feeling might aid the consolidation of a unified British identity. In various ways, then, sensibility and sympathy can be read as one of the defining cultural discourses of the eighteenth century; my account aims to trace its reinscription and reconfiguration within the cultural and literary context of the Romantic period.

Sensibility and the Novel: A Critical Overview

Critical studies of sensibility and the novel are by no means a recent scholarly phenomenon. By the late 1930s the scholarly accounts of the sentimental novel were numerous enough to warrant a re-evaluation in the form of Walter F. Wright's *Sensibility in English Prose Fiction 1760-1814: A Reinterpretation*.¹⁵ By this point studies by Edith Birkhead (1925) and Joyce Marjorie Sanxter Tompkins (1932) had already begun to identify the central texts, motifs and terminology of sentimental fiction.¹⁶ These two studies established themselves as critical paradigms for later scholarship, particularly in the case of Tompkins's discussion of philanthropy, physiology, and the discreditation of sensibility during the French Revolution. Tompkins appears to have coined the term 'cult of sensibility', which has been frequently employed by later critics. She was also the first literary critic to use James Gillray's 'New Morality' (1798) to exemplify the association between sensibility and radicalism, although she did not refer to either Gillray or the

¹⁵ Walter F. Wright, *Sensibility in English Prose Fiction 1760-1814: A Reinterpretation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1937). Wright stated in his introduction that it was common knowledge that English fiction of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was sentimental. His project was characteristic of the literary criticism of the period (but original in terms of sentimentalism) in that he sought to determine the 'sentimental qualities' and the 'creative impulse' of various novelists of sensibility (p. 9).

¹⁶ Edith Birkhead, 'Sentiment and Sensibility in the Eighteenth-Century Novel', *Essays and Studies*, 11 (1925), 92-116; J. M. S. Tompkins, *The Popular Novel in England 1770-1800* (London: Methuen, 1932; repr. 1969).

caricature by name.¹⁷ Likewise, R. S. Crane's 'Suggestions Toward a Genealogy of the "Man of Feeling"' (1934) was influential in its attempt to define the philosophical contexts of sensibility, tracing its origins to the Latitudinarian divines who preached 'universal benevolence' and 'natural goodness' throughout the seventeenth century and into the eighteenth.¹⁸ Crane's aetiological approach, in its quest for a genealogy of sentimentalism, was typical of the scholarship of the next few decades, which began to trace the origins of sensibility in the Enlightenment moral philosophic formations of sympathy.¹⁹ While these critical works examined particular aspects of sensibility itself, the term was also proffered as a general label for late eighteenth-century literature. Northrop Frye's essay 'Towards Defining an Age of Sensibility' (1956) and Roland Mortier's "'Sensibility," "Neoclassicism," or "Preromanticism"?' (1972) sought to apply the designation to literature produced in the period between the Augustan and Romantic eras, but made little attempt to develop the concept of sensibility as a literary phenomenon in its own right.²⁰

There were a number of scholarly works on sensibility published in the 1970s which took a variety of critical approaches including Feminism, Marxism and the emerging discourse of medical science in the eighteenth century.²¹ However, R. F.

¹⁷ Tompkins, *The Popular Novel in England*, p. 111.

¹⁸ R. S. Crane, 'Suggestions Toward a Genealogy of the "Man of Feeling"', *ELH*, 1.3 (1934), 205-230 (pp. 208, 220).

¹⁹ See A. R. Humphreys, 'The "Friend of Mankind" (1700-1760): An Aspect of Eighteenth-Century Sensibility', *Review of English Studies*, 24 (1948), 203-18; K. Maclean, 'Imagination and Sympathy: Sterne and Adam Smith', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 10 (1949), 399-410; Louis I. Bredvold, *The Natural History of Sensibility* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1962); and R. F. Brissenden "'Sentiment": Some Uses of the Word in the Writings of David Hume', in *Studies in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by R. F. Brissenden (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), pp. 89-107.

²⁰ Northrop Frye, 'Towards Defining an Age of Sensibility', *ELH*, 23 (1956), 144-52; Roland Mortier, "'Sensibility," "Neoclassicism," or "Preromanticism"?' in *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, ed. by Peter Gay (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1972), pp. 155-63.

²¹ See Katharine M. Rogers, 'Sensitive Feminism vs. Conventional Sympathy: Richardson and Fielding on Women', *Novel*, 9 (1976), 256-70, Richard Allen, 'Sentimentalism as Soft Romanticism', *Genre*, 8 (1975),

Brissenden's *Virtue in Distress* (1974) was by far the most influential study of the period. He began his account with the observation that scholars had so far been hesitant to attempt the project of defining sentimentalism as a cultural discourse of the eighteenth century and his book aimed to address this failing by examining the role of sentimental discourse in 'the languages of physiology, psychology, philosophy and the emerging social sciences'.²² He was also the first critic since Tompkins in 1932 to consider sensibility's contribution to British anxieties surrounding the French Revolution and the manifestation of conservative reaction in the Tory *Anti-Jacobin Review*. Brissenden's work was certainly the first broadly political account of sentimentalism, exposing it as an essentially middle-class discourse of an era when 'bourgeois respectability' came to 'replace aristocratic freedom as the most admired norm, both in life and literature'.²³ But perhaps most importantly, *Virtue in Distress* examined the association of sentimentalism and moral philosophy not, as precedent had dictated, in the context of genealogy but in terms of its capacity for social reform. Coupled with his politicisation of sensibility, Brissenden's argument that humanitarian idealism coexisted with a 'deepening realisation [...] that individual acts of benevolence could not alter a general social condition which was fundamentally unjust' marked a decisive shift in critical perception of sentimentalism.²⁴

119-45 and George S. Rousseau, 'Nerves, Spirits and Fibres: Towards Defining the Organs of Sensibility – with a Postscript, 1976', *The Blue Guitar*, 2 (1976), 125-53.

²² R. F. Brissenden, *Virtue in Distress: Studies in the Novel of Sentiment from Richardson to Sade* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1974), p. 20. Brissenden articulated a discomfort with his subject matter which serves as a reliable indicator of the disreputability of sentimental literature at this time. While his was an extremely valuable account of sentimentalism, it was also something of an apotheosis to 'respectable' writers like Richardson. Brissenden disparaged the 'vulgarisation' (p. 97) of Richardson by later writers and declared late eighteenth-century fiction (with some minor exceptions) 'morally and philosophically bankrupt' (p. 117).

²³ Brissenden, *Virtue in Distress*, p. 88.

²⁴ Brissenden, *Virtue in Distress*, p. 82.

This shift was essentially away from genealogy towards evaluation of literary sensibility as a cultural and political force. Janet Todd's *Sensibility: An Introduction* (1984) heralded this new era in its codification of sentimentalism. The origins, terminology, authors and works of sensibility were effectively canonised and, while later years saw considerable expansion of Todd's ideas, these central components remain firmly entrenched in subsequent critical accounts of sentimentalism. Todd's account outlined the features of the 'man of feeling' and the 'woman of feeling', arguing that both were essentially impotent and without agency. The man of feeling, Todd suggested, 'has, in an unfeeling world, avoided manly power and assumed the womanly qualities of tenderness and susceptibility', while his female counterpart embodied the qualities 'considered feminine in the sexual psychology of the time: intuitive sympathy, susceptibility, emotionalism and passivity.'²⁵ Todd ended her account by stating that the 'sentimental strain did not die in 1800 but continued into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries'.²⁶ However, she contextualised this statement only through references to Victorian fiction and melodrama and made no attempt to consider the period between 1800 and the era of Dickens: sensibility, it seemed, was an explicitly eighteenth-century phenomenon.

In addition to Todd's, there were two full length studies of sensibility published in the 1980s, both of which voiced serious doubts about the ideological persuasion of sentimentalism. The first was Mary Poovey's *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer* (1984), a feminist account of sensibility that considered it as an essentially reactionary discourse which reinforced patriarchal control by emphasising feminine moral

²⁵ Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction* (London: Methuen, 1986), pp. 87, 111.

²⁶ Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction*, p. 146.

superiority.²⁷ The second, John Mullan's *Sentiment and Sociability* (1988), interrogated theorisations of sentimentalism as a benevolent discourse of communality, suggesting instead that sensibility – 'originally posed as a capacity for sociability' – could in fact only be realised through private experience.²⁸ Mullan argued that although sentimental fiction could be regarded as a vehicle for moral instruction, the virtue 'of the singular, uncorrupted individual' was, by the second half of the eighteenth century, no longer 'a mainstay of moral and political discourse' and the sentimental novel was less a means of providing a model for practical action than an essentially 'elegiac' form.²⁹ According to Mullan the sentimental novel, by the time Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling* was published in 1771, had become a 'terminal formula'.³⁰ Sensibility – rural, private and expressed as hypochondria or hysteria – was ultimately solipsistic and ineffectual.

The collection of essays in *Sensibility in Transformation* (1990) sought to explore the self-reflexive nature of sensibility, suggesting that while it undoubtedly contributed to the transformation of British culture throughout the eighteenth century it simultaneously underwent its own transformation in order 'to contribute to larger shifts in attitude

²⁷ Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley and Jane Austen* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

²⁸ John Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 17. Mullan fully acknowledged earlier theories of the relationship between sentimental and benevolistic idealism. However, he argued that benevolence as it appeared in sentimental fiction 'failed to live up to this model of a "universal" capacity' in two ways (p. 144). The first is that where it is depicted as a 'reforming influence', it is usually in the context of 'rewarding the obedience of the socially inferior' and hence 'affirming hierarchy' (p. 144). He also noted that eighteenth-century philanthropy was as 'tough minded' as it was benevolent, 'dedicated as much to the disciplining as to the relief of the poor' (p. 144). Second, he argued that the novel of sentiment duplicates entertainment: benevolence was 'not being put forward as a universal phenomenon or a possible influence on social reform' (p. 146). Rather, it was 'unusual and fleeting' (p. 145), a 'rare and delicious moment' (p. 146).

²⁹ Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability*, p. 130.

³⁰ Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability*, p. 118.

towards both public and private virtue.³¹ Stephen Cox's contention in his essay 'Sensibility as Argument' that 'sensibility was not merely an artistic mode but a protean intellectual force and moral problem' serves as a neat demonstration of the wide-ranging critical negotiations that took place within the scholarship of the 1990s.³² The accounts published in this decade identified a series of permutations of sensibility that widened the field and remain influential today. G. J. Barker Benfield's *The Culture of Sensibility* (1992) traced the connections between sensibility and commerce, suggesting that sentimentalism developed in response to the transformation of Britain into a consumer society that took place from the mid seventeenth century, arguing that Britain's new commercial status led to a campaign for the 'reformation of manners' in which men 'cultivated politeness and sensibility', women's engagement with the public sphere (both for the purpose of leisure activities and through writing) increased to an unprecedented level and humanitarian reform (especially that led by the Evangelical and Methodist reform movements) became a central preoccupation.³³ Ann Jessie Van Sant's *Eighteenth-Century Sensibility and the Novel* (1993) examined the intertextual relationship between the discourses of sensibility, physiology, epistemology and psychology with a specific focus on the overlap between pity and scientific presentation, suggesting that humanitarian presentation of social problems and institutions configured the objects of charity as 'simultaneously objects of pity and experimental material'.³⁴

³¹ Sydney M. Conger, 'Introduction', *Sensibility in Transformation: Creative Resistance to Sentiment from the Augustans to the Romantics, Essays in Honour of Jean H. Hagstrum*, ed. by Conger (London and Toronto: Associated University Press, 1990), pp. 13-19 (p. 18).

³² Stephen Cox, 'Sensibility as Argument', in *Sensibility in Transformation*, pp. 63-82 (p. 64).

³³ G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. xxv.

³⁴ Ann Jessie Van Sant, *Eighteenth-Century Sensibility and the Novel: the Senses in a Social Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 17. Van Sant's thesis elaborated on Brissenden's discussion of the parallels between sensibility and the developing sciences of physiology and psychology.

Markman Ellis's *The Politics of Sensibility* (1996) identified a number of new inflections of sensibility in its discussion of philanthropy. Ellis explored the morally dubious practice of spectatorship and the limitations of sentimental literature as a means of social reform, suggesting that spectacles of suffering (such as the reformed prostitutes of the Magdalen Hospital in London) often served to provide salacious pleasure to middle-class observers.³⁵ Likewise, many ameliorist sentimental novels had 'no interest in destroying slavery as a hegemonic system of coercion'; ultimately, middle-class advocates of sentimental benevolence were often complicit with the commercial culture which occasioned the suffering they sought to alleviate.³⁶ In *Sensibility and Economics in the Novel* (1999) Gillian Skinner also emphasised the interactions between sensibility and commercial culture, refuting claims of earlier critics that sentimentalism was 'ardently anti-capitalist',³⁷ arguing – as Ellis had done – that 'sensibility took part in and partook of the very constructs and values it is conventionally supposed to have abhorred.'³⁸ This focus on capitalism and sentiment persisted in *Passionate Encounters in a Time of Sensibility* (2000), a collection of essays that stressed the wide cultural influence of sentimentalism in contexts as diverse as commerce, slavery, the female body,

In *Virtue in Distress* he noted the correspondence between the experimental physiology of Albrecht von Haller and Richardson's *Clarissa* (p. 41), an observation which forms the basis of Van Sant's fourth chapter. Although Van Sant's approach was largely confined the parallels between sympathy and physiology, she concurred with Mullan's discussion of gender in *Sentiment and Sociability*, proposing that 'sensibility did not represent new modes of expression for women, nor was it fully available to them' (p. 113), for it 'defines a new male rather than a female character type' (p. 115).

³⁵ Such exploration of the ambiguous relationship between sensibility and benevolence was not unprecedented but Ellis's account was (and remains) the most convincing and comprehensive. For discussion by other critics, see Tompkins, *The Popular Novel in England 1770-1800*, pp. 101-102; Crane, 'Suggestions Toward a Genealogy', p. 227; Brissenden, *Virtue in Distress*, p. 83; and Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability*, p. 145.

³⁶ Markman Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility: Race, Gender and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 128.

³⁷ Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction*, p. 97.

³⁸ Gillian Skinner, *Sensibility and Economics in the Novel, 1740-1800: The Price of a Tear* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), p. 2.

homosexuality and historiography over a period beginning with the Restoration and ending with the late Romantic period.³⁹

Alongside these studies, scholars were also considering the more explicit political agenda of sensibility. In *Radical Sensibility* (1993) Chris Jones proposed that sensibility was a powerful social force which served in the 1790s as ‘a site of contention between radical and conservative discourses’, but suggested that its ‘predominant impulse was progressive’.⁴⁰ In contrast, Barbara Benedict’s *Framing Feeling* (1994) argued that sentimentalism was essentially conservative: writers of sentiment employed techniques designed to indulge the reader’s appetite for sensibility while simultaneously conforming to moral standards by warning against revolutionary or sexual impulses and ‘encasing sentimental perspectives within conventional discourses’.⁴¹ In *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender and Sentiment in the 1790s* (1995), Claudia Johnson also suggested that sensibility was ultimately reactionary, arguing that ‘women’s presence in a sentimental public sphere is not to be confused with empowerment’.⁴² In opposition to the notion that sensibility incited a feminisation of culture and masculinity – as articulated by Barker Benfield – Johnson argued that sentimentalism in fact involved a masculinisation ‘of formerly feminine gender traits’, thus encoding and subsuming female selfhood within the masculine sphere.

³⁹ Maximillian E. Novak and Anne Mellor (eds), *Passionate Encounters in a Time of Sensibility* (Newark: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Press, 2000).

⁴⁰ Chris Jones, *Radical Sensibility: Literature and Ideas in the 1790s* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 1. Jones also noted that some aspects of radical sensibility were often wrongly considered to be ‘part of the instability of the concept and of the writers themselves’ (p. 16). He argued that ‘the social dimension of the potentially radical strain of sensibility has [...] been insufficiently recognized and confused with the more traditional social responsibilities acknowledged in conservative writing’ (p. 16).

⁴¹ Barbara M. Benedict, *Framing Feeling: Sentiment and Style in English Prose Fiction 1745-1800* (New York: AMS Press, 1994), p. 6.

⁴² Claudia L. Johnson, *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender, and Sentimentality in the 1790s* (Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 14.

Scholarship of the 1990s, then, can be seen to replicate the ‘crisis’ it identified in sensibility itself. While it proposed a series of wide-ranging interactions between sensibility and eighteenth-century culture, few of the accounts discussed could identify a future for sensibility after the terminal decade of the 1790s. Both Todd and Ellis hinted towards its endurance in the nineteenth century but made no attempts at more than passing references. Gary Kelly had claimed in 1989 that ‘novelists of the Romantic period [...] continued to draw on the formal and thematic repertory of the Enlightenment and Sentimental novelists’ and that ‘Romanticism itself largely continued the social and cultural project of the Enlightenment and Sensibility’, but the decade that followed saw no attempt to explore the interactions between sensibility and Romanticism in more detail.⁴³ Since the mid 1990s, then, full-length studies of sensibility have tended to follow the critical paradigm of exploring its eighteenth-century permutations, as in the case of Wendy Motooka’s consideration of quixotism and political economy (1998), Michael Bell’s study of sentimentalism and ethics (2000), Paul Goring’s book on rhetoric and oratory as a means of disseminating modern politeness (2005) and Hina Nazar’s account of sensibility and aesthetic judgment (2012).⁴⁴

Of course, there has also been considerable work done on the role of sensibility within other fictional sub-genres in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, or

⁴³ Gary Kelly, *English Fiction of the Romantic Period 1789-1830* (London and New York: Longman, 1989), p. 13. Todd proposed that ‘sentimental strain [...] continued into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, especially in the popular genres of drama and fiction’ (*Sensibility: An Introduction*, p. 146) and Ellis argued that sensibility retained ‘a subdued residual power’ (*The Politics of Sensibility*, p. 220) which led to ‘its transmutation (survival and renaissance) into powerful forms of political argument and literary production in the nineteenth century and beyond’, p. 221.

⁴⁴ Wendy Motooka, *The Age of Reasons: Quixotism, Sentimentalism and Political Economy in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 1998); Michael Bell, *Sentimentalism, Ethics and the Culture of Feeling* (New York: Palgrave, 2000); Paul Goring, *The Rhetoric of Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Hina Nazar, *Enlightened Sentiments: Judgement and Autonomy in the Age of Sensibility* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012).

as Benedict termed them, the ‘flock of offspring’ of eighteenth-century sentimental fiction.⁴⁵ Many of these studies have been hugely influential in charting the role of what we might term eighteenth-century sensibility in fiction of the Romantic period. In particular, there has been considerable attention paid to the interactions between sensibility and the gothic (most often in terms of ‘excessive’ portrayals of sexuality) and the role of sympathy in the formation of British national identity in the national and historical tale. These sub-genres are discussed more fully in the section on genre later in the introduction but it is worth noting here that these discussions of the ongoing influence of sensibility in later fictional modes have influenced my own thinking about the Romantic novel. However, this thesis moves beyond discussing the influence of sentimental discourse within the context of specific, discrete genres and argues for a much more comprehensive interaction between sensibility and Romanticism.

Indeed, sustained accounts of the legacy of sensibility in the nineteenth century have been few and far between. As Miriam Wallace points out, the widespread consensus that sensibility had reached a terminal crisis point by the end of the 1790s has meant that

[e]fforts to distinguish eighteenth-century sensibility from nineteenth-century sentimentality often make a break between a mid-nineteenth-century Victorian sentimentality and a late eighteenth-century philosophically-inflected interest in portraying internal subjectivity through external signs.⁴⁶

Wallace draws attention to the curious phenomenon of this critical interruption in the scholarship of sensibility suggesting that it is, in part, a result of the tendency to conform to formations of literary classification and periodisation.⁴⁷ Certainly, there is considerable

⁴⁵ Benedict, *Framing Feeling*, p. 17.

⁴⁶ Wallace, ‘Enlightened Romanticism’, p. 5.

⁴⁷ Wallace, ‘Enlightened Romanticism’, p. 6.

appeal in the neat ending implied in theories of the crisis of sensibility as the eighteenth-century drew to a close. Of course, nothing is as simple as this when it comes to genre, as discussed in the next section of the introduction, and this thesis attempts to address the problem of the critical interregnum in the scholarship of sensibility that Wallace identifies by offering a sustained account of sensibility and the Romantic novel.

Both Nicola Watson and Christopher Nagle have attempted to address this problem. Watson's *Revolution and the Form of the British Novel* (1994) provided an account of sentiment in the 'divergent strands' of the novel between 1790 and 1825.⁴⁸ She considered these strands as 'fictional accommodations of the [...] cultural anxiety [...] crystallized by the French Revolution', with specific attention to the function of the epistolary form and the refashioning of the plot of Rousseau's *Julie; or, La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761).⁴⁹ While Watson's account was extremely valuable, its focus remained grounded in the politics of eighteenth-century radical sensibility – suggesting its redeployment and detoxification in national and historical fiction – and did not consider how this discourse might have engaged with the literary contexts of Romanticism. The most sustained attempt to consider the relationship between sensibility and Romanticism has been Christopher Nagle's *Sexuality and the Culture of Sensibility in the British Romantic Era* (2007). In his introduction, Nagle observed that critics have acknowledged that 'many if not most of the texts that literary historians have come to see as Romantic are significantly influenced by earlier works of Sensibility' but that 'what has been left largely uninterrogated, however, is the specific ways in which the two

⁴⁸ Nicola J. Watson, *Revolution and the Form of the British Novel, 1790-1825: Intercepted Letters, Interrupted Seductions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 3.

⁴⁹ Watson, *Revolution and the Form of the British Novel*, p. 3.

traditions come together'.⁵⁰ His study went on to suggest that 'at its core Romanticism is built on the ground of Sensibility and is so thoroughly invested in its rhetorical and stylistic tropes – and thus, in its ideological investments as well – that what is most distinctive about the literature we call Romantic might be the uses to which it puts Sensibility'.⁵¹

My reading of sensibility in the Romantic period is in firm agreement with Nagle's but differs from his in a number of ways. First, Nagle's methodology was grounded in the politics of sensibility as it relates to the dynamics of sexuality and gender. This thesis, while it does at various points engage with the gendered inflections of sensibility – certainly, it would be extremely difficult not to – does not take gender as its central focus. Second, Nagle's account considered both poetry and fiction. While there is evidently far more work to be done on the poetic manifestations of sensibility in the Romantic period, my discussion seeks to propose sensibility as a metanarrative for the Romantic novel, suggesting that it influences not only the 'rhetorical and stylistic tropes' of fiction of the period but also the self-conscious experimentations that were taking place about how fictional realism engages its reader. Third, Nagle did not consider sensibility in terms of its origins in the philosophy of the Enlightenment and it is this that forms a central component of my thesis, which reads sensibility in the period as a specific means of reworking Enlightenment formations of sociability within a more conventionally Romantic aesthetic context.

Despite the valuable work of both Watson and Nagle, then, there is still no full-length study of the interaction between sensibility and Romanticism across the category

⁵⁰ Christopher Nagle, *Sexuality and the Culture of Sensibility in the British Romantic Era* (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 2.

⁵¹ Nagle, *Sexuality and the Culture of Sensibility*, p. 3.

of the 'Romantic novel'. Nor has there been a detailed account of how the eighteenth-century Enlightenment origins of sensibility are incorporated within Romantic models of selfhood. My thesis emerges directly from the critical tradition of eighteenth-century sensibility that has been outlined in this section. Taking various aspects of the sentimental novel of the eighteenth century identified in the studies cited above – most notably moral philosophy, physiological sensation, commercial culture and visual perception – I suggest that these are reworked into a model of Romantic selfhood during the first decades of the nineteenth century. The inherently private nature of eighteenth-century sensibility has been well-documented in the forms of the isolated man of feeling, feminine virtue in distress, the interior workings of gothic terror and so forth. This thesis argues that the Romantic-period novel demonstrates an ideological investment in reconfiguring such interiority in a variety of ways.

Offering a reading of the gothic novels of Ann Radcliffe within the context of moral philosophy, it argues that Radcliffe configures private sensation in the form of sublime experience as a means of promoting sociability, in a model that is subsequently interrogated in the novels of Charlotte Dacre, where the restrictive nature of sentimental community breaks down to reveal a form of excessive and individual selfhood. William Godwin, working within a revised form of the Jacobin novel in his later fiction, depicts a similarly excessive version of private feeling, considering the potential of individual sensation as the basis for political public action before ultimately consigning sensibility to a model of Romantic alienation. Sydney Owenson reinscribes sensibility as the basis for national cohesion not just in terms of the unionising romantic marriage and the formation of national sympathy, as has been suggested, but in its relationship to

politeness and civility. Expanding on Barker-Benfield's association of sensibility and cultivation in the eighteenth-century, I argue that Owenson reconsiders sensibility as a force for cross-cultural sympathy within the context of Enlightenment stadial history. Finally, the thesis suggests that Walter Scott takes the Romantic reconfiguration of sentimental interiority even further in the Waverley novels. Employing sensibility and sympathy as a means of 'reanimating' (an appropriately physiological term) the past, Scott ultimately engages in a critique of the politics of affect in relation to historical representation and realism. Through these various reinterpretations of sensibility the authors discussed display an explicitly Romantic self-consciousness.

Beyond the Sentimental: Romantic Fiction and Genre

Reconsidering the discourse of sensibility in this way obviously elides the boundary of eighteenth and nineteenth-century studies as discrete fields of scholarship that is implied in the narrative of sensibility's crisis and decline. It also has significant implications in terms of genre and Romanticism. David Duff offers a comprehensive overview of the critical contexts of Romantic genre in the introduction to his 2009 book *Romanticism and the Uses of Genre*. He considers the twentieth-century 'anti-generic hypothesis', which claimed that 'Romantic ideas of originality, spontaneity, and self-expression, and the associated doctrine of "organic form", were incompatible with the concept of genre, which was grounded in notions of convention and imitation'.⁵² The challenges to this hypothesis by recent scholarship have been wide-ranging, no more so than in the case of

⁵² David Duff, *Romanticism and the Uses of Genre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 1.

the novel.⁵³ Gary Kelly contended in his 1993 essay ‘Romantic Fiction’ that even the novels that had enjoyed renewed critical focus in the 1980s and 90s were ‘not generally thought to equal the intense, transcendent, and reflexive subjectivity, “supernatural naturalism,” and discursive self-consciousness widely seen as the central characteristics and achievement of Romantic poetry’.⁵⁴ Since then, the tendency of earlier criticism to emphasise the aesthetic domination of poetry in the Romantic period has been superseded by a widespread understanding of the significance of this novel in this period, not only in commercial terms, but in an intellectual sense too.

However, as Jillian Heydt-Stevenson and Charlotte Sussman observe, the fractured and expansive nature of the novel during the Romantic period ‘has tended to distract scholars – leading them down the paths of sub-generic definition and into the vexed project of trying to place novels into discrete political camps’.⁵⁵ Duff argues that

[t]o understand the transformational dynamic, the dialectic of archaism and innovation, and other genre-shaping forces in Romantic literary culture, we must therefore analyse the interaction of genres rather than constructing separate generic histories, and attempt to see the genre-system as a whole instead of confining attention to isolated parts of it.⁵⁶

Although this thesis is not a study of genre *per se*, I want to apply Duff’s assertion to my study of the discourse of sensibility within the period. Given that it is such a self-

⁵³ See, for example, *Romanticism, History, and the Possibilities of Genre* ed. by Tilottama Rajan and Julia Wright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) which, in Duff’s words, ‘demonstrates through an impressive range of examples how the Romantics, far from rejecting the power of genre, were actively discovering and harnessing it’, Duff, *Romanticism and the Uses of Genre*, p. 7.

⁵⁴ Gary Kelly, ‘Romantic Fiction’, in *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*, ed. by Stuart Curran (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 196-215 (p. 197).

⁵⁵ Jillian Heydt-Stevenson and Charlotte Sussman, “‘Launched upon the Sea of Moral and Political Inquiry’: The Ethical Experiments of the Romantic Novel”, in *Recognizing the Romantic Novel: New Histories of British Fiction, 1780-1830*, ed. by Heydt-Stevenson and Sussman (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008; repr. 2010), pp. 13-48 (p. 14).

⁵⁶ Duff, *Romanticism and the Use of Genre*, p. 20.

critiquing, self-conscious and wide-ranging aesthetic foundation of Romantic fiction, it is difficult to understand sensibility's 'transformational dynamic' by reading it as a discrete genre – the 'sentimental novel' as it has usually been termed. It must instead be considered a wide ranging discourse that informs the development of all fictional sub-genres of the period. Of course, the same criticism might be levelled at confining discussion to the novel and, while an account of poetry is beyond my scope here, the politics of sympathy and sensibility are beginning to be considered in terms of Romantic poetry and there is much to be said for a wider theorisation of sentimental politics.⁵⁷

It is notable that the sub-genres of the novel form in the period are now widely discussed in much the same categories as Kelly proposed in the 1980s: the sentimental novel (the 'novel of manners, sentiment, and emulation'), the 'gothic romance', the historical romance, the national tale, the 'Jacobin' and 'anti-Jacobin novel', and the "“silver fork” and “Newgate” novels of the 1820s and 1830s".⁵⁸ The category of the 'sentimental novel' as Kelly defined it refers largely to the novels in the sub-genre of fiction which peaked during the mid eighteenth century. The 'canonical' texts in Britain include Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740), *Clarissa* (1747-8) and *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753-4); Sarah Fielding's *The Adventures of David Simple* (1744, with a continuation in 1753); Henry Brooke's *The Fool of Quality* (1765-70); Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766); Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey* (1768); and Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* (1771). In Europe, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Julie; or, La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761) and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's

⁵⁷ See McGann, Jerome, *The Poetics of Sensibility: A Revolution in Literary Style* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996; repr. 1998), Noel Jackson, *Science and Sensation in Romantic Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) and Claire Knowles, *Sensibility and Female Poetic Tradition, 1780-1860: The Legacy of Charlotte Smith* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2009).

⁵⁸ Kelly, 'Romantic Fiction', pp. 199, 202, 202.

The Sorrows of Young Werther (1774) are key examples. However, it is significant that even Kelly's relatively programmatic classifications of the novel allowed for a degree of generic mutability. He reads the gothic novel as a 'variant' of the novel of sentiment and the Jacobin and anti-Jacobin novels he cites include a number of examples that might just as easily be considered novels of sensibility in the radical tradition identified by Jones.⁵⁹

This thesis suggests that the features Kelly identifies in the 'dominant form' of sentimental novel or, as he terms it 'the novel of manners, sentiment, and emulation', are in fact applicable to the wider category of the Romantic novel.⁶⁰

The notion of manners as relating to 'social differentiation and power with moral and ethical overtones, which were applied to the culture and conduct of the nation as a whole and treated novelistically in terms of the moral, ethical, cultural, and social options (sentiment and emulation) exercised in private life by individuals' is applicable to all of the novels discussed in this thesis, although most of them (with the possible exception of Dacre's early novels) do not fit within Kelly's sub-generic classification of the novel of sentiment.⁶¹ This thesis suggests that, in various ways, the politics of 'differentiation' and 'emulation' are precisely those that are interrogated within the framework of sensibility and sympathy throughout the Romantic period.⁶²

⁵⁹ Kelly, 'Romantic Fiction', p. 202.

⁶⁰ Kelly, 'Romantic Fiction', p. 199.

⁶¹ Kelly, 'Romantic Fiction', pp. 199-200. Kelly does include Radcliffe in his list of female authors who work within the 'bourgeois values' of the form of the sentimental novel, although she is also the first novelist listed within the category of the gothic.

⁶² Kelly also associates the 'Philosophical' novel (which includes the categories of Jacobin and anti-Jacobin) with 'Enlightenment social, political, and cultural critique' (p. 204). He suggests that the Jacobin novelists 'develop and Enlightenment sociology of knowledge to argue that individuals and social groups are constructed by the political and cultural system under which they live' (p. 204). In the Jacobin novel 'the individual internalizes false consciousness and social difference, thereby becomes self-divided, searches for reunifying self-understanding, and discovers the cause of his or her self-conflict and social alienation in the actual injustice and oppression of society' (p. 204).

The interactions between the gothic novel and sensibility are widespread and pervasive. Indeed to discuss ‘gothic fiction’ unearths a multitude of generic complexities, and I fully accept Robert Miles’s argument that ‘[w]e should not understand the Gothic as a set of prose conventions, however flexible, but as a discursive site crossing the genres’.⁶³ Certainly, both the gothic and the sentimental function – in the words of Gamer’s formation – ‘neither as a mode nor as a kind of fiction [...] but as an aesthetic’, and are by no means limited to literary forms.⁶⁴ There has long been an overlap between critical accounts of sensibility and the gothic; indeed, early-twentieth-century criticism of the novel assumes that they are interchangeable.⁶⁵ It is impossible to catalogue the broad connections made between the sentimental and the gothic in later studies, given that these are so pervasive and widespread. Certainly, references to the sentimental ‘inheritance’ of the gothic or to gothic fiction as ‘an effect of a change in sensibility’ are common in full-length studies,⁶⁶ as are allusions to the fact that (particularly in the case of Radcliffe) gothic fiction invites ‘sympathetic identification’.⁶⁷ Nonetheless, there has been no sustained attempt to formalise the relationship between the two discourses. Perhaps even

⁶³ Robert Miles, *Gothic Writing, 1750-1820: A Genealogy*, (New York: Routledge, 1993; repr. 2010), p. 176.

⁶⁴ Michael Gamer, *Romanticism and the Gothic: Genre, Reception, and Canon Formation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 4.

⁶⁵ Tompkins states that ‘[i]t will readily be assumed that Gothic authors appropriated and refurbished the old stock-in-trade of the sentimental novel, that families are scattered and symmetrically re-assembled, that parental tyranny took a more feudal shade, lovers languished in fetters, and heroines eloped through subterranean passages’, *The Popular Novel in England*, pp. 294-95.

⁶⁶ See Markman Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 31 and David H. Richter, ‘The Reception of the Gothic Novel in the 1790s’, in *The Idea of the Novel in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Robert W. Uphaus (East Lansing, MI: Colleagues Press, 1988), pp. 117-37 (p. 131). Richter also suggests that ‘the Gothic was able to develop as a genre owing to the ready-made presence of an audience segment already partially prepared, by Richardson, Prévost and the sentimental novelists, to read for imaginative play and escape’, p. 127. See also Gary Kelly, ‘Romantic Fiction’, in which he terms the ‘gothic romance’ a ‘variant’ of the novel of sentiment, arguing that it ‘celebrates subjectivity in the face of social conventions, institutions, values, and individuals threatening to overwhelm the virtuous individual self’, p. 202.

⁶⁷ Ellis, *History of Gothic Fiction*, p. 2.

more notably, focus on the gothic within studies of sensibility is surprisingly brief, and is often absent altogether. Sydney Conger's review of Mullan's *Sentiment and Sociability* in 1991 regrets the 'unfortunate' omission of gothic fiction from the work, suggesting that – as 'a late phase of the eighteenth-century sentimental vogue' – the study would have been strengthened by a discussion of key gothic novels as the 'last fictional refuges of the "sadly distracted and isolated hysteric."'”⁶⁸ Little has been done to redress this omission in subsequent works on sensibility and this thesis hopes to go some way towards offering a more complete discussion of the relationship between sensibility and gothic fiction.

This thesis resists the formulation of the gothic novel as a 'last fictional refuge' of sensibility or of the sentimental novel as a mere precursor of the gothic. Instead, locating the discussion within the cultural movements of Enlightenment and Romanticism, it suggests that gothic discourse appropriates and interrogates the oppositions inherent to sensibility's Enlightenment formation and, in the process, participates in the wider process of Romantic sentimental reconfiguration. I argue that it is possible to identify a fusion of 'sentimental' moral sense philosophy and 'gothic' aesthetic theory in the fiction of Radcliffe, Dacre and Godwin. While focus on moral philosophy and the novel has tended to be restricted to scholarly accounts of sentimental fiction, I suggest that the female Radcliffean gothic constructs a sensory model of sociability tempered by rational moderation, which functions as a restorative antidote to gothic isolation.⁶⁹ Furthermore, the 'psychological gothic' of the early nineteenth century – represented here by Godwin's *Fleetwood* and *Mandeville* (1817) – interrogates the dynamics of sympathetic

⁶⁸ Sydney Conger, Review of John Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability* (1988), in *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 3.3 (1991), 270-71 (p. 271).

⁶⁹ One notable exception is Steven Bruhm's *Gothic Bodies: The Politics of Pain in Romantic Fiction* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), which reads the gothic as part of a transition towards Romanticism within the context of bodily pain and torture.

spectatorship, from which emerge the conventionally Romantic ‘questions of interiority’ and identity.⁷⁰ Focus on aesthetic theory is more common in gothic criticism, but the discussion in the first part of this section offers a new interpretation by applying Luke Gibbons’s recent conception of the ‘sympathetic sublime’ to the gothic novel, identifying eighteenth-century Enlightenment formations of socialised sublimity and suggesting that these are gradually replaced by a more individualistic Romantic sublime.⁷¹

These processes are all located within the contemporary debates about the self and society that characterise the eighteenth-century novel. The contradictions and instabilities of the gothic novel construct a framework – expressed through the gothic discourse of sensation – in which the individual and society are in constant opposition. Yet while excessive sensation is often read as a signifier of gross individualism, gothic fiction often articulates sensation in terms of public sociability as an alternative to isolated private feeling. The unifying properties of sympathy, however, are always unstable in the gothic mode, for collective sympathy must necessarily ‘eras[e] individual characteristics’.⁷² This complication forms the basis of gothic sensibility, as the Enlightenment models of communality that efface the self come into conflict with individual sensibility, resulting in a Romantic crisis of identity.⁷³

With the possible exception of Owenson (who, despite producing a gothic novel at the start of her career, tended to eschew gothic discourse in her national tales) all of the

⁷⁰ Sydney Conger states that, after 1800, ‘High Gothic literature’ concerned itself with ‘questions of interiority’, ‘Sensibility Restored: Radcliffe’s Answer to Lewis’s *The Monk*’ in *Gothic Fictions: Prohibition/Transgression*, ed. by Kenneth W. Graham (New York: AMS Press, 1989), pp. 113-149 (p. 144).

⁷¹ Luke Gibbons, *Edmund Burke and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 13.

⁷² Eric Daffron, ‘Double Trouble: The Self, the Social Order and the Trouble with Sympathy in the Romantic and Post-Modern Gothic’, *Gothic Studies*, 3.1 (April 2001), 75-83 (p. 76).

⁷³ See Robert Miles’s definition of the gothic novel as ‘a coherent code for the representation of fragmented subjectivity’, *Gothic Writing*, p. 2.

authors discussed in this thesis appropriate the gothic mode within their fiction. This is particularly notable in the case of Radcliffe and Dacre and, to a lesser extent, Godwin. But my discussion of these authors seeks to liberate them from the restrictive category of ‘gothic novelists’. Chapter two of the thesis considers the novels of Ann Radcliffe within the context of moral sense philosophy and aesthetic theory, suggesting that they are grounded in a model of private sensation operating as the basis for sociability and public benefit. Similarly, Radcliffe’s sublime can be understood as ethically-coded, providing a means for social cohesion rather than individualistic self-preservation, as is often assumed. Within the context of late-eighteenth-century anxieties about the nature of selfhood, these sympathetic constructions break down in Radcliffe’s later novels, revealing a resistance to the Enlightenment tendency to absorb the self within the social. I argue that Charlotte Dacre’s writing can be read as a direct opposition to Radcliffe’s construction of sociable communities; Dacre exposes Radcliffe’s model of a Burkean sensibility based on familial affection as limiting and oppressive and her novels depict a struggle for autonomous selfhood within the restrictive model of female sensibility.

The discussion of Godwin’s *Fleetwood* and *Mandeville* in chapter three, both of which operate within – among others – the category of gothic fiction, considers the construction of isolated individualism in the novels and the way in which their depictions of gothic excess interrogate the dynamic between the self and other, demonstrating conventionally Romantic concerns with communication, creativity and alienation. In its discussion of the discourse of sensibility in conventionally gothic novels, the thesis hopes to revise current understandings of the gothic by considering its moral-philosophic as well as its aesthetic origins as part of a wider discussion of late-Romantic sensibility. In

doing so, it contends that all of the texts considered here manifest the tension between Enlightenment and Romantic ideas of selfhood. In attempting to formalise the connections between the sentimental and the gothic, it is possible to identify an increasing anxiety over Enlightenment constructions of sociability, which finally give way to a Romantic preoccupation with autonomous selfhood.

Within the framework of recent Romantic genre theory, I read sensibility as part of the tendency of Romantic texts ‘to be either over- or under-determined’, either overstating their generic alliances or ‘conceal[ing] their generic provenance’.⁷⁴ Many of the texts discussed in the thesis demonstrate these tendencies; for example, the title of Charlotte Dacre’s *The Confessions of the Nun of St Omer* (1805) overstates its gothicism in order to elude its affiliation with the radical novel of sensibility while William Godwin’s *Fleetwood; or, The New Man of Feeling* (1805) aligns itself with an eighteenth-century mode of sentiment which is at odds with its gothic depictions of madness and uncontrollable passion. Likewise, there are frequent correlations between novels allied to the gothic mode and the historical novel, as in the case of *Mandeville*, which carries the subtitle ‘A Tale of the Seventeenth Century in England’ and engages directly with the political upheaval of the Glorious Revolution.

Many post-1800 works of Romantic fiction replicated Godwin’s fusion of the gothic and historical-national modes, in a Bakhtinian model of competing discourses. In recent decades, scholarly perceptions of nationhood and Romanticism have been revised in a number of ways, with increasing emphasis on formations of British cultural nationalism. As part of this critical reinterpretation, the role of the gothic novel in the

⁷⁴ Duff, *Romanticism and the Uses of Genre*, p. 19. Duff notes that this approach recalls Paul Hamilton’s construction of ‘metaromanticism’ in *Metaromanticism: Aesthetics, Literature, Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

forging of national character or ‘imagining of a nationalist community’ is widely acknowledged.⁷⁵ Within what Emma Clery terms the ‘direct political-fictional correspondence’ between the French Revolution and gothic fiction,⁷⁶ Murray Pittock suggests that the depiction of ‘displacements and repressions of the self [and] the performance of that self by other means’ in both Charles Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) and James Hogg’s *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) ‘were ways by which the legitimacy of British power and public place could be questioned’.⁷⁷ Siobhán Kilfeather identifies an emergent sub-genre of the ‘Celtic Gothic’ in the Romantic period, which focused on Ireland, Wales, Scotland and Cornwall and ‘traded on a blend of popular superstitions and native insurgency to produce its terrors’.⁷⁸

This idea of a renewed focus on the Celtic nations in gothic fiction reflects the new archipelagic formulations that were developing in the period. Certainly, the Romantic period saw a revived interest in national identity in various manifestations, resulting in what Linda Colley defines as a ‘consciously and officially constructed patriotism’ in response to the international political and military unrest of the second half of the eighteenth century.⁷⁹ Within the context of sensibility, there have been a number of influential studies of nationhood and sympathy in the last decade. This body of

⁷⁵ See, for example, Toni Wein, *British Identities, Heroic Nationalisms, and the Gothic Novel, 1764-1824* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 3. Wein writes, quoting Deniz Kandiyoti, that ‘whether responding to fears of a lost British identity as the outline of the nation changed, or embracing the extended reach of British imperialism, Gothic novels reaffirm “authentic cultural values culled from the depths of presumed communal past”’, p. 4.

⁷⁶ E. J. Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 156.

⁷⁷ Murray Pittock, *Scottish and Irish Romanticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 233.

⁷⁸ Siobhán Kilfeather, ‘The Gothic Novel’, in *The Cambridge Companion to the Irish Novel*, ed. by John Wilson Foster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 78-96 (p. 80).

⁷⁹ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992; repr. 2005), p. 145.

scholarship emphasises the fact the Enlightenment formation of a widespread shared sympathy was central in both philosophical and public discourse in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as a means of promoting national unity by forming ‘imagined communities’, as Benedict Anderson puts it.⁸⁰ Hume’s conception of sympathy as instinctive and universal forms a paradigm for the natural development of national identity, while Smith’s theory ‘rearticulates sympathy as a voluntary, “achieved” state of emotional harmony capable of actively uniting disparate peoples.’⁸¹ These unifying properties were of obvious significance to the union of Scotland and England in 1707 and the union of England, Wales and Scotland with Ireland to form the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in 1801.

Evan Gottlieb’s study of sympathy within the context of English and Scottish identity in *Feeling British* (2007) identified a formation of ‘sympathetic Britishness’ in the Romantic period, in which the politics of feeling underscored the politics of union.⁸² Gottlieb suggested that the formations of sympathy in the philosophy of Hume and Smith were integral to discourses of national unity. In Hume’s philosophy, ‘[a]ny sense of preexisting connection, from the familial to the national to the eponymous, augments the extent to which we will sympathize with others’; therefore, emphasising connections between heterogeneous nations through sympathy has the potential to efface difference and promote integration.⁸³ Juliet Shields also considered the practice of ‘defining the nation as a community united by sympathy rather than by shared blood, or common political and economic interests’ in her *Sentimental Literature and Anglo-Scottish*

⁸⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd edn (London and New York: Verso, 2006), p. 6.

⁸¹ Gottlieb, *Feeling British*, p. 22.

⁸² Gottlieb, *Feeling British*, p. 15.

⁸³ Gottlieb, *Feeling British*, p. 39.

Identity (2010), which argued that Scottish writers including Susan Ferrier, Scott and James Hogg ‘responded to Scotland’s loss of independent sovereignty by seeking in sentiment [...] a compensation for political dispossession.’⁸⁴

Claire Connolly, in her *Cultural History of the Irish Novel* (2012), considered the politics of sensibility as it relates to romantic love and the unionising marriage plot, analysing ‘a dynamic relationship between love, the domain of feelings, and marriage’ that was ‘taken to represent the organisation of those feelings within public structures’.⁸⁵ Other recent scholarly accounts of the Irish national tale have emphasised the relationship between fiction and sympathy. In *The Romantic National Tale and Question of Ireland* (2002), Ina Ferris argued that it is possible to identify a ‘particular dynamic of sympathy’ in the Irish national tale.⁸⁶ This is based on ‘an initial discomfort, on a certain unhinging of a consciousness from its familiar place’ which mirrors the ‘persistent and profound discomfort’ within political discourse between Britain and Ireland in the early nineteenth century.⁸⁷ Julia M. Wright also discussed Irish fiction within the context of sympathy in her book *Ireland, India, and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (2007), focusing on ‘sentimental literature in which colonial-imperial contact generates affect, via sensibility, and hence the promise of social harmony’.⁸⁸

Within the emerging archipelagic formation of Britishness in the Romantic period, the recognition of the role of Welsh fiction has been slower than that of Irish and

⁸⁴ Juliet Shields, *Sentimental Literature and Anglo-Scottish Identity, 1745-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 1.

⁸⁵ Claire Connolly, *A Cultural History of the Irish Novel, 1790-1829* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 85.

⁸⁶ Ina Ferris, *The Romantic National Tale and the Question of Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 13.

⁸⁷ Ferris, *The Romantic National Tale*, p. 13.

⁸⁸ Julia M. Wright, *Ireland, India, and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 22.

Scottish writing. However, scholars have begun to demonstrate the impact of Welsh culture on Romanticism and a number of recent studies have emphasised the importance of Welsh fiction, as well as Welsh themes and locations, within the wider category of the Romantic novel; as Damian Walford Davies and Lynda Pratt put it, ‘Wales was a crucial site for the Romantic imagination’.⁸⁹ The connections between the Welsh Romantic novel and sensibility are numerous. Jane Aaron observes that there was a proliferation of ‘copycat Welsh romances’ in the wake of Anna Maria Bennett’s hugely successful *Anna: or Memoirs of a Welch Heiress* (1785) and *Ellen, Countess of Castle Howel* (1794) which she locates within the formulaic model of Minerva press popular fiction as ‘picaresque, sentimental, and mildly Gothic novels, located in the so-called “Celtic fringe”’.⁹⁰ Aaron has suggested that ‘women writers’ contribution to nation-building in a Welsh context cannot really be said to begin until the 1820s, with women’s increased involvement in the Welsh antiquarian and eisteddfod movements’ as, until this point, women novelists were mostly ‘estranged for the core values and perspectives of the culture they were writing about than were their Scottish and Irish equivalents’.⁹¹ However, Sarah Prescott’s recent account of the sentimental politics in Bennett’s novels and in Edward Davies’s *Elisa Powell; or, Trials of Sensibility* (1795) – which explores the extent to which Welsh nationalism could ‘be expressed in a genre which relies on feminine sensibility rather

⁸⁹ Damian Walford Davies and Lynda Pratt, ‘Introduction: Devolving Romanticism’, in *Wales and the Romantic Imagination*, ed. by Walford Davies and Pratt (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007). For further discussion of Wales and Romantic fiction, see Andrew Davies, ‘The Reputed Nation of Inspiration: Representations of Wales in Fiction from the Romantic Period’, (unpublished doctoral thesis, Cardiff University, 2001) and Moira Dearnley, *Distant Fields: Eighteenth-Century Fictions of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), as well as the works of Jane Aaron and Sarah Prescott cited below.

⁹⁰ Jane Aaron, *Nineteenth-Century Women’s Writing in Wales: Nation, Gender and Identity* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), pp. 8, 9.

⁹¹ Aaron, *Nineteenth-Century Women’s Writing in Wales*, p. 11.

than heroic valour’ – suggests that there is more work to be done in the interaction between sensibility and national identity in Welsh fiction of the period.⁹²

The focus on both British national identity and that of its ‘constituent cultures’ in the early-nineteenth-century novel is not confined to the form of the national tale; it is also inextricably linked to the historical novel. Katie Trumpener, in her influential study *Bardic Nationalism* (1997) suggested that the two modes are closely related: ‘the emergence of the historical novel out of the national tale can be plotted quite precisely, book by book, through the 1810s.’⁹³ However, the ‘two genres remain interdependent, still almost identical in plot and characters, but already highly polarised in their overall novelistic strategies and political implications’; while the national tale ‘evokes an organic national society’, the historical novel details the fragmentation of this society before a ‘new national community’ replaces ‘the old’.⁹⁴ The interdependence of the two genres is expressed in the ways that their authors appropriated Enlightenment formations of sympathy. Gottlieb and Shields each devoted chapters to the historical novel in their accounts of sympathy and Scottish writing, both of which focus on Scott’s *Waverley* novels. Certainly, there has already been considerable focus on sensibility and sympathy in the work of Scott, most notably in accounts by Peter Garside (1985), Everett Zimmerman (2000) and Ian Duncan (2007, 2010), which are discussed in more detail in chapter five.⁹⁵ Aside from Scott, scholars have discussed the work of the female tradition

⁹² Sarah Prescott, *Eighteenth-Century Writing from Wales: Bards and Britons* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008), p. 153.

⁹³ Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 131.

⁹⁴ Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, pp. 131, xii-xiii.

⁹⁵ Peter Garside, ‘Scott, the Eighteenth Century and the New Man of Sentiment’, *Anglia* 103 (1985), 71- 89; Everett Zimmerman, ‘The Hero of Sensibility in a Commercial Romance: Scott’s *Rob Roy*’ in *Passionate Encounters in a Time of Sensibility*, pp. 221-46 (pp. 221-24); Ian Duncan, *Scott’s Shadow: The Novel in*

of domestic sensibility in the historical novel in, for example, Birkhead's account of Jane Porter's *The Scottish Chiefs* (1810) and Jayne Lewis's essay on the sentimental representation of Mary Queen of Scots.⁹⁶ Anne H. Stevens's study of the historical novel before Scott in 2010 also explored the relationship between sensibility and historical fiction, interrogating the contention that the latter was, before Scott, 'little more than sentimental fictions in period costume'.⁹⁷ Mark Salber Phillips's *Society and Sentiment: Genres of Historical Writing in Britain* (2000) considered the role of sensibility in historical writing, focusing on a variety of genres, discussing them in terms of their negotiation with the 'social and sentimental concerns of a modern, commercial society'.⁹⁸

This thesis attempts to discuss the novels of Owenson and Scott within the contexts already identified by the critical studies cited above but also within the wider field of the Romantic novel, suggesting various parallels which destabilise the generic boundaries of the national and historical modes. As such, my discussion of Owenson in chapter four – although it engages with the idea of sympathy and the unionising love plot – is centred on the way in which the texts interact with the discourse of politeness and civility inherent to eighteenth-century sensibility, suggesting that this has important implications for her interrogation of models of nationhood based on sympathy and historical progress. In chapter five, my reading of Scott's fiction considers the politics of sympathy within the context of eighteenth-century theories of the picturesque and the

Romantic Edinburgh (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007); Ian Duncan, 'Sympathy, Physiognomy, and Scottish Romantic Fiction', in *Recognizing the Romantic Novel*, pp. 13-48.

⁹⁶ Birkhead, 'Sentiment and Sensibility in the Eighteenth-Century Novel'; Jayne Lewis, "'The sorrow of seeing the Queen": Mary, Queen of Scots and the British History of Sensibility, 1707-1789' in *Passionate Encounters in a Time of Sensibility*, pp. 193-220, which argues that by the end of the eighteenth century, Mary, Queen of Scots had become 'a national icon of sensibility, of female suffering, and of domestic sorrow' (p. 23).

⁹⁷ Anne H. Stevens, *British Historical Fiction Before Scott* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 9.

⁹⁸ Mark Salber Phillips, *Society and Sentiment: Genres of Historical Writing in Britain, 1740-1820* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

imagination, focusing on the discourses of visual representation and orality. Through this mode of novelistic representation, the novels offer a self-conscious interrogation of the relationship between fictional realism and sympathetic identification which has implications not only for all of the sub-genres discussed in the thesis but for the wider category of the Romantic novel itself.

Sensibility, Enlightenment and Romanticism

If the role of sensibility serves to destabilise the generic boundaries of fiction in the Romantic period, its complication of the binary between Enlightenment and Romanticism is still more profound. The Enlightenment discourses of the sublime, the pathetic, the beautiful and the picturesque that are closely linked to sensibility in their relationship to sensory perception themselves posed a challenge to sharply defined neoclassical aesthetic categories. As Duff points out, they

were subjective concepts, part of a new science of psychological causes and effects [...] that claimed to be experimental rather than rationalistic, inductive not deductive, and that explained the workings of art in terms of the faculties of mind involved in its creation and reception.⁹⁹

Because they were grounded in subjectivity, when applied as part of the analysis of literary works they led to a focus on the ‘emotional potencies’ of literature as opposed to its ‘formal properties.’¹⁰⁰ Likewise, the discourse of sensibility, as a theory of subjective perception, represents a shift away from Lockean empiricism towards a more complex model of selfhood which has much in common with the conventional self-reflection of Romanticism.

⁹⁹ Duff, *Romanticism and Genre*, p. 47.

¹⁰⁰ Duff, *Romanticism and Genre*, p. 47.

This thesis discusses a variety of Enlightenment concepts as they relate to sensibility in the Romantic-period novel and, in doing so, offers a deconstruction of the strict distinction between the literature of the eighteenth century and the literature of the Romantic period that has until recently been preserved within the field of literary criticism. As Wallace points out, the ‘investment in a cultural shift from something prior to something alternately identified as Romanticism (or sometimes simply modernity), has long been a defining feature of Romantic criticism and the Romantic era itself.’¹⁰¹ This thesis contests the idea of the ‘Romantic turn’, suggesting that sensibility functions as discourse that incorporates both conventionally Enlightenment and Romantic ideologies. As such, it adheres to the emerging branch of criticism which suggests a need for new ‘ways of understanding the usefulness of terms such as “Romanticism” and “Enlightenment” in order to develop a fuller understanding of fiction in the Romantic period’.¹⁰² My account, therefore, does not seek to chart a simple trajectory from Enlightenment to Romanticism, but instead to suggest an interplay and fluidity between the two aesthetics in their appropriation of the discourse of sensibility.

Many of the Enlightenment formations of perception discussed here have their basis in forms of individual sensation which have much in common with the introspective selfhood generally understood to characterise Romanticism. The novels considered depict a hybrid model of sensibility in which Enlightenment formations of feeling and perception as a means of social coherence coexist with Romantic models of alienated selfhood. My discussion of the sublime in Ann Radcliffe’s fiction argues that she emphasises the individual sensation implied in Burke’s model as a basis for social

¹⁰¹ Wallace, ‘Enlightened Romanticism’, p. 15.

¹⁰² Wallace, ‘Enlightened Romanticism’, p. 17.

coherence informed by the principles of moral sense philosophy, constructing a rationalist empiricist model of sensation in which private feeling is directed outwards in order to construct and promote affective communities. However, this model of sentimental sociability breaks down in Radcliffe's novels as a result of what Burke identified as 'the annihilation of the self' associated with the sublime experience.¹⁰³ Charlotte Dacre's novels take this annihilation even further, engaging directly with Radcliffe's model of sociability by offering a version of excessive selfhood which rejects the notion of affect as a means of social cohesion.

William Godwin's fiction engages more specifically with sympathy as means of social cohesion and *Mandeville* in particular engages directly with Enlightenment moral philosophy. In the novel, the socially unifying philosophy of the anachronistic fictional representation of the Earl of Shaftesbury is offset against the excessive feeling and self-interest of the eponymous hero (whose name evokes Bernard Mandeville's theory that selfishness could promote virtue in *The Fable of the Bees* (1714)). Godwin ultimately rejects Mandeville's contention that self-interest could be directed to the good of the public and the novel ends with a vision of Romantic alienation which prefigures Byron's *Cain* (1821), culminating with its hero disfigured and excluded from society.

Sydney Owenson's novels interrogate formations of sympathy and the eighteenth-century inflection of sensibility as a discourse of civility in their configuration of Romantic nationhood. As Julia M. Wright points out, in many national tales 'cross-cultural identification is enabled by developing recognition' of the 'essential sameness' of sympathetic subjects.¹⁰⁴ However, for nations such as Scotland and Ireland this

¹⁰³ Gibbons, *Edmund Burke and Ireland*, p. 85.

¹⁰⁴ Wright, *Ireland, India, and Nationalism*, p. 19.

‘sameness’ was highly problematic. Ina Ferris explores the Irish discontent with this process of assimilation, citing the Reverend James Hall’s account of his 1813 tour to Ireland, in which he suggests that the prospect of ““amalgamation”” of nations elicits ““an alarm for self-preservation”” in the smaller nation as a reaction to cultural homogenisation.¹⁰⁵ Owenson’s novels consider the process of assimilation implied in models of national sympathy, with specific reference to the formation of Enlightenment stadial history. Linking cultivated sensibility to an explicitly English culture of feeling she rejects the cultural assimilation facilitated by the imported Enlightenment ideals of civilised commercial modernity. Instead, what emerges in the novel is a hybrid model of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism and Romantic nationalism, which emphasises local attachment and a more fractured formation of national selfhood.

The final chapter of thesis argues that sensibility in Walter Scott’s novels is fundamentally linked to Enlightenment theories of perception. The Waverley novels engage with the discourse of the picturesque, which in William Gilpin’s theorisation made an explicit link between visual sensation and feeling, and Henry Home, Lord Kames’s theory of ideal presence, in which the act of reading evokes such passion in the reader that they ‘[lose] the consciousness of self’.¹⁰⁶ Scott links this process of self-effacement to the act of reading historical fiction, engaging in a self-conscious Romantic interrogation of form and meaning which raises some pertinent questions about the politics of sympathy and the realist form of the novel.

¹⁰⁵ James Hall, *Tour Through Ireland; Particularly the Interior & Least Known Parts*, 2 vols (London, 1813), II, 302, cited in Ferris, *The Romantic National Tale*, p. 20.

¹⁰⁶ [Henry Home, Lord Kames], *Elements of Criticism*, 3 vols (London: Millar; Edinburgh: Kincaid and Bell, 1762), I, 112.

All of the authors discussed in the thesis employ the philosophy of the Enlightenment in order to evoke ideas of self-annihilation. What emerges in the novels through their representation of sensibility is a hybrid discourse of Enlightenment sociability and Romantic subjectivity. The thesis suggests, then, that the Enlightenment discourse of sensibility is integral to the formation of the self-conscious form of the Romantic novel. I do not contend that Romantic sensibility emerges directly from Enlightenment models of selfhood, rather that the two co-exist in varying and complex ways within Romantic fiction. Likewise, I do not assume that the categories of Enlightenment and Romanticism are themselves discrete or fixed. Many of the Enlightenment philosophical formulations considered here undermine the assumed rationality of the period from which they derive, as emphasised in the quotation from Duff at the start of this section. In terms of Romanticism, while my approach conforms in many ways to the more recent critical approaches of a historicised and contextual Romanticism, the traditional aesthetic constructions should also be taken into account. I follow Murray Pittock's claim in his study of Scottish and Irish Romanticism, that any definition of Romantic period literature 'must encounter and incorporate the stress on subjective and aesthetic dimensions of "Romanticism" held so dear by a previous critical paradigm, rather than merely overthrowing them.'¹⁰⁷

Methodology and Structure

This thesis is not intended to offer a teleological account of the 'progression' or 'development' of the novel. Likewise, the division of the thesis into chapters on the broad basis of fictional sub-genre – the gothic novel, the Jacobin novel, the national tale and the

¹⁰⁷ Murray Pittock, *Scottish and Irish Romanticism*, p. 3.

historical novel – does not imply that these generic categories are either stable or fixed. Indeed, as discussed earlier in the introduction, I suggest that to discuss sensibility in the Romantic period serves to destabilise established generic categories rather than to strengthen them. However, in order to offer a sufficiently broad survey of Romantic fiction, choosing examples with affiliations to a number of generic categories seems the best way to consider the various inflections of the discourse of sensibility in the period. The period covered by the thesis (1789-1820) is also not intended to be prescriptive or limiting. To begin with the fiction of Radcliffe is an appropriate entry point in order to counter critical claims of the excessive and individualistic radical sensibility of the 1790s by suggesting that Enlightenment moral philosophy in fact had a profound influence on the gothic novel in this decade. The thesis therefore begins in 1789, when Radcliffe's first novel was published. Ending in 1820, it suggests that Scott's *Ivanhoe* marks a turning point in the Romantic novel's treatment of sensibility in the development of a heightened self-consciousness about the politics of realism and sympathetic identification which has significant implication for the development of the novel form in the 1820s and beyond.

This thesis identifies with the 'historicist branch' of Romantic studies that Wallace locates as an alternative approach to the conventional 'traditions of aesthetic and transcendental Romanticism'.¹⁰⁸ In its reading of Romantic fiction within the context of the philosophy of the Enlightenment it attempts to describe the discourse of sensibility as part of the cultural history of the early nineteenth century. The discussion of sensibility identifies many of the tropes traditionally associated with Romantic novel – inwardness,

¹⁰⁸ Wallace, 'Enlightened Romanticism', p. 11. Wallace offers a brief history of the historicist approach, citing Marilyn Butler, Gary Kelly, James Chandler, Katie Trumpener and Anne K. Mellor as key examples (p. 11) and noting – quoting Ian Haywood and Zachary Leader – that it can be read as seeking to overcome “the perceived dehistoricizing tendencies not only of New Criticism but also of post-structuralism and deconstruction”, p. 13.

sublime experience, alienation, self-consciousness and interiority – and I attempt to discuss these aspects of Romanticism as part of a cultural-historicist approach rather than an aesthetic one. Indeed the Romantic novel's preoccupation with selfhood and private feeling can no longer be considered as purely aesthetic given that the literature in question emerges from a historical period in which the relationship between the individual and society was of paramount importance.

The political and philosophical formulations of sociability which provide the contextual underpinnings of the thesis – such as those expressed in Godwin's *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, Burke's *Reflections* and the various manifestations of Enlightenment moral sense philosophy – engage in numerous ways with the role of the individual in a period of European social and political unrest. By engaging directly with these formations, the novels discussed evoke ideas of boundaries and borders and the potential of sensibility to efface cultural divisions through shared feeling. The discussion of the capacity of fiction to interrogate the social politics of affect also emphasises the fact that the authors considered were acutely aware of the influence of literary production on both the individual and the nation. Indeed, most of the novels discussed engage directly in one way or another with the act of reading as a means of forming and shaping individual identity, particularly in the case of Dacre and Scott. In contextualising the novels discussed through their reception in the contemporary reviews of the period, the thesis also emphasises the role that sensibility played in the wider literary marketplace of the Romantic period.

Certainly, the discourse of sensibility is not only identifiable in the Romantic novel; the reviews of the period are also articulated from within this framework with

surprising frequency and there is more work to be done on how the discourse of sensibility simultaneously articulated and shaped the reception of the novel. Marilyn Butler's account of the literary review in the Romantic period argues that the "serious" general magazine or Review' was a 'crucial institution' in print culture at this time.¹⁰⁹ The Reviews were 'aimed not at selling the individual book (for on the whole there was little direct "puffing"), but at creating and developing an audience for "literary intelligence"'.¹¹⁰ As such, they are not only a critical indicator of literary discourse in the Romantic period but an integral component in the development and distribution of these discourses. In addition, there are parallels between the public role of the Reviews and the politics of sensibility. Butler draws attention to Jon Klancher's study of journals in the Romantic period, noting that he shows how 'journals implied a community of discourse that united its scattered members and over time distinguished their idiolects from those of the national community.'¹¹¹ However, this implied unity was always unstable: 'Journals provided a notional "public sphere" deeply compromised from the start, since the egalitarian relationship of writer and reader and the classless status claimed for the reader were always sharply contradicted by the real world of widely unequal incomes, rank and power.'¹¹² The politics of assimilation and differentiation that were integral to the model of sensibility and sympathy were evidently at work within the Reviews themselves.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Marilyn Butler, 'Culture's Medium: The Role of the Review', in *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*, ed. by Stuart Curran (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 120-147 (p. 122).

¹¹⁰ Butler, 'Culture's Medium', p. 123.

¹¹¹ Butler, 'Culture's Medium', p. 127. See also Jon P. Klancher, *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790-1832* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), pp. 18-46.

¹¹² Butler, 'Culture's Medium', p. 127.

¹¹³ Butler notes that Klancher cites James Anderson, editor of the small Edinburgh journal *The Bee*: "By means of the universal intercourse which [British] trade occasions, and the general utility of this language, he hopes to be able to establish a mutual exchange of knowledge, and to effect a friendly literary intercourse among all nations [...] til it shall comprehend every individual of the human race", pp. 127-28.

In its contextualising of sensibility through the reception of the novels, the thesis emphasises the way that fictional experimentation with modes of feeling can be read within the wider context of what Paul Magnuson has defined as ‘public Romanticism’. Resisting the traditional idea of Romantic poetry as essentially private and introspective and building on the work of Jürgen Habermas, Magnuson argues that the literature of the Romantic period must be read in terms of public discourse, for ‘[t]o center a discussion of political and social thought exclusively within the individual expressive acts of single authors is to ignore writing’s inevitably public nature’.¹¹⁴ Within the context of Romanticism, I aim to reinterpret traditional readings of sensibility as an essentially introspective fictional mode. The thesis proposes that the discourse of sensibility is simultaneously informed by and capable of influencing the explicitly public formation of political and philosophical theory, as well as the collective ideology of the contemporary reviews. I therefore locate sensibility within a specifically communal Romanticism in which private feeling is made public. In doing so, the thesis suggests that considering sensibility as a metanarrative for the Romantic novel provides an opportunity to reassess the complex and often contradictory relationship between the aesthetics of Enlightenment and Romanticism.

¹¹⁴ Paul Magnuson, *Reading Public Romanticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 11.

Chapter Two

Gothic Sensation and Sociability: Ann Radcliffe and Charlotte Dacre

The affiliations between the gothic novel and sensibility are deep and widespread. The most obvious interactions between the sentimental and the gothic occur within the female-authored gothic novels of the 1770s, 80s and 90s which emerged directly from the earlier mid-century tradition of literary sentimentalism. Clara Reeve, Sophia Lee and Charlotte Smith all traversed the classifications of ‘sentimental’ and ‘gothic’ (among others) during this period, working within the Richardsonian paradigm of virtue in distress and finding new ways of interrogating sentimental models of femininity via gothic discourse. Almost all of the women writers associated with radical sensibility in the 1790s also produced works of ‘gothic’ fiction. Mary Hays’s *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796) and Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Mary, A Fiction* (1788) and *The Wrongs of Woman; or, Maria* (1798) have often been discussed as part of the gothic tradition, with Diane Long Hoeveler reading *Mary* as part of the female gothic mode which self-consciously stages the ‘hyperbolic gestures’ and ‘frenzied poses of victimization’ that characterise the transition from sentimental to gothic.¹ Likewise, Mary Robinson’s *Hubert de Sevrac* (1796) appropriates the motif of gothic persecution to engage with

¹ Diane Long Hoeveler, ‘The Construction of the Female Gothic Posture: Wollstonecraft’s *Mary* and Gothic Feminism’, *Gothic Studies*, 6.1 (May 2004), 30-44 (p. 30).

