

**Irish Female Gothic Fiction: A Study of the  
Fiction of Regina Maria Roche and Sydney  
Owenson**

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**M.A. Thesis (Research)**

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to identify whether some of Sydney Owenson's and Regina Maria Roche's work should be considered as examples of Irish Female Gothic. Through a close study of four novels by Owenson and Roche, I explore the usefulness of the category Irish Female Gothic to account for certain characteristics of their work which does not align with current definitions of Gothic, Irish Gothic or Female Gothic. This study also expands upon current knowledge of Gothic fiction, Irish Gothic fiction, Female Gothic fiction, and Owenson's and Roche's work.

In this thesis I show that Owenson's and Roche's novels can be considered as part of a Gothic, Irish Gothic and Female Gothic tradition because the novels feature certain characteristics from each genre. I discuss certain features common to Owenson's and Roche's work, such as their portrayal of the gothic heroine, and the spaces the heroine inhabits, the Absent Mother figure, the banshee and sovereignty goddess, and representations of Irish landscape.

Through this study, I identify certain themes and features in Owenson's and Roche's work that differ from the features of Gothic, Irish Gothic and Female Gothic fictions, to show why the category of Irish Female Gothic needs to be considered. Such divergent characteristics include the heroine, her sensibilities, the representation of religious institutions and the persistent portrayal of alternate, egalitarian societies for women, themes of religious intolerance, improving colonial relations, highlighting the similarities in societal status between the Gaelic-Irish and women as oppressed people, and representing the struggle to maintain a Celtic identity within a British Union.

The results of this study reveal that Owenson's and Roche's work should be considered as a part of an Irish Female Gothic genre, as the unique themes and characteristics found in their works cannot be contained under such terms as Gothic, Irish Gothic or Female Gothic. This study also highlights the need for a gender-nuanced approach to studies of Irish Gothic fiction and opens up possibilities for further discussion and study of Irish Female Gothic fiction.

# Table of Contents

Cover Sheet	i
Abstract	ii
Contents	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Author's declaration	v
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter One: The Gothic and Irish Gothic</b>	<b>9</b>
Gothic Fiction	9
Irish History and Identity	15
The Struggle for Celtic Identity	18
Irish Gothic Fiction	23
<b>Chapter Two: Female Gothic</b>	<b>32</b>
Marriage, Inheritance and Domestic Bliss?	39
The Absent Mother	46
<b>Chapter Three: The Irish Gothic Heroine</b>	<b>51</b>
The Cult of Sensibility	51
The Supernatural and the Irish Gothic Heroine	60
The Banshee and the Irish Female Voice	63
<b>Chapter Four: Female Spaces and Religion</b>	<b>71</b>
The Castle, the Boudoir and Female Spaces	71
Religion from and Irish Female Perspective	85
<b>Chapter Five: Nation and Landscape</b>	<b>94</b>
Negotiating Colonial Ideology	94
Building New Relationships with the Landscape	104
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>117</b>

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## **Author's Declaration**

I hereby declare that this project represents my own work and has not been submitted, in whole or in part, by me or another person, for the purposes of obtaining any other credit/grade. I agree that this project may be made available by the College to future students.

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## Introduction

Gothic is the term for a myriad different subjects from an ancient race of Germans to a style of architecture or a literary mode. Gothic fiction itself can be similarly divided into several sub-categories: “British Gothic”, “Irish Gothic”, “American Gothic”, “Male Gothic”, and “Female Gothic”, each with a canon of writers and critics. Only one scholar has acknowledged the existence of the subgenre which is the subject of this thesis, “Irish Female Gothic fiction”. Siobhán Kilfeather’s 1994 article “Origins of the Irish Female Gothic” identifies Female Gothic, Irish Gothic and “Colonial Gothic” features as possible origins of the Irish Female Gothic genre. My thesis takes inspiration from her article and aims to examine the appropriateness of Irish Female Gothic as a category to account for distinctive characteristics of some works by Sydney Owenson (1776?-1859) and Regina Maria Roche (1764-1845).<sup>1</sup>

By studying these authors and their texts I hope to expand upon scholarship in the area of Gothic fiction, Irish Gothic fiction and Female Gothic fiction in the late eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries. In particular I wish to consider Owenson’s and Roche’s contribution to Irish literature and Gothic fiction. While Owenson is well known in studies of Irish literature, her work has rarely been acknowledged or studied as being specifically gothic. Regina Maria Roche on the other hand is virtually absent from the canon of late eighteenth-, early nineteenth-century Irish and Female Gothic literature. In *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Literature* there are only two pages of reference for Regina Maria Roche and none for Owenson. This omission is repeated again in the recently published *Dictionary of Irish Biography* that includes an article on Owenson (by Joep Leerssen) yet nothing on Roche. Kilfeather has noted “critical attention to the eighteenth-century female gothic novel has been so dominated by readings of Anne Radcliffe” so that the work of her contemporary, Regina Maria Roche, has been overlooked (Kilfeather 1994, pp.36-37). As such Owenson and Roche have not been considered or studied as contributors to a Female Gothic tradition. Similarly, studies of Irish Gothic fiction have been dominated by attention to Bram Stoker, Charles Maturin and Sheridan Le Fanu. Hence, by considering some of

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<sup>1</sup> Owenson was quite coy about her birth, claiming she was born on a boat on the Irish Sea on Christmas Day, while other stories say she was born in Dublin on Christmas Day. Owenson would also not say what year she was born. It is a general assumption amongst scholars that she was born sometime between 1776 and 1785.

Owenson's and Roche's work as Irish Female Gothic, this thesis may be able to rescue their gothic work from academic obscurity.

Kilfeather highlights two novels, *The Children of the Abbey* (1796) and *Clermont* (1798) by Roche, and *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806) by Owenson in her article to indicate that Owenson and Roche are possible participants in an Irish Female Gothic mode. Kilfeather also points to other writers whose fiction could be considered as Irish Female Gothic, such as Elizabeth Griffith (1720-1793), Maria Edgeworth (1767-1849), Lady Rosa Mulholland Gilbert (1841-1921) and Elizabeth Bowen (1899-1973). I wish to choose two writers from the same era whose writing is in some way neglected academically. Elizabeth Griffith, Lady Gilbert and Elizabeth Bowen were not contemporaries of Owenson and Roche, while both Bowen and Edgeworth are well-studied literary figures whose writing has been acknowledged as part of a Female Gothic tradition. Owenson and Roche belong to the same time period, allowing an investigation of contemporary political, social or cultural influences upon their work. It is also an era when Gothic fiction was quite popular and therefore I will be able to make brief comparisons where relevant to other gothic texts such as *The Castle of Otranto* (1765) by Horace Walpole, *The Monk* (1796) by Matthew Gregory Lewis and *Frankenstein* (1818) by Mary Shelley, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) by Anne Radcliffe, *Dracula* (1897) by Bram Stoker, *In a Glass Darkly* (1872) by Sheridan Le Fanu, and *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) by Charles Robert Maturin.

In order to establish some of the characteristics of what might be described as the Irish Female Gothic, I will engage in a close reading of four texts, two by Roche: *The Children of the Abbey* and *Clermont*, and two by Owenson: *The Wild Irish Girl* and *The Missionary* (1811). I have chosen these texts because they are the most gothic among the writers' work. *The Children of the Abbey* is the story of the trials of Amanda Fitzalan: her struggle to avoid a forced marriage with Colonel Belgrave, her quest to win the hand of her love Lord Mortimer, and return her family's inheritance. Amanda does all this while travelling around Ireland, Wales, Scotland and London. *Clermont* is a similar tale set in France, as Madeline Clermont attempts to discover her father's secrets, escape marriage and murder by Mr. D'Alembert and to restore her family's inheritance. *The Wild Irish Girl* is the only one of these texts wholly set in Ireland. Horatio Mortimer writes letters to a friend detailing his "exile" in Ireland, where he discovers and falls in love with an Irish girl, Glorvina, and the Irish nation. *The Missionary* follows the titular

character, Hilarion, as he travels to India on a mission to convert the Hindus to Christianity. Similar to *The Wild Irish Girl* Hilarion, a representative of the colonial invaders, falls in love with a native, an Indian priestess Luxima.

These novels are not all set in Ireland, but this does not exclude them from my study. Displacement (or dislocation) is a characteristic of Gothic fiction as a method to avoid criticism or condemnation for discussing taboo or potentially treasonous subjects. For example, Horace Walpole distanced himself from his gothic novel by claiming it was a translation of a lost manuscript written in the medieval era to avoid being criticised for writing such a fantastical text at a time when ghosts and superstitions were frowned upon by a Protestant Enlightenment culture. By claiming the text was a medieval manuscript, Walpole could not be criticised for writing fiction that contradicted logical and enlightened thought.<sup>2</sup> In an Irish context, such distancing devices meant that the author could raise questions relevant to the Irish situation in a different setting such as India. So by means of displacement, Owenson and Roche could avoid condemnation for potentially seditious critiques of the colonial project or religious bigotry in Ireland. Julia M. Wright has suggested that *The Missionary* addresses:

colonialism and the attendant issue of religious intolerance while apparently dislocating them from Owenson's main sphere of interest, nineteenth-century Ireland, by nominally rooting them in seventeenth-century Portugal and India ... these sites of European domination are paralleled and mapped onto each other, revealing broad lessons about the cultural, and specifically religious, intolerance that validates and energizes the imperial drive to conquer.

(Wright 2002, p.20)

Owenson's critique of colonial practice and religious intolerance, issues relevant to Ireland at the time of publication, may have had negative repercussions for her. She was already under surveillance by Dublin Castle (Campbell 1988, pp.63, 71-72). It is no wonder that Owenson chose a displaced setting for *The Missionary*. India as Ireland provided an acceptable space for Owenson to write about colonialism and religious intolerance, without being accused of directly attacking British policy or rule in Ireland.

Roche's *Clermont* may also be read as an example of dislocation. The novel is set in France to reflect the favoured gothic setting of the sublime Alps, and to evoke the traditional gothic landscape of ruined castles. Roche draws in a discussion of Ireland through her heroine's ancestry. Madeline's grandfather is Lord Dunlere, an Irish nobleman forced to live in exile in

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<sup>2</sup> Walpole would later claim authorship of *Castle Otranto* after it proved so popular.



France. He was a supporter of James the Second, which suggests Lord Dunlere is Catholic, “and in consequence of his attachment to that unhappy Prince, became an exile from his native country, Ireland” (Roche 2006, p.240). Lord Dunlere, like other Irish supporters of the Jacobite rebellion followed James the Second to France as Lord Dunlere lost “considerable property” (Roche 2006, p.240).<sup>3</sup> Madeline’s family history highlights one of the reasons Irish Male Gothic writers chose to portray Catholicism in a negative light. The Protestant Ascendancy in Ireland and the British monarchy feared Catholic uprisings in Ireland and Scotland. Madeline’s Irish heritage also emphasises religious and political links between Ireland, France and Scotland. France was a predominantly Catholic country at this time and after the failed 1691 Irish rising, the Irish Jacobite Army later assisted in the 1745 rebellion in Scotland. By obliquely evoking this specific historical detail, Roche highlights her engagement with key events in Irish history and its consequences.

Throughout the thesis I will discuss various aspects of Irish history to engage fully with and understand the world Owenson and Roche inhabited. Many of the Irish concerns Owenson and Roche introduce in their fiction come from Ireland’s complex history, in particular Ireland’s experience as a British colony. The Irish experienced colonialism differently from other British colonies due to its geographical and cultural proximity to Britain, and to the British people. Ireland, unlike England’s Indian or African colonies, was in close proximity to England. The ethnic Irish of this time period were quite similar to the English – both were predominantly white and Christian. This raised problems in regards to English identity; the coloniser needed to find a way to differentiate the English self from the Irish self to prevent miscegenation. This was done through “Othering”, “a process by which such binary divisions were created and perpetuated” (Templeton 2007, para. 3). These binary divisions allowed for a definition of the English self against the Irish “Other”. For example, where the English were civilized, rational and mature, the Irish were savage, irrational and childlike. Colonial relationships were built on these binary constructs, and negative images of the Irish people reinforced difference and superiority of Englishness over the inferiority of Irishness. The depiction of the Irish as savage was incorporated into Colonial Gothic fiction which drew its terrors from the colonized landscape and people:

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<sup>3</sup> The Jacobite War was a series of uprisings, rebellions and wars between 1688 and 1746 in Ireland, Scotland and England between the House of Stuarts (Catholic) and the Hanovers (Protestant) for the English crown.

By the 1790s Gothic writers were quick to realise that Britain's growing empire could prove a vast source of frightening "others" who would, as replacements for the villainous Italian antiheroes in Walpole or Radcliffe, bring freshness and variety to the genre. With the inclusion of the colonial, a new sort of darkness – of race, landscape, erotic desire and despair – enters the Gothic genre.

(Paravisini-Gebert 2002, p.229)

Colonial Gothic developed out of British fears surrounding the colonial project and "the nation's exposure to colonial societies, nonwhite races, non-Christian belief systems, and the moral evils of slavery" (Paravisini-Gebert 2002, p.230). The Irish people and landscape were represented as savage and dark, clearly "Other" in British writing about Ireland. The depiction of the Irish as savage became problematic for those in Ireland with both Anglo and Irish heritage. Owenson and Roche had to negotiate various concepts, which posited their part-Irish identity as savage and their part-English identity as superior.

In addition to a historic consideration of Owenson's and Roche's work, I will examine various studies of Gothic fiction by Victor Sage, Fred Botting, and Diana Wallace. In the field of Irish Gothic I will draw upon the work of W.J. McCormack, Jarlath Killeen, Richard Haslam, and Siobhán Kilfeather. And in relation to Female Gothic I will incorporate the theories of Ellen Moers, Kate Ferguson Ellis, Diane Hoeveler, Diana Wallace, Robert Miles, and Eugenia DeLamotte. As Owenson and Roche were arguably influenced by contemporary Gothic, Irish Gothic and Female Gothic fictions, these various studies are necessary to form a theoretical framework for this thesis.

Chapter One will offer an introduction to Gothic fiction and Irish Gothic fiction, showing how Owenson and Roche's writing can be considered as part of the canon of Irish Gothic fiction. One issue to be addressed briefly here is the question of whether an Irish Gothic genre exists. In the field of Irish Gothic scholarship there is a debate as to how one should define Irish Gothic.<sup>4</sup> Should it be a mode, tradition or does Irish Gothic exist at all? W.J. McCormack claims that Irish Gothic "does not amount to a tradition" (McCormack 1991, p.833). Richard Haslam suggests that one should approach Irish Gothic as a mode, as the term:

tradition is too weighty (and weighted) a word to describe the irregular development and deployment of Gothic forms and themes in the work of Irish writers over the course of three centuries ... .

(Haslam 2007, para.5)

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<sup>4</sup> There may be some doubt as to whether an Irish Gothic tradition exists but there is no question that an Irish Gothic school of criticism exists as Seamus Deane, W.J. McCormack, Luke Gibbons, Jarlath Killeen and Richard Haslam have written many papers and books on the topic of Irish gothic fiction. There is also a dedicated Irish Gothic Horror Journal hosted on the internet since 2006.

Jarlath Killeen, however argues for Irish Gothic to be seen as a tradition:

[A] list of writers which includes figures as substantial as Maturin, Le Fanu, Wilde, Stoker, Yeats, Synge, and Bowen, all of whom have a connection to the same political and geographical space, all of whom have recourse to the same broadly defined conventions of Gothic, all of whom have some thematic associations, may still amount to a (much complicated) version of a tradition, indeed, a Gothic tradition in the full sense of the word.

(Killeen 2006, para.3)

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to engage in any depth with this debate but, for the purposes of my discussion I will accept the tradition of Irish writers who write in an Irish Gothic mode. So, Chapter One will involve the identification of some of the unique characteristics of Irish Gothic and it will also include an examination of Irish history, the complexities of Irish identity, religious discrimination and how this influenced Irish Gothic characteristics.

In Chapter One I will also introduce a complex area in relation to Gothic fiction, the sublime. The sublime can describe an experience, a reaction, a landscape, a setting, many different representations and relationships between the self and landscape, others, and the divine. There are also many different types of sublime experience, the gendering of the sublime and the sublime's relationship to the supernatural and landscape. Various authors and critics focus on these different aspects of the sublime for the purpose of their writing. My introduction to the sublime in Chapter One will be extended and developed in later chapters. In Chapter Two I discuss the gendering of the sublime, and in Chapter Five I investigate the representations of sublime landscape by Owenson and Roche.

In Chapter Two I introduce the subgenre of Female Gothic, addressing ways in which Owenson and Roche engage with the conventions of Female Gothic fiction, and the implications of this. In this chapter I will also investigate how Owenson and Roche write in a mode retrospectively described as the feminine sublime, drawing in particular upon Freeman's work, *The Feminine Sublime*. As the Female Gothic is concerned with women's struggles with patriarchal power structures, I will also discuss how Owenson and Roche address the various problems women face in relation to marriage, inheritance and domestic violence.

In Chapter Three I move on to a more detailed discussion of the characteristics of Female Gothic and Irish Gothic focusing on the figure of the gothic heroine, the female voice, and the Absent Mother. The cultural phenomenon of the late-eighteenth century known as sensibility influenced the portrayal of contemporary fictional heroines and this will be discussed in relation to Owenson's and Roche's heroines and central female characters. Sensibility, broadly speaking,

was a fashion for an affected, exaggerated emotional behaviour that came to be linked to female conduct. This fashion greatly influenced the literature of this period to produce the literature of sensibility and the sensibility heroine, which will be expanded upon in this chapter.

Chapter Four addresses issues of space -domestic and religious -and the women who occupy these spaces. The gothic castle, the boudoir, portraits and even costume can all be seen as spaces of entrapment or self-expression. These spaces will be discussed in relation to Owenson's and Roche's heroines. The chapter will also address representations of religion in Gothic fiction and propose that Owenson and Roche interpret religious spaces differently from their Gothic and Female Gothic counterparts.

Finally, Chapter Five will address how Owenson and Roche negotiate and integrate notions of complex hybrid Anglo-Celtic identities by looking at representations of race and landscape in their gothic novels. Owenson's and Roche's depictions of the Irish landscape and male and female relationships to nature provide insights into the complexities of Anglo-Irish identity and Ireland's status within the British Union.

Chapter Five's study of how Roche writes about Ireland may add to the limited information we have about her. Any studies of Roche's work are limited by the fact that there is very little biographical or critical information available on her. Natalie Schroeder is the only scholar to have paid particular attention to her writing, and her interpretation of Roche's novels will provide an important framework for my discussion. Roche is often identified as a British writer and in her lifetime it is correct to identify her as such, as Ireland was part of the British Empire, but she should also be considered Irish, as she was born Regina Maria Dalton in Ireland in 1764 and lived most of her life in Waterford and Dublin. She married Ambrose Roche in 1792. Recently, Tina O'Toole has reclaimed Roche as an Irish writer in her work *Dictionary of Munster Women Writers 1800-2000* (O'Toole 2005, pp.263-264) and just this year Christina Morin has highlighted the importance of Roche as an Irish Gothic writer (Morin 2011, pp.80-94).

In contrast to the critical neglect of Roche's work, Owenson is a well-studied figure in Irish literature, however her writing is considered more often as part of a Romantic or Nationalist tradition rather than Gothic, so this thesis will broaden studies of her work. Sydney Owenson was the daughter of Robert Owenson, a Catholic Gaelic-Irish actor and Jane Hill, an English Protestant from Shrewsbury. Owenson was thus a hybrid figure, who had an Irish and English, Protestant and Catholic, Celtic and Anglo-Saxon heritage. During her lifetime she adopted and

switched allegiances between her English and Irish heritage, as she rejected her English mother's "piety and negative assessment of Ireland" and "embraced her Irish Catholic father's country and culture" (Kirkpatrick 1999, p.vii). She was then integrated into the hyphenated culture of the Anglo-Irish through her marriage to Sir Charles Morgan in 1812.<sup>5</sup> Connections can be made between Owenson's life, heritage and marriage and the gothic characteristic of blurring boundaries and crossing borders, for example melting the margins between the real and the unreal (the supernatural), between life and death (the un-dead vampire), even between characters (Victor Frankenstein and his monster, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde). Owenson never wholly sided with one aspect of her heritage. Even though Owenson championed her Celtic heritage in the Anglo-Irish salons, she still wrote for a predominantly English audience and married an Anglo-Irish man. It is as though this multiple racial heritage not only defined her identity but also how she chose to live her life. Roche shared Owenson's cultural and racial hybridity. It is difficult to locate Owenson and Roche culturally, as they are not wholly Irish, English or Anglo-Irish, and have significant social and cultural links to both Ireland and England. The nationalities and cultural identities of these women are resistant to categorisation. Similarly, these writer's works are resistant to categorisation and the labels of Gothic, Irish Gothic and Female Gothic do not appropriately describe their novels. This thesis explores the usefulness of the category Irish Female Gothic to begin to explain the hybrid nature of Owenson's and Roche's work. The following chapter will show how Owenson's and Roche's work can be considered as part of the Gothic and Irish Gothic mode.

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<sup>5</sup> Biographers have suggested that Owenson's aristocratic patrons, the Abercorns, knighted the family physician Charles Morgan in 1811 to encourage Owenson to marry him" (Kirkpatrick 1999, p.ix). From this marriage she gained the title of Lady Morgan, by which she is best known.

## Chapter One: Gothic and Irish Gothic Fiction

W.J. McCormack claims that Gothic fiction “is not easily defined” (McCormack 1991, p.831) so one may appreciate how difficult it is to define Irish Female Gothic fiction. In this chapter I will begin the process of defining an Irish Female Gothic genre by identifying the characteristics of Gothic and Irish Gothic fiction that are present in Owenson’s and Roche’s texts, while also giving background information on the development of Gothic and Irish Gothic fiction. This will locate Owenson’s and Roche’s work within a timeline of Gothic fiction, that is, in the first wave of Gothic fiction which ran from 1764 to 1820. This chapter will also highlight contemporary political and social events in Ireland which contributed to a distinctly Irish quality in the gothic writing produced by Owenson and Roche.

### Gothic Fiction

It is widely accepted that the first Gothic novel appeared in 1764: Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*. The title page to the second edition identifies the novel as “A GOTHIC STORY” (Walpole 2001, p.4).<sup>6</sup> The term “gothic” was as problematic in the eighteenth century as it is today. According to Victor Sage:

one familiar meaning of ‘Gothick’, for example, assumes that it is barbarous, Catholic, feudal and Norman in origin – everything opposed to the civilised ‘Augustan’ classicism of contemporary England ... the term ‘Gothick’ itself is an ambiguous one, incorporating many shades and combinations of association ... .

(Sage 1990, pp.17-18)

However, “gothic” also had positive associations; it could refer to a grand style of architecture, an ancient culture or the medieval age. Some early gothic novels were set in medieval times or in a medieval castle, such as *The Castle of Otranto*, to evoke notions of chivalry, superstition and the supernatural. Gothic fiction inherited both the negative and positive associations of the term. The Goths, an ancient race of Germans, were blamed for the downfall of the Roman Empire, but, as Samuel Klinger shows, there is a Whig tradition which portrays German Goths as progressive and the source of contemporary English culture and democracy (Klinger 1990, pp.115-130). Seventeenth-century critics also viewed medieval literature as barbarous, but this outlook was critically revised by Thomas Warton and Bishop

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<sup>6</sup> All quotations maintain original emphasis unless otherwise stated.

Hurd. In *Observations on the Faerie Queen of Spenser* (Warton 1754) and *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (Hurd 1762), Warton and Hurd argued that one could not judge “ancient” romances by the standards of the eighteenth century they must be seen in the context of the unenlightened age they were produced in (Clery 2002, p.25).

*The Castle of Otranto* is thus a blend of medieval literature and the eighteenth-century romance. This novel, according to its author:

was an attempt to blend the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern. In the former all was imagination and improbability: in the latter, nature is always intended to be, and sometimes has been, copied with success. Invention has not been wanting; but the great resources of fancy have been damned up, by a strict adherence to common life.

(Walpole 2001, p.9)

Walpole envisioned a style of fiction which freed the author from the restrictive forms of classical and Augustan literature. This new form of gothic literature set:

the powers of fancy at liberty to expiate through the boundless realms of invention, and thence to creating more interesting situations.

(Walpole 2001, p.9)

Walpole shifted novel settings from domestic to foreign countries and from the present to the past, and also reintroduced the supernatural into literature, thus using the resources of fancy and imagination to create a new form of fiction. Owenson and Roche include medieval allusions in their novels, most notably through the presence of a ruined castle in *The Wild Irish Girl*, *The Children of the Abbey* and *Clermont*. In *The Missionary*, the medieval era is evoked through the presence of the Inquisition in India. Most gothic novelists took their cue from Walpole and followed the character types, settings, excess and style he created.