French revolutionary politics and Eliza Fenwick's *Secresy* (1795) considers the configuration of gothic isolation as a dangerous precursor to excessive passion and the threat of becoming the 'worst of slaves, the slave of self'.²

The relationship between male authors of gothic novels and sensibility is perhaps less familiar critical ground. Certainly, scholars of the gothic have in some ways perpetuated the gendering of gothic sensibility as female by suggesting that the male gothic (itself often cited as a rationalist counter to the female gothic mode) is 'psychological rather than in the social or economic realm.'³ However, M. G. Lewis's *The Monk* (1796), despite its status as a paradigmatic text of the male gothic tradition, also engages intimately with the aesthetic of sensibility and notions of inward subjectivity, and Lewis produced an earlier unpublished satire entitled *The Effusions of Sensibility*, suggesting a deeper debt to the sentimental tradition than is usually acknowledged.⁴ As discussed in the next chapter, William Godwin's novels of the 1790s stage their gothicised interrogation of public duty and social justice within a context of moral sense philosophy and the later novels depict a form of fragmented Romantic identity through a gothic discourse of frenzied passion. This focus on selfhood is also a feature of many later works of Romantic gothic fiction, such as Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) and James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824), which both depict various fragmentations and displacements of the self.

² Eliza Fenwick, *Secresy; or, The Ruin on the Rock*, ed. by Isobel Grundy (Peterborough: Broadview, 1998), pp. 104, 284. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

³ Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism*, p. 8. For an overview of the female and male gothic traditions, see Rictor Norton, 'Introduction', in *Gothic Readings: The First Wave, 1764-1840*, ed. by Norton (London and New York: Continuum, 2000; repr. 2006), pp. vii-xiv (p. ix).

⁴ The unfinished work is subtitled 'Letters from Lady Honoria Harrowheart to Miss Sophonisba Simper: a Pathetic Novel in the Modern Taste', Margaret Baron-Wilson (ed.), *The Life and Correspondence of M. G. Lewis*, 2 vols (London: Colburn, 1839), II, 241-70.

It is within this context of selfhood that I locate my discussion of Ann Radcliffe and Charlotte Dacre. This chapter takes as its starting point Adela Pinch's contention that in order to understand how sensibility operates in the gothic mode, it is essential to first consider the 'relationship between "feeling" and "individual"'.⁵ My discussion explores the interaction between private feeling and personal identity in the writing of Radcliffe and Dacre. Beginning with Radcliffe, I argue that the discourse of sensibility in her fiction is a hybrid form of Enlightenment moral sense philosophy and aesthetic theorisations of the sublime. In this way, gothic sensation is configured as a component of a wider formation of sociability and sympathetic interaction. I contend, however, that in *The Italian* (1797) the benevolent sentimental communities constructed by Radcliffe in the earlier novels begin to give way to a more conventionally Romantic aesthetic of fragmented and unstable selfhood. In the second part of the chapter, I suggest that this challenge to cohesive Enlightenment models of sociability becomes a central preoccupation in the first decade of the nineteenth century. By reading the fiction of Dacre as a sustained negotiation with the idea of a unifying domestic sympathy, it is clear that the 'Romantic' impulse of her writing (in the form of its individualistic and transgressive imaginative excess) emerges directly from the interrogation of Enlightenment formations of selfhood. In framing its discussion of gothic sensibility within the cultural movements of Enlightenment and Romanticism, this chapter suggests that Radcliffe and Dacre can both be read as central figures in the process of sentimental reconfiguration that defines the Romantic period.

⁵ Adela Pinch, *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 9.

Ann Radcliffe: Sentimental Contexts

Operating within the ‘hybridised genre’ of the gothic, Ann Radcliffe’s fiction can be understood as an early manifestation of the tension between Enlightenment and Romantic configurations of sensibility.⁶ Critical focus on Radcliffe’s engagement with sensibility is widespread; indeed, before the rise of scholarly interest in gothic fiction, she was frequently assigned exclusively to the generic category of the eighteenth-century sentimental novel.⁷ Scholarly interest in her affiliation with the philosophy of the Enlightenment, however, has tended to be restricted to general remarks about her alleged ‘Enlightenment rationality’ or to accounts of the relationship between her fiction and the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, either in the form of her apparently conservative reconstructions of his pastoral idylls or her negotiation with the educational theories outlined in his *Émile* (1762).⁸ My discussion of Radcliffe’s sensibility locates it instead within the context of the moral sense philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment – in particular in the work of Francis Hutcheson – and aesthetic theories of the sublime, suggesting that moral sensation and perception operate as a basis for sociability in her novels. In terms of my wider thesis in this chapter that sensibility functions as an integral component of gothic Romanticism, Radcliffe’s fiction is an appropriate point of

⁶ Coral Ann Howells, *Love, Mystery and Misery: Feeling in Gothic Fiction* (London: Athlone, 1978), p. vi.

⁷ Walter F. Wright referred to Radcliffe as a ‘sentimental’ novelist, *Sensibility in English Prose Fiction 1760-1814: A Reinterpretation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1937), p. 81.

⁸ JoEllen DeLucia’s recent article on Radcliffe and the Scottish Enlightenment is suggestive of the possibilities for reinterpreting the novels within the context of philosophy, although she reads the connections in terms of its postcolonial implications, rather than its generic ones, ‘From the Female Gothic to a Feminist Theory of History: Ann Radcliffe and the Scottish Enlightenment’, *The Eighteenth Century*, 50.1 (Spring 2009), 101-15. For Radcliffe’s treatment of Rousseau see, for example, Robert Miles’s discussion of *Émile* and *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) in *Ann Radcliffe: The Great Enchantress* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), pp. 116-19 and Claudia Johnson’s chapter on Radcliffe in *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender, and Sentimentality in the 1790s, Wollstonecraft, Radcliffe, Burney, Austen* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 71-138, which discusses both the rural idyll and Radcliffe’s engagement with Rousseau’s theories of education. See also Angela Wright, *Britain, France and the Gothic, 1764-1820: The Import of Terror* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 88-119.

departure, revealing the Enlightenment origins of gothic sensation and hinting towards Romantic complexities relating to subjectivity and the self.

Many accounts of Radcliffe's novels invoke the conventional dialectic of sentimental fiction, in which sensibility is both 'feared and desired as individuality *in extremis*, as extra-social being *par excellence*, as freedom from the realities and constraints of merely social existence, but consequently as a terrible solitude.'⁹ This oppositional construction is replicated in readings of Radcliffe's sentimental politics; while some accounts read her depiction of sensibility as staunchly conservative, most credit it with an element of subtle subversion but consider it – like the wider movement of sensibility – largely ambivalent. Nelson Smith sees Radcliffe as an opponent of sentiment, using the excesses of the gothic novel to 'show the extreme effects of sensibility' and its 'defects', but observes that she 'manages to have her novels both ways', evoking the 'pleasurable emotions of fear and terror and then expos[ing] the rational causes to show the weakness of [...] sensibility'.¹⁰ Likewise, Coral Ann Howells detects a similar ambivalence, arguing that, despite the 'hard core of rationality' in the novels, they also suggest 'that reason may be inadequate to determine the proper value of an emotional relationship'.¹¹

Barbara Benedict finds the novels reactionary in their 'dedication to the Enlightenment ideals of rationality and balance, self-control and order' and their warning against 'the

⁹ Gary Kelly, *English Fiction of the Romantic Period, 1789-1830* (London: Longman, 1989), p. 59. Kelly argues that Radcliffe's novels 'oppose subjectivity to sociability', and 'to merely social modes and codes of being', p. 51.

¹⁰ Nelson C. Smith, 'Sense, Sensibility and Ann Radcliffe', *SEL*, 13 (1973), 577-90 (pp. 577-78). Smith argues against critical interpretations of Radcliffe as a novelist of sensibility, stating that 'none of her contemporaries [...] saw her as such' (p. 577).

¹¹ Howells, *Love, Mystery and Misery*, pp. 29, 58. Howells presents a similar thesis in her essay 'The Pleasure of the Woman's Text: Ann Radcliffe's Subtle Transgressions in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Italian*' in *Gothic Fictions: Prohibition/Transgression*, ed. by Kenneth W. Graham (New York: AMS Press, 1989), pp. 151-62. Here, she argues that in the novels, 'it is as if [Radcliffe] is showing that she can write within the decorum of sentimental fiction, and then insisting on her freedom to do something else beyond the confines of those fictional structures' (p. 158).

indulgence of private feeling’, suggesting that their ‘style, voices yet also muffles sentimental values within a conventional structure’.¹² Feminist critics read Radcliffe’s sensibility as more progressive, suggesting that, as part of the wider movement of gothic feminism (which I consider in more detail in my discussion of Charlotte Dacre’s writing), she contests the construction of sensibility as a ‘public, male, aristocratic discourse’, reconfiguring it as ‘a private, domestic virtue’.¹³ My reading of Radcliffe’s fiction conforms to the idea that her engagement with sensibility is essentially ambivalent. Locating my discussion within the sensory formations of Scottish Enlightenment philosophy and theories of the sublime, this chapter rejects the assumption that gothic sensation must necessarily be a private, interior experience, suggesting instead that Radcliffe uses the discourse of sensibility to construct a model of public engagement based on individual feeling.

As a starting point, it is worth considering critical accounts of Radcliffe’s affiliation with Latitudinarianism, for they provide an important insight into her engagement with Enlightenment sensibility, given the connections between Latitudinarianism and moral sense philosophy. The most notable of the critical works identifying this correlation is R. S. Crane’s reassessment of the genesis of sensibility, in which he suggested that that the origins of sentimentalism could be traced to the Latitudinarian divines who preached ‘universal benevolence’ and ‘natural goodness’ throughout the seventeenth century and into the eighteenth and that Latitudinarian influence was central to the cultural dominance of

¹² Barbara M. Benedict, *Framing Feeling: Sentiment and Style in English Prose Fiction, 1745-1800* (New York: AMS Press, 1994), pp. 176, 195; Barbara Benedict, ‘Pictures of Conformity: Sentiment and Structure in Ann Radcliffe’s Style’, *Philological Quarterly*, 68 (1989), 363-77 (p. 363).

¹³ Sydney M. Conger, ‘Sensibility Restored: Radcliffe’s Answer to Lewis’s *The Monk*’, in *Gothic Fictions: Prohibition/Transgression*, pp. 113-49 (p. 136). See also Hoeveler’s discussion of Radcliffe within her construction of ‘professional femininity’ in gothic fiction, in which ‘by valorizing the private female world of the home’, female authors thereby ‘destroyed the public/juridical masculine world’, *Gothic Feminism*, p. 5.

sentimentalism during the middle part of the eighteenth century.¹⁴ In terms of the critical accounts of Radcliffe and Latitudinarianism, Robert Mayhew rejects Rictor Norton's suggestion that she held sympathy for Dissenting culture, arguing instead that she 'follows a Latitudinarian form of argument with respect to the interrelation of nature and religion at a thematic level'.¹⁵ Mayhew's discussion focuses on Radcliffe's descriptions of the viewing of landscapes as 'ascending to a mood of devotion' and the presence of the 'explained supernatural', locating them within a Latitudinarian context of religious rationalism.¹⁶ Anne Chandler extends Mayhew's discussion in her article on Radcliffe and natural theology, a movement which considers the notion of 'spiritual consolation through a reverent appreciation of natural phenomena'.¹⁷ This critical tendency to contextualise the novels in terms of natural theology (which sought to prove the existence of God from empirical facts) is significant because it locates them within the wider philosophical and religious debates of the Enlightenment that informed the development of sensibility. Janet Todd discusses this in her account of sensibility, noting that Isaac Newton's empirical science emphasised nature as 'an expression of God through which finite people could approach the infinite and understand both beauty and morality' and that this led to the wider belief that '[t]he external world was processed through humanity' and, more specifically, 'through sensation and feeling'.¹⁸

Likewise, Todd observes that John Locke's associations between morality and sensory

¹⁴ R. S. Crane, 'Suggestions Toward a Genealogy of the "Man of Feeling"', *ELH*, 1.3 (1934), 205-30 (pp. 207, 208). See also G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 66-68.

¹⁵ Robert Mayhew, 'Latitudinarianism and the Novels of Ann Radcliffe', *Texas Studies in Language and Literature*, 44 (Fall 2002), 237-301 (p. 291). See also Robert Mayhew, 'Gothic Trajectories: Latitudinarian Theology and the Novels of Ann Radcliffe', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 15.3-4 (2003), 583-613.

¹⁶ Mayhew, 'Latitudinarianism and the Novels of Ann Radcliffe', p. 285. See also Sydney M. Conger, 'Sensibility Restored', pp. 113-49, which refers to the Latitudinarian 'scriptural ideals' in *The Italian*, p. 142.

¹⁷ Anne Chandler, 'Ann Radcliffe and Natural Theology', *Studies in the Novel*, 38.2 (Summer 2006), 133-53 (p. 135). For a discussion of the differences between Latitudinarianism and natural theology see Mayhew, 'Latitudinarianism and the Novels of Ann Radcliffe', pp. 276-77.

¹⁸ Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction* (London and New York: Methuen, 1986), p. 23.

experience were an important factor in the development of physiological and ethical sensibility, given the emphasis in formulations of sensibility on acute perception of emotion.¹⁹

It follows that these critical discussions of the interaction between nature and religion also look towards the sublime as a central feature of the gothic, and Chandler's article makes a number of observations about Radcliffe's depiction of sublime experience which inform my reading. She begins by suggesting that the process of devotion inspired by nature relates to Locke's notion 'that looking within the self, taking full advantage of rationality as a faculty, can replicate the awe-inspiring experience of looking upward and outward'.²⁰ This process of extending private feeling and sensory experience outward is important in Chandler's reading of the sublime, which she suggests operates in a similar way in that 'the organic, ecstatic experience of Burkean sublimity is usually tempered by a sense of replicability and demotic, commonly held meaning'.²¹ So, Chandler goes on, while 'the process of spiritual acclimation with the natural sublime is [...] tied to the construction of an idealized and feminine subjectivity', it also functions as a source of collectivity and unification because Radcliffe often features 'group interactions involving texts as well as landscapes, men as well as women.'²² Radcliffe's appropriation of theories of the sublime has received considerable critical attention, and this discussion cannot hope to cover the intricacies of its manifestations in her novels. However, I do wish to suggest that Radcliffe's representations of the sublime might provide a number of parallels with sensibility and moral sense philosophy. Taking both Chandler's and Anne Mellor's discussions of Radcliffe's sublime as a starting point, it is

¹⁹ See Todd, *Sensibility*, p. 3 for a fuller discussion. In terms of the religious context, Todd points out that both Newton and Locke were influenced by the Cambridge Platonists and that although Locke 'totally opposed their belief in innate principles', his pupil Shaftesbury went on to define a moral sense aligned to that of Latitudinarianism which was 'near reason but also close to intuition', pp. 23, 25.

²⁰ Chandler, 'Ann Radcliffe and Natural Theology', pp. 135-36.

²¹ Chandler, 'Ann Radcliffe and Natural Theology', p. 145.

²² Chandler, 'Ann Radcliffe and Natural Theology', p. 140.

possible to read the novels as offering a fusion of the sublime and the beautiful as Burke constructed them: an essentially ‘*democratic*’ formation in which the ‘experience of the positive sublime can produce sympathy or love that connects the self with other people’.²³

Thus, Radcliffe emphasises individual sensation as a basis for social coherence through her depictions of the sublime, in common with the wider discourse of moral sense philosophy. However, while her fiction can be read as being grounded in a rationalist empiricist model of individual sensation as part of a Burkean formation of sociability where private feeling promotes public benefit, Radcliffe’s novels express considerable anxiety over this kind of socially-constructed subjectivity, particularly in the later works. This section reads the changing manifestations of Radcliffe’s sublime as prefiguring a form of Romantic selfhood, suggesting that the construction of a collective sublime breaks down as a result of what Burke identified as ‘the annihilation of the self’ associated with the sublime experience.²⁴ Likewise, the Hutchesonian formation of sociability based on a shared moral sense is also rendered problematic in her novels because of its tendency to efface individual selfhood in favour of social cohesion. Radcliffe’s fiction demonstrates an increasing anxiety about the possibility of subsuming the self within the state, which ultimately exposes the limitations of her own sympathetic communities.

Ann Radcliffe: Moral Sense Philosophy and Sociability in *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* and *The Romance of the Forest*

²³ Anne K. Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 95. See also Rictor Norton, *Mistress of Udolpho: The Life of Ann Radcliffe* (London and New York: Leicester University Press, 1999), where he observes that Radcliffe was ‘indebted to [William] Gilpin for his belief in the mutually enhancing contrast of the sublime and the beautiful – in marked contrast to Burke’, p. 79.

²⁴ Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender*, p. 85.

Radcliffe's first novel *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne: A Highland Story* (1789) has received little critical attention, having been considered an 'overplotted' and 'thin' literary production by a novelist 'learning her art'.²⁵ However, in terms of my discussion it is highly relevant, for it denotes Radcliffe's early appropriation of the formations of moral sense philosophy. The opening chapter of the novel locates it firmly within a moral-philosophic discourse of sensation. Robert Miles suggests that Radcliffe's description of the affective process of reading – in which '[a]t a tale of distress our tears flow a full tribute to pity'²⁶ – recalls Henry Home, Lord Kames's theory of ideal presence, but I want to suggest that the ideas expressed in the early passages of the novel are in fact closer to Hutcheson's formulation of moral sense and the approval of benevolence.²⁷ The statement that '[a]t a deed of virtue our heart unfolds, our soul aspires, we bless the action' (p. 5), accords directly with Hutcheson's definition of 'moral sense' as 'MORAL SENSE'; '*that Determination to be pleas'd with the Contemplation of those Affections, Actions, or Characters of rational Agents, which we call virtuous*'.²⁸

In Hutcheson's theory, moral sense operated as a means of perceiving virtue in others, operating in the same way as the other senses by involuntarily receiving sensations, which would incite either pleasure or aversion. In accordance with Hutcheson's belief in the innate benevolence of human nature (which refuted the earlier 'self-interest' theories of Hobbes and

²⁵ Frederick S. Frank, 'Ann Radcliffe', in *Gothic Writers: A Critical and Bibliographical Guide*, ed. by Douglass H. Thomson, Jack G. Voller and Frederick S. Frank (Westport: Greenwood, 2002), pp. 349-60 (p. 353); Robert Miles, *Ann Radcliffe: The Great Enchantress* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 73; Robert Miles, 'The 1790s: the Effulgence of Gothic', in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed. by Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 41-62 (p. 45).

²⁶ Ann Radcliffe, *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne: A Highland Story* (London: Hookham, 1789), p. 5. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

²⁷ Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 135. Miles terms Kames's ideal presence 'the dominant model of eighteenth-century aesthetic response', 'Introduction: Gothic Romance as Visual Technology', *Romantic Circles* (December 2005) <<http://www.rc.umd.edu/praxis/gothic/intro/miles.html>> [accessed 31 March 2010]. A fuller discussion of Kames's theory can be found in chapter five of the thesis.

²⁸ Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue; In Two Treatises*. (London: Smith, 1725), p. vi.

Mandeville), Radcliffe writes in her description of the young Osbert that, in youth, ‘[t]he happy benevolence of our feelings prompts us to believe that every body is good’ and ‘the warm heart expands to those around it’ (p. 4).²⁹ The idea of sensation as a means of appreciating benevolence is pervasive in *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* and the novel is replete with the discourse of what Ann Jessie Van Sant terms ‘organic sensitivity’: the narrative frequently focuses on characters’ ‘sensation’, ‘perception’ and ‘delicacy’, and nerves ‘thrill’ (pp. 57, 64, 161) with abundance.³⁰ Indeed, Radcliffe’s depiction of virtue accords with this sensory model in its description of the heroine Mary, upon whom ‘[n]ature had bestowed [...] a heart susceptible of all the fine emotions of delicate passion; a heart which vibrated in union with the sweetest feelings of humanity’ (p. 103). The moral implication of her sensitivity is obvious here; as Hutcheson writes in his outline of a divinely endowed moral sense,

*the AUTHOR of NATURE has much better furnish’d us for a virtuous Conduct, than our Moralists seem to imagine [...] He has made Virtue a lovely Form, to excite our pursuit of it; and has given us strong Affections to be the Springs of each virtuous Action.*³¹

The ability to derive pleasure from virtue, or the ‘sweetest feelings of humanity’ as Radcliffe puts it, serves to strengthen social bonds; Hutcheson argued that perceiving and approving of benevolence create a community of feeling attuned to the public good.

Certainly, it is notable that in *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* epistemological moments of individual sensation are almost always articulated within an ethical framework of public sociability which operates as an antidote to gothic dispossession and isolation.

²⁹ Hutcheson writes that ‘This moral Sense of Beauty in Actions and Affections may appear strange at first View: Some of our Moralists themselves are offended at it in my LORD SHAFTESBURY; so much they are accustom’d to deduce every Approbation, or Aversion, from rational Views of Interest’, *Inquiry*, p. vii.

³⁰ Ann Jessie Van Sant, *Eighteenth-Century Sensibility and the Novel: the Senses in a Social Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 6.

³¹ Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, p. vii.

For example, towards the end of the novel when the Count de Santmorin expresses his remorse for having abducted Mary as a result of his uncontrollable desire for her, it is not merely in terms of self-interested regret, but in the context of the disastrous effects of excessive passion for the public good. He declares that '[t]he impetuosity of passion impelled me onward with irresistible fury; it urged me to violate the sacred duties of gratitude – of friendship – and of humanity' (p. 261). The language used here is significant: the notion of being 'impelled' (a term usually associated with action in accordance with moral pressure, not in violation of it) by passion to breach social duty serves to emphasise the necessity for sensibility to be controlled and directed outwards from the self. Certainly, the fate of the Count becomes a means of emphasising the unifying and humanitarian potential of sensibility. Osbert is '[t]ouched by the recollection of past friendship' to the extent that he 'threw down his sword', 'overcome with a sort of tenderness' (p. 263) and when the Count makes his final speech, he 'concluded [his] sentence with a groan, which vibrated upon the hearts of all present' (p. 264), inciting passion in the spectators and implicitly uniting them through shared public sympathy. The sympathy of the spectators is clearly articulated within the terms of Hutcheson's formation of moral sense and benevolence, for the narrator observes that 'Alleyn had observed the Count with a mixture of pity and *admiration* [my italics]' (p. 264), a term closely allied to Hutcheson's notion of approval.³² Radcliffe's depiction of sensibility in this scene, then, suggests not the justice of a chivalric social order that is often assumed to be a feature of her novels, but an investment in a modern and egalitarian sociability in which combat (represented in Osbert's abandonment of his sword) is replaced by 'tenderness' (p. 263) and forgiveness.

³² Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, p. 11. Hutcheson uses only the terms 'approve' and 'disapprove' but the idea of moral approval or approbation appears throughout the *Inquiry*.

If this poses a challenge to scholarly interpretations of sensibility as a conservative means of upholding social order, then the interaction of reason and feeling in *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* also complicates the binary construction of Enlightenment rationality as a counter to feeling in Radcliffe's work. While the process of the 'Senses and Affections leading us to *publick Good*, as well as to *private*' derives from the philosophy of both Hutcheson and Shaftesbury,³³ neither saw 'the individual as naturally capable of acting from the motives of universal benevolence' and both had stressed the importance of reason, or reflection, in governing the affections and directing benevolence towards the good of the system.³⁴ As Hutcheson put it, one must 'enquire by *Reflections* upon human Affairs, what Course of Action does most effectually promote the *universal Good*'.³⁵ Radcliffe's construction of feeling and reason are articulated precisely in these terms: instead of acting as an opposing or tempering force for sensibility, as critics have suggested, it can be read as being interrelated to a sensibility based on the tenets of moral sense philosophy.³⁶

Radcliffe insists that in addition to moral sense, Mary also has 'a mind, quick in *perceiving* the nicest lines of moral *rectitude*, and strenuous in endeavouring to *act* up to its *perceptions*' (p. 103, my emphasis). This conjunction of perception and action accords directly with Hutcheson's trajectory of moral sensation (or sensory perceptions) being governed by

³³ Francis Hutcheson, *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections. With Illustrations on Moral Sense* (London: Powell and Crampton, 1728), p. 58. Hutcheson asserted that 'the Actions we approve in others, are generally imagin'd to tend to the *natural Good* of Mankind, or that of some *Parts* of it', *Inquiry*, p. 111. See also Shaftesbury's condemnation of 'PARTIAL AFFECTION, or social Love *in part*, without regard to a complete Society or *Whole*' and his emphasis on the '*natural Affections* which lead to the GOOD OF THE PUBLICK', Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, 3 vols (London: [no. pub.], 1711), II, 110; II, 86.

³⁴ Chris Jones, *Radical Sensibility: Literature and Ideas in the 1790s* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 23. Jones argues that Hutcheson's emphasis on 'the importance of reason as an ally of benevolence and the moral sense in discovering what courses really benefited mankind' is the part of his philosophy that can most easily be considered 'progressive', perhaps especially in terms of its differentiation from that of Shaftesbury, p. 26.

³⁵ Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, p. 253.

³⁶ See, for example, Benedict, *Framing Feeling*, p. 176.

reflection (or judgment and rectitude) in order to achieve the outcome of benevolent action for the public good. Similarly, later in the novel when Mary's brother Osbert seeks to avenge his father's murder, he initially experiences a 'cruel conflict' (p. 20) between pity for his family's emotional distress at hearing of his desire for revenge and his own inclination for action and resolution: 'filial duty, honour, revenge, commanded him to go; filial love, regret, and pity, entreated him to stay' (p. 20). Finally, '[s]terner principles now nerved [his] breast [...] against [pity's] influence, and impelled him on' (p. 21) to act upon the principles of duty and honour. This is consistent with Hutcheson's proto-utilitarian assertion that reason

serve[s] to suggest *greater Ends* than would occur to us without Reflection; and by the *Prepollency* of one Desire towards the *greater Good* [...] to stop the Desire toward the *smaller good* when it appears inconsistent with the greater.³⁷

Here the 'smaller good' of Osbert appeasing his family is sacrificed to the 'greater good' of social justice and the overthrowing of aristocratic individualism. The narrative asserts that '[s]o lovely is Pity in all her attitudes, that fondness prompts us to believe she can never transgress; but she changes into a vice, when she overcomes the purposes of a stronger virtue' (p. 21); like Hutcheson and Shaftesbury, Radcliffe emphasises the importance of reason as a guiding force for moral sense. In *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* sensibility, as articulated via Hutcheson's model of moral sense, operates as a uniting social force which – if properly moderated by reflection – promotes the causes of justice and benevolence.

The model of sociability based on individual sensation in *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* is more fully realised in *The Romance of the Forest* (1791). There have been various critical accounts of the influence of Rousseau's work on the novel, focused largely on the parallels between the Protestant clergyman La Luc and the Savoyard vicar in Rousseau's

³⁷ Hutcheson, *Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections*, p. 220.

Émile.³⁸ Certainly, La Luc, in possessing ‘the strength of philosophy united with the finest tenderness of humanity – a philosophy which taught him to correct his feelings, not to annihilate them’ has much in common with the Savoyard vicar’s blend of faith, sensitivity and reflection.³⁹ *The Romance of the Forest* – set in France – has also been read as an imitation of Rousseau’s sentimental pastoral communities: Claudia Johnson argues that there was nothing ‘dangerous’ about the ‘bland Rousseauism of *The Romance of the Forest*’ in ‘the value it places on republican independence, virtuous retirement, and sentimental domesticity, and the suspicion in which it holds the distinctions and refinements of aristocratic society’.⁴⁰ While there remains more to be said about Radcliffe’s interactions with Rousseau’s philosophy, there is no scope to do so here and my discussion of *The Romance of the Forest* returns to the philosophical formations of the British moral sense philosophers, suggesting that reading the novel as a bland replication of Rousseau’s pastoral idyll is to neglect Radcliffe’s more complex portrayal of selfhood.

At first, the novel does read as a conventional account of domestic sentiment and familial affection, in a Burkean model of private affection acting as a model for public cohesion. In the community of Lelancourt ‘the philanthropy which, flowing from the heart of the pastor, was diffused through the whole village, and united the inhabitants in the sweet and firm bonds of social compact’ (p. 277), in keeping with the moral sense Enlightenment model

³⁸ Claudia Johnson argues that the novel is affiliated with *Émile* and its focus on ‘how education may restore “man” to the condition “nature” fitted him for’, *Equivocal Beings*, p. 75. See also Chloe Chard, ‘Introduction’, in Ann Radcliffe, *The Romance of the Forest* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986; repr. 1999), pp. vii-xxiv (p. xxiii). Angela Wright has recently considered Radcliffe’s engagement with Rousseau in the novel in a different context as part of her wider discussion of the relationship between Britain and France in gothic fiction of the period, suggesting that Radcliffe exhibits a ‘quasi-obsession’ with the theme of self-interest, not only engaging directly with Rousseau’s theories but also disagreeing with them, *Britain, France and the Gothic, 1764-1820: The Import of Terror* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 98.

³⁹ Ann Radcliffe, *The Romance of the Forest* [1791] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 277. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

⁴⁰ Johnson, *Equivocal Beings*, p. 77.

of sensibility extending outwards from the individual in a natural gravitation towards communality. Similarly, when Adeline and Theodore are married at the end of the novel, the narrator is keen to assert that ‘not to themselves was their happiness contracted, but diffused to all who came within the sphere of their influence’ (p. 363). The community Radcliffe constructs, in contrast to Burke’s, is formulated as an egalitarian alternative to ‘the effects of an arbitrary government, where the bounties of nature, which were designed for all, are monopolized by a few, and the many are suffered to starve tantalized by surrounding plenty’ (p. 281); as Janet Todd puts it, Adeline and Theodore are ‘aristocrats of sentiment, rather than rank’.⁴¹ The sentimental egalitarianism of the novel, then, has much in common with the benevolent formation of justice in *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*.

However, Radcliffe does move beyond the isolated pastoral retreat in *The Romance of the Forest* during a series of scenes in which the operation of sympathy is distinctly public, serving to heighten the injustice of gothic persecution and isolation by emphasising communal sentimental bonds. It is at this point, however, that the novel begins to manifest anxiety over the dangerous potential of widespread sympathetic identification. Indeed, if the novel’s sociability is derivative of Hutcheson’s and Shaftesbury’s formations of cultivated moral sense, it also reflects the qualified selectivity implied in these models. Both Hutcheson and Shaftesbury, as early proponents of sympathy, proposed a model of sensory transmission (which prefigured Hume’s) in which sympathy – via the moral sense – passes from person to person via a process of ‘contagion’ or ‘infection’. In *Characteristicks*, Shaftesbury writes that

We may with good reason call every Passion *Pannick* which is rais’d in a Multitude, and convey’d by Aspect, or as it were by Contact or Sympathy. Thus popular Fury may

⁴¹ Janet Todd, *The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing, and Fiction, 1660-1800* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), p. 259.

be call'd *Pannick*, when the Rage of the People, as we have sometimes known, has put them beyond themselves.⁴²

In other words, the fact that the sympathetic impulse could operate via a process of infection, being imperceptibly transmitted from one individual to another, possessed considerable disruptive potential if extended to the masses. As John Mullan puts it, Shaftesbury was 'willing to trust the gentlemanly fellowships of which he was a member but not the disordered passions of the mob'.⁴³ As a result, he delineated two kinds of sympathy: the 'dangerously affective nature of the passions and the assertiveness of authority which finds in sympathy a means for the reestablishment of social order and harmony.'⁴⁴ This latter version has much in common with Burke's assertion that sympathy within the family unit must operate within a hierarchical structure and reinforce the order of society. *The Romance of the Forest* articulates a version of public sympathy which merges the two forms outlined by Shaftesbury; for Radcliffe, the contagious nature of the passions is capable of undermining unjust social hierarchies.

One of the most notable scenes in this context is that in which the King's men insist upon arresting Adeline's wounded suitor Theodore for having quitted his regiment. The reaction of the witnesses to the scene is described in the following terms:

Meanwhile the mob, whose compassion for him had been gradually excited by the obduracy of the officer, were now roused to pity and indignation by the seeming certainty of his punishment, and the unfeeling manner in which it had been denounced. In a short time they became so much enraged, that, partly from a dread of farther consequences, and partly from the shame which their charges of cruelty had occasioned, the serjeant consented that he should be put to bed. (p. 178)

⁴² Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks*, I, 15.

⁴³ Jones, *Radical Sensibility*, p. 26.

⁴⁴ Eileen Hunt Botting, *Family Feuds: Wollstonecraft, Burke, and Rousseau on the Transformation of the Family* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), p. 104.

The terminology of this depiction of the ‘enraged’ mob, whose ‘compassion’ is excited, derives directly from moral-philosophic rhetoric. Van Sant quotes Johnson’s entry on Newton in his *Dictionary*, which remarks on ‘the rays of light, falling upon the bottom of the eye’ which ‘excite *vibrations* in the tunica retina’.⁴⁵ She goes on to note that the term ‘excite’ ‘occur[s] regularly in descriptions of psychological and physiological sensibility’, referring ‘equally to procedures for arousing the passions or to procedure for creating disturbance in the nervous system’.⁴⁶ The term is used by Shaftesbury in *Characteristicks* but perhaps most notably by his pupil Hume, who suggests in the *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40) that ‘[m]orals excite passions, and produce and prevent actions’.⁴⁷ The reaction of the legal enforcers in the quotation above is interesting in terms of Shaftesbury’s reflections on the dangers of sentimental contagion. Using a judicial metaphor, he states that,

[t]he Magistrate, if he be any Artist, shou’d have a gentler hand; and, instead of Causticks, Incisions, and Amputations, shou’d be using the softest Balms; and, with a kind Sympathy, entering into the Concern of the People, and taking, as it were, their Passion upon him, shou’d, when he has sooth’d and satisfy’d it, endeavour, by chearful ways, to divert and heal it.⁴⁸

This striking configuration of the public panic engendered by contagious passion as a sentimental body politic which must be ‘sooth’d’ by the ‘Balms’ of sympathy is inverted by Radcliffe in her description of the officers of law. In her version, the rational ‘dread of farther consequences’ on the part of the officials is at least as important as the emotional ‘shame’ ‘occasioned’ by the crowd in the outcome of the scene. Although Janet Todd claims that the ‘open community’ of *The Romance of the Forest* finds its sentimental power ‘through the

⁴⁵ Van Sant, *Eighteenth-Century Sensibility and the Novel*, p. 9.

⁴⁶ Van Sant, *Eighteenth-Century Sensibility and the Novel*, p. 50.

⁴⁷ David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 3 vols (London: Noon, 1739-40), III, 5.

⁴⁸ Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks*, I, 16-17.

established institutions of the law', Radcliffe's account of Theodore's arrest suggests that this is not the case.⁴⁹ Rather than representing a necessity to quell or extinguish the dangerous manifestations of public passion, Radcliffe berates the judicial system for lacking sensibility suggesting, as she does in *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*, a social formulation not of feudal hierarchy but of egalitarian sympathy and pity.

Similarly, in the description of La Motte's trial for robbery and conspiracy to murder, the watching crowd become sympathetically involved and, as the sentence of death is pronounced, 'the unhappy criminal fainted, and the compassion of the assembly, whose feelings had been unusually interested in the decision, was expressed in a general groan' (p. 340). This scene manifests Burke's reservations about the public function of sympathy as it relates to the death penalty and public execution, in which he had feared that 'in keeping with the operation of the sublime, the sympathy of the crowd often passed to the hapless victim, thus undermining state power at the very moment of its triumph'.⁵⁰ However, Radcliffe does not configure the sympathy of the crowd as a dangerous challenge to state power, as Burke does: instead, it functions as a means of critiquing an unjust social system. In this sense, it has much in common with Smith's legal metaphor of sympathy in which he states that,

though man has, in this manner, been rendered the immediate judge of mankind, he has been rendered so only in the first instance; and an appeal lies from his sentence to a much higher tribunal, to the tribunal of their own consciences [...] to that of the man within the breast, the great judge and arbiter of their conduct.⁵¹

In this context, Radcliffe makes the startling suggestion that legal institutions are improperly situated to judge human behaviour; sympathy must essentially be the province of collective

⁴⁹ Todd, *The Sign of Angellica*, p. 260.

⁵⁰ Luke Gibbons, *Edmund Burke and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 4.

⁵¹ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 6th edn, 2 vols (London: Strahan and Cadell; Edinburgh: Creech and Bell, 1790), I, 321.

social conscience and religious faith. Yet, the powerful potential of social sympathy is undermined as the novel draws to its close, as it relocates benevolence and pity to a more individualistic and hierarchical province. Ultimately, it is not the power of the impassioned crowd but Adeline's personal appeal to the King's sympathy that obtains a pardon for Theodore, and her persuasiveness has as much to do with the fact that she has been 'formally acknowledged as the daughter and heiress of Henry Marquis de Montalt' as it does with her 'irresistible' personal charms (p. 353). So, while Radcliffe's public operation of sympathy can be seen to accord with Shaftesbury's conception of the natural capacity to respond to behaviour which is attuned to the good of the system, the operation of public good is always confined to a 'select and enlightened society' (p. 362).⁵² From the communal sentimental fantasy of *The Romance of the Forest* emerges a profound ambivalence relating to the public model of sympathetic sensibility and its potential to erase individual – and social – difference.

Ann Radcliffe: Sublime Selfhood in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Italian*

This ambivalence is further manifested in Radcliffe's representations of the sublime. The relationship between the sublime and the individual self is highly complex, eliciting much critical debate, and the interaction between the sublime and the sentimental is similarly polyvalent. As Dafydd Moore observes, '[a]s categories of thought and experience the sublime and the sentimental are, in one important sense at least, antithetical'; the sentimental is more closely aligned with the beautiful in Burke's formation as 'it tends to be social rather than

⁵² See also Johnson, *Equivocal Beings*, in which she notes that *Udolpho* 'reminds us that sentimentality enforces and mystifies certain social priorities by a converse operation of desensitization. It ensures the stable continuance of certain arrangements unconflictually by privileging the feelings of some and excluding from sympathy the feelings of those who fall outside dominant values. Far from granting all persons access to the dignity of interiority by virtue of their capacity for feeling, sentimentality always entails exclusion', p. 107.

appeal to instincts of self-preservation'.⁵³ However, critical interpretations of the sublime have begun to suggest a number of parallels between the sublime, sympathy and sentiment.⁵⁴ In his 2003 study of Burke, Luke Gibbons identifies a 'sympathetic sublime', resisting traditional accounts of Burke's sublime as individualistic and suggesting that sympathy '[extends] its remit from self-preservation in the face of danger to include wider social sentiments and the well-being of others'.⁵⁵ Building on Gibbons's reading of Burke's philosophy, I suggest that Radcliffe's fiction forges a link between the aesthetic qualities of the sublime and the ethical qualities of sympathy. As her rendering of moral sense philosophy constructs a model of individual sensation feeding into public communality, so her rendering of the sublime evokes an ethically-coded framework of private feeling elevated to interaction with both nature and fellow human beings. Yet, like her constructions of public sympathy, Radcliffe's model of sublime sociability ultimately collapses under the pressure of sympathetic association.

To return to Chandler's discussion of the 'lateral sociability of natural forms' in Radcliffe's fiction, I am interested in her assertion that '*Udolpho* frequently assigns ethical or transformative agency to landforms, sunlight, and waterways, often showing these elements embracing or reaching toward one another'.⁵⁶ This construction recalls Burke's account of the sublime interaction between the human spectator and nature, in which the 'interpenetration of human and natural types of beauty and sublimity assimilates itself to the kind of anthropomorphism' which centres on 'the illusion that inanimate objects can participate in

⁵³ Dafydd Moore, *Enlightenment and Romanticism in James Macpherson's The Poems of Ossian: Myth, Genre and Cultural Change* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2003), p. 115.

⁵⁴ Moore goes on to suggest that *Ossian* represents a fusion of the two, stating that 'the surface and self-proclaimed differences between the sublime and the sentimental are less significant than the more fundamental congruencies between them', p. 117.

⁵⁵ Gibbons, *Edmund Burke and Ireland*, p.xii.

⁵⁶ Chandler, 'Ann Radcliffe and Natural Theology', p. 149.

human feelings'.⁵⁷ Furthermore, as Chandler suggests, this 'sociability of natural forms' also lends itself to comparisons with Shaftesbury's philosophy.⁵⁸ For Shaftesbury, the contemplation of nature was to view a system of beauty and order within which every individual component works harmoniously, recalling the role of the individual as part of a social whole. Therefore, the engagement between the human observer and natural forms in Radcliffe's fiction not only relates to the aesthetic response to the sublime but also to earlier moral sense constructions of sociability. In *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), a depiction of 'Nature in her most sublime and striking attitudes' demonstrates a remarkable course from sociability between natural forms to human sensibility.⁵⁹ As Madame de Menon observes the sublime spectacle, the reader is informed that 'the caves more darkly frowned – the projecting cliffs assumed a more terrific aspect, and the wild overhanging shrubs waved to the gale in deeper murmurs' (pp. 104-05). Into this scene of anthropomorphic natural sociability enters a human voice 'of liquid and melodious sweetness' and, in harmony, 'the tones swelled and died faintly among the clear, yet languishing echoes which the rocks repeated with an effect like that of enchantment' (p. 105). This communion between the human voice and natural forms acts as a precursor to a more conventional scene of sensibility a few sentences later, in which 'the sweet warbler' is revealed as Julia, 'who sunk into [Madame de Menon's] arms overcome with joy' (p. 105).

This type of sociable interaction of natural forms occurs with increasing frequency in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), and the novel is suffused with depictions of humanistic

⁵⁷ Frances Ferguson, *Solitude and the Sublime: Romanticism and the Aesthetics of Individuation* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), p. 4.

⁵⁸ Chandler observes that '[t]he lateral sociability of natural forms in Radcliffe's fiction is a topic unto itself, suggesting that more work should be done on her debts to Shaftesbury and Addison', 'Ann Radcliffe and Natural Theology', pp. 148-9.

⁵⁹ Ann Radcliffe, *A Sicilian Romance* [1790] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 104. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

interchange between geographical and natural features, such as that in which ‘the pine forests brightened, and then the broad breast of the mountains, till, at length, the mist settled round their summit, touching them with a ruddy glow’.⁶⁰ In human terms, the process of collective appreciation of the sublime operates as a uniting force in the novel. The pleasure of Emily and Valancourt in viewing ‘the wonderful sublimity and variety of the prospects’, ‘heightened [St Aubert’s pleasure], and awakened a remembrance of all the delightful emotions of his early days, when the sublime charms of nature were first unveiled to him’: the sublime operates here as a catalyst for ‘the union of pure and affectionate hearts’ (p. 49). Furthermore, the sublime experience is explicitly constructed as democratic and socially inclusive; as Emily asserts, “‘the scenes of nature – those sublime spectacles, so infinitely superior to all artificial luxuries – are open for the enjoyment of the poor as well as of the rich’” (p. 60). The problem with this construction of a democratic sublime, however, is that, like the formation of sensibility, the conflation of the individual and the social is potentially detrimental to private selfhood because emphasising sympathy based on sameness implies an effacement of individual difference. Although it accords in many ways with the recent scholarly focus on the social collectivity of Burke’s sublime, Radcliffe’s appropriation of Burke retains elements of formation of the individual who ‘must [...] assert himself in his independence and originality against the universe, both physical and social’.⁶¹ Frances Ferguson’s emphasis on both Burke’s and Kant’s association of ‘the sublime with individuals isolated either by the simple fact of their solitude or by a heroic distinction that sets them apart even as they participate in social enterprises’ directly recalls the position of the hero or heroine of sentiment, in which delicate sensibility

⁶⁰ Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* [1794] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 242. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text. See also the relevant passages identified by Chandler: pp. 36-37, 42-43, 53-54, 105.

⁶¹ Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), p. 330.

renders them unfit for social participation.⁶² Radcliffe's construction of the sublime in *Udolpho* replicates this instability. If her heroines cannot be seen to display the impulse of self-preservation when faced with the sublime in nature, there is no doubt that they resist the threat to selfhood implied in the idea that 'the most authentic relationship between the self and Nature is one of complete oneness'.⁶³

When Emily first encounters the 'silent, lonely, and sublime' spectacle of the castle of Udolpho, her sensations of self-preservation are stimulated and her isolation emphasised as 'she almost expected to see banditti start up from under the trees' (p. 229). Perhaps less obvious is the way in which depictions of the sublime continue to reflect a form of self-interest even in scenes focusing on the novel's more benign characters, such as St Aubert's contemplation of 'distant and sublime mountains' which leads him to reflect that '[t]he song of the peasant, the cheering voice of man, will no longer sound for me!' (p. 63). Similarly, during a scene in which Emily observes the ramparts and the 'gloom of a lowering sky' (p. 289), sublime appreciation is explicitly configured in opposition to social interaction; she is only able to indulge in the 'silent and solitary' (p. 289) scene when she is alone after the peasants have retreated and before her sublime reflections are interrupted by the appearance of three strangers on the ramparts. The operation of the sublime in *Udolpho*, then, represents the novel's wider conflict between individual desire and social coherence. Of Radcliffe's novels, *Udolpho* is the one most concerned with the necessity for individual governance as a facilitator of social participation, and its pages are littered with references to controlled and Hutchesonian reflection as an antidote to individualistic and excessive sensibility (represented most potently in the fate of Agnes/Laurentini and her terrible warning against 'the indulgence of the

⁶² Ferguson, *Solitude and the Sublime*, p. 3.

⁶³ Beatrice Battaglia, 'The "Pieces of Poetry" in Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*', in *Romantic Women Poets: Genre and Gender*, ed. by Lilla Maria Crisafulli and Cecilia Pietropoli, pp. 137-52 (p. 141).

passions' (p. 647)).⁶⁴ But, as a novel bound by sentimental ideology, *Udolpho* condemns excessive selfhood while simultaneously resisting the tendency of both the Burkean sublime and Enlightenment moral philosophy to efface individual identity through participation in collective interaction based on shared emotion. Just as *Udolpho*'s emphasis on 'practical virtue' competes with the fact that it is articulated largely from a position of social retirement, so Radcliffe's seemingly sympathetic and socially cohesive construction of the sublime ultimately fails to satisfactorily reconcile self and other.⁶⁵

The Italian (1797), in its critical formations of the sublime, sensation and horror, reinscribes the departure from the fusion of 'self and Nature' (or self and other) that emerges in *Udolpho*. Scholarly accounts of the novel have increasingly focused on the role of sensation; Emma Clery goes as far as to suggest that the very 'point of this text lies in the sensations that it arouses.'⁶⁶ Conger reads the novel as a response to *The Monk*, 'reasserting an idealist notion of sensibility in the place of [Lewis's] materialist one', suggesting that, where *The Monk* operates via a process of 'sensory bombardment', 'Radcliffe offers sensory deprivation'.⁶⁷ While my reading departs from Conger's in various ways – most notably in that I consider materialist sensation and idealist sympathetic sensibility as interrelated in their philosophical construction – the idea of 'sensory deprivation' informs my reading of *The Italian* as a culmination of Radcliffe's increasing ambivalence towards eighteenth-century aesthetic theory

⁶⁴ The novel repeatedly warns that '[a]ll excess is vicious; even that sorrow, which is amiable in its origin, becomes a selfish and unjust passion, if indulged at the expence of our duties' (p. 20) and Laurentini reiterates this sentiment in her words of caution against the dangerous nature of the passions, which are 'the seeds of vices as well as of virtues, from which either may spring, accordingly, as they are nurtured' (p. 647).

⁶⁵ A full discussion of these competing facets is beyond my scope here, but it is notable that the novel's repeated emphasis on the necessity for 'active virtue' and censure of seclusion (for example, Emily's 'beautiful illusion over the sanctified retirement of a nun, that almost hid from her view the selfishness of its security' (p. 89)) is at odds with the position of its central characters.

⁶⁶ E. J. Clery, 'Introduction', in Ann Radcliffe, *The Italian* [1797] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. vii – xxxi (p. xxix).

⁶⁷ Conger, 'Sensibility Restored', pp. 129, 130.

and its potential for sociable interaction. Within the context of the gothic distinction between terror and horror, *The Italian*'s status as a novel detailing the aesthetic effects of horror reflects Radcliffe's changing depiction of selfhood.⁶⁸

In her posthumously published essay 'On the Supernatural in Poetry' (1826) Radcliffe famously writes that: 'Terror and horror are so far opposite, that the first expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life; the other contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them'.⁶⁹ The use of the term 'faculties', conventional in aesthetic theory, is significant. As Fred Botting puts it, this expansion of sensory perception means that 'terror activates the mind and the imagination, allowing it to overcome, transcend even, its fears and doubts, enabling the subject to move from a state of passivity to activity.'⁷⁰ The idea of the imagination is important here, given the fact that sympathy works on the basis of imaginative identification. In Radcliffe's novels, this 'activity' is constructed – recalling the moral sense philosophy formation of the sensations as the '*Springs of each virtuous Action*' – as rational direction of private sensation towards public good.⁷¹ Indeed, Botting suggests that terror is able to overcome threat so that 'proper order can be reaffirmed' and that in many of Radcliffe's novels 'terror enables a return to patterns of sentimental fiction'.⁷² This 'proper order' always takes the form of sentimental community in Radcliffe's fiction. If *The Italian*, as a novel of horror, conforms to Radcliffe's definition and 'contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates' the faculties, then it follows that the model of sensation feeding into the 'proper order' is similarly

⁶⁸ Here I accept numerous critical readings of *The Italian* as more closely allied with horror than terror. See for example, Rictor Norton, *Mistress of Udolpho*, where he states that '[d]isturbing and pervasive references to torture, "half-stifled groans, as of a person in agony" [...], "sickening anguish" [...], and "horrible perversions" [...] point up how far Ann Radcliffe has moved from the *frisson* of terror to the agony of horror' in the novel, p. 27.

⁶⁹ Ann Radcliffe 'On the Supernatural in Poetry', *New Monthly Magazine*, 16 (1826), 145-52 (p. 149).

⁷⁰ Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 74-75.

⁷¹ Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, p. vii.

⁷² Botting, *Gothic*, p. 48.

immobilised. Instances of horror in the novel are explicitly divorced from her earlier construction of sensation as a basis for sympathy and fellowship. When Ellena fears she has been brought to a lonely hut to be assassinated, ‘horror chilled all her frame, and her senses forsook her’.⁷³ This scene of sensory diminishment enforces the breakdown of sympathetic identification, for, on waking, Ellena ‘would have supplicated for [her captors’] pity, but that she feared to exasperate them by betraying her suspicions’ (p. 211): in moments of horror, the narrative of *The Italian* cannot accommodate the possibility of sentimental sociability, which offers a marked contrast to the scenes of sympathetic appeal associated with terror in the earlier novels.⁷⁴ Similarly, when Ellena discovers ‘with a degree of horror that almost deprived her of recollection, Spalatro himself stealing along the very chamber in which she was’ (p. 264), although ‘pity soon predominat[ed] over horror’ in her attempt to locate the wounded man she has glimpsed, her sympathetic faculties soon reach their limit and ‘reminding [Schedoni] of the danger of their situation, she entreated that they might quit the villa immediately’ (p. 266).

The restoration of social order realised by the sentimental communities in the earlier novels fails in *The Italian* because the ‘guarantee of conventional boundaries’ present in Radcliffe’s terror narratives is itself revealed as corrupt and individualistic.⁷⁵ Claudia Johnson observes that, in a conservative manoeuvre in the final volume of the novel, ‘[s]ensitivity is recontained by authoritarian rigour’ and the ‘established institutions of Church [...] and

⁷³ Ann Radcliffe, *The Italian* [1797] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 211. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

⁷⁴ See for example, the archetypal portrayal of virtue in distress in the depiction of the persecuted Adeline at the start of *The Romance of the Forest*: ‘Her features were bathed in tears, and she seemed to suffer the utmost distress [...] She sunk at [La Motte’s] feet, and with supplicating eyes, that streamed with tears, implored him to have pity on her. Notwithstanding his present agitation, he found it impossible to contemplate the beauty and distress of the object before him with indifference’, p. 5.

⁷⁵ Botting, *Gothic*, p. 48.

State'.⁷⁶ More disturbingly, these institutions not only delimit sensitivity, they also appropriate it. It is unsurprising that Schedoni lacks moral sense; he is 'insensible to [...] sufferings' that 'would have engaged the pity of any heart, which prejudice or self-interest had not hardened' (p. 105). But the discourse of sympathy is associated more frequently with Schedoni and the Marchesa – who as, representatives of the church and the aristocracy provide a significant contrast to the bourgeois communities of feeling in the earlier novels – than it ever is with Ellena or Vivaldi. Although Robert Miles argues that the novel separates 'sensibility and libertinage',⁷⁷ it is in fact sympathy that unites Schedoni and the Marchesa in their immorality, providing justification for their actions, as '[d]uring the warmth of this sympathy in resentment [they] mutually, and sincerely, lost their remembrance of the unworthy motives, by which each knew the other to be influenced' (p. 53).⁷⁸ On trial before the Inquisition Schedoni claims that his actions had derived from 'the consolations of sympathy, the intelligence of friendship' (p. 348); even the Inquisition itself appropriates sympathy, as revealed in Vivaldi's suspicion when approached by a man offering consolation, because 'he had heard that informers sometimes visited the prisoners, and, under the affectation of kindness and sympathy, drew from them a confession of opinions, which were afterwards used against them' (p. 308).

⁷⁶ Johnson, *Equivocal Beings*, pp. 133, 134.

⁷⁷ Miles, *Ann Radcliffe*, p. 163. Miles goes on to observe that 'by having the libertine Schedoni sneer at the Marchesa's awakening sensibility Radcliffe makes her case far more effectively than simple words in sensibility's defence', p. 163.

⁷⁸ This is recalled in Schedoni's misappropriation of the term 'justice', when he asserts that "'Strong minds perceive that justice is the highest of moral attributes, mercy is only the favourite of weak ones'" (p. 107). The narrative observes that he admires the Marchesa's 'convenient morality upon which she had occasionally acted; and, calling sternness justice, extolled that for strength of mind, which was only callous insensibility' (p. 107). These concerns evidently lend themselves to comparison with the treatment of justice in Godwin's fiction. Certainly, Clery argues that *The Italian* 'can usefully be read alongside the contemporary work of Jacobin novelists', stating that '[n]ovels such as *Caleb Williams* and *St Leon* [...], *Maria* [...] and *Secresy* [...] share a concern with the dangerous allure of superstition (irrational beliefs being equated with subservience to a mystified social hierarchy), conflict with arbitrary power, and the experience of wrongful imprisonment', 'Introduction', *The Italian*, p. xxxi.

Likewise, manifestations of the sublime in *The Italian* depart from the sympathetic paradigm in their depiction of the relationship between self and other, expanding upon the ambivalence about the sublime experience that emerges in *Udolpho*. Rather than presenting an effacement of the self before the sublime power of nature, the novel's sublime scenes invest the individual with a sense of independence and fortitude, recalling Kant's formation of the sublime in the *Critique of Judgment* (1790) in which the individual takes pleasure in the feeling of resisting the immense force of nature. *The Italian* offers a number of examples of this phenomenon in action. When observing the sublime landscape from her carriage, Ellena states that:

‘Here, the objects seem to impart somewhat of their own force, their own sublimity, to the soul. It is scarcely possible to yield to the pressure of misfortune while we walk, as with the Deity, amidst his most stupendous works!’ (pp. 62-63)

Although Clery suggests that this scene (and Radcliffe's sublime in general) ‘tends towards a more selfless and spiritual exaltation’ than that expressed in eighteenth-century aesthetic theory, this internalisation of the power of the sublime spectacle is closer to Burke's account of the ‘swelling “self-love”’ when we are ‘conversant with terrible objects’ than to the sympathetic sublime.⁷⁹ The sublime functions in *The Italian* as a means of reinforcing individual agency and selfhood. One of the later scenes in the novel identifies closely with Kant's formation, and is worth quoting in full:

Here, gazing upon the stupendous imagery around her, looking, as it were, beyond the awful veil which obscures the features of the Deity, and conceals Him from the eyes of his creatures, dwelling as with a present God in midst of his sublime works; with a mind thus elevated, how insignificant would appear to her the transactions, and the sufferings of the world! How poor the boasted power of man, when the fall of a single

⁷⁹ Clery, ‘Note 63’, in Ann Radcliffe, *The Italian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 418-19.

cliff from these mountains would with ease destroy thousands of his race assembled on the plains below! How would it avail them, that they were accoutred for battle, armed with all the instruments of destruction that human invention ever fashioned? Thus man, the giants who now held her in captivity, would shrink to the diminutiveness of a fairy; and she would experience, that his utmost force was unable to enchain her soul, or compel her to fear him. (pp. 90-91)

This remarkable scene of spiritual transcendence, in which an omniscient Ellena – ‘dwelling as with a present God’ – appears to be invested with the power of sublime vengeance against the ‘fairy’ forms of her captors, invests her with a sense of self-determination and agency. She experiences the sense of individual resistance to nature defined by Kant but she is also allied with the destructive force of nature itself and is imaginatively imbued with the agency of all its supreme power, which is directed against her fellow men. Ellena’s sublime experience operates in direct contrast to that of the earlier novels, in which the sublime operates as a means of social cohesion. In *The Italian* the landscape no longer has the power to promote sociability; the self can only exist in isolation.

The epistemological model of sensation and perception as the basis for moral action in Radcliffe’s early novels is fundamentally destabilised in *The Italian*. So too is the ethically-coded formulation of sublime experience and, through the course of Radcliffe’s fiction during the 1790s, there is an identifiable shift away from the eighteenth-century Burkean model of the sympathetic sublime towards a more Romantic construction. The dialectical opposition of private feeling and public sympathy is conventional in sentimental discourse, but the framing of this opposition within a moral-philosophic and aesthetic context in Radcliffe’s fiction evokes some of the wider concerns of Romanticism in its focus on selfhood and the complex interaction between morality and aesthetics.

Charlotte Dacre: Sentimental Contexts

While Radcliffe's position within the gothic tradition is firmly established, Charlotte Dacre's remains unfixed and mutable. Dacre's novels not only 'frustrate attempts to accommodate her within the paradigm of male/female gothic',⁸⁰ they often resist generic classification entirely and she has been discussed variously as part of the gothic, sentimental, 'pornographic' and 'sensationalist' novel forms.⁸¹ This discussion considers Dacre's generic elusiveness within the wider context of literary Romanticism. While I identify broadly with the critical tradition that reads Dacre's writing as operating within the gothic mode, her novels also reflect a compelling generic affiliation with the sentimental fiction of the 1790s. As such, in order to fully understand Dacre's engagement with the discourse of sensibility, these two facets of her literary identity must be considered simultaneously. Accordingly, I read her novels as a series of extended critiques of the sentimental sociability articulated in Radcliffe's gothic fiction which can be contextualised within the broader ideological formation of radical sensibility.

The inability to locate Dacre's fiction within constructions of the male and female gothic aptly reflects her radical engagement with gothic sensibility. If we accept Robert Miles's 'series of antitheses' defining the two categories – 'terror/horror; sensibility/sensation; poetic realism/irony; explained/unexplained supernatural; Radcliffe/Lewis' – it is clear that Dacre traverses and deconstructs almost all of these dichotomies.⁸² First appearing in Ellen Moers's 1974 article, the category of the 'female gothic' has been a central preoccupation of gothic criticism. Since the 1970s, it has

⁸⁰ Sue Chaplin, *Law, Sensibility and the Sublime in Eighteenth-Century Women's Fiction* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2004), p. 10.

⁸¹ Adriana Craciun, *Fatal Women of Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 111.

⁸² Robert Miles, 'Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis', in *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. by David Punter, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 41-57 (p. 45).

undergone various revisions, and a number of related classifications, such as Emma Clery's 'women's gothic' and Diane Long Hoeveler's 'gothic feminism', have emerged as part of a wider critical field relating to gender and the gothic.⁸³ Inevitably, this process has meant that the term 'female gothic' now elides the possibility of a singular meaning and most critical accounts have moved far beyond Gary Kelly's descriptive definition of female gothic fiction as texts 'written by women, featuring female protagonists'.⁸⁴

My discussion focuses on the ways in which Dacre's fiction engages with the 'gothic feminism' branch of the female gothic and its appropriation of 'an ideology of female power through pretended and staged weakness' and by 'valorizing the private sphere', suggesting that Dacre's novels explicitly reject the sentimental communities depicted in Radcliffe's fiction.⁸⁵ Likewise, they destabilise the conventional binaries of the female/male gothic outlined by Miles, fusing both sensibility and sensation and the traditions of Radcliffe and Lewis. Many of the features of the female gothic (and gothic feminism in particular) can also be applied to constructions of 'feminine Romanticism' and Dacre's novels resist gender-complementary models of masculine and feminine Romanticism.⁸⁶ If sensibility has tended to fall within the category of feminine Romanticism because of its focus on sympathy and community, Dacre's rendering entirely rejects this 'ethic of care' and its concomitant focus on 'a cooperative rather than possessive interaction with a Nature troped as a female friend or sister'.⁸⁷ Yet, if the novels can be seen to move towards a masculine (or, in other words, traditional) aesthetic

⁸³ See Carol Margaret Davison, 'Getting Their Knickers in a Twist: Contesting the "Female Gothic" in Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya*', *Gothic Studies*, 11 (May 2009), 32-45 (pp. 32-34) for a useful discussion of how the field has developed.

⁸⁴ Kelly, 'General Introduction', in *Varieties of Female Gothic*, 6 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2002), I, pp. xi-lx (I, p. xiv).

⁸⁵ Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism*, pp. 7, 5.

⁸⁶ See Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender*, for a fuller discussion of these terms.

⁸⁷ Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender*, p. 3.

of Romanticism in their focus on autonomous selfhood, they also defy accommodation within a binary model because they link this focus on the self to the domestic sphere which characterises feminine Romanticism. From within a framework of gothic sensation, passion and the unexplained supernatural, Dacre's fiction interrogates contemporary constructions of feminine sensibility and sociability, destabilising and reinscribing the discourse of the eighteenth-century female gothic in the Romantic period.

Dacre's personal life was as equivocal as her literary identity. Born Charlotte King, her father John King was a notorious radical Jewish money broker, editor and writer.⁸⁸ He was a well-known and controversial public figure: an associate of Godwin, Shelley and Byron, he was allied with a number of leading political radicals and was rumoured to have had an affair with Mary Robinson.⁸⁹ King's financial affairs often took on a 'criminal dimension', involving fraud and extortion, and he was charged with sexual assault in 1798. Charlotte's own relationships were themselves less than conventional and she had three children with the married Nicholas Byrne – editor and owner of the *Morning Post* – before they married in 1815 after the death of his wife.⁹⁰ Yet despite Dacre's iconoclastic background, critics have been reticent about reading her literary works within a context of political dissent. Adriana Craciun suggests King's notoriety and radicalism (although 'inconsistent'), coupled with her own adulterous affair and 'status as an outsider because Jewish', could be read as indicative of 'sympathy for liberal politics and political outsiders', a reading which is supported by her numerous poetic

⁸⁸ The DNB entry for King notes that he anglicised his name from Jacob Rey, a step that anticipates the multiple identities later assumed by his daughter. Todd M. Endelman, 'King, John (c.1753–1824)', *DNB*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/67336>> [accessed 3 Sept 2008] (para. 1 of 4).

⁸⁹ In terms of his political affiliates, Endelman notes that King 'met and was influenced by Tom Paine' 'as a youth' (para. 3 of 4) and Craciun states that he 'had been an early ally of Fox and Paine', *Fatal Women*, p. 112.

⁹⁰ Paul Baines, 'Byrne [*née* King], Charlotte [*pseud.* Charlotte Dacre] (1782?–1825)', *DNB*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/63519>> [accessed 3 Sept 2008] (para. 4 of 4).

contributions to the ‘radical *Telegraph* in the 1790s’.⁹¹ In literary terms, the ‘sexual fleshliness’ and violence in her novels certainly suggest a radical turn,⁹² as does the dedication of her first novel to Matthew Lewis and the obvious influence of his *The Monk* on *Zofloya* (1806).⁹³ Similarly, her poetic affiliation with the Della Cruscans was also potentially subversive, given the circle’s sexualised reputation as ‘amorous sentimentalists’.⁹⁴ Yet other critical accounts suggest that Dacre’s literary output, in common with many of her contemporaries, became increasingly conservative from the mid-1800s. Craciun argues that the 1806 poem ‘On the Death of the Right Honorable William Pitt’, ‘in which Pitt is elevated to “a Saint in Heaven,”’ and the condemnation of Wollstonecraftian feminism in *The Passions* (1811) ‘suggest that Dacre was politically conservative and no feminist.’⁹⁵ Similarly, Baines observes that Dacre’s ‘sporadic newspaper verse’ of the 1820s was often reactionary and notes her publication of the ‘naïvely royalist’ ‘George the Fourth, a Poem’ in 1822.⁹⁶ Ann Jones even identifies Dacre with the sub-genre of moral-didactic fiction, asserting that although ‘certainly no Evangelical’, she ‘saw herself as a supporter of orthodox religion and conventional morality.’⁹⁷

The ambiguity of Dacre’s political allegiance is neatly replicated in her assumption of three different identities during her lifetime: Charlotte King, her legal

⁹¹ Craciun, *Fatal Women*, p. 113.

⁹² Jerome J. McGann, “‘My brain is feminine’: Byron and the Poetry of Deception”, in *Byron and Romanticism* ed. by James Soderholm (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 53-76 (p. 57).

⁹³ *The Monk* was of course one of the most controversial novels of the period. As McGann observes, the first edition of the novel ‘created such a scandal that Lewis was driven to delete and revise the sexual passages that were so offensive to many readers’, “‘My brain is feminine’”, p. 55.

⁹⁴ McGann, “‘My brain is feminine’”, p. 56.

⁹⁵ Craciun, *Fatal Women*, p. 113.

⁹⁶ Baines, *DNB*, para. 3 of 4.

⁹⁷ Ann H. Jones, *Ideas and Innovations: Best Sellers of Jane Austen’s Age* (New York: AMS Press, 1986), p. 225.

name until 1815; the pseudonym ‘Rosa Matilda’, derived from the Rosario/Matilda demon lover in *The Monk*;⁹⁸ and Charlotte Dacre, an additional pseudonym initially believed to be her real name and that by which critics have always referred to her.⁹⁹ These multiple literary personas reflect her fluidity in terms of generic boundaries. The reputation of Dacre as a gothic writer is the combined result of her choice of pseudonym and dedication of her first novel to Lewis, the influence of *Zofloya* on Percy Shelley’s prose writing and the prominence of this novel as her most scandalous and well-known work.¹⁰⁰ Yet, as Lisa Wilson observes, in her choice of Rosa Matilda as a pseudonym, in addition to its gothic association, Dacre also ‘aligned herself with [another] debased genre’ in the form of Della Cruscan poetry.¹⁰¹ Dacre’s Della Cruscan affinities have until recently been largely disregarded by critics, but there can be little doubt that the pseudonym Rosa Matilda recalled Della Cruscan pseudonyms such as Hannah Cowley’s ‘Anna Matilda’ and Mary Robinson’s ‘Laura Maria’, an association furthered by Dacre’s poem ‘To the Shade of Mary Robinson’ which disregarded Robinson’s public notoriety and depicted her ‘as a worthy and appropriate literary model.’¹⁰² Both her fiction and

⁹⁸ Dacre published *Confessions of the Nun of St Omer* (1805) as ‘Rosa Matilda’; the poetic volume *Hours of Solitude* (1805) as ‘Charlotte Dacre, Better Known by the Name of Rosa Matilda’; *Zofloya* (1806) and *The Libertine* (1807) as ‘Charlotte Dacre, Better Known as Rosa Matilda’; and *The Passions* (1811) as ‘Rosa Matilda’.