“Gothic signifies a writing of excess” (Botting 1996, p.1) in both form and content. Multiple layers of narrative are created through references to documents, letters and lost or hidden wills to create a labyrinth of text that the reader becomes lost in. The physical, psychological and emotional terrors inflicted upon stock characters are excessive also.<sup>7</sup> For example, the heroines of *The Castle of Otranto*, Matilda and Isabella, witness supernatural deaths, moving portraits, they are chased through the castle, are forced into marriage, and suffer imprisonment and murder. Subsequent gothic writers introduce torture, murder, ghosts, banditti, vampires and ghouls. Gothic excess, including some of these horrors, are

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<sup>7</sup> Stock characters such as the virtuous heroine and the devious older man pursuing her.

present in Owenson's and Roche's work. Roche's characters endure extreme horrors such as entrapment and murder. For example, Amanda Fitzalan is relentlessly pursued by a depraved man, her reputation is destroyed by her scheming cousins and she is kidnapped and held in an isolated mansion which she then escapes only to find herself homeless and her father dead. Owenson demonstrates excess in her depictions of various landscapes. In Gothic fiction the landscape and setting are not merely backdrops but form a distinct characteristic of this genre. The setting is presented in a realistic but lavish fashion as no landscape is ordinary, but melodramatic in her descriptions, such as barren wastelands, lush jungles and scorching deserts. Owenson presents India as a land of lush jungles and "wild and burning plains" (Owenson 2002, p.206). In *The Wild Irish Girl*, Ireland has stupendous cliffs, beautiful valleys and a sublime coastline. In *Clermont*, Roche describes a French landscape that is filled with an excessive number of ruined castles and buildings.

The characters in Gothic fiction also engage with excess in the form of the sublime. The sublime has been theorised by writers such as Longinus, Emmanuel Kant, William Wordsworth and Edmund Burke. Burke defined the sublime in his 1751 treatise *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* as:

Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime.

(Burke 2001, p.8)

An example of Walpole's adaptation of Burke's sublime is seen in *The Castle of Otranto*, when Bianca sees an apparition:

-Oh! The hand! The giant! The hand! – Support me! I am terrified out of my senses, cried Bianca: I will not sleep in the castle to-night.

(Walpole 2001, p. 90)

Bianca is so overcome with horror and emotional distress at seeing the giant hand she cannot communicate properly. This reflects the excess of the sublime as Bianca's emotions are in excess of language or human emotion; she cannot put into words what she is feeling. Bianca's self-preservation becomes her only concern; she must leave the castle to escape the source of her fear.<sup>8</sup> Madeline Clermont experiences a similar sublime incident in *Clermont*:

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<sup>8</sup> There is an element of irony present here as Bianca's limited intelligence and education influence her reaction to a supernatural event. Her limited education brings an element of class into Walpole's criticism.



She beheld a hand thrust through the tapestry behind him, extended and pointing to him. Shrieking aloud, she started from her seat, and, with a desperate resolution, was flying to the wall in order to examine it, when her strength and sense suddenly receded, and she fell faintly on the floor.

(Roche 2006, p.262)

Madeline witnesses a supernatural event and her mind is overwhelmed, leading to her lapse of consciousness.<sup>9</sup> The sublime experience can include a suspension of faculties and this is what happens to Madeline. It is as though her mind cannot process what she is seeing and as such her mind shuts down protecting itself from sensory overload. This is but one aspect of the sublime experience; it can also be triggered by scenery.

Longinus' *Sublime* refers to a person's reaction while viewing certain landscapes or works of art. These landscapes are typically mountainous and of a vast form. Viewing these scenes elevates the soul, takes the reader or viewer to new heights, showing that there is more to life than the mundane. Longinus "says that the sublime implies that man can, in emotions and in language, transcend the limits of the human condition" (Patten 1999, para.1). Longinus' conception of the sublime demonstrates that there is something beyond the real world and hints at the divine. This sublime is present in Ann Radcliffe's work. Her descriptions of landscapes heighten the emotions, and elevate the soul to contemplate the divine:

It was one of Emily's earliest pleasures to ramble among the scenes of nature; nor was it in the soft and glowing landscape that she most delighted; she loved more the wild wood-walks, that skirted the mountain; and still more the mountain's stupendous recesses, where the silence and grandeur of solitude impressed a sacred awe upon her heart, and lifted her thoughts to the GOD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH.

(Radcliffe 1980, pp.9-10)

Radcliffe draws the character's eye from the earth to the sky in order to contemplate the infinite. The character is taken on a journey from the self to the divine, expanding the soul to experience the infinite in the face of grand mountains and transportation to the magnificence of the heavens, hence Radcliffe's bold emphasis on the words "GOD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH". The character's thoughts are raised upwards, and she feels a sense of wonder and awe. In contrast to this example of Longinian sublime, which elevates the soul outwards

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<sup>9</sup> Even though Madeline is of a higher, more educated class than Bianca, her response to a supposed supernatural event is similar.

towards the divine, Burke's definition of the sublime makes the character look inward and instead of awe, experience fear.

According to Charles W. Eliot "Burke dealt boldly with [the sublime] on the basis of the most scientific psychology that was then within his reach" (Eliot 2001, para.2). Burke states:

the *sublime* ... is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling. I say the strongest emotion, because I am satisfied the ideas of pain are much more powerful than those which enter on the part of pleasure. Without all doubt, the torments which we may be made to suffer are much greater in their effect on the body and mind, than any pleasure which the most learned voluptuary could suggest, or than the liveliest imagination, and the most sound and exquisitely sensible body, could enjoy.

(Burke 2001, p.45)

Burke's perception of the sublime focuses upon pain and fear, negative emotions, while Longinus sublime is arguably spiritual as he describes overcoming the human condition. Radcliffe's writing is more reminiscent of a Longinian sublime whereas Walpole's gothic seems to be more in line with Burke's sublime. Radcliffe's Emily looks outside herself in her experience of the sublime, Walpole's Bianca is concerned with her own self-preservation; Bianca wishes to flee while Emily lingers to enjoy her sublime encounter. From this we can see that Longinus/ Radcliffe's sublime is a more positive experience while Walpole's/ Burke's sublime is a negative experience. Remarkably, Roche engages with both forms of the sublime in the same novel. Previous to her negative sublime experience upon witnessing a ghostly hand extending out of the wall, Madeline also experiences the positive sublime:

Oh how noble, how sublime did the prospect appear which Madeline now viewed! She felt struck with astonishment and veneration as she cast her eyes towards the summits of the congregated mountains piled before her; and her heart was more exalted than ever towards the author of such glorious, such stupendous works,

-The Parent of good, Almighty- ... .

(Roche 2006, p.64)

Roche does not just hint at the divine; she explicitly connects nature, the sublime experience and the divine. The mountains are likened to the congregation of a church mass engaged in the worship of the divine indicating that this is a religious/ spiritual moment for her. Madeline does not feel insignificant in the face of the divine but feels a kinship with God as her heart is lifted up to the creator she reveres. As Roche engages with both forms of the

sublime, one could surmise that she does not place any preference on either type of sublime in her fiction, but that each sublime experience serves a different purpose, whether to heighten gothic terrors or exaggerate a spiritual moment. This is a significant deviation from the norms of Gothic fiction as gothic writers usually favour one form of the sublime in their novels. Roche's portrayal of various forms of the sublime might suggest a development in the Gothic fiction. Owenson also engages with the sublime especially in regards to her descriptions of various landscapes. These will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

Another gothic trope that is present in Owenson's and Roche's work is the doppelgänger. The doppelgänger or double can refer to different sides of the same character; for example Rosario and Matilda in Matthew Gregory Lewis' *The Monk*. Rosario is the male identity Matilda assumes to infiltrate a monastery. The double can also refer to two or more characters who display similarities to each other. The doppelgänger can be a frightening feature that threatens a person's unique identity, or it can be a method to explore alternate storylines within one novel. Among the multiple resonances of the double in gothic, one concern that the trope of the double addresses and which distinguishes women's gothic writing is the possibility of abuse and violence for women within a marriage. In *The Children of the Abbey* Amanda Fitzalan and Adela are both pursued by Colonel Belgrave but while Amanda escapes him, Adela is duped into marriage with the Colonel. This doubling presents two possible storylines: one where the heroine escapes an unwanted marriage, and one where the heroine is forced into marriage. This highlights the perils women faced in the eighteenth century when choosing a husband. The doppelgänger is present in *The Wild Irish Girl*, through Horatio and Mortimer Senior's relationship to each other, their experiences in Inismore, and as twinned bridegrooms. Both men accidentally find Inismore castle and both become enamoured with Glorvina. Both men also wish to return their usurped lands back to the Prince of Inismore, yet they also have to hide their identities from Glorvina and her father. By doubling these men, Owenson emphasises the guilt descendents of colonial invaders feel and their need to make reparation to the natives. Through the doppelgänger Owenson reinforces the novel's theme of making restitution to those who were wronged.

Owenson's and Roche's novels contain elements common to other novels which have been identified as part of the gothic genre. One could suggest that the presence of gothic characteristics as well as Owenson's and Roche's engagement with various concepts

of the sublime indicates that these writers were deliberately drawing upon current trends in literature, possibly with commercial success in mind. However, these writers were not just influenced by current literary trends, but also by their location in time and space.

### **Irish History and Identity**

The historical, social, cultural and political consequences of the British colonial project in Ireland directly affected the development of Irish Gothic fiction. The Gaelic-Irish were England's first overseas colonial subjects (Morrissey 2004, p.100). The colonisation of Ireland was not one organised endeavour; instead it comprised of waves of Old English and New English planters who displaced Gaelic-Irish landowners and partially integrated with the Gaelic-Irish population. Even though the planters and Gaelic-Irish blurred the boundaries between races through intermarriage, the delineations between Anglo and Irish were maintained via colonial discourse. According to John Morrissey:

a continuum of exclusivist ideological thought can be traced back to the twelfth century when the works of Giraldus Cambrensis comprehensively established the notion of 'Anglo' civility/superiority and 'Gaelic' barbarity/inferiority ... The exclusivist rhetoric intensified in government circles in the late-sixteenth century. Political discourses advancing the idea that 'only true subjects of the Crown' were those who were committed Protestants – the 'Self' of colonial relations – and that all 'others' were 'a threat to the security of the English Crown and its position in Ireland'.

(Morrissey 2004, p.96)

Religion became a marker of difference where assumed Protestant superiority disempowered Irish Catholics, most of whom were Gaelic-Irish. This "exclusivist ideological thought" assisted in establishing Anglo-Protestant political dominance in Ireland. However, religious discrimination was not the central desire of the British; it was the means to ensure British political dominance in Ireland (Eagleton 1995, p.34).

The process of excluding the colonial other from arenas of power and influence was not easy, as the separate identities of English and Irish had become muddled throughout the centuries-long process of colonisation, and thus Irish identity in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century became highly problematic. A variety of terms such as Ascendancy, Anglo-Irish, and Gaelic-Irish were used to describe different social, cultural and religious groups in Ireland at the time; however, these terms were unstable and could sometimes be contradictory. For example, the Ascendancy referred to the predominantly Protestant land

owning class, although there were also Catholic landowners even after the penal laws prohibited this.

The Gaelic-Irish identified themselves as descendants of the Celtic Irish, the inheritors of a Celtic and Christian tradition, who were once the ruling elite of Ireland, although some of these Gaelic-Irish converted to Protestantism to circumvent the penal laws. The term Gaelic-Irish is a more modern identifier and, like Ascendancy and Anglo-Irish, it is not a stable signifier of a cultural group.

The Anglo-Irish dominated the Gaelic-Irish politically and economically through control of land, wealth and political representation. This led to many social and political problems for the Catholics and Gaelic-Irish. The penal laws, restrictions to suppress and control the native Catholic population, came into effect in 1704. Catholics had to pay tithes to the established Church of England in Ireland. The Catholic Irish were not allowed to buy land, inherit from Protestants or lease it for more than thirty-one years. They were not allowed to leave land to a single heir but instead had to divide the land amongst their sons. In 1760, landowners enclosed common land used for grazing cattle. These restrictions led to widespread agrarian tension amongst the Gaelic-Irish population as most depended upon commonage for their animals. The disaffected Irish founded secret societies such as the Whiteboys and Defenders in response to these tensions, and engaged in agrarian violence.

Throughout the eighteenth century, agrarian unrest turned into nationalist unrest. In 1791, the United Irishmen, a nationalist revolutionary group seeking total independence from England, was founded. In May 1798, the Irish Rebellion began, led by the United Irishmen and Wolfe Tone with assistance from the French, against British forces ruling Ireland. Martial law was imposed and by the end of the summer of 1798 the rebellion was violently suppressed by the British. Prompted by the rebellion and the war with France, England sought to make Ireland a part of the Empire through an act of union. Protestant Ascendancy support of the Union was bought by promises, threats and bribes, and Catholic support for the Union was gained through the promise of Catholic Emancipation. Ultimately, the Irish parliament voted itself out of existence and brought Ireland under total British command. However, Catholic Emancipation did not immediately follow the Union.

Religious discrimination against the Catholic Irish remained a point of contention between the Gaelic-Irish and Protestant-English. Daniel O'Connell founded the Catholic

Association in 1823 with the aim of acquiring Catholic Emancipation that is, the lifting of all restrictions on the Catholic population of Ireland. In 1825 a Catholic Emancipation Bill was brought to the House of Lords but was defeated. O'Connell was elected to the British Parliament but he could not hold his elected office as the penal laws forbade any Catholics to do so. Catholic Emancipation was passed in 1829. Owenson was a supporter of Catholic Emancipation and in *The Missionary* she addresses the kind of religious intolerance typified by the penal laws in Ireland.

The colonisation of Ireland created more problems for the Gaelic-Irish. Just as Giraldus Cambrensis had established the colonial ideology of the savage Irishman in the twelfth-century, Edmund Spenser and other English writers reporting on Ireland perpetuated Cambrensis' tradition of portraying the Irish as unruly, barbarous and savage, reinforcing the concept of English superiority over the Gaelic-Irish (Leerssen 1986, p.36). This had long-ranging implications for the Gaelic-Irish as the English used the argument of Irish barbarity to refuse self-rule for Ireland.

However, another colonial ideology reinforcing British rule of Ireland arose in the late eighteenth century:

English Renaissance texts almost uniformly represent the Irish as primitive, violent, uncivilised, and unassimilable. But, by the end of the eighteenth century, "savage" Ireland was countered by an Ireland represented as Britain's "sister".

(Wright 2002, p.22)

The feminisation of the Irish colony was a method to naturalize masculine dominance of the English over the Irish. Just as women were politically excluded in England, so too was the "feminine" colony. This also reinforced the concept that the colony needed a masculine British rule to maintain order and protection. However Ireland's representation as feminine is unique as it stems from not just English colonial discourse but an Irish nationalist discourse. Catherine Nash states that

The representation of Ireland as female has been used to define Ireland and Irishness in different ways, in different contexts and for different purposes. Those who have depicted Ireland as female have done so in order to make sense of, order and justify relationships between countries and claims to territories. In doing so, they have drawn on and reinforced ideas of masculinity and femininity and certain kinds of relationships between men and women. Thus the gendering of Ireland has been used to define the cultural identity and political status of the society and the identities and roles of men and women in Ireland.

(Nash 1997, p.111)

The colonial discourse of feminising Ireland seeks to naturalise the relationship between Britain and Ireland through the idealised representations of the relationship between men and women in eighteenth-century Britain. The depiction of Ireland as feminine justified Britain's domination of Ireland and right to rule. The nationalist representations of Ireland as female date from as early as the pre-Christian era in Ireland, and this predates English colonial feminization of Ireland. These personifications include the myths of the sovereignty goddess and the *aisling* and form part of a nationalist anti-colonial tradition:

In the Gaelic traditions of pre-Christian Ireland, both the idea of sovereignty and the land of the kingdom was represented as a woman. This sovereignty goddess validated the right of the king to rule, and her condition and the condition of the land itself reflected the quality of the king who married her.

(Nash 1997, p.112)

Whether Ireland is figured as a sister or wife, in a nationalist or colonial register, she is still subject to her male relatives through patriarchal law. Other personifications of the sovereignty goddess such as Cathleen Ní Houlihán and the Sean Bhean Bhocht are portrayed as helpless women needing to be saved by men. Because any woman within a Western marriage was subject to her husband's will, the nationalist feminisation of Ireland was problematic for women and women writers engaging with colonial themes, such as Owenson and Roche. Chapter Five will address these issues and tease out Owenson's and Roche's negotiations of these complex and problematic national and colonial discourses in their novels.

### **The Struggle for Celtic Identity**

Another problem for Irish, Welsh and Scottish natives within the British Union was the struggle to maintain a distinct Celtic identity. In their novels Owenson and Roche interrogate the nature of the relationship between Ireland and Scotland. These writers also attempt through their novels to negotiate and restructure the relationship between colonized Ireland and colonizer Britain. Ireland and Scotland are linked by their Celtic identity, their Gothic fiction and their similar histories in regards to England. Both countries supported the Jacobite Rebellion, which was suppressed by English forces. Scotland was brought into the Union in 1707 and, as in Ireland, the native aristocracy was

displaced and lost its power. Both countries are linked through popular Gothic fiction, which presents them as liminal “weird” zones, and both Irish and Scottish writers have produced a national variant of Gothic fiction. The subgenre of Scottish Gothic emerged in the late eighteenth century as writers such as James Hogg, Walter Scott and Robert Louis Stevenson attempted to “analyze their nation’s fragmentation” in fiction by using “recognizable Gothic tropes. Tales of haunted doubles, disowned sons and ineffectual heroes populate their fictional explorations of Scotland’s fractured state” (Wright 2007, p.73). Themes such as a “concern with history”, attempts to “problematise the past as myth”, a “haunting ancestral identity” and the “motif of the journey north” form distinctive elements of what has been labeled Scottish Gothic (McDonald 2009, p.1-2). Scottish and Irish Gothic were similarly influenced by a colonial history (Punter 2002, pp.105-123). In both national Gothic fictions, antiquarianism is important. However, in Scottish Gothic antiquarianism is a method to reclaim a lost Celtic heritage for the native population, whereas in Irish Gothic, antiquarianism is a medium for the Anglo-Irish to appropriate Irish culture in order to justify their claims to “Irishness”.

Gothic is a discourse of the marginalized and barbaric; a medium to articulate the suppressed histories of a colonized people (Punter 2002, p.123, 106), and as such it is useful for Scotland and Ireland to maintain their Celtic heritage and fight against colonial representations of the savage and feminised Celt. Both Ireland and Scotland struggled to assert an authentic Celtic identity within the British Union, and Owenson and Roche engage with this problem in their novels.

The main focus of the struggle between Scotland and Ireland for ownership of an authentic Celtic identity was Ossian. Ossian was the supposed author of three collections of poetry, discovered by James Macpherson.<sup>10</sup> In fact, Macpherson was the author of these reworkings of Irish myths. Irish and Scottish antiquarians and critics debated Macpherson’s claims and the authenticity of his works. Owenson also engages in the debate of Ossian’s origins in *The Wild Irish Girl*. Glorvina and the family priest believe that Macpherson translated Irish myths and epics:

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<sup>10</sup> James Macpherson, Scottish poet and literary collector, 1736-1796.



‘we know, believe, and assert them [Ossian’s epics] to be translated from the fragments of the Irish bards, or seanachies, whose surviving works were almost equally diffused through the Highlands as through this country ...’.

(Owenson 1999, p.107)

Owenson manages to identify the truth behind the controversy surrounding Ossian and Macpherson and she is vehement in her argument that Ossian is Irish. Horatio believes that “Ossian was an Highland bard, whose works were handed down to us by *oral* tradition, through a lapse of fifteen hundred years” (Owenson 1999, p.107), though Glorvina and Fr. John consistently counter Horatio’s arguments. Horatio must concede that there is some truth in Fr. John’s and Glorvina’s arguments:

‘Were I a Scotchman,’ said I, ‘I should be furnished with more effectual arms against you; but as an Englishman, I claim an armed neutrality, which I shall endeavour to preserve between the two nations. At the same time that I feel the highest satisfaction in witnessing the just pretensions of that country (which now ranks in my estimation as my own) to a work which would do honour to *any* country so fortunate as to claim its author as her son’.

(Owenson 1999, p.114)

Owenson’s vehemence as to the Irish origins of Ossian spills into the footnotes where she attempts to prove that Macpherson’s work is sourced from Irish myths and legends of Fionn MacCumhal and Oisín. Irish folklorists and literary critics were incensed by the Scottish claiming Ossian as their own, and it is clear Owenson agreed with them. However, one could say that the passionate desire to claim Ossian as a Scottish or Irish writer, as portrayed by Owenson, is a reaction to cultural imperialism. Celtic identity was in the process of being eroded in Scotland and Ireland and both countries’ claims to Ossian are an attempt to maintain a distinct Celtic identity.

Roche also mentions Ossian in her texts, either through direct quotation or through characters referring to Macpherson’s work. However, unlike Owenson, Roche does not interrogate Ossian’s origins. Instead, Ossian’s writing does inform the depiction of what might be described as a “Celtic sovereignty goddess” figure, Amanda Fitzalan. Amanda’s genealogy is an amalgam of Celtic nationalities. She is the daughter of Malvina, a Scotswoman, who is described as “one of the beautiful forms which Ossian so often describes” (Roche 2005, p.16). Amanda’s brother is named Oscar, perhaps after a character in Ossian’s works. Roche may be favouring the concept of a Scottish Ossian in her depiction of Malvina. Malvina’s character is also a way for Roche to express the

problems of identity in Scotland towards the end of the eighteenth century. Siobhán Kilfeather states:

Malvina's name and demeanor show her affiliation to the myth of the lost highlands' culture destroyed after 1745, while her evil half-sister and usurper, Augusta, and Augusta's daughter Lady Euphrasia Sutherland patently identify with a new order of Scots nobility. Augusta, like Sutherland, is both an Hanovarian name and also a signifier of imperial power. While Malvina visits the peasantry, and sings simple Scots ballads, her rival employs bagpipes and tartan as merely decorative to a regime in every way despising Scotland, and orienting itself towards the London metropolis.

(Kilfeather 1994, p.43)

The true Scots in this novel become displaced by the imperialist Sutherlands, thus reflecting the displacement of Scottish Highland nobility after the Rebellion of 1745. One can see the parallels with Irish history here. A crisis of national identity is evident as Augusta and Euphrasia clearly identify as a new breed of Scot who view Scotland as part of the Union of Great Britain. As Wright observes, "some families saw Scotland as part of the Union, others identified with the Jacobite cause" (Wright 2007, p.73). This identification is reinforced as Augusta is Malvina's adopted sister, an interloper, who displaces and dispossesses the true blood relative. Roche increases Amanda's Celtic heritage through her father, Fitzalan:

the father of Amanda, was the descendant of an ancient Irish family, which had, however, unfortunately attained the summit of its prosperity long before his entrance into life; so that little more than a name, once dignified by illustrious actions, was left to its posterity.

(Roche 2005, p.10)

Not much else is known about Fitzalan's family, except that they were once prosperous and belonged to the Ascendancy class in Ireland. The name "Fitzalan" has important connotations. The name originated in the Breton region of France and referred to a Scottish family living there. Fitzalan

was introduced into England and later to Ireland by the Breton followers of William the Conqueror after 1066, among whom it was a very popular given name.

(Name Origin Research 2011)<sup>11</sup>

The Bretons are considered a Celtic race and Roche seems to have chosen this name for its Celtic connotations. Amanda inherits these complex histories through her genealogy.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.surnamedb.com/Surname/FitzAlan#ixzz1K4pcziY>

Her character's history reflects the double dispossession of Celtic Ireland and Scotland by British imperial forces (Kilfeather 1994, p.43). By highlighting the common experience of colonialism within the Celtic Fringe, Roche hopes to unite these nations through Celtic nationalism.

Nevertheless, instead of identifying as an Irish-Scotswoman, or Scots-Irishwoman, Amanda defines herself as Welsh: ““Pray, ma'am, may I ask what countrywoman you are”? ‘Welsh’, said Amanda” (Roche 2005, p.529). She identifies herself as such because she was born in Wales and raised by a Welsh foster-family. Amanda cements her pan-Celtic identity by moving from Wales to Ireland and then to Scotland. It is for this reason I identify Amanda as a “Celtic sovereignty goddess”. Her character draws together four of six Celtic identities, thereby locating Amanda in a Celtic rather than national identity.<sup>12</sup> She may not be presented with as much emphasis on her magical qualities like Glorvina and Luxima, but Amanda is described by Lord Mortimer and her foster father as “a being of another world”, “seraphic”, and as “a little fairy” (Roche 2005, pp.4, 53, 206). Amanda's heritage posits her as a representative for all Celtic nations, especially those within the Union. In this way Roche seems to be suggesting that Celtic countries should unite in their attempts to maintain unique cultural identities within the Union, instead of fighting for authenticity amongst themselves. Roche promotes this concept of uniting Celtic nations through an allegory of marriage, first through Fitzalan and Malvina and then through Amanda and the Welsh-Irishman, Lord Mortimer. Through Amanda's character there is an attempt to renegotiate the relationship between landlord and tenant/ colonizer and colonized. In addition to her Celtic identity, Amanda also has links to Britain as she is a descendant of supporters of William the Conqueror and she is part of an Ascendancy class in Ireland. Even though Amanda's character is a fusion of Celtic identity, the inclusion of British elements in her identity suggests that the Celtic nations should remain part of the Union, not assimilated into an Anglo-Saxon identity but recognized as equal unique partners within the Union.

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<sup>12</sup> Other Celtic locations include the Isle of Man and Cornwall as well as Ireland, Wales, Scotland and Brittany.

## Irish Gothic Fiction

Siobhán Kilfeather suggests that a “variety of definitions might justify the inclusion of particular texts in the canon of Irish Gothic” (Kilfeather 2006, p.85), which leads her to include works by Irish writers, works set in Ireland, works by British authors set wholly or partially in Ireland, any work that contains a significant allusion to Ireland. I would define an Irish Gothic text as one written by a person or persons who claim significant links to Ireland, which engages with specific gothic themes and characteristics and one which includes some of the following characteristics: the presence of the Big House or Irish castle, an Irish setting or displaced Irish setting, themes of colonialism and religious intolerance, fears of marginalization, Catholophobia and Catholophilia, antiquarianism, concerns over the transmission of property and wealth and the pursuer pursued.

W.J. McCormack claims that Irish Gothic authors maintain the appearance of a standard Gothic text by using gothic characteristics such as the use of a ruined castle as the central stage of *The Wild Irish Girl* (McCormack 1993, p.3). In an Irish context, the castle may be present for gothic effect as well as to pay homage to the medieval origins of gothic fiction and also to register Ireland’s Gaelic past. The image of the castle in ruins can also be read as a comment upon the decline of the Gaelic-Irish aristocracy as most lost their power and wealth to the English, but is most often included in these texts to enhance the gothic atmosphere. Roche also presents an Irish castle in *The Children of the Abbey*. Amanda Fitzalan lives for a while in Castle Carberry, which is described as a medieval gothic edifice:

Castle Carberry, to which our travellers were going, was a large gothic pile, erected in the rude and distant period when strength more than elegance was deemed necessary in building. The depredations of war, as well as time, were discernable on its exterior; some of its lofty battlements were broken, and others mouldering to decay, while about its ancient towers

“The rank grass waved its head,  
And the moss whistled in the wind.”

It stood upon a rocky eminence overhanging the sea, and commanding a delightful prospect of the opposite coast of Scotland; about it yet to be traced irregular fortifications, a moat, and remains of a drawbridge, with a well, long since dry, which had been dug in the rock to supply the inhabitants in times of siege with water. On one side rose a stupendous hill, covered to the very summit with trees, and scattered over with relics of druidical antiquity.

(Roche 2005, p.150)

Roche presents the reader with a traditional gothic castle which locates her novel within the Gothic genre. The description of Castle Carberry presents Ireland as an appropriate gothic setting. In this passage the reader is also reminded of Ireland's Celtic past through the "relics of druidical antiquity" scattered across the hill. The fact that Scotland can be seen from Castle Carberry reinforces the Celtic link between Ireland and Scotland. However, Castle Carberry is a reminder of British dominance in Ireland as most castles in Ireland were built by the Normans. Although originally French, the Normans conquered Britain and integrated themselves into British society before invading Ireland; therefore they can be considered as British. The druidical remains are dwarfed by the imposing castle ruins, reinforcing British dominance upon the landscape. The castle in Ireland is a monument to successive waves of British colonialism and is thus a reminder of oppressive domination rather than the romantic medievalism that the castle tends to evoke in English Gothic fiction.

In an Irish context, the gothic castle could also be presented as the "Big House", that is the Protestant, or Anglo-Irish planter's house.<sup>13</sup> In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Big House was a symbol of national identity for the Anglo-Irish. According to Jacqueline Genet:

Originally the Big House was an assertion of Norman dominance and it was to become a landmark of English dominion and a protection of English identity. Its high walls were to separate for centuries the Gaelic population from the English invader.

(Genet 1991, p.ix)

The Norman tower house was adapted throughout the centuries to include English architectural features but it is important to note the gothic, medieval origins of the Big House. In fiction the Big House is a metaphor for Anglo-Irish society; as the Big House crumbles and falls into ruin, so does Ascendancy society. This downfall is anticipated in Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent*<sup>14</sup>

Owenson also includes descriptions of the gothic Castle and Big House in *The Wild Irish Girl* and *O'Donnel: A National Tale*, but she focuses upon the fortunes of the Gaelic-Irish families that inhabit these structures rather than those of the Anglo-Irish and Protestant Ascendancy. In *The Wild Irish Girl* Owenson interrogates the differences between the Irish Castle and the Ascendancy Big House. Inismore is not Norman or

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<sup>13</sup> The Big House inspired a genre of literature which focused on the house and its inhabitants.

<sup>14</sup> This novel chronicles the downfall of the Ascendancy Rackrent family.

Gaelic-Irish in origin, but Milesian; it was built by a mythical race of Spanish invaders who settled in Ireland and became naturalised there.<sup>15</sup> This is part of Owenson's attempt to develop an origin myth for the Gaelic-Irish. In a country where no castle had been built by the native Irish, Owenson claims Inismore Castle as authentically Irish. Owenson sets up a contrast between the Ascendancy Big House represented by Mortimer House and the Gaelic-Irish castle to establish a Gaelic-Irish/ Milesian aesthetic and cultural superiority over the English. Horatio describes Mortimer House:

the situation of this place is bleak and solitary, and the old mansion, like the old manor houses of England, has neither the architectural character of an antique structure, nor the accommodation of a modern one. 'Dilapidated in appearance with no air of antiquity.'<sup>16</sup>

(Owenson 1999, p.32)

Inismore Castle is described in more detail and it is clear that Horatio prefers this building to Mortimer House:

Towards the extreme western point of this peninsula, which was wildly romantic beyond all description, arose a cast and grotesque pile of rocks, which at once formed the scite [sic] and fortifications of the noblest mass of ruins on which my eye ever rested. Grand even in desolation, and magnificent in decay – it was the Castle of Inismore. The setting sun shone brightly on its mouldering turrets, and the eaves which bathed its rocky basis, reflected on their swelling bosoms the dark outline of its awful ruins.

(Owenson 1999, pp.44-45)

Comparing Inismore Castle and Mortimer House one can see Owenson draws upon antiquarianism to further exoticize Ireland. Horatio is clearly interested in antiquity, and one of the drawbacks of Mortimer House is that it has no "air of antiquity"; in contrast, Inismore Castle is a repository for all things Gaelic-Irish and Milesian. In these passages, Owenson reverses the assumption of English superiority and Irish inferiority. In matters of antiquity and culture, Ireland is superior to England, in Owenson's and Horatio's opinion. In the castle are living remnants of a nearly extinct native Irish nobility. The castle becomes the site of Horatio's exploration of Gaelic-Irish culture.<sup>17</sup> Even the landscape surrounding Inismore Castle is more impressive than the landscape

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<sup>15</sup> According to myth Milesius married one of the Irish sovereignty Goddesses, Erin, and the Princes of Inismore are descendents of this line.

<sup>16</sup> Translated from French footnote, (Kirkpatrick 1999, p. 256).

<sup>17</sup> Horatio's experience could possibly attract English tourists to Ireland. Those with an interest in antiquity and landscape would surely be interested in exploring Ireland just as Horatio has.

surrounding Mortimer House; it is sublime, “beyond all description”, and “desolate”. Owenson highlights here the hospitality and kindness of the Irish to undermine predominant negative perceptions to make the west of Ireland appear as a hospitable and welcoming place for the English or Anglo-Irish visitor.<sup>18</sup>

Owenson’s depiction of an ancient Irish castle and race capitalises upon contemporary popular interest in the study of Gaelic-Irish and Celtic culture and folklore, amongst the Anglo-Irish. Irish antiquarianism is a feature of Irish Gothic fiction as a means to record and explore Celtic culture. *The Wild Irish Girl* is a novel of exploration into Irish culture, folklore and superstition. Kathryn Kirkpatrick notes that Owenson wished to promote a positive view of Ireland and she did this by including footnotes where she:

draws on the antiquarian discourse of the late eighteenth-century Celtic Revival, which produced studies of the Celtic languages, Irish castles, and ancient dwellings as well as collections of Gaelic ballads and folklore.

(Kirkpatrick 1999, p.253)

References to the medieval age in traditional Gothic texts are sometimes replaced by antiquarianism in Irish Gothic fiction. This places an Irish emphasis on the Gothic machinery typically seen in this literature. In *The Wild Irish Girl* Owenson capitalises upon the fascination the Ascendancy had with Celticism and Irish Catholic customs. Owenson’s footnotes and Glorvina’s discussions of Irish culture provides an opportunity for Anglo-Protestants to learn about a fascinating and somewhat forbidden culture. For example, Owenson writes a footnote explaining the term “shanaos”:

*Shanaos* pronounced, but properly spelt *Seanachus*, is a term in very general use in Ireland, and is applied to a kind of genealogical chit-chat, or talking over family antiquity, family anecdotes, descent, alliances, etc. Etc. To which the lower, as well as the higher order of Irish in the provincial parts are much addicted. I have myself conversed with several old ladies in Connaught and Munster, who were living chronicles of transactions in their families of the most distant date and complicated nature.

*Senachy*, was the name of the antiquary retained in every noble family to preserve its exploits, etc, etc.

(Owenson 1999, p.62 FN.1)

Owenson describes elements of Irish folklore to educate her audience, whereas other Irish Gothic writers simply include Irish folklore to terrorise the characters and reader. For example, Sheridan Le Fanu incorporates aspects of the Irish banshee in his vampire character

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<sup>18</sup> It is also notable that Horatio is attracted to Inismore castle because Glorvina and her father provide Horatio with a family, something that Mortimer House is lacking.

Carmilla, but does not explain the banshee's Celtic origins. Roche does not include as much Irish antiquarianism in her novels as Owenson does, only making brief references to the banshee and Welsh fairies. Roche may not be as familiar with Irish folklore as Owenson or this could indicate Roche's preference for more traditional Gothic sources of terror and fascination to focus the story upon the heroine. Perhaps Roche is not as interested in the promotion of a cultural nationalism as Owenson at this time. According to Natalie Schroeder, Roche's "novels of the 1820s are all set in Ireland and all concern themselves in some way with Irish national issues" (Schroeder 1980, p.163). *Clermont* and *The Children of the Abbey* were written before 1800; perhaps this is why Irish antiquity is not a prominent feature in these novels.<sup>19</sup>

While the Anglo-Irish were eager to learn about Gaelic-Irish heritage, the fractured nature of Irish society in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries influenced other developments in Irish Gothic fiction; Anglo-Irish fears of marginalization, a fear of and fascination with Catholicism, and concerns over the transmission of property and wealth were recurring concerns that became characteristic of the genre. In addition:

[A] 'colonial' history, Protestantism, and the fear of marginalization – rather than marginalization itself – are central features of the Irish Gothic tradition.

(Killeen 2006a, para.8)

Killeen identifies these traits as stemming from Ascendancy anxiety about a loss of power. The Ascendancy were a minority whose legitimacy to rule could be questioned. As they held a precarious political power in Ireland at this time, it is only natural that they would fear becoming as politically marginalized as the Gaelic-Irish. This is evident in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, as the mostly English heroes fear that the foreign invader will assimilate the British population, leaving those who resist him in the minority. The Protestant fear is not as clearly manifested in most Irish Gothic novels like *Dracula*, but it is visible through a negative depiction of Catholicism. A theme of anti-Catholicism was already an established trope in Gothic fiction and is not just particular to Irish Gothic. For example, Matthew Gregory

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<sup>19</sup> Another reason for Roche's sudden interest in Irish national issues after 1800 might be that she did not support the Act of Union. This is supposition as there is not much information available on Roche's life. Schroeder notes that there was two periods from 1800 to 1807 and 1814 to 1820 when Roche did not write because of financial difficulty and her husband's illness. This would also explain why Roche did not focus upon Irish issues until 1820.



Lewis's *The Monk* can be read as an anti-Catholic tirade.<sup>20</sup> An example of representations of a deviant Catholicism in Irish Gothic fiction is present in *Dracula*, as the Protestant Jonathan Harker has been taught to regard the crucifix with disdain (Stoker 2003, p.35). Here, Catholicism is linked with the irrational as the crucifix and pagan idols such as garlic and roses are considered as wards against the vampire. The crucifix is presented as having the same superstitious power as pagan idols thus equating Catholicism with barbarous pagan practices. However, one cannot ignore the benefit of these Catholic icons to Harker as they protect him from the vampire.<sup>21</sup> Also Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* presents Catholicism in the form of the Spanish Inquisition as irrational, repressive, violent and cruel. It comes as no surprise that the Gothic was a popular form amongst Anglo-Irish and Ascendancy writers. When a social group is trying to maintain "political supremacy that is protestant" (Eagleton 1995, p.34) it makes sense to present negative images of Catholicism that link Catholic practice with paganism and the occult to confirm Catholic inferiority amongst the Protestant reading public.

This kind of "Catholophobia", so typical of much Irish Gothic fiction is completely absent in Owenson's and Roche's texts; in fact, there is a significant deviation in their work from the Gothic representation of Catholicism. Instead, religious tolerance is a theme in *The Children of the Abbey* and *The Wild Irish Girl*. Roche presents a convent as a sanctuary for women in contrast to other gothic representations of convents as prisons. This discussion will be resumed in Chapter Four in relation to how Owenson and Roche address religion in their novels. However, it is important to note this deviation from Irish Gothic norms as it indicates a possible feature of Irish Gothic fiction written by women.

Paradoxically, linked to the fear of Catholicism is a Protestant fascination with exploring the culture of the Catholic "Other". This "Catholophilia" is evident in male-authored and female-authored Irish Gothic fiction through a:

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<sup>20</sup> The Catholic Church was dominant in medieval times (pre reformation) and was associated with aristocratic wealth and superstition. Enlightenment Protestants viewed Catholics as superstitious and given to belief in the supernatural due to the "magical nature" of transubstantiation in the Catholic mass. Protestants believed themselves to be more rational thinkers. This hatred was also motivated by a desire to wrestle power and control from Catholic aristocrats. Many writers of Gothic fiction were Protestant and this anti-Catholicism pervaded Gothic texts.

<sup>21</sup> This is evidence of Catholophilia, a paradoxical fascination with Catholic practice, which will be discussed later.

fascination with antiquarianism, folkloric studies and Irish ‘superstitions’ is, at least to some extent, emblematic of an ethnographic encounter with a native population, and expressive of a means by which the Protestant Self can safely explore (and perhaps absorb) aspects of that forbidden culture.

(Killeen 2006a, para.8)

Catholophilia is a distinct characteristic in Irish Gothic fiction that is not found in English Gothic. One does see Catholophobia regularly appearing in British and European Gothic fiction to promote the concept of Enlightenment “reason” and logical thinking of Protestantism over Catholic “superstition”. Catholophilia is evident in Irish Gothic novels through representations of Catholic Irish traditions, antiquarianism, and folklore studies. This “disgust/ desire dichotomy” in relation to Catholicism by Irish Protestants (Killeen 2008, para. 23) is a distinctive part of Irish Gothic fiction and is present in Owenson’s and Roche’s work. In *The Children of the Abbey*, for example, Roche describes an Irish Catholic wake and the convent and nuns of St. Catherine’s. Similarly, in *The Wild Irish Girl*, Father John discusses the education of an Irish priest and an Irish funeral is also described. However, in both novels the Irish wake is presented as an unusual practice. Amanda Fitzalan is disgusted by her father’s wake and Father John in *The Wild Irish Girl* says to Horatio “you should see an Irish Roman Catholic funeral; to a protestant and a stranger it must be a spectacle of some interest” (Owenson 1999, p.183). The wake is presented as a potentially offensive act to the Protestant self, yet it is also a spectacle, like a theatrical event that must be seen.

This fascination with Gaelic-Irish culture was countered by a fear of repossession of Irish land. As descendants of colonisers, the Anglo-Irish and Ascendancy owned land that once belonged to the Gaelic-Irish. If land can be so easily usurped by the colonisers, then it could just as easily be taken back; the fear was justified in this circumstance and gave rise to a preoccupation with title deeds and wills, legal documents, proof of ownership and inheritance in Irish Gothic novels. These records could give one a stronger claim to their property, but the fear remains of falsified documents and lost wills. These anxieties are highlighted in *The Children of the Abbey*, as Amanda seeks to restore her family’s usurped inheritance. Her grandfather’s will left his estate to Malvina, Amanda’s mother. This will is hidden by Malvina’s step-mother, which forces Amanda to live in poverty until the document is discovered. One of the themes in this novel is the loss and reclamation of inheritance, and the key document that restores Amanda’s fortune is her grandfather’s will. Amanda experiences the fear of losing wealth; her family never owns their own house and as

a result, Amanda becomes a nomad, always on the brink of poverty. This characteristic reflects the continuing issue of land ownership in Ireland since the British colonial project in Ireland began. Who owns the land and who controls the wealth?

The theme of disputed inheritance is thus a prominent motif in Irish Gothic fiction and Owenson's and Roche's work. Roche's heroines Amanda, (*The Children of the Abbey*) and Madeline, (*Clermont*) are deprived of their inheritance in these novels. In *The Wild Irish Girl*, Horatio attempts to restore the Prince of Inismore's land as it was usurped by an ancestor of Horatio's during the Cromwellian era. Horatio attempts to restore these stolen lands to their rightful owner by marrying Glorvina. However, the property laws in Ireland at this time would ensure that the townlands of Inismore would still belong to Horatio, as a woman was not allowed to own property. Similarly in *The Children of the Abbey*, even though Amanda restores her inheritance, ownership of Dunreath Abbey and her family's assets would reside with her brother. Owenson and Roche include the Irish Gothic theme of disputed inheritance but extend the theme to encompass gender dispossession as well as racial dispossession. This will be discussed in further detail in the following chapter.

The final characteristic of Irish Gothic fiction I wish to discuss may not at first glance appear to be influenced by Ireland's colonial history, but considering the paranoia experienced by the Anglo-Irish and Ascendancy in relation to maintaining their wealth and power in Ireland, Ireland's colonial influence becomes clear. According to Siobhán Kilfeather, "the pursuer pursued ... [is] a prominent motif in Irish fiction: it is the structuring theme of ... Regina Maria Roche's *Clermont*" (Kilfeather 1994, p.38). In *Clermont* Madeline struggles to return to the protective arms of her father. Along the way she is pursued by banditti and by Monsieur D'Alembert, who would wed her then murder her for her fortune. She also pursues the revelation of the secrets that surround her father and her would-be love, Monsieur De Sevignie. Owenson also incorporates this plotline in *The Missionary*, as Hilarion follows Luxima, an Indian priestess, to convert her to Christianity. He is consequently trailed by the Inquisition. Glorvina is pursued by Horatio who is in turn haunted by the secret of his real identity as the descendent of the man who stole lands belonging to Glorvina's family. He fears that Glorvina would turn against him if she knew this, as the Prince of Inismore still harbours deep hatred for Horatio's family. An example of this motif also appears in *Dracula*, as those who seek to kill the vampire (Harker, Van

Helsing et al), are in turn pursued by Dracula, seeking to assimilate or kill the members of this group. A reading of this characteristic in an Irish context could be that those who pursued the colonisation of Ireland, the pursuit of wealth and dominance, are themselves pursued, by the anxiety and fear of the loss of this power or their assimilation into the Gaelic-Irish national body. Certainly in historical terms, this did occur eventually in the early twentieth century. Those who pursue power are in turn pursued or even in a more gothic register, haunted by the fear of losing that power.

In all of the critical writings on Irish Gothic that I have cited here, it is notable that only Irish male Gothic writers feature prominently, such as Maturin, Le Fanu and Stoker. With the exception of Kilfeather, Irish Gothic has only been investigated from a male perspective. What has previously been addressed as a study on Irish Gothic literature has been in fact a study on Irish Male Gothic literature. Ann Owens Weekes states that

[D]espite centuries of oppressive conditions, Irish women have written, initially in Gaelic and English and latterly chiefly in English, and judging by what survives of their writing, they have written well. The problem lies not in their work but in the single lens with which critics have traditionally viewed most fiction, Irish included.

(Weekes 1990, p.2)

In the context of this thesis, the “single lens” is the male perspective on male writing; to extend her metaphor, one requires binoculars to achieve a balanced view of Irish Gothic literature. This study seeks to remedy the problem of gender imbalance in Irish Gothic fiction by including male and female authored Irish Gothic novels.

In this chapter we have seen that Owenson and Roche include certain characteristics of both Gothic and Irish Gothic fiction in their work. However, in their novels Owenson and Roche produce significant deviations or alterations to Irish Gothic that may point to a distinct Irish Female Gothic mode. The question I now must answer is whether Owenson’s and Roche’s novels are influenced by Female Gothic fiction and if there are any significant deviations in their writing from the Female Gothic mode that would indicate an Irish inflection.

## Chapter Two: Female Gothic

What is the “Female Gothic”? Is it Gothic novels written by women? Is it Gothic novels that focus on a female character? Is it a Gothic novel that raises issues important to women? Or is Female Gothic just a label applied by modern theorists to a pattern identified in some Gothic novels? Donna Hieland suggests that “a set of conventions defines the Female Gothic” and I agree (Hieland 2004, p.5). These conventions include and revolve around a virtuous heroine fleeing from a threatening patriarchal figure while attempting to uncover a family secret. While Ann Radcliffe has been described as the originator of this subgenre, there were other writers, such as Sophia Lee, Clara Reeve, Charlotte Dacre and Mary Wollstonecraft, whose writing formed part of what is retrospectively labelled as Female Gothic. Radcliffe was the most popular writer of this genre and her style was widely imitated, but to say she created the genre by herself would be to ignore the importance of other writers. In this chapter I will elaborate upon the defining characteristics of Female Gothic fiction and investigate how Owenson’s and Roche’s work can be read as being part of the Female Gothic tradition.

First I will address the issues surrounding the study of Female Gothic. The label “Female Gothic” is considered today to be too essentialising and reductive a label for this style of fiction. Even though women dominated in the production of this genre, male authors also wrote the Female Gothic. A variety of terms such as “women’s Gothic,’ ‘feminine Gothic,’ ‘lesbian Gothic,’ and even ‘Gothic feminism’” (Smith and Wallace 2004, p.1) have emerged in modern criticism to describe aspects of this complex subgenre of Gothic fiction. For the purpose of this thesis I will identify the subgenre as “Female Gothic” to reflect the dominance of women as writers and readers, who also provide the focus of this fiction which was emerging when Owenson and Roche were writing.

Female Gothic fiction:

as a novelistic tradition became a coded system whereby women authors covertly communicated to other women - their largely female reading audience - their ambivalent rejection of and outward complicity with the dominant sexual ideologies of their culture.

(Hoeveler 1998, p.5)

These dominant sexual ideologies and the consequent oppression of women are represented in Female Gothic as the force threatening the heroine is almost always male, whether it is an institution or person. The plots of *The Wild Irish Girl*, *The Missionary*, *The Children of the Abbey* and *Clermont* all focus upon a virtuous heroine threatened by a male figure: Amanda is pursued by Colonel Belgrave who wishes to possess her, and Madeline is threatened by Monsieur D'Alembert who wishes to possess the money that she will inherit. Luxima is threatened by Hilarion (whose attempts to convert Luxima result in her death) and her own Hindu beliefs. Glorvina's life is not directly threatened by a male figure but her Milesian/ Celtic heritage is threatened with erasure by the patriarchal British colonial project. This is represented by her forced marriage to Horatio's father. Not only is this Female Gothic plot found in Owenson's and Roche's work, but three of these heroines uncover a secret. Amanda finds a will that restores her family's inheritance; Madeline discovers that her father attempted to kill his half-brother; and Glorvina discovers that Horatio is the descendent of the man who stole the lands of Inismore from her family. These Female Gothic characteristics suggest that Owenson and Roche are participating in what Hoeveler describes as a coded system of communicating women's ambivalent rejection of the sexual ideologies of patriarchal culture, represented by the heroine's flight from one man, and their outward complicity with patriarchy, represented by the heroine's subsequent marriage to another man. In this manner we can say that these novels are part of the canon of Female Gothic.

"Female Gothic" is distinguished from other Gothic genres through distinctly different plots, which are gendered:

studies exploring the distinction between 'Female Gothic' and 'Male Gothic' had seen this plot [virtuous girl pursued by devious male figure] as typical of female writers, while male writers tended towards a plot of masculine transgression of social taboos, exemplified by Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796).

(Smith and Wallace 2004, p.2)

An Irish example of the "Male Gothic" plot is Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* in which the title character flouts many social taboos, such as seducing and eloping with a young girl and making Faustian deals. The plot of *Dracula* also reflects this masculine plot as does "Carmilla", with scenes hinting at sexual transgression between two women. Female Gothic differs from the Male Gothic on other levels, not just the plot. The

primary difference between these styles is the writer's approach to the supernatural. In Male Gothic the supernatural is real, or to use Tzvetan Todorov's label, marvellous:

The fantastic, we have seen, lasts only as long as a certain hesitation: a hesitation common to reader and character, who must decide whether or not what they perceive derives from "reality" as it exists in the common opinion. At the story's end, the reader makes a decision even if the character does not; he opts for one solution or the other, and thereby emerges from the fantastic. If he decides that the laws of reality remain intact and permit an explanation of the phenomena described, we say that the work belongs to another genre: the uncanny. If, on the contrary, he decides that the new laws of nature must be entertained to account for the phenomena, we enter the genre of the marvellous.