⁹⁹ Baines suggests that the pseudonym ‘Charlotte Dacre’ was ‘probably designed to suggest aristocratic connections’, *DNB*, para. 1 of 4. Jacqueline Pearson argues that it is derived from the name of the heroine Althea Dacres, in Charlotte Smith’s *Marchmont* (1796), *Women’s Reading in Britain, 1750-1835: A Dangerous Recreation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 117.

¹⁰⁰ It may be worth considering the possibility that the dedication to Lewis was in part inspired by J. F. Hughes, Dacre’s publisher, whose aggressive marketing techniques often involved evoking associations between newcomers and distinguished authors as well as publishing texts under titles incongruous to their content. See Peter Garside, ‘J. F. Hughes and the Publication of Popular Fiction, 1803-1810’, *The Library*, 9 (1987), 240-58.

¹⁰¹ Lisa M. Wilson, ‘Female Pseudonymity in the Romantic “Age of Personality”’: The Career of Charlotte King/Rosa Matilda/Charlotte Dacre’, *European Romantic Review*, 9 (1998), 393-420 (p. 397).

¹⁰² Wilson, ‘Female Pseudonymity’, pp. 396, 399. Robinson was a controversial public figure in terms of both her private life (especially her well-publicised affair with the Prince of Wales) and her literary feminism.

poetry fuse gothic and sentimental traditions and, while her association with Lewis undoubtedly remained fixed in the public consciousness, this was manifested primarily in the reception of *Zofloya*. The rooting of Dacre within the gothic tradition appears to be a modern critical undertaking, and certainly a valid one; however, her contemporary reputation rested firmly on her Della Cruscan and sentimental affinities.

It was in this guise that Dacre most often appeared in the literary allusions of her contemporaries. Byron's infamous assault on '[t]he lovely ROSA's prose in masquerade' in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809) is one of many attacks on Dacre as a Della Cruscan,¹⁰³ which included a mention in George Daniel's *The Modern Dunciad* (1814) and an essay in *Monthly Literary Recreations* which lamented the 'affected sensibility' and 'over affected simplicity' of 'otherwise really excellent authors'.¹⁰⁴ Dacre appears as Rosa Matilda in Hannah More's *Coelebs in Search of a Wife* (1809) in a scene where a pair of fashionable sisters have 'read Tears of Sensibility, and Rosa Matilda, and Sympathy of Souls, and Too Civil by Half, and the Sorrows of Werter [sic], and the Stranger, and the Orphans of Snowdon' but have never heard of Virgil.¹⁰⁵ This list (and the one that follows it) is clearly intended to reflect the dangerous and corruptive potential of female reading; more specifically, it highlights sensibility as the principal danger, for Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774) was – with the possible exception of Rousseau's *Julie; or, La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761) – easily the most

¹⁰³ Duncan Wu and David S. Miall, 'Charlotte Dacre' in *Romanticism: An Anthology*, ed. by Wu and Miall (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 441-42 (p. 441).

¹⁰⁴ George Daniel refers to Dacre as 'the Sappho of the Morning Post' (p. 47) and contains references to Rosa Matilda's 'woeful Madrigals', 'innumerable Odes, Elegies, and Sonnets' and 'sundry volumes of "Horrors"' (p. 8), as well as her 'melting tales' (p. 93), *The Modern Dunciad* [1814], 4th edn (London: Wilson and Rodwell, 1816). The author of the essay in *Monthly Literary Recreations* includes a list of perpetrators of excessive sensibility, among which are 'the Laura Marias, the Robinsons [...] and [...] the Rosa Matildas', 'An Essay, whether the Present Age can, or cannot be Reckoned among the Ages of Poetical Excellence', *Monthly Literary Recreations*, 15 (September 1807), 172.

¹⁰⁵ Hannah More, *Coelebs in Search of a Wife*, 6th edn, 2 vols (London: Cadell and Davies, 1809), I, 34.

controversial text of the period. Wilson points out that the name Rosa Matilda ‘came to represent the entire denigrated genre of “light” poetry and prose’.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, references to ‘Rosa Matilda’ as a perpetrator of excessive sensibility can be traced throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. For example, the name appears in an article in the *Quarterly Review* in 1833 which attacks modern writers of ‘romance’ ‘frosted over with Rosa-Matilda sentiment’, and in an article in the *London Quarterly Review* which refers to the ‘mock sentimentality’ that many writers borrow from the previous generation of ‘Rosa-Matilda sonneteers’.¹⁰⁷ It even appears twice in a piece in the *New Monthly Magazine* in 1852 about Currer Bell/Charlotte Brontë which heralds the realistic style of the latter and imagines her defiantly questioning, “Because I write a novel, am I to be herded with your Rosa Matildas?”.¹⁰⁸

These references, as Wilson suggests, refer equally to Rosa Matilda-esque prose and poetry. There is no room here for a detailed discussion of Dacre’s poetry, but it is worth noting that she did have some credibility as a poet (with recent criticism acknowledging her influence on Byron),¹⁰⁹ and that her poetry, while highly sentimental, has also been discussed in a gothic context.¹¹⁰ It is clear, then, that in terms of generic

¹⁰⁶ Wilson, ‘Female Pseudonymity’, p. 403.

¹⁰⁷ ‘The Dramatic Works and Poems of James Shirley’, *Quarterly Review*, 49 (Apr-Jul 1833), 1-29 (p. 17); ‘Article 5’, *London Quarterly Review*, 54 (Sept 1835), 205-15 (p. 208).

¹⁰⁸ ‘Female Novelists: No. 3 – Currer Bell’, *The New Monthly Magazine and Humorist*, 95 (1852), 295-305 (p. 296).

¹⁰⁹ In terms of her relationship to Byron, critics have argued that *Hours of Solitude* was an important influence on Byron’s juvenile *Hours of Idleness* (1807). Jerome McGann notes the ‘verbal echo’ of the titles, the ‘massive act of allusion to Dacre’ in the format of Byron’s title page, the similarities in the prefaces, as well as the Dacre’s sentimental influence on his poem ‘To Romance’, ‘where he reluctantly (and sentimentally) acknowledges the failure of the muse of sentiment’, “My brain is feminine” (p. 54). Similarly, Paul Douglass offers a sustained and convincing account of Dacre’s influence on *Hours of Idleness*, Paul Douglass, ‘Lord Byron’s Feminist Canon: Notes Towards its Construction’, *Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net*, 43 (August 2006)

<<http://www.erudit.org/revue/RON/2006/v/n43/013588ar.html>> [accessed 12 June 2008] (para. 9 of 47).

¹¹⁰ See, for example, E. J. Clery, who notes that the ‘dominant model for [Dacre’s] Gothic verse is Lewis, and, beyond him, the seminal German poet Burger’, *Women’s Gothic: From Clara Reeve to Mary Shelley*

affinity Dacre's oeuvre comprises a fusion of sentimental and gothic modes. Of her four novels, the supernatural and satanic *Zofloya* is the most identifiably gothic and, despite Michasiw's assertion that Dacre's last two novels 'are Gothic only in their depiction of extreme feeling and desperate actions', the other three novels are replete with the gothic tropes of madness, murder and suicide.¹¹¹ My focus here is on the way in which Dacre appropriates the gothic concerns of isolation and the 'unnatural' to engage with contemporary debates surrounding sensibility. If critical works that focalise Dacre through the mode of the gothic have found it difficult to determine her political allegiance, it becomes more apparent when her fiction is read in terms of sensibility. The novels, although ostensibly conservative, explore the restrictive nature of the feminine models of sensibility articulated within the framework of the female gothic, continuing the tradition of radical women writers of the 1790s within a modified generic framework. Dacre dismembers the construction of sentimental Rousseauvian education and the construction of 'natural' benevolent female sensibility that appears in Radcliffe's fiction, outlining the dramatic repercussions of this oppression of female selfhood.

Charlotte Dacre: Dismembering Sentimental Community in *The Confessions of the Nun of St Omer* and *The Libertine*

The extravagantly gothic title of Dacre's first novel, *The Confessions of the Nun of St Omer* (1805), obscures its affiliation with radical female sensibility in a typical Romantic

(Tavistock: Northcote House, 2004), p. 103. Craciun also offers an extensive discussion on Dacre's poetry in the context of the figure of the demon lover in "'I hasten to be disembodied": Charlotte Dacre, the Demon Lover, and Representations of the Body', *European Romantic Review*, 6 (1995), 75-97 and in *Fatal Women*, pp. 114-17.

¹¹¹ Kim Ian Michasiw, 'Introduction', in Charlotte Dacre, *Zofloya* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. vii-xxx (p. viii).

gesture of both overstating and denying generic affiliation. Its gothic credentials have occasioned some critical debate, leading Ann Jones to reject the somewhat exaggerated praise of its gothicism from the editor of the novel's first modern edition, arguing that 'despite its gothic-sounding title' it is 'quite a run-of-the-mill cautionary tale, written in a style of high sensibility'.¹¹² While Jones is one of the few critics to mention the novel's link to sentimental literature, to describe *Confessions* as a 'cautionary tale' is misleading. In fact, it locates Rousseau's plot of sentimental seduction within a context of gothic isolation, and, in its reworking of *Julie; or, La Nouvelle Héloïse*, aligns itself with the female-authored novels of the 1790s which, as Nicola Watson puts it, 'set about dismembering and rearticulating [Rousseau's novel] to ratify the voice of individual affect in the face of social restrictions'.¹¹³ These novels are no 'cautionary tales': they articulate from a proto-feminist perspective the conflict between female individualism and the 'power of the patriarchal social order' that forms the focus of the *Héloïse* plot.¹¹⁴ This opposition is the central concern of *Confessions*, in which Dacre displays a profound anxiety over female subjectivity and constructions of the sentimental heroine.

Written as a first-person memoir to the protagonist's son, the plot is undeniably Rousseauvian: the heroine Cazire meets Fribourg – a philosophic hybrid of Godwin and Saint Preux – and resists his sexual advances but is seduced by another man, before being reabsorbed into the social order through her marriage to St Elmer, a younger version of

¹¹² Jones, *Ideas and Innovations*, p. 227.

¹¹³ Nicola Watson, *Revolution and the Form of the British Novel, 1790-1825* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 40. Among these works Watson includes Helen Maria Williams, *Julia* (1790); Charlotte Smith, *Desmond* (1792) and *The Young Philosopher* (1798); Eliza Fenwick, *Secresy* (1795); Mary Hays, *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796) and *The Victim of Prejudice* (1799); and Mary Wollstonecraft's *The Wrongs of Woman; or, Maria* (1798). To this list can be added Amelia Opie's *Adeline Mowbray* (1804).

¹¹⁴ Watson reads *Julie; or, La Nouvelle Héloïse* as an articulation of the conflict between individualism and social duty, where the former is 'disciplined in favour of the social and the legitimate' before Julie's final letter 'overturns the carefully constructed fiction of the power of patriarchal social order', *Revolution and the Form of the British Novel*, p. 13.

Wolmar. Fribourg disrupts their version of domestic harmony, reappearing some years later and finally seducing Cazire, leading to a gothicised culmination (diverging from Rousseau's model) in which St Elmer is killed in a duel, Fribourg commits suicide and Cazire retires to the convent of St Omer. Given this plot, it is not difficult to credit Jones's reading of the novel as a 'cautionary tale' and, in an apparently reactionary move, Dacre suggests that the implicit cause of these events is her heroine's voracious novel reading: her consumption of books that 'like the poisonous poppy' moulded 'a heart softened beyond the intentions of Nature' and 'refined sensibility to a pitch of agony.'¹¹⁵ This is a familiar refrain of novels that reinscribe the Héloïse plot (in particular Mary Hays's *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796)), which attempts to negotiate what Pearson terms the 'period's constant elision of textuality and sexuality', where female reading comes to represent the process of seduction.¹¹⁶ Dacre employs it as a means of neutralising the potential radicalism of sensibility, evidently fearful of being accused – as Hays was – of tolerating 'the free sentiments [the novel] infused' (I, 71). This anxiety is extended to Dacre's insistent rejection of the radical sentimental individualism embraced by the heroines of Fenwick, Hays, Opie and Wollstonecraft. Fribourg – like Glenmurray in Opie's *Adeline Mowbray* (1804) – rehearses the rationalist philosophy of Godwin's *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793), privileging individual reason over the limiting social construct of marriage in a sustained discourse of sophistry.¹¹⁷ His

¹¹⁵ [Charlotte Dacre], *Confessions of the Nun of St Omer, A Tale*, 3 vols (London: Hughes, 1805), I, 63; I, 74. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

¹¹⁶ Pearson, *Women's Reading*, p. 87.

¹¹⁷ Fribourg attacks 'the received doctrines of ages, despised custom and formed his actions from the result of his own inferences' and the narrative offers an unmistakable warning of his moral character: 'established laws he considered prejudices; the principles he avowed were dangerous and seductive, he affirmed they were the offspring of cool discrimination and dispassionate reflection, the dictates of nature, reason and common sense' (I, 124-25). Gary Kelly points out that the motif of seduction by a philosopher is a central feature of the anti-Jacobin novel but I argue that Dacre's use of the motif is quite different in *Confessions*,

assertions that ‘[n]ature knows [marriage] not, therefore it is contemptible’” (I, 127) are the same ‘gross allurements’ which lead to the illicit ‘marriage’ (p. 154) of Sibella and Clement in Eliza Fenwick’s *Secresy* and influence Adeline Mowbray ‘to declaim against marriage, as an institution at once absurd, unjust, and immoral’.¹¹⁸ Dacre, however, goes to great lengths to emphasise her heroine’s resistance to Fribourg’s ‘system of independence’ (I, 172). Cazire counters his entreaties with a defence of social duty and sociability, declaring it ‘unjust to adopt a self-created system’ (I, 172) and endorsing the ‘moral system’ of marriage as ‘a sacred institution, the cement of society’ (I, 190). Yet despite the assertion that ‘the incendiary who would destroy a link of a chain so fine [as marriage], is a traitor to society and an enemy to mankind’ (I, 190), the way the novel goes on to describe the model of domestic sentimental affection is highly ambivalent.

While Cazire’s sexual transgression can be assimilated into the framework of the ‘cautionary tale’ (warning of the irresistible power of uncensored novel reading), it is altogether more difficult to explain the novel’s apparent aversion to the patriarchal order, which is linked to constructions of sentimental community. While Rousseau’s Julie willingly consents to enter Wolmar’s pastoral enclave, Cazire resists St Elmer’s attempt to introduce her to the ‘quiet, placid, negative pleasure’ (III, 23) of life as a wife and mother. Indeed, the novel is highly suspicious of the philanthropic communality embodied by St Elmer, warning from the outset of the need for reason to counter ‘romantic quixotism’, ‘false sentiment and chimerical notions of mangimanity’ (I, 50). The notion of ‘false sentiment’ is later embodied in St Elmer’s attempt to impose a

‘Romantic Fiction’, in *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*, 2nd edn, ed. by Stuart Curran (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 187-208 (p. 205).

¹¹⁸ Amelia Opie, *Adeline Mowbray; or, The Mother and Daughter* [1804] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 28.

sentimental construction of femininity upon Cazire in order to locate her within the conservative system of sentimental benevolism. While the sentimental protagonists of Hays and Wollstonecraft misread and idealise the objects of their desire, configuring them as the ‘ideal lover[s]’ they have read about in sentimental novels, Dacre inverts this process of misreading and idealisation by implying that it is St Elmer, and not Cazire, who fallaciously construes real life in terms of fiction.¹¹⁹ Rather than providing a critique of excessive sensibility, as it does in the fiction of Wollstonecraft and Hays, his idealised image of Cazire functions as a damning account of the tendency of the patriarchal order to oppress women through idealistic sentimental constructions of femininity. Early in the novel St Elmer tells her that she possesses ‘philanthropy the most refined in want of a guide’ (I, 82) and a ‘disposition, ever ready to attach the best motives to the worst actions’ (I, 98) and, after their marriage, states that ‘I look up to you as all that is perfect in humanity’ (III, 81). However, there is nothing philanthropic or quixotic about Cazire; she is effectively ‘misanthropised by long and repeated seclusion’ in the convent at the start of the novel (I, 60), which results in ‘not a philanthropic pity for, but a hatred of, mankind’ (I, 107).

Confessions entirely resists the notion that isolation results in ‘the pensive philanthropic sorrow so fallaciously depicted’ (I, 60) by novelists like Radcliffe in her depiction of Cazire as misanthropic and sexualised. It rejects the conception of feminine

¹¹⁹ Mary Wollstonecraft, *Mary and The Wrongs of Woman* [1798] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976; repr. 1998), p. 89. In *The Wrongs of Woman*, the heroine, prior to meeting Darnford, imagines him in terms of Rousseau’s novel: ‘still the personification of Saint Preux, or of an ideal lover far superior, was after this imperfect model, of which merely a glance had been caught, even to the minutiae of the coat and hat of the stranger’, p. 89. Similarly, Watson points out that in *Emma Courtney* ‘Emma’s virtual monologue [...] appropriates the text of Harley’s (few and reluctant) letters and perversely misreads them, favours her image of Harley over his speaking person, and prioritizes her script for their relationship over his’, *Revolution and the Form of the British Novel*, p. 47. Emma also sees Harley as ‘the Saint Preux, the Emilius of [her] sleeping and waking reveries’, Mary Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* [1796] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 59.

philanthropic sentimentalism as natural; as Robert Miles has argued, when Fribourg finally seduces Cazire in the ‘grotto’ at the end of the novel, ‘the apparently conservative drift of both the female and male Gothic, the attachment to sensibility as woman’s true nature, finds itself repudiated.’¹²⁰ Unlike the novels of Radcliffe, *Confessions* cannot envisage sentimental community as an alternative to gothic isolation. Rather, Dacre expresses a profound uneasiness about the implications of sociability for women. Cazire is oppressed by St Elmer’s insistence on her supposedly natural sensibility – and thus his effacement of her autonomous selfhood – to the extent that she is finally seduced by Fribourg’s individualistic discourse, in turn leading to her return to the convent where she had been confined by her father at the start of the novel. If, as Hoeveler suggests, within the system of patriarchy the gothic heroine was forced ‘to seek protection from any surrogate protection agency they could find’, for Dacre this does not include marriage.¹²¹ Unlike the female gothic protagonists of her contemporaries, Dacre’s heroines cannot endure the cloying nature of sentimental domesticity, even as an alternative to religious confinement.

The connection between the oppressive sentimental rural tradition and sexual transgression is explored more fully in *The Libertine* (1807).¹²² Although it achieved moderate popularity, going into three editions within twelve months, *The Libertine* was overshadowed by the scandalous reception of *Zofloya*, published the previous year, and reviewers queried its moral intention, with the *Monthly Magazine* declaring it ‘prurient

¹²⁰ Robert Miles, *Gothic Writing 1750-1820: A Genealogy* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1993; repr. 2002), p. 95.

¹²¹ Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism*, p. 35.

¹²² The sexually transgressive elements of the text have been noted by scholars; indeed, the novel has recently appeared as a volume of the *Varieties of Female Gothic* series entitled ‘Erotic Gothic’ in which Dacre’s fiction is read as posing ‘a feminine or even feminist erotic Gothic against Lewis’s masculinist one’, Gary Kelly, ‘Introduction: Erotic Gothic’ in *Varieties of Female Gothic*, 6 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2002), III, vii-xlvi (p. xxiv).

trash' and a 'florid rhapsody' and the *Oxford Review* stating that it was 'worse than wild nonsense' and unfit for a female readership.¹²³ Certainly, the novel departs from the conventional model of the Radcliffean gothic in its depiction of a sexual excess more commonly associated with Lewis's gothic. Furthermore, it exposes the limitations of sentimental education; unlike Radcliffe's model in *Udolpho* where this type of education is synonymous with socialised sensibility, in *The Libertine* it is dangerously conducive to sensory and erotic excess. Varma argues that Dacre 'like Mrs. Radcliffe, champions Rousseauistic philosophy, and favours pastoral charms, sublime, solitudes and the simplicities of country existence'.¹²⁴ My reading suggests that, on the contrary, rather than championing the pastoral idyll, the novel is highly suspicious of such isolation, especially as it relates to the Rousseauvian model of female education.

While most critics have argued that Dacre's oeuvre (and in particular *The Passions*) comprises an attack on Wollstonecraft's feminism, *The Libertine* replicates the latter's precepts on female education with surprising exactitude.¹²⁵ Educated by a father who 'detest[s] the world', the novel's heroine Gabrielle Montmorency is taught to view 'mankind as monsters' which 'inspired her innocent mind with a feeling amounting

¹²³ *Monthly Magazine*, 23 (30 July 1807), 645; *Oxford Review, or Literary Censor*, 2 (August 1807), 190. 'The *Oxford Review* declared 'we might have hoped, for the honour of that sex whose brightest ornament is modesty, that the author of such flights as the Nun of St. Omer's, Zofloya, and the present florid rhapsody could not be a female', p. 190.

¹²⁴ Devendra Varma, 'Introduction', in Charlotte Dacre, *The Libertine* (New York: Arno, 1974), pp. vii-xiv (p. vii).

¹²⁵ See, for example, Craciun's assertion that 'passages in *The Passions* clearly and violently attack radical feminists such as Wollstonecraft, suggesting that Dacre was anti-feminist', Craciun, 'Introduction', in Charlotte Dacre, *Zofloya* (Peterborough: Broadview, 2003), pp. 9-32 (p. 12).

Janet Todd's argues that Dacre 'featured abandoned women in her novels, but attacked the feminism of Wollstonecraft', *Mary Wollstonecraft: A Revolutionary Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p. 489.

almost to horror of her fellow creatures'.¹²⁶ The representation of Gabrielle's education has much in common with *Secresy*: both novels condemn educational systems which neglect the 'blessings' (*Secresy*, p. 104) and 'comforts' (*Libertine*, I, 14) of social 'intercourse' (*S*, p. 104, *L*, I, 14) in favour of the 'negative virtues of the recluse' (*S*, p. 104). Both too are clearly influenced by Wollstonecraft's criticism of Rousseau's educational theories, in which she contested the benefits of 'a private education', arguing that 'men and women must be educated, in a great degree, by the opinions and manners of the society they live in.'¹²⁷ Certainly Wollstonecraft's vision of an inexperienced and youthful perception in which 'fellow creatures would not then be viewed as frail beings; like themselves [...] but guarded against as beasts of prey, till every enlarged social feeling, in a word, - humanity, was eradicated' is replicated in Gabrielle's perception of 'mankind as monsters'.¹²⁸ Both Sibella Valmont (the heroine of *Secresy*) and Gabrielle lack the necessary experience to, in Wollstonecraft's words, 'acquire wisdom and virtue by exercise of their own faculties' and it is no surprise that Gabrielle's first encounter with a 'man of the world' – the eponymous libertine Angelo – results in her seduction.¹²⁹

Gabrielle's educational failings are duly transferred to her own illegitimate daughter Agnes who, like both her Radcliffean namesake and her mother, demonstrates the cyclical nature of a flawed education.¹³⁰ Having been raised in solitude by a guardian while her mother sought her absent father abroad, her fate echoes that of Sibella in her seduction by Darlowitz, which he compares to a marriage. After her mother's death, her

¹²⁶ Charlotte Dacre, *The Libertine*, 3rd edn, 4 vols (London: Cadell and Davies, 1807), I, 3; I, 10-11; I, 11-12. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text. Eliza Fenwick, *Secresy; or, The Ruin on the Rock*, ed. by Isobel Grundy (Peterborough: Broadview, 1998).

¹²⁷ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* [1792], 3rd edn (London: Johnson, 1796), pp. 36-37.

¹²⁸ Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, p. 239.

¹²⁹ Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, p. 24.

¹³⁰ Agnes is the assumed name of Laurentini di Udolpho in *Udolpho*.

father's pride 'shrunk from accompanying into society the child for whose errors he alone was accountable' (IV, 133) and he unconvincingly advocates her entry into the 'wretched gloom of a convent' (IV, 146), which he represents as a socialised community in miniature, the 'best and purest society' where 'in every sister you will find a friend' (IV, 140). There appears to be no solution for the victim of a flawed sentimental education other than 'monastic seclusion' (IV, 142) and the novel is pessimistic about the possibility of socialised sensibility. The 'pure morality of a nature uncontaminated by association with the world' (I, 193) – in short, uncultivated sensibility – is entirely ineffectual and passive. Radcliffe's Adeline has her perception that 'all the people were good, and all the good happy' (I, 95) shaken during the course of *The Romance of the Forest*, but it ultimately attempts to redress 'the dangers of a lost rural tradition' in its construction of a sentimental utopia.¹³¹ While Hoeveler argues that Radcliffe failed to acknowledge 'that this bucolic [rural] tradition was wrapped up and complicit with a flawed and already-outmoded gendered code of behaviour that went under the name of Sensibility', Dacre fully engages with this idea.¹³² The novel entirely rejects the socialising potential of sensibility: it can exist only in isolation or in perpetual fear of corruption.

Charlotte Dacre: Radical Sensibility in *Zofloya* and *The Passions*

Zofloya; or, The Moor, A Romance of the Fifteenth Century (1806) is a tale of violent passion and murder in which the heroine falls under the influence of the Moorish servant Zofloya (who is finally revealed as Satan) and is written, as one contemporary reviewer

¹³¹ Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism*, p. 88

¹³² Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism*, p. 88.

put it, with ‘the same lust – the same infernal agents – the same voluptuous language’ as *The Monk*.¹³³ Recent critical assessments of the novel have read *Zofloya* as an exploration of the ‘gendered gothic’, a ‘dialectical process – wherein the “antithetical” gothics of Radcliffe and Lewis combine in Dacre’s text into a new synthetic form.’¹³⁴ If Dacre’s other novels can be seen to disrupt the tendency of gothic feminism to celebrate the private sphere in their depiction of erotic sensation overcoming domestic sentimental virtue, *Zofloya* constructs a complete inversion of the professional female victim in its violent and autonomous heroine Victoria di Loredani. However, although it is tempting to read Victoria, as Craciun does, as the ‘rebellious hero’ of the male gothic,¹³⁵ this discussion suggests that if we are to understand *Zofloya*’s ‘dialogic tendency to place discourses [...] in edgy opposition’ within the context of sensibility, it is necessary to consider its relationship to Radcliffe’s particular form of sentimental female gothic, for the novel is focalised through Radcliffe’s fiction, opposing innate and socialised sensibility with a chilling vision of demoniac self-interest.¹³⁶ In doing so, *Zofloya* reinscribes both the female gothic and feminine Romanticism.

While Emily St Aubert has so much natural sensibility that she must be taught by her father to ‘reject the first impulse of her feelings’ (*Udolpho*, p. 5), Victoria di Loredani is the antithesis of the Radcliffean heroine: ‘by nature more prone to evil than good’ and

¹³³ *New Annual Register*, 27 (1806), 372-73 (pp. 372-73).

¹³⁴ Michael Gamer, ‘Charlotte Dacre’s *Zofloya*: Two New Editions [Broadview, 1997, ed. Adriana Craciun; Oxford, 1997, ed. Kim Ian Michasiw]’, *Romantic Circles* (Fall 1998)

<<http://www.rc.umd.edu/reviews/zofloya.html>> [accessed 06 August 2008] (para. 2 of 4). Craciun she discusses critical identification in the novel of ‘a female Gothic that centres on an embattled heroine (typical of Radcliffe), and distinguish[ed] this from a male Gothic, which focuses on a rebellious hero (masculine because exiled from the domestic sphere, according to Ellis, and because he seeks to control rather than adapt his world, according to Day).’ She argues that Victoria is ‘neither within the female nor male Gothic traditions but somewhere in between’, ‘Introduction’, *Zofloya*, p. 11.

¹³⁵ Craciun, ‘Introduction’, *Zofloya*, p. 11.

¹³⁶ Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 168.

‘not susceptible of a single sentiment, vibrating from a tender movement of the heart’.¹³⁷ This Calvinistic propensity towards evil provides a stark contrast to the moral sense of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson in Radcliffe’s protagonists – the use of the term ‘vibrating’ specifically rejects the physiological discourse of sensibility – and so too does the novel’s notable lack of any sociable model of education. The Loredanis’ education of their children directly opposes the ‘scrupulous care’ (*Udolpho*, p. 6) taken by St Aubert: ‘To see their wayward children happy, their infantine and lovely faces undisfigured by tears or vexation, was a pleasure too great to be resigned from the distant reflection of future evil possible to accrue from the indulgence’ (p. 4). Their indulgent parenting reflects the problematic nature of Lawrence Stone’s concept of ‘affective individualism’, a phenomenon that he suggests developed through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and which stressed the importance of affective familial bonds in which each member of the family had the right to pursue individual happiness.¹³⁸ While Stone argued that affective individualism could ‘make the individual’s selfish desire for happiness contribute to the common good’, Dacre explicitly rejects this notion: Victoria’s upbringing serves ‘only to confirm [her] in depravity’ (p. 78) and to incubate her destructive individualism.¹³⁹ Thus, she fails to acquire a sense of socialised feminine morality to counteract her nature and her reactions to the stylised Radcliffean scenes

¹³⁷ Charlotte Dacre, *Zofloya, or, The Moor* [1806] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 28, 78. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

¹³⁸ Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), p. 241. He argues that ‘the authority of husbands over wives and of parent over children declined as greater autonomy was granted to, or assumed by, all members of the family unit’, p. 656, which is reflected in the Loredanis’ lack of discipline over their children.

¹³⁹ Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage* , p. 241. There are of course parallels with Wollstonecraft’s educational theory here. Like Dacre’s other novels, *Zofloya* articulates Wollstonecraft’s emphasis on the mother as principal educator for her children in the *Vindication*. Diane Long Hoeveler terms *Zofloya* ‘a virtual parody of Wollstonecraft’s works’, ‘Charlotte Dacre’s *Zofloya*: A Case Study in Miscegenation as Sexual and Racial Nausea’, *European Romantic Review*, 8.2 (Spring 1997), 185-99 (p. 185).

staged by Dacre are accordingly inappropriate. Although Victoria begins the novel entirely without sentiment, the fact that her moral descent (the product of diabolic influence) is synonymous with heightened sensibility as she becomes overwhelmed by her ‘infuriate passions’ (p. 197) suggests a deep scepticism on Dacre’s part about Radcliffe’s insistence on the moral-philosophic formation of innate delicacy and feeling.

If Radcliffe, as Todd suggests, ‘socialises the reclusive obsessive tendency of individual sentiment by describing the melancholy moods feeding back into social action, not into exaggerating self absorption’, Dacre inverts this principle entirely.¹⁴⁰ Victoria’s naturally ‘selfish’ (p. 77) tendencies intensify under the satanic Zofloya’s influence and she becomes increasingly prone to ‘fits of gloom and abstraction’, ‘forb[earing] to cultivate any society’ (p. 128). Even more disturbingly, she *is* in fact eventually incited to ‘social action’ but it is far removed from the philanthropic impulse of the Radcliffean heroine. In a marked inversion of the self-effacement necessary for sympathetic identification, Victoria is nihilistic in her pursuit of personal gain, wishing ‘that Berenza, that Lilla, nay, even the whole world, (if it stood between her and the attainment of her object), could become instantly annihilated’ (p. 135). As Zofloya’s domination of Victoria increases, she becomes subject to ‘distempered fancy’ (p. 135) brought about by her dreams. The phrase reappears later in the novel in a scene where – in a recollection of the black curtain in *Udolpho* – Victoria inspects the murdered Berenza’s body, drawing the curtains around his bed to reveal ‘features disfigured indeed, and frightfully changed, even to the most extravagant portraiture of her distempered fancy!’ (p. 189) Though this scene casts her in the role of Emily, Dacre surely intends the reader to connect Victoria’s mental disorder with the ‘distempered fancy’ (*Udolpho*, p. 661) of the ‘fiend’ Laurentini

¹⁴⁰ Janet Todd, *The Sign of Angellica*, p. 260.

di Udolpho (*Udolpho*, p. 646).¹⁴¹ Thus, Victoria comes to signify the triumph of ‘unresisted’ and ‘evil passions’ (*Udolpho*, pp. 659, 646) over the passive sensibility of Lilla, representative of idealised Radcliffean femininity. She feels not ‘one emotion of pity’ (*Zofloya*, p. 205) for the ‘fairy delicacy’ (p. 213) of Lilla as she prepares for her murder, and the latter’s plea to her captor’s fellow-feeling is predictably unsuccessful; that they have ‘been companions, bedfellows’ evokes nothing but a ‘fiend-like laugh’ (p. 224).

If Dacre’s contrasting of the passive sensibility of the Radcliffean heroine and the passionate individualism of Victoria is obvious, her treatment of the ‘natural’ human capacity for sociability and benevolence that are foregrounded in Radcliffe’s novels is more complex. While the discourses of individualism and communality remain opposed in *Confessions*, within the supernatural context of *Zofloya* they become increasingly mutable and unstable. Berenza begins the novel as a ‘liberal philosopher’ (p. 27) with a ‘noble, virtuous [...] soul’ (p. 67), keen to determine whether the sexual transgression of Laurina and Ardolph ‘arose from a selfish depravity of heart, or was induced by the force of nature’ (p. 27). When he discovers that ‘they had voluntarily rushed into evil’ he looks upon them ‘with contempt and dislike, unmixed with the slightest portion of pity’ (p. 27) revealing his true nature and lack of sensibility. The ‘noble and benevolent satisfaction’ (p. 128) he derives from having made Victoria his wife is revealed as having ‘been solely actuated by selfish motives’ (p. 134); he is ‘devoted to the excess of his passion’ (p. 125), but consistently attempts to deny and misrepresent his desire, declaring that he was duped

¹⁴¹ Laurentini precipitates the murder of the Marchioness de Villeroi’s [Emily’s aunt] as a result of her uncontrollable passion for her husband, and is subsequently placed in a monastery, where the physician recommends that she be allowed to continue her practice to ‘walk in the woods near the monastery, in the solitary hours of night [...] as the only means of soothing her distempered fancy’ (p. 661).

by the ‘witcheries’ of the ‘seductress’ Megalena rather than acting of free will (p. 73). Victoria’s developing perception of him as a ‘philosophic sensualist’ (p. 34) is endorsed by Zofloya, who persuasively argues that “‘*he* had no hesitation in sacrificing to himself your young and beautiful person, for his gratification; and why should you hesitate, now, at sacrificing him for yours?’” (p. 155) Yet, just as Berenza’s initial philanthropic sensibility is revealed as selfish, so Zofloya’s ‘Sadean perspective’ in which ‘self is the law of nature’ begins to look disturbingly like sympathy, the classic indicator of benevolent sentimentalism.¹⁴² The ‘kind and pitying Moor’ (p. 179) assures Victoria that “‘there is a delight, of which you will speedily become sensible, in confiding [sorrows] to a sympathising breast’” (p. 151). Sure enough, like the numerous victims of sentimental seduction before her, she is soon ‘conquered and affected by [his] shew of kindness’ (p. 239) and his ‘piteously tender’ ‘wily accent’ (p. 198).

But if this seduction appears to align Victoria with the heroine of sensibility, Dacre is careful to divorce her entirely from her sentimental predecessors in her aesthetic responses. *Zofloya* is, like *The Monk*, replete with the discourse of sensation. Like Radcliffe’s heroines, feeling is constructed as an alternative to ‘dreary solitude and the most abominable tyranny’ (p. 87) but, while their sensation is ethically coded in order to promote social cohesion, Victoria’s sensory perceptions are linked only to individualistic impulse. Her dreams are the first signifier of this sensory excess and her imaginative capacity bears no resemblance to the sympathetic pity for suffering in Radcliffe’s novels: after waking from one of her portentous visions, Victoria ‘pondered with a sensation of pleasure [...] Berenza, bleeding and dying at her feet [...] as a blissful omen of her success’ (p. 146). Later, in a discourse of uncontrolled sensation and excessive passion

¹⁴² Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 172.

that can scarcely be imagined in a conventional text of the female gothic, '[h]er brain worked with wildest rage, producing almost instant madness [...] revenge, thirsting revenge, was the predominant sensation of her soul, swallowing up every other' (p. 197). The 'natural' delicacy and innate moral sense of Radcliffe's heroines is further interrogated in *Zofloya* from within this same discourse of physical sensation through the novel's appropriation of Bienville's *Nymphomania* (1775), and Craciun offers a convincing account of Dacre's depictions of 'nymphomaniacal degeneration' in her heroines.¹⁴³

The novel's depiction of the sublime also departs from the model of the sympathetic sublime in Radcliffe's earlier novels in a number of ways. The affiliation of both *Zofloya* and *Victoria* with the sublime marks a departure from the tentatively-expressed individual agency of sublime experience in *The Italian*, by making it excessively self-interested, rather than social, and by constructing an unconventional 'feminine sublime power which provokes a submissive masculine response' in the first part of the novel.¹⁴⁴ *Victoria* perceives the 'majestic sublimity' (p. 165) and isolated setting of the *Castella de Berenza* only for their ability to abet her plans for murder: 'Hail then to these blissful solitudes, hail to them, since they perhaps may first witness the rich harvest of my persevering love; and for such a love, perish – perish, all that may oppose it!' (p. 165).¹⁴⁵ She can also be seen to achieve a Kantian mastery over nature's

¹⁴³ Craciun, 'Introduction', *Zofloya*, p. 22.

¹⁴⁴ Chaplin, *Law, Sensibility and the Sublime*, p. 139.

¹⁴⁵ Chaplin points out that *Victoria*'s 'responses to various traditional manifestations of the sublime [...] mark her as unfeminine', *Law, Sensibility and the Sublime*, p. 138. She refers specifically to the incident in which, realising she is a prisoner of *Signora di Modena*, *Victoria* notices that '[t]he surrounding scenery, beautifully romantic, furnished ample employment for her pencil; and [...] she seated herself by an open window, and endeavoured by occupation to banish reflection' (p. 48). She is immune to the consolatory power of nature experienced by the Radcliffean heroine when confronted with the sublime spectacle, in

power in her response to the sublime, in which her internal passion leads her to feel immunity against physical threat. The ‘internal warfare’ of her mind overcomes any perceived danger as ‘the thunder now rattled over her head, and the blue lightning flashed across her path’ (p. 212) and she is rendered ‘unmindful of the awe inspiring’ power of nature (p. 213). Although this mastery is undermined as Zofloya’s dominion increases over Victoria, resulting in her submission to his sublime power, the novel’s depiction of the sublime in terms of individual power is radical. While Radcliffe begins to develop a sense of individual agency in the sublime experiences of her heroines in *Udolpho* and *The Italian*, Dacre takes this agency to excess, constructing a female protagonist who, at least in part, is able to harness and collude with the force of the sublime in order to gain mastery over others.

Zofloya dismembers the sentimental ideological framework of the female gothic in its subversion of Radcliffean ‘sacred social affinities’ (p. 93). By questioning the cause of human corruption in the final paragraph, the narrator offers a wry critique of formations of ‘natural’ morality, stating that ‘[e]ither we must suppose that the love of evil is born with us (which would be an insult to the Deity), or we must attribute them (as appears more consonant with reason) to the suggestions of infernal inference’ (p. 268). As Craciun puts it, ‘the supposedly “reasonable” faith in human benevolence’ is in fact as reasonable as believing that ‘infernal influence’ is accountable for the depravity depicted in the novel.¹⁴⁶ *Zofloya*, then, can be read as an excessive fictionalised alternative to the restrained and egalitarian sentimental communities in Radcliffe’s novels.

contrast to Emily St Aubert, who is ‘tranquil enough to be pleased with the thought of sketching the sublime scenes beheld from her windows’, *Udolpho*, p. 240.

¹⁴⁶ Craciun, *Fatal Women*, p. 152.

Dacre's final novel, *The Passions* (1811), offers the fullest and most radical interrogation of the rural sentimental-gothic tradition. It recalls in epistolary form the fates of two married couples, Wiemar and Julia and Darlowitz and Amelia, who together form a rural domestic community. The principal correspondent of Wiemar and Darlowitz is the Baron Rozendorf – childhood friend and possessor of a 'cool, philosophic eye' – while Julia exchanges letters with Appollonia Zulmer, a proud and fiery widowed countess bent on seeking revenge for Wiemar's spurning of her affections.¹⁴⁷ The events unfold: Julia and Darlowitz form an illicit attachment (although never a sexual one) and much gothic melodrama ensues, resulting in the death of Amelia, the suicide of Darlowitz and the insanity of Julia who, racked with guilt, flees the community, leaving Wiemar to care for the children. *The Passions* offers an early-nineteenth-century deconstruction of what Terry Eagleton terms the 'feminization of discourse' that took place in the eighteenth century.¹⁴⁸ The concept represents a critical counter to Stone's concept of 'affective individualism', which emphasised the growth of the nuclear family and companionate marriage in the eighteenth century, on the grounds that the greater emphasis placed on the family in fact confirmed the 'patriarchal structure' of the state.¹⁴⁹ Dacre explicitly critiques the Burkean model of ideal community – in which familial bonds extend outwards to promote the social cohesion of the nation – in her depiction of

¹⁴⁷ [Charlotte Dacre], *The Passions*, 4 vols (London: Cadell and Davies, 1811), I, 20. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

¹⁴⁸ Terry Eagleton, *The Rape of Clarissa: Writing, Sexuality and Class Struggle in Samuel Richardson* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), p. 13.

¹⁴⁹ Eagleton, *The Rape of Clarissa*, p. 14. Many modern critics have argued that, as Vivien Jones terms it, the 'language of affective individualism masks actual power relations by offering women the promise of romantic attachment and personal choice', *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 15. See also Ingrid Tague, 'Aristocratic Women and Ideas of Family in the Early Eighteenth Century', in *The Family in Early Modern England*, ed. by Helen Barry and Elizabeth Foyster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 184-208 (pp. 187-88) for a useful overview of these objections.

an extended family in which '[o]ur children linked together, and our united families, like those of the patriarchs, form but one' (I, 226). The implication of this dual *paterfamilias* for the wives of Wiemar and Darlowitz is predictably inauspicious. Dacre's version of Wolmar's Clarens estate – envisaged by Darlowitz and Wiemar as an antidote to lonely solitude – turns out to be a disastrous product of combined sentimental male 'irrational fantasms' (I, 21) and 'egoti[sm]' (I, 229).

Wiemar represents the 'feminization of discourse' in its most oppressive form. His appropriation of feminine sensibility serves to control and oppress the women in the novel, testifying to Johnson's conception of 'the authority of male affectivity', which 'tend[s] to prohibit female complaint.'¹⁵⁰ His assumption of female qualities makes him no less protective of masculine ones; it is his detestation of Appollonia's 'masculine cast' (I, 28) that precipitates her revenge in encouraging Julia's transgression and it takes no leap in imagination to recall Polwhele's 'Unsex'd Females' in Wiemar's undisguised abhorrence of her 'bold female genius' (I, 28).¹⁵¹ Wiemar's 'picture of a perfect woman' (I, 31) – of which Amelia is the living representative – is equally destructive. Like the heroines of Wollstonecraft and Hays and St Elmer in *Confessions*, he has an unrealistic notion of ideal love: he fears 'I had better never marry, for where could I ever meet with a woman to my wish – with a second Amelia' (I, 31). He writes that Julia's 'sylphid form' 'reminded me of the visionary maiden of my boyish enthusiasm!' but reveals that he has

¹⁵⁰ Johnson, *Equivocal Beings*, p. 16.

¹⁵¹ Richard Polwhele's poem *The Unsex'd Females: A Poem Addressed to the Author of the Pursuits of Literature* (London: Cadell and Davies, 1798), characterised radicals like Wollstonecraft as 'a female band despising NATURE's law' (l. 12) who, 'Arm'd with proud intellect' (l. 119), threatened to 'Invoke the Proteus of petrific art' (l. 18), transfiguring beholding men to stone. This association of 'unnatural' female intellect with Medusa was common in the period and was explicitly associated with French radicalism, as seen in the popular print 'The Contrast' (1793), which opposes British and French liberty, the latter depicted as snake-haired; 'The French Feast of Reason, or the Cloven-foot Triumphant' (1793), which shows a similar figure, here with a cloven hoof to further signify her diabolical provenance; and in Gillray's 'The New Morality' (1798).

‘seen her only once’ since meeting her and is ‘as yet unacquainted with her history, situation’ or character (I, 107). He goes on to mould Julia to fit his notion of female perfection and, in Rozendorf’s words, gives ‘the reins too unreservedly to that mighty queen of [his] brain, imagination’ and indulges ‘extravagant or chimerical anticipations’ (I, 114). In her ‘simplicity and ignorance of society’ (I, 108) (yet another warning of the dangers of sentimental education), Julia submits to his will. Her submission is reflected in the narrative form. Their courtship is glossed over by the text; in a short narrative interpolation detailing the events of four years, the reader is informed of ‘his increasing passion for her, and determination to make her his wife’ (I, 119) and the first letter from Julia does not occur until after her marriage.

Fiona Price’s assertion that the novel’s rural community ‘is revolutionary in its reliance upon affection rather than authority’ but that ‘the group is doomed by the willfulness of individual desire’ is undermined by the group’s decidedly patriarchal structure.¹⁵² If even Amelia – a ‘faultless’ (I, 96) exemplar of feminine virtue – acknowledges the ‘negative virtue’ (I, 270) of seclusion, it is unsurprising that Julia feels a ‘criminal sentiment of dissatisfaction’ and an ‘inexplicable inquietude’ (II, 70). The damaging effects of her submission to Wiemar’s constructions of both ideal femininity and community reflect Eagleton’s conception of the ‘nuclear family’, which ‘brutally isolated [women] from the protection of an extended kinship, cloistered them from the public sphere and reduced them to delicate drones’.¹⁵³ It is this very isolation which incites Julia’s friendship with Appollonia. She feels unable to confide in Amelia because she has ‘a superiority that is utterly unobtainable by any other woman’ (II, 28) and

¹⁵² Fiona Price, ‘Dacre, Charlotte’, in *Encyclopaedia of the Romantic Era, 1760-1850*, ed. by Christopher John Murray, 2 vols (New York and London: Taylor & Francis, 2004), I, 249-51 (p. 250).

¹⁵³ Eagleton, *The Rape of Clarissa*, p. 16

reveals to Appollonia that ‘happy as I ought to feel, surrounded by most dear and excellent beings, I still regret and miss your animated, your engaging converse’ (II, 69). It is notable that the ‘engaging’ qualities of Appollonia are predicated on the fact that she is explicitly configured as ‘social’, not ‘domestic’ (I, 143) for, in making this distinction, Dacre further departs from the model of female gothic and its celebration of the domestic sphere.

This friendship, the product of patriarchal control and isolation, allows Appollonia to enact her revenge on Wiemar by encouraging Julia’s transgression through a programme of philosophical feminism and salacious reading, which of course includes *Julie; or, La Nouvelle Héloïse*. Yet critics have noted the difficulty of determining the ultimate cause of this transgression,¹⁵⁴ as expressed in the *Critical Review*’s perplexity about the fact that,

the agency of all the misery was attributed to Appollonia’s revenge; yet the misfortunes of Julia arose wholly from the unbridled passions of Darlowitz, over whom Appollonia could have exerted no influence [...] [T]he pride of Wiemar is wholly unaccountable and unnatural.¹⁵⁵

Varma appears to accept these contradictions as ‘glaring defects [of] the story’, but this seems an unsatisfactory condemnation of inconsistencies that can be explained by Dacre’s anxiety over female subjectivity.¹⁵⁶ The novel’s apparent censure of the vengeful Appollonia is in fact more complex than it first appears. Craciun draws attention to critical readings of Appollonia as a ‘female monster’ or a ‘literal demonization of

¹⁵⁴ See, for example, James Dunn’s comment that ‘[t]he cause of the dissolution of this domestic order is a point of some contention’, ‘Charlotte Dacre and the Feminization of Violence’, *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 53.3 (Dec 1998), 307-27 (p. 320). Ann Jones also notes that Julia and Darlowitz ‘are themselves the real cause of the consequent tragedy, not Appollonia’, *Ideas and Innovations*, pp. 245-46.

¹⁵⁵ *Critical Review*, 3rd ser. 24 (Sept 1811), 51-57 (p. 56).

¹⁵⁶ Devendra Varma, ‘Introduction’, in Charlotte Dacre, *The Passions* (New York: Arno, 1974), pp. ix-xvi (p. xiii).

Wollstonecraftian feminism',¹⁵⁷ and Dacre clearly recalls Wollstonecraft in Appollonia's censure of 'the destiny which marks *woman* for the *slave of man*' (I, 169) and the way that 'men will not allow us the use of reason, and reduce us to mere animals' (II, 65).¹⁵⁸ This appropriation of Wollstonecraft is inseparable from Appollonia's sensibility, and her role as 'Satanic heroine' is united with her sentimental 'sophistry' (IV, 340),¹⁵⁹ embodied in the well-worn conviction that if 'an involuntary *act*, whatever its consequences, cannot be deemed criminal, how shall thoughts and feelings be deemed so, which are, and ever must be involuntary?' (II, 75)

However, Dacre subtly complicates this representation of Appollonia as a monstrous villainess and the text demonstrates a remarkable ideological resistance, subverting her apparently deranged malevolence by investing many of her claims with startling accuracy. Appollonia allows that Julia's 'understanding, and [...] real principle, enable her to combat my philosophy' (II, 221), suggesting that there is at least an element of free will in her transgression. Indeed, there is in fact far greater evidence for the persuasive power of Darlowitz's 'sophistry of passion' (III, 29) as the source of Julia's transgression than for Appollonia's blend of reason and feeling. His dubious claim that Julia's love 'so far from injuring, increases the happiness of others, by increasing my tenderness towards them' (III, 28) recalls Fribourg's equally unconvincing plea to Cazire in *Confessions*, and his 'philosophy of reason, of nature, and of love' (IV, 29) aligns him with the sentimental seducer.¹⁶⁰ Many of Appollonia's statements are endorsed by the

¹⁵⁷ Clery, *Women's Gothic*, p. 116; Craciun, 'Introduction', *Zofloya*, p. 27.

¹⁵⁸ Wollstonecraft frequently referred to woman as a 'slave' in the *Vindication* (pp. 47, 96, 115, 188, 283) and to the way in a wife is 'scarcely raised by her employments above the animal kingdom', p. 62.

¹⁵⁹ Craciun, 'Introduction', *Zofloya*, p. 26.

¹⁶⁰ Cazire writes that Fribourg 'had said that on me alone depended the domestic tranquillity of an innocent wife, that as I raised or depressed his soul by my compliance or refusal of what he termed his guiltless wishes, the effects would be perceptible in his family', *Confessions*, I, 182-83.

narrative: for example, her assertion that ‘long seclusion from the world [has] refined [Julia’s] imagination to too high a pitch’ (II, 89) is a recurrent theme in all of Dacre’s fiction which frequently results in sexual transgression. Her conviction that ‘those secluded buried beauties [are] unfit for wives’ and ‘if a man will [...] select a hamadryad for his bride, he should have a care of taking her from her native woods and mountains’ (II, 215) recalls Wiemar’s naïve idealisation of Julia’s ‘sylphid form’, as well as the numerous descriptions of Sibella Valmont in *Secresy* – another victim of imposed patriarchal isolation – as ‘Wood Nymph, Dryad, and Hymadriad [sic]’ (S, p. 54). The reader is inclined to agree, at least in part, with Appollonia when she states that ‘[e]very thing must be progressive, it is the rule of nature [...] Julia Wiemar will be, in time, all I can wish’ (I, 179). Dacre subverts the supposed naturalisation of the women in the male rural fantasy through Appollonia’s argument that Julia’s transgression is the inevitable and natural consequence of patriarchal control: ‘the embryo events to which I shall give birth’ (I, 181). Even Wiemar disputes Rozendorf’s conviction that Appollonia – ‘that fierce malignant fiend’ (II, 228) – is the sole cause of his misery, stating that even if she had ‘been never let loose upon the universe [...] Julia would equally have been perfidious’ (IV, 134).

The narrative form of the novel reinforces its ideological inconsistencies. Like Wollstonecraft’s *The Wrongs of Woman*, it shifts to third-person narrative at the end, thus ‘insulating the reader’s sympathies’ from the potential radicalism of the individualistic epistolary form.¹⁶¹ But if its fervent condemnation of ‘hell-born Appollonia’ (IV, 226) as the engineer of destruction is undermined by the epistolary narrative, so too is the portrayal of Wiemar. In the first part of the closing narrative, he appears to reject

¹⁶¹ Watson, *Revolution and the Form of the British Novel*, p. 55.

sensibility in favour of reason and assumes ‘the firmness of man’ (IV, 16), declaring himself to be ‘no weak theorist’, but a man of ‘positive virtue and firmness of [...] character’ (IV, 28) who ‘shall tower above his destiny’ (IV, 17). This rejection of feminine discourse ultimately results in the deranged Julia’s death, as he refuses to go to her for fear that – as Julia puts it – ‘the tear of compassion might [...] dishonour [him]’ (III, 212). He does not relent until it is too late, but the narrator still endorses his actions as ‘not weakness, but simply humanity’ (IV, 276-77). Wiemar is reinvested with moderated Radcliffean sensibility in the narrator’s assertion of his ‘noble dignified subjection’ of his ‘tenderest sensibility’, stating that he has ‘passed his life at peace from the fury of the passions’ (IV, 239), a claim surely at odds with Rozendorf’s earlier conviction that ‘with his lively feelings and keen susceptibility, I can imagine for you only distraction or suicide’ (I, 24). Male sensibility is, then, apparently privileged by the closing narrative, triumphant in its fortitude while the female version ends with Appollonia’s ‘agonies of a violent death’ (IV, 118) and the final ‘tortures inexpressible’ (IV, 331) of Julia’s ‘shuddering frame’ (IV, 333).

This valorisation of male sensibility and the novel’s final warning against ‘the danger of listening to the delusive blandishments of sophistry; of yielding to the guilty violence of the Passions, or of swerving even in *thought* from the sacred line of virtue, and our duty’ (IV, 340) seem dangerously unstable when read in terms of the epistolary narrative. Certainly, the *Critical Review* found the moralistic ending unconvincing, observing that ‘such a moral is not [...] deducible from the premises before us, and it is no uncommon affectation to add sentences of this nature to the end of a novel, that it may

pretend to be in some way subservient to the purposes of instruction'.¹⁶² The familiar anxiety about the dubious morality of Dacre's fiction resurfaces here, but the reviewer's main objection to the novel appears to be its excessively gothic-sentimental style, in which 'the tyranny of the passions overstrained far beyond the limits which truth can justify' and 'every individual of the dramatis personæ are madmen and madwomen upon stilts'.¹⁶³ Dacre's attempt to neutralise the novel's potential radicalism in the final volume of the text is ultimately subverted by the ideological resistance of the epistolary narrative. Instead of validating moderated and virtuous domestic sensibility in the tradition of the female gothic, *The Passions* ultimately rejects it as a destructive signifier of patriarchal control.

Radcliffe's novels construct a model of egalitarian benevolent sociability based on the formations of moral sense philosophy, in which individual sensation operates as a means of benevolent and sympathetic interaction. Likewise, her configuration of the sublime in *A Sicilian Romance* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* invests the sublime experience with the capacity to replicate the harmony of the natural world in the human spectator, making it a force for social cohesion. This model of sociability begins to break down in *The Italian* and the power of the sublime becomes linked to a form of alienated Romantic selfhood. Dacre's fiction disrupts the typical focus of both the female gothic and feminine Romanticism on domestic sociability as a natural female virtue. In this refusal to valorise the affective communities celebrated by Radcliffe, Rousseau and Burke, Dacre rejects the 'ethic of care' associated with feminine Romanticism and its

¹⁶² *Critical Review*, 3rd ser. 24 (Sept 1811), 51–57 (p. 52). Dacre employs a similar manoeuvre in *Zofloya* when she states at the start that it is a novel that explores the effects of parental neglect and miseducation, an affiliation with didactic literature which is surely at odds with the transgressive content of the novel.

¹⁶³ *Critical Review*, p. 52.

insistence on family and community.¹⁶⁴ In their juxtaposition of monstrously violent and powerful women and passive sentimental heroines, Dacre's novels demonstrate a preoccupation with the threat of the other which Mellor identifies as a feature of masculine Romanticism and question 'the legitimacy of normative gender patterns', questioning the validity of narratives of female victimisation.¹⁶⁵ In a struggle for autonomous selfhood, natural sensibility is transformed into excessive passion and female subjectivity can only be expressed through 'hyperbolic distortion which makes desire a synonym for madness' or unrestrained sexuality.¹⁶⁶ What transpires from Dacre's interrogation of sympathetic models of human interaction is a form of excessive Romantic selfhood based on sensibility which was simultaneously emerging in the fiction of William Godwin.

¹⁶⁴ Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender*, p. 3.

¹⁶⁵ Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender*, p. x; Miles, 'Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis', p. 45.

¹⁶⁶ Helen Small, *Love's Madness: Medicine, the Novel, and Female Insanity, 1800-1865* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 87.

Chapter Three

William Godwin: The Limits of Sympathetic Identification

The conflict between William Godwin's rationalism and sentimentalism has long been a critical preoccupation. His *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793) became one of the most controversial works of Jacobin philosophy and political anarchism in its construction of human perfectibility based on freedom from institutional or governmental 'compulsory restraint' and emphasis on 'private judgement' or reason.¹ Godwin's apparent 'conversion' to sensibility in the late 1790s has been read as an act of political apostasy which fundamentally undermined his Jacobin principles, but this binary construction of reason and sentiment is reductive in a number of ways. As a work of Enlightenment rationalism, the *Enquiry* incorporates many of the oppositions common to the wider cultural and philosophical movement of the Enlightenment. On one hand, Godwin's vision of perfectibility demonstrates a pervasive commitment to the power of 'social communication' and 'mutual intercourse' for the 'delivering [of] sentiments'.² However, it also expresses a deep anxiety about the tendency for social interaction to efface individual identity: as he put it, 'individuality is of the very essence of intellectual excellence. He that resigns himself wholly to sympathy and imitation can possess little of

¹ William Godwin, *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, and its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness*, 2 vols (London: Robinson, 1793), I, 140; I, 120. All further references are to this edition unless specified.

² Godwin, *Enquiry*, I, 214.

mental strength or accuracy'.³ Like many other formations of Enlightenment social philosophy, Godwin's vision of human perfectibility is inherently unstable because it ultimately resists public engagement for fear that sociability might efface the capacity for reasoned judgement.

It follows, then, that the *Enquiry* reflects the opposition between the self and the social that pervades Enlightenment moral sense philosophy. Indeed, its emphasis on communicative exchange and benevolence suggests that it is limiting to read it purely as a work of rationalism. Certainly, some critical readings of Godwin's philosophy have suggested that, even before his revisions to the *Enquiry* for the second edition in 1796 which tempered its rationalism, there were clear links to both Hutcheson and Shaftesbury in his work. Chris Jones notes Godwin's early approbation of, as he put it, 'that very elegant philosopher, Mr Hutcheson' for his insistence that 'self-love is not the source of all our passions, but that disinterested benevolence has its seat in the human heart'.⁴ Furthermore, Jones suggests that 'even in the first edition' of the *Enquiry* there is 'too much stress on natural benevolence to content a Rational Moralist'.⁵ Of course, the emphasis on sociability became more evident in the revisions for the second edition and third edition (1798), after which Dugald Stewart termed Godwin's philosophy 'precisely the system of Hutcheson'.⁶ Mark Philp suggests that, after the first edition of the *Enquiry*, the system of 'Rational Dissent' was succeeded by the benevolent framework of the

³ Godwin, *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, 3rd edn, 2 vols (London: Robinson, 1798), II, 500.

⁴ William Godwin, *An Account of the Seminary* (1783), cited in Chris Jones, 'Radical Sensibility in the 1790s', in *Reflections of Revolution: Images of Romanticism*, ed. by Alison Yarrington and Kelvin Everest (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 68-82 (p. 76).

⁵ Jones, 'Radical Sensibility in the 1790s', p. 76.

⁶ Dugald Stewart, *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind* [1792], in *The Works of Dugald Stewart*, 7 vols (Cambridge: Hilliard and Brown, 1829), I, 380.

‘British Moralists’.⁷ Indeed, Godwin conceded that the ‘unqualified condemnation of private affections’ in the first edition had been problematic and he attempted to address this weakness in the second, acknowledging the substantial revisions in the preface.⁸ The additional chapter ‘Of Self-love and Benevolence’ acknowledged the efforts of Shaftesbury, Butler, Hutcheson and Hume to ‘support the practicability of disinterested action’ and articulated a model of sociable benevolence in which ‘benevolent intention is essential to virtue’.⁹ Furthermore, the second edition revised the unqualified rationality of the first, stating that ‘passion is so far from being incompatible with reason, that it is inseparable from it’.¹⁰ By the third edition, ‘[r]eason is [...] merely a comparison and balancing of different feelings’ and ‘[v]irtue is nothing else but kind and sympathetic feelings reduced into principle’.¹¹ Justice, too, is contextualised in terms of sympathy, reflecting Godwin’s debt to Smith’s formulation of the impartial spectator in the second edition: ‘Justice requires that I should put myself in the position of an impartial spectator, of human concerns, and divest myself of retrospect to my own predilections’.¹² As Ian Ward observes, ‘[t]he philosophy of anarchy, it seemed, had become a philosophy of “feelings”’: Godwin was gradually releasing his hold on rational individualism in favour of more externally-focused model of selfhood.¹³

⁷ Mark Philp, *Godwin’s Political Justice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), pp. 15, 208.

⁸ William Godwin, Undated note, cited in Ian Ward, ‘A Man of Feelings: William Godwin’s Romantic Embrace’, *Law and Literature*, 17.1 (2005), 21-46 (p. 29).

⁹ Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, 2nd edn, 2 vols (London: Robinson, 1796), I, 423; I, 433.

¹⁰ Godwin, *Enquiry*, 2nd edn, I, 82.

¹¹ Godwin, *Enquiry*, 3rd edn, I, xxvi; II, 146.

¹² Godwin, *Enquiry*, 3rd edn, I, xxv. In the second edition Godwin had stated: ‘We find by observation that we are surrounded by beings of the same nature with ourselves. They have the same senses, are susceptible to the same pleasures and pains, capable of being raised to the same excellence, and employed in the same usefulness. We are able in imagination to go out of ourselves, and become impartial spectators of the system of which we are a part’, I, 428.

¹³ Ward, ‘A Man of Feelings’, p. 30.

Rationalism and Sensibility: *Caleb Williams* and *St Leon*

In terms of Godwin's fiction, any discussion must necessarily engage with his designation as a Jacobin novelist. In his seminal study *The English Jacobin Novel*, Gary Kelly attempted to revise the rationalist reputation of Godwin, and of the other Jacobin novelists he considered, by emphasising a shift in their values which corresponds with that I have charted in the changing inflections of the *Enquiry*. Kelly argues that from the mid 1790s, Thomas Holcroft and Godwin 'began to emphasize the value of sympathy rather than argument in achieving individual moral reform, and to appreciate the power of imagination and feeling, ideas vital to young ex-Jacobins who were now becoming Romantics'.¹⁴ While Kelly observes the shift in the emphasis of Godwin's fiction, his suggestion that it displays an increasing emphasis on 'imagination and feeling' locates it within a conventional model of introspective Romanticism that lacks wider social engagement. My discussion refutes this idea by suggesting that the later novels provide an explicit critique of Enlightenment formulations of sympathy as the basis for social cohesion which retain the radicalism of Godwin's early philosophy. The focus on fractured and alienated selfhood in Godwin's fiction can be read as part of the impetus of the radical sensibility Chris Jones identifies as a feature of the 1790s. The novels critique what Jones terms the 'natural feelings' of conservative models of sensibility (like that proposed by Burke) which, by emphasising the essential sameness of human nature, undermine identity and individuality.¹⁵

The philosophy of feeling is generally considered to have emerged fully in *St Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century* (1799), 'the first novel Godwin attempted to write

¹⁴ Gary Kelly, *The English Jacobin Novel, 1780-1805* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 11.

¹⁵ Jones, *Radical Sensibility: Literature and Ideas in the 1790s* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 89.

entirely out of his reformed sensibility'.¹⁶ Yet, like the early hints of moral sense philosophy within his Enlightenment rationality, Godwin's first works of fiction – three novels quickly produced and published in 1784 – also suggest an engagement with the discourse of sensibility. *Damon and Delia* (1784), described by Marilyn Butler and Mark Philp as 'a comedy of manners indebted to both Fielding and Burney',¹⁷ was favourably received by the *English Review* for its 'line of philosophical sensibility' and the reviewer found the author's aptitude for comedy inferior to that for sentiment, stating instead that 'his talent lies in the pathetic'.¹⁸ *Italian Letters* (1784) was Godwin's first identifiably gothic work, showing the influence of Walpole in its setting and parts of the plot, but it was also self-consciously sentimental in its epistolary form.¹⁹ Like the novel of sensibility (and, as Pamela Clemit points out, Godwin's later novels) *Italian Letters* was more concerned with emotion than plot;²⁰ the *Critical Review* found it 'pleasing, tender, and pathetic': 'a novel which interests rather by a faithful and accurate description of the feelings of a wounded mind, than by incident, bustle, or intrigue'.²¹ Likewise, the *Monthly Review* declared it 'both pathetic and interesting' and 'intermixed with reflections equally sensible, benevolent, and moral'.²² *Imogen* – a purportedly original Welsh pastoral romance that recalled 'other contemporary fabrications of national myth'

¹⁶ Kelly, *The English Jacobin Novel*, p. 226.

¹⁷ Marilyn Butler and Mark Philp, 'Introduction', in William Godwin, *Memoirs*, ed. by Mark Philp, *Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin*, 8 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1992), I, 7-46 (p. 24).

¹⁸ *English Review*, 3 (February 1784), 133-35 (pp. 133, 135). Pamela Clemit notes that the review 'may have been written by Godwin himself, since he worked as a reviewer for the journal from 1784 to 1785', 'Introduction', in *Damon and Delia, Italian Letters and Imogen*, ed. by Clemit, *Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin*, II, pp. vii-ix (p. vii).

¹⁹ Gary Kelly terms it 'an obvious imitation' of Richardson's *Clarissa*, locating it firmly within the paradigm of eighteenth-century sentiment, *The Jacobin Novel*, p. 17.

²⁰ Clemit, 'Introduction', *Damon and Delia*, p. viii.

²¹ *Critical Review*, 58 (1784), 211-213 (p. 212).

²² *Monthly Review*, 71 (November 1784), 386.

like Macpherson's Ossian poems²³ – was also generally well received by critics, who declared that 'the work abounds in beauties, in tender incidents, and simply pathetic descriptions'.²⁴

Although Ward suggests that sensibility only 'lurked' in *Things as They Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794) before materialising fully in *St Leon*, this assertion is incompatible with the prevalence of emotion and sympathy in the novel.²⁵ Given that it was published only a year after the first edition of the *Enquiry*, it is tempting to read *Caleb Williams* as an extension of the earlier philosophical work in a more accessible and popular form. Yet, if the novel can be read as a 'study of the individual', its focus on private feeling is always located within a social context.²⁶ As Clemit notes, the confessional form of *Caleb Williams* reflects the influence of Rousseau in its focus on 'self-analysis' as 'a way of rethinking social and political relations'.²⁷ Certainly, in the words of Caleb's narrative, '[t]he pride of philosophy has taught us to treat man as an individual. He is no such thing. He holds, necessarily, indispensably, to his species.'²⁸ It is possible, then, to read the novel as a 'gesture towards political reform through the agency of feeling'.²⁹ This focus on feeling in *Caleb Williams* has been compared to both the sentimental and the gothic novelistic traditions in their tendency to 'mimic the intensity of subjective experience', with critics noting Godwin's debts to Richardson, as

²³ Clemit, 'Introduction', *Damon and Delia*, p. vii.

²⁴ *Critical Review*, 58 (October 1784), 312.

²⁵ Ward, 'A Man of Feelings', p. 36.

²⁶ Pamela Clemit, 'Introduction', in William Godwin, *Caleb Williams* [1794] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. vii-xxvii (p. x).

²⁷ Clemit, 'Introduction', *Caleb Williams*, p. x. See also Rudolf F. Storch, 'Metaphors of Private Guilt and Social Rebellion in Godwin's *Caleb Williams*', *ELH*, 34.2 (1967), 188-207, which examines the 'energies of the individual mind which fuel overt social protest', p. 189.