(Todorov 1975, p.41)

According to Todorov, in Male Gothic the supernatural agent -the ghost, the vampire, the monster -is a real threat to the characters. In *Melmoth the Wanderer*, the demonic Melmoth is presented as real. He lives an unnaturally long life and is therefore marvellous as "new laws of nature must be entertained to account for the phenomena" (Todorov 1975, p.41). In Female Gothic, the supernatural is predominantly a result of the heroine's over active imagination. For example, in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* a disembodied voice, which haunts La Vallée, later turns out to be a real man singing, thus leaving "the laws of reality ... intact" (Todorov 1975, p.41). In *The Children of the Abbey*, Amanda believes Lady Dunreath to be a ghost at first, but then realizes she is a real woman, an instance of the uncanny in Todorov's terms. Similarly, in *Clermont*, Madeline thinks she sees a ghostly hand pushing through a tapestry in the wall, but it is actually a man trying the gain access to her boudoir. Typically, the marvellous supernatural is the source of peril for the protagonist in Male Gothic. For example, the vampires Dracula, Carmilla and the devil are marvellous creatures who require new laws of reality to explain their existence. However, this is not a strict definition as Maturin includes natural and supernatural threats in *Melmoth the Wanderer*, such as the convent and the devil respectively.

The perils that threaten the heroine in Female Gothic mirror those in the real world to show that women have much more to fear from everyday life.<sup>22</sup> Male Gothic fiction problematises the repressed fears of men by translating them into monsters, while Female Gothic writers drew upon the many fears that were a reality to them at this time,

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<sup>22</sup> By the "physical world" I mean eighteenth-/ nineteenth-century British/ Irish society.

and this is reflected in the deployment of real physical terrors in Female Gothic fiction. When a Gothic heroine encounters the supernatural in Female Gothic fiction it is uncanny because there is usually a plausible explanation for the event, however the explanation is often more terrifying than the encounter, as it is often revealed to be a man attempting to kill or rape the heroine. This is also an instance of how Female Gothic writers code their displeasure with patriarchal society, as they hide the real threat to the heroine's safety beneath a spectral disguise.

The reactions to supernatural/ marvelous and uncanny/ imaginary in gothic fiction are differentiated in Male and Female Gothic as the horror and terror modes respectively. Fred Botting elaborates upon the difference between horror and terror in Gothic fiction:

Horror is most often experienced in underground vaults or burial chambers. It freezes human faculties, rendering the mind passive and immobilizing the body. The cause is generally a direct encounter with physical mortality, the touching of a cold corpse, the sight of a decaying body ...

Terror enables escape; it allows one to delimit its effects, to distinguish and overcome the threat it manifests.

(Botting 1996, p.75)

Edmund Burke and Anne Radcliffe associate these modes with the sublime. While Burke does not make much of a distinction in his work between terror and horror, Ann Radcliffe highlights the difference between these two states of mind in her treatise on the sublime entitled "On the Supernatural in Poetry":<sup>23</sup>

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.

(Radcliffe 1826, p.151)

Terror allows the victim (usually the heroine in Female Gothic) the opportunity of escape, as her faculties are awakened to a high degree; she can think quickly at the height of her intelligence as a result of the sublime experience. This delineation between terror and horror becomes an important distinction between Male and Female Gothic novels.

Male Gothic draws upon the literature of horror which:

confronts the principal characters with the gross violence of physical or psychological dissolution, explicitly shattering the assumed norms (including the repressions) of everyday life with wildly shocking, and even revolting consequences.

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<sup>23</sup> Burke favours the term "terror" over "horror" in his treatise but associates terror with death and a suspension of faculties, aspects Botting and Radcliffe associate with horror.



(Hogle 2002, p.3, 11)

Examples of this in Irish fiction include Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and *Melmoth the Wanderer* where the presence of an immortal or vampire shatters "the assumed norms of everyday life" and the reader is confronted with shocking and revolting scenes of cannibalism and bloodletting. In these novels the characters are faced with graphic violence and their perceptions of the natural world are altered. Conversely, Female Gothic is considered to draw upon the literature of terror which:

holds characters and readers mostly in anxious suspense about threats to life, safety, and sanity kept largely out of sight or in shadows or suggestions from a hidden past.

(Hogle 2002, p.3)

Owenson's and Roche's novels are clear examples of the literature of terror. Luxima, Madeline and Amanda all have their lives threatened and hidden pasts haunt Glorvina (the feud between her family and Horatio's), Madeline (her father's fratricide) and Amanda (Lady Dunreath's possession of the Earl's true will). Luxima's sanity is threatened and shattered by her imprisonment in a convent.

A clear example of the terror mode in Female Gothic fiction is present in *The Children of the Abbey*, when Amanda encounters Lady Dunreath:

She went up to examine it [a portrait]; but her horror may be better conceived than described, when she found herself not by a picture but by the real form of a woman, with a death-like countenance! She screamed wildly at the terrifying spectre, for such she believed it to be, and quick as lightning flew from the room ... She made a spring to escape through the entrance, but the apparition, with a rapidity equal to her own, glided before her, and with a hollow voice, as she waved an emaciated hand, exclaimed, "Forbear to go."

A deadly faintness again came over Amanda; she sunk upon a broken seat, and put her hand over her eyes to shut out the frightful vision.

"Lose," continued the figure, in a hollow voice, "lose your superstitious fears, and in me behold not an airy inhabitant of the other world, but a sinful, sorrowing, and repentant woman."

The terrors of Amanda gave way to this unexpected address; but her surprise was equal to what these terrors had been, she withdrew her hand, and gazed attentively on the form before her.

(Roche 2005, pp.466-467)

Amanda is in a sealed part of Dunreath Abbey that houses Lady Dunreath. While the woman approaching Amanda is real, Amanda imagines that Lady Dunreath is a spectre, thus locating the narrative in the terror mode. Amanda's attempts to escape the spectre locate this novel within the terror mode also. Amanda is quick to run from this creature,

which tells us that her senses have not been frozen, as they would be in the horror mode. The terror mode offers the ability to escape and overcome the threat, which Amanda attempts to do. Even when Amanda is trapped by the spectre she does not succumb to the horror of the experience and freeze, she recovers her senses quickly to realize that Lady Dunreath is real. Roche may use the term horror to describe Amanda's experience but the heroine's reaction is within the parameters of the terror mode. However, there are aspects of this scene that draw on the literature of horror and Roche may have included them to comment upon the women's confinement within marriage. Lady Dunreath's prison in an abandoned chapel and within her husband's property signifies her imprisonment within marriage. What is even more frightening about this is that even though the Earl is dead, Lady Dunreath's imprisonment is not over. It could be said that Lady Dunreath is living in horror, her movements are restricted and she is presented as a living spectre that haunts Dunreath Abbey. Lady Dunreath even shows a surprising recognition of her own ghostly nature, telling Amanda she is not a ghost, but real. This is another coded expression of how women writers were aware of the invisibility of the married woman in the public sphere. In this manner, marriage means horror for Lady Dunreath. By utilizing the terror mode to characterize Amanda's reaction to meeting Lady Dunreath, Roche seems to be saying that Amanda still has a chance to change her future circumstances to ensure she does not end up like Lady Dunreath.

Roche makes a surprising departure from this mode in *Clermont* when Madeline stumbles across the body of the Countess in a ruined chapel:

They beheld their friend, their benefactress, lying stretched before the monument of her husband, apparently lifeless, and a small stream of blood issuing from her side. A shriek of mingled grief and horror burst from Madeline, and, unable to stand, she sunk beside her and clasped her trembling arms around her.

(Roche 2006, p.119)

Madeline reacts to an encounter with death in horror. Roche may be drawing on the horror mode in a Female Gothic novel to show that the horrifying realities of life cannot be escaped for women. The women Amanda and Madeline encounter are victims of an overbearing patriarchy: Lady Dunreath is imprisoned by her son-in-law and daughter, and the Countess is murdered by her son-in-law. Lady Dunreath is in possession of her

husband's true will, which would deprive her son-in-law of his inheritance.<sup>24</sup> The Countess is murdered for the same reason, so that her son-in-law can inherit her wealth. It seems in these novels the man most women have to fear, especially wealthy mothers with only one daughter, is the son-in-law. If the mother's husband is dead, as he is in these novels, his wealth is controlled by the mother, thereby putting her in a vulnerable position regarding her greedy son-in-law. This was an inescapable fear for women; coverture further entraps them and makes them subject to their male relatives. These patriarchal structures make women victims and because of their inability to alter these laws, the heroine is presented as immobile, like all women unable to act, to save themselves from real horrors.

Owenson also engages in a similar displacement of terror/horror and the uncanny/marvelous in her novel. She includes the imagined supernatural in her novels, but it is a man who experiences this terror. I say terror because his reaction could be classed as such. In *The Wild Irish Girl* Horatio sees Glorvina as a monster:

raising her veil, discovered a face I had hitherto rather guessed at, than seen. Imagine my horror – it was the face, the head, of a *Gorgon*!

(Owenson 1999, p.60)

It is revealed that Horatio is dreaming and therefore imagining his terrors. This puts the novel in the realms of the uncanny as the laws of nature remain intact. However, the association of Glorvina with the gorgon reflects Horatio's fears of female power over men. Freud would say that this is "the castration complex", that viewing the Gorgon's head is tantamount to a fear of castration (Freud 2003, p.84-86). In this instance the fear Horatio has is that Glorvina has power over him. In this manner, Owenson has placed a male character in a woman's position, that is to say, that men always have power over women and this is a constant horror for women as they cannot escape men's control. Horatio is made to feel this horror for a moment, perhaps to enlighten him and male readers to women's realities.

Yet, Owenson's heroines do not display the overactive imagination that is necessary to the production of terrors and characteristic of other Female Gothic heroines.

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<sup>24</sup> All wealth inherited by a woman became her husband's property under the doctrine of coverture (Erikson 1993, p.3). "Under the system of coverture, the woman's legal identity was 'covered' by that of her husband. She underwent a civil death and forfeited all rights to possess property, custody of her own children and, indeed, herself" (Anolik 2003, p.26).

One reason for this is that Owenson wrote these novels from the hero's perspective and therefore the reader has no access to the heroine's inner thoughts. Without an overactive imagination the heroine cannot imagine supernatural threats against her. Glorvina fears losing her father, and Luxima fears excommunication. Owenson seems to be suggesting that women have enough to fear in the actual world without imagining extra terrors to frighten themselves.

### **Marriage, Inheritance and "Domestic Bliss"**

Female Gothic is predominantly a critique of patriarchy; the writers of this genre tend to focus upon exposing the oppression of women and the coercion in patriarchal structures to make women complicit in their own oppression. The Female Gothic plot usually concludes with marriage, not only a primary area for critique by Female Gothic writers, but also a profitable subject for women writers. Analysis of the representations of marriage in *The Wild Irish Girl*, *Clermont* and *The Children of the Abbey* reveals criticisms consistent with Female Gothic fiction. Marriage is rarely mentioned in *The Missionary*, as it is primarily an Orientalist text, but one can consider Luxima's incarceration in a convent as a type of marriage. The only choices available to women outside marriage in the late eighteenth, early nineteenth centuries were the convent or the streets. In the institutions of marriage and Christianity the woman became invisible and confined to the private sphere of the convent/ home, so a cloistered life is a gothic double of marriage for women.

Returning to more conventional portrayals of marriage, Roche presents this institution as hazardous for women. In *Clermont*, the titular character's mother is married to St. Julian Senior, Clermont's father, but both she and her son are rejected by St. Julian Senior who tells her:

"I will not deny Madeline, (said he) that it is not my intention to be deaf to such importunities: as our marriage is a profound secret, I mean it will never shall be known; that from henceforth we shall be strangers to each other, and each again enter the world free to make another choice."<sup>25</sup>

(Roche 2006, p.227)

St. Julian Senior may be able to "enter the world free to make another choice", but because of societal restrictions upon brides, Madeline Senior cannot remarry because she

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<sup>25</sup> The heroine is named after her grandmother.

has a child, and is no longer the ideal virgin-bride patriarchy demands. Madeline Senior also failed to have witnesses to her marriage and so her husband is free to leave her, as she does not have legal claim to him. Roche emphasises the dangers of an un-witnessed marriage to her readers, as a secret marriage leaves women vulnerable to abandonment. Roche also emphasises the problems women face when choosing a husband as Madeline Senior's mother, the heroine's great-grandmother, suffers the exact same fate. Madeline Senior writes in a letter how her mother married St. Foix and gave him a child only for him to leave her:

“ ... however, the delirium of passion over, and the pressure of distress experienced, bitterly regretted having yielded to an affection which heightened his cares, by involving the woman he adored in sorrow, and in little more than two years after his marriage, and a few months after my [Madeline Senior] birth, he fell victim to his feelings ... ”.

(Roche 2006, p.222)

This letter by Madeline Senior highlights gender inequality in a patriarchal society. While a man is free to leave one marriage and start afresh, a woman cannot and this has a great impact upon her personally as she is without a means to earn a living. While St. Foix and St. Julian Senior are free to leave their wives and remarry, Madeline Senior and her mother are ruined. These women then must find a way to support themselves and their children. Both consider retiring to a convent as this is the only “respectable” option. Madeline Senior's mother is provided for by her brother as he marries an heiress, but he cannot maintain her for long and after her death, Madeline Senior is forced to reside with her Great-Uncle. While women's vulnerabilities are emphasised, Roche also shows how men are burdened by patriarchy. Unmarried women are a burden to their fathers or other male relatives, as in the case of Madeline Senior. Roche's main message regarding marriage in this novel is that women should choose their husbands (if they can) carefully and make sure these men cannot abandon them. Roche re-emphasises her point as the Countess de Merville's daughter Viola is also tricked into marrying a despicable man who is only interested in the wealth she brings to the union. Like St. Julian Senior, who marries his second wife for her wealth, Monsieur D'Alembert marries simply for financial benefits, and has no qualms about murdering his current wife when the money runs out. Marriage in this novel is motivated by financial gain, for both men and women, yet when a marriage dissolves it is the wife who suffers. This is one of the persistently

haunting realities of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century life for women, represented in Female Gothic novels such as those of Roche.

Concerns about marriage recur in Roche's *The Children of the Abbey*. Malvina's marriage to Captain Fitzalan, which condemns her to a life of poverty, highlights the problems women face when they marry for love and not wealth. Roche warns women again about the perils of choosing a husband when Adela is duped into marrying Colonel Belgrave. An immoral and depraved man, he fools Adela's father, General Honeywood, and Adela into believing that Oscar, Adela's love interest, does not wish to marry her. Adela is then trapped in an unhappy marriage and removed from her father's house to Colonel Belgrave's harem in Wales.

Owenson incorporates a political agenda in her portrayal of marriage in *The Wild Irish Girl*. The marriage between Glorvina and Horatio is an allegory of the Union of Great Britain and Ireland in 1800. Thomas Tracy states that:

through her union with the English hero, [Glorvina] represented a re-imagined distribution of power between Britain and Ireland as well as between men and women ... Her profound learning argues for a much more equal partnership than those typical of contemporary marriages. Far from being subservient to Horatio, Glorvina schools him in Irish language, culture, botany, and history, while he teaches her painting. Her imparting of this great learning and her active role in administering her aging father's estates help seduce Horatio.

(Tracy 2004, p.91)

This imagined marriage is one of equals, both socially and culturally, but the reality of the Union was quite different. As many Irish historians have asserted, a real integration of Great Britain and Ireland never took place. The same members of the Protestant Ascendancy were given positions in the new administration, and the power to make laws only moved from Dublin to London. Legislative power remained in Anglo Protestant hands and very little changed for the Gaelic-Irish. Owenson would have liked to see Ireland raised from colony status to an equal member of the Empire but, according to Eagleton: "[w]hat was in one sense an act of voluntary merging was in effect one of annexation and appropriation" which abolished the "sham" (133) political independence of Ireland. (Eagleton 1995, p.130 & 133)

Akin to the Act of Union, Owenson's representation of colonial reparation through marriage is problematic. Horatio thinks that his marriage to Glorvina will return

usurped lands to Glorvina and the Princes of Inismore. In reality Glorvina cannot take ownership of this land. Until the Married Women's Acts 1882-1893:

a married woman had no right to property independent of her husband, whether acquired by gift, inheritance, or by her own earnings, and this included her dowry.

(O'Riordan, UCC Multitext, "Dowry and Marriage", para.3)

While Horatio's concept of marriage and the idea of a true Union are idealistic, the realities of both these institutions maintained the status quo for women and for Ireland as a colony. In this manner the Female Gothic's preoccupation with female problems under patriarchal structures interrupts Owenson's novel, perhaps highlighting how women's continued disenfranchisement will be problematic for the Union and any other political regimes in Ireland.

In regards to marriage, another of Owenson's heroines, Luxima, is an anomaly. When we are first introduced to Luxima, she is a virgin-widow. She was born into a distinguished caste and betrothed to a man of similar rank at a young age: "He devoted himself to the Tupaseya sacred pilgrimage, until the age of his bride should permit him to claim her" (Owenson 2002, p.96). The couple married but her husband died before the marriage could be consummated. Luxima therefore lives in an anomalous state, but she also escapes the potential horrors of marriage. Her identity remains intact and she does not suffer imprisonment or the threat of the dangers often associated with childbirth. Owenson's idealized portrayal of Luxima's religious status presents a new state for women.<sup>26</sup> She offers an alternative vision of the gothic heroine which does not reflect the imprisoned state of western women, and through the gothic heroine, Owenson attempts to inspire women to create alternate spaces for themselves. Unlike the other novels under discussion and other typical Female Gothic works, *The Missionary* does not end in a marriage, but in a death. As Anne Williams says:

The theme of marriage ... so prominent in the Female Gothic conclusion, cannot within a strictly realist context be read as a "happy ending".

(Williams 1984, p.138)

Through Luxima's death Owenson could be making an ironic point about the typical marriage conclusion of other Gothic novels written by women. If the only happy ending

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<sup>26</sup> Owenson's representation of India and Indian culture are exaggerated for fictional purposes and do not reflect the realities of sixteenth-century Indian and Hindu culture.

for women is marriage, then this is tantamount to death. Luxima dies for Hilarion, taking a blade meant for him. Marriage sacrifices a woman to a man and Luxima sacrifices herself for Hilarion, so for Owenson in this novel, there does not seem to be a difference between marriage and death for women.

Inheritance is another patriarchal structure linked to marriage that created difficulties for women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and is also a central concern for Roche and Owenson. In *Clermont*, female characters suffer at the hands of men who wish to claim their fortune. Monsieur D'Alembert murders the Countess de Merville for her fortune, and when he discovers that Madeline is wealthy, he attempts to murder his current wife to marry Madeline. Because women do not have any control over their property and wealth, they are left vulnerable to these real terrors. Monsieur D'Alembert kidnaps Madeline in order to seize her fortune. Trying to escape the villain, Madeline is without male protection in the form of a father, brother or husband. Unprotected women are portrayed as vulnerable targets for devious men to reinforce the concept that only men of virtue, but men nonetheless, can protect women. Roche highlights how patriarchy makes women into victims and if women are to escape from the terror of patriarchy, they must know how it operates. These scenarios may well have offered women readers some insight into the systems in which they themselves were trapped and into which they had possibly been coerced.

Owenson also highlights the problems of primogeniture for women in *The Wild Irish Girl*. Primogeniture is defined as:

the "common law doctrine" (Erikson 8) that limits the rights of the woman to possession, determining that all of the father's property is bequeathed to the firstborn son.

(Anolik 2003, p.32)

As previously mentioned, Horatio and Glorvina's marriage is idealistic because even in marriage Glorvina has no claims to the lands of Inismore. Anne Owens Weekes states that:

prior to the conquest and plantations Irish women had enjoyed considerably more economic independence and security than had English women, they lost these rights during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Before the conquest, for example, the property Irish women brought into marriage remained their own; a husband could not dispose of this property, as an English husband could, nor could he make unfavourable contracts with others that would affect its use without his wife's permission. If the marriage dissolved, the property reverted to the original owners. Again,



unlike English husbands, Irish husbands were not granted sole responsibility for their wives; the women's families retained partial responsibility, and husbands had to answer to these families in cases of mistreatment. Indeed, the wife of an Irish Chieftain had some small political independence, being "entitled to certain rents and taxes from her husband's subjects, sometimes called 'lady's rent,' or 'little rent'".

(Weekes 1990, pp.12-13)

If Glorvina and Horatio had married under old Irish law, Glorvina would have been able to take ownership of her lands. Earlier in the novel Owenson describes a pseudo-Celtic marriage scene to highlight this alternate model of law which would benefit women.

Horatio and Glorvina exchange flowers, myrtle and rose, and both drink from the same flower. Horatio tentatively asks Glorvina to marry him: "'Am I to pledge to you?'"

(Owenson 1999, p.141). Fr. John, who arrives on the scene, later claims that Glorvina and Horatio look like a druid and druidess, perhaps stating the authority Glorvina and Horatio have to marry each other and emphasizing the Celtic nature of this marriage:

"So, I perceive you have both been sacrificing to *Beal*; and, like the priests and priestesses of this country in former times, are adorned with the flowers of the season. For you must know Mr. Mortimer, *we* had our Druidesses as well as our Druids; and both, like the ministers of Grecian mythology, were crowned with flowers at the time of sacrifice".

(Owenson 1999, p.143)

Owenson repeatedly embellishes her research to imagine alternate spaces for women by drawing upon an exotic, non-Western, culture. Fr. John refers to druids and druidesses to suggest men and women held similar power and status within an alternate religious organization. Owenson draws upon Irish antiquarianism to draw comparisons between old Celtic law and current English law regarding women and inheritance, indicating that the old Celtic system was fairer and that a model of marriage exists that does not exploit the female partner.<sup>27</sup> Under the old Irish system the idealised marriage could be made real. Owenson could also be hinting at the possibility of reinstating old Irish law over English law, for the benefit of women. It seems important to Owenson to attempt to imagine new more equal spaces for women, as Female Gothic novels highlight, women were not happy with their status in early-nineteenth-century Europe.

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<sup>27</sup> Brehon Law did contain an element of "protection" regarding women and it benefited the woman's family more than the woman herself. However, in comparison with English common law, Brehon law did afford women more rights.

Owenson also considers the problems of female inheritance in *The Missionary*. She makes imaginative use of her research again, this time on inheritance laws for women in India. Luxima's parents died as did her husband so "[t]he riches of her opulent family, according to the laws of Menu, centre in herself" (Owenson 2002, p.97). In a footnote to this passage, Julia M. Wright notes that Owenson altered her source as:

According to the laws of Menu ... a woman could only inherit if her sonless father "appointed" her to bear a son for him; the grandson would then inherit the wealth, and responsibilities, that would otherwise have fallen to sons ... Luxima, as a vestal (and so under a vow of chastity), could clearly not fulfil such a commitment and thus could not ... play a role in the inheritance of her family's property.

(Wright 2002, p.268)

Perhaps Owenson is showing practical ways of changing the system of patriarchy to benefit women. In this way, Owenson's work builds upon Roche's from highlighting the problems of patriarchy for women to actively searching for alternative societal models to fix these problems.

Female Gothic writers also use the conventions of the Gothic to portray domestic violence. In the eighteenth century, redefinitions of the home and woman's place in it emerged in books such as Thomas Gisborne's *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (1796), which introduced the concept of separate spheres for men and women. A woman's sphere of influence was seen to be the domestic and within the home she was supposedly safe from the evils of the world. Women were imprisoned not just within their homes but within definitions of female behaviour, hence the many images of imprisonment in Female Gothic novels. Dr. John Gregory wrote *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters* in 1774, which defined innocence as a key quality of womanhood. From these works the "standard of female virtue became increasingly "angelic" in the course of the eighteenth century" and "constraints on virtuous female behaviours in novels increased as well" (Ellis 1989, p.17). Thus the virtuous angelic woman and her ability to navigate the world within behavioural constraints became the subject of Female Gothic fiction. Roche applies this focus in *The Children of the Abbey*, as Amanda's sexual innocence is threatened not only by Colonel Belgrave, but also by her scheming relatives. Lady Euphrasia and her mother make it appear as though Amanda has lost her virtue, therefore removing her from the marriage market. This "set up" finds Amanda

unsupervised in her bedroom with Colonel Belgrave which results in her eviction from the house she is staying in. Her reputation thus tarnished, her love, Lord Mortimer, refuses to have anything to do with her. The only commodity, besides her dowry, that a woman brought to a marriage was her purity and without it she was considered unmarried and thus potentially without a means of survival. Luxima's virtue is also a commodity in *The Missionary*. Her religious status depends upon her purity and when she becomes one of the "chancalas" she becomes an outcast like Amanda:

The few Hindus who belonged to the caravan shrank in horror from the unfortunate *Chancalas*, thus so closely associated with a *frangui*, or impure.

(Owenson 2002, p.221)

Luxima depends upon her religion and grandfather for her financial security and when her purity is tainted by Hilarion's touch, she is excommunicated and disowned by her grandfather. Owenson also portrays a concern for women and the constraints they face being confined within a patriarchal ideology of female purity. Amanda's and Luxima's difficulties come from restrictions upon female behaviour and Owenson's and Roche's portrayal of these difficulties highlight the suffering of women who have acted outside those restrictions, which also leave women vulnerable to schemers. The gender inequality of such restrictions is also emphasized, for example, in *The Children of the Abbey*. While Amanda's good reputation is ruined by Colonel Belgrave's behaviour, his remains intact. This registers Owenson's and Roche's opposition to and protest against an unfair societal model that persecutes women.

### **The Absent Mother**

The mother figure is most often the focus of familial violence in Female Gothic fiction. Women writer's struggles with the oppressive patriarchal systems of coverture and primogeniture are represented by the Female Gothic motif of the absent mother.

According to Ruth Bienstock Anolik:

Although all gothic women are threatened, no woman is in greater peril in the world of the gothic as the mother. The typical gothic mother is absent: dead, imprisoned or somehow abjected ...

(Anolik 2003,  
p.25)

In Owenson and Roche's novels, the heroines' mothers are absent. Luxima, Glorvina, Amanda and Madeline are all without mothers, raised by their father, or grandfather in the case of Luxima. Malvina, Amanda's mother, died giving birth to her and Geraldine, Madeline's mother, died of heartbreak after her own sister Eleanor passed away. One might suggest that this reflects the high maternal mortality rates of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but only Amanda's mother is identified as dying in childbirth. While Madeline's mother died from grief, the deaths of Owenson's heroine's mothers are unexplained. Neither Luxima nor Glorvina overtly mourn or express grief over the loss of their mothers suggesting that they died when these heroines were children. One could surmise that they died in childbirth.

However, the absence of the maternal in these novels is profound. The absence emerges as a spectral presence in the text as the reader questions what happened to the heroine's mother. Diana Wallace argues that ghost stories of the Female Gothic "explore how a patriarchal culture represses/ buries images of the maternal" (Smith and Wallace 2004, p.4), but Anolik develops this point to say that mothers are erased from Gothic fiction as a literalized metaphor:

to reveal the horror implicit in two legal principles that governed the lives of women in England through the middle of the nineteenth century: coverture and primogeniture.

(Anolik 2003, p.26)

As I have already argued, Owenson and Roche were critics of these patriarchal practices and both address the problem of the buried maternal figure to further emphasise this. The image of buried maternity is represented in *The Children of the Abbey* as Amanda visits her mother's grave:

as she proceeded to the grave of Lady Malvina ... it was overgrown with grass, and the flag, which bore her name, green from time and damp.

(Roche 2005, p.36)

Not only has the physical mother been buried here, her grave has been neglected for a long time. Nature has begun to reclaim the burial plot as it is overgrown with grass and moss, signifying how mothers are viewed by patriarchy: as creatures more associated with the natural and therefore exempt from the cultural and political world. The natural world is reclaiming the mother because she has fulfilled her role by producing a child and is no longer required. However, Roche undermines Malvina's buried and repressed status

by imbuing her with a spectral presence through portraiture and genetics. It is Amanda's physical similarity to Malvina's portrait that urges Lady Dunreath to reveal Amanda's true inheritance. By linking Amanda's mother to her family's inheritance, Roche is highlighting the unfair systems of primogeniture and coverture and their effect upon women.

Roche also attempts to undermine primogeniture by granting Lady Dunreath the power to decide where her husband's wealth goes. If she continues to conceal the true will, her daughter's husband inherits the money; if she gives the will to Amanda, Amanda's brother will inherit the family fortune. Lady Dunreath interrupts the transmission of wealth from one man to another by concealing this will and thus interrupts the process of primogeniture. B.A. Holderness suggests that the wealthy widow:

reached the height of [her] social influence and enjoyed [her] greatest rights out of coverture, as the common law expressed it, especially in widowhood.

(Holderness 1984, p.427)

Lady Dunreath is at the same time a powerful and vulnerable figure. In Roche's two novels the wealthy widow is always vulnerable to her son in law. Her imprisonment echoes how:

by the nineteenth century widowhood had become almost invisible. Widows, being outside the conventional orbit of male despotism, fell virtually into a status-less void.

(Holderness 1984, p.424)

Lady Dunreath, however, is not outside the reach of male despotism as it is her son-in-law who imprisons her, but her invisibility in the public world and even within Dunreath Abbey (she is confined to one wing of the abbey) reflects how she is without status.

Similarly, in *Clermont*, the figure of the rich widow, the Countess de Merville, must be erased to ensure primogeniture. Being a rich widow was the only way women could gain any kind of independence and this figure, who undermines patriarchal control of money, must be eliminated.<sup>28</sup> Roche exposes the dangers inherent in being a wealthy widow as the Countess is murdered by her son-in-law for her fortune. The Countess was already a doubly-damned gothic figure as she was a mother, an adopted mother to

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<sup>28</sup> Maria Edgeworth acknowledges the independence of the wealthy widow in *Castle Rackrent* as all the Rackrent wives outlive their husbands when they leave Rackrent Castle; they are wealthier than when they entered it. For more on this see Anolik 2003, p.37.

Madeline and widow. All mothers in this novel are erased: Madeline's great-grandmother retires to a convent and is never heard from again; Madeline Senior writes a letter to her son from her deathbed and is also never heard from again; and Madeline's mother dies of grief. Clermont is also complicit in the repression of the maternal as he refuses to speak to Madeline about her mother and views her similarity to Geraldine as "a fatal one" (Roche 2006, p.27). He says her resemblance to Geraldine "often embitters the pleasure I take in gazing on her; the eyes, the voice, the smile!" (Roche 2006, p.27), and, in an attempt to erase further the maternal, he sends his daughter to live with the Countess. Clermont is haunted by the maternal through his daughter. Roche seems to indicate that no matter how hard male characters try, the maternal cannot be entirely repressed or controlled; patriarchy cannot eliminate matriarchy.

In Owenson's novels, the maternal absence is even more profound. Silence surrounds the heroine's mother as Glorvina's mother is only referenced once in naming her daughter and Luxima's mother is not even mentioned as an independent person; Owenson writes that Luxima's *parents* died while she was young. Anolik once again provides a theory as to this profound maternal absence:

As the figure of the imprisoned or murdered wife literalizes the experience of the wife under coverture, so does the figure of the absent mother literalize and thereby demystify the situation of the mother within the system of primogeniture. Under primogeniture the mother is indeed legally absent, a predicament that is quite horrifying.

(Anolik 2003, p.33)

Under this system the child becomes the property of the father, thereby erasing the need for a maternal figure. The profound absence of the maternal in Owenson's novels reflects the fact that mothers are only necessary for the production of children and afterwards they are no longer required.

The Female Gothic characteristics addressed in this chapter all show women's frustrations with the patriarchal system that governs them. Women writers of this time do not need to imagine gothic horrors, as everyday life provided enough inspiration. Many characteristics of Owenson's and Roche's work are similar to other Female Gothic novels, including their focus upon women's issues. Even in their deviations from some Female Gothic characteristics, Owenson and Roche reinforce the main concerns behind this genre: women suffer gothic horror every day under patriarchy. While men have to

imagine supernatural beings that are capable of the most evil acts to feel the thrill of terror, women live the real terror of the oppression of the patriarchal monster who threatens them daily.

## Chapter Three: The Irish Gothic Heroine

The Irish heroine is virtually absent in Irish Gothic works. While Stoker's Mina Harker and Maturin's Imalee are gothic heroines written by Irishmen, the novels do not focus on the heroine. Owenson's and Roche's heroines are the focus of their novels as Roche's works are written from the heroine's perspective and Owenson's novels are structured around the introduction of the gothic heroine into the male protagonist's life. In their portrayals of gothic heroines, Owenson and Roche are able to draw upon their own experiences as women in colonial Ireland, and I would suggest that this position influences their gothic heroines. In this chapter I will focus on the heroine's character in Owenson's and Roche's work, and how the novelists draw upon the cult of sensibility associated with the Female Gothic and the antiquarianism found in Irish Gothic texts. However, before analysing the portrayal of these heroines, I must address the concept of sensibility.

### The Cult of Sensibility

Sensibility, like the sublime, is a broad topic which is embedded with many interrelated concepts in the areas of science, literature and society:

sensibility in its various uses seems to have taken over the meaning of delicacy, further defining them through the contemporary physiology of the nervous system.

(Van Sant 2004, p.3)

Sensibility is associated with the body, the physical response, and sentiment with the mind, the refinement of thought (Van Sant 2004, p.4). Janet Todd defines the difference between a sentiment and sensibility. A sentiment is:

a moral reflection, a rational opinion usually about the rights and wrongs of human conduct, or, a thought, often an elevated one, influenced by emotion, a combining of heart with head or an emotional impulse leading to an opinion or principle.

(Todd 1986, p.7)

Sensibility is:

the key term of the period ... it came to denote the faculty of feeling, the capacity for extremely refined emotion and a quickness to display compassion for suffering, or, an innate sensitiveness or susceptibility revealing itself in a variety of spontaneous activities such as crying, swooning and kneeling.

(Todd 1986, p.7)



These definitions of a person of sentiment or displaying sensibility were absorbed into the fiction and culture of the eighteenth century, but were complicated by inconsistencies of usage of the terms (Van Sant 2004, p.8).

The literature of sensibility was dominated by women who both read and wrote it (Barker-Benfield 1992, p.xvii). Todd provides an explanation of the differences between the novel of sentiment and the novel of sensibility:

the novel of sentiment of the 1740s and 1750s praises a generous heart and often delays the narrative to philosophize about benevolence; the novel of sensibility, increasingly written from the 1760s onwards, differs slightly in emphasis since it honours above all the capacity for refined feeling. It stops the story to display this feeling in the characters and elicit in the reader its physical manifestations of tears and trembling. Such display is justified by the belief that a heightened sense of one's virtue through pity for another is morally improving.

(Todd 1986, p.8)

Initially the novel of sentiment intended to represent the ideal response to life's experiences and later the writers of the novel of sensibility attempted to provoke an emotional response in the reader. The literature of sensibility "demands an emotional, even physical response" (Todd 1986, p.2) and this influenced popular culture from the 1740s to the 1770s to form the cult of sensibility. G.J. Barker-Benfield argues that the cult of sensibility was a:

central focus of eighteenth-century Britain ... [and was] ... coterminous with others; a cult of feeling, a cult of melancholy, a cult of distress, a cult of refined emotionalism, a cult of benevolence ... .

(Barker-Benfield 1992, p.xix)

The cult of sensibility was "devoted to tear-demanding exhibitions of pathos and unqualified virtue" (Todd 1986, p.8), which is exactly what the literature of sensibility portrayed. However, the idea of sensibility started losing ground towards the end of the eighteenth century and came to suggest "debased and affected feeling, an indulgence in and display of emotions for its own sake beyond the stimulus and beyond propriety" (Todd 1986, p.8). Sensibility came to be known as an affectation, a false display of shallow emotion that was frowned upon. As sensibility fell out of fashion, it became gendered as feminine, associated with weakness and fragility. Sensibility directly affected the way women were portrayed in novels that drew upon the literature and cult of sensibility.

The standard model for the gothic heroine, as she appears in the Radcliffian gothic novel, is the virtuous heroine fleeing from a depraved man. This model also draws

on aspects of the cult of sensibility. While sensibility was a fashionable trend in the eighteenth century:

for Radcliffe, sensibility was not a fashion accessory. On the contrary, it was an important fictional instrument, one that expanded the scope of her writing.

(Miles 1995, p.152)

Roche did not create the sensibility heroine but drew upon current fiction and social fashions to develop a heroine who had “extreme sensibilities, [an] ardent imagination and show[s] symptoms of genius” (Stoler 1972, p.78). Owenson’s and Roche’s heroines are similar to Radcliffe’s sensibility heroine. Amanda, Madeline, Glorvina and Luxima are paragons of virtue who are being pursued by a threatening man.

However, Owenson and Roche create heroines whose sensitivities are stimulated by more significant social problems. Usually a sensitive individual would become emotional over the slightest issue:

Ladies whose hearts were wrung by the beauty of a snowdrop or the indisposition of a pet bird were unmoved by social injustices, by the iniquitous law which hanged children for theft, or by the squalid horror of the prison system.

(McCarthy 1994, p.283)

Unlike the typical sensibility heroine, Owenson’s and Roche’s heroines are aware of social injustice, and their sensitivity is focused upon societal problems. For example, Amanda Fitzalan wishes to aid the poor of Ireland:

Oh! How rapturous! Thought Amanda – the idea of Lord Mortimer’s feeling recurring to her mind – to change such scenes [of suffering peasants in wretched hovel shelters]; to see the clay-built hovel vanish, and a dwelling of neatness and convenience rise in its stead; to wander, continued she, with him whose soul is fraught with sensibility, and view the projects of benevolence realized by the hand of charity; see the faded cheek of misery regain the glow of health, “The desert blossom as the rose,” and content and cheerfulness sport beneath its shades.

(Roche 2005, p.172)

Amanda is aware of the poverty of Irish peasants and she wishes to better their situation. Her beloved, Lord Mortimer, is also a sensitive individual. For Roche sensibility can be rewritten or redirected to do something beneficial for those in need, such as the poor Gaelic-Irish people. According to Robert Miles:

Sensibility was seen as a fashionable affectation which masked establishment inaction: it invited the rich to purge their moral qualms with a few benevolent tears rather than to attack inequality systematically.

(Miles 1995, p.153)

Amanda is not purging her moral qualms with a few benevolent tears, as Miles suggests; she is excited and enthusiastic about assisting the poor of Ireland. Instead of being saddened at the plight of the Gaelic-Irish, Amanda is overjoyed at the thought of being able to assist the poor and her emotions are described as “rapturous”, her daydream an “ecstatic reverie” (Roche 2005, p.172). Amanda does not affect sympathy for these people, but looks forward to the day when she can help them. This is another departure in Roche’s presentation of the sensibility heroine. Because Amanda knows she may one day help the poor, she does not need to affect emotion for them now. Her plan is to build solid homes for the Irish to raise their standard of living. To further prove that her sensibility is not contrived, Amanda contemplates her future charity in private; she does not state aloud her intentions to anyone or affect a display of tears. Roche thus highlights the sincerity of Amanda’s wishes and the social awareness her sensibility is focused on.

Roche’s heroines, however, also possess “physical hardiness” (Stoler 1972, p.83) and this is another aspect of the Radcliffean sensibility heroine. She:

must register her reactions for the reader by weeping and fainting, but she must possess a courageous curiosity that impels her to delve into the mysterious and a certain toughness that enables her to weather each storm and thus lengthen the suspense as mysteries and dangers accumulate.

(Stoler 1972, p.83)

Roche’s heroines show this “certain toughness”; for example, after her father’s death, Amanda moves to Scotland where she finds employment. She endures harsh conditions, sleeping on “a half-decayed bedstead, without curtains and covered with a blue-stuff quilt”; her food consists of “a few heads of kail, some oaten bread,” which Amanda can barely bring herself to eat (Roche 2005, p.435- 436). Amanda works six days a week and is expected to rise “before six in summer, and seven in winter” (Roche 2005, p.437), and she must suffer Mrs. Macpherson’s incessant inquiries into her painful past. Amanda also shows surprising courage as she explores the recesses of Dunreath Abbey. She discovers an entrance into the abandoned chapel that houses a picture of her mother and rather than fear what dangers might be present in the chapel, she breaks into the ruin:

A sudden pleasure pervaded her heart at the idea of being able to enter it, and examine the picture she had so long wished to behold.

(Roche 2005, pp.463-464)

Amanda does not hesitate to enter a building which would hold gothic terrors for the heroine. She trembles, but not in fear, in anticipation, excitement. “She felt impressed with reverential awe” (Roche 2005, p.464) in the chapel and even returns on a number of occasions. Amanda also undertakes a perilous journey by herself to restore her family’s fortune. While travelling alone she is vulnerable but survives a night without shelter (even though she is eventually rescued by Sir Charles Bingham) and, as Stoler says, “she weathers each storm” to the end of the novel. This portrayal of a sensibility heroine who possesses physical hardiness and toughness serves a double function. Stoler suggests that this extends the mysteries and terrors of the novel over three volumes, but it also removes connotations of weakness associated with the feminine. Amanda Fitzalan survives without male assistance through most of this novel. She walks through a storm to be with her father when he is deathly ill and has the courage to undertake a perilous journey from Scotland to London without protection.

Similarly, Madeline Clermont also shows typical aspects of sensibility as she delights in the glory of nature and has an ardent imagination:

The liveliness of her fancy was equal to the strength of her understanding, and often raised a visionary paradise around her... .

(Roche 2006, p.5)

She also expresses symptoms of genius:

She possessed ... an exquisite taste for drawing and music, and accompanied the soft melody of her lute with a voice which, though not strong, was inexpressibly sweet.

(Roche 2006, p.5)

Like Radcliffe’s sensibility heroine, Madeline possesses physical toughness and courage. After the Countess’s death, Madeline wishes to return home to her father but remains in the chateau as the Countess’s daughter begs her to. Even when Madeline’s life is threatened by an intruder in the castle, she remains a while longer. Madeline then survives a perilous journey home and a kidnapping. While she is imprisoned in Paris, Madeline does not faint, sigh or burst into tears over her imprisonment; instead, she attempts to discover an escape route for herself and her father:

Madeline tried many doors, but found them fastened. She resolved, however, not to return without attempting all, and was just laying her hand upon another lock, when a dreadful groan from the bottom of the passage pierced her ear, and penetrated to her heart. She hesitated whether she

should advance or retreat; but at length humanity triumphed over fear, and she determined to go on, and try if she could be of any service to the person from whom the groan proceeded.

(Roche 2006, pp.340-341)

Her attempts to find an escape route instead of succumbing to her imprisonment are unlike so many other female victims in gothic fiction. She is terrified by the sounds she hears but her “humanity triumphed over fear, and she determined to go on” (Roche 2006, pp.340-341). This is a striking moment in a Female Gothic text as the sensibility heroine overcomes her fear and fragility, and her concern for another person inspires her to rise above the restrictive mode of behaviour, sensibility, to do something that will improve another’s situation. Roche seems to be implying that humanity, displaying a deeper more genuine concern for other people, is the answer to reforming the sensibility mode of behaviour. Madeline’s attempt to assist a stranger portrays a shift in her sensitivity towards the suffering of others. This shift could be described as humanity. Like Amanda, Madeline attempts to assist strangers in distress instead of lamenting the cause in a staged performance of sensibility. These characters present a genuine concern for others and as such, Roche may be altering the stimulus of sensibility towards more relevant social concerns. A typical sensibility heroine would succumb to her emotions, but Madeline, as Roche’s heroine, must do something to remedy her situation. Madeline also possesses the courage to stand up to D’Alembert and his threats. She refuses to acquiesce to his demands, even in the face of death:

“Yes; accept my offers, and all that the most duteous, the most tender son could do for a father, I will do for your’s.”

“And think you (said Madeline), my father would thank me for freedom and security, if purchased by dishonour? No, believe me he would not; I know his soul too well – know that death, in its most frightful form, would not be half so dreadful to him as the knowledge of his daughter’s infamy ...

“Your resolution is then fixed,” said D’Alembert.

“It is,” replied Madeline in a firm voice.

(Roche 2006, pp.346-347)

She stands up to an oppressive male figure, a man who would use terror to force her into marriage. She is firm in her rejection of D’Alembert, even though it may cause her death and the death of her father. Madeline emphasises her words with a “firm voice”. She has suffered gothic terrors but remains strong to the end of the novel; her emotions do not

consume her. Madeline is strong enough to survive many gothic horrors, death threats and kidnapping to prolong the story but, like Amanda, any weakness and fragility associated with sensibility is undermined. In this manner, the Rochean heroine is identical to the Radcliffean heroine as she is defined by John Andrew Stoler. This is further evidence that Roche's novels can be considered as part of the Female Gothic genre. However, Roche's refocusing of the heroine's sensibility towards a more genuine humanity suggests Roche may not be happy with the sensibility heroine as she is portrayed in gothic novels and she wishes to portray women as they really are, not shallow, one-dimensional women but as impassioned, genuine and complex heroines.

Luxima and Glorvina can also be described as sensibility heroines. They are portrayed as fainting, weeping, sighing women, but these displays of pathos are appropriate for the situation. For example, Glorvina is in a state of sensibility as she is being forced to marry Mortimer Senior while her father is close to death. When Horatio enters she is overcome:

A convulsive shriek burst from the lips of Glorvina. She raised her eyes to heaven, then fixed them on her unfortunate lover, and dropped lifeless into his arms – a pause of indescribable emotions succeeded.

(Owenson 1999, p.239)

This is a highly emotional time for Glorvina as she is about to lose her father, her only family, and be forced into marriage. While Glorvina's display might be considered an affectation of sensibility, her reaction to this situation is apt; Owenson's narrative exaggerates the drama of the scene to convey the confusion of complex emotions Glorvina is feeling. Similarly, in *The Missionary*, Luxima experiences moments of heightened sensibility but in the circumstances, the heroine's display is acceptable. For example, when Luxima is excommunicated her reaction is understandable:

She lay lifeless on the earth, where she had fallen during the conclusion of the ceremony of her excommunication, with a shriek so loud and piercing, that the horrid crash of sounds, which at that moment filled the Pagoda, could alone have drowned her shrill and plaintive voice ... .

(Owenson 2002, p.189)

Luxima is not only expelled from her religious order, she is also disowned by her grandfather and expelled from her caste, thus condemned to a life of poverty and

suffering. Once again Owenson heightens the drama of this scene to communicate Luxima's suffering as vividly as possible.

Similar to the way Roche depicts her heroines, Owenson incorporates positive attributes of sensibility when describing Glorvina. While she is presented as a typical sensibility heroine, crying for the death of a little bird, she is not blind to the sufferings of others. She is "a great *physicianer* to boot; curing all the sick and maimed for twenty miles round" (Owenson 1999, p.41). Glorvina also nurses Horatio after his fall. Like the Rochean heroine, Glorvina is called to action when her sensibility is engaged. She must do something to improve the position of the suffering.

"Owenson uses the conventions of literary sensibility to add emotional force to her political points" (Wright 2002, p.11). This "emotional force" is present in *The Missionary* through Luxima's "sentimental attraction and intelligence" (Wright 2002, p.36) and in *The Wild Irish Girl* through Glorvina's suffering. Luxima is figured in the novel as being emblematic of the Indian nation and Hindu culture, through her dress, religion and the religious markers she wears such as the tellertum and dsandam. Owenson focuses on Luxima's suffering to highlight the suffering of Luxima's nation. She includes a sentimental attraction and intelligence in her portrayal of Luxima to gain the reader's admiration and sympathy; then through the heroine's suffering the reader will empathize with Luxima and what she represents. Luxima's final words summarise what Owenson is trying to communicate through the heroine:

"When I am no more, thou shalt preach, not to the Brahims only, but to the Christians, that the sword of destruction, which has this day raised between the followers of thy faith and of mine, may be forever sheathed! Thou wilt appear among them as a spirit of peace, teaching mercy, and inspiring love; thou wilt soothe away, by acts of tenderness, and words of kindness, the stubborn prejudice which separates the mild and patient Hindu from his species; and thou wilt check the Christian's zeal...But should thy eloquence and thy example fail, tell them my story! Tell them how I have suffered, and how even thou hast failed:... and now I *die* as Brahim women *die*, a *Hindu* in my feelings and my faith—dying for him I loved, and believing as my fathers have believed".

(Owenson 2002, p.257)

Luxima is aware of her own ability to inspire sensibility in others. She urges Hilarion to tell her story to encourage people to be tolerant of other religions. Her death is extremely poignant as she says that she dies because she loved Hilarion but refused to give up her

beliefs. Luxima remains true to her character and her strength here could evoke emotion in the reader as it does in Hilarion. Her final words urge peace and tolerance between Hindus and Christians and encourage mutual respect between Indians and Europeans.

Owenson also attempts to inspire nationalist sympathy through Glorvina. Like Luxima, Glorvina is an amiable and intelligent heroine emblematic of her people. Her family has fallen into poverty as most of their ancestral lands were usurped by English colonists, and this reflects the conditions of most Gaelic-Irish people at this time. The Prince of Inismore says:

“But the splendid dwelling of princely grandeur, the awful asylum of monastic piety, are just mouldering into oblivion with the memory of those they once sheltered. The sons of little men triumph over those whose arm was strong in war, and whose voice breathed no impotent command; and the descendant of the mighty chieftain has nothing left to distinguish him from the son of the peasant, but the decaying ruins of his ancestor’s castle; while the blasts of a few storms, and the pressure of a few years, shall even of them leave scarce a wreck to tell the traveller the mournful tale of fallen greatness”.