²⁸ William Godwin, *Caleb Williams* [1794] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 303. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text. The full title of the novel on publication was *Things as They Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams* but modern editions have tended to favour using the shorter title.

²⁹ Clemit, 'Introduction', *Caleb Williams*, p. xxvi.

well as the novel's allusions to Burke's sentimentalised discourse in the *Reflections on the Revolution in France*.³⁰ In terms of the gothic, the novel follows Radcliffe's construction of public sympathy as a counter to individual persecution, constructing a vision of man 'cut off from the whole human species' (p. 303) in which persecution and lack of sympathy are interrelated: 'instead of seeking to identify myself with the joys and sorrows of others, and exchanging the delicious gifts of confidence and sympathy, [I] was compelled to centre my thoughts and vigilance in myself' (p. 256). As in Radcliffe's novels, solitude is counterbalanced by a moral-philosophic construction of sympathy; *Caleb Williams* employs a Smithian rhetoric of sympathetic interaction which hints at the possibility of social reform based on shared private feeling.³¹ In the courtroom scene in the revised ending (just one of a series of public trial scenes in the novel) Caleb's story is told in 'accents dictated by my remorse', 'poured [...] out with uncontrollable impetuosity, for my heart was pierced' (p. 323), and the spectators 'melted into tears'; '[t]hey could not resist the ardour with which I praised the great qualities of Falkland; they manifested their sympathy in the tokens of my penitence' (p. 324).³² Caleb's 'plain and unadulterated tale' (p. 323) exposes the weakness of reticence and suspicion and emphasises the value of communication in social interaction, as expressed in the *Enquiry*. Although both Falkland and Caleb are repeatedly constructed in the discourse of gothic villainy ('monster' and 'serpent' are key terms), Godwin departs from the typical gothic hero(ine)/villain dichotomy by effacing the differences between them in order to

³⁰ Clemit, 'Introduction', *Caleb Williams*, pp. xix, xv.

³¹ See Monika Fludernick, 'Spectacle, Theatre, and Sympathy in *Caleb Williams*', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 14.1 (2001), 1-30, for a fuller discussion of the novel's engagement with Smith's philosophy.

³² It is worth noting that Godwin revised the original ending he had intended for the novel to reflect a much greater investment in the power of sympathy.

reinforce their similarity, hinting towards the redemptive power of shared sympathy.³³

Godwin's portrayal of sympathy in *Caleb Williams* is largely ambivalent, but it nonetheless marks a decisive shift towards the negotiation of private feeling and public duty that would be a defining feature of his fiction over the next two decades.

St Leon retained the political emphasis of *Caleb Williams*; Kelly reads it as a quintessentially Jacobin novel that attacks Burke's emphasis on chivalric ideals as an anachronistic and nostalgic model of society which emphasised rather than effaced traditional hierarchies.³⁴ Yet, while the novel is in one sense a 'liberal critique of institutional power', like *Political Justice* and *Caleb Williams*,³⁵ it is also widely considered as representative of the modification of Godwin's philosophy in its discourse of 'reformed sensibility': it is perhaps for this reason that Peter Knox-Shaw reads the novel as 'emphatically Post-Jacobin'.³⁶ This 'intellectual and sentimental re-education' is generally attributed to Godwin's romantic relationship with Mary Wollstonecraft – which began in 1796 – and his subsequent programme of sentimental and gothic reading during which he read Rousseau and Goethe for the first time.³⁷ Although this 'reform' was perhaps not as pronounced as is often assumed (given the importance of sensibility in both the early philosophical works and *Caleb Williams*), *St Leon* certainly reflects

³³ Mr Forester calls Caleb 'a monster of depravity to the justice of your country' and a 'monster of ingratitude' (p. 174), as well as a 'serpent' (p. 174) who was 'hatched by a hen' but 'came of the spawn of a cockatrice' (p. 176), and he is later denounced by Mrs Denison as 'a monster, not a man' (p. 300). Falkland is described in both spectral and infernal terms: 'ghost-like and wild' (p. 318) with eyes which are 'red, quick, wandering, full of suspicion and rage' and a complexion which 'suggested the idea of its being burnt and parched by the eternal fire that burned within him' (p. 280).

³⁴ Kelly, *The English Jacobin Novel*, p. 216.

³⁵ Gary Handwerk, 'History, Trauma, and the Limits of the Liberal Imagination: William Godwin's Historical Fiction', in *Romanticism, History, and the Possibilities of Genre*, ed. by Tilottoma Rajan and Julia M. Wright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 64-85 (p. 75).

³⁶ Kelly, *The English Jacobin Novel*, p. 226; Peter Knox-Shaw, 'Sense and Sensibility, Godwin and the Empiricists', *The Cambridge Quarterly*, 27.3 (1998), 183-208 (p. 195).

³⁷ Kelly, *The English Jacobin Novel*, p. 225. See also Kelly pp. 208, 226 and Pamela Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel: The Rational Fictions of Godwin, Brockden Brown, Mary Shelley* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 73.

Godwin's emerging conviction that 'pure rationalism' must admit the 'centrality' of 'imagination and emotion' in the human psyche.³⁸ The novel's preface emphasised the fact that its focus on the 'domestic and private affections' was 'not incompatible with [the] profound and active sense of justice' that formed the basis of Godwin's philosophy.³⁹ Instead, the two are closely linked, for 'by kindling [the individual's] sensibility' it is possible 'if he is endowed with liberal and manly spirit, to render him more prompt in the service of strangers and the public' (p. 11). In these terms, the novel represents the opposing philosophies of Shaftesbury and Mandeville, depicting a conflict between St Leon's philanthropy and his individualism. This recalls the opposition central to moral sense philosophy that emerges in *Political Justice*: to construct a model of public action and communication is to risk the effacement of 'solitary reflection' and private feeling.⁴⁰

This opposition is reflected in *St Leon*'s generic hybridity: as William Brewer points out, it 'contains elements of the Gothic romance, the sentimental novel, the political allegory, the confession, the philosophical fable, the historical novel, the *Bildungsroman*, and the travel novel.'⁴¹ While the novel's historical backdrop is important, the conflict between the self and the social is most aptly reflected in its blending of the gothic and sentimental traditions. Given the nature of the plot, it is

³⁸ Gary Handwerk and A. A. Markley, 'Introduction' in William Godwin, *Fleetwood*, ed. by Handwerk and Markley (Peterborough: Broadview, 2000), pp. 9-39 (p. 9).

³⁹ William Godwin, *St Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century* [1799], ed. by Pamela Clemit, *Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin*, IV, 11. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

⁴⁰ Godwin, *Enquiry*, I, 203.

⁴¹ William Dean Brewer, 'Introduction', in *St Leon* (Peterborough: Broadview, 2006), pp. 11-39 (p. 11). Kelly terms it Godwin's 'first real historical novel', *The English Jacobin Novel*, p. 199.

obvious that *St Leon* is heavily indebted to the gothic genre.⁴² The eponymous protagonist Count Reginald de St Leon resigns his military ambitions in favour of domestic happiness and is then offered the philosopher's stone by a mysterious stranger. Accepting this offer on the grounds that immortality and wealth will enable him to enrich his family and practise widespread benevolence and philanthropy, his plans are ultimately unfulfilled and he becomes estranged from his family, left to travel Europe as a social outcast. Like the novels of Radcliffe and Dacre, *St Leon*'s gothicism is ingrained with a domestic sentimental ideology in its focus on the 'culture of the heart' (p. 11).⁴³ Louise Joy suggests that St Leon's early disclosure to the reader of the destruction of his family 'renders [his] eulogium on the affections impotent': the narrative focus on affection is manifested only as a series of interruptions to the 'beguiling solitariness of the narratorial voice'.⁴⁴ Yet, this conflicting narrative style is typical of gothic sentimentalism; rather than representing the failure of sentiment, it can be read as an attempt to explore the problematic nature of reconciling private affection and public good. Indeed, as Handwerk and Markley observe, St Leon is 'a kindred figure to the "man of feeling"'.⁴⁵ Like Mackenzie's Harley, he is unable to find an appropriate outlet for his sociable impulses: 'I had looked for happiness as the result of the benevolence and the philanthropy I was exerting; I found only anxiety and a well grounded fear for my personal safety' (p. 309). However, this does not necessarily signify a rejection of sensibility on Godwin's part;

⁴² See Kelly, *The English Jacobin Novel*, pp. 227, 232. See also Louise Joy, 'St Leon and the Culture of the Heart', *History of European Ideas*, 33 (2007), 40-53, pp. 45-46 for a discussion of the gothic contexts of the novel.

⁴³ Peter Knox-Shaw suggests that this phrase is derived from Hutcheson and 'was taken from *The Wrongs of Woman*', *Jane Austen and the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004; repr. 2005), pp. 134-35. In *The Wrongs of Woman*, Maria states that "[t]he culture of the heart ever, I believe, keeps pace with that of the mind", Mary Wollstonecraft, *Mary and The Wrongs of Woman* [1798] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976; repr. 1998), p. 115.

⁴⁴ Louise Joy, 'St Leon and the Culture of the Heart', pp. 46, 47.

⁴⁵ Handwerk and Markley, 'Introduction', p. 15.

rather, in a discourse typical of Enlightenment moral sense philosophy, *St Leon* explores the complex interaction of self-interest and benevolence. This exploration forms the starting point of my discussion of the later novels: *St Leon* manifests the complexities of Enlightenment constructions of sociability that would ultimately give way to a form of Romantic selfhood.

Critics have suggested that *Fleetwood; or, The New Man of Feeling* (1805) was ‘perhaps the first Romantic novel in England’, finding a ‘Wordsworthian Romanticism’ in the protagonist’s ‘disposition, formed amongst mountains and the wildness of nature’.⁴⁶ Such assertions of the later novels’ Romanticism, however, remain somewhat indeterminate; this discussion is intended to go some way towards offering a fuller account of how both *Fleetwood* and *Mandeville; A Tale of the Seventeenth Century in England* (1817) contribute to the wider tradition of the Romantic novel. *Fleetwood* engages more explicitly with Enlightenment moral philosophy and its fictional counterpart, the eighteenth-century sentimental novel, than any of the earlier works considered in this chapter. Within a psychological-gothic context of paranoia and trauma, the novel explores the conflict between private feeling and public action in the man of feeling. The psychological resonance of the novel rests in its depiction of Romantic self-consciousness in *Fleetwood*, which signifies an ‘emergent Romantic mentality’ grounded in sensibility.⁴⁷ *Mandeville*, published over a decade later in 1817, was profoundly influenced by Romantic poetry and the work of Byron and Wordsworth in particular. It is preoccupied with the effect of sensibility on selfhood, detailing the dangerous potential of

⁴⁶ Kelly, *The English Jacobin Novel*, pp. 225, 210, 239.

⁴⁷ Handwerk, ‘History, Trauma, and the Limits of the Liberal Imagination’, p. 67.

public models of sympathetic interaction – which require us ‘to go out of ourselves’⁴⁸ – in its depiction of persecution and madness, culminating in a form of alienated and fragmented identity. Both *Fleetwood* and *Mandeville* ultimately return to the essential paradox expressed in *Political Justice* – that of reconciling private feeling and reason with collective participation in the wider social system – reconfiguring it within a Romantic ideology.

Contesting Enlightenment Selfhood: *Fleetwood; or, The New Man of Feeling*

Gary Kelly argues that *Fleetwood* ‘marks the metamorphosis of English Jacobin into English Romantic fiction’.⁴⁹ The novel is certainly more focused on the psychological development of the individual than Godwin’s earlier novels, but it does not necessarily follow that this indicates a turn away from political change in favour of ‘depoliticized Romantic liberalism’, as some critics have suggested.⁵⁰ In fact, *Fleetwood* – in the mode of revisionist intent signalled by its subtitle – deconstructs the model of sensibility formulated by Henry Mackenzie in his paradigmatic sentimental novel *The Man of Feeling* (1771), focusing specifically on its capacity for public interaction. Although the novel’s subtitle locates it within the generic formation of sensibility, it is also closely allied to both gothic and historical fiction.⁵¹ I read *Fleetwood*’s amalgamation of

⁴⁸ Godwin, *Enquiry*, 2nd edn, I, 428.

⁴⁹ Kelly, *The English Jacobin Novel*, p. 239.

⁵⁰ Kelly, *The English Jacobin Novel*, p. 223. Kelly notes that in *Fleetwood* ‘Godwin was turning away from political reform to emphasis on the moral amelioration of individuals’, p. 223. Likewise, Clemit points out the ‘increased attention to the mental lives of individuals’ in *Fleetwood* and *Mandeville, The Godwinian Novel*, p. 73. Handwerk and Markley also observe this change, associating it with a ‘shift away from the explicitly public and political concerns of the 1790s’, ‘Introduction’, p. 9. Butler and Philp make a similar assertion of the move ‘away from direct social commentary’ in *Fleetwood*, arguing that this shift is fully realised in Godwin’s later novels but that its genesis is evident in *Caleb Williams*, ‘Introduction’, I, 30.

⁵¹ Much of the novel’s inspiration was derived from historical sources. Originally titled ‘Lambert’ in his diary, Godwin’s appropriation of the name was derived from Prévost’s fictional account of the historical

sensibility within its ‘framework of judicial inquiry, punishment, and torture’ as part of the tradition of Romantic sensibility which anatomises and reconfigures Enlightenment modes of feeling.⁵² *Fleetwood* has been read as reflective of the shift from Enlightenment to Romanticism in its focus on ‘inwardness’, and my discussion locates it within a dialectical construction of the two cultural movements, in which from the oppositions already present within Enlightenment constructions of sensibility emerge a number of conventionally Romantic concerns.⁵³ *Fleetwood*, in its engagement with the moral-philosophical paradigm of the man of feeling, stages a series of oppositions between Enlightenment theories of public sympathy and private feeling from which emerge a number of Romantic preoccupations with selfhood, identity and alienation.

Typically, critics have read the novel’s engagement with sensibility in terms of both Godwin’s biography and his philosophy, suggesting that its continued focus on the ‘domestic and private affections’ (*SL*, 11) marks the culmination of Godwin’s sentimental conversion.⁵⁴ Godwin himself was aware of the contradictions between the novel and his earlier philosophy, addressing his ‘supposed inconsistencies’ regarding the ‘respect

figure John Lambert, which – in an apt metaphor for Godwin’s study of sentimental alienation – narrates Lambert’s ‘disillusion[ment] with the treachery of Cromwell’ and his subsequent exile ‘on a desert island.’ Pamela Clemit, ‘Introduction’, in William Godwin, *Fleetwood*, ed. by Pamela Clemit, *Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin*, V, pp. v-vii (p. v).

⁵² Steven Bruhm, *Gothic Bodies: The Politics of Pain in Romantic Fiction* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1994), p. 107.

⁵³ Butler and Philp ‘Introduction’, I, 30. See Marshall Brown, ‘Romanticism and Enlightenment’ in *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism* ed. by Stuart Curran (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 25-47, in which he suggests a similarly dialectical account of the two cultural movements, where ‘Romanticism and Enlightenment differ from one another in consequence of the ways in which each differs internally from itself – in which Enlightenment is driven towards its opposite and in which Romanticism incorporates its antithesis’, p. 31.

⁵⁴ Butler and Philp point out that ‘[c]ritical accounts of [Godwin’s] oeuvre have often emphasized the tensions and apparent contradictions between both his various works and between his philosophical commitments and his own life’, Butler and Philp, ‘Introduction’, I, 22.

expressed [...] for marriage' in the novel's preface.⁵⁵ His anticipation of *Fleetwood's* likely reception in the context of *Political Justice* was astute. Not only did reviewers predictably identify 'inconsistency in the author's moral principles', many read it as a further endorsement of Godwin's disregard for marriage.⁵⁶ The depiction of Fleetwood and Mary cohabiting before the legal legitimacy of their marriage is restored elicited moral objection from the *British Critic* and the *Anti-Jacobin Review* which maintained the conviction that Godwin 'entertains as little respect for marriage, as he ever did, at any time of his life'.⁵⁷ *Fleetwood* compared unfavourably with Godwin's earlier fiction in other ways too, with reviewers declaring it an 'utterly incredible' (*BC*, 189) novel that 'hardly rises to mediocrity' (*AJR*, 337). Indeed, modern critics have also found the novel's 'rather conventional literariness' disappointing in the context of the 'usual power' of Godwin's prose.⁵⁸ Aside from the lack of conviction in the novel's realism, by far the most common contemporary criticism was that its subtitle was a 'capital misnomer' (*AJR*, 339). Scott, clearly rankled by the perceived misappropriation of his friend Mackenzie's title, declared in the *Edinburgh Review* that Godwin's hero 'merits any title better than that of a man of feeling'.⁵⁹ While the reviewers' descriptions of Mackenzie's man of feeling were firmly located within the eighteenth-century formation of benevolent sensibility – he is possessed of 'innate benevolence' and 'exquisitely sensible to the

⁵⁵ William Godwin, *Fleetwood; or, The New Man of Feeling*, 3 vols (London: Phillips, 1805), I, x. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

⁵⁶ *British Critic*, 26 (August 1805), 189-94 (p. 190). All further references are to this issue and are given in the text as *BC*.

⁵⁷ *Anti-Jacobin Review*, 21 (August 1805), 337-58 (p. 342). All further references are to this issue and are given in the text as *AJR*.

⁵⁸ Butler and Philp, 'Introduction', *Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin*, I, 33.

⁵⁹ [Walter Scott], 'Review of *Fleetwood*', *Edinburgh Review*, 6 (April 1805), 182-93 (p. 190). All further references are to this issue and are given in the text as *ER*. See G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992) for a discussion of the friendship between Scott and Mackenzie and an account of Scott's praise of *The Man of Feeling*, p. 144.

distresses of every being around him' (*AJR*, 339) – Fleetwood was considered a 'disgusting egotist, and one of the most selfish creatures which it is possible to conceive' (*AJR*, 339).⁶⁰ Godwin's delineation of Fleetwood in 'the inflated language of high passion' (*ER*, 192), often verging on insanity, reveals the dangerously individualistic propensity of sensibility in which 'there is no aspiration towards promoting the public advantage, or the happiness of individuals' (*ER*, 193). The reviewers could not reconcile the novel's subtitle and its central character, unless Godwin intended his misanthropic embodiment of the 'new man of feeling' to be 'in absolute contradiction to the old.'⁶¹

This 'absolute contradiction' to Mackenzie's man of feeling is the point of departure for my discussion. *Fleetwood* engages broadly with eighteenth-century sentimental tradition, and critics have noted its debt to Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse* and *Émile*, Inchbald's *A Simple Story* (1791) and Mackenzie's *Julia de Roubigné* (1777).⁶² Yet, while many of these intertextual connections have merited sustained discussion, *Fleetwood*'s relationship to *The Man of Feeling* has tended to remain implicit. As a paradigmatic sentimental novel, critical accounts of *The Man of Feeling* have observed close affiliations with eighteenth-century moral-philosophic constructions of sympathy. Barker-Benfield suggests that Mackenzie's depiction of "'domestic distresses'" expressed the same value Smith placed on private life':⁶³ as Mackenzie put it, private virtue is stimulated 'amidst the warmth of social affection, and of social sympathy' and

⁶⁰ *European Magazine*, 49 (April 1806), 259-61 (p. 260); *AJR*, p. 339.

⁶¹ *Critical Review*, 3rd ser. 4 (1805), 383-91 (p. 391).

⁶² Clemit observes the influence of *Julia de Roubigné* and *A Simple Story*, 'Introduction', *Fleetwood*, p. vi; Kelly compares Fleetwood to Saint Preux and notes the similarities to *Julia de Roubigné*, *The English Jacobin Novel*, pp. 239, 244; Handwerk offers the most extensive comparison between *Fleetwood* and Rousseau in 'Mapping Misogyny: Godwin's *Fleetwood* and the Staging of Rousseauvian Education', *Studies in Romanticism*, 41 (2002), 375-98.

⁶³ *The Culture of Sensibility*, p. 143. Much of Barker-Benfield's discussion of Mackenzie focuses on the perceived effeminacy of the man of feeling and this conflict this posed with business and commerce: see pp. 144-47.

thus individual feeling and sociability are interrelated.⁶⁴ This connection was reciprocal, for Mackenzie, like Smith, ‘suggests that there was a beneficial relationship between the businessman’s expression of sensibility in his public work’ and the ‘softened’ domestic feelings ‘in the closer intercourse of friend, of husband, and of father’.⁶⁵ However, this mutual affiliation between subjectivity and sociability is never conveyed effectively in *The Man of Feeling*; private feeling cannot be accommodated in the public sphere and the novel ends with Harley’s dying admission that ‘I was not formed for the bustle of the busy, nor the dissipation of the gay’.⁶⁶ James Lilley explains the failure of Mackenzie’s novel in terms of the typical sentimental opposition between private feeling and sociability. In contrast to the mutually beneficial relationship between self and sociability outlined by Barker-Benfield, he argues that the sentimental novel is in fact characterised by ‘two qualitatively distinct kinds of affective value’: feeling simultaneously functions as ‘a principle of public exchange’ and ‘as a totally private essence.’⁶⁷ These two values come into conflict in Mackenzie’s heroes as, while they celebrate sensibility for its socialising and cohesive properties,

they also mourn the ruin of utterly private feeling that such publicity entails [...] [T]he sentimental romance secretly desires the prestige of singular and private

⁶⁴ Henry Mackenzie, Untitled Article, *The Mirror*, 72 (15 Jan 1780) in *The Mirror, 1779-80*, 3 vols (Edinburgh: Creech; London: Strahan and Cadell, 1781), II, 320-30 (p. 327).

⁶⁵ Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility*, p. 146; Henry Mackenzie, Untitled Article, *The Lounger*, 100 (30 Dec 1786) in *The Lounger, 1785-86*, 4th edn (London: Strahan and Cadell; Edinburgh: Creech, 1787), III, 297-307 (p. 306).

⁶⁶ Henry Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 94. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text as *MOF*. Barker-Benfield reads *The Man of Feeling* as a warning against excessive sensibility, a view which is supported by many other critical accounts. For example, John Mullan argues that the novel ‘is ever on the point of conceding that any belief in actual communities of “affections” has to be abandoned’, *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 122.

⁶⁷ James D. Lilley, ‘Henry Mackenzie’s Ruined Feelings: Romance, Race, and the Afterlife of Sentimental Exchange’, *New Literary History*, 38.4 (2007), 649-66 (pp. 649-50).

differences that have been ruined by, and excluded from this new political community and its concepts of universal feelings and rights.⁶⁸

This opposition is the central focus of *Fleetwood*. Taking the form of a loosely autobiographical account of the narrator's life, the novel charts Fleetwood's education, his political career and finally his marriage, which is destroyed by his misanthropy and paranoia before being tenuously restored in the final pages. Godwin's hero begins the novel as an emblem of the 'private feeling' of the paradigmatic sentimental hero: removed from 'the populous haunts of men' (I, 4) and 'averse to the commerce of the world' (I, 39), he sees 'in the intercourse of my species, something for ever prepared to thwart my sensibility, and to jar against the unreal world in which I lived' (I, 19). This is the model of sentiment as it appears in *The Man of Feeling*, in which the 'world is in general selfish, interested, and unthinking' and '[t]here are some feelings which perhaps are too tender to be suffered' (*MOF*, 95). Mackenzie deplores the public corruption of sympathy at the expense of self-interest but can envisage no public space which can accommodate his virtuous hero; the novel incites the reader to 'hate the world' (*MOF*, 98), while celebrating the virtue of private feeling. Godwin's revision of the eighteenth-century prototype resists this unmitigated rejection of sociability, mapping the struggle of the eponymous hero to reconcile his innate sensibility with public action and domestic communality. *Fleetwood* confronts and deconstructs the dangerous artificiality of the hero's 'unreal world' (I, 19) of private feeling, which is only ever implicit in Mackenzie's novel.⁶⁹ As the novel opposes communal sympathy and individual sensibility it becomes

⁶⁸ Lilley, 'Henry Mackenzie's Ruined Feelings', p. 650.

⁶⁹ Godwin dismantles Mackenzie's paradigm in a series of intertextual scenes. These include a reworking of Harley's encounter with Ben Silton in a stage coach in which he laments that '[t]he immense riches acquired by individuals have erected a standard of ambition, destructive of private morals and public virtue', *MOF*, p. 62. In Godwin's version of the scene, Fleetwood finds many of his fellow travellers

increasingly focused on the inner workings of Fleetwood's mind, and he finally emerges as something akin to the Romantic artist, alienated by 'the growth and painting of his own mind' (I, 142).

Fleetwood's misanthropic tendencies have often been read, like Harley's excessive solipsism, as an unequivocal reaction against the corruption of a dissipated society, with critics focusing on his time at university and in Paris and his subsequent retreat to the Swiss rural idyll of the 'Rousseauvian sage' Ruffigny.⁷⁰ However, Fleetwood acknowledges that he 'was a misanthrope' but not one who has 'a perverse sort of pleasure in the office' (I, 161). Instead he feels in rural seclusion the 'constant and corroding dissatisfaction' (II, 134) of private feeling unshared and 'pined for the society of my like' (I, 162). These sensations provide the impetus for Fleetwood to 'take an active part' (II, 134) as a man of the world through politics. It is surprising that this part of the novel has received almost no critical attention when it is so powerfully suggestive of Godwin's engagement with the politics of sensibility and sociability, and there can be little doubt that Fleetwood's political ambition is modelled on principles of universal sympathy. He considers political engagement as a 'copious opportunity of studying the humours and predilections of the middling and lower classes of the community' (II, 127-28) and 'pleading the cause of the great mass of [his] countrymen, who are denied the

tiresome – rendering him 'slave of a frigid civility' – and is disappointed by the 'fugitive nature of [...] intercourse' with strangers, which he likens to the 'sensation [...] experienced by passengers in a stage-coach' in the transient communality that is destroyed by entry into 'some vast city' (II, 142). Similarly, the presence of a 'crook legged dog' (*MOF*, p. 16) heightens Harley's compassion towards a beggar he encounters and he is brought to tears by Edwards's account of the death of his blind dog 'old Trusty' (*MOF*, p. 66). Godwin appropriates this classic sentimental motif in his description of Fleetwood's dog Chilo, the 'confident [sic] of [his] sorrows' (I, 41), whose young master, during a 'fit of mutiny and misanthropy', is 'in too ill a humour to notice him' (I, 42). Though Harley's skills in physiognomy are tested in his visit to London, he 'retains his attachment to that science' (*MOF*, p. 57). Fleetwood also uses physiognomy in his meetings with Sir Charles Gleed (I, 114-115), Mary (II, 186) and Gifford (III, 120) but his misreadings produce far more serious consequences, as he becomes convinced of an illicit attachment between Mary and Kenrick.

⁷⁰ Handwerk and Markley, 'Introduction', p. 25.

advantage of being able to plead for themselves' (II, 130). These public political acts – 'of immediate importance to the welfare of thousands' (II, 136) – replace the smaller-scale benevolent exchanges of Mackenzie's heroes in their affective capacity to, as Fleetwood terms it 'carr[y] transport to my heart' (II, 136). Fleetwood's appropriation of Burke's description 'upon the repeal of the American Stamp Act' (I, 136) to express the 'animation' (II, 135) of politics is significant in its evocation of sympathy as a basis for international and state cohesion. The scene narrates the reaction of the Act's opponents to the return of 'their deliverer' [Conway] in which 'they jumped upon him like children on a long-absent father, and clung about him as captives about their redeemer' (II, 135).⁷¹ Burke's depiction of this political event in terms of familial affection here reiterates his construction of state power in the *Reflections*, where the 'sentiments which beautify and soften private society' are 'incorporated into politics'.⁷² This model of private virtue as a basis for social cohesion is never realised in Mackenzie's fiction as it is in Godwin's. However, *Fleetwood* maintains a number of the ideological inconsistencies of its predecessor, which both complicate and destabilise Fleetwood's attempts at public participation as the sentimental communality of political life simultaneously attracts and repels him.

⁷¹ This quotation is adapted from Burke's speech on American taxation, 19 April 1774. The incident quoted refers to the Secretary of State General Henry Conway's introduction of the Declaratory Act, which preceded the official repeal of the Stamp Act in 1766. Burke refers in heavily sentimental terms to 'the Hon. Gentleman [Conway] who made the motion for the repeal; in that crisis, when the whole trading interest of this empire, crammed into your lobbies, with a trembling and anxious expectation, waited', Edmund Burke, *Speech of Edmund Burke, Esq. on American Taxation, April 19, 1774* (London: Dodsley, 1775), p. 36. When he returned 'from the whole of that grave multitude there arose an involuntary burst of gratitude and transport' and '[n]or did he seem insensible to the best of all earthly rewards, the love and admiration of his fellow-citizens' (p. 37).

⁷² Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* [1790] (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 77. See also Stephen H. Browne's observation that in Burke's construction of the repeal of the Stamp Act 'the particular virtue of its key players created a collective sense of unified public action', *Edmund Burke and the Discourse of Virtue* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993), p. 38.

Like St Leon, his preoccupation with history – and more specifically the glory of individual reputation – clouds his perception of the present and ‘[t]he contrast [...] between England as I found her in the volumes of her history, and England as she now was [...] dampened the ardour of my enthusiasm’ (II, 135).⁷³ Like Harley, Fleetwood deplores the inequality and self-interest that results from commerce, in which ‘[c]ontractors, directors, and upstarts, – men fattened on the vitals of their fellow-citizens’ (II, 133) – destroy the democratic nature of his idealised conception of political community. However, it is telling that his objection to these ‘upstarts’ is that they ‘have taken the place which was once filled by the Wentworths, the Seldens, and the Pym’s’ (II, 133–34); this outrage at the usurpation of his illustrious historical predecessors reveals Fleetwood’s overwhelming desire for ‘the prestige of singular and private differences’ that are destroyed by sentimental democracy.⁷⁴ As Clemit observes, both St Leon and Fleetwood ‘envisage personal fulfilment in terms of public fame’.⁷⁵ However, public fame in this sense must involve the politics of sociability and sensibility which threaten to efface individual difference. Fleetwood finds it impossible to reconcile his individual sensibility (and his privileged class status) to the communal nature of politics, perceiving that ‘persons of merit [...] must accommodate themselves to the views of the dullest and meanest of their adherents’ and ‘the sage must [...] be made the tools and dupes of the vilest of the herd’ (II, 132). This statement forms a striking objection to models of

⁷³ This historical focalisation is articulated in terms of individual figures from commonwealth history. See, for example, Fleetwood’s earlier narration of the differences between himself and Sir Charles Gleed, in which he states ‘If I entered the walls of the British House of Commons, and waited to hear an important debate, the scenes of past ages revolved before the eyes of my fancy, and that parliament again filled the benches in which Pym and Hampden, and Falkland and Selden, and Cromwell and Vane, sat together, to decide, perhaps for ever, on the civil and intellectual liberties of my country’ (I, 143).

⁷⁴ Lilley, ‘Henry Mackenzie’s Ruined Feelings’, p. 650.

⁷⁵ Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel*, p. 95.

democratic sociability, suggesting that the unique status of the man of feeling must never be compromised by sympathetic identification with the masses.

However, on his withdrawal from politics, Fleetwood continues to yearn for social interaction. As Lilley observes, in the sentimental novel, ‘it can never be enough for the self to emote and feel in isolation’.⁷⁶ He suggests that

in order to register its essential humanity, this self must disclose itself, must direct its interiority outward, must cry public tears that somehow materialize and bear witness to its private core. Such a self can know itself only insofar as it is a self for another, only through the act of transforming its absolute privacy into communal sentimental spectacle.⁷⁷

Indeed, although Fleetwood is unable to reconcile his ‘private core’ with political sociability, as a man of feeling he cannot function without recognition of his sensibility. Correspondingly, he embraces domestic communality in the form of the pastoral idyll, an archetypal sentimental representation of public sympathy in microcosm. It is no coincidence that Fleetwood’s visit to the family of Macneil is inspired by the fact that he ‘was supposed particularly to have possessed the confidence of the celebrated Jean Jacques Rousseau’ (II, 155), and the Macneil family are emblematic of the Rousseauvian model of sentimental education.⁷⁸ Like the sentimental communities in the novels of Ann Radcliffe, they can also be read as a manifestation of Hutchesonian philosophy. The Scottish Macneil is an avid proponent of universal benevolence and ‘good neighbourhood’ (II, 193). He regales Fleetwood with parables of virtue, casting him as a sentimental spectator of fictional scenes calculated to inspire disinterested moral

⁷⁶ Lilley, ‘Henry Mackenzie’s Ruined Feelings’, p. 651.

⁷⁷ Lilley, ‘Henry Mackenzie’s Ruined Feelings’, p. 651.

⁷⁸ For a full account of *Fleetwood*’s treatment of Rousseau’s theories of education, see Handwerk, ‘Mapping Misogyny’.

approval. Macneil states that he is ‘as much delighted with the spectacle of the lively and ardent affection of an Englishman to his son, as if it were directed toward the child of a Japanese. It is equally affection, and equally beneficent’ (II, 192): his repeated use of the term ‘equally’ is explicit in its evocation of the fundamental sameness of human nature. Like Hutcheson and Shaftesbury, Macneil opposes the Mandevillean construction of self-interest, refusing to join ‘the prevailing cry of the selfishness, the wickedness, the original sin, or the subsequent depravity of mankind’ (II, 193), instead believing that ‘every individual [...] is endowed with angelic virtues’ (II, 193) and is capable of ‘disinterested [...] sentiment’ (II, 192).

Macneil proposes domestic felicity as the basis for sociability, convinced that ‘[e]very man has in him the seeds of a good husband, a good father, and a sincere friend’ (II, 92). Accordingly, he suggests that marriage might provide Fleetwood with an opportunity to ‘becom[e] one in the great congregation of man’ (II, 218). This construction of private affection as the basis for public sociability is reflected in Macneil’s plea to Fleetwood when he chooses to marry his daughter Mary to be ‘father, and mother, and sisters, and all the world in one’ (II, 228) to her. Like Fleetwood’s earlier foray into the public arena of politics, this construction of domestic communality is modelled on the principles of sympathy. Fleetwood’s description of his ideal companion is articulated via Smith’s construction of sympathy in his statement that

if there is a being who feels the blow under which I flinch, in whom my sensations are by a kind of necessity echoed and repeated, that being is part of myself. Every reasoning and sensitive creature seems intuitively to require [...] this sort of sympathy. (II, 149)

Indeed, this replicates Smith’s assertion that, on viewing somebody in pain,

[b]y the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure him, and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them.⁷⁹

This formulation is significant in its idea of sympathy as a means of becoming part of another self. After Fleetwood's marriage, this model of sympathy initially serves, as Macneil had suggested, to reinforce Fleetwood's wider sense of sociability, making him feel 'for the first time [...] that I belong to the great family of man' (III, 41). However, this seemingly successful model of domestic affection is inflected from the start with an ambivalence about the effacement of selfhood it implies. Fleetwood's statement that 'mine was no longer a morose and unparticipated sensation, but that another human creature, capable of feeling all my feelings, rejoiced and trembled along with me' (II, 294) is significant. He does not find satisfaction from entering into the feelings of another; the fact that the language he uses is specific in its emphasis on his own feelings suggests that his marriage operates as a means of duplicating selfhood, rather than combining it.

This is aptly reflected in the scenes of reading that take place within the novel, given that reading operates as a pertinent metaphor for the process of sympathetic identification. Godwin appropriates the period's model of communal reading as a signifier of domestic unity in his depiction of the Macneil family's 'zest for each other's society' in comparing 'impressions' and 'judgements' of their evening reading (II, 169).⁸⁰ Fleetwood's conception of his ideal companion also incorporates reading as part of his

⁷⁹ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (London: Millar; Edinburgh: Kincaid and Bell, 1759), pp. 2-3. All further references are to this edition.

⁸⁰ See Jacqueline Pearson, *Women's Reading in Britain, 1750-1835: A Dangerous Recreation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 172, for a discussion of this motif within Romantic fiction.

construction of sympathetic identification, stating that they ‘must be incapable of any pleasure in public, in reading, in travelling, of which he does not make his friend, at least in idea, a partaker’ (II, 147). Accordingly, Mary’s ability at reading demonstrates her ‘aptness to perceive and participate [in] the most virtuous sentiments’ (III, 23) and their reading together is expressed in conventional terms of sentimental harmony, which echo Hume’s metaphor of sympathetic communication as ‘strings equally wound up’ on a musical instrument: ‘At the same time we are like instruments tuned to a correspondent pitch, and the accord that is produced is of the most delightful nature! We communicate with instantaneous flashes, in one glance of the eye, and have no need of words’ (III, 23).⁸¹ Catherine Gallagher observes that fictional characters are ‘uniquely suitable objects of compassion’: ‘[b]ecause they were conjectural, suppositional identities *belonging* to no one, they could be universally appropriated. A story about nobody was nobody’s story and hence could be entered, occupied, identified with by anybody.’⁸² The conventional formulation of sympathetic identification in reading suggests that, because the identity of fictional characters was unfixed and insubstantial, the reader could easily enter into their feelings and place themselves in their situation. In the communal model that takes place in *Fleetwood*, then, the process of sympathetic identification involving more than one reader would mean that the readers are brought together – or ‘harmonised’ in Fleetwood’s metaphor – by subsuming their own individual identities in the process of imaginative identification.

However, for Fleetwood the process involves less an erosion of individual identity than a consolidation of it. When Mary is called away from their reading to a botanic

⁸¹ David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 3 vols (London: Noon, 1739-40), III, 204.

⁸² Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody’s Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670-1820* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1994; repr. 1995), p. 168.

excursion, Fleetwood reveals that his enjoyment in the communal act of reading is fundamentally self-interested. He asks himself how he can have married a woman

who is more interested in two or three blades of grass, or a wretched specimen of mosses, than in the most pathetic tale or the noblest sentiments. If she has no respect for the illustrious dead, who cannot feel her contempt, methinks she might have had some for me, whose heart still beats, and whose blood continues to flow. (II, 27)

This clearly shows that Mary's rejection of their reading implies not only a deficit in sympathy for the fictional characters, but for Fleetwood himself. His comment that '[t]here is no reciprocity in this commerce' (III, 32) serves as an ironic reminder of his egotism and the inequality that pervades the sympathetic bond of Fleetwood and Mary's marriage.⁸³ Mary's refusal to read with him leads Fleetwood to question the effacement of selfhood implied in romantic union, stating that 'I could not be content to yield much to her [...] But I cannot be content to be reduced to nothing. I must have an existence, a pursuit, a system of my own' (III, 31). It is as if the process of reading with Mary strengthens his own sense of selfhood: he is 'nothing' without this doubling and mimicry of his own interests.

While Smith privileges the spectator in his formation of sympathy, discussing the process of self-effacement required in order to identify with the suffering of the agent, both Macneil and Fleetwood focus primarily on the agent themselves. Macneil recognises the 'principle in the heart of man which demands the society of his like' (II, 198) and in which the individual 'pines [...] for an eye that shall flash upon him with responsive intelligence, for a face the lines of which shall talk to him in dumb but eloquent

⁸³ The inequality in their relationship is not only confined to the workings of sympathy, and there is much to be said about the gender politics of the novel that is beyond my scope here.

discourse, for a heart that shall beat in unison with his own' (II, 199). This construction suggests that pleasure can be derived by the agent from observing the self-effacement of the spectator. Fleetwood couches his desire for a companion in similar terms, declaring that they

should be to me as another self, who should joy in all my joys, and grieve in all my sorrows, and whose sympathy should be incapable of being changed by absence into smiles, while my head continues bent to the earth with anguish. (II, 289)

It is evident, then, that for Fleetwood the merits of sympathy are based on the spectator entering into his suffering but that he does not presume any form of reciprocity; Fleetwood remains bound by his conviction of individual difference which inhibits any possibility of mutual sympathy.

As the novel progresses, Fleetwood's desire to maintain his own individual selfhood becomes still more pronounced, to the extent that he will not even allow others to sympathise with him. In doing so, he resists the sympathetic dynamic that Smith proposes in his construction of the impartial spectator. Smith recognises that there are limits to the process of imaginative identification: when sympathising with another's sorrow 'the emotions of the spectator will still be very apt to fall short of the violence of what is felt by the sufferer'.⁸⁴ In order to gain the sympathy of the spectator, the sufferer must moderate his feelings accordingly:

To see the emotions of [the spectator's] hearts, in every respect, beat time to his own, in the violent and disagreeable passions, constitutes his sole consolation. But he can only hope to obtain this by lowering his passion to that pitch, in which the spectators are capable of going along with him. He must flatten [...] the sharpness

⁸⁴ Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 36.

of its natural tone, in order to reduce it to harmony and concord with the emotions of those who are about him.⁸⁵

However, as the novel progresses, Fleetwood demonstrates an excessive form of self-preservation in which he prohibits the ‘harmony and concord’ outlined by Smith by refusing to moderate the violence of his passion. On noticing that Fleetwood has become increasingly introverted (because of his suspicions of her attachment to Kenrick) Mary implores him to share his worries: “‘If you have any compassion for me, tell me what it is that distresses you! Open your bosom to your faithful wife, and let me soothe your sorrows!’” (III, 218). Instead of attempting to express his feelings in a moderated form, as Smith proposes, Fleetwood responds violently to her plea, ‘turn[ing] upon her, enraged’ and imploring her to “‘ Be gone! How dare you torment me thus! [...] Learn not to intrude upon my privacy, when I chuse to be alone!’” (III, 219). His ‘privacy’ and individualism is thus privileged over the harmony of sympathetic interaction. Ultimately, Fleetwood cannot function either in the role of the agent or the spectator outlined in Smith’s model; for him, the process of sympathetic identification amounts to nothing less than self-annihilation.

Dror Wahrman points out that ‘the very working of sympathy [...] militated against the notion of a deep, well-bounded self’ because – in Hume’s words – ‘nature has preserv’d a great resemblance among all human creatures’ and sympathy was based on common features and emotions.⁸⁶ So, while Fleetwood’s desire for a sympathetic companion ‘who is to me another self’ (II, 289) is consistent with this idea of resemblance, the narrative as a whole remains focused on individual difference. The

⁸⁵ Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 37.

⁸⁶ Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004; repr. 2006), p. 187; Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, II, 75.

acute and unique sensibility of the man of feeling must remain isolated and uncorrupted; Fleetwood states that he does ‘not altogether relish being thus reduced to a cipher’ (III, 89) by the process of sympathy. As a result, he is unable to engage in the process of imaginative identification. Fleetwood complains that ‘when I wished to fix [Mary’s] imagination on a particular point, and when I had worked up my whole soul with the imagination of it, she was drawn aside by some new phantasy, and left abruptly the pursuit, the lecture, and the professor’ (II, 67). This is highly suggestive, given the emphasis Smith places on the imagination in the process of sympathy. Fleetwood expects Mary to efface her own identity via imaginative identification with him but he refuses to engage with her ‘phantasy’.

As the novel progresses, instead of operating as part of the mechanism of sympathy, imagination becomes an individualistic and dangerous force, as, under the influence of the malevolent Gifford, Fleetwood becomes convinced of an attachment between his wife and Kenrick. Fleetwood states that ‘my sick imagination is for ever busy’ (II, 149) and as his ‘diseased imagination’ (II, 155) renders life unbearable, he ‘imprecated the most horrible curses that imagination could devise, upon the memory of the excellent Macneil’ (II, 238). The sympathetic potential of the imagination is thus subsumed by an excessive individualism. In the final volume, Fleetwood, desperate to save his marriage, can only perform a disturbing re-enactment of the sympathetic process. On having a life-sized model of Mary created in wax, he acts out a scene of communication in which he speaks to the image of his wife and ‘all the tropes that imagination ever supplied to man seemed to be at my command’ (III, 250). In doing, so he imagines that he sees the figure move before being seized by a fit of madness. This

scene serves as a neat demonstration for the workings of sympathy in the novel: Fleetwood is fit only to engage with a ‘cipher’ (III, 89), to use his term, and the sympathetic potential of the imagination is dramatically inverted, leading only to destruction and alienation.

Through the opposition of moral-philosophic formations of sociability and private feeling, *Fleetwood* deconstructs the Enlightenment model of the self as externally-constituted. Although the novel hints towards the reconciliation of Fleetwood and Mary’s relationship in the closing pages, it is the Byronic image of Fleetwood ‘resolved to retire to a strange, wild, despairing situation, which had formerly left a deep impression upon me, in the midst of the Pyrenees’ (III, 337) that most aptly characterises the novel. In many ways, it returns to Fleetwood’s earlier comparison between ‘men of [...] perception’ and ‘men of imagination’ (I, 140). He expresses the opposition through the image of ‘a poet and a cultivator of the soil, ascending one of the Welsh mountains, or tracing together the tracts of land’ (I, 140). The farmer sees the geography of the landscape and the weather, while the poet (whom Fleetwood likens to himself) ‘annexed a little romance to each’ thing he saw and ‘plunged in imagination into a world unknown’ (I, 141): ‘what the farmer saw was external and in the things themselves; what the poet saw was the growth and painting of his own mind’ (I, 142). The difference between the farmer’s ‘perceptions’ and the poet’s Wordsworthian internal ‘feelings’ (I, 141) provides an apt metaphor for *Fleetwood*’s relationship to Enlightenment and Romanticism.⁸⁷ The perceptive power of Enlightenment models of sympathy is abandoned and the novel

⁸⁷ This phrase recalls the subtitle to Wordsworth’s *The Prelude; or, Growth of a Poet’s Mind* (1850) and the novel has much in common with Wordsworth’s exploration of the development of the self.

finally arrives at something resembling the Romantic alienation and psychological interiority that would form the basis for *Mandeville*.

Mandeville, Sympathy and Romantic Selfhood

His first novel after a twelve-year interim, Godwin's *Mandeville* (1817) returned to the historical formula of *St Leon* while retaining the gothic emphasis of *Fleetwood*. Set in the mid seventeenth century, the eponymous narrator recalls his isolated Presbyterian upbringing and subsequent public dishonour as his sensibility gradually develops into misanthropy and madness. As with *Fleetwood*, critics have stressed the psychological interiority of *Mandeville*, contextualising it in terms of its historical focus and terming it a 'study of the pressures of politics and history on the individual psyche'.⁸⁸ Clemit reads Godwin's depiction of the 'permanent exclusion' of the individual in the face of historical change as a direct opposition to 'Scott's focus on the possibilities of human greatness liberated by moments of historical crisis'.⁸⁹ Likewise, Anthony Jarells interprets Godwin's confessional narratives as contradictions of the social cohesiveness of Scott's arguing that 'Godwin questions the progress of the nation in terms of the violent marks left on real individuals. Scott on the other hand shows how individuals transcend the violence of history precisely through coming together as a nation'.⁹⁰ This discussion of *Mandeville* attempts to read the isolation and exclusion of the individual within a different generic context, suggesting that it depicts the gothicised trauma of the 'individual psyche' in its account of excessive and unrestrained feeling. In terms of generic category, it is clear that the interiority of *Mandeville* falls within the critical

⁸⁸ Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel*, p. 101.

⁸⁹ Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel*, p. 101.

⁹⁰ Anthony Jarrells, 'Bloodless Revolution and the Form of the Novel', *Novel*, 37.1-2 (2003), 24-44 (p. 27).

configuration of the gothic in its emphasis on disordered psychological interiority and in its affiliation with Hoeveler's construction of the male gothic as focusing on 'the psychological rather than [...] the social or economic realm.'⁹¹ While this definition of the male gothic is not applicable to Godwin's earlier novels, in which gothicism is located within a framework of Enlightenment sociability, *Mandeville* comes closer to a construction of an internalised and disordered gothic sensibility based on alienation and fragmented selfhood. If *Fleetwood* attempts to reconcile the opposition between Enlightenment sociability and selfhood, *Mandeville*'s treatment of sensibility becomes more conventionally Romantic, exploring the process of sympathetic identification within the context of selfhood, otherness and alienation.

The narrative style of *Mandeville* reflects the change in Godwin's construction of sensibility after the composition of *Fleetwood*. Like *Caleb Williams*, *St Leon* and *Fleetwood*, *Mandeville* takes the form of a confessional first-person narrative. Yet, while this accords with the stylistic conventions of sensibility in its authentic expressiveness and potential for sympathetic identification, in this case the excesses of Mandeville's emotional responses serve only to distance and alienate the reader.⁹² Thus, instead of conforming to the conventional model of imaginative engagement on the part of the reader, through its violent and unrestrained expression, the narrative of *Mandeville* prohibits sympathetic identification and foregrounds fragmentation and isolation. The novel's contemporary reception not only reflects this shift in the role of the reader, but

⁹¹ Diane Long Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism: The Professionalization of Gender from Charlotte Smith to the Brontës* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1998), p. 8.

⁹² On the sympathetic response of the sentimental reader, see Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability*, which describes the way in which sentimental novels 'were able to position each private reader as the exceptional connoisseur of commendable sympathies, and to imply such a reader's understanding of the communication of sentiments and the special capacities of sensibility', p. 13.

perceives a mode of sympathetic participation based on insanity and derangement. The reviewer of *Mandeville* in *Blackwood's Magazine* lamented the tendency of modern authors 'to enhance the sympathy we feel for their heroes, by depicting them as having their reason itself shaken by the violence of their sufferings' and deplored the individualism of the modern hero, whose sufferings – in contrast to the real dangers faced by the heroes of ancient literature – are nothing more than creations of 'his own wishes, prejudices, principles, and passions'.⁹³ This reveals a striking contrast between the psychological suffering of the modern protagonist and the sympathy incited by the unworldly and melancholic man of feeling. Indeed, the contemporary reviews of the novel make this contrast explicit, juxtaposing Enlightenment and Romantic sensibility by unfavourably comparing *Mandeville* to various eighteenth-century sentimental novels. The author of a letter to *Blackwood's Magazine* in January 1818 argued that *Mandeville* lacked the naivety of the narrators of other great novels like Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766) and noted that although *Mandeville* was, like Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling*, 'a novel purely of character' the two works were 'almost the Antipodes of one another'.⁹⁴ The reviewer attributes these striking dissimilarities to Godwin's construction of sympathy, suggesting that although *Mandeville* is similar to Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774) in its delineation of a 'man [...] of a morbid sensibility' and 'the darkness of misanthropy', *Werther* has less of misanthropy's 'weakness or its vices'.⁹⁵ The result is that 'the sympathy [*Werther*] excites is of a kind

⁹³ 'Remarks on Godwin's New Novel *Mandeville*', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (Dec 1817), 268-79 (p. 269).

⁹⁴ "'Remarks on *Mandeville*": to the Editor', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (Jan 1818), 402-08 (pp. 408, 403).

⁹⁵ "'Remarks on *Mandeville*'", p. 405.

which we can feel without pain or disgust' but 'our sympathy with Mandeville (if his character will admit of any sympathy) is of a sterner cast'.⁹⁶

Other reviewers were also perplexed by the novel's depiction of intense emotion but lack of sympathetic potential. *The British Critic* stated that the novel's characters permitted very little 'fellow feeling with their joys and pains' and that 'the malignant passions of Mandeville repel, rather than attract, our sympathy'.⁹⁷ The reviewer argued that

[p]assion ought to be transfused into the heart of the reader, not painted to his imagination. What pleasure, then, can there be in reading paragraph after paragraph filled with wordy delineations of hateful, disproportioned emotions, which make no impression upon our sensibility, and leave no clear conceptions on the understanding?⁹⁸

This failure to incite sympathy is clearly linked to *Mandeville*'s new mode of first-person narrative: according to *Blackwood's Magazine* the style means that the reader is not 'admitted to draw our own conclusions from [the hero's] words and behaviour, when they come into contact with the other characters in the fable'.⁹⁹ The lack of benevolence in Mandeville's character also limits the reader's ability to sympathise with him;¹⁰⁰ the author of the letter in *Blackwood's Magazine* is in no doubt that almost all readers would prefer Mackenzie's novel, which leaves the reader satisfied 'amidst an air that breathes

⁹⁶ "'Remarks on *Mandeville*'", p. 405.

⁹⁷ *British Review*, 11 (1818), 108-20 (pp. 109, 113).

⁹⁸ *British Review*, p. 115.

⁹⁹ 'Remarks on Godwin's New Novel *Mandeville*', p. 279. The reviewer suggests that, in this, Godwin 'resembles the German novelists more than those of his own country', before entering into an unfavourable comparison with the narrative style of Scott's *Waverley* and *Guy Mannering*, p. 279.

¹⁰⁰ See *Edinburgh Magazine*, 2 (1818), 57-65: '[w]ith all his pride, and ambition, and elevation of mind, [Mandeville] is not to be charged with a single act of true generosity; and not a shilling of his immense fortune ever wandered to the poor', p. 59.

the inspiration of benevolence and virtue.’¹⁰¹ As with *Fleetwood*, the reviewers can only imagine that Godwin intended to condemn excessive sensibility in the novel, holding ‘up Mandeville as an example to deter [the reader] from the indulgence of a morbid sensibility, by showing its folly and the misery which results from it’.¹⁰²

Given that *Mandeville*, unlike *Fleetwood*, makes no declaration of a generic affiliation with sensibility, the fact that contemporary reception of the novel was focalised so explicitly through its relationship to sentimental fiction is powerfully indicative of Godwin’s commitment to the discourse of sensibility in his later works of fiction. It is, then, somewhat surprising that modern scholars have tended to privilege the gothic or conventionally ‘Romantic’ contexts of the novel, focusing on its depiction of Mandeville’s psychological trauma and its Byronic misanthropy, satirised in Peacock’s *Nightmare Abbey* (1818) as ‘the morbid anatomy of black bile’.¹⁰³ My reading suggests instead that the sentimental contexts of *Mandeville* are inseparable from both its gothicism and Romanticism. The novel’s title is an appropriate point of departure for a discussion of its sentimental context in its recollection of Bernard Mandeville, author of the *Fable of the Bees* (1714), one of the theories of human self-interest as a motivating force for social action (the other most notable being Thomas Hobbes’s *Leviathan* (1651))

¹⁰¹ “‘Remarks on *Mandeville*’”, p. 403.

¹⁰² *American Monthly Magazine and Critical Review* (April 1818), 444-55 (p. 453).

¹⁰³ Thomas Love Peacock, *Nightmare Abbey and Crotchet Castle* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), p. 60. Peacock includes the novel in the parcel of books sent to Mr Listless: “‘Devilman, a novel.’ Hm. Hatred – revenge – misanthropy – and quotations from the Bible. Hm’, p. 60. For a more detailed discussion of the relationship between the two texts, see John Colmer, ‘Godwin’s *Mandeville* and Peacock’s *Nightmare Abbey*’, *Review of English Studies*, 21 (1970), 331-36. Clemit observes similarities of the novel with Byron’s poetry noting that ‘it draws heavily on the misanthropic, guilt stricken heroes of Byron’s *Turkish Tales*’ and that Percy Shelley had sent Byron a copy of the novel on its publication, ‘describing the central character as “a Satanic likeness of Childe Harolde the first”’, *The Godwinian Novel*, p. 95.

which were opposed by Shaftesbury and Hutcheson.¹⁰⁴ Mandeville's treatise opposed the very foundations of sentimental sociability: a telling reference to its controversial nature appears in the moral philosopher James Beattie's satirical 'The Modern Tippling Philosophers' (1774), which reads

One Mandeville once, or Man-devil
 (Either name you may give as you please)
 By a brain ever brooding on evil
 Hatch'd a monster call'd *Fable of Bees*.¹⁰⁵

Godwin's novel is entrenched within this philosophical framework. In one sense it replicates the exploration of the conflict between the theories of Shaftesbury and Mandeville in *St Leon* but, although the title alludes to Bernard Mandeville's formation of self-interest, the novel itself is more concerned with the philosophy of Shaftesbury and Smith. The sympathetic formations of Enlightenment moral sense philosophy are integral to the emergent Romantic ideology of *Mandeville*. In keeping with the novel's aura of historical authenticity, Mandeville befriends a relation of Sir Anthony Ashley Cooper (the first Earl of Shaftesbury) at Oxford, nursing him through his failing health before he finally dies in his arms. Although Godwin adheres loosely to the historical events of Cooper's life (the depiction of his break with Cromwell is accurate, as is the subsequent distrust of his political position; Godwin presumably invented his support of the Penruddock Uprising in 1651), he invests him with a philosophical disposition – one of

¹⁰⁴ Knox Shaw notes that Godwin reread *The Fable of the Bees* after finishing the first *Enquiry* and observes that 'the "Second Dialogue" attached to the fable seems to have contributed significantly to *Caleb Williams*', *Jane Austen and the Enlightenment*, p. 136.

¹⁰⁵ James Hay Beattie, 'The Modern Tippling Philosophers', in James Beattie, *Essays and Fragments in Prose and Verse* (Edinburgh: Moir, 1774), pp. 170-74 (ll. 41-44, p. 172).

his ‘favourite pursuits was the development of the varieties of human character’ – more commonly associated with his grandson, the third Earl of Shaftesbury.¹⁰⁶

A number of anachronistic references to the third Earl’s *Characteristicks* (1711) appear in the second volume of the novel, as Mandeville’s sister Henrietta attempts, using the ‘authority’ of her ‘favourite writer’ (II, 137), to ‘inspire [him] with the principles of benevolence’ (II, 139) and to convince him that “‘we are formed for mutual sympathy, and [...] we are all exactly fitted to contribute to the good of all’” (II, 140).¹⁰⁷ In fact, Mandeville’s narration makes it clear that his character is already ‘formed for mutual sympathy’. Despite his retrospective concern that his recollections ‘[p]erhaps proves me to be a monster, not formed with the feelings of human nature’ (I, 113) and his belief that ‘my feelings were solitary, unsocial, exaggerated, wicked’ (I, 163), the young Mandeville is invested with a yearning for fellowship and sociability as ‘a member of the great community of man’ (I, 163). It is his belief that his upbringing thwarted the potential of his sensibility, for ‘[f]ew were the occasions that were calculated to awaken in me the social affections, in their purest and most fascinating tone’ (I, 166).

Certainly, when he visits Henrietta (who has been brought up by the Willis family) in the pastoral idyll of Beaulieu he venerates the sentimental community as a ‘fairy-land’ (I, 200), in which ‘[e]very thing I saw was frank and communicative, and sensitive, and sympathetic. It was like the society of “just man made perfect,” where all sought the good of all, and no one lived for himself, or studied for himself’ (I, 210-11). He believes that if he had been raised by the benevolent Mrs Willis, ‘I also should have

¹⁰⁶ William Godwin, *Mandeville; A Tale of the Seventeenth Century in England*, 3 vols (Edinburgh: Longman, 1817), II, 15. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

¹⁰⁷ Godwin acknowledged the anachronistic nature of the quotations from Shaftesbury’s *Characteristicks* in a footnote, stating that ‘I have nothing but the beauty of the passage to plead my excuse’ (II, 316).

been a human creature, I should have been the member of a community, I should have lived with my fellow mortals on peaceful terms' (I, 209). Although the trauma of Mandeville's early exclusion and isolation means that he constructs his own character in opposition to sentimental fellowship and adopts a persona of 'savage unsociableness' (III, 265), he is unable to fully repress his own propensity for sympathy. His relationship with his nemesis Clifford is initially founded on sympathetic identification, but the individualism cultivated during Mandeville's childhood savagely resists the notion of sentimental fellowship, transforming it into jealousy and abhorrence. As Mandeville's hatred develops, his connection with Clifford evolves into a form of sympathetic dysfunction, in which the natural propensity for sympathy becomes distorted and – in the physiological terminology of Enlightenment sensibility – 'all the wholesome juices and circulations of my frame converted themselves into bitterness and gall' (I, 303).

This sympathetic dysfunction is grounded in the complex model of Romantic subjectivity. As discussed in the thesis introduction, the 'characterization of the self in terms of psychological depth' has long been one of the abiding features of canonical Romanticism.¹⁰⁸ Andrea Henderson notes that recent studies have sought to 'historicize the Romantic investment' in subjectivity and, like her, I follow this historicist approach in considering the role of the influential philosophical and aesthetic movement of sensibility in the construction of Romantic selfhood.¹⁰⁹ In her revisionist study of Romantic subjectivity, Henderson identifies a contextual model of selfhood, which challenges conventional essentialist formations of Romantic identity. Her discussion alludes to the

¹⁰⁸ Andrea K. Henderson, *Romantic Identities: Varieties of Subjectivity, 1774-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996; repr. 2006), p. 1.

¹⁰⁹ Henderson, *Romantic Identities*, p. 2.

Enquiry, observing that Godwin's external construction of character follows the Lockean rejection of innate temperament in his assertion that

the actions and dispositions of men are not the offspring of any original bias that they bring into the world in favour of one sentiment or character rather than another, but flow entirely from the operation of circumstances and events acting upon a faculty of receiving sensible impressions.¹¹⁰

Godwin's construction of identity in the *Enquiry* rests on the premise that 'it is impression that makes the man, and, compared with the empire of impression, the mere differences of animal structure are inexpressibly unimportant and powerless'.¹¹¹ It is clear that, in terms of sensibility, there are a number of striking parallels between Henderson's contextual model of character or identity, as exemplified in the *Enquiry*, and that of Enlightenment sentimental selfhood. Like sensibility, this formulation imagines the self as externally or socially constructed (albeit based on an innate moral sense or 'faculty'), acting in accord with the 'sensible impressions' perceived. However, as Henderson observes, and in a manner typical of the equivocal nature of Godwin's philosophy, the contextual model of character in the *Enquiry* ultimately gives way to one based on 'reflection, self-consciousness' and 'active individualist thought' which is more akin to conventional Romantic formations of character.¹¹² Likewise, *Mandeville* resists the tendency of sympathetic impressions to make us 'go out of ourselves' and manifest private feeling externally.¹¹³ Instead, it depicts a canonically Romantic formation of

¹¹⁰ Henderson, *Romantic Identities*, p. 60; Godwin, *Enquiry*, 2nd edn, I, 27-28.

¹¹¹ Godwin, *Enquiry*, 3rd edn, I, 40.

¹¹² Henderson, *Romantic Identities*, pp. 62, 63. Henderson notes that, given the fact that '[t]he latter model having formed the basis for the canonical Romantic notion of character, it is easy to overlook or underestimate the importance of the former', p. 63.

¹¹³ Godwin, *Enquiry*, 2nd edn, I, 428.

‘deep’ and self-conscious identity in which the individual strives for agency and self-determination.¹¹⁴

Mandeville’s relationship with Clifford initially conforms to Henderson’s contextual model of selfhood. Clifford begins the novel as Mandeville’s schoolmate at Winchester College; born to an ‘impoverished branch of a noble family’ (I, 237), he has much in common with the archetypal man of feeling, deploring greed and the ‘selfishness [that] insidiously mingles itself with our kindest and most generous feelings!’ (I, 248). Befitting the sentimental model of his character, Clifford’s effect on Mandeville is pronounced in its arousal of his sensibility: ‘There was something in the very nature of his sentiments, calculated to waken a responsive chord in every human bosom’ (I, 253) and ‘he held me in an unnatural state of feeling’ (I, 238). The sentimental awakening of a ‘responsive chord’ is evocative of Hume’s construction of sympathy and consistent with the notion of impressions shaping action and character. The sympathetic natures of both Clifford and Henrietta repeatedly embrace Mandeville as a man of ‘sensibility all trembling and alive’ (II, 53), urging him to form a ‘bond of brotherhood’ (II, 162). They evoke a Shaftesburian model of socially-constructed selfhood which is based, like the harmony of the natural world where ‘the bending branches kiss the stream’ (II, 161), on ‘the principle of mutual gaiety and love’ (II, 162).

However, just as the *Enquiry* ultimately privileges self-consciousness over sociability, Mandeville rejects the external model of sympathetic fellowship because it is dependent upon a diminishment of personal identity; his solitary upbringing in a virtual ‘monarchy, of which I was the single subject’ (I, 143) renders him unfit for sociability and desirous of existing ‘in a world of my own, in the midst of a moral desert, and

¹¹⁴ Henderson, *Romantic Identities*, p. 2.

independent of my fellow men!’ (II, 55). His perpetual desire for self-assertion leads him to resist the notion of externally-constituted selfhood in which the individual is a component of a wider ‘social system’ and to despise the philosophical construction of sociability where ‘the cogs, the sockets, and the teeth, by which the different parts of the social system are connected with each other, and are made to act and react in perpetual succession, and to sympathise with their remotest members!’ (II, 212). Mandeville thus conceives an inverted model of sympathy, in which ‘as [...] there exist certain mysterious sympathies and analogies, drawing and attracting each to each’, so too are ‘there antipathies, and properties interchangeably irreconcilable and destructive to each other, that fit one human being to be the source of another’s misery’ (II, 103).

In many ways, the antipathy that Mandeville conceives between himself and Clifford – which leads him to construct Clifford as his ‘evil genius’ and a ‘Satanic’ (II, 206) other – conforms to what Mellor terms the Romantic ‘principle of polarity’ common to conventional Romanticism which ‘requires the construction of an Other which is seen as a threat to the originating subject’ and in which the prevalence of the self can be achieved ‘only by the arduous repression of the Other in all its forms’.¹¹⁵ This reassertion of the self is typical of the Romantic gothic novel but, in *Mandeville*, Godwin goes further, complicating this typical notion of ‘otherness’ by destabilising the Romantic preoccupation with the self as distinct and independent.

The supposed antipathy between Mandeville and Clifford becomes – like the wider ideological formation of sympathy – simultaneously autonomous and dependent. The conventionally Romantic sense of otherness values the ‘the prestige of singular and private difference’ (to use Lilley’s description of the man of feeling) but, like its

¹¹⁵ Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender*, pp. 3, 149.

eighteenth-century counterpart, it is ‘such a self [that] can know itself only insofar as it is a self for another’.¹¹⁶ This model of selfhood in *Mandeville* therefore complicates the conventional form of otherness by constructing a relationship between self and other that is closer to the critical conception of ‘Romantic alterity’. Introduced into general usage by Coleridge, ‘alterity’ is notoriously heterogeneous: both a Romantic and post-Romantic conception, it is used in its widest sense to signify ‘otherness’ and finds its fullest exploration in the work of Emmanuel Lévinas.¹¹⁷ Given the notorious difficulty in reaching a stable definition for the term and the fact that there is no scope within this study for a full discussion, my usage of the term merely evokes aspects of Lévinas’s ethical philosophy to help explain *Mandeville*’s treatment of Romantic selfhood. I suggest that, unlike typically Romantic ‘otherness’ – which signifies difference or the ‘not me’ – Godwin’s novel depicts a relationship between self and other which evokes Lévinas’s conception of alterity, differing from conventional, relative ‘otherness’ in positing a connection between self and other in the notion of ‘responsibility for the other’.¹¹⁸ Any of these terms might be applied to sympathy, which is fundamentally grounded in ideas of reciprocity and responsibility for the other. Lévinas’s notion of ‘giving the other priority over oneself’ and of the self ‘outside-of-itself-for-the-other’ is highly evocative of Enlightenment constructions of self-effacing sympathy.¹¹⁹

This complex dynamic between self and other is highly significant when read in terms of the sympathetic politics of friendship. Shawn Lisa Maurer suggests that a new

¹¹⁶ Lilley, ‘Henry Mackenzie’s Ruined Feelings’, pp. 650, 651.

¹¹⁷ The *OED* cites instances from the mid-seventeenth century, but Coleridge is widely credited with the introduction of alterity as a philosophical construction. For a fuller discussion of alterity and Romantic criticism, see Robert Alexander, Adam Carter, Kevin D. Hutchings and Neville F. Newman, ‘Alterity in the Discourses of Romanticism’, *European Romantic Review*, 9 (1998), 149-60.

¹¹⁸ Emmanuel Lévinas, *Entre-Nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other* [1991], trans. by Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav (London: Athlone, 1998), p. xii.

¹¹⁹ Lévinas, *Entre-Nous*, pp. 109, xiii.

form of male friendship emerged in the eighteenth century, which replaced earlier models based on political allegiance with a relationship based on ‘benevolence, succor, love, and mutual support’.¹²⁰ The implications of this model in terms of sympathy are clear: Maurer describes how, in the essays of Joseph Addison, ‘the advantages of friendship take place passively, through the breakdown of the barriers between self and other’.¹²¹ This emerging version of male friendship had a wide-ranging effect, serving to ‘erase the reverberations of power by creating a discourse in which all friends are seemingly equal’ and for this reason was frequently appropriated in the Jacobin novel.¹²² Maurer argues that Godwin engaged closely with this idea of equality in his essay ‘Of Love and Friendship’ where he contended that unequal friendships ‘might function to establish equality – and, by implication, abolish class structure’.¹²³ The fact that Mandeville’s identity is so closely bound to his privileged class status renders his relationship with Clifford even more problematic because it threatens to undermine his aristocratic pride. In giving his account of his time at school, Mandeville observes that his ‘native taste’ (I, 273) would have led him to embrace Clifford as a friend. However,

Clifford [was] the subject of my first and sincerest admiration; but I could not court him. All beings were to me tools that I was to make use of [...] I could court, and accommodate myself to the foibles of another, but not as to an equal [...] In a word, pride, a self-centred and untameable pride, was the inseparable concomitant of all my actions. (I, 275)

¹²⁰ Shawn Lisa Maurer, ‘The Politics of Masculinity in the 1790s Radical Novel: *Hugh Trevor, Caleb Williams* and the Romance of Sentimental Friendship’ in Friendship’ in *Enlightening Romanticism, Romancing the Enlightenment: British Novels from 1750 to 1832*, ed. by Miriam L. Wallace (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 87-110

(p. 87).

¹²¹ Maurer, ‘The Politics of Masculinity’, p. 91.

¹²² Maurer, ‘The Politics of Masculinity’, p. 92.

¹²³ Maurer, ‘The Politics of Masculinity’, p. 100.

The model of sentimental friendship outlined by Maurer is predicated on the denial of difference and Clifford represents a profound threat to Mandeville's pride and egotism by threatening to efface his autonomous selfhood.

When Mandeville first gazes on the 'spectacle' of Clifford, his sympathy is so powerful that he finds himself 'wrapt in self-oblivion, and possessed no faculties, but an eye to remark his graces, and an ear to drink in every sound he uttered' (I, 232).¹²⁴ As he puts it, Clifford 'charmed, as it were, our very souls out of our bodies' (I, 252-3). This 'self-oblivion' is significant; later, when Clifford offers him 'consideration and sympathy' (I, 55), Mandeville once more finds his faculties restricted, becoming 'inarticulate' and 'hardly able to support or to guide myself' (II, 55) and, on seeing Clifford at Lord Montagu's dinner, he withdraws to the forest 'but half a demon' before his resolutions of reconciliation with Clifford are resigned and 'Mandeville was himself again' (II, 203).¹²⁵ So, unlike typically Romantic 'otherness', *Mandeville* transforms the self/other dialectic into a force of self-annihilation in which his agency is fundamentally diminished. As the instances of disabling self-effacement increase, the antipathy that Mandeville has identified between himself and Clifford becomes increasingly like conventional sympathy. Just as Storch identifies between Caleb and Falkland a 'sympathy so close that they are almost one', the identities of Mandeville and Clifford converge and fuse throughout the narrative, destabilising Mandeville's construction of

¹²⁴ There is also a heavy overtone of homoerotic desire in this passage, and in many others throughout the novel. For a fuller discussion of this aspect of the novel, see William Dean Brewer, *The Mental Anatomies of William Godwin and Mary Shelley* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2001), pp. 100-104 and A. A. Markley, "'The Success of Gentleness': Desire and the Homosexual Personality in the Novels of William Godwin", *Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net*, 36-37 (Nov 2004-Feb 2005) <<http://www.erudit.org/revue/ron/2005/v/n36-37/011139ar.html>> [accessed 18 April 2010].

¹²⁵ See also I, 305, where Mandeville describes Clifford in the following terms: 'he always crossed my path, and thwarted my success, and drew off all eyes, not only from perceiving my worth, but in a manner from recognising my existence'.

Clifford as other.¹²⁶ In a series of gothic images of subjugated selfhood, Mandeville compares his connection with Clifford to the act of Mezentius who ‘tied a living body to a dead one, and caused the one to take in, and gradually to become a partner of, the putrescence of the other’ (II, 103) and to conjoined twins where ‘one carried with him, wherever he went, an intolerable load, and of whom, when one died, it involved the necessary destruction of the other’ (II, 103). The configuration of Clifford as Mandeville’s ‘evil genius’ (I, 305) involves an irrepressible bond; Mandeville is convinced that ‘[f]ate [...] had bound Clifford and me together, with a chain, the links of which could never be dissolved’ (II, 103). In the final volume of the novel, Mandeville asserts his belief that ‘Clifford is part of myself, a disease that has penetrated to my bones, and that I can never get rid of, as long as any portion of consciousness shall adhere to the individual Mandeville’ (III, 218).

Godwin’s representation of Mandeville’s fragmented ‘consciousness’ recalls poetic constructions of Romantic alienation in its focus on estrangement, abandonment and marginalisation. Mandeville’s withdrawal into his own consciousness is manifested in his inability to communicate effectively, which is a preoccupation throughout Godwin’s philosophy. Communication is a central facet of human perfectibility in the *Enquiry*; as Jane Hodson puts it, ‘[w]ithout communication, each man would be like the first savage, totally reliant upon his own personal sensations’.¹²⁷ This focus on sensation is significant because sociability is dependent on communication of feeling, although sensibility is, of course, emphatically non-verbal and exposes the inadequacy of verbal

¹²⁶ Storch, ‘Metaphors of Private Guilt and Social Rebellion in Godwin’s *Caleb Williams*’, p. 194.

¹²⁷ Jane Hodson, *Language and Revolution in Burke, Wollstonecraft, Paine, and Godwin* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), p. 172.

communication.¹²⁸ In Mandeville's case, his aversion to sympathetic participation means that he has no outlet for his sensibility, either verbally or non-verbally: his inability to communicate emphasises his traumatised internal sensibility, which becomes increasingly self-destructive. Mandeville laments his early lack of 'a creature that irresistibly called forth my sympathies' (I, 209) in these terms, observing that 'I uttered no sound that partook of equal communication; every thought I harboured in my soul, was a reverie' (I, 209), which provides a marked contrast to the 'communicative' and 'sympathetic' upbringing of his sister (I, 210). Mandeville's want of communal expression and the dangerous inarticulacy of his sensibility intensify throughout the novel, becoming increasingly introverted and destructive as his 'silent nature' continued to be 'an ever-living and incessant curse to me' (I, 158). Although Henrietta is at ease with both verbal and somatic expression – '[h]er pure and eloquent blood spoke in her cheeks' (I, 167) – Mandeville 'could not speak to her in return' (II, 209), answering her with 'silence or few words' (I, 176). Mandeville laments that, unlike Clifford, 'I could not put my soul into my tongue, and witch all hearers with my eloquence' (I, 258).

As his sense of selfhood becomes increasingly compromised by his perceptions of Clifford, Mandeville experiences a mental breakdown. He writes that 'I plunged myself in the wildest and most savage recesses of the forest of Shotover. I felt ease, in proportion as I withdrew from the haunts of men' (II, 108), and, although he is found by some rustics in the forest, he experiences a subsequent period of 'fierce and terrible ravings' and 'inarticulate words' (II, 124). This recourse to a primitive state of nature signifies a further shift away from sympathy, recalling Godwin's construction of the

¹²⁸ For a discussion of the relationship between verbal and non-verbal communication in terms of sensibility, see Paul Goring, *The Rhetoric of Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

uncommunicative savage in the *Enquiry* in which he argues that, without the communication of the ‘reflections and discoveries of their companions and ancestors’, mankind would remain in a ‘savage’ state.¹²⁹ Unlike Henrietta’s Shaftesburian conception of nature’s harmony as a model for human sociability, which captivates Mandeville in the early volumes of the novel, ultimately, nature becomes for him a means of isolation and self-annihilation. As he withdraws from human interaction, he declares that he ‘conversed only with the clouds. I had lived in my reveries only’ (II, 73). Mandeville’s appreciation of the sublime power of nature, unlike the self-assertion and mastery of the Kantian sublime or Wordsworth’s ‘egotistical sublime’, approaches something closer to Keats’s and Coleridge’s conception, as he ‘lost myself in the magnificence of nature’ (III, 328).¹³⁰ After he discovers that Henrietta and Clifford are to be married, Mandeville ‘wandered for ever in darkness, and on the edge of precipices, where every step threatened to shiver me to atoms, or sink me in a fathomless abyss’ (III, 310) and Mallison compares him to ‘some majestic oak in the forests of your country, that the thunder hast past over, and has scathed it [...] the heart of the tree, so late the boast of its native soil, is daily crumbling into dust’ (III, 121). Mandeville verges on the edge of annihilation and destruction, his sense of self reduced to mere ‘dust’, the ‘outcast of mankind’ (II, 106).

The union of Clifford and Henrietta represents the final destruction of Mandeville’s sympathetic potential. Throughout the novel, Henrietta operates as a kind of sympathetic alter-ego to her brother: in his final madness he states that ‘[e]arly [...] I learned to go out of myself [...] I left my own rejected and loathsome corse, to live in

¹²⁹ Godwin, *Enquiry*, I, 58.

¹³⁰ Barbara Claire Freeman notes that for Keats ‘to be sublime is to have “no identity [...] no self”’ and that Coleridge’s ‘sublime also depends upon the self’s awareness of its own absence’, *The Feminine Sublime: Gender and Excess in Women’s Fiction* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 8-9.

another, to feel her pleasures, and rejoice in her joys (III, 348-49). As a result, the threat of self-destruction and the terror of physical union with Clifford (as in the Mezentius myth or the metaphor of conjoined twins) are simultaneously realised in their marriage. Mandeville rails against it as ‘this crime, this abhorred mixture, this unnatural pollution, this worse than incest’ (III, 330), expressing both, as Brewer puts it, a ‘homophobic aversion’ to the man ‘who so violently repels and attracts him’ and a fierce repugnance to what he perceives as Clifford’s monopoly of his selfhood.¹³¹ The novel ends with the fulfilment of Mandeville’s conviction that, as a mark of his alienation, he ‘shall have a brand upon me like Cain, to make me out to every creature that lives’ (I, 293).¹³² In his attempt to separate Henrietta and Clifford, he receives a wound from Clifford resulting in a facial mutilation: a ‘preternatural and unvarying distorted smile, or deadly grin’ (III, 366), which, like the ‘brand with a red-hot iron’ made on slaves in the West Indies, signifies that ‘Clifford had set his mark upon me, as a token that I was his for ever’ (III, 367). This apparent subjugation of Mandeville by Clifford marks the ultimate breakdown of Mandeville’s identity. From the hope of sociability that characterises his youth, his sense of autonomous selfhood is finally eroded and fragmented: all that remains is a sense of self-estrangement and ‘[a]lienation of the mind’ (II, 121).

The deep, internalised and multi-layered selfhood that emerges from the dynamic of Enlightenment sympathy in *Mandeville* is essentially a version of the traditional aesthetic of Romantic interiority. Mandeville’s identity is inherently superficial and unstable and there are various instances in the novel where the boundary between self and

¹³¹ Brewer, *The Mental Anatomies of William Godwin and Mary Shelley*, p. 102.

¹³² Allusions to the mark of Cain appear frequently throughout the novel; this quotation is actually spoken by Waller. See also II, 102: ‘I should walk about, a tarnished thing, a petty rascal that had the word VILLAIN branded upon his forehead in the dock of a court of justice, or like Cain, with a mark set upon me, “lest anyone finding me kill me,” and that I might live out my appointed years of expiation!’

other is eroded. At one point he writes that '[t]he soul of Mandeville seemed to have left me, and the soul of Henrietta to have entered my bosom in its stead' (II, 164) and later in the novel, using an image of 'the bird and the rattle-snake' in which 'the defenceless victim is bewitched by the eye of his adversary, and is necessitated to fly into his mouth', he states that the malicious 'Holloway and Mallison became in some degree part of myself' (III, 147). The fact that Mandeville is plagued by dreams and visions in the novel has parallels in a Wordsworthian selfhood in which '[t]he mind is haunted – or eerily occupied – by parts of itself that have a quasi-autonomous stature: by thoughts, images, memories and past selves'.¹³³ Mandeville experiences numerous episodes of these 'hauntings' throughout the novel, including the traumatic memories and dreams of his parents' murder, the religious teachings of Hilkaih Bradford, the imagined sentimental self that he may have been if brought up with Henrietta and the delusional construction of Clifford as his 'evil genius'. The result is a self that is insubstantial and ephemeral: as Mandeville describes himself, 'a meagre, unlaid ghost' (I, 300). His statement that '[a]n undefined recollection haunted me, even when I was most rapt out of myself' (III, 17) suggests that his attempts to distance himself from the fragments of his identity are always unsuccessful. In Mandeville, Godwin constructs a quintessentially Romantic form of identity; in opposition to the externally-constituted selfhood of the Enlightenment sympathy that pervades the novel emerges an alienated and fragmented self.

Fleetwood and *Mandeville* offer a complex examination of selfhood, sensibility and sympathy. *Fleetwood* engages directly with Enlightenment formations of sociability, exploring the conflicting nature of sympathy embodied in the opposing categories of

¹³³ Laura Quinney, 'Wordsworth's Ghosts and the Model of the Mind', *European Romantic Review*, 9 (1998), 293-301 (p. 293).

public participation and private feeling, sociability and self-interest. As in the novels of Radcliffe and Dacre, the initial allure of both public and domestic sympathy is ultimately undermined by its insistence on resemblance and common feeling, which necessarily involves an erosion of the inner self. In *Mandeville*, the competing claims of self-interest and sympathy result in an often delusional and paranoid form of Romantic identity.

Despite his attempts to preserve a sense of autonomous selfhood by figuring Clifford as a monstrous and threatening other, the extremity of Mandeville's sympathetic connection with Clifford and Henrietta results in a gothicised form of self-annihilation, producing a fragmented and alienated subject. In doing so, the novel not only depicts a version of deep Romantic selfhood, it also complicates our understanding of Romantic inwardness and autonomy. Using the motif of sympathetic fellowship as the formation of 'another self' (*Fleetwood*, II, 289), *Mandeville* outlines the difficulty of reconciling sympathy with independent selfhood and egotism. While Fleetwood's tenuous commitment to domestic life grants him a diminished form of sympathy, Mandeville, prefiguring Byron's alienated and misanthropic Cain, is reduced to an 'abortion merely' who 'appertains in no way to the scene of the living world' (III, 269).

The satirical 'fourth volume' of *Mandeville—Mandeville; or, the Last Words of a Maniac!* (1818) – is emblematic of the fact that '[m]ost readers felt that Godwin had gone too far' in his depiction of madness and excessive passion.¹³⁴ However, the legacy of *Mandeville* has been underestimated. Although Kelly argues that – as one of Godwin's 'later romantic novels' – it 'can have no claim to special treatment in a history of the English Jacobin novel', the persistent association of self-interest and aristocratic privilege

¹³⁴ *Mandeville; or, the Last Words of a Maniac! A Tale of the Seventeenth Century in England. By Himself. Volume IV* (London: Wilson, 1818); Peter H. Marshall, *William Godwin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 340.

in the text warrants further consideration.¹³⁵ Likewise, in its deep engagement with moral sense philosophy, *Mandeville* is a striking hybrid of Enlightenment and Romantic aesthetics. As Percy Shelley wrote in his review of the novel, which emphasises its profound effect on the reader's sensibility, 'Godwin has been to the present age in moral philosophy what Wordsworth is in poetry'.¹³⁶ This is no simple opposition, however, and the link Shelley makes between Godwin's fiction and Romantic poetry is significant. Indeed, the novel was frequently associated with the work of Byron in the contemporary press; *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* named Byron and Godwin as the two greatest contemporary writers of 'masterpieces of misery'.¹³⁷ *Mandeville* can also be read as a formative influence on various later gothic novels in their representations of sociability and selfhood, in particular his daughter Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818) and James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) in its gothic depiction of the haunted and divided self of the protagonist Robert Wringhim.¹³⁸ Godwin's interrogation of sensibility operates across numerous modes and genres including Enlightenment philosophy, gothic and historical fiction and Romantic poetry, demonstrating a deep self-consciousness and an enduring legacy in Romantic literary culture.

¹³⁵ Kelly, *The English Jacobin Novel*, p. 240.

¹³⁶ Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'Remarks on *Mandeville* and Mr Godwin', *Athenæum* 261(27 Oct 1832), repr. in *Athenæum, Jan-Dec 1832* (London: Francis, 1832), pp. 698-99 (p. 698).

¹³⁷ 'Remarks on Godwin's New Novel *Mandeville*', p. 270. Interestingly, Kelly claims that *Mandeville; or, the Last Words of a Maniac!* was not actually a satire at all and that 'the poetry and influence of Byron were evident in almost every page', *The Jacobin Novel*, p. 252.

¹³⁸ See Ian Duncan, *Scott's Shadow: The Novel in Romantic Edinburgh* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), pp. 271-76 for a discussion of Hogg's novel and sympathy.

Chapter Four

Sydney Owenson: Sensibility, Civility and Constructing the Nation

In its 1806 review of Sydney Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl: A National Tale* (1806), the *Critical Review* lamented the intrusive nature of the author's 'disquisitions on the manners of the Irish' and their tendency to interpose just as 'the tear of sensibility is swelling in the eye of her fair reader at the woes and virtues of the interesting heroine'.¹ No such preference for sentiment over nationalism is discernible in twentieth-century accounts of Owenson's fiction; her work was excluded from Ann Owen Weekes's *Irish Women Writers* (1990) on the basis of its 'excessive romanticism and sentimentalism' and *The Wild Irish Girl* was dismissed by Elmer Andrews – among others – as a 'poor novel' because of the 'fulsome extravagance' of its sentimental style.² In other words, in the well-worn formulation familiar to the Romantic period itself, sentimental discourse was seen as fundamentally incompatible with literary credibility. Certainly, Owenson's effusive style was not to the taste of many of her own contemporaries: Jane Austen wrote

¹ *Critical Review*, 3rd ser. 9 (Nov 1806), 327-28 (p. 328).

² Ann Owen Weekes, *Irish Women Writers: An Uncharted Tradition* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1990), p. 20. Elmer Andrews, 'Aesthetics, Politics and Identity: Lady Morgan's *The Wild Irish Girl*', *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, 13.2 (Dec 1987), 7-19 (p. 7). Andrews observes that Brigid Brophy, in her introduction to the 1986 Pandora Press edition of the novel, terms it 'delightfully bad' (p. 7). Ann Jones also states that *The Wild Irish Girl* is 'not a good novel' and that 'its weakness lies in its style', *Ideas and Innovations: Best Sellers of Jane Austen's Age* (New York: AMS Press, 1986), pp. 190, 192.

archly of *The Wild Irish Girl* in January 1809 that ‘[i]f the warmth of her Language could affect the Body, it might be worth reading in this weather’.³ More recently, however, the critical reappraisal of the national tale has meant that the politics of sensibility and national identity in Owenson’s fiction are now recognised as interrelated.

Owenson, known as Lady Morgan after her marriage to Sir Charles Morgan in 1812, is widely acknowledged as a central figure in the development of both the Irish novel and the Romantic national tale.⁴ During her career she published poetry, nine novels and various prose works of non-fiction, including *Patriotic Sketches of Ireland* (1807) and the controversial travel narratives *France* (1817) and *Italy* (1821). Five of Owenson’s novels – *St Clair; or, The Heiress of Desmond* (1803), *The Wild Irish Girl*, *O’Donnel: A National Tale* (1814), *Florence Macarthy: An Irish Tale* (1818) and *The O’Briens and the O’Flahertys: A National Tale* (1827) – were set in Ireland, making Owenson one of the most prolific writers of national fiction during the Romantic period. While Maria Edgeworth, with the publication of *Castle Rackrent* in 1800, is generally considered to be the pioneer of the national tale,⁵ Owenson’s novels provided an important stylistic and ideological counter to Edgeworth’s fictional portrayal of Ireland, voicing a more radical perspective which, according to Kevin Wheelan, ‘emphasises rather than elides the trauma of internal colonialism’.⁶ In terms of sensibility, within the wider scholarly trend for considering the national tale’s links to the philosophical

³ Jane Austen, Letter to Cassandra Austen, 17 Jan 1809, in *British Fiction, 1800-1829: A Database of Production, Circulation & Reception* <<http://www.british-fiction.cf.ac.uk/anecdotal/wild06-54.html>> [accessed 02 October 2011].

⁴ Owenson published under her married name of Lady Morgan from 1812; *O’Donnel* (1814) was the first novel she published as Lady Morgan.

⁵ See Claire Connolly, *A Cultural History of the Irish Novel, 1790-1829* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 14.

⁶ Kevin Wheelan, ‘Foreword: Writing Ireland, Reading England’, in Sydney Owenson, *Lady Morgan, The Wild Irish Girl: A National Tale*, ed. by Claire Connolly and Stephen Copley (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2000), pp. ix-xxiv (p. ix).

movement of sympathy, the last two decades have seen renewed interest in Owenson's use of sentiment in her novels. Christopher Nagle considers Owenson's sentimental style as 'central to her politics' and offers an engaging account of the reception of her novels, suggesting that much of the criticism levelled at her fiction (by both contemporary and twentieth-century critics) must be read within the context of sensibility as a 'radical' and excessive feminised discourse, arguing that 'distaste for the sentimental excesses of women writers such as Owenson, signals a deeper, unacknowledged distaste for a specific flavour of cultural politics, as well as the politics of style.'⁷ This is never clearer than in John Wilson Croker's letter to the editor of *Freeman's Journal* in 1806, in which he writes 'I accuse Miss Owenson of having written bad novels [...] under the insidious mask of virtue, sensibility and truth', counting her among a 'host of treacherous sentimentalists' and aligning *St Clair* with the 'unbounded licentiousness of the French press'.⁸

Claire Connolly reads sensibility in Owenson's fiction through the love plot as a means of exploration of union and patriotism, arguing that in *The Wild Irish Girl* Owenson 'plots national politics in terms of sentiment and sensibility'.⁹ Ina Ferris contextualises Owenson's fiction within the philosophical framework of sympathy, in which sympathy operates through the 'activation of internal disequilibrium' and depends upon a 'certain unhinging of a consciousness from its familiar place' in order to promote

⁷ Christopher Nagle, 'From Owenson to Morgan: History, Sensibility, and the Vagaries of Reception in *The Wild Irish Girl*', in *Anglo-Irish Identities, 1571-1845*, ed. by David A. Valone and Jill Marie Bradbury (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2008), pp. 199-219 (pp. 209, 210).

⁸ M. T. [John Wilson Croker], 'Miss Owenson. To the Editor of the Freeman's Journal', *Freeman's Journal* [Dublin] (15 Dec 1806), cited in Jacqueline E. Belanger, *Critical Receptions: Sydney Owenson, Lady Morgan* (Bethesda, MD: Academica Press, 2007), pp. 73-75 (pp. 73, 73, 74).

⁹ Claire Connolly, 'Introduction: The Politics of Love in *The Wild Irish Girl*', in Sydney Owenson, *The Wild Irish Girl* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2000), pp. xxv-lvi (p. xxix).

cross-cultural identification.¹⁰ Julia M. Wright contends that in *The Wild Irish Girl*, Owenson ‘imagines the training of the English colonial agent’s sensibility by the sentimental heroine’ but that the novel ultimately replicates the ideology of colonial domination ‘under a superficially sentimental guise’.¹¹ Nicola Watson reads *The Wild Irish Girl* against the backdrop of the Héloïse plot that informs Dacre’s fiction, arguing that it performs a ‘mutually beneficial’ ‘rereading and rewriting of the epistolary hero and sentimental heroine’ in order to create a ‘unionised Irish identity’.¹² My discussion of Owenson is indebted to each of these studies of her fiction, in particular to Ferris’s notion of dislocation and Wright’s account of cultural assimilation, and I use these two concepts as my starting point in my reading of *St Clair* and *The Wild Irish Girl*. I also follow all of the critics cited above in their contention that the radical impetus of Owenson’s novels is inextricably linked to their sentimental style.

However, my account of the novels builds upon existing scholarship in three key ways. First, its discussion is focused primarily on *O’Donnel* and *Florence Macarthy* rather than *The Wild Irish Girl* (although this novel is considered briefly in order to contextualise the development of Owenson’s use of sensibility in the later novels), which has tended to be the key focus in the majority of scholarly accounts. Second, it considers the politics of sensibility in the novels as they relate to Enlightenment discourses of commerce and civility, arguing that sensory perception and expression – in the various forms of the sublime and the picturesque, orality and spectatorship – function as a means

¹⁰ Ina Ferris, *The Romantic National Tale and the Question of Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 13.

¹¹ Julia M. Wright, *Ireland, India, and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 24, 72.

¹² Nicola Watson, *Revolution and the Form of the British Novel, 1790-1825: Intercepted Letters, Interrupted Seductions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 114.

of interrogating the politics of cultural assimilation implied by post-union schemes of improvement and their implications for constructions of national selfhood. Third, my account traces Owenson's fiction within the wider context of sensibility as a discourse which incorporates the ideologies of Enlightenment and Romanticism, suggesting that Enlightenment sociability and collectivity are reconfigured into a more conventionally Romantic aesthetic of fragmentation and self-determination. I do not, however, ascribe to considering Owenson's novels in terms of an Enlightenment/Romanticism binary; rather, I suggest that the two constructions are interrelated in her fiction: the aesthetic of Romantic subjectivity relates directly to the tensions inherent in Enlightenment models of national sympathy and history.

The idea that '[w]here Maria Edgeworth's Ireland [...] is shaped by the Enlightenment, Lady Morgan's belongs to the Romantic Revival' can be explained in part by the fact that Owenson's novels dissect and interrogate the Enlightenment constructions of civil society and sympathy that underpin Edgeworth's fiction.¹³ Owenson's writing can be read in contrast to Edgeworth's in a variety of ways. In terms of *Castle Rackrent* at least, Edgeworth posits a corrupt and feudal Irish past in distinct contrast to the progressive ideals of modernity and Enlightenment. Owenson, on the other hand, disrupts this teleological framework to suggest that contemporary Ireland is in fact less and not more enlightened than the feudal past. Furthermore, as Ann Jones points out, Edgeworth 'aimed not to show the uniqueness of the Irish but to present them as essentially the same as the English in order to stress their right to similar treatment'.¹⁴ In

¹³ Andrews, 'Aesthetics, Politics and Identity', p. 16.

¹⁴ Jones, *Ideas and Innovations*, p. 186.

Owenson's fiction, this stress on similitude is exposed as fundamentally damaging to Irish national culture and identity.

In terms of Wright's conception of two competing forms of nationalism in Romantic-era Ireland – 'antiquarian', which 'idealizes' and 'fantasizes' a return to the past, and 'inaugural', which is committed to progress within a stadial context – Owenson's novels present a fascinating hybrid of these two opposing tendencies.¹⁵ The early novels, in particular *The Wild Irish Girl*, seem to favour the antiquarian model in their elevation of the ancient Irish past. However, *O'Donnel* and *Florence Macarthy* link the two models, suggesting that the politics of colonial assimilation implicit to the 'inaugural' formation of nationalism actually serve to render Irish society rooted to the past in a state of poverty, ignorance and outmoded prejudice. The character of Terence O'Leary, an amateur antiquarian and hedge schoolmaster in *Florence Macarthy*, serves as an apt emblem of the anachronism and nostalgia brought about by Enlightenment efforts to improve and civilise Ireland: he is described as 'living only in the past, contemptuous of the present, and hopeless of the future'.¹⁶

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first two consider the early novels of *St Clair* and *The Wild Irish Girl* in terms of the politics of sympathy and similitude, arguing that in these novels Owenson is essentially ambivalent about the model of a sympathetic cohesive British identity. The third and fourth sections consider the later national tales *O'Donnel* and *Florence Macarthy*, exploring Owenson's interrogation of models of national sociability based on the values of sympathy, commerce and civic society and examining the role of performance and oratory as they relate to the process of

¹⁵ Wright, *Ireland, India, and Nationalism*, p. 31.

¹⁶ [Sydney Owenson] Lady Morgan, *Florence Macarthy: An Irish Tale*, 4 vols (London: Colburn, 1818), I, 284-85. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

national self-fashioning. Each of the four novels discussed makes connections between eighteenth-century models of sensory perception and sensibility to the Irish landscape. Claire Connolly's chapter on 'Landscape and Map' in her *Cultural History of the Irish Novel* emphasises the various aspects of Irish geography which shaped constructions of Irish cultural identity in the Romantic period. She notes that Ireland's natural resources were increasingly re-evaluated in terms of their potential for trade during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and that the positioning of Irish geography in this way locates it within an Enlightenment discourse of political economy which finds its counter in the antiquarian nationalism which emphasises ancient Irish culture.¹⁷ This creates 'a relationship between economic necessity and aesthetic value in the context of global power relations', as the economic value of the Irish landscape was forged alongside the Romantic visions of Irish scenery which accompanied antiquarian nationalism.¹⁸ This chapter suggests that this relationship between economic and aesthetic value is inextricable from the discourse of sensibility in Owenson's fiction. These novels articulate a revised model of national identity which replaces a sentimental national consciousness with a more localised and contained model of sensibility. Owenson ultimately rejects the model of sympathetic social cohesion that she tentatively posits in her early novels, displaying 'resistance to the cultural assimilation which accompanies the colonial endeavor', rejecting it in favour of new forms of national identity which embrace subjectivity and fragmentation.¹⁹

¹⁷ Claire Connolly, *A Cultural History of the Irish Novel, 1790-1829* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 52.

¹⁸ Connolly, *Cultural History of the Irish Novel*, p. 52.

¹⁹ Michael J. Franklin, "'Passion's Empire': Sydney Owenson's "Indian Venture," Phoenicianism, Orientalism, and Binarism,' *Studies in Romanticism*, 45.2 (2006), 181-97 (p. 192).

St Clair: The Man of Feeling and Cultural Assimilation

In many ways, *St Clair* can be read as a conventional novel of eighteenth-century sensibility. In its plot recounting the tragic outcome of an illicit affair between the melancholy and disillusioned tutor of ‘exquisite sensibility’ St Clair and the sentimental heroine Olivia Desmond, who is engaged to the worthy but emotionally moderate Colonel L – , the novel demonstrates its allegiance to the European novelistic tradition of sentiment;²⁰ it was written, by Owenson’s admission, ‘in imitation of *Werter*’ and, in the lengthy discussions of Rousseau’s *Julie; or, La Nouvelle Héloïse*, is closely aligned with the fictional rearticulations of the Héloïse plot considered in my discussion of Dacre’s novels.²¹ Contemporary reviewers read the novel as a didactic warning against excessive sensibility and dangerous reading: the *European Magazine* declared that it was possessed of ‘much excellent moral’ and the *Monthly Mirror* praised it for ‘afford[ing] a useful lesson to those, who, vanquished by the sophistry of reasoning vice, nourish a criminal passion under the guise of sentiment’.²² Perhaps as a result of its reputation as a conventional and formulaic sentimental novel, twentieth- and twenty-first-century commentators have tended to ignore *St Clair* in their accounts of Owenson’s national tales. However, Ann Jones’s argument that despite the setting in Ireland, ‘there is no attempt to encourage interest in things Irish; the entire emphasis is on feelings’ warrants

²⁰ Sydney Owenson, *St Clair; or, The Heiress of Desmond*, 3rd edn, 2 vols (London: Stockdale, 1812; repr. London: Thoemmes, 1995), I, 48. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

²¹ Belanger, *Critical Receptions*, p. 18. For a more detailed discussion of the novel’s engagement with *The Sorrows of Young Werter* and *Julie; or, La Nouvelle Héloïse*, see Peter Garside, ‘Introduction’, in *St Clair* 3rd edn, 2 vols (London: Stockdale, 1812; repr. London: Thoemmes, 1995), pp. v-xxi (pp. xvi-xviii); Jacqueline Pearson, *Women’s Reading in Britain, 1750-1835: A Dangerous Recreation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 75; and Watson, *Revolution and the Form of the British Novel*, p. 114.

²² *European Magazine*, 45 (Jan 1804), 57 and *Monthly Mirror*, 17 (Jan 1804), 33, cited in Belanger, *Critical Receptions*, p. 57.

reconsideration.²³ Not only does the first edition, in the wake of the popularity of *Castle Rackrent*, contain various passages reflecting on the character of Ireland, the 1812 edition was subject to various authorial insertions and amendments, including the addition of three letters with a distinctly national theme which, according to Peter Garside, ‘had the effect of drawing back a forgotten tale into the general corpus of [Owenson’s] work.’²⁴

In fact, the conventional eighteenth-century sensibility of *St Clair* has a dual function within the novel, articulating the complexities of both individual and national selfhood in its depiction of private feeling. Typically, the unique sensibility of the sentimental protagonist is fashioned in opposition to the corruptness and tedium of metropolitan society in the eighteenth-century novel. However, in a gesture of Romantic generic disruption, Owenson takes this formation and invests it with national significance. While the Anglo-Irish St Clair’s complaint to his correspondent that the ‘discovery of [Irish] national character’ is impossible in Dublin because ‘the people of fashion here, are like the people of fashion everywhere else’ (I, 31) rehearses the man of feeling’s conventional disillusionment with urban society, it simultaneously hints at the effacement of Irish national identity that results from assimilation into British civil society. Indeed, St Clair’s family functions as an exemplar of colonial assimilation. After an imprudent marriage (presumably to a Protestant), St Clair’s Irish father, persecuted by the ‘religious bigotry’ (I, 28) of his family, ‘sought a retreat under the tolerance of a Swiss republic’ (I, 29). While his act of apostasy resulted in poverty and isolation, his cousin Lord L –, ‘by renouncing the faith of his ancestors, obtained the restoration of those titles and dignities which they had conscientiously sacrificed, from a principle of

²³ Jones, *Ideas and Innovations*, p. 189.

²⁴ Garside, ‘Introduction’, *St Clair*, p. xix. Garside notes that letters III, IV and LV were added to the 1812 edition.

virtue which has gradually decayed in its descent to their posterity' (I, 28-29). Thus, although he 'was a patriot', 'his Lordship has formed two thousand arguments against the patriotic system, in a place of two thousand a year' (I, 20). As a result, his sons are fully assimilated within the system of British colonial power: the eldest is 'the Colonel of a regiment, a member of the Irish senate, and has some personal interest with the Ministry', his younger brother 'is a Major in his [...] regiment' (I, 26) and both are lately returned from the continent in a wave of British military glory. St Clair, however, has no interest in civic institutions or state power. Appropriating the formation of eighteenth-century sentimental solipsism, he states that '[i]n private society every man is allowed to consult his private feelings in the disposal of his favours; a man in office is to have none' (I, 14-5) and that 'to be totally uninfluenced by situation and circumstance is perhaps the standard of human perfection' (I, 14).²⁵

The *Anti-Jacobin Review* found the individualism of this last doctrine dangerous and subversive, declaring that

man [...] must, of necessity, regulate his opinions and his conduct by circumstances [...] Hence, it follows, that this is an imaginary standard of perfection, which has nothing of either practical philosophy, or of practical utility, to recommend it.²⁶

This anxiety is precisely that which was frequently articulated in response to the radical sensibility of the 1790s: excessive private feeling minimised the power of state

²⁵ The notion of self-interested sensibility operating as an antithesis to cross-cultural sympathy features in many of Owenson's later novels, but most prominently in the figure of De Vere in *Florence Macarthy*. De Vere, supposedly modelled on Byron, is a hybrid of eighteenth-century solipsism and Romantic alienation. The narrator describes him as follows: '[O]ccupied by an *ideal presence*, he affected to live distinct and independent of all human interests'. He is 'a creature [...] beyond the ordinary pale of humanity', not 'herding with his species in human sympathy [but one] whose joys, whose woes, whose sentiments and passions, are not those of other men, but all his own', [Sydney Owenson], Lady Morgan, *Florence Macarthy: An Irish Tale*, 4 vols (London: Colburn, 1818), I, 8-9; I, 11; I, 12. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

²⁶ *Anti-Jacobin Review*, 40 (Dec 1811), 404-14, cited in Belanger, p. 59.

conformity. However, Owenson's use of the terms 'situation' and 'circumstance' is conspicuous if read within the context of national identity. In the paradigm of sympathetic interaction in the national tale, the influence of circumstance is highly significant, for in the constructions of Smith and Hume, situation and circumstance are essential components of the process of sympathetic identification. Smith's notion of sympathy is dependent upon, as he puts it, 'bringing your case home to myself, from putting myself in your situation, and thence conceiving what I should feel in the like circumstances.'²⁷ The use of the term 'home' is apt here; if the process of sympathy is akin to leaving the 'home' of the self to enter the hitherto unknown 'situation' and 'circumstances' of the agent, then travelling to a foreign country is an appropriate metaphor for the process of sympathetic identification. The sympathetic formulation of unknown situation and circumstance as a counter to familiarity and homeliness is also powerfully suggestive of post-Union difficulties in understanding the 'internal colony' of Ireland given its status as a simultaneously foreign and domestic 'estranged home space'.²⁸

Accordingly, in Owenson's novels the traveller must suspend his state of selfhood in order to assimilate to and identify with – or, in Smith's terms, to put himself in their situation – the unfamiliar Irish population in an act of trans-national cohesion. 'A stranger', William Hazlitt suggests, 'takes his hue and character from the time and place'; as a stranger we are able to 'in a manner forget [one]self' and to be 'no longer a citizen of the world', 'to lose our importune, tormenting, everlasting personal identity in the

²⁷ Smith, Adam, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (London: Millar; Edinburgh: Kincaid and Bell, 1759), p. 496.

²⁸ Ferris, *The Romantic National Tale*, p. 18.

elements of nature, and become the creature of the moment, clear of all ties'.²⁹ Ferris reads this suspension of identity as part of what she terms the 'dislocations of sympathy': the incitement of 'internal disequilibrium' and discomfort in the metropolitan traveller which must take place before a cross-cultural sympathy can be achieved.³⁰ St Clair's refusal to suspend his own identity under the influence of 'situation and circumstance' (I, 14), then, links the individualism condemned by the *Anti-Jacobin Review* to an unwillingness to participate in the network of cultural sympathy.

His 'imaginary standard of perfection' renders him isolated not only from fashionable urban society but also from 'authentic' Irish sensibility in the model of rural communality usually privileged in sentimental fiction. Unlike his own 'nerves which [...] thrill and vibrate in fatal sympathy to every fine impression' (I, 25), through his narrative perspective native Irish sensibility is configured as barbaric and uncivilised. The sensibility possessed by the Irish is, to St Clair, incompatible with the modern refined manners prized by the Enlightenment formulation of civility as the marker of historical progress. The Irish hospitality which forms a central element of national character in *The Wild Irish Girl* is condemned by St Clair, who states that

indiscriminate hospitality is the virtue of an uncivilized people, and, while it apparently breathes the very spirit of philanthropy, originates most frequently in self-love. The mind, unaccustomed to commune with itself, barren of ideas, and void of reflection, is thrown wholly dependent on society for occupation and engagement, and adopts every species of social and familiar intercourse, which, by opposing that vacuity of intellect, against which human nature, except in her most imbecile state, revolts, relieves it from the dreadful oppression of the *tædium vitae*'. (I, 176)³¹

²⁹ William Hazlitt, 'On Going on a Journey', in *Table-Talk; or, Original Essays* [1821-22], 2nd edn (London: Colburn, 1824), pp. 33-54 (pp. 43, 43, 43-44, 44).

³⁰ Ferris, *The Romantic National Tale*, pp. 57, 13.

³¹ This puzzling conflation of hospitality and selfishness is replicated in the letter published anonymously by John Wilson Croker, supposedly written from China but in fact a satire of post-Union Dublin society.

This excessive and uncivilised hospitality ‘frequently leads to an extravagance which involves [the Irish people] in pecuniary difficulties’ and ‘amidst [...] the unrestrained enjoyments of social intercourse, the mind and manners must lose in refinement, what the passions acquire in strength and vehemence’ (I, 177-78). While the same criticism of hospitality appears in Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, in which he claims that the ‘rustic hospitality that is in fashion among the Poles encroaches, perhaps, a little upon economy and good order’,³² he minimises such effects of ‘custom and fashion’ as ‘inconsiderable’ in their effect on the universal ‘moral sentiments of mankind’.³³ St Clair, however, appropriates the Enlightenment discourse of sociability as a means of configuring the Irish as a barbaric, ignorant and unrefined ‘other’.

Just as he rejects Irish sociability as a means of national sympathy and unity, so he resists any notion of a cohesive national consciousness, condemning as one of man’s ‘numberless extravagancies’, ‘the notion of an instinctive affection, independent of, and superior to, our reason, which we are supposed to have for our country, as if there was some physical virtue in the *soil*, which necessarily produced this effect in every one born upon it’ (I, 28). His objections reject eighteenth-century explanations of national identity as the product of geographical and climatic features.³⁴ However, while Hume believed that national ‘resemblance’ and the ‘great uniformity we may observe in the humours and

Croker writes of the Chinese/Irish society depicted that: ‘[t]hey are so generous, that their houses and hearts are open to the stranger whom they never saw before, and may never see again. Yet they are so selfish, that, though their next neighbour is oppressed, nothing will awaken their public spirit, but the evil’s knocking at their own door’, [John Wilson Croker], *An Intercepted Letter from J – T –, Esq. Writer at Canton, to His Friend in Dublin, Ireland*, 6th edn (Dublin: Mahon, 1805), p. 39.

³² Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 408.

³³ Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 407.

³⁴ See Evan Gottlieb, *Feeling British: Sympathy and National Identity in Scottish and English Writing, 1707-1832* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2007), p. 32.

turn of thinking of those of the same nation' 'arises from sympathy' rather than 'from any influence of the soil and climate', St Clair dismisses not only the idea of a unifying national identity based on the land itself but also any notion of shared national identity based on sympathy.³⁵ In a significant countering of national sympathy with individual pride, he states that 'I love this country because *it is mine* – for self-love never slumbers, and that which we call *ours* is always important to us' (I, 28)

The three letters added to the 1812 edition further emphasise St Clair's disavowal of national sympathy. Although, in keeping with the national ardour of *The Wild Irish Girl*, they emphasise the natural merits of Ireland, it is significant that St Clair also declares the Irish people to be insensible to their own national virtues. The potential for economic and commercial progress embodied in the location of their lakes, mines and quarries, 'in a word, those gifts on which the well-being of society depends, and which nature here has so bounteously lavished, are not only *unappreciated*, but almost *unknown by name* to the inhabitants' (I, 34). St Clair's depiction of the Irish as insensible resists the model of perception as a means of inciting national feeling. In contrast, his own refined sensibility renders him appreciative of the merits of Ireland, despite only visiting it for the first time at the start of the narrative. Sentiment is used here as a signifier of the cultural appropriation of Irish national character within the civilised framework of an emergent British national identity. He informs his correspondent that if 'I seem to judge or speak harshly of my native land, it is because I love it in *my heart of hearts* [...]'

Would that every Irish heart throbbed with the same pulse of *national enthusiasm* with which mine now beats!' (I, 37). In many ways, this later investment of St Clair with acute

³⁵ David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 3 vols (London: Noon, 1739-40), II, 73. All further references are to this edition.

national sensibility is at odds with his refutation of national sympathy in the first edition and is an obvious manifestation of Owenson's attempt to incorporate *St Clair* within the nationalistic oeuvre of her later fiction. However, it is significant that his national pride remains individualistic; he appropriates Irish national feeling as means of differentiation which sets him apart from the insentient Irish masses as a man of feeling, for he cannot 'feel and think like the common herd of men' (I, 25). The *Anti-Jacobin Review* found the 'strange indifference' to national merit as a feature of the Irish population highly suspect and proceeded to hail the virtues of national sentiment in a discourse of Burkean civic conformity based on sympathy, stating that patriotism

originates in a laudable principle, engenders the most amiable feelings, and awakens some of the best sympathies of our nature; while [indifference] is the deformed offspring of a perverted taste and childish intellect, producing an unnatural antipathy, and a distorted pre-possession. The love of our country is the genial source of generous affections; the ennobling spirit of great actions, the vivifying principle which identifies the individual with his native land, endears him to every surrounding object of animate, and inanimate, nature; gives to his heart the most enlivening impulse of delight, at deeds of heroism atchieved [sic] by her sons; and makes it swell with a soldier's energy when danger threatens her.³⁶

One can only assume that the patriotic fervour described here was envisaged by the *Anti-Jacobin Review* within a context of Britishness, given the potentially radical nature of these sympathies if roused in anti-British protest. Nonetheless, in contrast to this stirring call to paternalistic national sympathy, St Clair's own 'national enthusiasm' (I, 37) is imbued with none of these culturally cohesive attributes, merely operating as an external signifier of his own acute and refined sensibility. In a gesture typical of the eighteenth-century sentimental novel, the competing forces of 'social and dissocial passions' (II, 136) ultimately give way to the latter and St Clair comes to represent the notion of 'man

³⁶ *Anti-Jacobin Review*, 40 (Dec 1811), 404-14, cited in Belanger, p. 61.

as being wholly selfish, living solely for his own gratification, and warranted by the laws of nature in opposing his own individual enjoyment to the general happiness of society' (II, 173). The 'isolated and unconnected' (I, 124) sensibility of the man of feeling has no place within the formations of social or national sympathy.

The Wild Irish Girl: Sensory Perception and Civility

Published three years after *St Clair*, *The Wild Irish Girl; A National Tale* was not merely successful in terms of publication, going into seven editions in two years and being translated into French and German;³⁷ it was, as Claire Connolly puts it, a 'media event'.³⁸ While the novel's marketability was in part a product of the controversy that characterised its reception, with an ongoing hostile exchange between Owenson, John Wilson Croker and various other commentators taking place in the press during 1806 and 1807, its national focus also tapped into public curiosity about Ireland in the post-union period.³⁹ In keeping with the public appetite for Irish tour literature, the novel was advertised under the headline 'Domestic State of Ireland':⁴⁰ Owenson's paradigmatic national tale is, then, a hybrid text, fusing the discourses of travel literature and historiography (apparent in the extensive scholarly footnotes) with elements of gothic,

³⁷ For a full account of the novel's publication history, see 'The Wild Irish Girl', in *British Fiction* <<http://www.british-fiction.cf.ac.uk/titleDetails.asp?title=1806A053>> [accessed 04 July 2011]. There is some discrepancy in accounts of the the number and dates of editions. Claire Connolly suggests seven editions by 1813, 'Note on the Text', in Sydney Owenson, *The Wild Irish Girl* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2000), pp. lvii-lxvi (p. lxv). However, the British Fiction database cites seven editions in two years, including four in Britain and three in America by 1808.

³⁸ Claire Connolly, "'I accuse Miss Owenson': *The Wild Irish Girl* as Media Event', *Colby Quarterly*, 36.2 (2000), 98-115 (p. 102).

³⁹ For a full account of the novel's reception see Connolly, "'I accuse Miss Owenson'" and 'Note on the Text', pp. lxv-lxvi, and Belanger, *Critical Receptions*, pp. 7-10, 12-13.

⁴⁰ See Connolly's 'Note on the Text', where she discusses the letter written to Owenson by the novel's publisher Richard Phillips, in which he 'clearly sets out a plan of writing for the young author, indicating that she was considering available literary models, especially the travelogue', p. lviii.

sentimental and historical fiction.⁴¹ *The Wild Irish Girl* sought to familiarise British readers with Irish culture through the textual motif of the cosmopolitan traveller Horatio M – (known as Mortimer throughout the novel) who, exiled to Ireland by his father, finds his cultural prejudices gradually overcome through his acquaintance with the dispossessed Prince of Inismore and his daughter Glorvina until the novel finally culminates in the marriage of Mortimer and Glorvina in a symbolic gesture of ‘national unity of interests and affections’.⁴²

This national reconciliation – famously termed the ‘Glorvina solution’ by Robert Tracy – is brought about through a process of the ‘assimilation of the English nobleman to an Irish perspective’.⁴³ Certainly, Owenson’s emphasis on Mortimer’s cultural acclimatisation is so pronounced that Croker found it entirely improbable, wryly proclaiming that ‘at the Pigeon house [at the end of the Great South Wall in Dublin Bay] he is half naturalized, and no sooner does he set foot on the first flag of our metropolis than he starts into a ready-made true born Irishman’.⁴⁴ Whether or not Mortimer’s shift in national perspective is fully credible, Owenson’s insistence on the possibility of a shared Anglo-Irish sympathy is highly significant. Wright suggests that ‘the reformation of [Mortimer’s] sensibility, given the identification of Irishness with sensibility, is implicitly a form of assimilation’ and that Mortimer ‘also becomes *like* the Irish, in a reversal of the

⁴¹ Belanger, *Critical Receptions*, p. 8. The generic hybridity of *The Wild Irish Girl* has been widely discussed: see Joep Leersson, ‘How *The Wild Irish Girl* Made Ireland Romantic’, *Dutch Quarterly Review of Anglo-American Letters*, 18 (1998), 209-27; Connolly, ‘Introduction’, p. xxxiii; and Christopher Nagle, ‘Traveling Pleasures and Perils of Sensibility’, *Wordsworth Circle*, 39.1-2 (2008), 49-52.

⁴² Sydney Owenson, *The Wild Irish Girl; A National Tale* [1806] (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 250. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

⁴³ Robert Tracy, ‘Maria Edgeworth and Lady Morgan: Legality versus Legitimacy’, in *The Unappeasable Host: Studies in Irish Identity*, ed. by Robert Tracy (Dublin: University College of Dublin Press, 1998), pp. 25-40 (p. 31); Wright, *Ireland, India, and Nationalism*, p. 56.

⁴⁴ [John Wilson Croker] M. T., ‘Miss Owenson. To the Editor of the Freeman’s Journal’, *Freeman’s Journal* [Dublin] (2 Jan 1807), cited in Belanger, *Critical Receptions*, pp. 75-78 (p. 78).

mimicry described by Bhabha that is made possible by the valorization of moral sentiments over imperial power'.⁴⁵ The process of 'reformation' in Mortimer's sensibility that Wright outlines provides a sharp contrast to the solipsistic sentiment of St Clair, which fails to expand outwards in sympathy with the Irish. Not only is Mortimer's natural sensibility, in which 'the vivacity of warm emotion' has been 'worn out by its own violence' (p. 33) at the time of his arrival in Ireland, reinvigorated; Wright suggests that it undergoes a shift in its very nature as aesthetic sensibility – characterised by English cultivated taste – is transformed into genuine sympathy.⁴⁶ My reading of the novel differs from Wright's in that I do not read aesthetic sense and sympathy as the discrete entities that her account of Mortimer's reformation implies. Instead, I want to suggest that sensibility in *The Wild Irish Girl* – that is, the propensity for sensory engagement with the Irish landscape and culture – operates as a facilitator of sympathetic identification from the moment Mortimer arrives in Ireland: sensibility as a means of perception is capable of inciting cross-cultural identification through aesthetic appreciation.

The English Enlightenment model of civilised sensibility is embodied in Mortimer's appreciation of the sublime which is, as Wright points out, 'drenched in the language of Enlightenment taste'.⁴⁷ On his arrival, he concedes that the 'sublime operations of nature' in the Irish landscape 'awaken in the mind of the poetic or pictorial traveller, all the pleasures of tasteful enjoyment, all the sublime emotions of a rapt imagination' (p. 18). This statement clearly emphasises his role as a sentimental 'poetic

⁴⁵ Wright, *Ireland, India, and Nationalism*, p. 66.

⁴⁶ Wright suggests that Horatio's 'aesthetic, pleasurable response' to Murtoch O' Shaugnessey's narrative of suffering early in the novel reveals a restricted and refined sensibility characterised by 'English standards of beauty and taste' but that the process of cultural assimilation ultimately renders him capable of genuine Smithian 'fellow feeling', *Ireland, India, and Nationalism*, pp. 68, 67, 69.

⁴⁷ Wright, *Ireland, India, and Nationalism*, p. 67.

or pictorial traveller', capable of appreciating the artistic and picturesque elements of the Irish landscape. However, unlike Wright, I do not read his aesthetic taste as limiting his capability for sympathy. On the contrary, his sensibility is stimulated in its aesthetic spectatorship to ignite the 'rapt imagination' required for sympathetic identification. Mortimer's experience of the sublime in Ireland is transformed into sympathetic interaction which, as Anne Mellor suggests, amounts to an 'undercutting' of 'the aesthetic conventions' of the literary configurations of the sublime.⁴⁸ I want to suggest that Owenson builds upon Radcliffe's formulation of the sympathetic sublime, investing it with national significance so that sublime experience in *The Wild Irish Girl* operates as a method of transnational unification.

Before Mortimer's fall effects a dramatic introduction to the inhabitants of the Castle of Inismore, he watches the Prince and Glorvina admiring the 'scenes of mysterious sublimity' (p. 51) in a passage narrated in a Radcliffean discourse of sublime anthropomorphism and human interaction with nature.⁴⁹ After they depart, although Mortimer's own aesthetic reaction retains traces of the conventional self-awareness incited by the sublime spectacle – in which he resembles a 'victim of superstitious terror' and is made aware of the 'limited gaze of human vision' (p. 51) – nature's sublime effect is largely reconfigured into an imagined sympathy with the Irish landscape and its people as Mortimer 'almost wished I had been born the Lord of these beautiful ruins, the Prince

⁴⁸ Anne K. Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 99. Mellor refers only briefly to *The Wild Irish Girl* but she makes the important point that Owenson's *Life and Times of Salvator Rosa* (1824) demonstrated her conversance with Burke's aesthetic categories of the sublime and the beautiful, and of the gendering of these respectively as 'heroic (masculine) struggle' and 'loving (feminine) nurturance', *Romanticism and Gender*, p. 99.

⁴⁹ The passage is as follows: '[T]he beautiful effect of the retreating light, as it faded on the ocean's swelling bosom; and once the Princess raised her hand and pointed to the evening star, which rose brilliantly on the deep cerulean blue of a cloudless atmosphere, and shed its fairy beam on the mossy summit of a mouldering turret', pp. 50-51.

of this isolated little territory, the adored Chieftain of these affectionate and natural people' (p. 52). Although there is obviously a hierarchy implied here, the progression in his thought process from aristocratic ownership of property to clannish sociability traces Mortimer's burgeoning sympathy with Irish culture. This episode connects sensory engagement through spectatorship directly with sentimental encounter. Mortimer's feeling that, as he gazes on the Irish landscape, his 'soul [...] held commune with herself' (pp. 51-52) is soon transformed into communion with the Irish people. Unlike the scenes of spectatorship discussed in *Mandeville* in chapter three or the creature's voyeuristic appreciation of human *tableaux* of domestic sociability in *Frankenstein*, it does not result in alienation; rather, Mortimer wakes after his fall to find himself in the sentimental enclave of Inismore: a 'stranger' in 'the midst of friends' (p. 53) and benevolent carers.

Owenson's reconfiguration of the sublime clearly locates vision and viewing the Irish landscape as a key means of exciting the sensibility and imagination that is a precursor to sympathy: the scene of Mortimer's fall is replete with the terminology of the picturesque and the 'vision of imagination' (p. 51).⁵⁰ However, the novel's emphasis on oral culture extends the capacity for sensibility and resists the privileging of vision in Enlightenment aesthetic theory.⁵¹ Wheelan notes that the 'British ethical critique of Irish subjectivity often focused on the mouth and ear as vectors of oral culture' in which the 'mouth was seen as the site of drunkenness, sedition [...] and excessive emotion': the Irish body must be disciplined, as it is in Edgeworth's fiction, in order to produce an

⁵⁰ Mortimer describes the scene in notably artistic terms, recounting the 'vivid tints of this enchanting picture', p. 53.

⁵¹ See Luke Gibbons, *Edmund Burke and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) for an account of how Burke also sought to resist this in his 'sympathetic sublime', p. 4.

appropriate colonial subject.⁵² In contrast, Owenson emphasises an oral culture which is capable of inciting sympathy in which ‘[t]he Irish make the ear a path to the heart’.⁵³ This is not, however, at the expense of the sympathetic capacity of the visual: Owenson combines visual appreciation of the sublime within a discourse of music and orality. Mid-way through the novel, Mortimer and Glorvina are brought to ‘a mutual intelligence’ by observing the ‘ocean, calm and unruffled’, below ‘a body of dark sullen clouds’ and the ‘summits of [...] savage cliffs’, combined with the ‘tall spectral figure of Father John, leaning on a broken column’ to form a ‘sublime assemblage of images’ (p. 74). This scene immediately follows a discussion of the emotive power of Irish music and an instinctive performance of an ancient Irish song on the harp by Glorvina. The combination of visual and aural sensibility leads to a metaphysical communion of feeling: Mortimer’s thought that it is ‘consonant to the tone of [their] present feelings’ (p. 75) is greeted with a nod from Glorvina ‘as though my lips had given it birth’ (p. 75). In Owenson’s Ireland, the visual appreciation of the sublime is inseparable from aural and oral experience; rejecting an Edgeworthian restraining of the Irish senses, Mortimer’s English civilised visual taste is fused with the aural and oral features of Irish sensibility. However, while Owenson is keen to emphasise the potential of an Enlightenment aesthetic taste in facilitating sympathetic identification and national unity, the novel is highly sceptical of sensibility as a discourse of delicacy, taste and manners as it relates to

⁵² Wheelan, ‘Foreword: Writing Ireland, Reading England’, p. xvi. Wheelan argues that Edgeworth’s fictional assimilation of the Irish taps into the ‘reordering of the Irish senses, the acquisition of the stiff upper lip in place of lax loose talk’ and the idea that ‘only the newly disciplined Irish body could produce an Irish ethical subject – rational, self-interested and above all consistent’, p. xvi.

⁵³ Sydney Owenson, *Patriotic Sketches of Ireland, Written in Connaught*, 2 vols (London: Phillips, 1807), I, 157.

the Scottish Enlightenment stadial model of history and what Murray Pittock describes as the ‘teleology of civility’.⁵⁴

Smith’s stadial model outlined social development through the stages of hunting, pastoralism, agriculture and commerce and was expanded by William Robertson and John Millar who, according to Kevin Wheelan, ‘developed an explicitly materialist conception of history’ in which ‘[a]s modes of production changed, so did attitudes to law, property and politics, as well as customs, manners and morals’.⁵⁵ In terms of sentiment, the cultivation of manners and politeness were central in eighteenth-century conceptions of sympathy as the attributes of civility and taste – products of a newly commercial society – enabled communities based on shared sensibility. Accordingly, Robert Mitchell suggests that in Romantic-era Britain, sympathy was seen to relate to historical progress, ‘in the sense that sympathy had a wider and more nuanced field of action in “civilized” than in “savage” nations.’⁵⁶ This notion of historical progress had significant implications for so-called ‘savage’ or ‘barbarous’ cultures in the form of the cultural erasure implied in the process of assimilation to a collective and universal ideology of civilisation, replicating in national or regional terms the threat that sympathy poses to selfhood which Godwin explores in his novels. Wheelan argues that the stadial model is employed by Edgeworth in her national tales to suggest an Ireland which is a ‘bistadial society, in which the Protestant landed class occupied the same civilised stage as their British counterparts while the “Hibernians” (the native Irish) languished in an earlier feudal stage’; the past is evoked by Edgeworth in order to assimilate, civilise and

⁵⁴ Murray Pittock, ‘History and the Teleology of Civility in the Scottish Enlightenment’

⁵⁵ Wheelan, ‘Foreword: Writing Ireland, Reading England’, p. x.

⁵⁶ Robert Mitchell, *Sympathy and the State in the Romantic Era: Systems, State Finance, and the Shadows of Futurity* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 170.

modernise it into a version of Irishness that is compatible with Britishness.⁵⁷ In contrast, in *The Wild Irish Girl*, Owenson revives and reinvigorates Ireland's pre-colonial past, conceived in Enlightenment historiography as consisting of 'obsolete earlier stages to be cited only as antitheses to modernity, inhabited by cultures without history, archives, authority or civility.'⁵⁸ Owenson offsets the ancient Irish past against a 'depleted present', disturbing the coherence of the teleological stadial model of history by 'narrating the Irish nation as one which had regressed rather than advanced under colonialism'.⁵⁹

Owenson associates civility firmly with the ancient Irish past. Irish national identity is retrospective, forged through the cultural memory of a time when 'we were every where, and by all, justly famed for our patriotism, ardor of affection, love of letters, skill in arms and arts, and refinement of manners' (p. 177); even the contemporary Irish people, 'like the modern Greeks' are characterised by 'strong traces of a free, a great, a polished, and an enlightened people' (p. 178). Civility is a central feature of the 'genuine Irish character' but it is always 'inseparably connected' to 'ancient manners, modes, customs, and language' (p. 191). Owenson refashions the Edgeworthian paradigm of Irish improvement in order to suggest that refinement of manners and sensibility is incompatible with Irish identity under colonial rule. In fact, Owenson explicitly connects colonialism with the disintegration of Irish sociability and civilised sensibility. Father John deplores the status of Ulster as a 'Scottish colony' in which:

the ardor of the Irish constitution seems abated, if not chilled. Here the *cead-mile falta* of Irish cordiality seldom lends its welcome home to the stranger's heart. The bright beams which illumine the gay images of Milesian fancy are extinguished; the convivial pleasures, dear to the Milesian heart, sacred at the

⁵⁷ Wheelan, 'Foreword: Writing Ireland, Reading England', p. xiii.

⁵⁸ Wheelan, 'Foreword: Writing Ireland, Reading England', p. xvii.

⁵⁹ Wheelan, 'Foreword: Writing Ireland, Reading England', pp. xvii, xx.

prudential maxims of calculating interest, take flight to the warmer regions of the south; and the endearing socialities of the soul, lost and neglected amidst the cold concerns of the counting-house and the *bleach green*, droop and expire in the deficiency of that nutritive warmth on which their tender existence depends. (p. 198)

In this passage Owenson configures sensibility through the metaphor of botanical growth which permeates the novel.⁶⁰ This encoding of Irish national identity within geographical and natural discourse evokes both the eighteenth-century emphasis placed on national identity as a product of the landscape and Hume's counter-theory of national identity as a formation of sympathy. But it also recalls Connolly's notion of the tension between the aesthetic and economic value of the Irish landscape and demands a more nuanced reading within the context of stadial history. Jeanne Moskal points out that 'eighteenth-century thinkers frequently reconciled cosmopolitanism and nationalism in the metaphor of the garden', constructing the civilized world as an international garden comprised of flowers from the individual nations.⁶¹ Owenson would take pains to emphasise the inequality of this 'international garden' in *France* (1817) in which she compares the beautiful flowers in the gardens of the French peasantry to the 'peasant's hovel' in Ireland, which contain only the 'bearded thistle' or the 'scentless shamrock, the unprofitable blossom of the soil,

⁶⁰ For example, the Prince's account of 'the wreck of Irish greatness', in which 'the hand of prejudice and illiberality has sown the seeds of calumny and defamation, to choak up those healthful plants, indigenous to the soil, which still raise their oft-crushed heads, struggling for existence', p. 178. See also Horatio's father's construction of the Irish people within the formation of the botanical metaphor: Irish national virtues remain 'vital at the root' and want only 'encouragement', 'affection' and 'commiseration' to 'their pristine bloom and vigour' so that, 'like the tender vine [...] you will behold them naturally turning and gratefully twining round the fostering system', p. 251.

⁶¹ Jeanne Moskal, 'Gender, Nationality, and Textual Authority in Lady Morgan's Travel Books', in *Romantic Women Writers: Voices and Countervoices*, ed. by Paula R. Feldman and Theresa M. Kelley (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1995), pp. 171-93 (p. 185). Moskal cites Gerald Newman's idea of "'the civilized world as a great international community, a garden as Herder pictured it to which all the varying flowers, the English rose and German Kaiserblume as well as the French fleur-de-lis, contributed in some measure"', p. 185.

which creeps to be trodden upon'.⁶² She clearly rehearses this idea in *The Wild Irish Girl* by emphasising the inequality within Ireland itself through the botanical metaphor: the south remains a warm and 'nutritive' and organic habitat for the cultivation of sensibility and sociability which is under threat – in the sentimental-botanical lexicon, in danger of 'droop[ing]' and 'expir[ing]' – from the commercial cosmopolitanism of the colonised north. Sensibility, by implication, can only flourish in a localised environment which retains its identity against the assimilating force of colonial power.

The Wild Irish Girl makes a specific case against commerce for creating internal dislocation within Ireland, and disrupting the sensibility and sympathy that unites the Irish population. The colonised north of Ireland 'may be justly esteemed the palladium of Irish industry and Irish trade, where the staple commodity of the kingdom is reared and manufactured', but the rest of Ireland, 'devoted to [...] agriculture', can only observe as its worker 'famishes in the midst of an helpless family, or begs his way to England, and offers those services *there* in harvest time, which his own country rejects' (p. 192).

Reaping the benefits of historical progress and modernisation brought about through the union, the worker in the north 'enjoys the fruits of his industry, and acquires a relish for the comforts and conveniences of life' and 'a taste for comparative luxury' (p. 192).

Owenson's reference to the '*bleach green*' of textile manufacturing is significant within this context as an emblem of the commercial fourth stage of stadial development.⁶³

⁶² [Sydney Owenson] Lady Morgan, *France*, 2nd edn, 2 vols (London: Colburn, 1817), I, 47-48. It is notable that Owenson makes the link between flowers as a metaphor for national identity and their economic value: she goes on to state that '[f]lowers are not only a luxury to the French peasant: they are a commodity of profit' (I, 48).

⁶³ A bleach-green is an area used for the bleaching of fabrics in textile manufacturing. Antony Atkinson's description of the Mount Pleasant bleach-green near Strabane refers to 'its useful trade, which embraces an annual bleach of 8 or 10,000 pieces of that class of seven-eighths wide linens, commonly called Coleraines', 'which are usually disposed of in a finished state, in the markets of Dublin and London', Antony Atkinson, *Ireland in the Nineteenth Century, and Seventh of England's Dominion; Enriched with*

Indeed, in Antony Atkinson's 1833 *Ireland in the Nineteenth Century*, an account of a bleach-green four miles from Strabane in West Ulster is couched in precisely this terminology of civility. Described as part of a secluded and uncultivated locale, 'retired, like a wild Irish girl, rudely from the touch', Atkinson – in language that appropriates the lexicon of textiles and fashion – urges the linen merchant who owns the estate to

dress and civilize this comparatively rude and uncultivated piece of nature; and when he has tamed, educated, decorated, and made fit to appear in good company, we shall feel most happy to give it a distinguished place in the best assemblages of its own neighbourhood.⁶⁴

Given that the work is dedicated 'To the English Public' and that Atkinson's previous works of travel literature included *Ireland Exhibited to England* (1823), the political emphasis of the work is unsurprisingly pro-Union, designed to '[r]eview [...] the numerous and complex causes (political, ecclesiastical, and commercial) by which Ireland has been impoverished, divided, demoralized, and laid waste', and to '[secure] the rights of British connection to that country without a dissolution of the Act of Union'.⁶⁵ For Owenson, however, the cultivated luxury which characterises Enlightenment stadial history, rather than developing refined sensibility, dulls 'the florid virtues' and the 'warm overflowing of generous and ardent qualities' and the inhabitants of the north, although they are admirable, 'on the heart [...] make little claims, and from its affections they receive but little tribute' (p. 193).

The Wild Irish Girl's resistance to the imported framework of modern sensibility and refinement as a marker of historical progress problematises interpretations of the

Copious Descriptions of the Resources of the Soil and Seats and Scenery of the North West District (London: Hamilton and Adams; Liverpool: Marples, 1833), p. 313.

⁶⁴ Atkinson, *Ireland in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 313.

⁶⁵ Atkinson, *Ireland in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 1.

novel as a work advocating national assimilation and sympathy, in which, as Bridget Matthews-Kane suggests, ‘Celtic emotionalism’ could potentially ‘provide a curative for the materialism and pragmatism of the British temperament’.⁶⁶ In fact, it traces a process which reverses that posited by Matthews-Kane: British materialism blights Celtic emotionalism and destabilises Irish national identity. While the novel – as a series of ‘treatises on the unquestionable civility of ancient Irish culture’ – undoubtedly attempts to deconstruct the colonial binary of civility and savagery, its insistence on an ancient Irish civility and sensibility as fundamentally incompatible with British commercial ideology ultimately denies the possibility of a common Anglo-Irish sympathetic ideology that could effect cultural union.⁶⁷ Owenson resists the Enlightenment models of linear historical progress by bringing the primitive Irish past into the present, but this is not to imply that the model of romantic antiquarian nationalism is entirely idealistic.⁶⁸ The ancient Irish culture depicted in *The Wild Irish Girl* is ultimately regressive, isolated and unable to offer a solution to Irish economic and social instability.