(Owenson 1999, pp.63-64)

Owenson attempts to evoke sympathy in the reader for the Gaelic-Irish through this emotive passage. The Gaelic-Irish are “mouldering into oblivion” like the castle of Inismore. A once great people will become mere legend, like the Milesians Glorvina often mentions. Nationalist sympathies are evoked through the image of Glorvina, the last of a native Irish royalty, living in ruin and poverty. Owenson was influenced by the Della Cruscan “school of poetry in which sensibility was often directed towards radical political aims” (Wright 2002, p.30). Owenson’s political agenda was Irish nationalism, and highlighting the problems faced by the Gaelic-Irish in the English colonial regime.

Wright states that:

an individual’s sympathy can be strengthened and refined by experiencing sympathy for others in life and literature. [This] offers the lever by which literature can achieve political effect.

(Wright 2002, p.31)

Horatio experiences this refinement of sensibility by feeling sympathy for Glorvina and her father. He regrets that his ancestor took lands from the Princes of Inismore:

But still I wish *my* family had never possessed an acre of ground in this country, or possessed it on other terms, I always knew the estate fell into our family in the civil wars of Cromwell, and in the world’s language, was the well-earned meed of my progenitor’s valour.

(Owenson 1999, p.42)



When he sees the effects of this colonial domination upon the Gaelic-Irish and Glorvina he wishes the situation were different. This shows why Owenson included aspects of sensibility in her heroines as she could turn the “negative impact of colonialism to national advantage” (Wright 2002, p.33) and effect political change for colonised people. If Horatio’s sensibility can be refined, so can that of the reader.

### **The Supernatural and the Irish Gothic Heroine**

Owenson draws upon Irish folklore and the supernatural as well as the cult of sensibility in her portrayals of Glorvina and Luxima. While the supernatural is also present in other Female Gothic texts, its function is quite different in Owenson’s novels. As we have already seen, the supernatural elements in most Female Gothic texts are a product of the heroine’s imagination. In Owenson’s texts, the supernatural forms part of the heroine’s character and how other characters, usually the hero, perceive her. In *The Missionary* and *The Wild Irish Girl*, Luxima and Glorvina are often compared to both benign and malignant supernatural beings. It is important to note that in Irish folklore the natural is representative of the supernatural; the trees, the rivers, the stones are all in some sense magical as the gods reside in them. This pantheism is present in Owenson’s depiction of her heroines. Supernatural allusions are associated with the heroine’s affinity for the natural. Owenson’s heroines like to walk outside unaccompanied. Glorvina indulges her “wild” nature running alone:

“... you will see her up with the dawn, running like a doe about the rocks; her fine yellow hair streaming in the wind, for all the world like a mermaid ...”.

(Owenson 1999, p.41)

Glorvina is immediately associated with untamed nature. Her wild untied hair could be read as a release from restrictive civilisation. Horatio’s guide compares Glorvina to a deer and a mermaid, describing her in both natural and magical terms to highlight how she is viewed by the locals. As princess from an ancient Milesian line, she is a figure of awe amongst the locals. Luxima also engages in pantheism, as she worships outside of the temple, at the confluence of three streams. Both Glorvina and Luxima are described in otherworldly terms such as “fairy,” “druidess,” “sylph,” “seraph,” “ethereal” and “enchanted.” This lends the heroines a supernatural quality as part of their association with the natural.

One must note, however, that it is Horatio and Hilarion who are choosing these words. Glorvina and Luxima are represented to the reader via the male gaze. As “Adams” of the Edens of Connemara and Cashmire, they assume the power to identify and name what they discover, and as such they define Glorvina and Luxima as supernatural. One could read Horatio’s and Hilarion’s descriptions of these heroines as supernatural as a way to naturalise their attraction to a foreigner and “Othered” woman. As a beautiful supernatural being, the attraction is acceptable in contrast to attraction to a foreign savage or monster. *The Wild Irish Girl* is predominantly a collection of Horatio’s letters and it is his descriptions, his perceptions of Glorvina that we read. *The Missionary* is written from Hilarion’s point of view and Luxima is related to the reader through his perception of her. Occasionally these heroines are related to the reader with a negative supernatural stereotype. Glorvina and Luxima are described as “idolatresses,” “pagan,” “bewitching,” “witches,” “sirens” and “gorgons” when they are out of favour with their male admirers. According to Gilbert and Gubar:

From a male point of view, women who reject submissive silences of domesticity have been seen as terrible objects – gorgons, Sirens, Scyllas, serpent-Lamias, Mothers of Death or Goddesses of Night.

(Gilbert and Gubar 1984, p.79)

Luxima resists Hilarion’s attempts to convert her and Glorvina is an outspoken woman who speaks at length about everything from Irish culture and Milesian heritage to Ossian and the Scottish. Because Glorvina and Luxima hold power and authority in their respective roles of princess and priestess, western men view them as terrible monsters and witches. It has already been noted that Horatio fears the power Glorvina has over him, and his fears are evident through his descriptions of her as supernatural in negative terms. Witches, sirens and gorgons seduce and destroy men. This gender relationship is the inverse of the Female Gothic plot and would be truly terrifying to a male reader. Like Horatio, Hilarion also fears a woman’s power over him:

“Woman! Fiend! Whatever thou art, who thus by the seeming ways of Heaven leadest me to perdition, leave me! Fly me! Loose they fatal hold on my heart, while yet the guilty passions, which brood there, have made me criminal in thought alone”.

(Owenson 2002, p.174)

Horatio does not have the strength to leave Luxima, but rather than admit this he begs her to leave him. He links women with evil by shouting “Woman! Fiend!” acknowledging her power over him as she has a “fatal hold on his heart”. The negative supernatural names he gives Luxima express his frustrations with her. Hilarion describes her as “bewitching” (Owenson 2002, p.158), suggesting that his spiritual and temporal downfall is actually Luxima’s fault and not his own. He also labels her an “idolatress,” (Owenson 2002, p.100) six times which is not a supernatural identification but reflects his frustration at his inability to control Luxima’s beliefs. This shows that Horatio’s relationship with Luxima is a power struggle for him. He wishes to dominate and control a woman who refuses to change.

However, among Horatio’s and Hilarion’s negative supernatural epithets, there is one applied to both Glorvina and Luxima that can be read as empowering for the female writer:

To mention witches, however, is to be reminded once again of the traditional (patriarchally defined) association between creative women and monsters. In projecting their anger and dis-ease into dreadful figures, creating dark doubles for themselves and their heroines, women writers are both identifying with and revising the self-definitions patriarchal culture has imposed on them...literary women who evoke the female monster in their novels and poems alter her meaning by virtue of their own identification with her ... witch-monster-mad-woman becomes so crucial an avatar of the writer’s own self.

(Gilbert and Gubar 1984, p.79)

Owenson has shown us that the “dark double” of her heroines is created through the male gaze. Owenson revises “the self-definitions patriarchal culture has imposed” on women. The witch figure defies patriarchy as she is often a woman of power without a husband. The witch can be read as a symbol of Female Gothic – criticising and undermining patriarchy and empowering the gothic heroine. Even though Horatio and Hilarion identify the heroines as witches in a negative manner, their use of the term implies recognition of female agency and power. As a witch, Glorvina has the power to return lost land to her family, not only encouraging the elder Mortimer to do so, but his son also. In her role of witch, Luxima has the power to influence an entire nation.

In Luxima, Owenson elevates her heroine from witch to goddess. Luxima’s actions incite a revolt among the Indian natives:

-the hand of fanaticism, impatient for its victim, aimed a dagger at his heart; its point was received in the bosom of the Indian; -she shrieked, -and called upon "Brahma!" –Brahma! Brahma! was re-echoed on every side. A sudden impulse was given to feelings long suppressed: -the timid spirits of the Hindoos rallied to an event which touched their hearts, and roused them from their lethargy of despair: -the sufferings, the oppression they had so long endured, seemed now epitomized before their eyes, in the person of their celebrated and distinguished Prophetess –they believed it was their god who addressed them from her lips ... they fell with fury on the Christians, they rushed upon the cowardly guards of the Inquisition, who let fall their arms, and fled in dismay.

(Owenson 2002, pp.249-250)

Luxima's invocation of Brahma acts like a spell upon the natives who take up her invocation. Owenson then elevates Luxima from a witch into the epitome of their suffering and as an avatar of their god. Luxima is transformed from a priestess to represent an oppressed people and their beliefs. In this passage Luxima transcends all Indian class systems as she is no longer reviled as one of the chancalas, but is accepted as a goddess by the crowd. Luxima's power is immense in this passage, as she frightens the Christians and guards of the Inquisition into dropping their weapons and retreating. Because of the witch-like power Owenson gives to her heroines, they are able to effect change in the novel. Diane Hoeveler states that "the female gothic participates in the paradoxical enterprise of both criminalizing and deifying women" (Hoeveler 1998, p.4). Owenson's witch figure also demonstrates the practice of criminalizing and deifying women. Luxima and Glorvina are criminalized as witches in the eyes of the hero, but this only highlights male fear of female power. Both Glorvina and Luxima are deified figures in their localities. Through her evocation of the witch, Owenson's novels can be seen to be participating in the Female Gothic's paradoxical representation of female characters.

### **The Banshee and the Irish Female Voice**

The association between women, the supernatural, Irish antiquarianism and Gothic fiction written by women echoes Gilbert and Gubar's point that "From a female point of view the monster woman is simply a woman who seeks the power of self-articulation" (Gilbert and Gubar 1984, p.79). Glorvina and Luxima voice concerns over the loss of indigenous culture to the colonial project and women's oppression under patriarchy. The supernatural identities of Glorvina and Luxima grant them the power of self-articulation. The banshee is an Irish supernatural being whose most prominent feature is her cry, her

voice. It is noteworthy that Owenson and Roche include the banshee in their writing, as it is part of Irish folklore. The banshee has counterparts in Europe, but Owenson and Roche use the Irish-derived word for this traditional harbinger of death. The banshee is typically viewed by critics of Irish Gothic as representative of Celtic culture, a personification of the Irish “howl,” a lament for the loss of national culture, and part of the gothic characteristic of unseen voices. I argue that the banshee, like the witch, might also be read as an empowering symbol for both the female characters of Irish Gothic fiction and for the Irish female author.

The banshee has many names and many forms. She is known as *Bean Sí*, *Bean Chaointe* or *Badhbh*. She is often depicted as a young, tall woman with long golden hair, wearing white clothes. She is also represented as a short, old, ugly woman. These various representations of the banshee are characteristic of folklore, where numerous representations of the same being are common. The *bean sí* aspect of the banshee is often linked to the beautiful image of a young woman. This image indicates “the beauty of the being and reminiscent of the beautiful women of the Otherworld” (Lysaght 1986, p.91-92). Descriptions of Glorvina and Luxima echo this depiction. Glorvina is of

a form so almost impalpably delicate, that as it floated on the gaze, it seemed like the incarnation of some pure ethereal spirit, which a sigh too roughly breathed would dissolve into its kindred air; yet to this sylphid elegance of spherical beauty was united all that symmetrical *contour* which constitutes the luxury of human loveliness. This scarcely ‘mortal mixture of earth’s mould,’ was vested in a robe of vestal white, which was enfolded beneath the bosom with a narrow girdle embossed with precious stones.

(Owenson 1999, p.48)

Glorvina here is barely human; she defies gravity as her form floats on the gaze. She is an avatar of a spirit from another world, but at the same time her beauty is truly human as Glorvina epitomizes “the luxury of human beauty.” She wears white, a colour associated with death in Celtic culture, linking her to the banshee who appears in white robes.

Similarly, when Hilarion first meets Luxima he describes an Otherworldly being:

Before the altar, and near the consecrated shrine, appeared a human form, if human it might be called, which stood so bright and so ethereal in its look, that it seemed but a transient incorporation of the brilliant mists of morning; so light and so aspiring in its attitude, that it appeared already ascending from the earth it scarcely touched, to mingle with its kindred air.

(Owenson 2002, p.108)

Luxima is also barely human in Hilarion's description. She is ethereal, composed of the morning mist. Luxima also defies gravity like the banshee, who is thought to have the power of flight as she appears over houses or outside windows. The significance of this is that the representation of the heroine as supernatural attracts the attention of men, but not in a sexual manner. Instead, the heroine holds her hero's attention with a religious and spiritual awe, thereby inspiring respect for her words.

The second aspect of the banshee is an emphasis on her voice. *Bean chaointe*, which means woman who cries, is linked to the Irish tradition of keening women, that is, women hired to mourn for the dead at a funeral. She is represented as the old, squat hag, a dark double for the beautiful aspect of the banshee. In Celtic folklore there is often a doubling or tripling of images for the one being, for example, the triple goddess who is presented as the maiden, the mother and the crone. The banshee can be seen as the crone who is associated with death and death rites. When considering the link between the banshee's voice and the female voice, one must make a distinction between the howl and the keen. The howl is animalistic in nature, it is not musical. The keen is a lament, a female singing voice.<sup>29</sup> However, the howl and keen are just different aspects of the same female voice, similar to the dual images of the banshee. When considering a howl one tends to think of wolves, or in a Gothic sense, werewolves, a savage beast known to kill men or to transform them into monsters. The Gaelic-Irish were once referred to as a lycanthropic race by Giraldus Cambrensis and Edmund Spenser. Cambrensis relates the story of a priest who spoke to the werewolves of Ossory. In the eleventh century, the people of Ossory had two people in the form of the wolf for seven years at a time (Michell and Rockard 2000, p.290). In *A View of the State of Ireland*, Spenser tells of how the Scythians and the Irish "were once a year turned into wolves" (Spenser 1997, p.64). Owenson's heroines do not howl like wolves but they do keen. The association between the banshee and the howl could render her sub-human, but in Owenson's re-appropriation of this figure, the howl is transformed to a lament, just as the withered old hag is recast as a beautiful young maiden. There is also the issue of perception of the banshee's voice. To an outsider the keen can seem like a howl, but to an Irish person this

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<sup>29</sup> Owenson writes an extensive footnote on keening in *The Wild Irish Girl*, pp.182 – 184 as does Maria Edgeworth in *Castle Rackrent*, pp.99-103 demonstrating the importance of the Irish howl/keen to Irish gothic antiquarianism.

is a heartfelt lament for the dead. I suggest these different voices have differing functions in Owenson's novels.

Owenson describes a keener woman in *The Wild Irish Girl*:

An elderly woman, with eyes overflowed with tears, dishevelled hair, and distracted mien, followed the body, uttering many passionate claims in Irish; and the procession was filled up by upwards of three hundred people; the recitative of the female choristers relieved at intervals by the combined howlings of the whole body.

(Owenson 1999, p.182)

There is a potentially frightening loss of individuality for the Irish people in this passage in the creation of a monstrous howling procession. This is suggested through Owenson's use of the word "body". She refers to the body of the procession and to the individual human body being mourned at the funeral. These two bodies are contrasted with each other: one is dead and individual, whereas the other body, the "whole body" is made up of the funeral procession and their "combined howlings." Here one can see evidence of the howl and keen blending into one another. The outsider perceives a howl, but to the natives it is a song, a performance "to celebrate the virtues of the deceased" (Owenson 1999, p.183). Even though the lament is a beautiful singing voice, it is portrayed as a howl which renders the voice uncivilized; this is because it is seen from Horatio's perspective. To the Englishman, this practice is unusual and even Father John comments on how strange this must seem to a foreigner: "you *should* see an Irish Roman Catholic funeral; to a protestant and a stranger it must be a spectacle of some interest" (Owenson 1999, p.183). Owenson demonstrates how a foreigner might interpret Irish customs as savage. Horatio is not familiar with ancient Irish custom, but information from Glorvina and the priest alter the Englishman's perceptions of the funeral procession. Owenson may be suggesting that if the English had better knowledge of Irish folklore and Catholic practice, prejudices about Irish savagery and Catholic-Irish superstition would disappear.

The power of the female voice is noted in Glorvina's name which translates from the Irish, *glór bhinn*, as "sweet voice" (Owenson 1999, p.75 fn.1). Her voice is so enchanting Horatio will climb a dangerous parapet to find its source. Her voice is described as: "the low wild tremulous voice, which sweetly sighed its soul of melody o'er the harp's responsive chords" (Owenson 1999, p.52). Horatio describes her voice as a "witching strain," suggesting that he is under her spell. Glorvina is also likened to a

mermaid, the siren of the seas. In an Irish Gothic context, the mermaid is a supernatural being who, like the banshee, is not only known for her distinctive voice, but is also often reported to be combing her long hair. The mermaid figure can be dangerous to men as her voice lures men into the water to drown, and there is a parallel made between the mermaid's victims and Horatio. He is doubly lured by Glorvina's voice and sexuality and he immerses himself in her culture. Although he does not drown he joins Glorvina in her world and is re-born as a better man. Owenson re-values the mermaid myth by representing Horatio's seduction by Glorvina as a beneficial act that gives purpose to his life. Even though Horatio leaves Inismore for a time, Glorvina's banshee voice haunts him:

A thousand times I am awakened from an heavy unrefreshing sleep by the fancied sound of her harp and voice. There was on old Irish air she used to sing like an angel, and in the idiom of her national music sighed out certain passages with an heart-breaking thrill, that used to rend my very soul! Well this song I cannot send from my memory; it breathes around me, it dies upon my ear, and in the weakness of emotion I weep – weep like a child.

(Owenson 1999, p.230)

Glorvina's voice haunts Horatio as "the idiom of her national music sighed out."

Owenson highlights not any female voice, but a distinctly Irish female voice whose association with Irish nationalist sensibility is emphasised by the inclusion of a harp; a symbol of antiquarian nationalism.<sup>30</sup> Horatio experiences a moment of sensibility as her national music rends his very soul and he cries like a child. His feelings for Glorvina and all she represents result in Horatio attempting to make restitution to Glorvina on behalf of his family. Horatio's haunting by Glorvina can be read as politically motivated as her suffering forces Horatio to make restitution to her and her family on behalf of his ancestors. In this manner, Glorvina-as-Ireland haunts the English colonial psyche (represented by Horatio) to encourage a change in English rule in Ireland. Glorvina as

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<sup>30</sup> For more on antiquarian nationalism see Wright, J. (2005) "'Son's of Song': Irish Literature in the Age of Nationalism," in Coordinating Committee for a Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages (ed.) *Romantic Poetry*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company Pp.333-355. Schroeder states that Owenson quotes "Dow's *Dissertation on the Origin of Despotism in Indostan* ... [and] Owenson also notes Buddhism's opposition to violence against women ... The same regard for women's physical safety was often imputed in pre-colonial Ireland" (Schroeder 2002, p.268 fn.41). Owenson clearly researched the status of women in pre-colonial civilizations.



banshee is the voice of the repressed Gaelic-Irish, keening for their loss of status and haunting the Englishman.

Glorvina's bewitching voice links her to the third and most powerful aspect of the banshee, the *Badhbh*. She is one of the triumvirate warrior goddesses of Celtic folklore who is often depicted in the shape of a bird, especially a crow. The *badhbh* is the hag raven goddess, whose name is also used as a derogatory term meaning witch as *Gaeilge*. This links back to Horatio's description of Glorvina's voice as witch-like and the positive appropriation of the witch figure by Owenson. While Glorvina's voice in a Gaelic-Irish setting is entertainment for her father, her voice is a spell for the foreigner. The negative associations with witch here represent Horatio's disapproval of female empowerment. Witches were also often feared because of their associations with wisdom and knowledge, a fear Horatio articulates when he voices his doubts about Glorvina's education:

I fear, however, that this girl is already spoiled by the species of education she has received. The priest has more than once spoke of her erudition! *Erudition!* ... How much must a woman lose, and how little can she gain, by that commutation which gives her our acquirements for her own graces!

(Owenson 1999, p.65)

Glorvina's learning will inform her voice and Horatio is uncomfortable with a woman being educated and outspoken. He claims that Glorvina is "spoiled" by her education, that her female character is ruined by education. Horatio claims that women will lose out and gain nothing by this education, but we have seen that Glorvina has been trained to aid the sick. Her knowledge is not only beneficial to her, but to the local people. Horatio's opinions are typical of eighteenth-century views on female education. Glorvina has received a traditionally male education where "all that is most excellent in the circle of human intellect, or human science, her versatile genius is constantly directed" (Owenson 1999, p.77). She even speaks both Latin and French. However, we find that Horatio's opinion about female education is quickly altered as he comes to appreciate Glorvina's intelligence:

I believe I should have been easily led to desert the standard of pretty *fools*, had female pedantry ever stole my heart under such a form as the little *soi-disant* Princess of Inismore.

(Owenson 1999, p.65)

Horatio comes to realise that he does not like the manner of “pretty fools” and that a properly educated woman is more attractive to him. Owenson portrays a heroine who has been given the education traditionally denied to women under patriarchy to show her audience that educating women can be beneficial to men and women. Men do not have to be married to pretty fools, but can enjoy a partnership of intellectual equals if women are given access to the same education as men. Although Horatio initially identifies Glorvina as a woman spoiled by her education, he comes to respect the educated woman that she is. Horatio’s experience is exemplary for other men.

Roche also refers to the banshee in her novel *The Children of the Abbey*. At Castle Carberry a female caretaker speaks of how she heard the banshee:

“... Ah! I remember the night I heard the Banshee crying so pitifully.” “And pray what is that?” interrupted Amanda. “Why, a little woman, no higher than a yard, who wears a blue petticoat, a red cloak and a handkerchief round her head; and when the head of any family, especially a great family, is to die, she is always heard, by some of the old followers, bemoaning herself.” “Lort save us!” cried Ellen, “I hope his lordship, the Earl, won’t take it into his head to die while we are here, for I’d as lief see one of the fairies of Penmaenmawr, as such a little old witch.”

(Roche 2005, p.152)

In this instance the banshee announces the death of the Countess of Cherbury, Mortimer’s mother. The appearance of the banshee at this early stage in the novel can also be read as a warning about Captain Fitzalan’s death. Roche does not lend as much significance to the figure of the banshee as Owenson does. This passage also highlights the similarities between Ireland and Wales in regards to folklore. Ellen highlights a similar Welsh fairy tradition, thus linking two Celtic countries through a related folklore tradition. Roche also highlights the association between the banshee and the witch once again through Ellen’s statement. The banshee does not reappear in the novel but Roche finds other ways to highlight the female voice.

*Clermont* and *The Children of the Abbey* relate the heroine’s story predominantly from the heroine’s point of view, whereas Owenson’s novels are written from the perspective of men who encounter extraordinary women. The title *The Children of the Abbey* draws attention to Amanda as she is one of the children of Dunreath Abbey, and she also spends time in St. Catherine’s Abbey. Abbeys are also important places for Amanda as she recovers her family’s fortune in Dunreath Abbey and finds sanctuary in

St. Catherine's Abbey. To emphasise the heroine's dominant presence in the novel, Amanda's voice opens *The Children of the Abbey*: "Hail, sweet asylum of my infancy!" (Roche 2005, p.3). The novel opens with Amanda in her happiest state, as she is in her childhood home with her surrogate mother and sister. This is a significant opening statement by Amanda as her quest throughout the novel is to find a safe haven where she has enough wealth to live a comfortable life, free from the pursuit of Colonel Belgrave.

In contrast, *Clermont*'s title is Madeline's father's assumed name. It undermines not only Madeline's dominance in the novel, but her very identity, as she thinks that she is Madeline Clermont, when in fact she is Madeline St. Julian. This is a novel concerned with identities. Madeline's identity is unstable because of her father's deception. Other character's identities are concealed and revealed; no one is who they seem to be. For example, the Countess never reveals to Madeline that she is Madeline's father's step-sister. If the title of the novel bears the false name of the father, then it is Madeline's narrative, her perspective, her voice and the events of her life that correct this fault by forcing her father to admit his true identity. Roche uses the structure of the novel to highlight the female voice and female agency.

Female Gothic offers a critique of the patriarchal system, and the heroine is the focal point of the battle between this critique and patriarchal dominance. Like other Female Gothic authors, Owenson and Roche engage with the ideology of sensibility and coercive strategies to control female behaviour. However, Owenson and Roche undermine the supposed fragility of the woman of sensibility and her affected responses to trivialities by imitating Radcliffe's sensibility heroine and refocusing the heroine's true sensibilities towards pressing social issues. To empower further her heroines, Owenson draws upon Irish antiquarianism and the figure of the banshee. The witch and banshee figures symbolically empower the heroine to effect change in the novel as Glorvina is given access to "male" education and Luxima inspires a native revolt. While the four heroines being studied here are not identical, each heroine offers a means to highlight or undermine the abuses patriarchy commits against women. In the next chapter the heroine's mobility challenges patriarchal concepts of the public and private spheres and the heroine's imprisonment in the latter.

## Chapter Four: Female Spaces and Religion

In Female Gothic fiction the house is often a symbol for women's imprisonment within patriarchal structures of marriage and inheritance. Houses also symbolize women's confinement to the private sphere and exclusion from the public sphere. In these novels, which arguably draw upon a Female and Irish Gothic tradition, the notion of houses and open spaces take on multiple meanings. In this chapter I will focus on the spaces female characters occupy and the representation of spirituality and religion, especially Roman Catholicism. I connect female spaces to religion in this chapter because Owenson and Roche engage with typically gothic tropes of the house and religion, but drawing upon a uniquely Irish, female, upper-class background, the house and the convent surpass their typical gothic significance to become complex cultural and gendered symbols for the Irish Female writer.