The ending of the novel offers a final reminder of the political implications of the Enlightenment values of modernity and historical progress for Ireland. In Mortimer’s father’s letter, the discourse of stadial development and civility is employed as a means of culturally assimilating the Irish people to reinforce colonial power. In the letter, Irish

⁶⁶ Bridget Matthews-Kane, ‘Gothic Excess and Political Anxiety: Lady Morgan’s *The Wild Irish Girl*’, *Gothic Studies*, 5.2 (2003), 7-19 (p. 15).

⁶⁷ Julie Anne Miller, ‘Acts of Union: Family Violence and National Courtship in Maria Edgeworth’s *The Absentee* and Sydney Owenson’s *The Wild Irish Girl*’, in *Border Crossings: Irish Women Writers and National Identities*, ed. by Kathryn Kirkpatrick (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2000), pp. 13-37 (p. 25).

⁶⁸ As various critics have pointed out, the primitive nature of Inismore is static and limiting. See Andrews, who observes that, in the Castle of Inismore, ‘a feudal court survives [...] a way of life that has remained unchanged since the days of Ossian’, ‘Aesthetics, Politics and Identity’, p. 14. Heather Braun argues that Glorvina is ‘isolated by her primitivism’: she and her father are ultimately ‘other worldly beings’, ‘The Seductive Masquerade of *The Wild Irish Girl*’, *Irish Studies Review*, 13.1 (2005), 33-43 (p. 66). As Wheelan puts it, the inhabitants of Inismore remain mere ‘freeze-frame[s]’ of memory, ‘Foreword: Writing Ireland, Reading England’, p. xxii.

sensibility is associated with the martial valour and patriotism that precedes commercial civilisation in Smith's model of history.⁶⁹ This gesture simultaneously associates Irish culture with an undeveloped past and suggests that their clannish mentality can be directed for the benefit of the ruling classes through sentimental means. The Irish are 'brave' (p. 251) and loyal:

give them reason to believe you feel an interest in their welfare, and they will endeavour to promote your's even at the risk of their lives; for the life of an Irishman weighs but light in the scale of consideration with his feelings; it is immolated without a murmur to the affections of his heart; it is sacrificed without a sigh to suggestions of his honour. (p. 250)

Mortimer is urged to 'be ever watchful to moderate that ardent impetuosity, which flows from the natural tone of the national character, which is invariable concomitant of constitutional sensibility' (p. 251). His father suggests that the Irish require 'benevolence', 'tenderness', 'instruction' (p. 251) and 'reason and humanity' (p. 252) – in short, the virtues of a cultivated man of sensibility in Enlightenment rhetoric – in order for 'their lightened hearts [to] again throb with the cheery pulse of national exility' (p. 252).⁷⁰ The novel closes, then, with a Burkean construction of social bonds in which 'the order and stability of society and the state depend on the cultivation of the social passion of sympathy', one of the social passions which 'help to develop the two other major

⁶⁹ Juliet Shields observes in her discussion of Smith's notion of historical development that, as 'a tribal society progresses towards the telos of commercial civilization, its members acquire the prosperity, security, and leisure necessary to cultivate refined sentiments and to attend to the feelings of others'. As such, the 'martial, masculine virtues proper to primitive peoples' give way to a more feminised virtue based on sensibility, *Sentimental Literature and Anglo-Scottish Identity, 1745-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 29.

⁷⁰ As Wright observes, Mortimer's father 'sanctions the command through the rhetoric of a benevolence that expects gratitude rather than finds its own reward in the end of another's suffering – a rhetoric that locates power on one side and subordination on the other', *Ireland, India, and Nationalism*, p. 72.

social bonds, civility and patriotism'.⁷¹ Ultimately unable to bridge the gap of cultural difference, genuine Irish sensibility in *The Wild Irish Girl* is thwarted by an Enlightenment ideology of assimilation which reinforces colonial power and threatens the identity of the Irish state.⁷²

O'Donnel: Importing and Exporting Sentimental Nationhood

In the preface to *O'Donnel: A National Tale* (1814) Owenson announced a departure in novelistic style and a new focus on the "flat realities of life".⁷³ As part of her newly realistic style, Owenson had initially taken for the model of her hero the historical figure of Red Hugh O'Donnell (1572-1602), leader of a rebellion against English government in Ireland in 1593 and one of the leaders of Irish forces in the Nine Years' War. However, her project of using history to 'extenuate the errors attributed to Ireland' (xi) for the 'purposes of conciliation' (x) was thwarted by the violence and bloodshed she uncovered in her research: instead, she acknowledged that she had 'advanced [her] story to more modern and more liberal times, and exchanged the rude chief of the days of old, for his polished descendant in a more refined age' (xii). This historical transposition had a transformative effect on Owenson's version of the national tale. Where *The Wild Irish*

⁷¹ Eileen Hunt Botting, *Family Feuds: Wollstonecraft, Burke, and Rousseau on the Transformation of the Family* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006), p. 103. She states that, '[f]or Burke, civility is the art of adhering to the feminine, chivalrous, and aristocratic system of manners' (p. 103).

⁷² Other critics have noted a similar politics of assimilation and erasure in *The Wild Irish Girl*. See, for example, Patrick O'Malley, 'Owenson's "Sacred Union": Domesticating Ireland, Disavowing Catholicism in *The Wild Irish Girl*' in *Troubled Legacies: Narrative and Inheritance*, ed. by Allan Hepburn (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2007), pp. 26-52. O'Malley argues, within the context of Catholicism and Protestantism, that the novel 'reconciles its portrayal of essential alterity with its drive towards union precisely by erasing that which would have rendered Glorvina irredeemably exotic: essential Catholicism itself' (p. 30) and that it translates Ireland's 'difference into something more assimilable to a British notion of progress, more tractable to British aesthetic and religious ideologies, less wild', p. 34.

⁷³ [Sydney Owenson] Lady Morgan, *O'Donnel: A National Tale*, 3 vols (London: Colburn, 1814; Edinburgh: Goldie, 1814; Dublin: Cumming, 1814; repr. New York and London: Garland, 1979), I, ix. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

Girl was – despite its modern setting – limited by its nostalgic feudalism and its status, in Wheelan’s words, as an ‘entirely static stadial spectacle’,⁷⁴ *O’Donnel*’s vision of a ‘more refined age’ offers a fuller engagement with the stadial model of historical progress and its implications for post-union Ireland.

O’Donnel was published in 1814, the same year as Scott’s *Waverley* and Edgeworth’s *Patronage*, by Henry Colburn, who paid Owenson £500 with a bonus of £50 upon its reaching a third edition. The first edition of 2000 copies sold out quickly, the novel went into a third edition by 1815 and Ann Jones claims that ‘it was still being reprinted at the very end of the nineteenth century.’⁷⁵ Belanger observes that, given the hostile reception of her previous novels *Woman* and *The Missionary*, the reception of *O’Donnel* was ‘surprisingly muted’: ‘it was not widely reviewed, but was generally well received’.⁷⁶ This was, as Belanger points out, perhaps a result of the shift to a more realistic form of narration and away from the excess of the sentimental style that had received so much criticism in the earlier reception of Owenson’s work. Certainly, in a letter in July 1814 Scott praised the novel, declaring *O’Donnel* to be ‘incomparably superior to the Wild Irish Girl – having nature and reality for it’s [sic] foundation’ and he wrote of its ‘striking and beautiful passages of situation and description’ on rereading it in 1826.⁷⁷ Scott’s praise of the novel’s realistic style echoes that of the *Monthly Museum* review in April 1814, which claimed that ‘[t]he stile is much purer and more natural than

⁷⁴ Kevin Wheelan, ‘Foreword: Writing Ireland, Reading England’, p. xxii.

⁷⁵ Jones, *Ideas and Innovations*, p. 200. The latest edition cited by the *British Fiction Database* is in 1848. < <http://www.british-fiction.cf.ac.uk/titleDetails.asp?title=1814A045>> [accessed 14 June 2012].

⁷⁶ Belanger, *Critical Receptions*, p. 10.

⁷⁷ Walter Scott, Letter to Matthew Weld Hartstonge, 18 Jul 1814; Walter Scott, Journal Entry, 14 March 1826 in *British Fiction* < <http://www.british-fiction.cf.ac.uk/anecdotal/o-do14-41.html>> [accessed 14 June 2012].

any of Lady M's former productions',⁷⁸ and the *Critical Review* in September 1814 declared that '[a]s a national writer, we cannot too much admire her sentiments; and, as a descriptive writer, we hail her as the legitimate pupil of nature.'⁷⁹ This last quotation is a neat demonstration of the fact that realism and sentiment remain explicitly linked in *O'Donnel*: the realistic style of the novel works in conjunction with its wider aim of inciting readerly sympathy for the plight of the Irish people.

The complexities of the novel's plot and its resolution in the marriage union between the cosmopolitan O'Donnel and the Irish Duchess of Belmont reflect its explicit political agenda: the promotion of Anglo-Irish conciliation and Catholic Emancipation. The dispossessed national hero O'Donnel is lately returned to Ireland from many years' service in the Austrian army in order to claim his birthright. On arrival, he makes acquaintance with a party of English travellers which includes the enlightened absentee landowner Mr Glentworth, his opinionated and officious wife Lady Singleton, the sycophantic social climber Mr Dexter and the Irish governess to Lady Singleton's daughters Miss O'Halloran. The second volume is set in England, where O'Donnel visits the estate of Lady Llanberis along with a fashionable social set that includes the alluring widowed Duchess of Belmont, who is later revealed to be Miss O'Halloran, elevated in social status by a fortunate marriage. O'Donnel is the last descendant of the ancient Tyrconnel dynasty whose property has been expropriated by the English and his status as a Catholic Irishman renders him disenfranchised and impoverished, meaning that he is forced to seek a position in a foreign army. Fortuitously, the Duchess of Belmont has inherited the very Irish land that was appropriated from the Tyrconnels on her husband's

⁷⁸ *Monthly Museum*, 1 (Apr 1814), 430-34, cited in Belanger, *Critical Receptions*, pp. 130-35 (p. 135).

⁷⁹ *Critical Review*, 4th ser. 6 (Sept 1814), 277-88, in *British Fiction* < <http://www.british-fiction.cf.ac.uk/reviews/o-do14-41.html> > [accessed 15 September 2013].

death and her marriage to O'Donnell at the end of the final volume thus marks the restoration of his property and land.

The action in the novel's contemporary setting takes place against the backdrop of Irish history – undoubtedly retaining much of the emphasis Owenson had intended in her initial conception of the novel as operating within the field of historical fiction – and includes an extended interpolated narrative of the rebel Red Hugh O'Donnell, ancestor of Owenson's fictional hero. The result of the constant flux of historical time frames is, as Ferris puts it, 'an Ireland of different layers and different histories which stand in tense and shifting relation to one another' and which ultimately 'fracture any sense of the wholeness of national-historical time'.⁸⁰ *O'Donnell*, perhaps more so than any of Owenson's Irish novels, disrupts the generic categories of the national and the historical novel in its insistence that Irish national identity is inextricably linked to historical circumstance: the past is always to be found in the temporal space of the present. But, unlike *The Wild Irish Girl*, in its idealised vision of the ancient past, there is nothing nostalgic about *O'Donnell*. If *The Wild Irish Girl* reverses the teleological model of Enlightenment stadial history, *O'Donnell* – as part of Owenson's project of recasting her fiction in a 'more refined age' (p. xii) – provides a sustained account of the effect of civilising schemes for Irish progress in the post-Union period.

The novel has received far less scholarly attention than *The Wild Irish Girl*, and critical accounts tend to place less emphasis on the sentimental contexts. My discussion of *O'Donnell* is divided into two parts, which take two critical observations about the novel as their respective starting points. The first part stems from Wright's assertion that Owenson attempts to construct 'a national hero without flaws [...] by revaluing the

⁸⁰ Ferris, *The Romantic National Tale*, p. 87.

stereotype of the passionate Irishman through the Enlightenment ideal of manly sensibility’ but that O’Donnell remains a “man of feeling and spirit” as a national type rather than a liberal individual, and his return to Ireland stresses his powerlessness in civil terms’.⁸¹ Wright does not take either of these points further, but my discussion considers the implications of the Enlightenment ideal of sensibility in terms of Ireland’s civil powerlessness by considering the effect of Enlightenment formulations of refined sensibility as they relate to commerce and trade. The second part of my discussion attempts to reconfigure Ferris’s observation that *O’Donnell* ‘makes theatricality and self-display central motifs’, suggesting that these motifs are integral to Owenson’s concerns with Irish national identity.⁸² Ferris does not consider how this theatricality might be read within in terms of affective value: I want to expand her point to show that self-display in the novel is articulated within the framework of sentiment, focusing on the role of oratory and public performance as a medium of distribution for the values of a nationalised sensibility and civility.

Sensibility, civility and notions of international community became increasingly affiliated throughout the eighteenth century. William Robertson expanded on Smith’s theories with ‘an idea of change as it is effected by a process of transmission or imitation’, in which the process of civilisation was facilitated by international sympathy.⁸³ In his words:

All the civilized nations of Europe may be considered as forming one exclusive community. The intercourse among them is great, and every improvement in

⁸¹ Julia M. Wright, ‘National Erotics and Political Theory in Morgan’s *The O’Briens and the O’Flahertys*’, *European Romantic Review*, 15.2 (June 2004), 229-41 (p. 231).

⁸² Ferris, *The Romantic National Tale*, p. 71.

⁸³ William Robertson, Unpublished Sermon, 1788, cited in Karen O’Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment: Cosmopolitan History from Voltaire to Gibbon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 150.

science, in arts, in commerce, in government introduced into any of them is soon known in the others, and in time is adopted and imitated. Hence arises [...] the general resemblance among all the people of Europe, and their great superiority over the rest of mankind.⁸⁴

The ‘intercourse’ Robertson describes is the circulation of sympathy, as individual nations move towards a community of ‘resemblance’ via cross-cultural communication and circulation. In the field of literary studies, the interplay between commerce, economics and sensibility has been well documented. As Markman Ellis points out, eighteenth-century commercial rhetoric frequently adopted the physiological analogy the body politic of sensibility to denote circulation in trade.⁸⁵ Commerce would bring about a sentimental reformation of society as the benefits of capitalism lead to improved standards of living and refined taste and manners. Ellis’s study of eighteenth-century sensibility includes a chapter on canals and commerce, focusing in particular on Henry Brooke’s novel *The Fool of Quality* (1765-70) in terms of the interaction and tension between commercial wealth and aristocratic virtue. I want to suggest that the metaphor of canals takes on an even greater significance when read against the backdrop of commercial improvement in Ireland in the post-Union period. Part of the re-evaluation of the Irish landscape that Connolly identifies involved the potential to capitalise on the geographical networks of rivers and lakes in order to facilitate avenues of importation and exportation. Through its focus on canals (among other forms of geographical infrastructures) *O’Donnell* provides an extended critique of ascendancy schemes of

⁸⁴ Robertson, Unpublished Sermon, cited in O’Brien, p. 150.

⁸⁵ Markman Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility: Race, Gender and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 154. Ellis notes that the economic writing of Daniel Defoe, William Petty, Charles Davenant and David Hume all used the notion of circulation as a fundamental feature of economic discourse, citing Defoe’s statement that “Trade is made to circulate round the Nation, as the Blood in the Body”, p. 154. Ellis also points out that ‘this medical discourse on nervous structure provided for the political economy of Smith, Kames and Hume an account of the way an enlightened society operates’, p. 154.

improvement within the context of civilisation and sentimental assimilation inherent to the cultural model of Britishness.

Eighteenth-century Britain underwent vast modification of the transport infrastructure as part of widespread industrial and agricultural reform; Ellis suggests that the ‘canal age’ dates from ‘the completion of the Newry Canal in Ulster between 1732-40’, reaching its peak in the period 1755 to 1794 and lasting until the ‘eclipse of the canals by the growth of the railways in the 1830s’.⁸⁶ In England, a commercial network in which major ports linked with inner counties through rivers was supplemented by canals, providing connection to major industrial and agricultural regions, thus facilitating a nationwide market economy. Contemporary accounts of canal construction frequently invoked the discourse of sensibility to describe their benefits. In England, Robert Whitworth, MP and later engineer and canal-designer, argued that canals would reform manners of the people: ‘their rude and unpolished behaviour will be altered and soothed into the most social civility and good breeding by the alluring temptations of the beneficial advantage of trade and commerce’.⁸⁷ Commerce, therefore, enables a redistribution of sensibility from the aristocratic classes to the ‘rude and unpolished’ masses, hence promoting social equality.

In Ireland, Henry Brooke, Anglo-Irish author of *The Fool of Quality*, had published a tract promoting construction of canals in Ireland entitled *The Interests of Ireland* in 1759. The work outlines the centrality of geographical communication in facilitating national improvement through commerce, arguing that God created the sea, lakes, rivers and streams as ‘Avenues of [...] beneficent Communication’ so that ‘Man,

⁸⁶ Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility*, p. 141.

⁸⁷ Robert Whitworth, cited in Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility*, p. 143.

following the Example and Precedent of his benevolent Creator, might, in Time, by the Effect of his own Skill and Labour, knit into one Family, and weave into one Web, the Affinity and Brotherhood of all Mankind' through commercial interaction.⁸⁸ Brooke gives various examples of canals elsewhere in the world, such as those in China, which 'serve as Links or Chords to the grand Community of the *Chinese*, they bind Region to Region, House to House, and Man to Man, and hold the Whole as one System or Family together'.⁸⁹ The notion of trade reinforcing social bonds is obvious here and Brooke's metaphor recalls Hume's formulation of sympathy in which '[a]s in strings equally wound up, the motion of one communicates itself to the rest; so all the affections readily pass from one person to another'.⁹⁰ Canals could potentially operate in the same way, binding man to man in a geographical sense, but also facilitating the transmission of the refined manners and sensibility that were the eventual outcome of commercial wealth. The unnavigable landscape of Ireland is 'like a Carcass whose exterior Parts are kept warm by outward Applications, while the Heart and Vitals are inanimate, that should naturally communicate both Action and Nourishment to the whole System'.⁹¹ The landscape in this metaphor, then, wants only the chords or nerves of canals to animate and increase the circulation of the whole system of the body politic.⁹²

⁸⁸ Henry Brooke, *The Interests of Ireland Considered, Stated, and Recommended, Particularly with Respect to Inland Navigation* (Dublin: Faulkner, 1759), pp. 21, 22.

⁸⁹ Brooke, *The Interests of Ireland*, p. 25. Croker also makes the comparison between China and Ireland within the context of canals, stating that 'China may be truly called the country of canals, those watery ways being here almost as numerous as the high roads in Great Britain', *An Intercepted Letter*, p. 11.

⁹⁰ Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, III, 204.

⁹¹ Brooke, *The Interests of Ireland*, p. 66.

⁹² The Irish body politic in the period was a conflicted site within the context of the 1801 union. Ferris cites Byron's 1812 speech on Ireland to the House of Lords in which he declared "'Thus has Great Britain swallowed up the parliament, the constitution, the independence of Ireland, and refuses to disgorge even a single privilege, although for the relief of her swollen and distempered body politic'", *The Romantic National Tale*, p. 4. The body politic evoked in Brooke's account of Irish canals, then, must be read in terms of a system of communication which operates not only internally but also as system of nerves which links Ireland to the larger body of the United Kingdom.

The frequency with which the trope of canals appears as an emblem of sympathetic cohesion in eighteenth-century economic writing is suggestive of parallels with Romantic national and historical fiction, given their focus on sympathy as a means of national cohesion and their engagement with ideas of historical progress and national improvement. Indeed, in the early nineteenth century canals were frequently employed as a signifier of modernity and progress, located within the paradigm of stadial history in which an increase of trade would engender civil ideology in the commercial nation state.⁹³ Owenson herself replicated Brooke's sentiments about Ireland's geographical potential for trade in one of the letters added to *St Clair* in 1812, demonstrating an interest in Irish commercial activity during the period in which she wrote *O'Donnel*.⁹⁴ *St Clair* writes to his father that 'their lakes, more numerous than in any other country in the world of the same extent, so important in a commercial view, affording, as many of them do, within a few miles of the sea, a free navigation' (I, 34). In this case, however, the improvement of transport links in order to facilitate commerce is represented as a specifically English interest: *St Clair* tells his father that the Irish are entirely unaware of the geographical merits of their own country. The implication here is obvious: the Irish people remain static and rooted in the ancient past but the construction of canals would

⁹³ For example, Walter Scott makes a number of references to the Caledonian canal in his writing as a signifier of modernity and progress. In his imitation of Charles Dupin's 'Lines on the Caledonian Canal' he appropriates aesthetic terminology, beginning with the lines 'Far in the desert Scottish bounds I saw/Art's proudest triumph over nature's law;/Where, distant shores and oceans to combine,/Her daring hand has traced a liquid line', Walter Scott, Imitation of Charles Dupin's 'Lines on the Caledonian Canal' in Charles Dupin, *The Commercial Power of Great Britain; Exhibiting a Complete View of the Public Works of This Country*, 2 vols (London: Knight, 1825), II, 215-16. This emphasises the way that canals and refined civilisation were linked in contemporary discourse, as a feature of the landscape that it is at once geographical and aesthetic.

⁹⁴ Owenson had begun *O'Donnel* by 1812, see 'O'Donnel', in *British Fiction* <<http://www.british-fiction.cf.ac.uk/publishing/o-do14-41.html>> [accessed 15 July 2013].

set them on the path of historical progress through commerce towards modernity and civility.

The need for commercial progress in Ireland is an implicit but central theme in Owenson's controversial work of travel writing *France* (1817), in which she, as Benjamin Colbert puts it, 'perceived in the example of post-revolutionary France an image of social amelioration among the agrarian peasantry that contrasted sharply with her native Ireland.'⁹⁵ This image of the French peasantry is consistently associated with transport links to highlight the benefit of trade for social improvement. Owenson's praise of the role of improvements in transportation in aiding commercial activity was satirised in William Playfair's *France as it is, not Lady Morgan's France* (1819). Playfair objected to Owenson's depiction of France as 'a modern Arcadia, where the *patriarchal peasantry* live as in the golden age' and argued that the 'terrible will be [the] disappointment' of the traveller who actually visits the country.⁹⁶ He condemns Owenson's praise of the French transport links, presenting a biting satire of her picturesque description of the public roads in France and declaring that 'the greatest part of the country is too far from the sea-coast to be commercial'.⁹⁷ Playfair's suggestion that Owenson's intention in depicting the 'happy life of the peasantry' of post-revolutionary France was to 'excite a desire of imitation, and create discontent in Britain, where people formerly considered themselves more free and happy than in France' is telling.⁹⁸ The use of the term 'excite' recalls the eighteenth-century physiological discourse of sensibility but it is the word 'imitation' that is key here, if we recall Robertson's contention that imitation and similitude are the key

⁹⁵ Benjamin Colbert, *Shelley's Eye: Travel Writing and Aesthetic vision* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2005), p. 32.

⁹⁶ William Playfair, *France as It Is, not Lady Morgan's France*, 2 vols (London: Chapple, 1819), I, 7.

⁹⁷ Playfair, *France*, I, 17.

⁹⁸ Playfair, *France*, I, 9.

to a civilized European community. Conservative anxieties about the circulation and redistribution of sensibility are evident in Playfair's narrative: for Britain to experience the potentially democratising and equalising effects of wealth from trade appears to be less than desirable.

If *St Clair* and *France* advocate the improvement of transport links to aid commerce and historical development in Ireland, *O'Donnel* complicates this by highlighting the uneasy power balance associated with the model of creating an international 'Brotherhood of all Mankind' – to use Brooke's term – based on trade within the complex power dynamic of Britain.⁹⁹ The novel, through its depiction of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy as cosmopolitan travellers, provides an explicit critique of the prominent discourse of Irish improvement in the early nineteenth century and its attempts to address the problematic nature of 'closed cultural economies' 'resisting improvement'.¹⁰⁰ This process of improvement attempted to encourage imports and exports in both an economic and a cultural sense, opening up, as it were, the Irish economy and culture to external influences. Contemporary discussions of the improvement process are rooted in the eighteenth-century ideals of benevolent and practical sensibility as means of erasing difference: by alleviating economic hardship, a sentimental community of equality is created, which is precisely the root of Playfair's anxieties in his criticism of *France*.

In the characters of the absentee landowner Mr Glentworth (whose name recalls that of the Earl of Glenthorn, protagonist of Edgeworth's *Ennui*) and his wife Lady Singleton, *O'Donnel* exposes the limitations of the ideology of practical humanity as a

⁹⁹ Brooke, *The Interests of Ireland*, p. 22.

¹⁰⁰ Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 63.

means of Irish improvement. Lady Singleton epitomises the English Enlightenment ideology of commercial and sympathetic colonial reform: a ‘traveller by *profession*’ (I, 3), she is intent on addressing what she terms the ““semi-barbarous”” resistance to ““innovation”” (I, 5) she perceives in Ireland by exerting her programme of ‘*radical reform*’ by ‘examining, changing, correcting, and improving’ (I, 8). Her planned improvements are wide-ranging: enriching soil (I, 17), cultivating bogs (II, 70), renovating roads (I, 18; II, 70), erecting an aqueduct (I, 44), establishing a ‘bobbin-lace manufactory’ (I, 213), building schools (I, 213) but the majority of her efforts are focused on constructing canals (I, 5, 18, 85).¹⁰¹ Her schemes are modelled on principles of cultural assimilation, or, to use Robertson’s term, imitation: her canal system is based on that of Newcastle, the soil enriching process has taken place in Derbyshire and the school buildings are Lancasterian.¹⁰² Although Lady Singleton features largely as a figure of satire in the novel, Owenson is careful to invest her schemes with some degree of credibility. Her proposals for canal building are evidently based on the success of canals in England in facilitating a nationwide market economy which enabled a redistribution of wealth and her knowledge of the Irish canal system demonstrates her awareness of the problems inherent to the geographical landscape of Ireland. However, Lady Singleton’s

¹⁰¹ The improvement of roads in early-nineteenth-century Ireland can be read in terms of the same debates that contextualise my discussion of canals. Roads, however, were more closely related to the experience of travellers in Ireland. See Ferris, *The Romantic National Tale*, p. 18 and Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, p. 26.

¹⁰² Joseph Lancaster’s system of monitorial education, in which more able students taught those who were less advanced, making the system economically viable, was hailed for its potential to ‘produce a literate, disciplined, moral, orderly population, able to understand its obligations both civil and religious’ and to promote fellow-feeling by attendance at public schools’, Bruce Curtis, ‘Monitorial Schooling, “Common Christianity,” and Politics: A Transnational Controversy’, in *Transatlantic Subjects: Ideas, Institutions, and Social Experience in Post-Revolutionary British North America*, ed. by Nancy Christie (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2008), pp. 251-82 (pp. 257, 258). Lady Singleton makes the same link between education, trade and national progress, declaring that the Irish ““want nothing but manufactories, commerce, and schools, to be a very clever people indeed”” (I, 213).

assertion that “[t]here is nothing so much wanted here as a canal from Ballynogue to Dublin” (I, 3) undermines her self-professed desire to help the Irish people: the desire for a canal which links her husband’s estate to the commercial centre of Dublin suggests that the sympathetic rhetoric of reform in Ireland, as Owenson perceived it, often masked the self-interest of the ruling classes. As Mr Glentworth points out, the systems of reform imposed by his wife mean that, since their arrival in Ireland, “the common people of Ballynogue have been saved the trouble of thinking themselves, by the kind and constant interference of their superiors” (I, 215-16). Imported schemes of improvement, it seems, are ultimately damaging to Irish national identity; Owenson’s critique of canal construction and education constitutes a bitter satire on the project of civilising the Irish population for the economic benefit of the ascendancy.

She goes on to interrogate the formation of benevolent improvement in Ireland through her representation of the sentimental Mr Glentworth. She critiques the Edgeworthian archetype of the absentee landlord returned to his property in order to expel an exploitative and profiteering agent in an act of paternalistic benevolence by investing Glentworth with bounteous liberal feeling but making him entirely inadequate in practice. Visiting his Irish estate for the first time, the ‘liberal and enlightened, benevolent and temperate’ (II, 60) Glentworth is alert to the neglect and dispossession of the Irish people, stating that “I have always felt an interest for this country, for which, it has been truly said, *‘God has done so much and man so little’*” (II, 59). His initial condemnation of the inequality in Ireland marks him as a potentially beneficial influence on the Irish people, capable of removing difference and instating equality within the framework of sentimental sociability. He argues that the importance of education is “to

fit us for the enjoyment of *civil rights*, by moulding us to the performance of *civil duties*” (I, 207-08) and his vision of an improved and civilised Ireland is one of sentimental similitude, a constitution which “free from exclusions by equal laws, equal protection, and equal privileges, engages every member of the community in the interests, defence, and preservation of the whole” (I, 210-11). He is also acutely aware of the implications of political inequality in Ireland, in which where “ascendancy is claimed by one tribe or cast, over others, subsisting under the same government, there is little chance of internal union” (II, 212). O’Donnel urges Glentworth not only to break with the tradition of absenteeism himself, but to influence other landowners to do the same:

‘remain amongst us. Extend your pacificating influence to the utmost verge of your sphere; and encourage by the success of your example our other great English landholders, who draw their ample revenues from our plenteous soil, to visit, to know, and to acknowledge us.’ (II, 60)

This plea envisages a reversal of the cultural assimilation implied by the stadial model of historical progress, proposing an exportation of Irish cultural identity to England which emphasises the value of the smaller nation. Needless to say, this project to encourage English sympathy towards the Irish is never fulfilled: the only way Owenson can envisage progress in Ireland is for it to come from within.

The discourse of benevolent and sentimental improvement articulated by Glentworth and Lady Singleton is unable to forge any meaningful relationship to place. On the death of Glentworth in the second volume of the novel after having only visited Ireland once, his initial role as a presence of active benevolence is superseded by a month-old fragment of his obituary column in a newspaper. This scrap of paper replaces Glentworth’s commitment to progress with a circular model of historical time in the bleak

announcement of his succession by his son, currently residing within the ascendancy enclave of Christ Church College, Oxford (II, 85). Likewise, Lady Singleton's schemes for improvement are fittingly relocated to the individualistic and sentimental realms of the epistolary form. In *O'Donnel*, sensibility and civility function as markers of an explicitly English culture of feeling which is incapable of inciting real change. Progress in Ireland cannot be hastened by the imported Enlightenment ideals of civilised commercial modernity. Rather, it involves a complex process of reconciliation of past and present which can only emerge from within Ireland itself.

If *O'Donnel* rejects the imported British ideological framework of sentimental civility, it follows that the novel demonstrates a preoccupation with the consolidation of an authentically Irish national identity based on sensibility. The second part of my discussion focuses on the politics of self-display and self-determination within the context of Irish national selfhood. While Owenson rejects the Enlightenment formulation of sensibility as it relates to stadial historical progress in her interrogation of Irish improvement, the act of national self-determination in *O'Donnel* incorporates Enlightenment constructions of sensibility in various ways. To return to the framework of cultural importation and exportation, the ways in which Irishness must be performed or exported are integral to national self-awareness. As such, communication – and more specifically, sentimental communication – is a central theme in *O'Donnel* as means of defining Irishness.

Communication between different components in a system is perhaps the central premise of sensibility, manifested variously in models of physiology, sympathy and economy. Likewise, the related terms of “conversation”, “intercourse” and “commerce”

could be used synonymously to denote economic, cultural or sexual transaction.¹⁰³ While ‘conversation’ explicitly indicates the mutual exchange central to the politics of sensibility, Paul Goring has shown that rhetoric – specifically in the forms of preaching, oratory, elocution and stage performance – also appropriated the dynamics of sentimental communication, whereby the audience are roused to sympathetic identification with the speaker in an act of public emotional appeal and affect.¹⁰⁴ In national terms, a number of recent commentators have considered the cultural significance of speech and language in the period. Murray Pittock observes that ‘[t]he growth of standard English speech and style can be seen as visible proxies for British civilization and a unitary public sphere’ and that ‘linguistic incorporation was resisted’ in Wales, Scotland and Ireland.¹⁰⁵ Timothy Webb offers an insightful discussion of Romantic perceptions of Gaelic, noting that ‘Hazlitt rightly recognized that public speaking constituted an important element in national culture and that it could provide important clues to the dominant characteristics of individual nations.’¹⁰⁶ Hazlitt’s own account of eloquence in ‘Mr. Brougham – Sir F. Burdett’ constructs a polarised model of Irish and Scottish oratory in which the former is imaginative, emotive and “entirely the offspring of *impulse*” and the latter the reasoned offspring of “*mechanism*”.¹⁰⁷ Hazlitt’s construction of Irish eloquence is, as Webb points out, evidently politically loaded and his prose might be read as suggesting that ‘the

¹⁰³ Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility*, p. 139.

¹⁰⁴ Paul Goring, *The Rhetoric of Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

¹⁰⁵ Murray Pittock, *Scottish and Irish Romanticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 21, 22. See also David Duff and Catherine Jones, ‘Introduction’, in *Scotland, Ireland, and the Romantic Aesthetic*, ed. by Duff and Jones (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2007), pp. 11-31, in which they discuss the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge – directed against the Gaelic language – and the ‘connection between orality and immorality’ (p. 20).

¹⁰⁶ Timothy Webb, ‘Impulsive Aeronauts and Railway Rationalists’, in *Scotland, Ireland, and the Romantic Aesthetic*, pp. 32-54 (p. 41).

¹⁰⁷ William Hazlitt, ‘Mr. Brougham – Sir F. Burdett’, in *The Spirit of the Age; or, Contemporary Portraits*, 2nd edn (London: Colburn, 1825), p. 295.

Irish were still at an early stage of civilization, largely because of lack of education.¹⁰⁸

This account, along with others cited by Webb, demonstrates the extent to which eloquence was a marker of civility against which Irish diction was often represented as imaginative, disordered and excessive.¹⁰⁹

In Owenson's fiction, orality is central to the construction of Irish culture and as a means of inciting sympathy for the plight of Ireland. In the 'Prefatory Address' to the 1846 edition of *The Wild Irish Girl*, Owenson praised the *Irish Melodies* of Thomas Moore in which he 'sung the wrongs of Ireland to her own touching melodies, – thus awakening sympathies which reason could not rouse, and making the ear a passage to the heart and understanding.'¹¹⁰ She also emphasised the power of political oratory, noting that when the novel was first published 'the Catholic Association, had not yet awakened public opinion through the stirring eloquence of its great leader [Daniel O'Connell], and gifted and brilliant members'.¹¹¹ By emphasising the complexities of cross-cultural linguistic representation within British aristocratic society, Owenson makes explicit the connection between speaking and politeness that Goring identifies as a key feature of eighteenth-century oratory and rhetoric. As he puts it, 'the performing body had the potential to symbolise and broadcast a particular society's notions of civility'.¹¹² This

¹⁰⁸ Webb, 'Impulsive Aeronauts', p. 48.

¹⁰⁹ See also Wright, *Ireland, India, and Nationalism* where she quotes the anonymous reviewer of John Philpot Curran's *Speeches*, who writes of Irish eloquence that "'Being the natural language of fearless genius and impassioned feeling, it will not always be found to express judicious sentiments, or correct reasoning'", p. 36.

¹¹⁰ Sydney Owenson, 'Prefatory Address to the 1846 Edition', in *The Wild Irish Girl* (Pickering and Chatto), pp. 245-63 (p. 256). See Ferris, *The Romantic National Tale*, pp. 63-65, on the importance of song in Owenson's national tales.

¹¹¹ Owenson, 'Prefatory Address to the 1846 Edition', p. 256.

¹¹² Goring, *The Rhetoric of Sensibility*, p. 34. The potential of this 'broadcasting' in terms of national identity were wide-ranging; in his discussion of Thomas Sheridan's theories on elocution Goring suggests that, for Sheridan, a 'standardisation and refinement of the way people spoke [...] would strengthen the nation both as a unified domestic unit pervaded throughout its constituent parts by the inhabitants' sense of their shared Britishness and as a world power made stronger by an internally coherent identity', p. 92.

notion of standardisation recalls the complexities of imported culture discussed in terms of commerce; linguistic self-representation in *O'Donnel* is similarly fraught with the politics of cultural assimilation and self-determination.

In the second volume of the novel, O'Donnel's account of his ancestral history to the English travellers is followed by a series of remarks on his style of narration:

It was the rapid modulation of the speaker's voice; the changeful expression of his countenance; it was the warm effusion of a soul prone to enthusiasm; it was the language dictated in the energy and emphasis of the heart which charmed their imagination, and held attention captive. (II, 57)

The link between speech and sensibility here is obvious in the references to the power of 'effusion' on the imagination but it is significant that the effect of O'Donnel's eloquence is such that 'few among his auditors [...] had directed their interest to the point which naturally called for it. They thought not of *causes*, though they were moved by effects. Even the *matter* of the relation struck them less than the *manner*' (II, 57). This echoes the scene of Murtoch O'Shaughnessey's narrative in *The Wild Irish Girl* which recalls the uneasy dynamic of sympathy in which the agent's pain becomes a source of aesthetic pleasure in the spectator.¹¹³ Certainly, Owenson addresses the colonial politics of spectatorship throughout her fiction, but *O'Donnel* reverses the trend of the earlier novels by making her protagonist the subject of spectacle rather than the observer.¹¹⁴

When Lady Florence attempts to incorporate O'Donnel within a discourse that fuses the aesthetics of the sublime with Burkean chivalric hierarchy, he demonstrates a

¹¹³ Wright, *Ireland, India, and Nationalism*, p. 67.

¹¹⁴ See Fiona Price, *Revolutions in Taste, 1773-1818: Women Writers and the Aesthetics of Romanticism* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2009). Price suggests that the discourse of taste in *O'Donnel* overlaps with Addison's suggestion that 'spectatorship operates as a kind of substitute for actual possession', but that Owenson counters English gestures of 'imaginative possession' by making the Irish active participants: they 'are capable not only of forming part of such spectacle but of judging and analysing it', p. 161.

self-conscious resistance to forming a picturesque spectacle for the English travellers. On viewing a bridge over a chasm between two cliffs, Lady Florence states that

‘I should infinitely prefer [...] seeing a picturesque figure upon that wonderful bridge to the finest spectacle of the opera. I should not suppose [...] that there now exists a man, who, to gratify a woman’s wishes, would place himself in so perilous a situation; and yet one reads of such things in old legends and romances [...] but the days of chivalry are over.’ (II, 225)¹¹⁵

Despite the fact that he accedes to her request by crossing the bridge, O’Donnel’s sardonic reply that ‘it diminish[es] a little the glory of the enterprise, that having seen even women and children pass it, in search of birds’ eggs and sea-weeds on the opposite rocks, I have [...] passed and re-passed it, without any tendency to vertigo’ (II, 225-6) serves as a subtle statement of noncompliance with Lady Florence’s imagined performance of Romance, resisting his assigned role in her spectacle.

The second volume of the novel sees a shift in location from Ireland to the villa of Lady Llanberis near London, where O’Donnel has joined the fashionable party along with the charismatic Duchess of Belmont (formerly Miss O’Halloran). The Duchess entertains the company with ‘a little French romance’ (II, 306) composed by Rousseau which she is confident will please the fashionable crowd. Although the narrator declares that ‘[i]t was scarcely possible to judge of her voice, she sung in so suppressed a tone; and it was *impossible* not to accuse her of affectation, from the peculiar look she threw in her eyes and countenance’, a ‘rapturous applause’ nonetheless follows this ‘indifferent execution of this indifferent composition’ (II, 308). Declining to perform an encore, she offers instead ‘an Irish howl’ (II, 308) but cuts the ancient Irish melody short and refuses

¹¹⁵ Reviewers of the novel subscribed to this chivalric discourse, with the *Augustan Review* describing O’Donnel as ‘a true knight-errant’, *Augustan Review*, 2 (May 1816), 518-21, cited in Belanger, *Critical Receptions*, p. 128.

to finish it. On discussing her performances with O'Donnel, she admits that she 'sung for her audience' (II, 311) and that she 'call[s] up the same look for all sorts of sentiments, from the *Nina pazza*, to the *Blue Bells of Scotland*' because 'the world loves a little acting' (II, 312). While O'Donnel dislikes the Duchess's execution of the Rousseau composition, he acknowledges the powerful effect that Irish music has upon him: the sympathetic appeal of the unfinished melody is so great that he declares '[t]here have been periods in Irish story, when the policy of a foreign ruler should have prohibited the singing of such a song with such a countenance' (II, 312-13). The comparison Owenson makes between the effect of two performances on the fashionable audience is powerfully suggestive of the difficulties in the staging of national sentiment in society from which the Irish characters can count on, as O'Donnel puts it, 'neither similitude, sympathy, nor coincidence' (II, 209).

The performances staged at Longlands underscore the conflicted nature of the relationship between role playing and promoting cross-cultural sympathy. As David Marshall points out, creating sympathy is dependent on a certain type of self-display: 'For Smith, acts of sympathy are structured by theatrical dynamics that (because of the impossibility of really knowing or entering into someone else's sentiments) depend on people's ability to represent themselves as tableaux, spectacles, and texts before others'.¹¹⁶ This creates a troubling conflict for O'Donnel in which the potential benefits of arousing sympathy for the state of Ireland by 'dramatising' Irishness must be offset against the dangers of being read as an amusing spectacle of cultural otherness. As Webb notes, theatrical representations of Irishness and Scottishness were constructed with an

¹¹⁶ David Marshall, *The Surprising Effects of Sympathy: Marivaux, Diderot, Rousseau, and Mary Shelley* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 5.

English audience in mind and these ‘audiences often delighted in the perceived otherness of the Irish and the Scots (among others) and representations of national identity were often the product of a deliberate strategy’.¹¹⁷ Certainly, while the eloquence of O’Donnel’s faithful servant McRory is initially appealing to the fashionable spectators, he is ultimately transfigured into a spectacle of eccentric foreignness, occupying ‘a place which heroes, orators, actors, jugglers, ministers, and dancing-dogs, had all in succession occupied before’ (II, 241). O’Donnel’s roles as a ‘*Pet Irishman*’ (III, 142) and ‘*raconteur*’ (II, 168) reveal a profound discomfort with the aristocratic coterie’s penchant for Irish spectacle. Ultimately, Irish attempts to perform national identity in the context of refined British society are reduced either to exotic otherness, comedic eccentricity or the ‘Irish howl’ of the Duchess.

The second part of the third volume of *O’Donnel* reinstates its hero in Ireland. Although his birthright and property have been restored through his marriage, the novel ends with a bleak reminder of his disenfranchised status as a Catholic. That the final paragraphs should be focused on oratory is further suggestive of Owenson’s conviction that verbal communication of Ireland’s plight is inextricably linked to political progress. In a discussion about the future plans of O’Donnel, McRory tells the Duchess that he should be a ‘*parliament man*’ (III, 330), a career for which his sensibility would make him highly suitable because ‘he *spakes* from the *heart out*, that he would coax the very birds out of the trees [...] for he is an illigant fine speaker, anyway, and has beautiful English!’ (III, 331-32). Likewise, his love for his country, his faithful tenants ‘that doats on the very *sod* he treads on’ (III, 331) and his support of the clergy (for few ‘gentlem[e]n pays his ministers money with more heart’, III, 331) mean that he would

¹¹⁷ Webb, ‘Impulsive Aeronauts’, p. 53.

find sympathy for his political beliefs amongst his fellow countrymen. The affective value of the oral and bodily eloquence possessed by O'Donnel would operate via a model of sympathetic contagion, whereby 'through emotional communion' it would be possible to 'create complicity between speaker and audience'.¹¹⁸

The injustice of O'Donnel's ineligibility as a Catholic to stand for parliament is underscored by McRory's statement that 'there is no *rayson* in life, why he shouldn't be a great parliament man' and the Duchess's response that there is indeed none, 'at least, that you and I can see' (III, 332). The sentimental power of oratory is, then, curtailed by British colonial power. The elevation of 'emotionalism as a means of empowerment for men in their public roles' that Goring identifies as a feature of contemporary discourses on elocution cannot be experienced by the Catholic O'Donnel in the current state of Ireland.¹¹⁹ *O'Donnel* articulates the problem of maintaining a stable national identity within the assimilatory politics of union. Attempts to export Irishness through self-display, performance and oratory are ultimately rendered powerless against the imported standards of British civil society. For Owenson, this colonising of Ireland through the civilised and commercial ideology of sensibility would lead inexorably to effacement of 'authentic' Irish cultural identity. If *St Clair*, *The Wild Irish Girl* and *O'Donnel* can be read as resisting and interrogating this cultural homogenisation in various ways, *Florence Macarthy* was the first novel to emphatically construct an alternative formation of nationalism.

¹¹⁸ Goring, *The Rhetoric of Sensibility*, p. 40.

¹¹⁹ Goring, *The Rhetoric of Sensibility*, p. 10.

Florence Macarthy: Sensibility and Cosmopolitanism

Florence Macarthy (1818) received a hostile reception from the monthly reviews, although it went on to achieve considerable popularity, reaching a fifth edition by 1819 and being dramatised at some point before 1821.¹²⁰ Unsurprisingly, in accordance with the trend in the reception of her novels discussed at the start of the chapter, reviewers objected not only to the novel's unabashed political agenda but to Owenson's affected and sentimental style. The *British Review*'s account of *Florence Macarthy* was scathing, referring to its 'ignorance, and affectation, and vulgarity' and condemning it as 'tarnished tinsel and cast-off frippery' while objecting to the 'noxious opinions both in religion and politics' which made the novel nothing less than 'moral pestilence'.¹²¹ This tension between dismissing the novel as feminine trash and genuine anxiety about the potential influence on its readership is familiar: the power of sentimental style to convey emotion and promote identification in the reader is a concern that permeates the conservative discourse of print culture the Romantic period. No doubt highly alert to the reception of her earlier writing, Owenson explicitly attempts to emphasise the realism of her novel in the 'Advertisement', refuting the accusation that the Irish '[clank] their chains to excite compassion' (I, iii) and stating that *Florence Macarthy* 'is no pathetic appeal to public compassion' (I, iv). While she does acknowledge that her intention is to 'excite sympathy, and awaken justice' (I, vi), she is keen to point out that this is to be done through an accurate representation of the state of Ireland: 'For the fidelity of [the author's] delineations, whoever has resided in Ireland will readily vouch; and if the features are sometimes deeply tragical, and sometimes broadly ludicrous, the fault lies in

¹²⁰ Jones, *Ideas and Innovations*, pp. 220, 315.

¹²¹ *British Review*, 13 (May 1819), 482-94 (p. 483).

the originals, and not with their illustrator' (I, v). This appropriation of artistic terminology recalls Gilpin's account of the picturesque and the tension that exists between realistic representation and artistic deception: while Owenson's narrative may purport to be realistic, the reviewers are suspicious of its ability to manipulate the emotions of the reader.

Certainly, they are scathing of its hybrid discourse of realism and sentiment. The *Edinburgh Monthly Review* bemoaned the 'impertinent intrusion of certain notes, which continually force themselves on the eye, at the bottom of the page, as if to remind the reader, by their pedantic realities, that what is affording him the greatest gratification is merely fictitious.'¹²² Likewise, the *British Critic* stated that

[t]his new method of assigning to fictitious personages traits of character borrowed from real actors on the stage of the world [...] may be useful to give a zest to the palled appetites of subscribers to the circulating library; but it can scarcely be considered as coming within the limits of fair play in authorship.¹²³

Of course, the merging of fiction and reality did not seem to be a problem in the novels of Scott, but Owenson's radical political agenda made the credibility added by realist fictional devices highly undesirable. Certainly, in its more complimentary review of *Florence Macarthy*, the *Champion and Sunday Review* hit upon this very comparison in its discussion of Scott and Owenson as rival 'historical novelists', asserting that '[i]f, in estimating the pretensions of these candidates for the *civic* wreath of literature, the palm of profundity and erudite attainment must be awarded to the former [Scott], that of a

¹²² *Edinburgh Monthly Review*, 1 (Jun 1819), 655-62 (p. 660).

¹²³ *British Review*, p. 487.

more needful political benevolence is indisputably the right of the latter'.¹²⁴ Scott, then, is configured in terms of aesthetic merit, Owenson in terms of political action.

There is little doubt that *Florence Macarthy* embodied all of the dangerous propensities of the novel of sensibility: affective style, a 'realistic' but pathetic account of the state of Ireland and its people and a self-proclaimed desire for political engagement. It is also a highly self-conscious novel which aims to do far more than merely incite emotion in the reader. Its plot is similar in many ways to that of *O'Donnel*. Beginning with the hero Commodore Fitzwalter's return to Ireland from the South American wars against the Spanish, the novel charts the reintegration of Fitzwalter into Irish society, before he is revealed in the final volume as the rightful heir to the Fitzadelm estate. Fitzwalter's identity remains unknown to the reader for much of the novel and he finds his parallel in the figure of Lady Clancare, who adopts a variety of disguises and identities before she is exposed as the eponymous Florence Macarthy. Just as in *O'Donnel*, the progression of the fortunes of the hero and heroine are set against the backdrop of Anglo-Irish aristocratic society, yet *Florence Macarthy* is the first of Owenson's novels to offer a detailed fictional account of Irish land agents in the form of the unscrupulous and corrupt Crawley family. Through both the Crawleys and the social circle of the fashionable Lady Dunore, *Florence Macarthy* continues the critique of Enlightenment models of stadial history and Irish improvement that Owenson had begun in *O'Donnel*: as Thomas Tracy suggests, the novel 'mounts a challenge on numerous

¹²⁴ *Champion and Sunday Review* (20 Dec 1818), 808, cited in Belanger, *Critical Receptions*, p. 197.

levels to the social vision expressed in *Ormond* and ‘burlesques Ascendancy schemes of economic and educational reform’ that are typical in Edgeworth’s fiction.¹²⁵

The *Champion and Sunday Review* began its review of *Florence Macarthy* with a series of musings on the ‘progress of society’ and the novel.¹²⁶ It describes the development from ‘times of ignorance and barbarism’ to the modern age of ‘civilization and commerce’, drawing parallels with the development of the novel form, which has progressed to a degree that its ‘powerful attractions’ have rendered it ‘a vehicle of almost every species of moral, intellectual and political instruction.’¹²⁷ The newly civilised form of the novel is closely allied to sensibility; the aim of instruction in *Florence Macarthy* is explicitly stated within the formation of sympathy as a medium of promoting national conciliation. Owenson seeks

not only to describe, but to vindicate an oppressed, a slandered and a plundered people, who ought as much to be regarded as our brethren, and to be loved and cherished as the co-heirs of equal rights and advantages, as if it were a river only, and not a narrow channel of the sea, that separated the sister shores.¹²⁸

The terms used here recall Brooke’s promotion of trade and civility to consolidate the ‘Affinity and Brotherhood of all Mankind’ and also the emerging tendency in political discourse of the Romantic period to invoke ‘Ireland’s geographical location as irrefutable argument in favour of Union.’¹²⁹

Connolly quotes the Scottish peer Lord Minto’s speech to the British House of Lords in 1799, where he argued that the union was in effect endorsed by geographical

¹²⁵ Thomas Tracy, *Irishness and Womanhood in Nineteenth-Century British Writing* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), p. 51.

¹²⁶ *Champion and Sunday Review*, cited in Belanger, *Critical Receptions*, p. 197.

¹²⁷ *Champion and Sunday Review*, cited in Belanger, *Critical Receptions*, p. 197.

¹²⁸ *Champion and Sunday Review*, cited in Belanger, *Critical Receptions*, p. 197.

¹²⁹ Brooke, *The Interests of Ireland*, p. 22; Connolly, *Cultural History of the Irish Novel*, p. 54.

proximity: “these two sister Islands, not merely contiguous, but lying apart from the rest of Europe, as it were in the very bosom and embraces of each other, and reciprocally dependent”.¹³⁰ The sentimental and familial imagery employed here implies a reciprocal sympathetic bond of shared interest but, as Connolly points out, geography was just as frequently used as an argument against union. She cites an article from the Irish newspaper *The Northern Star* which emphasises the “dangerous tho’ narrow sea” – a pointed contrast to the Irish sea as a ‘narrow river’ in the review cited above – and declares that “Nature by its situation points out, that [Ireland] should be an independent state, and that both islands may be united under one head: they are still separate bodies, each possessing its own heart and its own members”.¹³¹ These discussions of union in terms of the sentimental body politic offer a neat demonstration of the troubled relationship between Ireland and England as ‘united’ or ‘separate bodies’. Indeed, they might be read in terms of the metaphor of conjoined twins that Godwin employs in *Mandeville* to denote the disturbing potential of sympathetic identification: for Ireland, union with Britain threatened to engulf it both physically and culturally. The idea employed in Minto’s speech about Ireland and England forming a united body within the larger geo-political system of Europe is explored by Owenson in *Florence Macarthy*. The Ireland of *Florence Macarthy* is consistently framed in terms of its sympathetic relationship with the wider international community but it ultimately rejects the importation of cultural values implied by this model: instead, Owenson emphasises a more localised, fragmented and hybrid form of national identity, suggesting that the political and cultural dislocation of Ireland can only be repaired from within.

¹³⁰ Connolly, *Cultural History of the Irish Novel*, p. 54.

¹³¹ Connolly, *Cultural History of the Irish Novel*, p. 55.

The discussion that follows considers Owenson's strategy of linking Chinese and Irish culture to critique the model of international sympathy. To locate it first within the Enlightenment context, China functions as a persistent metaphor of otherness in eighteenth-century moral philosophy. If we accept Hume's and Smith's contention that proximity aided sympathetic identification, then it follows that China serves as an appropriate example of 'otherness', in terms not only of its Eastern exoticism but of its distant geographical location and its vast population of 'strangers'. Smith's famous example of an earthquake in China mobilises the imaginary event as a test of the capacity for sympathy to extend to unknown people in unknown location. He writes that

[b]efore we can make any proper comparison of those opposite interests [of a stranger from our own] we must change our position. We must view them, neither from our own place nor yet from him, but from the place and with the particular eyes of a third person, who has no particular connexion with either, and who judges with impartiality between us.¹³²

He continues with the supposition that 'the great empire of China, with all its myriads of inhabitants, was suddenly swallowed up by an earthquake'.¹³³ Smith argues that 'a man of humanity in Europe' would 'express very strongly his sorrow' and that he might consider the effect of the disaster on European commerce but that ultimately he would continue 'with the same ease and tranquillity, as if no such accident had happened'.¹³⁴ He goes on to describe a scenario in which the European man, '[i]f he was to lose his little finger tomorrow [...] would not sleep to-night' but that 'provided he never saw [the Chinese

¹³² Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 6th edn, 2 vols (London: Strahan and Cadell; Edinburgh: Creech and Bell, 1790), I, 334. The 1790 version of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* included, as the title page announced, 'considerable additions and corrections' and was the first edition in which the example of the Chinese earthquake occurred.

¹³³ Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1790), I, 334.

¹³⁴ Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1790), I, 334, I, 334, I, 335.

victims], he will snore with the most profound security over the ruin of a hundred millions of his brethren'.¹³⁵ Smith ends his discussion of this example by posing the question of whether '[t]o prevent, therefore, this paltry misfortune to himself, would a man of humanity be willing to sacrifice the lives of a hundred millions of his brethren, provided he had never seen them?'¹³⁶

While in Smith's example China functions as a suitable metaphor for distance and otherness as they relate to sympathy, recent work on the role of Chinese culture in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century intellectual thought has sought to complicate this seemingly straightforward conception of China as a symbol of 'otherness'. Eric Hayot's study *The Hypothetical Mandarin* considers the phenomenon of 'the sustained and persistent appearance of the Chinese under the sign of sympathy, and of sympathy under the sign of the Chinese' during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹³⁷ Hayot notes that China occupies a unique role in this history of culture and civilisation because 'modern Europe encounters China as the first contemporaneous *civilizational* other it knows, not as a "tribe" or nation [with a] comparative lack of culture, technology, or economic development'.¹³⁸ In fact, China – as is reflected in Brooke's praise of its canals – had 'significant economic and technological advantages over Europe in the manufacture of certain especially desirable goods, most notably tea, silk, and porcelain, whose exchange dominated, financially and figuratively, the maritime economies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries'.¹³⁹ As a result of its commercial economy, Hayot

¹³⁵ Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1790), I, 335.

¹³⁶ Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1790), I, 335-36.

¹³⁷ Eric Hayot, *The Hypothetical Mandarin: Sympathy, Modernity, and Chinese Pain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 8.

¹³⁸ Hayot, *The Hypothetical Mandarin*, p. 9.

¹³⁹ Hayot, *The Hypothetical Mandarin*, p. 9.

suggests that in Western historiography and philosophy, China ‘has been most consistently characterized as a limit or potential limit, a horizon neither of otherness nor of similarity, but rather of the very distinction between otherness and similarity’ which operates within the field of ‘the dream of the universalization of culture’.¹⁴⁰ This notion of China as a means of emphasising the formation of ‘otherness’ and ‘similarity’ that was central to contemporary visions of international community provides a meaningful context within which to read the links between China and Ireland in the nineteenth-century novel.

The relationship between Ireland and China in the popular and literary imagination of the early nineteenth century must be located within the context of what Joseph Lennon has termed ‘Irish Orientalism’ in his book considering the complex politics of the Irish relationship to Asian and West Asian cultures. British writers had long emphasised the ancient Eastern origins of the Irish, a link which Lennon reads as having its ‘roots in ancient Greek and Roman depictions of borderlands: in Ireland, Asia, and Africa where outlanders with magical and barbaric traits lived’.¹⁴¹ Irish writers also appropriated this connection with the East, imagining the Orient as an ancient homeland. *The Wild Irish Girl* was one of the most prominent texts to emphasise this connection in its depiction of an ancient Celtic Irish culture with an Oriental heritage.¹⁴² Owenson’s emphasis on the Eastern origins of Irish culture served the immediate purpose of refuting British constructions of Irish barbarism but it also interrogated the contemporary binary formation of peripheral cultures: civilised/savage, reason/emotion and so forth. Lennon’s

¹⁴⁰ Hayot, *The Hypothetical Mandarin*, p. 8.

¹⁴¹ Joseph Lennon, *Irish Orientalism: A Literary and Intellectual History* (New York: Syracuse, 2004), p. 5.

¹⁴² See also Evgenia Sifaki, ‘A Gendered Version of Greekness: Lady Morgan’s *Woman: Or Ida of Athens*’, in *Women Writing Greece: Essays on Hellenism, Orientalism and Travel* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008), pp. 55-75.

account demonstrates the way that Eastern culture was appropriated as a means of emphasising both otherness and similarity: Orientalism simultaneously underscores Irish barbarism and incorporates Irishness within an ancient international culture. It becomes increasingly clear, then, that when it comes to Ireland, Eastern culture does not follow the simple model of ‘otherness’ that it occupies in Smith’s account; rather, it draws attention to the very categories of otherness and similarity within the context of post-union Ireland.

The contemporary association of China and Ireland in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is best understood if read in terms of Hayot’s conception of China as a ‘*civilizational* other’ rather than the conventional other of Smith’s formulation.¹⁴³ China is a particularly appropriate counterpart to Ireland in a commercial sense, as Hayot points out in his discussion of the Chinese manufacture and export of luxury goods. The discourse of commerce and trade, as discussed earlier in the chapter, is of course closely linked to that of taste and sensibility in the early nineteenth century. Indeed, Robert Markley points out that discourse of civility was frequently associated with China in period, arguing that civility was used to ‘override linguistic and cultural differences’ and to emphasise that ‘a basic sympathy of cultural, military, and economic interests exist[ed] between European merchants and Chinese and Manchu authorities’.¹⁴⁴ Accordingly, China serves as an appropriate metaphor not only for the Irish potential for improvement through trade and manufacturing but also for the capacity of Ireland to assimilate within the model of Enlightenment taste and sensibility required for historical progress.

¹⁴³ Hayot, *The Hypothetical Mandarin*, p. 9.

¹⁴⁴ Robert Markley, ‘Civility, Ceremony, and Desire at Beijing: Sensibility and the European Quest for “Free Trade” with China in the Late Seventeenth Century’, in *Passionate Encounters in a Time of Sensibility*, ed. by Maximillian E. Novak and Anne Mellor (Newark: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Press, 2000), pp. 60-88 (p. 62).

John Wilson Croker's anonymously-published *An Intercepted Letter from J– T–, Esq. Writer at Canton, to His Friend in Dublin, Ireland* (1804) engages directly with this context of taste and assimilation. The pamphlet is allegedly 'entirely of *Eastern* extraction' and is ostensibly written from the city of Canton but is clearly, in his own words, a 'lively and humorous satire on Dublin'.¹⁴⁵ The fact that the two cities can be conflated in this way attests to Hayot's reading of China as a '*civilizational* other', for the similarities between the commercial cultures of Canton and Dublin are central to Croker's discourse. The way the letter describes Dublin emphasises Ireland as a nation dislocated from European civilisation. The letter writer advises his correspondent that 'you are not to expect that their common sense is the common sense of Europe' and that 'every thing here is extraordinary to an [sic] European eye'.¹⁴⁶ He also makes clear that Dublin society, despite its commercial nature, is not compatible with European standards of taste: 'if we argue from what [their] shops profess to contain, they would appear to be the most elegant and tasteful, but the truth is, they are neither one nor the other'.¹⁴⁷ In terms of assimilation with the international community, Croker laments that the Irish are 'not indeed very willing to borrow the policy of other nations', for 'perhaps they have not even heard of these instances'.¹⁴⁸ However, he ends with the hope that the discourse of enlightened reason will eventually unite the international community: 'I begin to hope that reason is becoming, every day more and more a citizen of the world, she begins to speak every language, and every country on earth will soon be hers'.¹⁴⁹ The construction here is telling: reason will simultaneously be a 'citizen of the world' and in total

¹⁴⁵ [Croker], *Intercepted Letter*, 'Appeal to the Public', no page nos.

¹⁴⁶ [Croker], *Intercepted Letter*, pp. 2, 1.

¹⁴⁷ [Croker] *Intercepted Letter*, p. 22.

¹⁴⁸ [Croker], *Intercepted Letter*, p. 28.

¹⁴⁹ [Croker], *Intercepted Letter*, p. 41.

possession of it. Like Canton, Dublin is both like and unlike the Enlightened European culture to which it is compared.

It is hardly surprising that Croker and Owenson differ in their responses to the politics of cultural assimilation. *Florence Macarthy* can be read as a vehement rejection of the homogenising cultural values invoked by Croker in the *Intercepted Letter*: Owenson rejects the notion that Ireland should conform to Enlightenment standards of taste and civility, suggesting instead that change can only come about if focus is directed towards its own internal politics and national identity.¹⁵⁰ This account of Irish cultural identity in *Florence Macarthy* can be best understood if read within the context of cosmopolitanism and nationalism in the early nineteenth century. In her account of cosmopolitanism in Morgan's writing, Julie Donovan argues that Owenson's cosmopolitanism could 'confound a British-created statehood to which Owenson resisted declaring loyalty' and that it suggested Ireland would benefit from 'thinking beyond its borders to allies in mainland Europe and beyond'.¹⁵¹ While many aspects of Donovan's argument are convincing in her discussion of Morgan's travel writing and personal connections with Europe, the politics of cosmopolitanism in *Florence Macarthy* demand a more nuanced reading. Donovan is unable to offer a persuasive explanation for the fact that the 'transnational experience filtering through the domestic setting of the novel' contradicts the novel's concluding statement that 'Ireland can be best served in Ireland'

¹⁵⁰ Although there is no reference to the pamphlet in Owenson's correspondence, it is highly likely that she would have been familiar with it. It is mentioned in her memoirs, in which William Hepworth Dixon makes reference to Croker, noting that '[a] man of such attainments and such principles was not likely to find grace in the eyes of Sydney Owenson', *Lady Morgan's Memoirs: Autobiography, Diaries and Correspondence*, ed. by William Hepworth Dixon, 2 vols, 2nd edn (London: Allen, 1863), pp. 336-37.

¹⁵¹ Julie Donovan, *Sydney Owenson, Lady Morgan and the Politics of Style* (Palo Alto, CA: Academica Press, 2009), pp. 134, 137.

(IV, 282).¹⁵² My discussion of the novel suggests that this apparent contradiction can be explained by reading it within the context of the politics of colonial assimilation.

Esther Wohlgemut's *Romantic Cosmopolitanism* (2009) emphasises two distinct facets of cosmopolitanism in the nineteenth century. The first is 'the notion of heterogeneity or asymmetry as it applies to the internal structure of the nation: the concept of the nation as a non-unified identity'.¹⁵³ The second 'has to do with the nation as part of an international structure' and the fact that 'the internal integrity of a nation depends – paradoxically – on something outside itself'.¹⁵⁴ My reading of *Florence Macarthy* takes these facets as my starting point. Wohlgemut's use of the phrase 'something outside itself' recalls the problems inherent to sympathy as a means of facilitating the 'international structure' of a global community because of the potential effacement of individual national identities. I want to suggest that in *Florence Macarthy*, Owenson rejects the international structure implied by English discourses of union and calls for renewed focus on the internal state of Ireland. What emerges from the novel is a vision of Ireland which is a non-unified identity but which embraces local community and local responsibility, articulating the competing tendencies of Enlightenment sociability and Romantic self-determination.

Wohlgemut takes the political philosophy of Kant as her starting point, suggesting that 'his political thought [...] combines the cosmopolitan and the national to create a non-unified model of nation confounding those critical formulations that map the relationship between cosmopolitanism and nationalism in strictly oppositional terms'.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Donovan, *Lady Morgan and the Politics of Style*, p. 178.

¹⁵³ Wohlgemut, *Romantic Cosmopolitanism*, p. 3.

¹⁵⁴ Wohlgemut, *Romantic Cosmopolitanism*, p. 3.

¹⁵⁵ Wohlgemut, *Romantic Cosmopolitanism*, p. 10.

In other words, Kant combines the Enlightenment construction of cosmopolitanism as a form of universal homogeneous internationalism with a form of nationalism in which both the individual state and the international community are essentially heterogeneous. In contrast, Burke's model of British nationalism represents a 'unified model of the nation that ultimately excludes the cosmopolitan'.¹⁵⁶ In his formation of national identity as deriving from the 'little platoon' of familial and local attachments, he creates an idea of the state as self-enclosed.¹⁵⁷ He configures cosmopolitanism as a corollary of French Jacobinism in which the dangers of identification (and it is notable that his terminology often appropriates the discourse of Enlightenment sympathy) with other nations destabilises British nationalism and patriotism and undermines local attachment. Sensibility undoubtedly had its place as a promoter of patriotism – as the reviewer of *St Clair* put it in the extract quoted earlier, the 'love of our country' 'makes [the heart] swell with a soldier's energy when danger threatens [our native land]' – but universal sympathy had the potential to be highly destructive if it extended in the wrong direction.¹⁵⁸ In *Florence Macarthy*, however, there is nothing Jacobin about the cosmopolitanism of either the Anglo-Irish aristocracy or the Irish agent classes. Nor does Owenson see cosmopolitanism in the Kantian sense of promoting a 'perfect civil constitution'.¹⁵⁹ On the contrary, in both *O'Donnel* and *Florence Macarthy* cosmopolitanism is linked to the teleological model of stadial history in a way that configures the latter as a colonial threat to Irish national identity. In doing so, the novels rehearse an ideological position which is

¹⁵⁶ Wohlgemut, *Romantic Cosmopolitanism*, p. 22.

¹⁵⁷ Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* [1790] (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 47.

¹⁵⁸ *Anti-Jacobin Review*, 40 (Dec 1811), 404-14, cited in Belanger, p. 61.

¹⁵⁹ Immanuel Kant, 'An Idea of an Universal History in a Cosmopolitan View', in *Essays and Treatises on Moral, Political, and Various Philosophical Subjects*, 2 vols (London: Richardson, 1798), I, 411-32 (I, 421).

more akin to nineteenth-century conceptions of nationalism that emphasise the importance of self-determination.¹⁶⁰ However, ultimately, Owenson offers a model of Irish national identity that fuses cosmopolitanism and nationalism, emphasising a cosmopolitan ethos of a sympathetic international community which eschews the assimilation implied by Enlightenment models of sympathy in favour of a nationhood based on sentimental local attachment.

Lord Frederick Eversham, a fashionable and satirical friend of Lady Dunore, appropriates the metaphor of Chinese culture as it relates to Irish national identity in a way that is powerfully suggestive of Hayot's formulation of China as at once other and not-other. It also recalls Homi Bhabha's conception of colonial mimicry in which the colonised other is 'almost the same, but not quite': the transformation must remain incomplete in order to maintain the difference between the coloniser and the colonial subject.¹⁶¹ The configuration of the Crawley family as figures of the Chinese court emphasises the anxiety that assimilation to an international community of civilisation necessarily implies an effacement of authentic Irish culture. Like Lady Clonbrony in *The Absentee*, the Crawleys are rendered ridiculous through their attempts to mimic 'high' civilised culture.¹⁶² This mimicry is also inextricably linked to sensibility and politeness by Owenson; the local agent Derby Crawley is 'a close copyist of the sentimental jargon and foreign slip-slop of his sister' (II, 41-2) but also of the aristocratic ethos of cosmopolitanism. The first appearance of the Crawleys aligns them with the pomp of

¹⁶⁰ See Wohlgenut, *Romantic Cosmopolitanism*, p. 10, for a fuller discussion of these models of nationalism.

¹⁶¹ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 86.

¹⁶² In *The Absentee*, Edgeworth uses the motif of Chinese culture to critique the attempts of the Irish aristocracy to mimic British standards of taste and civility. The fashionable interior decorator Mr Soho festoons the Lady Clonbrony's house with Eastern décor for her gala which includes a Chinese-themed room, with 'Chinese pagoda paper, with the porcelain border and josses, and jars, and beakers, to match', Maria Edgeworth, *The Absentee* [1812] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988; repr. 2001), p. 13.

military ceremony: ‘Mr Crawley, accompanied by his sons, (the two elder and himself in full uniform)’ approaches the watching crowd ‘riding at the head of the Dunore yeomanry cavalry’ (II, 139). Lord Frederick’s exclamation on perceiving this spectacle makes a specific connection between this militarism and Chinese culture: ““By Confucius [...] here is the whole armed militia of the celestial empire, led on by the chief mandarin of the province, issuing forth to meet us on our imperial progress, with gongs beating, and colours flying. This is too much!”” (II, 140). Lord Frederick’s configuration of the Crawleys as Chinese marks them out as cultural interlopers at odds with their Irish identity. That they are evidently not authentically Chinese draws attention to the gap between their Irishness and their ‘Chineseness’ and, in doing so, draws attention to the contrast between their self-constructed cosmopolitan identity and ‘authentic’ Irishness.

Furthermore, the militaristic metaphor aligns them with the imperial power of the ascendancy. Owenson makes this link with oppressive colonial rule still more specific by configuring the Crawley family as a microcosmic parallel to the Irish government. Lord Frederick’s impression of Irish culture recalls to him:

something he had heard or read of the formal puerilities which distinguish the government and court of China; and from the moment he discovered the similitude, Ireland was to him the *celestial* empire, the castle of Dublin, TIEN SANG, or the HEAVENLY SPOT; and secretaries, chiefs, and subs, aides-de-camp, and officers of the household, were *chop-mandarins* of every coloured button in the prismatic scale. (II, 172)

Owenson’s arch footnote which declares that from the ““heavenly spot”” of Dublin castle, ‘all that is good and great is supposed to emanate’ (II, 172) and Lord Frederick’s observation that ‘a court without government, a representative of majesty without power,

patronage, or influence, seemed [...] to him an incongruous combination' (II, 172)
emphasises the ineffective and unstable nature of colonial rule.

Both the Crawleys and the Irish government are culturally distanced from genuine and authentic Irish concerns by their assimilation to the international teleological formulation of civility. Furthermore, the cosmopolitanism of the Crawleys is linked to their corruption and self-interest: in response to hearing the false rumours of insurrection initiated by the Crawleys, Lord Frederick remarks,

'Are the reports we have heard of incipient rebellion in the celestial empire really true, or are they only got up by the chop-mandarins for their own special purposes? I dare say that [...] Duke Conway Townsend Crawley, of the peacock's feather, is at the bottom of all this; or my own ching-foo, of the yellow button, is amusing himself with a plot.' (II, 255-56)

This is an interesting reversal of Burke's anxiety that cosmopolitanism, in its promotion of identification with foreign nations (namely France), could lead to political unrest in Ireland. Here, cosmopolitanism is linked not to unified national identification but to individual self-interest. That the Crawleys manipulate the unrest of the Irish population to consolidate their own power underscores the way that their self-fashioning as members of the cosmopolitan aristocratic classes is entirely at odds with sympathy for the local Irish community. Owenson suggests that colonial intervention in Ireland has, through the attempt to foster an international sameness between Ireland and Britain that reinforces colonial power, fundamentally destabilised Irish national identity. What remains is an unnatural, incoherent and anachronistic hybridity in the Irish national character that inhibits improvement and progress. The sensibility of the Crawleys is affected, inauthentic and designed to further their own influence through mimicry of the

ascendancy; as a result, the Irish populace are condemned as a brutalised and primitive ‘other’ in their own nation.

Wohlgemut argues that Edgeworth’s writings ‘produce an understanding of the nation as neither tightly bordered [...] nor borderless’ and I want to suggest that a similar phenomenon is at work in *Florence Macarthy*.¹⁶³ While Owenson critiques the potentially destructive nature of cosmopolitanism, her vision of Irish national identity is still articulated in contrast to Burke’s insular model of nationalism. Cosmopolitanism, she suggests, in the form of an international community based on genuine feeling, can in fact supplement local attachment instead of eliminating national difference. *Florence Macarthy* is insistent upon the need for a localised Irish national culture that is sympathetic to needs of the community. The cosmopolitanism discourse Owenson appropriates is not one that attempts to assimilate Irish national identity with the British colonial teleological of civility and politeness; rather it serves as a means of emphasising Ireland’s oppression and, by identifying with other nations, resists a British-centred identity. Fitzwalter, as a man who ‘belong[s] to the world’ (I, 5), rather than to a specific nation, is best placed to implement this sympathetic cosmopolitanism in Ireland. He links the plight of Ireland to the oppression he has witnessed during his military career, lamenting the ‘oppression and cruelty of the colonial legislatures’ in Spanish America, ‘which have so long bathed the richest country of the world with the tears and blood of her children’ (III, 131) and stating that ‘whatever be the colour of man struggling against oppression, the language of energetic minds is still the same’ (III, 136). His vision of

¹⁶³ Wohlgemut, *Romantic Cosmopolitanism*, p. 72. Likewise, in Edgeworth’s model of cosmopolitanism ‘neither partisan nor absentee landlord can qualify as properly Anglo-Irish; the partisan’s loyalty is uncritical and limited to one nation, while the absentee landlord’s removal from and lack of interest in Ireland prevents his full participation in the term’, p. 81.

freedom and liberty is couched in cosmopolitan terms: he argues that ‘whatever region [man] inhabits’ holds ‘a fearful and an humiliating history’ (III, 139) but that we should

‘take him when we can, in his best aspect, free and enlightened; so blessed by singularity of temperament, so formed of happy elements, that, like the mild Peruvian, he performs the rites of the heart, whose incense smells to heaven, and heaping on his sunny altars the fruits and odours of his luxuriant soil.’ (III, 139-40)

Fitzwalter’s vision is based on the idea of a fundamental international sympathy based on the ‘rites of the heart.’

Florence Macarthy – under the identity of Lady Clancare, which itself aligns her with sympathy for the local community – provides a sentimental counter to the Crawley family, using the principles of sympathy and assimilation on a local level to raise the condition of the inhabitants. Like Fitzwalter, her own cosmopolitan upbringing is configured by Owenson as a means of increasing her sympathy: she has been brought up in Ireland by her Irish grandfather, forced by her mother to enter a Spanish convent, travelled to a ‘distant land’ with her father in a ‘military life’ (II, 275) and then finally returned to Ireland alone and in poverty. Florence declares that, through her work and application, “‘I do much in giving an example of constant and ceaseless industry and activity to my people. When I am not writing, for I write for bread, I am planting potatoes, or presiding over turf bogs; or I am seated with my wheel in a barn’” (III, 269-70). Here, the politics of mimicry and imitation are configured as a constructive force that will encourage improvement on a local level, as opposed to absorbing the Irish people into the civilised cultural nexus of British culture. Florence hopes that that her own Irish identity will enable her integration within the local community, for she has been ‘born

and reared among them, speaking their language, and assimilating to them in a thousand ways' (III, 270).

The revised model of nationalism represented by Florence is based less on civility and progress than on communication and sentimental communion with the local people. She takes on the role of 'the idol of popular feeling' (III, 64) and, when she is taken prisoner by Mr Crawley, '[h]undreds of wild, but strong affectioned persons, had gathered for her protection and rescue' (III, 64). Likewise, when the crowd rebel against the arrests of Florence and Fitzwalter later in the novel they become a wild 'mob' (IV, 235), directed by contagious emotion. The civil institutions of the military and the clergy are unable to calm the crowd; it is only when Florence addresses them in Irish but 'neither in command nor supplication' (IV, 235) that any effect is produced: as she speaks a 'new impulse seemed to be given to the susceptible feelings of the auditory she addressed' (IV, 235-36) and they draw back and drop their weapons. The genuine sympathy and sensibility of the Irish Florence and Fitzwalter are thus revealed as the only viable means of consolidating unity amongst the Irish population: as the novel closes we are told that 'they acted, with their accustomed energy and perseverance, upon the dictates of experience, and illustrated, by their example, the truth of a maxim now more generally felt and admitted, that: IRELAND CAN BEST BE SERVED IN IRELAND' (IV, 281-82).

In *Florence Macarthy*, Owenson constructs a model of Irish nationhood which embraces hybridity. Gottlieb suggests that the construction of an international sympathy which may efface individual national identity breeds a desire for 'smaller communities [...] to retain an independent existence in their respective *gemeinschaften*, rather than

become the anonymous subjects of a larger *gesellschaft*'.¹⁶⁴ While this is clearly a concern of all of the novels discussed in this chapter, *Florence Macarthy* does not go as far as to propose a unified and insular form of Burkean nationalism. Owenson does, as various critics have pointed out, propose a more unified model of Ireland which rejects the fragmented social structure in which the aristocracy, agent classes and peasantry all exist in opposition to one another.¹⁶⁵ However, she resists the construction of an inward-looking Ireland by configuring in Ireland 'a more precarious and amorphous principle of sociality forged in unofficial associations at once local and cosmopolitan'.¹⁶⁶ Her response to the form of an international sentimental community which effaces individual difference is to represent a nationalism which embraces difference and emphasises local and not international attachment.

Owenson appropriates sensibility in various and complex ways in the novels discussed in this chapter to in order to offer an interrogation of Enlightenment sympathy as model for the union of Britain and Ireland. Her fiction suggests that the cultural assimilation implied by international communities based on modernity and civility are fundamentally damaging to Irish national identity: the fashionable De Vere's declaration in *Florence Macarthy* that 'all countries are alike: little masses of earth and water; where some swarms of human ants are destined to creep through their span of ephemeral existence' (I, 11) is a bleak vision for the Irish nation within this formulation. I do not intend to suggest that Owenson rejects sensibility as means of promoting national feeling;

¹⁶⁴ Gottlieb, *Feeling British*, p. 57.

¹⁶⁵ See Thomas Tracy, *Irishness and Womanhood*, in which he argues that *Florence Macarthy* 'represents an *entire* nation, not merely one narrow and circumscribed version of a nation', which attempts to rectify the exclusion of the Gaelic Irish, p. 52. Tracy states that Morgan's 'central argument is that no country ruled by such a fractured and alienating system can be integrated successfully into a nominally United Kingdom', p. 60.

¹⁶⁶ Wright, *Ireland, India and Nationalism*, p. 74.

rather, the novels discussed here represent an explicit rejection of sensibility as a marker of politeness and civility. For Owenson, the value of affect can be found in a genuine and 'authentic' Irish sensibility which can consolidate national identity and bring about improvement from within. Patriotism based on feeling, as outlined in Burke's model of nationalism, cannot function in an Ireland ruled by a Protestant ascendancy: sensibility must be allowed to promote identification and eliminate hierarchy rather than consolidating the Enlightenment philosophy of stadial progress which legitimises British colonial rule.

Chapter Five

Walter Scott, Historical Realism and Sympathy

‘[D]uality and doubleness’ are the defining features of the Waverley novels.¹ The series of binary formulations – past/present, history/romance, Scottish/English, Enlightenment/Romanticism to name but a few – that critics have identified in the novels is often discussed in terms of the extent to which these binaries are reconciled as part of Scott’s project of national unification. As Evan Gottlieb notes, the ‘unprecedented mass popularity of Scott’s literary output was largely predicated on Britain’s renewed need for national unity’ during the Napoleonic wars: the novels operate within a counter-revolutionary ideology in which assimilation and unification are central.² Within this context, the potential of sympathy to promote emotional harmony meant that it was a fitting discourse for attempts to foster national solidarity; as such, Scott’s novels are heavily reliant on the Scottish Enlightenment models of sympathy discussed in the introduction. Certainly, it is difficult to overstate the influence of Enlightenment philosophy on Scott’s fiction.

To begin with, it is, as Peter Garside points out, of considerable significance that Scott spent the first three decades of his life and undertook his education in Edinburgh,

¹ Ina Ferris, *The Achievement of Literary Authority: Gender, History and the Waverley Novels* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 11.

² Evan Gottlieb, *Feeling British: Sympathy and National Identity in Scottish and English Writing, 1707-1832* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2007), p. 172.

‘one of the most self-consciously “enlightened” centres in eighteenth-century Europe’.³ Duncan Forbes’s 1953 essay ‘The Rationalism of Sir Walter Scott’ marked the beginning of a scholarly trend for considering Scott’s engagement with Scottish Enlightenment philosophy, particularly as it relates to the interaction between his historical novels and models of conjectural history, given his acquaintance with various exponents of stadial theory including Adam Ferguson, William Robertson and Dugald Stewart (who taught Scott moral philosophy at the University of Edinburgh).⁴ Graham McMaster’s *Scott and Society* (1981) went on to offer a fuller consideration of the intellectual and social backdrop within which Scott was working, continuing the trend for linking his writing to Scottish Enlightenment social thought.⁵ Yet, Georg Lukács’s famous declaration that Scott’s fiction marks ‘a renunciation of Romanticism, a conquest of Romanticism, a higher development of the realist literary traditions of the Enlightenment’ no longer serves as a critical paradigm for scholars of Scott’s writing.⁶

In keeping with the tendency towards duality in the novels themselves, there is an equally strong critical trend for locating Scott’s novels within the aesthetic formation of Romanticism. Certainly, as Peter Garside, points out, ‘[n]othing could be easier in conventional literary and historical terms than to pick out a predominantly “eighteenth-century” or “nineteenth-century” Scott.’⁷ As a counter to the identification of Scott with the Enlightenment culture of literary production in Edinburgh, it is also possible to read

³ Peter Garside, ‘Scott, the Eighteenth Century and the New Man of Sentiment’, *Anglia*, 103 (1985), 71-89 (p. 71).

⁴ Duncan Forbes, ‘The Rationalism of Sir Walter Scott’, *Cambridge Journal*, 7 (1953), 20-35. See also Peter Garside, ‘Scott and the “Philosophical” Historians’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 36 (1975), 497-521.

⁵ Graham McMaster, *Scott and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). See pp. 49-77 for a full discussion of the interactions between Scott and Enlightenment philosophy.

⁶ Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel* (London: Merlin, 1962), p. 31.

⁷ Garside, ‘New Man of Sentiment’, p. 71.

his writing as ‘a mini-history of all things “Romantic”, from early experimentation in German supernaturalism, through folk ballad and medieval romance, to a series of novels, Scottish and medieval’ which exhibited an overwhelming ‘yearning for a more vital and organic past’.⁸ Indeed, in the last two decades, Scott has come to be recognised as an integral figure within the movement of British Romanticism; his fiction was considered by James Chandler in his revisionist account of the Romantic aesthetic in *England in 1819* (1998) and by Paul Hamilton in *Metaromanticism* (2003), which discussed practices of self-consciousness as a fundamental component of Romantic writing.⁹

In terms of sensibility, Garside suggests that Scott’s fiction offers a revised version of the ‘rootless and ineffectual’ man of feeling depicted by Henry Mackenzie, instead constructing a sentimental hero who is vividly connected to place and community and to a ‘society bound together by sentiment, locality and mutual interest’.¹⁰ This idea that Scott’s heroes occupy a state of externally-constituted selfhood as opposed to one of Romantic introspection is significant. It recalls William Hazlitt’s assessment of Scott and Godwin as emblems of two opposing fictional styles: ‘If the one [Scott] owes almost every thing to external observation and traditional character, the other [Godwin] owes every thing to internal conception and contemplation of the possible workings of the human mind.’¹¹ In Hazlitt’s construction, it is Godwin, not Scott, who embodies the Romantic ideal. Indeed, it was for this reason that Lukács argued that ‘it is completely wrong to see Scott as a Romantic writer’, for he ‘endeavours to portray the struggles and

⁸ Garside, ‘New Man of Sentiment’, p. 71.

⁹ James Chandler, *England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Paul Hamilton, *Metaromanticism: Aesthetics, Literature, Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

¹⁰ Garside, ‘New Man of Sentiment’, pp. 89, 87.

¹¹ William Hazlitt, ‘On the English Novelists’, in *Lectures on the English Comic Writers, Delivered at the Surrey Institution* (London: Taylor and Hessey, 1819), pp. 208-65 (p. 259).

antagonisms of history by means of characters who, in their psychology and destiny, always represent social trends and historical forces'.¹² This idea of the individual being subsumed by the force of historical progress in the *Waverley* novels has characterised many of the critical accounts of Scott's engagement with sentimental politics. For example, Isabelle Bour, in her essay on *Waverley* as an 'end-of-sensibility-novel', argues that the 'history that matters [...] is the cumulative and progressive process that constrains individual behavior'; she contends that, for Scott, 'sensibility is associated with the past' and is therefore incompatible with the stadial ethos of the novels.¹³ However, recent work by Ian Duncan and Evan Gottlieb has suggested that Scott's engagement with formulations of historical progress is, in fact, closely related to sensibility. In contrast to Bour's idea that sensibility remains rooted in the past, Gottlieb argues that 'sympathy plays a key role in Scott's project of reconciling the inhabitants of the nations of Great Britain to one another' as he forges a discourse of cross-cultural sociability based on shared feeling.¹⁴

What increasingly emerges from recent scholarship on the *Waverley* novels is an emphasis on the postmodern and self-reflexive qualities of Scott's writing.¹⁵ My focus in this chapter is on the ways in which this self-reflexivity manifests itself within the field of sensibility and sympathy. I do not intend to offer a detailed discussion of the complex interactions between the *Waverley* novels and Enlightenment models of sympathy, given the comprehensive accounts that have recently been produced in this field by Gottlieb and

¹² Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, p. 34.

¹³ Isabelle Bour, 'Sensibility as Epistemology in *Caleb Williams*, *Waverley*, and *Frankenstein*', *SEL*, 45.4 (2005), 813-27 (pp. 813, 814, 821).

¹⁴ Gottlieb, *Feeling British*, p. 189. See also Ian Duncan, *Scott's Shadow: The Novel in Romantic Edinburgh* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007) for a discussion of Scott and sympathy.

¹⁵ See, for example, Jerome McGann, 'Walter Scott's Romantic Postmodernity', in *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism*, ed. by Leith Davis, Ian Duncan and Janet Sorensen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004; repr. 2006), pp. 113-29.

Duncan. I do, however, want to suggest a link between the broader formation of sympathetic identification outlined in the work of Smith to a politics of readerly sensibility that can be traced back to the eighteenth-century sentimental novel. Reading Scott's fiction in this way provides a meaningful insight into his self-reflexive experimentation with the form of the historical novel.

My discussion is grounded in the relationship between sensibility and the realist form of the novel and it is worth pausing briefly to consider the work of Duncan and Alison Lumsden on Scott and realism in order to clarify my own approach. Duncan argues that the 'philosophical justification for Scott's combination of history and romance' can be traced back to David Hume's sceptical philosophy.¹⁶ In the *Treatise of Human Nature*, Hume makes a series of observations on the relationship between fiction and history, suggesting that they are not oppositional forms of fabrication and reality but that both are essentially based on imagination. He writes that:

In like manner tragedians always borrow their fable, or at least the names of their principal actors, from some known passage in history; and that not in order to deceive the spectators; for they will frankly confess, that truth is not in any circumstance inviolably observed; but in order to procure a more easy reception into the imagination for those extraordinary events, which they represent.¹⁷

Fiction does not, in the expected manner, operate as an appropriate means of conveying historical fact; rather, historical 'truth' functions as means of enhancing imaginative identification. As Duncan puts it, Hume defends fiction from the accusation that it acts as an 'error' or 'delusion' in opposition to an 'empirical reality, guaranteeing truth and

¹⁶ Duncan, *Scott's Shadow*, p. 29.

¹⁷ David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 3 vols (London: Noon, 1739-40), I, 215.

belief' by suggesting that all 'representation' is itself fictional.¹⁸ Reading Hume's theory as a philosophical underpinning for Scott's fiction allows Duncan to account for the self-reflexivity that characterises the Waverley novels and their 'deconstruction of the opposition between history and fiction'.¹⁹ For Lumsden, this self-reflexivity is most significant in terms of Hume's 'acknowledgement of the limits of both what is knowable, and [...] what is communicable to another', and her study focuses on what she terms Scott's 'fundamental scepticism concerning the communicative potentialities of language.'²⁰

My own reading builds upon Lumsden's in suggesting that the Waverley novels engage in a process of reflection about the communicative potential of sensibility through the written form of fiction. Certainly, Scott's own writing about the work of other novelists suggests a keen awareness of the interplay between sentiment and realism in fiction. Scott's review of Jane Austen's *Emma* seemingly dismisses any idea of such an interplay in the modern novel. He writes:

Accordingly a style of novel has arisen, within the last fifteen or twenty years, differing from the former in the points upon which the interest hinges; neither alarming our credulity nor amusing our imagination by wild variety of incident, or by those pictures of romantic affection and sensibility, which were formerly as certain attributes of fictitious characters as they are of rare occurrence among those who actually live and die. The substitute for these excitements, which had lost much of their poignancy by the repeated and injudicious use of them, was the art of copying from nature as she really exists in the common walks of life, and presenting to the reader, instead of the splendid scenes of an imaginary world, a correct and striking representation of that which is daily taking place around him.²¹

¹⁸ Duncan, *Scott's Shadow*, p. 133.

¹⁹ Duncan, *Scott's Shadow*, p. 133. See also Susan Manning, *Fragments of Union: Making Connections in Scottish and American Writing* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2002), for a discussion of Hume's philosophy and a 'postmodern' ethos of self-reflexivity.

²⁰ Alison Lumsden, *Walter Scott and the Limits of Language* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 17, 6.

²¹ Walter Scott, Review of *Emma*, *Quarterly Review*, 14 (1815), 188-201 (pp. 192-93).

However, while Scott conforms to the notion of sensibility as an outmoded and – more importantly – unrealistic, form (much as he does in the first chapter of *Waverley*), he goes on to make an explicit connection between Austen’s mimetic style and its ability to convey emotion. *Emma*, he writes, ‘proclaim[s] a knowledge of the human heart’ and possesses ‘the power and resolution to bring that knowledge to the service of honour and virtue’.²² The affective power of the novel – in this case, in terms of moral instruction – depends directly on its realist qualities: fictional imitation of emotion is essential to the new style of the novel. This idea is also central in Scott’s praise of Richardson’s writing, which complicates the understanding of Scott’s historical fiction as an oppositional form to the eighteenth-century sentimental novel. Scott writes that Richardson was ‘perhaps the first author in this line of composition, who, in fictitious narrative, threw aside the trappings of romance, with all its extravagance, and appealed to the genuine passions of the human heart’.²³ Richardson’s worth lies in the fact that he is a ‘cautious, deep, and *minute* examiner of the human heart’ (my emphasis): ‘by the circumstantial detail of minute, trivial, and even uninteresting circumstances, the author gives to his fiction an air of reality that can scarcely otherwise be obtained.’²⁴

While Scott clearly considers the realistic representation to be closely linked to the transmission of emotion to the reader in the case of both Richardson and Austen, his analysis of Henry Fielding considers the complexity of this process of affective transmission in more detail. He writes:

²² Scott, Review of *Emma*, p. 189. See also Scott’s comments on *Pride and Prejudice* in his journal, in which he famously comments, ‘[t]he Big Bow wow strain I can do myself like any now going but the exquisite touch which renders ordinary common-place things and characters interesting from the truth of the description and the sentiment is denied to me’, Journal Entry, 14 Mar 1826, in *The Journal of Walter Scott*, ed. by W. E. K. Anderson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 114.

²³ Walter Scott, *The Miscellaneous Prose Works of Sir Walter Scott*, 6 vols (Edinburgh: Cadell; London: Longman, 1827) III, 76. All further references are to this edition.

²⁴ Scott, *Miscellaneous Prose Works*, III, 76; III, 82.

It is the object of the novel-writer to place before the reader as full and accurate a representation of the events which he relates, as can be done by the mere force of imagination, without the assistance of material objects. His sole appeal is made to the world of fancy and ideas, and in this consists his strength and weakness, his poverty and his wealth. [...] He cannot, like the dramatist, present before our living eyes the heroes of former days, or the beautiful creations of his own fancy [...] but he can teach his reader to conjure up forms even more dignified and beautiful [...] Action, and tone, and gesture, the smile of the lover, the frown of the tyrant, the grimace of the buffoon, – all must be told, for nothing can be shown.²⁵

I want to suggest that the process of fictional representation Scott describes here finds its parallel in Enlightenment formations of sympathy in the reliance on affective transmission and the appeal to the imagination. As Rae Greiner points out, while Hume's model of sympathy focuses on the transmission of impressions, Smith's emphasises that this model of contagion is not only impossible but undesirable because of the threat it poses to the stability of selfhood; he suggests that it is 'the impressions of our own senses only, not those of [the agent], which our imaginations copy'.²⁶ As Greiner notes, '[a]gain and again, Smith insists that another's feeling must be imagined and reflected upon, but it need not be felt'.²⁷ Accordingly, Smith's formation of sympathy 'describes a way of thinking and feeling with others who are, like fictional characters, nowhere in sight'.²⁸

The project of fictional realism outlined by Scott – as he puts it, the appeal to the 'world of fancy and ideas' in order to stimulate the reader's imagination – replicates the process of sympathetic identification.²⁹ Catherine Gallagher argues that fictional characters are 'uniquely suitable objects of compassion': '[b]ecause they were

²⁵ Scott, *Miscellaneous Prose Works*, III, 96-97.

²⁶ Rae Greiner, *Sympathetic Realism in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), p. 5; Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (London: Millar; Edinburgh: Kincaid and Bell, 1759), p. 2.

²⁷ Greiner, *Sympathetic Realism*, p. 18.

²⁸ Greiner, *Sympathetic Realism*, p. 9.

²⁹ Scott, *Miscellaneous Prose Works*, III, 96.

conjectural, suppositional identities *belonging* to no one, they could be universally appropriated. A story about nobody was nobody's story and hence could be entered, occupied, identified with by anybody.³⁰ However, while the process of sympathetic identification may be highly suitable to the novel form, in Smith's more general formulation it is dependent on a sense of familiarity with the object of sympathy: in order to achieve this familiarity, the spectator must 'put himself in the situation of the other' and 'adopt the whole case' of the subject 'with all its minutest incidents'.³¹ That Scott's own account of Richardson's fictional merit appropriates the exact terminology employed by Smith is highly suggestive: Richardson's ability to incite emotion in the reader is dependent on, as discussed above, 'the circumstantial detail of minute, trivial, and even uninteresting circumstances'.³² I want to suggest, then, that Scott's historical fiction demonstrates a conscious awareness of the politics of sympathetic representation as it relates to fiction. The reader must rely on the narrative technique of realism in order to create familiarity with the fictional characters: as Scott puts it, 'all must be told, for nothing can be shown'.³³

The process of inciting sympathy through reading is a complex act of telling: the eighteenth-century sentimental novel works by providing a detailed and 'realistic' account of the physiological effects of emotion – in the form of crying, fainting, trembling, blushing and so on – in order to stimulate feeling in the reader, as they imaginatively place themselves in the position of the characters. Likewise, this process is

³⁰ Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670-1820* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1994; repr. 1995), p. 168.

³¹ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (London: Millar; Edinburgh: Kincaid and Bell, 1759), p. 36.

³² Scott, *Miscellaneous Prose Works*, III, 82.

³³ Scott, *Miscellaneous Prose Works*, III, 97.

integral to the other sub-genres of fiction discussed in the previous chapters. The gothic and the Jacobin novel rely on depictions of excessive sensation in order to provoke readerly identification. The forms of the national and historical novel, however, engage in a more self-referential way with their accounts of emotional response suggesting that, as Owenson's O'Donnel puts it, when witnessing scenes of suffering, the appropriate response is for the mind to move 'beyond the mere impulse of sympathy' and '[rush] at once from the *effect* to the *cause*'.³⁴ In the Waverley novels, encouraging the reader to identify with scenes of history as a means of reflecting on the present is dependent upon a realistic description of the past which operates within the wider framework of perception and sensibility.

The process of perception in Enlightenment thought was integral to the workings of sympathy, as sensory perception leads to imaginative sympathetic identification. The reader of historical fiction functions, in effect, as the blind or deaf subject of Hume's discussion in *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748):

A blind Man can form no Notion of Colours, a deaf Man of Sounds. Restore either of them that Sense, in which he is deficient; by opening this new Inlet for his Sensations, you also open an Inlet for the Ideas, and he finds no Difficulty of conceiving these Objects.³⁵

Scott's appeal to the reader is centred in the idea of restoring sense through aural, oral and visual depictions in order to reconstruct the past through a process of sensory reanimation. The discussion that follows suggests that, in keeping with the eighteenth-century tradition of sensibility, the Waverley novels construct a version of 'mimetic'

³⁴ [Owenson, Sydney] Lady Morgan, *O'Donnel: A National Tale*, 3 vols (London: Colburn, 1814; Edinburgh: Goldie, 1814; Dublin: Cumming, 1814; repr. New York and London: Garland, 1979), I, 44.

³⁵ David Hume, *Philosophical Essays Concerning Human Understanding* (London: Millar, 1748), p. 25.

sensory experience through their intricate delineations of the protagonists' perceptions of the Scottish landscape and people in order to incite sympathetic response in the reader. The novels discussed in this section are all highly alert to the capacity of oral, visual and aural mediums to provoke emotion and sympathy in the spectator. As such, the reader functions as a double for the dislocated heroes of the novels, requiring a sensory and sentimental immersion in the texts for sympathetic identification to occur. As in Hazlitt's notion of the stranger as one who is 'no longer a citizen of the world' and who must take 'his hue and character from the time and place',³⁶ both the passive hero of the *Waverley* novels and the implied English reader embody the characteristics of Hazlitt's stranger; they must be assimilated into the unfamiliar territory of the past through a process of Smithian sympathetic identification.

This chapter focuses on how this process is manifested in *Waverley* (1814), *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819) and *Ivanhoe* (1820). It considers *Waverley* as a pioneering text of formal experimentation that performs a highly self-conscious interrogation of the act of reading romance and fiction. In one sense, the novel offsets the imaginative mode of romance against the more empirical discourse of history. However, my discussion suggests that within the context of sensibility, these two modes are inextricably linked. For Scott, to understand history is to be presented with a realistic and detailed account of both character and setting (in the style of Richardson and Fielding) in order to incite the process of imaginative identification. As Smith puts it,

[T]he spectator must [...] endeavour, as much as he can, to put himself in the situation of the other, and to bring home to himself every little circumstance of distress which can possibly occur to the sufferer. He must adopt the whole case of

³⁶ William Hazlitt, 'On Going on a Journey', in *Table-Talk; or, Original Essays* [1821-22], 2nd edn (London: Colburn, 1824), pp. 33-54 (p. 43).

his companion, with all its minutest incidents; and strive to render, as perfect as possible, that imaginary change of situation upon which his sympathy is founded.³⁷

In the case of historical fiction, however, this process of identification is far more problematic than in the case of the sentimental or the gothic novel. Scott's use of real historical characters and 'authentic' historical language creates a narrative disruption which inhibits sympathetic identification by drawing attention to its own status as fiction. In addition, techniques which serve to remind the reader of the links between the past and the present in Scott's novels – narrative interpolation, footnotes, prefaces and so forth – disturb the seamless process of identification we might see, for example, in a gothic novel: the reader is at once assimilated and dislocated. In various ways, then, the formation of sympathy in the novels gives way to alienation. This chapter reads *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819) *Ivanhoe* (1820) as representative of a shift in Scott's experimentation with the politics of sympathy. *The Bride of Lammermoor* goes further than any of the earlier Waverley novels in depicting an alienated subject who is unable to identify with either the archaic past or the modern future. This alienation is depicted through a series of ekphrastic representations which draw attention to the instability of sensibility as a discourse of sociability as it relates to both the novel's protagonist and the reader. In *Ivanhoe* Scott continues his focus on sentimental fellowship but the cohesive ties of friendship he depicts are ultimately revealed as unstable and inconsistent at the level of language and discourse themselves.

³⁷ Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 36.

Narrative Fellowship: The Reception of the Waverley Novels

The reception of the novels provides a useful means of contextualising the discourse of sympathetic identification at work within Scott's writing. The contemporary reviews of *Waverley* participate in the legitimising of novel reading in the first decades of the nineteenth century as the literary status of the novel began to change in a process initiated, as least in part, by Scott's move into the field of historical fiction. In keeping with the 'literary authority' that Ina Ferris ascribes to the critical reviews of the period, their consideration of the novels appropriates a language heavily reliant on non-fictional discourses.³⁸ In this context, Ferris discusses the numerous references to the stadial models of history of the Scottish Enlightenment as an indicator of the respectability and authority granted to *Waverley* by the reviewers as a text which tempered the frivolity of fiction with accurate and authentic social history.³⁹ The discourse of Enlightenment sympathy also features prominently in many of the reviews as part of the authorisation of Scott's use of the novel form.

The review of *Waverley* in the *British Critic* focuses primarily on the instructive function of the novel as a means of educating the English reader in the 'history and manners' of Scotland.⁴⁰ In addition, this process of education is predicated on an imaginative identification on the part of the reader. The reviewer observes that 'the sentiments are uniformly good, and such as cannot fail to make a strong impression upon the mind of a thinking reader'.⁴¹ Likewise, Francis Jeffrey in the *Edinburgh Review* praised the 'charm' of 'all works that deal in the [realistic] representation of human

³⁸ See Ina Ferris, *The Achievement of Literary Authority*, p. 3.

³⁹ See Ferris, *The Achievement of Literary Authority*, pp. 84, 87.

⁴⁰ *British Critic*, n.s. 2 (1814), 189-211 (p. 204).

⁴¹ *British Critic*, p. 208.

actions and characters', stating that this effect was 'more readily felt than understood'.⁴² The use of the terms 'impression', 'thinking' and 'felt' here are significant, recalling Smith's account of sympathy in which the spectator receives impressions of another person's emotion and imaginatively identifies with the agent in order to form an idea of their situation in order to feel sympathy.⁴³ The reception of *Waverley* in the reviews defines this process as operating on two levels. First, the implied reader identifies with Waverley himself as an English stranger in Scottish territory; as the *Monthly Review* observes, the depiction of 'national character, manners, customs, and opinions' of the Lowlands 'will be fully as novel and instructive to most of the present readers of *Waverley* as they could have been to the young captain of dragoons.'⁴⁴ Second, in occupying the position of Waverley, the reader receives a series of sentimental 'impressions' from the text, imaginatively identifies with its fictional (Scottish) agents and thus feels sympathy, bridging the gap between English reader and Scottish subject.

John Wilson Croker's consideration of the novel in the *Quarterly Review* makes the link between fiction and sympathy still more explicit. He begins with a series of thoughts on the development of the novel as a genre which define it as part of a process of shared human understanding. He links the decline in popularity of the 'earlier novelists' and their idealistic sentimental style to the fact that 'the great mass of mankind became more informed of each other's feelings and concerns' which exposed the unreality of exalted virtue displayed in eighteenth-century fiction: the failure of these

⁴² Francis Jeffrey, Review of *Waverley*, *Edinburgh Review*, 24 (Nov 1814), 208-43 (p. 208).

⁴³ 'By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations, and feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them', Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 2.

⁴⁴ *Monthly Review*, 2nd ser. 75 (Nov 1814), 275-89 (p. 277).

novels is, for Croker, explicitly connected to their lack of realism.⁴⁵ He moves on to discuss the picaresque novel as a general depiction of mankind which effaces difference and encourages sympathetic identification in the reader. Croker argues that ‘every man who reads them is obliged to confess to himself, that in similar circumstances with the personages of Le Sage and Fielding, he would probably have acted in the way in which they are described to have done.’⁴⁶ This replicates Smith’s outline of sympathy in which we cannot experience the feelings of others except ‘by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation.’⁴⁷

Croker goes on to consider the generality of the picaresque novel using the metaphor of nation, declaring that ‘Tom Jones might have been a Frenchman, and Gil Blas an Englishman, because the essence of their characters is human nature’, not the ‘personal situation of the individual’.⁴⁸ In contrast, the modern novel contains characters who are ‘Irish, or Scotch, or French, and not in the abstract, *men*’ and, as result, like Dutch painting, the novels are ‘delightful in their vivid and minute details of common life’ but capable of ‘exciting none of those more exalted feelings, giving none of those higher views of the human soul which delight and exalt the mind of the spectator of Raphael, Correggio, or Murillo.’⁴⁹ If the eighteenth-century novel was capable of inspiring sympathy in the reader, then, Croker sees the realism of the modern novel – and presumably its descriptions of characters and settings that differ from those of the reader

⁴⁵ *Quarterly Review* 11 (July 1814), 354-77 (p. 354).

⁴⁶ *Quarterly Review*, p. 355.

⁴⁷ Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 2.

⁴⁸ *Quarterly Review*, p. 355.

⁴⁹ *Quarterly Review*, p. 355. For a discussion of the reviewers’ appropriation of this painterly metaphor see Ferris, *The Achievement of Literary Authority*, pp. 77, 84. See also p. 51, where she draws attention to Croker’s use of artistic terminology to highlight the excess of Owenson’s prose style. It is also worth noting the similarity between Croker’s review and the description of the novel form in Scott’s own account in his review of *Emma*.

– as limiting the possibility of depicting shared and universal emotion. Presumably, Croker is unconvinced by Scott’s assertion in the introductory chapter of *Waverley* that

[c]onsidering the disadvantages inseparable from this part of my subject, I must be understood to have resolved to avoid them as much as possible, by throwing the force of my narrative upon the characters and passions of the actors; – those passions common to men in all stages of society, and which have alike agitated the human heart, whether it throbbed under the steel corslet of the fifteenth century, the brocaded coat of the eighteenth, or the blue frock and white dimity waistcoat of the present day.⁵⁰

The opposition between Scott’s assertion that common passions unite men across temporal and, presumably, national boundaries and Croker’s contention that the detail and realism of the historical mode limits the possibility of exciting the ‘exalted feelings’ of sympathy are powerfully suggestive when read in terms of the interaction between sensibility and realism in Scott’s novels. In these terms, the *Waverley* novels can be read as a self-conscious negotiation of the extent to which realism is able to engage and capture the imagination of the reader.

Reviews of the novels also foreground the sensory nature of Scott’s reconstruction of the past, suggesting, in opposition to Croker’s assertion, that the historical realism of the novels is in fact inextricably linked to the production of ‘exalted feelings’ in the reader.⁵¹ The *Monthly Review*’s piece on *The Heart of Mid-Lothian* (1818) praises Scott’s rendering of the past in precisely the sensory terminology of Enlightenment theories of sympathy. After considering the problematic nature of describing ‘men and manners’ as

⁵⁰ Walter Scott, *Waverley; or, 'Tis Sixty Years Since* [1814] (London: Penguin: 2007, repr. 2011), p. 5. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

⁵¹ *Quarterly Review*, p. 355.

they are, let alone as they were, the reviewer goes on to praise Scott's ability to bring together the dead and the living through fiction:⁵²

He convinces us by the representation of scenes and characters which have long been withdrawn from the gaze of the world, that he is not less acquainted with the passions and prejudices of mankind as they now subsist, than he is with them as they subsisted a century ago. He exhibits himself as the intimate acquaintance at one and the same time of the dead and the living; and the characters, whom he calls from the grave to figure in his pages, start forth into new life, perfect in all the mien, form, and lineaments of human beings, and warm with all the blood and freshness of animated existence.⁵³

The contemporary reader occupies a state of figurative blindness – to recall Hume's idea of sensory inlets quoted earlier – unable to see the historical past which is 'withdrawn from the gaze of the world'. The figures of the past are revived through Scott's prose and called forth before the reader in a state of 'animated existence' capable of replicating the process of sensory animation in the reader and thus offering a credible reconstruction of the past.

The same connection between reanimation and reconstructing the past is the focus of Mary Shelley's short story 'Roger Dodsworth: The Reanimated Englishman' (1826). Shelley's tale imagines the character of Roger Dodsworth, son of a notable seventeenth-century antiquary, frozen in an avalanche in the region of Mount St Gothard in the year 1654 and maintained in a state of suspended animation until he is resurrected some 150 years later.⁵⁴ The mock-journalistic tone of the story satirises antiquarianism in various

⁵² Review of *Tales of My Landlord, Second Series, Monthly Review*, n.s., v 87 (Dec 1818), 356-70 (p. 361).

⁵³ Review of *Tales of My Landlord, Second Series, Monthly Review*, p. 363.

⁵⁴ Jane C. Loudon published *The Mummy!* in 1829, which can be read as a hybrid of 'Roger Dodsworth' and *Frankenstein* (1818). The novel is set in the year 2126 and recounts the reanimation of an Egyptian corpse, considering the implications of a body and soul reanimated in a different historical era in a similarly ironic style. For a fuller discussion of the novel, see Lisa Hopkins, 'Jane C. Loudon's *The Mummy!*: Mary Shelley Meets George Orwell, and They Go in a Balloon to Egypt', in *Cardiff Corvey: Reading the*

ways but most interestingly in terms of historical speculation: conjecture and imagination are key terms. The resurrection of Dodsworth is a ‘circumstance to which the imagination must cling with delight’ but Shelley takes pains to emphasise the hypothetical nature of the report: ‘since facts are denied to us, let us be permitted to indulge in conjecture.’⁵⁵ Dodsworth is, then, essentially an imaginative historical construction, brought to life through narrative speculation. Before the narrative begins, ‘his breath never heaved, his pulses were stopped; death had his finger pressed on his lips which no breath might pass’; he is reanimated as the account commences.⁵⁶ Dodsworth’s experience of the present mirrors the way the reader of historical fiction experiences the past: ‘[h]is curiosity is insatiable; when he reads, his eyes cannot purvey fast enough to his mind, and every now and then he lights upon some inexplicable passage [...] undreamed of in his days, that throws him into wonder and interminable reverie’.⁵⁷

The complications inherent in resurrecting the past are not confined to Dodsworth’s physical manifestation as a relic of history. Shelley also draws attention to the linguistic difficulties experienced by Dodsworth as he attempts to assimilate to the early nineteenth century. There are misunderstandings between Dodsworth and his discoverer Dr Hotham regarding the meaning of Dodsworth’s question about the state of the ‘poor distracted country’ as Dodsworth refers to the commonwealth and the similarly conservative Dr Hotham ‘suspects a Radical’ criticising the king and government.⁵⁸ Yet the confusion is not merely restricted to political meaning; ‘[t]he very sound of the

Romantic Text 10 (June 2003), < http://www.cf.ac.uk/encap/romtext/articles/cc10_n01.html > [accessed 28 Aug 2013].

⁵⁵ Mary Shelley, ‘Roger Dodsworth: The Reanimated Englishman’ [1826] in *Mary Shelley: Collected Tales and Stories*, ed. by Charles E. Robinson (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976; repr. 1990), pp. 43-50 (p. 44).

⁵⁶ Shelley, ‘Roger Dodsworth’, p. 44.

⁵⁷ Shelley, ‘Roger Dodsworth’, pp. 47-48.

⁵⁸ Shelley, ‘Roger Dodsworth’, p. 45.

English tongue is changed' and Dodsworth is aware of his anachronistic identity as he sings a 'royalist song against old Noll and the Roundheads, breaking off suddenly, and looking round fearfully to see who were his auditors'.⁵⁹ The significance of the unstable nature of communication across historical time frames has obvious implications for the form of the historical novel, as does the fact that Shelley emphasises the difficulties in sympathising with a figure from a different era. She imagines Dodsworth's grief at realising that his friends, family and 'destined and lovely bride' are dead, describing how 'tears long frozen are uncongealed, and flow down his young old cheeks' but the narrator goes on to state that 'we do not wish to be pathetic; surely since the days of the patriarchs, no fair lady had her death mourned by her lover so many years after it had taken place'.⁶⁰ Sympathy, it seems, is limited by the expanse of historical time.

Like Scott, Shelley draws attention to the difficulty in reconstructing the past through her satire of the folly of antiquarianism and its claims to historical objectivity and accuracy. Both the physicality of Roger Dodsworth as a living historical artefact and Scott's fictional capacity for calling historical personages 'from the grave' and into his novels have significant implications in terms of the politics of historical fiction and sympathy. The praise in the reception of the *Waverley* novels for Scott's ability to reanimate history and bridge the gap between the contemporary reader and the past through fictional representation is closely related to the link between Enlightenment sympathy and proximity, which is of obvious relevance to the form of the national-historical novel. For Hume, sympathy is stimulated by proximity: 'sympathy with persons

⁵⁹ Shelley, 'Roger Dodsworth', pp. 47, 48.

⁶⁰ Shelley, 'Roger Dodsworth', p. 47.

remote from us [is] much fainter than that with persons near and contiguous.’⁶¹ Physical proximity engenders sympathy and ideas of nearness and locality are central to Hume’s construction of sympathetic interaction. He considers this specifically in terms of a written account, arguing that a description of a generous action reported in an ‘old History or remote Gazette’ is ‘so infinitely remov’d, as to affect the Senses, neither with Light nor Heat’ but if that connection is brought nearer ‘by our Acquaintance or Connexion with the Persons, or even by an eloquent Narration or Recital of the Case’ then our ‘Hearts are immediately caught, our Sympathy enliven’d, and our cool Approbation converted into the warmest Sentiments of Friendship and Regard’.⁶² Likewise, if we have no interest in the sympathetic subject, then real sentiment cannot be stimulated; Forman-Barzilai notes that Hume ‘maintained that since our real and present interests are always “in view,” it is unlikely that an “imaginary interest” in “distant ages and countries” will incite “real sentiments,” particularly if these interests happen to draw in different directions.’⁶³ However, both Hume and Smith consider the possibility of fictional description as a means of addressing the issues relating to physical proximity. Hume argues that ‘an eloquent Narration or Recital of the Case’ will incite sympathy; detailed description can replicate physical proximity and language can serve as appropriate means of eliciting sensibility in the reader or listener.

The *Monthly Review* describes Scott’s sympathetic engagement in exactly these terms. It considers in detail the narrative dynamic between the English reader and the Scottish subject, refuting the criticism of the use of Scots dialect found in earlier reviews

⁶¹ Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, III, 251.

⁶² David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (London: Millar, 1751), p. 101.

⁶³ Fonna Forman-Barzilai, *Adam Smith and the Circles of Sympathy: Cosmopolitanism and Moral Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 140.

of the *Waverley* novels on the grounds that the unfamiliar language made the novels inaccessible to the English reader.⁶⁴ In contrast, the reviewer in the *Monthly Review* argues that the use of Scots is essential to the process of sympathetic engagement because it

gives us a more full and complete idea of rustic simplicity and honesty, than any which we could possibly acquire by reading the same sentiments expressed in the most refined and polished English: it detaches us from the localities of present associations; and it enhances the feelings with which we peruse it, by transporting us to other regions, where we are mere sojourners, and in which we find every thing attractive because it is new and strange to our perception.⁶⁵

The central ideas here are precisely those discussed in Smith's account of sympathy and proximity. The use of authentic Scots discourse 'detaches' the English reader from the 'localities of present associations' in a process which enables Scott to overcome the remoteness of the reader and to 'transport' them to 'other regions.' In doing so, the reader is recast as a literary tourist or 'sojourner', akin to Hazlitt's construction of the stranger, able to 'in a manner forget [one]self': Scott's use of dialect creates discomfort in the English reader in order to prime them for cross-cultural sympathetic identification.⁶⁶ This process of dislocation and difference is essential; the *Monthly Review* goes on to state that

[w]e are even inclined to go farther, and assert that the Doricism of the language inspires an English bosom with an intensity of sympathy, interest, and curiosity, which no North-Briton himself can ever attain; because the illusion, which we have before stated the dialect to create in our minds, is destroyed in his by the frequency with which he hears it repeated.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ See, for example, the review of *Waverley* in the *Critical Review*, 5th ser. 1 (Mar 1815), 288-97, which states that '[h]ad the work been less national, (we are speaking of novel or romance) and divested of its endless Scotch idioms, Gaelic allusions, scraps of Latin, and a ridiculous French character expunged, we think it would have proved as acceptable to English novel readers, as it must doubtless be to those on the other side of the Tweed', p. 297.

⁶⁵ Review of *Tales of My Landlord, Second Series*, *Monthly Review*, p. 363.

⁶⁶ Hazlitt, 'On Going on a Journey', p. 43.

⁶⁷ 'Review of *Tales of My Landlord, Second Series*', *Monthly Review*, p. 363.

The discourse in which the contemporary reviews of the Waverley novels lauds Scott's ability to reconstruct the past draw attention to three key facets of his narrative technique in terms of sympathy: the appeal to the senses, the use of Scots dialect to relocate the English reader and the extent to which the narrator, through vivid description, minimises the distance between character and reader in order to promote sympathy. These aspects will form the basis of my discussion of *Waverley*, *The Bride of Lammermoor* and *Ivanhoe*.

***Waverley* and the Sympathetic Historical Spectator**

The process of sensory reanimation that takes place in the Waverley novels as they breathe life into historical scenes and characters 'long [...] withdrawn from the gaze of the world' functions as a remarkable hybrid of Enlightenment models of sensibility and sensation and the Romantic imaginative aesthetic.⁶⁸ When read within the context of sympathetic identification, Scott's use of ekphrasis and the emphasis on visuality in the novels offer an insight into the interaction between the eighteenth-century theories of sensibility and perception and the Romantic historical novel. Recent appraisals of Romantic visual culture have begun to analyse the relationship between Enlightenment rationalism and the Romantic aesthetic. Sophie Thomas's study of Romanticism and visuality suggests that there is a 'palpable antagonism between visual display and imaginative endeavour' in the Romantic period, claiming that in literary descriptions of the visual the 'verbal image [...] was said to be more powerful than the visual image in its capacity to stimulate the imagination; nevertheless, the imagination's representations

⁶⁸ 'Review of *Tales of My Landlord, Second Series*', *Monthly Review*, p. 363.

were explicitly shaped by visualist criteria.’⁶⁹ William Galperin’s influential study *The Return of the Visible in British Romanticism* also emphasises this link between the visual and the imaginative: the visible ‘is *no sooner seen* than imaginatively appropriated’ – as, for example, in the poetic subjectivity dramatised in Wordsworth’s ‘Tintern Abbey’ in its depiction of a mind that, in Galperin’s words ‘half-perceives and half-creates’.⁷⁰ My discussion of *Waverley* considers the implications for our understanding of Scott’s narrative in terms of the relationship between such conceptions of the links between visual display, the imagination and the politics of sympathy, which are similarly reliant on the interaction between perception and imagination.

Ann Jessie Van Sant opens her account of ‘Sympathetic visibility’ by considering the centrality of the visual in the physiological eighteenth-century model of sympathy:

Sympathetic feelings, which require vividness and proximity, arise through an act of the imagination largely dependent on sight. Contemplation of the fortunes of others, with the actual eye or the mind’s eye, allows an imaginative exchange of place that ‘makes real’ and ‘brings near’ experience not one’s own.⁷¹

Smith’s account of sympathy emphasises the visual role of the spectator in its theatrical metaphor and it is this that corresponds most closely to the visual politics of Scott’s fiction. The reader is cast in the role of spectator – even further removed from the agent by the passage of history – whom the narrative must inspire with sympathy in order for

⁶⁹ Sophie Thomas, *Romanticism and Visuality: Fragments, History, Spectacle* (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 3, 8. Thomas’s account is placed within the context of the ‘growing bourgeois taste for visual novelty and spectacles of the “real” that prompted the largely negative high-brow reaction to the mimetic representationalism of displays such as “Belzoni’s tomb,” mounted at Bullock’s London Museum in 1821’, p. 3.

⁷⁰ William H. Galperin, *The Return of the Visible in British Romanticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 3. See also Gillen D’Arcy Wood, *The Shock of the Real: Romanticism and Visual Culture 1760-1860* (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

⁷¹ Ann Jessie Van Sant, *Eighteenth-Century Sensibility and the Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 16-17.

them to fully identify with the characters in Scott's historical production. This process is undertaken through various means of sensory appeal – music, orality and dreams are significant in all of the novels discussed in this chapter – but most significantly through the appeal to the visual. It is notable that the discourse of artistic representation is found repeatedly in the contemporary reviews of the *Waverley* novels and that it is always linked to Scott's ability to reconstruct the past. The *Monthly Review*'s appraisal of *Waverley* uses the metaphor of painting to praise the historical realism of the novel, stating that '[t]he frame of the picture is fiction: but the delineation itself is as correct, minute, and spirited a copy of nature as ever came from the hands of an artist'.⁷² Likewise, the *British Review* deems the third series of the *Tales of My Landlord* 'faithful historical paintings of times and persons'.⁷³

The discourse of the picturesque is central to *Waverley*'s fostering of sympathetic historical identification. Jane Millgate offers a sustained account of the novel's use of the picturesque, identifying a complex series of episodes of sensory representation in the novel which challenge Waverley as both he and 'the reader are required to distinguish purely visual effects from those that, correctly interpreted, are eloquent of deeper meanings'.⁷⁴ This is most evident in Edward's initial visit to Tully Veolan and Millgate argues that narrative has 'built-in markers for the path to be followed by the trained observer of the picturesque' which serve to reveal the inadequate nature of Edward's aesthetic model of perception through the stark contrast of his romantic perception of

⁷² Review of *Waverley*, *Monthly Review* (Nov 1814), p. 275.

⁷³ *British Review*, 14 (Aug 1819), 233-47 (p. 246).

⁷⁴ Jane Millgate, *Walter Scott: The Making of the Novelist* (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 1984; repr. 1987), p. 45.

Tully Veolan and the realities of life for the inhabitants of the village.⁷⁵ *Waverley*'s status as a novel which details Edward's progression from a romanticised and illusory conception of the primitive past to an empirical awareness of historical truth is, then, closely linked to the narrative techniques of visual representation: as Peter Garside puts it, 'Waverley and the reader are assailed with a series of shock effects, as the distinctly "romantic" becomes close-up "reality"'.⁷⁶

William Gilpin's *Three Essays* (1792) was one of the central texts discussing the picturesque in the Romantic period and his theories reveal a number of points which are illuminating to my consideration of the politics of sympathetic historical identification in the Romantic novel. First, he makes a series of comparisons between artistic and literary representation, arguing that '[l]anguage, like light, is a medium' akin to those of the artist.⁷⁷ Second, Gilpin draws attention to the role of feeling and imagination in the process of appreciating both nature and art. He suggests that '[t]he general idea of the scene makes an impression, before any appeal is made to the judgement. We rather *feel*, than *survey* it'.⁷⁸ This process, he argues, is 'generally induced by the scenes of nature; yet sometimes by artificial objects', such as sketches or literature.⁷⁹ When this happens, it 'has sometimes an astonishing effect on the mind; giving the imagination an opening into all those glowing ideas, which inspired the artist; and which imagination *only* can translate'.⁸⁰ The imagination is central to this process:

⁷⁵ Millgate, *Walter Scott*, p. 43.

⁷⁶ P. D. Garside, 'Waverley's Pictures of the Past', *ELH*, 44.4 (1977), 659-82 (p. 670).

⁷⁷ William Gilpin, *Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty; on Picturesque Travel; and on Sketching Landscape* (London: Blamire, 1792), p. 18. See also Essay Three, which discusses the ways in which sketching and writing are similar, p. 61. All references are to this edition unless specified.

⁷⁸ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, p. 50.

⁷⁹ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, p. 50.

⁸⁰ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, p. 50.

The imagination becomes a camera obscura, only with this difference, that the camera represents objects as they really are: while the imagination, impressed with the most beautiful scenes, and chastened by rules of art, forms it's [sic] pictures, not only from the most admirable parts of nature; but in the best taste.⁸¹

In terms of my discussion of Scott's fiction, these ideas are suggestive of the fact that his fictional depictions of the Scottish landscape are closely linked to the imaginative process of sympathetic identification in the reader. To 'see' Scotland through Scott's narrative description is, then, also to 'feel' it. Through the visual representations of *Waverley's* narrative, the imagination of the reader is opened not only to the Scottish landscape but to Scottish history and culture.

However, this process is potentially problematic. Gilpin's account of the picturesque is permeated with ideas of artificiality and deception, which finds its parallel in Scott's own fictional experimentations with the historical novel. Gilpin uses the specific example of the work of history painters – which is of obvious significance in any discussion of Scott – noting that artificiality is a necessity in order for the artist to 'tell his story'.⁸² Gilpin begins by saying that painting is 'an art strictly imitative' but goes on to qualify this, stating that 'is not an art strictly imitative, but rather deceptive – that by an assemblage of colours, and a peculiar art in spreading them, the painter gives a semblance of nature at a proper distance; which at hand, is quite another thing'.⁸³ The poem 'On Landscape Painting, A Poem' – the form of which itself serves as another demonstration of the parallels between artistic and literary representation – includes the lines 'Nor thou refuse that ornamental aid,/The feathered race afford. When fluttering near/The eye, we

⁸¹ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, p. 52.

⁸² Gilpin, *Three Essays*, p. 27. He writes 'And what could the history-painter do, without his draperies to combine, contrast, and harmonize his figures? Unclothed, they could never be grouped', p. 27.

⁸³ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, p. 29.

own absurdity results;/They seem both fixed and moving; but beheld/At proper distance, they will fill thy sky/With animation'.⁸⁴ Gilpin added the following note to these lines in the second edition: 'There is an art of feeling, as well as of painting. The eye must in part enter into the deception. [...] General forms only are imitated, and much is to be supplied by the imagination of the spectator – It is thus in the drama'.⁸⁵ In his words, the spectator must be 'a party to the deception'.⁸⁶ This notion of deception, then, is integral to the way in which Scott attempts to foster sympathetic identification on the part of the reader in *Waverley* in order to bridge the gap between the implied English reader and the Scottish characters. My discussion of *Waverley* focus on the way that Scott attempts to encourage imaginative identification through ekphrastic techniques, suggesting that the self-referential nature of the historical narrative ultimately undermines the reader's sympathetic identification, conforming to Gilpin's theory of deception which states that '[i]f indeed, either in literary, or in picturesque composition you endeavour to draw the reader, or the spectator from the *subject* to the *mode of executing* it, your affectation disgusts'.⁸⁷ *Waverley* fictionalises this 'disgust', drawing attention to the politics of alienation inherent to the process of sympathetic historical spectatorship.

Scott makes this explicitly clear in the repeated contrasts between Edward's romanticised imaginations of the past and the sensory reality of the present that confront him as he travels through Scotland. His idealised perception of history is, significantly, initially configured as a hybrid experience which fuses fiction and historical fact. His sympathetic interaction with Scottish culture is expressed via a discourse of literary

⁸⁴ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 2nd edition (London: Blamire, 1794), ll. 605-10 (p. 120).

⁸⁵ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 2nd edition, note to l. 608, p. 140.

⁸⁶ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 2nd edition, p. 140.

⁸⁷ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, p. 18.

identification which begins early on in the novel. To return to Hume's formulation, an 'eloquent Narration or Recital of the Case' serves to bring history alive by inciting Edward's sympathy.⁸⁸ The narrator tells that, in hearing the 'oft-repeated tale of narrative old age' from Sir Everard and his Aunt Rachael, 'his imagination, the predominant faculty of his mind, was frequently excited' (p. 17). It is significant that Scott deliberately fuses historical and fictional representation in his account of these sentimental narratives of 'family tradition and genealogical history' (p. 17). The accounts of Sir Everard and Rachael are explicitly within the realm of historical account but the discourse of sensibility through which they are related configures them within a fictional mode; indeed, it is highly suggestive that it is to the library at Waverley-Honour that Edward retreats, not to read but to 'exercise for hours that internal sorcery by which past or imaginary events are presented in action, as it were, to the eye of the muser' (p. 18). This fusion of history and fiction is a self-conscious gesture on Scott's part which recalls Hume's theory that fiction and history are similarly imaginative and inauthentic. Hume also blurs the generic boundaries between the two discourses in his account of two readers who read the same book, one as a romance and another as a 'true history'. He writes that the author's

words produce the same ideas in both; tho' his testimony has not the same influence on them. The latter [the reader of history] has a more lively conception of all the incidents. He enters deeper into the concerns of the persons: represents to himself their actions, and characters, and friendship, and enmities: He even goes so far as to form a notion of their features, and air, and person. While the former, who gives no credit to the testimony of the author, has a more faint and languid conception of all these particulars; and except on account of the style and ingenuity of composition, can receive little entertainment from it.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Hume, *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, p. 101.

⁸⁹ Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, I, 174-75.

History, in effect, takes on the form of a sentimental narrative, just as it does in Edward's reaction to the tales of 'suffering and fortitude' (p. 17) of his ancestors. Indeed, the narrative observes that '[a]s living in this ideal world became daily more delectable to our hero, interruption was disagreeable in proportion' (p. 19). The use of the phrase 'ideal world' is significant in its evocation of Kamesian ideal presence, a concept that is highly useful in understanding the nature of sympathetic identification in *Waverley*.

In *Elements of Criticism* (1762) Henry Home, Lord Kames, coined the term 'ideal presence' to describe the imaginative approximation of physical sensory perception. He differentiates ideal presence from the 'reflective remembrance' of standard memory on the basis that it creates stronger and more immediate sensations which makes the imagined event appear to exist in the present moment.⁹⁰ He describes this sensation in the following terms:

when a man, as in a reverie, drops himself out of his thoughts, he perceives every thing as passing before him, and hath a consciousness of presence similar to that of a spectator.⁹¹

Kames goes on to consider the applicability of ideal presence to the sensations aroused in the 'spectator' by art or fiction. He describes the experience of hearing or reading a cursory account of a historical event, stating that in this instance, 'I consider it as long past'; however, 'supposing me to be warmed by the story, perhaps by a beautiful description, I am insensibly transformed to a spectator' who sees the events as if they are happening to him in the present moment.⁹² In the moment of ideal presence incited by

⁹⁰ [Henry Home, Lord Kames], *Elements of Criticism*, 3 vols (London: Millar; Edinburgh: Kincaid & Bell, 1762), I, 108. All further references are to this edition.

⁹¹ Kames, *Elements of Criticism*, I, 109.

⁹² Kames, *Elements of Criticism*, I, 110; I 110-11.

reading a ‘lively and accurate description’, sympathy is evoked: ‘[t]he reader’s passions are never sensibly moved, till he be thrown into a kind of reverie; in which state, losing the consciousness of self, and of reading, his present occupation, he conceives every incident as passing in his presence, precisely as if he were an eye-witness.’⁹³

This process of ‘losing the consciousness of self’ (a key concept in both Godwin’s *Fleetwood* and *Mandeville*, as discussed in chapter three) is that of the experience of sympathetic identification, in which the spectator must, by an act of self-erasure, place himself in the situation of another. The relevance for historical fiction is obvious, particularly in the case of *Waverley*. The process of sympathetic identification is two-fold in *Waverley*: it operates not only in the experiences of Edward Waverley himself, but also for the reader of the novel. For the implied English reader to sympathetically identify with the Scottish people and culture they must, through Scott’s ‘lively and accurate description’, lose consciousness of themselves and become immersed in the fictional Scotland depicted in the pages of *Waverley*.⁹⁴ This process is, however, even more complex for the reader, as they must engage with not two but three time frames: the imagined past of Edward’s romantic imagination; the Scotland of ‘sixty years since’ and the moment in which they are reading the novel. In creating this contrast of time frames, Scott provides a detailed examination of the dangers and pitfalls of the type of sensory identification outlined by Kames.

The account of the interest in history that is shared by Edward and the Baron of Bradwardine draws on Kames’s account of the power of the written word to incite ideal presence. While the Baron ‘only cumbered his memory with matters of fact; the cold, dry,

⁹³ Kames, *Elements of Criticism*, I, 110; I, 112.

⁹⁴ Kames, *Elements of Criticism*, I, 110.

hard outlines which history delineates', Edward, in contrast, 'loved to fill up and round the sketch with the colouring of a warm and vivid imagination, which gives light and life to the actors and speakers in the drama of past ages' (p. 61). Like Kames's account of theatrical performance and its potential to excite ideal presence, Edward's imagination is both inspired by and able to embellish 'cold, dry, hard' accounts of history. However, the contrast between Edward's romantic visions of the past and those living in the present is highlighted when he meets Rose Bradwardine. When Rose tells of a skirmish between the Highlanders and the inhabitants of Tully-Veolan which took place when she was a child, she recalls her own memory of the events in the aftermath, telling him that 'I could not sleep for six weeks without starting, and thinking I heard these terrible cries, and saw the bodies lying on the steps, all stiff and swathed up in their bloody tartans' (p. 77). The difference between her authentic memory – 'recalled remembrance', to use Kames's term – and Waverley's indulgence in the ideal presence of the past is subtly emphasised in his interior response:

Waverley could not help starting at a story which bore so much resemblance to one of his own day-dreams. Here was a girl scarce seventeen, the gentlest of her sex, both in temper and appearance, who had witnessed with her own eyes such a scene as he had used to conjure up in his imagination, as only occurring in ancient times. (p. 77)

While Edward is experienced in creating the sensory spectacle of 'ideal presence' by listening to and reading accounts of historical romance this is offset against the process of authentic observation in the contrast with Rose, who has 'witnessed with her own eyes' (p. 77).

Scott emphasises the disjuncture between Edward's imaginative and textual interaction with history and the 'authentic' experience of ancient Scottish culture through the narrative focus on Edward's sensory deficiencies, which intensify as he moves into the Highlands and is confronted with a reality which begins to destabilise his romantic idealism. Through this narrative manoeuvre, Scott suggests that there is a gap between Edward's aesthetic capacity to imaginatively sympathise with the Scottish people and the more visceral sensory response required for true sympathetic identification. When Edward attends the 'Highland Feast' with the Mac-Ivor clan the 'family *bhairdh*' Mac-Murrough 'began to chaunt, with low and rapid utterance, a profusion of Celtic verses, which were received by the audience with all the applause of enthusiasm' (p. 105). The process is one designed to evoke sensory response in the audience: '[h]e had at first spoken with his eyes fixed on the ground; he now cast them around as if beseeching, and anon as if commanding attention, and his tones rose into wild and impassioned notes, accompanied with appropriate gesture' (p. 105). What occurs is akin to a public evocation of ideal presence as the bard begins to 'recite many proper names, to lament the dead, to apostrophize the absent, to exhort and animate those who were present' (p. 105).