### The Castle, the Boudoir and Female Spaces

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries women were supposed to be content with remaining in the confines of the domestic, to care for and improve the manners of the family. However, as Hoeveler points out:

women did not quietly acquiesce to the conduct book construction of their nature and destiny.

They wrote female gothic novels that proffered another, alternate fantasy, and in this vision they emerged from the private domain with a vengeance.

(Hoeveler 1998, p.31)

For as we have seen in the previous chapter, the family could be dangerous for women, as childbirth meant high mortality rates and women were often susceptible to abuse from male relatives. So, in Female Gothic fiction one can find a record of women's objection to the dangers of patriarchal confinement through the image of the castle or house. Ann Radcliffe equates the castle with a figure of power and tyranny (Botting 2003, p.68) and, according to Kate Ferguson Ellis, the castle became a site of exploration of domestic violence in Gothic fiction (Ellis 1989, p.3). The castle, representative of a vestige of the barbaric medieval age, came to emblemise the barbarity of the domestic violence women suffered. Like many gothic heroines, Owenson and Roche's heroines attempt to escape the confines of the domestic prison and discover an alternate space for women.

While houses were often the property of men, the boudoir was a distinctly feminine site. However, the boudoir can still be seen to exist under patriarchal law and is not a place where the rule of the father ceases. The boudoir then works as a metaphor for women's entrapment within patriarchal structures. Her body is locked away in patriarchal structures where female incarceration is justified as necessary protection from depraved men. In *The Children of the Abbey*, the scene where Colonel Belgrave attacks Amanda in the boudoir could be read as tantamount to an act of rape. Amanda is staying with Lady Greystock in London and while there she is found alone in a boudoir (Lady Euphrasia's room, but the metaphor still holds) with Colonel Belgrave. This man's presence in the boudoir ruins Amanda's reputation. Eugenia DeLamotte reads the iconography of doors as boundaries of the self (DeLamotte 1990, p.29) and, as Belgrave invades this room, it can be seen as a violation of Amanda herself. As if to reinforce the concept of rape, Roche describes how Belgrave assaults Amanda physically:

a sudden noise made her hastily turn her head, and with equal horror and surprise she beheld Colonel Belgrave coming forward. She started up, and was springing to the door, when, rushing between her and it, he caught her in his arms, and forcing her back on the sofa, rudely stopped her mouth.

(Roche 2005, p.295)

The threat of sexual violence is highlighted by the gagging and push towards the sofa. Later "his face [is] inflamed with passion" (Roche 2005, p.296) showing that Belgrave is excited by this violent act. He takes pleasure in physically dominating her. Belgrave's motive is to ruin Amanda's reputation and to get her expelled from the house so he can kidnap her. The metaphor of the boudoir is clear even to the characters. They assume Amanda is of loose morals simply because there is an un-chaperoned man in a boudoir with her. Significantly it is only Amanda's reputation that is tainted by this act. Even though Belgrave broke into the boudoir, he escapes without any stain upon his character. This highlights the fragility of women's reputations and the inequality women suffered in eighteenth and nineteenth century society.

In *The Wild Irish Girl*, Glorvina's boudoir is also representative of her sexuality. However, descriptions of Glorvina's room are related through Horatio's letters. He describes the room as "the asylum of pensive thoughts" (Owenson 1999, p.156) and a "sacred asylum of innocence" (Owenson 1999, p.209). This description reveals

patriarchal concepts of the house as a sanctuary for women and of the boudoir as representative of female sexuality. The term “innocence” also refers to how the so-called asylum of the boudoir is actually a prison for women’s sexuality. By using terms such as asylum, sacred and innocence, Horatio presents the boudoir as an almost spiritual safe-haven when in fact, it is the opposite. The boudoir is an expression of male control over female sexuality. However, unlike Amanda Fitzalan’s disgrace in the boudoir with Colonel Belgrave, Horatio is alone with Glorvina in her bedroom and there is no scandal; Glorvina is not upset by this intrusion either. Owenson could be suggesting that women in Gaelic-Ireland do not live under the same restrictive patriarchy that English women do. Owenson again imagines a new space where women are less restricted by male domination and therefore not as vulnerable as their English counterparts.

Roche repeats the boudoir-as-female-body metaphor in *Clermont*. Twice, Madeline is attacked by a stranger invading her boudoir. The first time is at Chateau de Merville, after the Countess’s death and the second is in her grandfather’s chateau. At the Chateau de Merville, Madeline is praying for her dying friend when someone enters her boudoir:

That the murderers of Agatha had by some means or other discovered her concealment, and from the garden had entered, through the closet window, with an intention of destroying her, was the dreadful idea which instantly started to her mind: all power of voice and motion forsook her, and straining an eye of agony and horror on the terrifying stranger, she still continued kneeling: in this situation she remained for about two minutes, when a soft tap came to the chamber door, the stranger hastily retreated, and shut the closet door ... .

(Roche 2006, p.183)

This passage emphatically likens intrusion into the boudoir to a physical assault. This invasion is also a prelude to some form of attack on Madeline. She is so afraid of being physically harmed that she experiences the negative sublime, once again highlighting how women did not need to imagine terrors to invoke a sublime experience; the real world held enough terrors for women. This scene echoes the murder of the Countess who was assaulted when alone in the chapel. Madeline is praying when the intruder enters her room and suggesting that neither faith nor the stronghold of the masculine castle can protect women. The institution of Christianity is also not a place of sanctuary for women. Roche repeats this critique in *The Children of the Abbey* as Belgrave tries to attack

Amanda in St. Catherine's convent. These scenes undermine the logic behind the patriarchal notion of confining women to the home for their own protection. Roche seems to be implying that the domestic, private sphere, whether it is the male home or religious institution, is not a sanctuary for women as they are both patriarchal structures, and where men hold most power, women are most vulnerable.

Roche's novels highlight how patriarchal restrictions victimize women. Through her representations of the private sphere, Roche examines domestic violence. It is revealed through the course of the novel that Belgrave has abused and damaged many women, mostly in his house. Belgrave's mansion is at the centre of an "extensive wood" (Roche 2005, p.316) that conceals his home and these damaged women from prying eyes. His collection of women is mentioned briefly in the novel, but none of them are given names. These women, described as "insolent looking creatures" (Roche 2005, p.317), lack subjectivity. They are dehumanized, rendered less than human because they reject the norms of female conduct. This could be a comment about how women were afforded as few rights as animals. Belgrave's mistresses have lost all self-respect and human feelings in their reduction to an animal-like state. This short scene highlights how invisible women are to the public sphere and justice system and how patriarchal structures facilitate the exploitation of defenceless women. In this gothic house we see a pattern of abuse:

A young woman leaned over Amanda, and surveyed her with the most malignant scrutiny. She was daughter to Belgrave's steward, and neither she nor her father possessed sufficient virtue to make them reject the offers Belgrave made them on her account. His attachment to her was violent, but transient, and in the height of it he made her mistress of the mansion she now occupied, which character she maintained with tyrannic sway over the rest of the domestics. Belgrave was really ignorant of the violence of her temper, and had no idea she would dare dispute his inclinations, or disobey his orders.

(Roche 2005, p.318)

While Amanda's kidnapping is part of the gothic adventure plot, the representations of other women in the house show how abused women are made to suffer further by remaining within the domestic sphere. These women do not have anywhere else to go and they have no means of procuring shelter or protection. This short scene may seem

inconsequential in regards to the larger plot, but read as part of the Female Gothic by drawing attention to violence against women in the late eighteenth century.

Through these scenes Roche highlights a flaw in the notion of patriarchal protection. Women were confined to the private, domestic sphere to protect them from depraved men. Domestic violence was supposed to be kept in check by male reason in the eighteenth century, but Roche shows that this system does not work. Belgrave's actions are not supervised by any men; instead, he fools Lord Mortimer and General Woodlawn (Ellis 1989, p.3), and he is allowed to have a harem in his Welsh mansion. Supposed male reason never stops Belgrave's abusive behaviour towards women. Only Lord Mortimer and Captain Fitzalan are aware of Belgrave's deeds and yet they also do nothing to stop him. Fitzalan simply hides his daughter from Belgrave and Lord Mortimer chases Belgrave from St. Catherine's Abbey. Male reason proves to be completely ineffective against Belgrave and it is only Amanda, or rather the rumour of her death, that ends Belgrave's abuses:

Overwhelmed with terror and grief, he had quitted England – terror at the supposition of a crime which in reality he had not committed, and grief for the fate of Amanda. He sought to lose his horrors in inebriety; but this, joined to the agitations of his mind, brought on a violent fever by the time he had landed at Calais, in the paroxysms of which had the attendants understood his language, they would have been shocked at the crimes he revealed. His senses were restored a short time before he died; but what excruciating anguish, as well as horror, did he suffer from their restoration!

(Roche 2005, p.637)

One might suggest that Amanda is in some way responsible for Belgrave's death. To preserve the heroine's virtuous character Amanda cannot directly be involved in Belgrave's death, but this could be evidence of sensibility pushed to the limit. Female sensibility was supposed to improve the manners of those men around her; however, as Amanda's living suffering could not influence Belgrave into becoming a better man, her supposed death does affect him. Only then does he become sensitive to the suffering, both real and imaginary, he made her endure. Belgrave's imagination is altered and images of Amanda haunt him, as do all his victims as:

Every treacherous action now rose to view, and, trembling, he groaned with terror at the spectres which a guilty conscience raised around him.

(Roche 2005, p.647)



In the end, male reason does not stop Belgrave; instead, the memories of “the accusing spirits of those he had injured” (Roche 2005, p.637) wait for him with death’s “sacred Judge” (Roche 2005, p.637) to punish him in the afterlife. Roche offers an alternative justice system for women through belief that men will be punished for such behaviour in the afterlife, for there is no real justice for abused women in the temporal world. This could be seen as a hollow victory for Amanda, but the women in these novels need to believe in a more just higher power that does not discriminate between genders.

The castle and the house are not just metaphors for women’s sufferings under a patriarchal system. The home can also be “both a gendered and a potent national signifier” (Bohata 2009, p.186). Bohata sees houses as “emblematic of nation” as “[f]amily, ‘race’ and nation are evoked by a sense of the word house meaning ‘lineage’” (Bohata 2009, p.180-181). In this manner the castle/house has double significance for the heroine, but it also raises issues too. Owenson’s and Roche’s heroines display a surprising amount of mobility for Female Gothic heroines. In other Female Gothic works the heroine is frequently imprisoned within the domestic sphere. However, Glorvina is predominantly portrayed outside rather than inside the gothic castle, and Amanda, Luxima and Madeline are all mobile heroines who take long walks, or flee from danger across a beautiful landscape. In *The Children of the Abbey*, Castle Carberry is a Norman building and thus a “symbol of English imperialism” (Genet 1991, p.x). However, Castle Carberry was Lord Mortimer’s Irish mother’s home, thus putting it in the possession of an Irish-Welsh family (Lord Mortimer’s father is Welsh). In this novel, Castle Carberry and the people that have lived in it link together an Irish, Welsh and English heritage. Amanda’s absence from this and other significant buildings in the novel such as Tudor Hall and Dunreath Abbey could signify a loss of nationality for the heroine. However, Amanda does not attempt to escape these places; instead she is lured away from them by Lady Greystock and then she is banished from the Castle by Lord Mortimer’s father. Amanda has to flee Tudor Hall because of Belgrave’s attention and she is excluded from Dunreath Abbey because her mother was disinherited. Amanda is therefore excluded from her Celtic heritage; she does not try to escape it. Lord Mortimer, conversely, gets full ownership of Tudor Hall in Wales and Castle Carberry when his father dies, thus entitling him to maintain his Irish-Welsh roots. It is not the heroine’s desire to escape

patriarchal order that excludes her from her Celtic nationality, but rather it is patriarchal rules of inheritance that prevent her from accessing her Celtic heritage.

There is another possible explanation for the extraordinary mobility Owenson's and Roche's heroines enjoy in these novels. Ellen Moers says that

Women were only beginning to be travellers in the eighteenth century, women were banned from the Grand Tour – they had to imagine it.

(Moers 1976, p.128)

Amanda's, Madeline's, Glorvina's and Luxima's travels may be an imagined Grand Tour for the readers of this fiction. Gothic fiction provided an adventure fantasy for the reader, with a woman as the central figure so that female readers could identify with the heroine and imagine themselves as partaking in this fantasy. It could also be an expression of women's new-found freedom in travel. Another reason for these heroines' freedom is suggested by Moers' discussion of the precursors for tomboy figure in women's literature:

The prohibitions on outdoor female activities must account for the proud place of the tomboy in women's literature. For in every age, whatever the social rules, there has always been one time in a woman's life, the years before puberty, when walking, running, climbing, battling and tumbling are as normal female as they are male activities.

(Moers 1976, p.130)

While Amanda, Madeline, Glorvina and Luxima do not engage in climbing, battling and tumbling, their presence in the outdoor world walking and running, in pleasure and fear could suggest a pre-marital, pre-sexual state for these women. Before Glorvina marries Horatio she is frequently represented as running through the hills or dancing and walking outside. When she is to marry Horatio, her future enclosure within marriage is represented in the last section of the novel indoors by the ruined church. Her face is also veiled and her voice is quietened (while she does speak, she does not talk at length as she did earlier in the novel), thereby suggesting woman's invisibility and silence within marriage. Similarly, Madeline and Amanda's journeys end with marriage. While Roche's heroines are not seeking husbands, the marriage between Amanda and Lord Mortimer and Madeline and De Sevignie signify an end to the heroine's solitary travels. The excessive descriptions of the heroine's journey could also be representative of women's reluctance to enter into the terrors of domestic life. Amanda and Madeline are now

imprisoned within the family and are not permitted the freedom to travel alone anymore. In these novels the heroine's ability to travel freely signifies her freedom from the confines of marriage and motherhood, which are potentially dangerous life choices for a gothic heroine.

In a Female Gothic text the heroine's escape from the house represents her freedom from oppressive patriarchal structures. This act becomes problematic for texts that can also be considered as Irish Gothic. Roche discovers a way for her heroines to maintain their national identity while trying to free themselves from the oppression of the patriarchal house and thus solve the "potentially troubling and problematic trope of nation for those reading or writing female nationhood" (Bohata 2009, p.181). Even though Amanda and Madeline are predominantly presented outside the gothic house, they retain their nationality through a type of genetic memory. Amanda and Madeline both look quite similar to their mothers and this is remarked on through the novels. Clermont describes Madeline's resemblance to her mother as "A fatal one ... it often embitters the pleasure I take in gazing on her; the eyes, the voice, the smile!" (Roche 2006, p.27). Geraldine, Madeline's mother, is Irish and so Madeline is half-Irish. Amanda is a descendent of Irish and Scottish parents. Roche emphasises Madeline's and Amanda's Celtic heritage through references to Ossian. Amanda's mother is described as "one of the beautiful forms which Ossian so often describes" (Roche 2005, p.16), and Madeline quotes from Macpherson's *Poems of Ossian*. While women may escape patriarchal oppression this does not mean that they abandon their nationality or Celtic heritage. In this instance, the heroine's nationality and the writer's, to a certain degree, is focused upon the feminine body and not the masculine building; the Celtic aspect of the heroine's identity is carried through the mother. The gothic erasure of the mother figure then represents the struggle to maintain a Celtic identity in the British Union. So, in Irish Gothic written by women, even though their heroines are thrown out of places associated with national identity, it does not mean the heroine loses her nationality.

*The Children of the Abbey* makes use of another gothic trope to express the enclosure and exclusion of female characters from patriarchal structures. According to Kilfeather, the portrait is a dominant characteristic of Irish Gothic fiction after 1820 (Kilfeather 2006, p.90). However, portraits are present in Roche's 1796 work, *The*

*Children of the Abbey*, as expression of female entrapment and symbolic of the return of the repressed. Roche could have been influenced by Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, as this is where portraiture as a gothic characteristic first appeared. Amanda carries a portrait of Lord Mortimer, a contemporary fashion, yet it is the portraits of her mother and Lady Augusta that are particularly interesting:

Lady Malvina was represented in the simple attire of a peasant girl, leaning on a little grassy hillock, whose foot was washed by a clear stream, while her flocks browsed around, and her dog rested beneath the shade of an old tree, that waved its branches over her head, and seemed sheltering her from the beams of the meridian sun.

(Roche 2005, p.15)

It is important that Malvina is painted in a pastoral setting as a shepherdess, yet she is the daughter of the Earl of Dunreath. There are two apparently contradictory reasons for this. Firstly there was a fashion amongst the aristocracy at this time to paint their members in pastoral settings. Secondly, this was a deliberate act by the artist who took instruction from Malvina's hateful stepmother. Lady Dunreath symbolically excludes Malvina from her inheritance by placing her in the role of a peasant girl. This act foreshadows what Lady Dunreath will later do to Malvina. She will hide the Earl of Dunreath's true will and replace it with a forgery to exclude Malvina from her inheritance and to make Lady Dunreath's daughter the sole beneficiary. Considering that Lady Dunreath is presented as a scheming woman who manipulates every event to her advantage, she can claim Malvina was painted as a peasant girl because it is the current fashion. However, when Malvina's portrait is compared to her half-sister's painting, it is clear how Lady Dunreath wishes to view her step-daughter and daughter. Malvina is a poor Scottish peasant girl and Augusta is the true aristocrat and therefore entitled to the Earl's inheritance:

Lady Augusta appeared negligently reclined upon a sofa, in a verdant alcove; the flowing drapery of the loose robe in which she was habited, set off her fine figure; little cupids were seen fanning aside her dark-brown hair, and strewing roses on her pillow.

(Roche 2005, p.15)

Malvina is expelled from the castle, and forced into the harsh outside world, as she is depicted in portrait, whereas Augusta and her mother use lies and deception to maintain their status within Dunreath Abbey; Augusta's artificial nature is represented in her artificial surroundings.

Malvina's portrait appears again in the novel to represent the return of the repressed. When Amanda returns to Dunreath Abbey, she goes in search of her mother's portrait, possibly so she can be closer to a mother she never knew. This picture and Amanda's resemblance to Malvina trigger the events that restore Amanda's true inheritance. Once Augusta, now Lady Dunreath is imprisoned within the abbey, she is constantly haunted by her half-sister's face. When Augusta meets Amanda she thinks the heroine is Malvina, and a double return of the repressed occurs. Malvina and Augusta, the two women represented in the portraits mentioned above, become repressed figures but they return to assist the heroine, perhaps to prevent her from suffering the same fate. As I have shown, the inclusion of the portrait is not just a trope to present women's further entrapment in patriarchal structures, but also as part of the Irish Gothic characteristic of the return of the repressed.

While Glorvina does not attempt to escape her father's castle, she carries her national identity with her in her choice of clothing. Glorvina's clothes echo a gothic medievalism that is represented by Inismore castle and are part of the Irish gothic characteristic of antiquarianism. When Horatio first sees Glorvina he describes her dress:

[She] was vested in a robe of vestal white, which was enfolded beneath the bosom with a narrow girdle embossed with precious stones.

From the shoulder fell a mantle of scarlet silk, fastened at the neck with a silver bodkin, while the fine turned head was enveloped in a veil of point lace, bound round the brow with a band, or diadem, ornamented with the same description of jewels as encircled her arms.

(Owenson 1999, p.48)

A footnote by Owenson goes on to explain: "This was, with little variation, the general costume of the female *noblesse* of Ireland from a very early period" (Owenson 1999, p.48, fn.2). One can see that Glorvina's clothes reflect her nationality, her heritage. She is not only wearing the costume of an Irish woman, she is wearing the clothes of a noble Irish woman. Glorvina goes on to explain how she maintains this antique costume as:

'the drapery being made of modern materials (on the antique model), is absolutely drawn from the wardrobes of my great granddames.'

(Owenson 1999, p.98)

The jewels she wears are hundreds of years old and belonged to her ancestors. She says that:

‘it is to the caskets of my female ancestors that I stand indebted that my dress or hair is not fastened or adorned like those of my humbler countrywomen, with a wooden bodkin.’

(Owenson 1999, p.99)

This passage highlights how old Irish fashions are dying out. Different, English modes of dress are more prominent in Ireland at this time as there is no demand for bodkins to be made. Owenson’s text directly affected contemporary fashions as a vogue for bodkins and Glorvina shawls developed in the nineteenth century. Glorvina’s clothing is a defiant expression of Irish heritage as the Statutes of Kilkenny banned Irish modes of dress in Ireland (Bartlett 2010, p.58). Her clothing is symbolic of Gaelic-Irish defiance of English colonial practice and their domination in Ireland. As Owenson portrays the Princes of Inismore as the very last of an authentic Irish aristocracy, every aspect of these characters must reflect their genuine Irishness. Glorvina’s performative nationality rejuvenates ancient Irish culture for her readers, thus aiding a nationalist rejection of English culture. As most of the aristocracy in Ireland at this time would have been anglicised to some degree, Owenson’s portrayal of an ultra-Irish Princess can also be read as a gothic return of the repressed. Glorvina’s national costume is a part of the discourse of a politically excluded majority who are trying to maintain an Irish identity.

Another of Owenson’s heroines, Luxima, must also negotiate a way to escape oppressive patriarchal structures while also maintaining her cultural identity. There is no grand gothic castle present in *The Missionary*, but both Hindu and Christian religions function as the overbearing and controlling patriarchal influence Luxima attempts to escape from. At the beginning of the novel Luxima lives in a Hindu convent, attended only by other women, and she is content to reside there. However, when Luxima acts contrary to the rules of her religion, that is, she associates with Hilarion, Hindu laws reveal their oppressive nature. Luxima is cast out and labelled “impure” for her crimes. Brahmin traditions and the Hindu religion, as described by Owenson, are similar to the Gothic castle as both attempt to control female sexuality. After Luxima’s husband is killed, she has only two choices under Owenson’s imaginary version of Hindu law: to commit sati or to become a Hindu priestess. This mirrors the life choices available to western women also: they must marry or join a convent. Both options highlight Luxima’s paradoxical status as virgin widow. If Luxima were allowed to live outside of religious orders, according to Owenson’s re-imagining of Indian inheritance laws, Luxima would

be a wealthy independent woman and thus a threat to the patriarchal structures in India. When Luxima is then excommunicated, this does not return her to the position of wealthy widow; instead, Luxima is physically marked as an outcast to ensure she is not assisted by any of her people.

Like Glorvina, Luxima does not require an edifice to function as a symbol of national identity. Owenson thus removes the boudoir as the female body motif; yet, instead of setting up another metaphor, Owenson depicts Luxima's body in a way so that it becomes an expression of personal identity, both religious and national. It could be argued that Luxima engages with the same performative nationalism as Glorvina in her choice of clothing. However, Luxima has little choice regarding her clothing. As we shall see in the following passage, her religion determines her garments and accessories:

*She sat near him, veiled only by that religious mystery of air and look, which involved her person, as though a cloud of evening mists threw its soft shadows round her. Forbidden the use of ornaments, by her profession, except that of consecrated flowers, the scarlet berries of the sweet sumbal, the flower of the Ganges, alone enwreathed her brow; a string of mogrees, whose odour exceeded the ottar of the rose, encircled her neck, with the dsandam, or three Brahminical threads, the distinguishing insignia of her distinguished cast. Her downcast eyes were fixed upon the mantras, the Indian rosary, which were twined round her wrist; and o'er whose beads she softly murmured the Gayatras, or text of the Shaster. And when, with a slight motion of the head, she threw back the dark shining tresses which shaded her brow, in the centre of her forehead appeared the small consecrated mark of the tellertum.*

(Owenson 2002, p.92)

Luxima's nationality is related through her use of native plants as accessories. Her religious identity is represented through her clothing, the Indian rosary and the tellertum. In this manner Luxima "performs" or wears her national and religious identity. However, unlike Glorvina, Luxima does not choose to wear these items; they are forced upon her by a patriarchal religious order. Yet, Luxima does not try to escape this religious law as Owenson's re-imagined version of Hinduism is not as oppressive as contemporary western patriarchal structures. Instead, Luxima is cast out from her religion and has another identity forced upon her. Her clothing links her to a national and religious family and when she is stripped of these social markers, she is alone and vulnerable to the predations of other men such as Hilarion and the officers of the Inquisition. Despite Owenson's attempts to imagine new spaces, societies or social models to give women

more freedom, these imagined spaces remain tainted. Luxima's clothing as boudoir metaphor also works as a patriarchal asylum to protect her from other depraved men as it is stated that

in India, the person of a woman was deemed so sacred, that, even in all the tumult of warfare, the sex was equally respected by the conqueror and the conquered ... and ... Luxima was guarded equally by her sacred character and holy vows.

(Owenson 2002, p.137)

Even though Luxima is not confined to the walls of a convent or home, patriarchal law is still represented through her clothing and Owenson emphasises this by drawing upon contemporary research.<sup>31</sup> It would seem that when women have a choice in their clothing in these particular Owenson novels, they use clothing as a mode of self-expression, of making their national identity visible. However, when a woman is forced to wear a certain costume it is further evidence of the oppressive male structures, and in this novel Luxima's costume is equal to the gothic castle as a symbol of an overbearing patriarchy.