This process of 'animation' – to return to the historiographical paradigm of Shelley's tale – operates on two levels; it simultaneously ignites the fervour of the present crowd and draws attention to the reanimation of the past as, in Kames's formulation, incidents seem to be occurring before their eyes. The process is explicitly one of sentimental contagion as the 'ardour of the poet appeared to communicate itself to the audience' (p. 105) and they in turn assimilate to his tone and somatic responses, assuming 'a fiercer and more animated expression [...] many sprung up and waved their arms in

ecstasy [sic], and some laid their hands on their swords' (p. 105). Yet Edward, of course, can take no part in this process of sympathetic identification because he is linguistically excluded – as exemplified through the narrator's repetition of the terms 'seemed', 'supposed', 'thought' and 'appeared' (p. 105) – and can only appreciate the scene as a detached spectator. He can watch and understand the sensory responses of the crowd with 'interest' (p. 105), but he cannot respond fully because he has no access to the 'lively and beautiful description' required to evoke Kamesian ideal presence and, in turn, precipitate sympathetic identification. Edward is, as Fergus puts it, 'a worshipper of the Celtic muse, not the less so perhaps that he does not understand a word of her language' (p. 110).

Flora Mac-Ivor's translation of the Celtic poems, 'recording the feats of heroes, the complaints of lovers, and the wars of contending tribes' (p. 111) is highly significant in terms of Edward's sensory deficiency and within the context of Scott's self-conscious exploration of the difficulties of translating the past to, as Flora puts it, an 'English stranger' (p. 110). The translation takes the form of an open-air performance near the waterfall at Glennaquoich in a scene which is explicitly romantic and picturesque. Edward is led 'up the wild, bleak, and narrow valley' and up the course of a stream which is 'rapid and furious [...] all foam and uproar' (p. 112), 'like a knight of romance [...] conducted by the fair Highland damsel, his silent guide' (p. 112). The landscape evokes the typical sensation of the sublime: as Edward gazes on the rustic bridge over a chasm of one hundred and fifty feet 'it was with a sensation of horror that [he] beheld Flora and her attendant appear, like inhabitants of another region, propped, as it were, in mid air, upon this trembling structure' (p. 113). As they reach their destination, 'like one of those lovely

forms which decorate the landscapes of Claude, Waverley found Flora gazing on the water-fall. Two paces back stood Cathleen, holding a small Scottish harp' (p. 114).

Edward's experience of the scene is essentially a witnessing of the animation of his romantic historical fantasies: the 'internal sorcery' (p. 18) of his early imagination is brought to life, 'as if by magic' (p. 114). Certainly, the vision of Flora that he sees before him is described as exceeding even his imaginative constructions:

Edward thought he had never, even in his wildest dreams, imagined a figure of such exquisite and interesting loveliness. The wild beauty of the retreat, bursting upon him as if by magic, augmented the mingled feeling of delight and awe with which he approached her. (p. 114)

Flora's artificial staging of the scene in accordance with Edward's 'wildest dreams' incites a reaction which recalls Kames's account of reading, in which the individual enters a 'reverie', 'losing the consciousness of self'.⁹⁵

Few could have heard this lovely woman make this declaration, with a voice where harmony was exalted by pathos, without exclaiming that the muse whom she invoked could never find a more appropriate representative. But Waverley, though the thought rushed on his mind, found no courage to utter it. Indeed the wild feeling of romantic delight, with which he heard the few first notes she drew from her instrument, amounted almost to a sense of pain. He would not for worlds have quitted his place by her side; yet he almost longed for solitude, that he might decypher and examine at leisure the complication of emotions which now agitated his bosom. (pp. 114-15)

The comparison to Kames is significant, in that Scott relates the loss of self – represented in Edward's desire to be alone to regain a rational perspective on what he has perceived – specifically to the act of reading, for what is described in the scene above is essentially a response to a fictional representation of Highland culture. Flora argues that this scene is

⁹⁵ Kames, *Elements of Criticism*, I, 112.

necessary to do justice to her ‘imperfect translation’ (p. 114) – it operates in effect as another level of textual explication. Furthermore, the narrator is careful to remind the reader that her actions are carefully calculated – she is described as being ‘conscious of her own power’ (p. 114) – in order to inspire Waverley’s admiration of the ‘Celtic muse’ (p. 110) through the sublime and romantic setting.⁹⁶

The visual representation of Flora’s translation is just one of a series of scenes that draw attention to the artificiality and deception associated with inciting sympathetic identification. The restoration of sympathetic social bonds at the end of *Waverley* – despite the fact that it supposedly represents an arrival at a less romantic and idealised vision of history – retains this aura of dubious authenticity. When Waverley returns to find Tully-Veolan destroyed, ‘the towers and pinnacles of the main building were scorched and blackened [...] the windows dashed in and demolished’ (p. 316). The trappings of aristocratic wealth and lineage are also defiled and defaced; ‘[t]he whole tribe of Bears [...] had experienced as little favour as those at the head of the avenue, and one or two of the family pictures, which had served as targets for the soldiers, lay on the ground in tatters’ (p. 316). However, the restoration of Tully-Veolan – in which buildings like the stables were replaced by those of ‘a lighter and more picturesque appearance’ (p. 356) – functions as an act of historical erasure which refuses to allow the imagination to linger on the past. The portrait of Edward and Fergus ‘in their Highland dress, the scene a wild, rocky, and mountainous pass, down which the clan were descending in the background’ (p. 361) directly recalls Gilpin’s idea that painting is ‘not an art, strictly imitative, but rather deceptive’, for ‘the painter gives a semblance of nature at a proper

⁹⁶ See Millgate, *Walter Scott*, p. 48, for a fuller discussion of the artificiality of the scene.

distance; which at hand, is quite another thing'.⁹⁷ The response of the viewers is represented as explicitly sentimental: the narrator describes the way the painting 'drew tears into the Baron's eyes' (p. 361). It marks the restoration of sympathetic community via an act of historical reimagination. But, as Marjorie Garson observes, it disturbs the complex historical focus of *Waverley* for, 'by throwing the emphasis on the well-born and attractive individual, it erases the tensions that make the novel interesting to the politically-engaged reader, handing it back to the lover of romance.'⁹⁸ To engage the sympathy of the spectator, then, ultimately demands an inauthentic rewriting of the past.

It is clear that visual representation in *Waverley* is fraught with a self-consciousness about the act of producing sympathetic identification through the process of sensory perception. Likewise, the role of dreams in *Waverley* is significant in this respect. While the dream sequences in the novel ostensibly offer the reader an insight into Edward's confused state of mind, they also serve to expose the narrative inconsistencies that are inevitable in creating a sympathetic reanimation of history. These sequences also have much in common with both Gilpin's account of the picturesque and Kames's ideal presence. Edward's dreams function as a mid point between the scenes of fancy he imagines from hearing or reading tales of the past and the reality of the present. Furthermore, they are always described in a discourse of sensory perception, often mixed with sound or music. In one instance, the narrator describes Edward's progress from sleep to wakefulness in the following terms:

In the morning, when Waverley's troubled reflections had for some time given way to repose, there came music to his dreams, but not the voice of Selma. He

⁹⁷ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, p. 29.

⁹⁸ Marjorie Garson, *Moral Taste: Aesthetics, Subjectivity and Social Power in the Nineteenth-Century Novel* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), p. 70.

imagined himself transported back to Tully-Veolan, and that he heard David Gellatley singing in the court those matins which used generally to be the first sounds that disturbed his repose while a guest of the Baron of Bradwardine. The notes which suggested this vision continued and waxed louder, until Edward awaked in earnest. The illusion, however, did not seem entirely dispelled. (p. 146)

In this passage, Edward's dream is represented as a complex blend of past and present.

Not only does the music that he hears in his half-waking state recall to him his past experiences at Tully-Veolan; he is, through his imagination, 'transported back' in time via the aural stimulus of the present moment.

The effect of the sensory stimulus of the present has much in common with Gilpin's formulation of the picturesque. He describes the effect of 'visions of fancy', inspired by viewing a painting:

Often, when slumber has half-closed the eye, and shut out all the objects of sense, especially after the enjoyment of some splendid scene; the imagination, active, and alert, collects it's scattered ideas, transposes, combines, and shifts them into a thousand forms, producing such exquisite scenes, such sublime arrangements, such glow, such harmony of colouring, such brilliant lights, such depth, and clearness of shadow, as equally foil description, and every attempt at artificial colouring.⁹⁹

This state of the half-closed eye is exactly what is described in the account of Waverley's dream. Furthermore, it recalls Kamesian ideal presence in its fragile reconstruction of the past, for,

[i]n contradistinction to real presence, ideal presence may be properly termed a *waking dream*; because, like a dream, it vanisheth the moment we reflect upon our present situation: real presence, on the contrary, vouched by eye-sight, commands our belief, not only during the direct perception, but in reflecting afterward upon the object.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, p. 54.

¹⁰⁰ Kames, *Elements of Criticism*, p. 82.

What is also integral to Scott's description of Waverley's dream is that it emphasises the artificiality inherent to the process of imaginative reanimation of history. That the song of David Gellately is 'not the voice of Selma' (p. 146) is highly significant. Peter Garside notes that Selma is a place in James Macpherson's *Fingal* (1762) in *The Poems of Ossian*.¹⁰¹ He contends that the word possibly originates from the Gealic *seallagh* ('sight, view') and *math* ('good'), which, if this is the case, is interesting as a usage in a passage which calls attention to the transience of sight in the mind's eye.¹⁰² Garside's contention that 'Scott himself evidently considered [Selma] a fabrication' is also highly significant.¹⁰³ While it is possible to read the reference to Selma as evocative of a contrast between the Ossianic fictional locality and the Edward's 'real' experience of Gaelic culture in the novel, it also draws attention to the complexities of imaginative representation, suggesting that the 'illusion' (p. 146) of fiction is always in danger of being destabilised.

Waverley, then, uses a series of narrative devices designed to evoke sensory response and imaginative sympathetic identification – music, picturesque landscapes, dreams, art, poetry, song and so on – but this imaginary response in the reader is always limited by the narrative's own artificiality. Gilpin suggests that 'language, like light, is a medium; and the true philosophic stile, like light from a north-window, exhibits objects clearly, and distinctly, without soliciting attention to itself.'¹⁰⁴ However, the fact that the politics of sympathy in the Waverley novels are inextricably linked to the role of the narrators renders the unobtrusiveness required to promote imaginative identification

¹⁰¹ Peter Garside, Note 146.5 in *Waverley* (Penguin), p. 439.

¹⁰² Garside, Note 146.5 in *Waverley* (Penguin), p. 439.

¹⁰³ Garside, Note 146.5 in *Waverley* (Penguin), p. 439.

¹⁰⁴ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, p. 18.

highly problematic. As Ina Ferris points out (and as I have demonstrated earlier in the chapter), in the contemporary reception of the Waverley novels, ‘the reviewers draw attention to their powers of sympathy, highlighting the “sociality,” “cordial spirit,” and “social sympathy” that the novels signify and encourage.’¹⁰⁵ The promotion of sympathetic identification in the implied English reader is ‘an effect not just of the actual representation (the depiction of characters, marginal cultures, and so forth) but of the author implied in the narrative act.’¹⁰⁶

If the reviewers configured Scott as a ‘genial host’ welcoming his readers as companions, as Ferris suggests, then this is doubtless an effect of the way that the narrators frequently attempt to construct a bond fellowship with the reader.¹⁰⁷ For example, in the dedication to the first series of *Tales of My Landlord* (1816), Scott’s fictional editor Jedediah Cleishbotham dedicates the tales that follow to ‘HIS LOVING COUNTRYMEN, WHETHER THEY ARE DENOMINATED MEN OF THE SOUTH, GENTLEMEN OF THE NORTH, PEOPLE OF THE WEST, OR FOLK OF FIFE; THESE TALES [...] ARE RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED BY THEIR FRIEND AND LIEGE-FELLOW SUBJECT, JEDEDIAH CLEISHBOTHAM’.¹⁰⁸ As Gottlieb points out, while the implied reader is ostensibly Scottish here, Scott’s use of equivocal phrasing – as in the terms ‘countrymen’ and ‘liege fellow-subject’ ‘imagine[s] his audience as British rather than specifically Scottish or English’.¹⁰⁹ Direct addresses to the reader are frequent in the Waverley novels, in order to maintain a level of fellowship and sympathetic identification

¹⁰⁵ Ferris, *The Achievement of Literary Authority*, p. 93.

¹⁰⁶ Ferris, *The Achievement of Literary Authority*, p. 244.

¹⁰⁷ Ferris, *The Achievement of Literary Authority*, p. 245.

¹⁰⁸ Walter Scott, *Tales of My Landlord, Collected and Arranged by Jedediah Cleishbotham*, 4 vols (Edinburgh: Blackwood; London: Murray, 1816), I, 1.

¹⁰⁹ Gottlieb, *Feeling British*, p. 183.

between narrator and reader, and this even takes place via the more subtle narratorial presence of *Waverley*.

The interjection as Edward approaches Rose and Flora at the ball in Edinburgh invites the reader to participate directly in Edward's emotional response to Flora's rejection. The narrator states that

[i]f, my dear reader, thou hast ever happened to take post-horses at ---, or at ---, (one at least of which blanks, or more probably both, you will be able to fill up from an inn near your own residence,) you must have observed, and doubtless with sympathetic pain, the reluctant agony with which the poor jades at first apply their galled necks to the collars of the harness. (pp. 222-23)

He goes on to note that as time passes the horses 'become callous to the first sensation' and proceed. He finishes by stating that '[t]his simile so much corresponds with the state of *Waverley*'s feelings in the course of this memorable evening, that I prefer it (especially as being, I trust, wholly original) to any more splendid illustration, with which *Byshe's Art of Poetry* might supply me' (p. 222). While this passage is obviously ironic in its apparent undermining of the process of inciting emotion in the reader, it also replicates the way that fictional narrative operates as a substitute for physical proximity in the theories of sympathy formulated by Hume and Smith, by inviting the reader to relocate the sympathetic metaphor to their own locality. In doing so, it disrupts the illusion of the historical narrative and underscores its own agenda of inciting 'sympathetic pain' in its description of its hero's plight.

Likewise, the narrator interjects at various moments with recourse to his own memory at precisely the moments when the narrative should remain unobtrusive in order to intensify the reader's affective response. For example, in the description of the pastor of Cairnvreckan, the narrator reflects that

[p]erhaps it is owing to this mixture of faith and practice, that, although his memory has formed a sort of era in the annals of Cairnvreckan [...] I have never been able to discover which he belonged to, the evangelic or the moderate party in the kirk. Nor do I hold the circumstance of much moment, since, in my own remembrance, the one was headed by an Erskine, the other by a Robertson.’ (p. 163)

This self-referential reflection on the inconsistency of memory is inserted between two paragraphs which detail the sensory response to Edward’s accidental firing of the pistol. Its fragmentation of the narrative in which Edward is previously ‘filled with a natural horror’ and subsequently Micklewraith’s wife ‘in a revulsion of feeling, was weeping, howling, and tearing her elf locks, in a state little short of distraction’ (p. 163) has the effect of interrupting the illusion of the sentimental reconstruction of the past. If, in Gilpin’s terms, the spectator – or reader, in this case – must be ‘a party to the deception’ in order to imaginatively identify with an artistic representation, this can never be achieved because Scott’s attempts to remind the reader of the distance between the past and present must always destabilise the equilibrium of sympathetic reconstruction.¹¹⁰

As the narrative reaches its conclusion, the narrator emphasises the reader’s role to an even greater degree. As ‘the story draws near its close, we hurry over the circumstances, however important, which your imagination must have forestalled, and leave you to suppose those things, which it would be abusing your patience to narrate at length’ (p. 353). The production of ideal presence, however, cannot be generated by such scant narration: it requires the ‘lively and accurate description’ that Kames proposes.¹¹¹ The novel’s postscript offers a final attempt to fuse past and present by recourse to realism and fact. The narrator states ‘I have embodied in imaginary scenes, and ascribed

¹¹⁰ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 2nd edn, note to l. 608, p. 140.

¹¹¹ Kames, *Elements of Criticism*, I, 110.

to fictitious characters, a part of the incidents which I then received from those who were actors in them. Indeed, the most romantic parts of this narrative are precisely those which have a foundation in fact' (p. 363). This fusion of fact and imagination should result in the production of a fictional scene which illuminates the past for the reader. As Gilpin states, the painter uses his imagination and, 'like a magician, he calls up at pleasure with a wave of his hand; bringing before the eye, sometimes a scene from history, or romance'.¹¹² Scott, the self-styled 'Scottish magician' and 'Northern Warlock',¹¹³ using scenes from the 'narrative of intelligent eye-witnesses' (p. 364) attempts to reconstruct the past of 'sixty years since' using various techniques of sympathetic identification. However, the narrative's self-referential qualities mean that this is never fully effective in *Waverley*: like the scenes witnessed by its hero, a 'nearer view [...] rather diminished the effect impressed on the mind by the more distant appearance' (pp. 227-28).

***The Bride of Lammermoor*: Ekphrasis and Alienation**

The metaphorical comparisons of the *Waverley* novels to paintings in their contemporary reception are made literal in *The Bride of Lammermoor*. The account of the conversation between Peter Pattieson, the fictional compiler of the narratives that comprise *Tales of my Landlord*, and his artist friend Dick Tinto Pattieson takes the form of an exchange between the two friends on the relative merits of artistic representation and dramatic dialogue. During this exchange, Tinto, on perusing the papers of Pattieson's narrative,

¹¹² Gilpin, *Three Essays*, p. 61.

¹¹³ Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe* [1820] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996; repr. 2008), p. 15. All further references are to this edition. It is notable that this discourse of wizardry in the 'Dedicatory Epistle' of *Ivanhoe* recalls the terms of reanimation discussed earlier in the chapter. The fictional editor Laurence Templeton writes that 'The Scottish magician [...] was, like Lucan's witch, at liberty to walk over the recent field of battle, and to select for the subject of the resuscitation by his sorceries, a body whose limbs had recently quivered with existence, and whose throat had but just uttered the last note of agony', p. 15.

takes issue with the amount of dialogue, complaining that the ‘characters [...] *patter* too much’.¹¹⁴ In Tinto’s opinion, artistic representation is altogether more economical and elegant; he ‘will not allow that a professor of the fine arts has occasion to embody the idea of his scene in language, in order to impress upon the reader its reality and its effect’ (p. 21). However, it is dialogue not description to which he objects and he claims that the power of description is

to the author of romance exactly what drawing and tinting were to a painter; words were his colours, and, if properly employed, they could not fail to place the scene, which he wished to conjure up, as effectually before the mind’s eye, as the tablet or canvass presents it to the bodily organ. (p. 22)

For Dick, a fictional narrative dialogue is constraining and leads to a loss of the ‘power of arresting the attention and exciting the imagination’ (p. 22). The implications of this conversation for the use of the visual as a means of inciting sympathy in Scott’s narratives are two fold. First, its self-referential consideration of the relationship between reader and narrator is heavily reliant on the discourse of sensation and perception; in its awareness of the necessity for literature to ‘impress’ and ‘excite’ (p. 22), it demonstrates Scott’s pervasive concern with the power of his fiction to convey history to the reader using sensibility. Second, it emphasises the capacity of the verbal image to stimulate imagination – the ‘mind’s eye’ – in order to encourage sympathetic identification on the part of the reader. The ironic sympathy in the account of Dick’s demise, however, demonstrates a marked ambivalence on Scott’s part about the power of art to create the desired impression in the viewer: Dick’s obituary notes that ‘his manner displayed considerable genius, though his style was rather sketchy’ (p. 20), suggesting the intended

¹¹⁴ Walter Scott, *The Bride of Lammermoor* [1819] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991; repr. 2008), p. 21. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

effect is all too easily lost in the process of artistic representation. The ‘parcel of loose scraps’ which comprise Dick’s notes of the tale that forms the basis of the novel make the link between artistic and literary representation still more specific: what remains is ‘partly scratched over with his pencil, partly with his pen, where outlines of caricatures, sketches of turrets, mills, old gables, and dovecots, disputed the ground with his written memoranda’ (p. 25). This disputed ground is an appropriate metaphor for the difficulties in inciting emotion in the reader of historical fiction. Both the metafictional and the ekphrastic properties of *The Bride of Lammermoor* draw attention to the artificiality of promoting sympathetic identification via the novel form. What emerges in the novel as a result is a sense of profound alienation on both the part of the protagonist, Edgar Ravenswood, and the reader. To return to Smith’s formulation of sympathy as it relates to proximity, Edgar occupies an isolated position between history and modernity which renders him ultimately incapable of forming sentimental bonds with the other characters. Likewise, the metafictional properties of the novel obscure the metaphorical proximity required for the process of sympathetic identification on the part of the reader.

The Bride of Lammermoor is fundamentally concerned with the links between perception and union. Set in the aftermath of the 1707 Union of Parliaments, it considers the possibility of reconciling the Scottish past with the British present.¹¹⁵ Based on the story of Janet Dalrymple told to Scott by his mother and his great-aunt, the novel tells of the ill-fated attachment formed between Edgar Ravenswood, the last remaining descendant of the diminished but venerable Ravenswood family, and Lucy Ashton, the

¹¹⁵ The alterations to the Magnum Opus edition of the novel (1830) suggesting a post-Union setting are significant within the context of historical fiction as a mediator for Union outlined by Gottlieb, making the text’s sympathetic alienation and disempowerment even more pertinent. For an account of the changes to the novel for the Magnum Opus edition, see Jane Millgate, ‘Text and Context: Dating the Events of *The Bride of Lammermoor*’, *The Bibliothek*, 9 (1979), 200-13.

daughter of Sir William Ashton, Keeper of the Great Seal of Scotland and bourgeois purchaser of the Ravenswood estate. In contrast to the reconciliatory marriages that symbolise national union in the national–historical fiction of the period – and in many of the other Waverley novels – *The Bride of Lammermoor* refuses such an outcome; instead, as Juliet Shields observes, it dramatises ‘Scots disempowerment in the negotiation of union’ through the figure of Lucy Ashton.¹¹⁶ There have been a number of accounts which consider the role of sentiment in the novel, most of which suggest that sensibility is, as Shields puts it, ‘[consigned] to the ahistorical domestic sphere’, in the model of sentimental reconciliation common to the national tale.¹¹⁷ My discussion suggests that sensibility operates at a far more public level in the novel, interrogating the potential for unionising national sympathy as a signifier of historical progress. In addition, this interrogation is focalised through a discourse of sensation – and more specifically, visuality – which recalls the self-consciousness about the mediating role of literature in the opening chapter and functions as a ‘reflection on the problems of telling stories about the past’.¹¹⁸

The scene in which Edgar Ravenswood first appears in the narrative is an apt reminder of the influence that the conversation between Pattieson and Tinto in the opening chapter has on the novel as a whole; as Fiona Robertson points out, ‘landscape, architecture, and the physical positioning of the characters are unusually expressive’ in

¹¹⁶ Juliet Shields, *Sentimental Literature and Anglo-Scottish Identity, 1745-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 150.

¹¹⁷ Shields, *Sentimental Literature and Anglo-Scottish Identity*, p. 152. See Miranda J. Burgess, *British Fiction and the Production of Social Order, 1740-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) and Ian Duncan, *Modern Romance and Transformations of the Novel: The Gothic, Scott, Dickens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992; repr. 2005), p. 53.

¹¹⁸ Fiona Robertson, ‘Introduction’ in Walter Scott, *The Bride of Lammermoor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991; repr. 2008), pp. vii-xxix (pp. viii-ix).

The Bride of Lammermoor.¹¹⁹ The officer who is called to Lord Ravenswood's funeral at the start of the novel to prevent the unlawful 'Scottish Episcopal communion' is described as a 'spectator of the ceremonial' (p. 32), placing him in the role of onlooker to a 'scene [...] worthy of an artist's pencil' (p. 32) in which the participants are described in a static *tableau*, gathered around the clergyman as the corpse of Lord Ravenswood is lowered into the family vault. The reader, then, takes the part of the spectator, incited into sympathetic identification with the 'deep agony' of Edgar Ravenswood as he mourns for his father and the lost feudal past. A similar technique is used later in the novel in Scott's description of Caleb, Edgar's servant, as he opens the gate to Edgar and Bucklaw 'with a trembling hand' (p. 84):

[t]he timorous cautious glance which he threw around him – the effect of the partial light upon his white hair and illumined features, might have made a good painting; but our travellers were too impatient for security against the rising storm, to permit them to indulge themselves in studying the picturesque. (pp. 84-85)

However, it is at this point that the narrative begins to reveal the inconsistency and instability of perception that characterise it for the rest of the novel. The reader's sympathy is aroused for the figure in the artistic scene thanks to the narrator's interpolation but there is a careful separation of this from the perception of Edgar himself, who is too distracted to 'indulge' in sensitivity to the loyal attachment of his servant.

Scott's use of ekphrasis underlines the ways in which perception and imagination destabilise the possibility of national union in the novel. When Edgar visits Ravenswood Castle on the invitation of Lord Ashton, he is struck by the changes that have been made

¹¹⁹ Robertson, 'Introduction', p. xiv.

in the castle, in which ‘new alterations impressed upon Ravenswood the superior wealth of the present inhabitants of the castle’ (p. 191). He notes in particular the removal of ‘[s]everal old family portraits’, which have been replaced by those of royalty and lawyers – indicating Ashton’s political sympathies and legal background – and of Ashton’s parents. The portrait of Ashton’s father is described as depicting a

pinched, peevish, puritanical set of features, terminating in a hungry, reddish, peaked beard, forming on the whole a countenance, in the expression of which the hypocrite seemed to contend with the miser and the knave. (p. 191)

The portrait functions as a reminder of the demise of the fortunes of the Ravenswood family, offering a contrast between the old aristocratic order and the modernity of Ashton who, in his own portrait, lacks ‘that air of awful rule and right supremacy, which indicates the full possession of domestic authority’ (p. 192).¹²⁰ What is most interesting, however, about Scott’s ekphrasis, is the impact it has on Ravenswood as a spectator. The narrator describes how ‘[h]e looked at them again, and, as he looked, the recollection of Lucy Ashton [...] seemed less lively in his imagination’ (p. 191). His response to the visual stimuli of the portraits results not in sympathy for the subjects – in the proper sympathetic mode of seeing precipitating an imaginative identification with the situation of the agent – but in antipathy and a diminishment of his sentimental bond with Lucy.

Sight in *The Bride of Lammermoor* is perpetually linked to the possibility of union between the Scottish past and the modern British present. Blind Alice is integral to the novel’s concern with union: ‘deprived of the advantage of sight’ (p. 48) in the

¹²⁰ See also Robertson, Note 191.3 (pp. 420-21) which discusses the other paintings in Ashton’s collection as contrasting his ‘low origins and high aspirations’, p. 421. This contrast also hints at the contested notion of monarchy in the Scottish/British contexts, in which the country’s patriotic affective bond to the Stuarts is contrasted with the modern civic duty of the Hanoverians (which is often articulated in terms of sensibility and politeness, as in the case of the Enlightened Hanoverian Captain Talbot in *Waverley*).

physiological sense, her second sight emerges as a powerful force which represents the ‘authority of tradition’.¹²¹ Shields argues that in dismissing omens and the supernatural, ‘Ravenswood unwittingly fulfils the prophecies surrounding his ancestry’.¹²² The incident of his ancestor Raymond of Ravenswood causing the death of a Naiad who inhabited a fountain in the grounds of the estate marks the point, according to the narrator, at which ‘the house of Ravenswood was supposed to have dated decay’ (p. 58). Shields argues that this narrative endorsement of the prophecy amounts to an ‘alternative history’ of supernatural romance in the novel, which coexists alongside the more conventional suggestion that the Ravenswood family’s decline was a product of the downfall of the Stuart monarchy in 1688.¹²³ The scene at the fountain where Edgar intends to terminate his relationship with Lucy represents Edgar’s misguided belief that the danger of their attachment lies in its political, rather than prophetic, threat. What is even more suggestive, however, is that Edgar’s unstable judgement of the situation is grounded in his sensory response to Lucy: he overlooks the ‘second sight’ of the prophecy for the romantic and sentimental visual stimulus of Lucy’s beauty. As Edgar approaches Lucy she is described as a static part of the landscape, sitting ‘upon one of the disjointed stones of the ancient fountain [...] watch[ing] the progress of the current’ but ‘not aris[ing] from the stone on which she was seated’ (p. 205). The narrator states that,

[t]o a superstitious eye, Lucy Ashton, folded in her plaided mantle, with her long hair [...] might have suggested the idea of the murdered Nymph of the Fountain. But Ravenswood only saw a female exquisitely beautiful, and rendered yet more so in his eyes – how could it be otherwise – by the consciousness that she had placed her affections on him. As he gazed on her, he felt his fixed resolution melting like wax in the sun. (p. 205)

¹²¹ Shields, *Sentimental Literature and Anglo-Scottish Identity*, p. 148.

¹²² Shields, *Sentimental Literature and Anglo-Scottish Identity*, p. 148.

¹²³ Shields, *Sentimental Literature and Anglo-Scottish Identity*, p. 148.

The visual lexicon in the passage is highly significant in terms of Scott's self-conscious use of narrative sympathy because it clearly subverts the model of sympathetic identification based on visual perception in two ways. First, the passage juxtaposes conventional sight with the second sight of a 'superstitious eye'; Edgar's lack of appreciation for the prophecy recounted by Alice represents his blindness to the tradition and folklore which encapsulate the Scottish past. Second, his attachment to Lucy is revealed as the product of self-interest rather than a deep and reciprocal affective bond, for his sentimental perception of her beauty is dependent on his awareness of her affection for him. The ekphrastic representation of Lucy in the fountain *tableau* creates a dynamic characterised by isolation rather than sympathy: Edgar is ultimately alienated from both the ancient Scottish past – represented by superstition and folklore – and from the modern bourgeois domesticity promised in his marriage to Lucy.

The problems inherent in cross-cultural sympathetic identification are rendered still more explicit by the way that Scott connects visual and sensory representation with assimilation and loss of identity. In one of the other key ekphrastic episodes of the novel, the young Henry Ashton is terrified by the resemblance between Edgar and the portrait of his ancestor Malise of Ravenswood which hangs in the castle. The boy tells his father that Edgar 'is the picture of old Malise of Ravenswood, and he is as like it as if he had loupén out of the canvas' (p. 195). As the novel progresses, Edgar Ravenswood undergoes a transformation into the spectral figure of vengeance imagined by Henry Ashton: a demonic reanimation of art which has 'come to chase us all out of the castle [...] and is come to say, with a hollow voice, *I bide my time*' (p. 195). When he enters the castle

later in the novel he has ‘more the appearance of one returned from the dead, than of a living visitor’ (p. 321). Even his dress has assimilated with that in the portrait of Malise; he takes on a martial appearance resembling that of Malise’s armour with ‘a sword by his side, and pistols in his belt’ (p. 321). Ravenswood is described by the narrator as a figure suspended between life and art: ‘[t]he matted and dishevelled locks of hair which escaped from under his hat, together with his fixed and unmoved posture, made his head more resemble that of a marble bust than that of a living man’ (pp. 321-22).

As he leaves the castle for the final time, he looks at it ‘with a fixed eye; then set spurs to his good steed, and departed with the speed of a demon dismissed by the exorcist’ (p. 329). From this point his demonic spirit is represented by the portrait of Malise, which in a ‘queer [...] ploy’ – placed there by Ailsie Gourlay, an old woman suspected of witchcraft – ‘seemed to frown with wrath and vengeance upon the party assembled below’ (p. 336). Ravenswood himself, deprived of his birthright and his identity, meets his end in the suitably unstable quicksand of the Kelpie’s Flow in accordance with the prophecy. The implications in terms of sympathy are telling. Ravenswood’s attachment to the past renders him incapable of sympathetic perception in the present. In an inversion of the model of visual stimulus inciting sympathetic identification, Edgar’s perception is static and expressed only in terms of the past – for example, Ashton’s portraits lessen Lucy’s hold on his imagination because they cause him to reflect on the historical demise of his family – which serves to limit the possibility of sympathetic union in the present. As a result of his inability to appropriate the dynamics of sentimental spectatorship, Ravenswood is transformed, in effect, into a static object of art. The inverse of the reanimated artefact Roger Dodsworth, he becomes a

living man petrified by history: a ‘marble bust’ or the subject of a portrait unable to participate in the present and to forge the sympathetic unions necessary for historical progress. Scott’s use of ekphrasis and his emphasis on visual art in *The Bride of Lammermoor* exposes the necessity for sympathetic community in uniting the Scottish past with the British present, while simultaneously offering a self-conscious consideration of the difficulties inherent to the visual and verbal representation of history.

***Ivanhoe*: Linguistic Representation and Sentimental Fellowship**

It is widely accepted that *Ivanhoe* marks a turning point in Scott’s literary production in more ways than one. The most obvious point of difference is the shift in setting and period: until this point all of Scott’s novels had been set in Scotland and all (with the exception of *The Legend of Montrose*, published in 1819) had been set in the second half of the seventeenth century or later. As Graham Tulloch observes in his influential study of Scott’s language, this change ‘is often felt to have had far from beneficial effects on Scott’s writing in general’, and ‘certainly had major repercussions in the language of the novels, especially the dialogue’.¹²⁴ Lumsden argues that *The Heart of Mid-Lothian* (1819) ‘emerges as a kind of crisis in Scott’s writing’, marking ‘moment where the question of language assumes a new urgency for the Author of Waverley’ and that the subsequent novels of the 1820s ‘see a significant shift in both the subject matter of Scott’s fiction and the complexity with which he approaches the topic of the relationships between meaning and discourse and the implications of these for the novelist’.¹²⁵ Certainly, the emphasis on

¹²⁴ Graham Tulloch, *The Language of Walter Scott: A Study of his Scottish and Period Language* (London: André Deutsch, 1980), p. 13.

¹²⁵ Lumsden, *Walter Scott and the Limits of Language*, p. 135.

sensory perception in the forms of the picturesque and ekphrasis discussed in *Waverley* and *The Bride of Lammermoor* are largely dispensed with in *Ivanhoe*, resulting in a decided shift in the way Scott employs sensibility.

David Simpson argues that *Ivanhoe*, in contrast to the model of Scott's earlier romances of national conciliation, depicts a far more heterogeneous social fabric: 'it persists in a form of discordant ethnic fragments unincorporated either into politically tolerant entities or into the more spontaneous harmonies of an evolving civil society.'¹²⁶ However, the 'Dedicatory Epistle' in *Ivanhoe* is articulated in terms that reflect Scott's continued interest in both the politics of sympathy as means of promoting cross-cultural identification and the difficulties inherent in the fictional representation of the past. The purported editor Laurence Templeton defends the practice of 'explain[ing] ancient manners in modern language' on the basis that there is an 'extensive neutral ground [...] of manners and sentiments which are common to us and our ancestors' and which '[arise] out of the principles of our common nature' which 'must have existed alike in either state of society' (p. 18). This notion of the essential sameness underpinning the sentiments of different historical eras is emphasised in the well-known passage that follows, in which Templeton states that:

The passions, the sources from which these must spring in all their modifications, are generally the same in all ranks and conditions, all countries and ages; and it follows, as a matter of course, that the opinions, habits of thinking, and actions, however influenced by the peculiar state of society, must still, upon the whole, bear a strong resemblance to each other [...] The tenor, therefore, of [our ancestors'] affections and feelings, must have borne the same general proportion to our own.' (pp. 19-20)

¹²⁶ David Simpson, *Romanticism and the Question of the Stranger* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), p. 89.

Like the passage in the opening chapter of *Waverley*, in which Scott referred to ‘those passions common to all men in all stages of society [...] which have alike agitated the human heart’ and the shared ‘deep ruling impulse’ of feeling (p. 5), Templeton’s statement underscores the politics of sympathy at work in the historical novel: in spite of temporal distance, the contemporary passions of the reader will necessarily identify with those described in the text.

As discussed earlier in the chapter, both Smith and Hume address the complexities surrounding the transmission of sympathy through geographical and historical space. In the *Treatise*, Hume argues that ‘sympathy is very variable’ and that ‘[w]e sympathise more with persons contiguous to us than persons remote from us: With our acquaintance, than with strangers: With our countrymen, than with foreigners.’¹²⁷ As such, one cannot ‘feel the same lively pleasure from the virtues of a person, who liv’d in *Greece* two thousand years ago, [as] that I feel from the virtues of a familiar friend and acquaintance’.¹²⁸ Scott appears to be well aware of this limitation, for the ‘Dedicatory Epistle’ goes on to consider the complexities of identification and proximity in more detail. While Templeton appears to support Hume’s assertion that we sympathise more readily with our own countrymen, he adds a caveat when it comes to historical distance. He argues that, in fact, the English reader is *less* likely to identify with an account of the primitive society of his ancestors precisely *because* there is an expectation of similitude. So, the English reader

placed in his own snug parlour, and surrounded by all the comforts of an Englishman’s fireside, is not half so much disposed [as is he in the case of the Scottish] to believe that his own ancestors led a very different life from himself

¹²⁷ Hume, *Treatise of Human Understanding*, III, 212; III 213.

¹²⁸ Hume, *Treatise of Human Understanding*, III 213.

[...] and that the complete influence of feudal tyranny once extended over the neighbouring village, where the attorney is now a man of more importance than the lord of the manor. (p. 16)

In effect, sympathy in this case is limited by the expectation of sameness. As Dabney Townsend points out, in Hume's conception,

[t]he problem is not that we would be prejudiced in favor of our friends but simply that we know them better and are thus better attuned to the cues that they give us to their sentiments. Their impressions would be more likely to transfer sympathetically because we would be likely to be more aware of their impressions.¹²⁹

The account of a primitive and historically distant time, then, makes sympathetic identification problematic because of the gap between the familiarity of the present historical moment and the unknown nature of the past. The process of identification is conditional upon reducing this gap by creating a detailed fictional account in a way that 'renders [it] as perfect as possible'.¹³⁰

However, while both Smith and Hume are in agreement about the increase of sympathy that occurs when the agent is known to the spectator, this does not mean that sympathy is impossible with foreign or distant persons: the ideological formation is imbued with the capacity for considerable fluctuation. Although Scott outlines his awareness of the difficulties associated with representing the past in the 'Dedicatory Epistle', Templeton is confident that 'these objections' – meaning the historical distance between the reader and the medieval setting of *Ivanhoe* – 'do not appear to me to be altogether insurmountable' (p. 16). Certainly, as Hume acknowledges, '[o]ur situation, with regard both to persons and things, is in continual fluctuation; and a man, that lies at

¹²⁹ Dabney Townsend, *Hume's Aesthetic Theory: Taste and Sentiment* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 102.

¹³⁰ Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 36.

distance from us, may, in a little time, become a familiar acquaintance'.¹³¹ In addition, it is 'certain, that sympathy is not always limited to the present moment, but that we often feel by communication the pains and pleasures of others, which are not in being, and which we only anticipate by the force of imagination.'¹³²

The 'Dedicatory Epistle', then, has implications in terms of both the sympathetic connection and the degree of familiarity with the object and the linguistic representation of feeling. My discussion of *Ivanhoe* follows these two avenues, suggesting that they are interrelated. The novel is invested with a discourse of friendship and fellowship which links it firmly to Enlightenment concepts of sympathy, with particular reference to Smith and Hume. Through its consideration of friendship, fellowship and cross-cultural sympathetic union, the novel represents Scott's continued investment in sympathy as a unifying force of civilisation and modernity. He draws on the tradition of male friendship that emerged in the eighteenth-century which, according to Shawn Lisa Maurer, transformed 'prior vicissitudes of often antagonistic political power into a narrative in which benevolence, succor, love, and mutual support become friendship's highest achievements.'¹³³ Maurer suggests that Thomas Holcroft and William Godwin transformed this Enlightenment discourse in the 1790s into a 'wholly affective, personal, rational, and often familial phenomenon' and a 'strictly voluntary tie'.¹³⁴ As she points out, before the eighteenth-century, 'discussions of friendship always existed within a context of explicit engagement with an active public arena'; this earlier conception of

¹³¹ Hume, *Treatise of Human Understanding*, III, 214.

¹³² Hume, *Treatise of Human Understanding*, II, 193.

¹³³ Shawn Lisa Maurer, 'The Politics of Masculinity in the 1790s Radical Novel: *Hugh Trevor, Caleb Williams* and the Romance of Sentimental Friendship' in *Enlightening Romanticism, Romancing the Enlightenment: British Novels from 1750 to 1832*, ed. by Miriam L. Wallace (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 87-110 (p. 87). Maurer suggests that this discourse is particularly identifiable in the periodical essays of Joseph Addison and Samuel Johnson.

¹³⁴ Maurer, 'The Politics of Masculinity', pp. 88, 92.

friendship emphasises the practical benefits of friendship in the public and political arena, while sentimental friendship in the eighteenth century becomes connected to the idea of ‘how a friend makes one feel’.¹³⁵ The eighteenth-century model is one which, by configuring the friend as another self, effaces ‘the barriers between self and other’.¹³⁶ The ties of friendship are invested with additional significance with the genre of historical fiction as, in keeping with the formation of stadial historical progress, new kinds of civilised fellowship replace the hierarchical bonds of kinship, promoting cultural unity. However, *Ivanhoe* manifests some profound reservations about the effectiveness of this model of sociability. Friendship functions in the novel as a dangerous and unfixed hybrid of the earlier Roman, Greek and Renaissance formulation – in which a friend serves as an ally in the political arena – and the Enlightenment conception of friendship based on mutual affection.

In one sense, friendship in the novel is tribal and primitive, located explicitly within the active public arena. Cedric rails against the Normans in terms of militarism and combat, stating

‘I will be avenged [...] I will go with my complaint to the great council; I have friends, I have followers – man to man I will appeal the Norman to the lists; let him come in his plate and his mail, and all that can render cowardice bold [...] Haply they think me old; but they shall find, alone and childless as I am, the blood of Hereward is in the veins of Cedric.’ (pp. 51-52)

In this passage ‘friends’ and ‘followers’ are conflated, located explicitly within a discourse of political alliance. Likewise, in the discourse of friendship associated with King Richard, friends are linked to military allegiance. Richard’s geographical

¹³⁵ Maurer, ‘The Politics of Masculinity’, p. 89.

¹³⁶ Maurer, ‘The Politics of Masculinity’, p. 89.

dislocation represents a fracturing of the bonds of fellowship as a result of changes in the political structure of the nation; as Fitzurse states, ““these are not the days of King Arthur, when a champion could encounter an army. If Richard indeed comes back, it must be alone, – unfollowed – unfriended”” (p. 173). This construction clearly opposes the ‘modern’ enlightened values of friendship outlined by Maurer, suggesting that loyalty is based on political power rather than individual mutual fellowship.

In contrast, Scott constructs an alternative model of friendship which specifically aligns itself with the eighteenth-century formation of social bonds. This is most notable in the references to the discourse of physiognomy which locate fellowship firmly within an Enlightenment model of feeling. The scene where Richard (at this point still unidentified) takes shelter in Friar Tuck’s hermitage relocates fellowship to a private setting in which mutual affection is forged, not through knowledge of political allegiance, but through the physiological indicators of sensibility. In response to Robin Locksley’s assurance that, while he will not reveal his identity, he is nonetheless ‘the friend of my country, and of my country’s friends’ (p. 218), Richard answers that he can credit Locksley’s assertion, for “I have been accustomed to study men’s countenances, and I can read in thine honesty and resolution” (p. 218). As Ian Duncan points out in his discussion of physiognomy in *Redgauntlet*, the somatic manifestations of feeling operate as ‘the legible page of the socialized body’.¹³⁷ Scott’s appropriation of physiognomy recalls that in Mackenzie’s *The Man of Feeling*, in which it functions as the only means of identifying genuine and

¹³⁷ Ian Duncan, ‘Sympathy, Physiognomy, and Scottish Romantic Fiction’, in *Recognizing the Romantic Novel: New Histories of British Fiction, 1780-1830*, ed. by Jillian Heydt-Stevenson and Charlotte Sussman (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), pp. 285-305 (p. 286).

authentic sensibility in a corrupt society.¹³⁸ Duncan argues that physiognomy was ‘the most elaborate of a range of Enlightenment techniques for interpreting, representing and thus fully socializing the embodied self’.¹³⁹ In a novel such as *Ivanhoe*, where the social fabric consists of disparate and disguised cultural groups and factions, the impressions imparted by the physical appearance of strangers are integral to the formation of social bonds. In the absence of the familiarity most appropriate for the process of sympathetic identification defined by Smith and Hume, fellowship must be forged via the interactions of sensibility.

However, Scott reveals the politics of sympathetic fellowship to be inherently unstable in *Ivanhoe*: the fact that so many of the characters in the novel are effectively strangers to one another – either because of concealed identity or because of geographical and cultural dislocation – means that sensibility becomes not only an unreliable means of judging individual motives and allegiances but also a destructive force that has the power to destabilise the fabric of the nation. Cedric’s plea as he attempts to ‘wring out of those who guarded him an avowal of their character and purpose’ (p. 223), underscores both the unstable and the dangerous potential of friendship. He states that:

‘You should be Englishmen [...] and yet, sacred Heaven! you prey upon your countrymen as if you were very Normans. You should be my neighbours, and, if so, my friends; for which of my English neighbours have reason to be otherwise? I tell ye, yeomen, that even those among ye who have been branded with outlawry have had from me protection; for I have pitied their miseries, and curst the

¹³⁸ Physiognomy itself is also an inherently unreliable process. Indeed, in *The Man of Feeling*, ‘physiognomy was one of Harley’s foibles, for which he had often been rebuked by his aunt in the country; who used to tell him, that when he came to her years and experience, he would know that all’s not gold that glisters’, Henry Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 34.

¹³⁹ Duncan, ‘Sympathy, Physiognomy, and Scottish Romantic Fiction’, p. 286.

oppression of their tyrannic nobles [...] Ye are worse than brute beasts in your actions, and will you imitate them in their very dumbness?’ (p. 223)

This speech is a complex meditation on the politics of cultural sympathy and assimilation. Cedric’s conflation of neighbourhood and friendship espouses the notion that one should more readily sympathise with one’s countrymen, not only because of their geographical nearness but because shared cultural values of nationality facilitate sympathetic identification through familiarity. Indeed, Cedric himself asserts that he has ‘pitied’ the plight of his neighbours in the role of a sympathetic ‘friend’, despite their status as outlaws.

However, his speech emphasises the fact that sympathy is not necessarily reciprocal and in fact can serve to strengthen rather than to overcome oppression. His accusation that the guards have begun to ‘imitate’ ‘brute beasts’ in their actions charges them with a betrayal of the shared sympathetic values of neighbours and friends. Furthermore, his use of the term ‘imitation’ implies that the dangerous politics of cultural erasure – a central motif in Owenson’s interrogation of sensibility within a national context – can be set in motion by misplaced friendship. His account of how a Norman artist was brought to England to endow Wolfganger’s father’s hall with a stained glass window makes this connection even more explicit in the accusation that the Saxons ‘made these strangers our bosom friends, our confidential servants’ and ‘became enervated by Norman arts long ere we fell under Norman arms’ (p. 227). The allure of the sophistication and luxury of the civilised arts of the Normans – key terms in the process of stadial history – have led to a process of cultural erasure which has fundamentally damaged the sympathetic bonds of the nation.

The difficulty of identifying a true friend in *Ivanhoe* further emphasises the dangers inherent in the Enlightenment model of fellowship as a basis for national cohesion. When the Prior Aymer of Jorvaulx accuses the Jews of being ‘gnawing adders’ who ‘eat the bowels of the state’ (p. 361), implicitly charging them with undermining the body politic of the nation, Isaac responds with an impassioned speech, stating that

‘when churchman and layman, prince and prior, knight and priest, come knocking to Isaac’s door, they borrow not his shekels with these uncivil terms. It is then, Friend Isaac, will you pleasure us in this matter, and our day shall be truly kept, so God sa’ me? – and Kind Isaac, if you ever served man, show yourself a friend in this need! And when the day comes, and I ask my own, then what hear I but Damned Jew, and The curse of Egypt on your tribe, and all that may stir up the rude and uncivil populace against poor strangers!’ (p. 361)

This notion of false friendship is linked with superficial civility but it is clear that the boundary between ‘friend’ and ‘stranger’ remains in a constant state of flux. This is never clearer than in the relationship between Rebecca and Brian de Bois-Guilbert. When Rebecca is conducted to her trial and finds a scrap of paper pressed into her hand, ‘[t]he assurance that she possessed some friend in this awful assembly gave her courage to look around’ (p. 401); the revelation that this scroll is actually from Bois-Guilbert undermines all of her assumptions about loyalty and allegiance. When Rebecca later hears a knock at the door of her prison chamber, she declares, ““Enter [...] if thou art a friend; and if a foe, I have not the means of refusing thy entrance”” (p. 426). Bois-Guilbert, on entering, replies ““I am [...] friend or foe, Rebecca, as the event of this interview shall make me.”” (p. 426). It is clear, then, that the terms of ‘friend’ and ‘foe’ in *Ivanhoe* are fundamentally shifting and in flux. In terms of the wider implications for historical fiction this is significant, for it puts cultural relationships under the pressure of knowing/not-knowing

in a way that undermines the capacity for sympathetic identification. In Hume's terms, this continual state of fluctuation means that the spectator can never be sure whether the agent is friend or foe, which makes sympathetic identification superficial and unreliable.

If this instability is expressed at the level of plot and character, it is further emphasised by the ambiguous nature of the discourse and terminology of friendship in *Ivanhoe*. This has significant implications for the interaction between realism and sensibility outlined earlier in the chapter because it represents a failure of linguistic potential to promote sympathetic identification. In her discussion of *Waverley*, Lumsden considers the scene in which the narrator offers a translation of the exchange between Edward and Evan Dhu, suggesting that

this act of translation in turn acts as a metaphor for how the novel as a whole is operating, suggesting that through the novel form the reader may be brought to understand [...] the discourse of Scottish culture (thereby learning to sympathise with its foibles) [...] While another culture may be alien or other, Scott [...] seems confident that it may be at least 'sympathised with' by learning its grammar, the rules by which it operates.¹⁴⁰

While this process of sympathising with another culture via a process of familiarisation with its dialect is demonstrably at work in the Scottish *Waverley* novels it is considerably more unstable in terms of *Ivanhoe*'s historical discourse. Templeton draws attention to this in the 'Dedicatory Epistle' in his defence of the practice of describing 'ancient manners in modern language' (p. 18). To write in the 'authentic' mimetic discourse of the past inhibits the process of imaginative identification in the reader: sympathising with an alien culture must be aided by narrative interpretation. The implications for this in terms of Smith's conception of sympathy being predicated on knowing the state of the object of compassion in as much detail as possible and for Scott's own notions about realism as a

¹⁴⁰ Lumsden, *Walter Scott and the Limits of Language*, p. 87.

way of conveying emotion are significant. The synthetic discourse of *Ivanhoe* threatens to fundamentally destabilise the act of readerly identification.

As Graham Tulloch pointed out in his influential study of language in Scott's novels, the language of *Ivanhoe* 'is not Anglo-Saxon or early Middle English but a mixed, artificially created language – a base of early nineteenth-century English with elements of earlier English added to give a flavour of "oldness"'.¹⁴¹ Accordingly, the language of friendship used in *Ivanhoe* is unsurprisingly hybrid. The various definitions of 'friendship' coexist in the novel: it simultaneously implies 'mutual trust and intimacy'; 'a person who is not hostile' (in contrast to foe, another key term in the text); 'a person who takes the same side as another in war'; 'a close relation, a kinsman or kinswoman'; 'a person who wishes another [...] well'; and 'an acquaintance, an associate; a stranger whom one comes across or has occasion to mention again'.¹⁴² It implies variously a political ally, a relation (significantly the word 'friend' to suggest a kinsman or woman in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is cited in the *OED* as specifically Scottish, making the discourse not only a historical fusion but also a national one) and a friend in the eighteenth-century sense that Maurer identifies, signifying 'mutual trust and intimacy'. As a result, the very terminology of friendship fuses various historical time frames, creating a hybrid discourse of medieval kinship and modern Enlightenment affective bonds. The fluid nature of the terminology of friendship is underscored in the humorous exchange between Richard and Friar Tuck about the identity of Robin:

"But who is he?" said the Black Knight; "it imports me much to know."
 "Who is he?" answered the hermit; "I tell thee he is a friend."
 "But what friend?" answered the knight; "for he may be friend to thee and none of mine?"

¹⁴¹ Tulloch, *The Language of Walter Scott*, p. 14.

¹⁴² *OED*, online version, available at < <http://www.oed.com>.> [accessed 3rd September 2013].

“What friend?” replied the hermit; “that, now, is one of the questions that is more easily asked than answered. What friend? – why, he is, now that I bethink me a little, the very same honest keeper I told thee of a while since.” (p. 216)

The ironic and self-conscious interrogation of the terminology of fellowship in *Ivanhoe* once again draws attention to Scott’s awareness about the problematic nature of inciting sympathetic identification in the reader. The fluctuating designations of friend and foe mean that for the characters, the bonds of fellowship and friendship in the novel are fundamentally indecipherable. For the reader, dependent on the author’s mimetic representation of emotion, the instability of the discourse of feeling ultimately inhibits the process of sympathetic identification.

Waverley, *The Bride of Lammermoor* and *Ivanhoe* interrogate the representation of feeling in the realist form in various ways. *Waverley*, through the relationship it forges between the dislocated protagonist in an unfamiliar land and the implied English reader, uses discourses of sensory perception – in the form of the picturesque, the sublime, dreams and so forth – to immerse the reader into a fictional Scotland in order to encourage cross-cultural sympathy. However, the illusion of knowingness and imagined proximity is consistently disrupted by the metafictional narrative. *The Bride of Lammermoor* can be read as a fictionalisation of the alienation of the reader of historical fiction who, like Edgar Ravenswood, is caught between the past and the present, only partially immersed in the fictional world. *Ivanhoe* is far less reliant on the discourses of sensation; replacing them with a form of sentimental fellowship. This is, however, ultimately revealed as fundamentally unstable at the level of language itself, suggesting that the self-conscious form of Scott’s historical novel can never authentically bridge the gap between the sentimental spectator (or reader) and the object of their sympathy.

Conclusion

Walter Scott's self-conscious interrogation of the complex interaction between sensibility and the realist form of the historical novel raises some important questions about Romantic fiction and the alleged shift from a mimetic to an expressive ideology that has long been a perceived manoeuvre of Romanticism.¹ My argument that sensibility operates as a metanarrative for Romantic fiction destabilises this assumption, given the literary origins of sentiment in the form of the eighteenth-century novel. In doing so, it complicates the perception of Romanticism as, in Wordsworth's terms, 'the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings' which exists in opposition to the realist modes of the eighteenth century.² Realism and eighteenth-century fiction have been inextricably linked in the literary critical consciousness since the publication of Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel* in 1957, which provided a narrative of an emerging realist discourse in the eighteenth century as a product of Enlightenment empiricist philosophy. As Watt writes, '[m]odern realism [...] begins from the position that truth can be discovered by the

¹ See M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953; repr. 1971), pp. 3-29, for a full account of the theories of mimetic and expressive Romanticism.

² William Wordsworth, 'Preface', in *Lyrical Ballads*, 2 vols (London: Longman and Rees, 1800), I, v-xlvi (p. xxxiii).

individual through his senses'.³ This, he argues, shaped the form of the novel in its depiction of individual characters in specific environments and circumstances to provide 'what purports to be an authentic account of the actual experiences of individuals'.⁴

Watt specifically includes the sentimental tradition in his study, discussing Richardson's fiction in terms of its use of realist techniques in portraying emotion. Certainly, it is obvious that many of the narrative features of the novel of sensibility (the 'authentic' nature of the epistolary form, detailed accounts of physiological emotional response and literary devices of journals and manuscripts to name a few) conform to Watt's definition of the realist novel. To assume, then, that a discourse working within the realist mode of the eighteenth century might function as a metanarrative for Romantic fiction is potentially contentious. However, a more nuanced reading of the relationship between Watt's theory of realism and sensibility reveals that the realist portrayal of individual experience is not necessarily at odds with the imaginative aesthetic of Romanticism.

The idea that the eighteenth-century novel reflects the empiricist philosophy of interpreting the world through individual sensory experience is complicated by the imaginative politics of reading. So, while this form of fiction offers a detailed and realistic account of the experience of a particular individual, the process of conveying this experience via the act of reading implies an act of sympathetic identification on the part of the reader, as they imagine themselves in the place of the character. Watt's assertion that 'from the Renaissance onwards, there was a growing tendency for individual experience to replace collective tradition as the ultimate arbiter of reality' is undermined

³ Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* [1957] (London: Hogarth, 1987), p. 12.

⁴ Watt, *Rise of the Novel*, p. 27.

by the fact that reading is essentially an act of unification and collectivity.⁵ This is never clearer than in the case of the sentimental novel, which operates on the basis of imaginative identification with the suffering of fictional characters in order to elicit an emotional response in the reader or, as Margaret Case Croskery puts it, the act of ‘vicarious imaginative and emotional involvement’.⁶

The psychological realism of the sentimental mode attempted to bring together the identities of fictional character and reader, a phenomenon that is neatly demonstrated in Percy Shelley’s review of *Mandeville*, where he states that

[t]he reader’s mind is hurried on as he approaches the end with breathless and accelerated impulse. The noun *smorfia* comes at last, and touches some nerve which jars the inmost soul, and grates, as it were, along the blood; and we can scarcely believe that that grin which must accompany Mandeville to his grave, is not stamped upon our own visage.⁷

This idea of the reader assuming the physical form of a fictional character is powerfully suggestive of the negotiations of selfhood that appear in the novels discussed in the previous chapters. In the wider social context of the Romantic period the notion of the shared universal human characteristics implied by Enlightenment formations of moral sense and sympathy gave rise to widespread debate about individualism and sociability. In the novels discussed in the chapters on Radcliffe, Dacre and Godwin, the empiricist construction of individual identity based on sensory perception is always articulated within the context of social interaction. From the Enlightenment theories that proposed

⁵ Watt, *Rise of the Novel*, p. 14.

⁶ Margaret Case Croskery, ‘Novel Romanticism in 1751: Eliza Haywood’s *Betsy Thoughtless*’, in *Enlightening Romanticism, Romancing the Enlightenment: British Novels from 1750 to 1832*, ed. by Miriam L. Wallace (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 21-37 (p. 22).

⁷ Percy Bysshe Shelley, ‘Remarks on *Mandeville* and Mr Godwin’, *Athenæum*, 261 (27 Oct 1832), repr. *Athenæum, Jan-Dec 1832* (London: Francis, 1832), pp. 698-99 (p. 699).

individual sensation as a means of promoting sociability based on shared feeling emerges a Romantic impulse of alienation, as the protagonists of these novels struggle against the effacement of individuality that such models imply.

In the writing of Owenson and Scott, the ‘realistic’ portrayal of feeling is reconfigured so that identification with the individual experience of the characters becomes a means for promoting cross-cultural sympathy. In the national tales of Owenson, the reader is encouraged to sympathise with various spectacles of Irish oppression as a means of promoting Owenson’s own vision of Anglo-Irish union. For Scott, generating sympathetic identification on the part of the reader via narrative realism works in a similar way, serving to educate the implied English reader about Scottish culture and history in order to foster a sense of cohesive British identity. Both Owenson and Scott demonstrate a profound self-consciousness about the way that sympathetic identification is reliant on realistic representation by forging a hybrid discourse in which mimetic representation (in the form of ekphrasis, visual perception and descriptions of somatic response, for example) specifically functions as means of provoking sympathetic identification on the part of the reader.

The fusion of realism and sentimental discourse is also central to the sub-genre of moral domestic fiction, a descendant of the anti-Jacobin novel which became increasingly widespread in the decades following the publication of Hannah More’s *Coelebs in Search of a Wife* (1808) and which was popularised by authors such as Mary Brunton and Barbara Hofland.⁸ This genre displays a remarkable self-awareness about its engagement

⁸ While this field still warrants additional consideration, given its widespread popularity in the 1810s and 20s, there have nonetheless been a number of accounts of conservative fiction in the Romantic period. See M. O. Grenby, *The Anti-Jacobin Novel: British Conservatism and the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001; repr. 2004); Lisa Wood, *Modes of Discipline: Women, Conservatism,*

with realist narrative techniques in its self-fashioning as a mode which dissolved the boundaries between conduct literature and fiction, reinscribing the discourse of sensibility as a means of instruction rather than amusement. There are also potential correlations with the national tale, given the explicitly homespun national ideology expressed in the moral domestic novel. Likewise, scholarly recognition of the appropriation of sensibility by the Evangelical and Methodist reform movements is suggestive of how both non-fictional religious discourse and the Evangelical novel might relate to philosophical formations of sociability in the period.⁹ It is beyond the scope of this thesis to consider the moral-domestic genre in any detail (indeed, it warrants a full-length study in its own right) but it is worth noting that there is more work to be done on how the discourse of sensibility is reconfigured in a mode in which virtue, charity and benevolence are central themes and which operates within the didactic context of the eighteenth-century novel, in which ‘stories of individual lives have a pedagogical value for their readers, and the novel, as a genre, has the capacity to transmit that value’.¹⁰ Further consideration of these novels might also help to make valuable connections with the interactions between sensibility and realism in the Victorian period. Rae Greiner’s recent book *Sympathetic*

and the Novel After the French Revolution (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2003); Rachel Howard, ‘Domesticating the Novel: Moral-Domestic Fiction, 1820-1834’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Cardiff University, 2007); and Chapter Four of Anthony Mandal’s, *Jane Austen and the Popular Novel: The Determined Author* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

⁹ For accounts of didacticism and the appropriation of sensibility by religious movements in the eighteenth century see Isabel Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England, 1660-1780*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992); ‘Introduction’ by Maximilian E. and Anne Mellor, in *Passionate Encounters in a Time of Sensibility*, ed. by Novak and Mellor (Newark: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Press, 2000), pp. 11-26; and Paul Goring, *The Rhetoric of Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

¹⁰ Jillian Heydt-Stevenson and Charlotte Sussman, ‘“Launched upon the Sea of Moral and Political Inquiry”: The Ethical Experiments of the Romantic Novel’, in *Recognizing the Romantic Novel: New Approaches to British Fiction, 1780-1832*, ed. by Heydt-Stevenson and Sussman (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008; repr. 2010), pp. 13-48 (p. 23).

Realism in Nineteenth-Century Fiction (2012) offers a valuable account of how the politics of sympathy inform the narrative techniques of free indirect discourse and realist characterisation in the work of major novelists including Jane Austen, Charles Dickens and George Eliot but there is considerable scope for further exploration of how these ideas might be applied to the category of the Romantic novel.¹¹

* * *

This thesis offers new understandings of sensibility in three ways. Its most obvious contribution to the field of Romantic-period criticism is its refutation of the ‘crisis and demise’ theories of sensibility proposed by scholars of the twentieth century. It demonstrates that sensibility did not exist, as is often assumed, solely as a transient and cultish mode of the mid-eighteenth century which was later eradicated by the conservative reaction in the wake of the French Revolution when its depiction of feeling became dangerously excessive. Rather, it was redirected and refashioned from the turn of the century to become, it is no exaggeration to state, the defining discourse of the Romantic novel. The conventional tropes of eighteenth-century sensibility found expression in various forms of fiction in the first decades of the nineteenth century: philosophical discourses of moral philosophy and sympathy, the physiological

¹¹ Rae Greiner, *Sympathetic Realism in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012). For additional accounts of the politics of sympathy in the Victorian novel, see Rachel Ablow, *The Marriage of Minds: Reading Sympathy in the Victorian Marriage Plot* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), Audrey Jaffe, *Scenes of Sympathy: Identity and Representation in Victorian Fiction* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2000) and Brigid Lowe, *Victorian Fiction and the Insights of Sympathy: An Alternative to the Hermeneutics of Suspicion* (London: Anthem, 2007).

manifestation of feeling, the power of sensation and perception and cultivated sentimental politeness are widespread in the Romantic novels discussed in the previous chapters.

The thesis has attempted to do more than offer a teleological narrative of development, however. It suggests not only that the discourse of sensibility was identifiable in the novel of the early nineteenth century, but also that it actually functioned as both a formative influence on and a central ideological component of what we now think of as the Romantic novel. While the fiction of the new decade may have dispensed, for the most part, with the epistolary form of the eighteenth-century, it found new ways of articulating private feeling through the discourse of sensibility. In doing so, it demonstrated the enduring preoccupation with selfhood that defines the conventional formulation of Romanticism. However, while the writers of fiction engaged with the various tropes of inwardness, alienation and interiority through the discourse of sensibility, their focus was increasingly more public and self-conscious than that of the traditional Romantic aesthetic. Sensibility in the Romantic novel, then, demands a rethinking of Romantic selfhood in terms of a more public and sociable Romanticism. The novels discussed in the thesis employed sensibility to explore the social responsibility of the individual, the formation of national identity and the politics of realist expression in the novel itself. As such, it must be read as a creative, protean and self-conscious force that challenges many of our assumptions about the Romantic period.

The malleability of sensibility and its ability to traverse and even reconfigure generic boundaries is highly significant. Its pervasive influence across all of the major fictional sub-genres of the period destabilises any notion of discrete and fixed generic categories by suggesting widespread correlations and overlaps. As a result, to name just a

few examples, the model of gothic isolation and sensory excess can be readily identified in the Jacobin novel; the exploration of sympathy, individualism and public participation found in the Jacobin form becomes the basis for the national tale; and the historical novel appropriates the discourses of visual perception and sensation most commonly identified as a feature of the gothic. This generic assimilation and mutation that operates under the banner of sensibility proposes a challenge to conventional notions of Romantic aesthetic unity and spontaneity, suggesting instead a self-conscious and experimental engagement with genre which has only recently been recognised as a widespread phenomenon in David Duff's study of Romantic 'genre-mixing'.¹²

The thesis also offers potentially new readings of the sub-genres themselves, as well as the authors discussed. The account of Ann Radcliffe's fiction and its engagement with moral philosophy suggests that there is more work to be done on the relationship between British Enlightenment philosophy and gothic fiction as means of understanding the Romantic impulses of the gothic. The thesis also makes a case for further study of the full range of Charlotte Dacre's novels, which have tended to be excluded in favour of the sensational and excessive *Zofloya*. In terms of the Jacobin or post-Jacobin novel, the discussion of Godwin aims to counter the rationalist myth that persists in criticism of his fiction, suggesting that there is much to be gained by acknowledging the deep and pervasive debt to sensibility and Enlightenment moral philosophy in his later novels.

The discussion of Owenson's national tales revises existing accounts of her appropriation of sensibility, suggesting that she moves beyond the politics of the unionising marriage plot in order to interrogate a form of sympathy based on Enlightenment stadial history. Owenson's critique of models of progress within the

¹² David Duff, *Romanticism and the Uses of Genre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 164.

context of the cultivated commercial sensibility of the eighteenth century suggests that there are further connections to be made between this eighteenth-century formulation and the emerging discourse of Romantic national sympathy in terms of how they relate to constructions of cosmopolitanism and nationalism in the period. My reading of Scott's Waverley novels argues that his engagement with Enlightenment constructions of sociability is more extensive than has been previously assumed. Not only does Scott appropriate Enlightenment models of sympathy as part of his quest to encourage sympathetic identification of the English and Scots within a unified British identity, he self-consciously engages with eighteenth-century aesthetic constructions of sensory experience and imagination, such as those by Gilpin and Kames. In doing so, he provides an extended critique of the politics of sympathy in the realist novel, revealing a series of instabilities and inconsistencies in the illusory rendering of fiction.

Finally, the exploration of the discourse of sensibility in the Romantic novel fundamentally destabilises the binary formation of Enlightenment and Romanticism. In terms of the gothic novel, my discussion of the influence of Enlightenment models of sociability on the novels of Radcliffe and Dacre – which suggests a correlation between sensation and reflection – contributes to the critical revision of the 'idea that Gothic fiction is a kind of "protest" against the blindness of Enlightenment rationalism', which has 'survived without much challenge' until recently.¹³ The relationship between Enlightenment sympathy and national and historical fiction has already received considerable critical attention. However, my discussion of Owenson and Scott proposes new ways of considering their appropriation of sensibility through Enlightenment

¹³ Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall, 'Gothic Criticism' in *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. by David Punter (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000; repr. 2005), pp. 209-28 (p. 215).

discourses of taste and civility, cosmopolitanism, the picturesque and the imagination. From within these Enlightenment formations emerges a more conventionally Romantic aesthetic in the form of Owenson's self-conscious construction of an alternative model of national selfhood and Scott's self-referential reflections on the relationship between fiction, imagination and historical representation. As a result, it is clear that the deep and complex nature of the interactions between the Enlightenment and Romanticism in Romantic fiction cannot be overstated.

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