While Luxima's clothing represents her entrapment within patriarchy, representations of her physical body register her emotions and mental state throughout the novel. These earlier descriptions of Luxima provide a shocking contrast to her later appearance when she has been excommunicated, converted and placed within a convent. Her "dark shining tresses" are cut, and "She had suffered them to exchange her Indian dress for the habit of a novice of St. Dominick" (Owenson 2002, p.242). She is stripped of her Hindu appearance and forced to wear a novice's habit. She suffers mentally within the convent as this is where she loses her sanity. Luxima is depicted as glorious and proud in her Hindu garments, probably to reflect the slightly better status women have in Owenson's imagined India. In contrast, when forced to wear the habit she becomes meek and mute. Paradoxically, it would appear that through costume Owenson empowers the female voice when she is dressed in Hindu garments, yet Hindu religion is also a symbol of overbearing patriarchy. Perhaps Owenson is showing that no matter how much freedom, power or agency a woman is given in a patriarchal society, the gender imbalance of power within a patriarchal society will always mean that women will be

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Schroeder states that Owenson quotes "Dow's *Dissertation on the Origin of Despotism in Indostan* ... [and] Owenson also notes Buddhism's opposition to violence against women ... The same regard for women's physical safety was often imputed in pre-colonial Ireland" (Schroeder 2002, p.268 fn.41). Owenson clearly researched the status of women in pre-colonial civilizations.



oppressed. Instead a new society, a humanist, rather than a gender-based one will give women true equality.

Representations of Luxima's body and garments are developed further in this novel to become the site of the feminine sublime. Barbara Claire Freeman writes that the feminine sublime:

[I]s the site both of women's affective experiences and their encounters with the gendered mechanisms of power from the mid-eighteenth century ... to the present, for it responds specifically to the diverse cultural configurations of women's oppression, passion and resistance.

(Freeman 1995, p.2)

Luxima's appearance towards the end of the novel exemplifies this definition of the feminine sublime. Through her experience with Hilarion, Christianity, Hinduism and the colonial process, these "gendered mechanisms of power," Luxima forms a response which articulates her feelings of oppression, passion and resistance:

a form scarcely human ... reached the foot of the pile, and stood before it in a grand and aspiring attitude; the deep red flame of the slowly kindling fire shone through a transparent drapery which flowed in loose folds from the bosom of the seeming vision, and tinged with golden hues, those long dishevelled tresses, which streamed like the rays of a meteor on the air; thus bright and aerial as it stood, it looked like a spirit sent from Heaven in the awful moment of dissolution to cheer and to convey to the religions of the blessed, the soul which would soon arise, pure from the ordeal of earthly suffering.

The sudden appearance of the singular phantom struck the imagination of the credulous and awed multitude with superstitious wonder ... the Christians fixed their eyes upon the *cross*, which glittered on a bosom whose beauty scarcely seemed of mortal mould, and deemed themselves the witnesses of a miracle, wrought for the salvation of a persecuted martyr, whose innocence was asserted by the firmness and fortitude which he met a dreadful death.

The Hindoos gazed upon the sacred impress of *Brahma*, marked on the brow of his consecrated offspring; and beheld the fancied *herald* of the tenth *Avatar*, announcing vengeance to the enemies of their religion.

(Owenson 2002, p.248-9)

In this passage Luxima reacts and responds to the oppression of her situation, to her rejection by the Hindus and the oppression of the Christians. Her clothes are reminiscent of her Hindu dress and she stands defiant before a crowd which both rejected and dominated her. In her choice of dress, Luxima suggests a solution to the antagonism between Hindu and Christian as she wears the cross and the tellertum, "the sacred

impress of Brahma". In this aspect she inspires both Christian and Hindu. Her actions inspire the Indians to resist the colonial process as she incites revolt amongst them. The Christians believe they are witnessing a miracle. Her appearance in this scene is supernatural as she is described as "scarcely human", a "seeming vision", a "spirit sent from Heaven", and a "phantom". Despite being a supernatural creature in a gothic text, Luxima is not a monster. Instead, she is the opposite of a demon, she is like an angel, once again demonstrating how women writers of Irish Gothic incorporate the supernatural in a different manner from their male counterparts. Luxima is also referred to as "it", a sexless and a superior being. This portrayal of Luxima collapses and combines the differences between Hindu and Christian, as her clothes represent aspects of both, between man and woman as she is referred to in a gender neutral term "it", and between man and spirit, as she is both mortal human and heavenly spirit, to create a figure that exceeds these differences. Luxima responds to her oppression with passion and her symbolic garments express a method of resistance to religious intolerance, which undermines the typical Gothic theme of religious cruelty, thus making Luxima the site of the feminine sublime in this passage.

### **Religion and Alternate Spaces for Women**

The practice of portraying Catholicism as a source of deviance is common to Gothic fiction and Irish Gothic fiction. The Irish authors Charles Maturin, Bram Stoker and Sheridan Le Fanu include elements of Catholophobia in their Gothic novels, whether through depictions of cruel Catholic institutions or monsters that can only be fought with Catholic icons such as the crucifix. However, in Owenson's and Roche's Gothic novels we see a different portrayal of Catholic religious institutions as both oppressive and protective spaces where women find solidarity in female company. This is a significant departure from typical Irish Gothic and Female Gothic representations of religion and as such, warrants further discussion.

Roche's descriptions of the convent and nuns in *The Children of the Abbey* highlight her departure from typical representations of the convent as an evil institution.

St. Catherine's convent:

consisted of twelve nuns. Their little fortunes, though sunk in one common fund, were insufficient to supply their necessities, which compelled them to keep a day-school, in which the neighbouring

children were instructed in reading, writing, plain-work, embroidery, and artificial flowers. She also added that the nuns were allowed to go out, but few availed themselves of that liberty, and that, except in fasting, they were strangers to the austerities practiced in foreign convents.

For such a society Amanda thought nothing could be better adapted than their present situation. Sheltered by the ruins, like the living among the dead, their wishes, like their views, were bound by the mouldering walls, as no object appeared beyond them which could tempt their wandering from their usual limits. The dreary common, which met their view, could not be more bleak and inhospitable than the world in general would have proved to these children of poverty and nature.

(Roche 2005, p.165)

These nuns provide a service for the local community, giving Irish children the skills necessary to escape their poverty. While the nuns are doing this to support themselves, it does not undermine the good that this convent is doing. Amanda's ideas about nuns are different to the reality of these nun's lives. Amanda sees St. Catherine's nuns as imprisoned within the ruins, voiceless and without agency; yet, according to Miss O'Flanagan the nuns are allowed to go out and clearly these women have a voice within the community through their day-school. Perhaps Amanda's expectations of convent-life reflect the more austere practices of continental convents and the depictions of convents in other gothic novels, as well as public conceptions of European convents at this time. As Haggerty states, in the eighteenth century:

Oversexed and violent priests, victimizing and vindictive nuns, devil worship and self-abuse ... were common popular perceptions of conventual life in Mediterranean countries.

(Haggerty 2004, para.5)

Roche's perception of Irish convents is quite different.

In other Gothic texts, the convent is often a place to put troublesome women, that is, women who bear children out of wedlock, are sexually active outside of marriage, widowed, or poor . In *The Children of the Abbey*, however, Amanda voluntarily enters a convent, not to become a nun but to find sanctuary. Amanda is offered sanctuary at St. Catherine's and she is under no obligation to take vows, unlike Agnes in Lewis's *The Monk* or Alonzo de Monçada in Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*. The nuns of St. Catherine's abbey allow Amanda to live with them as a lay person. They do not demand payment or her conversion, though they do wish it. In this convent there is a surprising tolerance for Amanda's religious beliefs. Religious difference does not break down the

bond between these women. Instead, they see past their conflicting faiths and forge strong friendships. Haggerty suggests that

As an answer to the rigours of patriarchal law, Radcliffe offers the kindly maternal convent in which relations among women are celebrated and in which particular female-female bonds are valued, even honoured.

(Haggerty 2004, p.18)

Certainly St. Catherine's is a sanctuary from the rigours of patriarchal law; yet, Haggerty claims that these representations of the convent establish "a context for same-sex desire" (Haggerty 2004, p.18). In a further attempt to demonise Catholic practice, the monastery and convent are depicted as locations "to explore same-sex and transgressive desire" in Gothic fiction (Haggerty 2004, p.4). This is not so in Roche's fiction as there is no sexual desire represented between any of the women in St. Catherine's. Amanda and Sister Mary may have a close relationship, but it is more friendly and maternal, as Sister Mary wishes to care for Amanda who is grieving for her father and weakened from her ordeal in London:

A little room, inside the prioress's chamber, was prepared for Amanda, into which she was now conveyed, and the good-natured Sister Mary brought her own bed, and laid it beside hers.

(Roche 2005, p.359)

The proximity between Amanda's bed and Sister Mary's bed does not suggest that they are having sexual relations. This is a room within the prioress's chamber so they are supervised. Sister Mary is described as being "good-natured" and not as a sexual predator like Colonel Belgrave. This scene highlights a platonic friendship and maternal care between these nuns and Amanda and reinforces Roche's concept of the convent as a female sanctuary.

This sanctuary space is similar to the Chateau de Merville in *Clermont* where the heroine lives with the Countess and servants without men's supervision. It is only when men are introduced into the Chateau that the women are threatened. Like the Chateau de Merville, in St. Catherine's women live together without the protection of men. One could argue that the convent is a patriarchal institution and therefore ruled by men, but there is no man physically present to oversee or control the women. Unlike the Chateau, the convent does not come under attack from men probably because it is considered as a patriarchal institution and also because it may be considered bad luck to attack a convent.

Just as the Chateau de Merville is owned by a woman, St. Catherine's Abbey was founded by a woman, who:

on her deathbed, had a remarkable dream, or vision, in which she thought an angel appeared, and charged her to bequeath her wealth to her confessor, who would, no doubt, make a much better use of it than those she designed it for. She obeyed the sacred injunction, and the good man immediately laid the foundation of this abbey, which he called after his benefactress.

(Roche 2005, p.162)

It would seem that any institution founded by or run by women can be considered a true sanctuary for other women. In this sanctuary the woman does not need to conform to religious orders and she can gain support and friendship from the women there.

In St. Catherine's convent Roche presents alternatives for women outside of marriage and motherhood through her description of one of the nuns:

She was fifty, as Amanda afterwards heard, for she never could, from her appearance, have conceived her to be so much. Her skin was fair, and perfectly free from wrinkle; the bloom and down upon her cheeks as bright and as soft as that upon a peach ... .

(Roche 2005, p.163)

The woman's appearance represents the possible benefits available for women who live as nuns. She may be fifty but the nun's face does not reflect her age. Whatever the reasons for her youthful appearance, the protected lifestyle of the convent perhaps, Roche goes against the norms of Gothic fiction to present a convent as a benign location, a sanctuary for the gothic heroine.

Recalling Owenson's warm descriptions of Glorvina's family, Roche goes to great lengths to provide a positive portrait, as Richard Haslam highlights:

Sensing that some of her English readers might not be accustomed to positive descriptions of an Irish nun, since representations of convents in previous Gothic fiction (especially by male authors) were often very negative, Roche provides a lot of detail and local colour in order to authenticate the depiction through the testimony of her personal experience.

(Haslam 2009, p.7)

Perhaps because Ireland is a Catholic country outside the Mediterranean, the typical gothic locale of the evil Catholic institute, Roche takes the opportunity to show how Irish nuns are different from their Continental counterparts. Her positive description is emphasised by a footnote on her own personal experience in meeting an Irish nun in *The Children of the Abbey*:

The Abbey and the Nun, which the Author has attempted to describe, were such as she really saw, but in a different part of Ireland from that which she has mentioned.

(Roche 2005, p.163)

Unlike Owenson, it is unusual for Roche to halt the narrative with explanatory footnotes, and as such highlights the importance of such an intervention. Her reasons for such an interruption are probably twofold: she challenges contemporary impressions of Irish convent life, and through this, she highlights a similarity between Ascendancy, Anglo-Irish women and Irish Catholics on the basis of their politically disenfranchised position. Women in general are politically excluded because of their gender and the Gaelic-Irish because of their religion. These two groups of society are controlled by systems of patriarchal and colonial oppression. Religion is a political subject in Irish Gothic and as such this could be one reason Roche chooses to ally women with Irish Catholics. By linking women with the Gaelic-Irish she adds political weight to her discussion of female oppression as a civil rights issue.

Although Roche presents a mainly positive vision of the convent, there are some negative depictions too. For Madeline Clermont, the convent is a sanctuary but also a place to be feared. Because this novel is set in France, Roche is able to represent the oppressive aspects of convent life without tainting the benign image of the Irish nunnery in *The Children of the Abbey*. Kilfeather says that “when stories by Irish women are set in Ireland villainy is imported from England or continental Europe” (Kilfeather 1994, p.42), and, this seems to be the same regarding convents. Roche’s Irish convent is a haven but French convents are to be feared. Madeline tells her father that she would prefer to “immure [her]self for ever within the walls of a cloister, than become the wife of D’Alembert” (Roche 2006, p.271). Here Roche highlights the limited alternatives women have for escaping an unwanted marriage. Madeline can either marry a man she hates or become celibate. Her father fears he will have to place her in a convent if she is without his protection or the protection of a husband but, “to that you ever manifested a repugnance, and I could not therefore influence you to it” (Roche 2006, p.33). This dilemma is repeated through three generations of Clermont’s family where Madeline’s grandmother and great-grandmother are threatened with convent life. Both Clermont’s grandmother and mother consider entering convents so that they are not a burden to their male relatives. This highlights how problematic unmarried women with children are to

patriarchal society. Later in the novel, Clermont resigns his daughter to the “doom” of the convent:

to her God I shall devote her; the offering I trust will be acceptable, and cause him to look with an eye of compassion and forgiveness upon my miseries and crimes.

(Roche 2006, p.365)

Clermont makes this decision for one reason only, so that God may forgive him his sins. Clermont’s considerations for his daughter are overlooked as he selfishly sacrifices her to ensure his forgiveness from God. Clermont would sacrifice his daughter to an institution that he does not believe in as he states:

I can never believe that beings immured for life, can feel gratitude so ardent, piety so exalted to the Almighty, as those who, in the wide range of the world, have daily opportunities of exploring his wonders, experiencing his goodness, and contemplating the profusion of his gifts.

(Roche 2006, p.33)

Clermont has a paradoxical view of the cloistered life. He believes it is not the way to truly worship the divine, yet he also believes that sacrificing his daughter to this institution will ensure him God’s forgiveness, and provide for his daughter. In this manner Clermont is worse than the traditional gothic villain. The villain is often forthright in his evil deeds and motives; for example, Monsieur D’Alembert wishes to marry and then kill Madeline for her money. Madeline’s father, the only man she trusts and the only family she has, would go against her will and imprison her within a convent under the guise of protecting her.

Hilarion is another hypocritical character who sacrifices a woman to the convent. In *The Missionary* Luxima forms an attachment to Hilarion, who then intends to deposit her in a convent. Even though Luxima does not enter the convent Hilarion chooses for her, when she is placed within another convent she goes mad. Luxima has already been sacrificed to religious life by her grandfather. When her husband dies, Luxima’s only choices according to her country’s laws were to commit sati or enter the convent. Luxima’s wishes to commit sati are thwarted by her grandfather convincing her to lead a religious life:

Tender, pious, and ambitious, Luxima would have ascended the funeral pile. The tears and infirmities of her grandsire prevailed. Childless but for her, she consented for his sake to live, and embraced the alternative held out for women in her situation of becoming a Brachmachira ... .

(Owenson 2002, p.97)

Luxima's grandfather wishes to save himself the pain of losing his grandchild, so he finds a place for her within a religious institution. As a virgin widow she is another problematic figure for a patriarchal society and must be contained. Luxima's sexuality is controlled through her religious role as no one is permitted to touch her. However, as a Brachmachira, Luxima becomes a powerful woman:

The riches of her opulent family, according to the laws of Menu, centre in herself, and are expended in such acts of public and private beneficence as are calculated to increase the popular veneration, which her extraordinary zeal, and the austere purity of her life have awakened.

(Owenson 2002, p.97)

Luxima is not initially a cloistered figure like Western nuns; she has agency and assists the local community in the same way as the nuns in St. Catherine's Abbey. However, when she enters a Western convent she loses all influence, power and respect and becomes a figure of pity.

A woman who bore on her forehead the mark of a descendant of Brahma (the sacred *tellertum*), and round her neck the sacrificial threads or *dsandam* of their tutelary god, was seen to enter a convent of Dominican nuns, led by an officer of the Inquisition, and surrounded by Dominican and *Jesuit priests!* The faded beauty of her perfect form, her noble and distinguished air, the agony of her countenance, and the silent tears which fell from her eyes when she turned them on those of her own cast and country, who stood near the litter from which she alighted, awakened a strong and powerful emotion in their feelings ... [and] the doors of the Christian sanctuary shut out from the eyes of the multitude the priestess of Brahma.

(Owenson 2002, pp.241-242)

Luxima is not placed within the convent for her safety, she is a prisoner. There is a clash in concepts here between imprisonment and "sanctuary". Sanctuary is a place where one can go to of one's own free will, yet imprisonment is against one's will. Luxima is escorted by Dominicans and Jesuits who are depicted as prison guards instead of benevolent figures. Luxima is a prisoner and not a true convert, nor is she truly seeking sanctuary. It seems when Owenson and Roche describe religious spaces for women, these spaces are presented as prisons when the woman is forced into them, but as spaces of female empowerment and an alternative way of life when women choose to enter into the religious life.

Owenson also takes up the discussion of alternatives for women within religious roles. Luxima, the Priestess of Cashmire, has great power and influence in her religious



role, something she may not have had in another role. Her influence is so great that Hilarion intends to use her to convert the entire population of India. Even after her superficial conversion she still has great power and influence over the natives, inspiring awe in their hearts:

Considered as the offspring of Brahma, as a ray of the divine excellence, the Indians of the most distinguished rank drew back as she approached, lest their very breath should pollute that region of purity her respiration consecrated; and the odour of the sacred flowers, by which she was adorned, was inhaled with an eager devotion, as if it purified the soul it almost seemed to penetrate.

(Owenson 2002, p.91)

Luxima is worshipped like a deity; even her breath is sacred to the Hindus. Her murder at the hands of the Inquisition effects a change in the Indian population. They are appalled by the treatment of their revered Priestess and in her name they revolt against the colonial oppressors. Luxima does not force her followers to revolt, but her conduct inspires the actions of the Indians. Luxima becomes re-empowered once she makes the decision to commit sati, once she throws off the Christianity that was forced upon her and took away her power. Before, the Indians shunned her because she was an outcast, but now that she engages in a Hindu tradition, they accept her again.

In Owenson's and Roche's depiction of female spaces, whether they are the gothic castle, the house, the boudoir, a portrait or religious orders, there is a constant preoccupation with female imprisonment. Female characters attempt to escape the patriarchal structures that restrict them, yet they are faced with a loss of identity, both personal and national if they leave these structures. Owenson and Roche provide an answer to this problem through performative nationalism and the female sanctuary. A woman, especially a woman from a colonised country, does not have to give up her national identity because she leaves the symbolic house-as-nation/culture, she can carry her heritage with her through her ancestry and her choice of clothing. Roche has also shown that women can create their own structures, female sanctuaries, to escape the overbearing control of patriarchy. Whether the sanctuary is founded on religious grounds or through inheritance, a sanctuary that is run by women for women provides respite for the gothic heroine from male pursuit. However, these matriarchal sanctuaries are not invincible and like all women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries— they are vulnerable to male attack. Like other writers of the Female Gothic genre, Owenson and

Roche highlight the need for women to be able to control their own space, their own homes and choices in life. The gothic horror is that women, like the gothic heroine, are relentlessly pursued and confined by a domineering patriarchy.

## Chapter Five: Nation and Landscape

In the novels under scrutiny the concepts of nationality, gender, landscape and identity are complicated by colonialism. Colonial discourse posits a gender-based ideology of “othering” Celtic people by representing the colony as feminine and as savage. By drawing upon gothic characteristics of antiquarianism, the sublime, the discourse of the marginalized and allusions to Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, Owenson and Roche attempt to renegotiate colonial and gender identities. Owenson attempts to reorganize figuratively the colonial relationship between Ireland and England in the hopes of influencing the creation of an equal and fair relationship for the colonized within the Union. Roche attempts the same process by uniting and thereby empowering Celtic identities in the Union, through her gothic heroines. Through representations of wild and domestic landscape, and through allusions to the mythical landscape of Eden, Owenson and Roche negotiate and integrate the various cultural identities within the Union, and possibly also their own hybrid identities. To do this, Owenson and Roche must work in opposition to a colonial discourse that defines Ireland as negatively feminine and savage, always subordinate and inferior to English identity (Cairns and Richards 1988, p.8). This attempt to negotiate national and gender identities draws from both Irish and Female Gothic traditions, creating a unique type of fiction.

### Negotiating Colonial Ideology

As discussed in Chapter One, two forms of colonial ideology were used to “other” the native Irish population and to colour English opinion of the Gaelic-Irish. Due to their gender, Owenson and Roche were socially and politically second to their male counterparts. The dignity of Owenson’s and Roche’s identity was further threatened by concepts of the savage and feminised Irish people. David Cairns and Shaun Richards claim that

The colonized are ... constrained to assert a dignified self-identity in opposition to a discourse which defines [them] as, variously, barbarian, pagan, ape, female; but always subordinate and inferior.

(Cairns and Richards 1988, p.8)

To assert a dignified self-identity, Owenson and Roche are forced to engage with the various discourses that define them as inferior and they do so in the four novels discussed in this study. They undermine associations between the Irish and barbarity, emphasize the feminine as a civilizing force and empower the feminized colony through a nationalist discourse.

Unfortunately:

Gender symbolism in colonist and post-independence periods remain essentially unchanged; women were paradoxically both central (as symbolic figures) and marginal (in terms of actual changes in their material circumstances) to nationalist projects, just as they had been to colonial projects . . . .

(George 2006, p.222)

This passage refers to twentieth-century realities but is relevant in this context as female symbolic figures are central to Owenson's and Roche's nationalist discourse. Yet these authors and their heroines are marginalized figures because of the patriarchal society they live in. However, Gothic fiction is the "discourse of the marginalized" (Punter 2002, p.123), and therefore the perfect medium for Owenson and Roche to convey their views on gender and colonial inequality. Owenson's and Roche's unique position as Irish women allows them to see and draw comparisons between the status of women and the Gaelic-Irish. Owenson and Roche adopt different aspects of the Gothic to protest against the negative feminization of the Irish and perhaps to offer a new more positive vision of Ireland as woman.

Owenson begins the process of undermining colonial concepts of Irish savagery in *The Wild Irish Girl*. Horatio comes to Ireland with a stereotypical prejudice against the "savage" Irish people and he is shocked when his bigotry is challenged:

I listlessly followed, and found myself seated by one of these sea monsters, who in an accent and voice that made me startle, addressed me in English at least as pure and correct as a Thames boatman would use; and with so much courtesy, cheerfulness, and respect, that I was at a loss how to reconcile such civilization of manner to such ferocity of appearance.

(Owenson 1999, p.14)

Horatio's description of the Irishman as "one of those sea monsters" posits Dublin Bay as the location of mythical sea monsters. Owenson draws upon English and European concepts of Ireland as a liminal zone, the periphery of civilisation and the location of the irrational. However, as we shall see, Owenson undermines this association by presenting

Irish people as civilised and the Irish landscape as devoid of mythical beasts and in line with European norms of flora, fauna and people.<sup>32</sup> In this passage, Horatio equates language, specifically the English language, with civilisation. While this Irishman does not speak the Queen's English, he speaks "in English at least as pure and correct as a Thames boatman". His observation maintains class distinctions, that is, he is of a higher class than a Thames boatman, but it also undermines the preconception of the savage ways of the Irish. The Irish are at least equal in civilisation to an underclass of English subject. Owenson skilfully includes stereotypes of an Irish sea-monster and Thames boatman to ensure her audience understands what she is doing. Owenson removes the fear associated with the Irish by portraying them as something familiar to the English, a Thames boatman. When Horatio says he "was at a loss how to reconcile such civilization of manner to such ferocity of appearance," he addresses the need to renegotiate perceived notions of Irish identity. Once Horatio's preconceptions are undermined, he becomes more receptive to exploring and understanding the Irish people and culture. Conversely, the use of the term "wild" to describe Glorvina in the title may be subscribing to colonial ideologies; however Owenson may be drawing upon Romantic and exotic meanings of the word to sell more books.

Roche also challenges colonial ideologies in *The Children of the Abbey*. Amanda, according to Lady Euphrasia, was "picked up in the wilds of Ireland" by Lady Greystock, and is called an "ignorant Irish country girl" (Roche 2005, p.229, 231). Their perception of wild Irish landscape is displaced onto Amanda. Lady Greystock and Lady Euphrasia's words echo the colonial associations between Irishness and wildness. It probably does not matter to these characters that Amanda is in fact Welsh, as they would view another Celtic nationality with the same disdain. Lady Greystock's and Lady Euphrasia's aim in these scenes is not be overtly racist, they simply wish to demean and embarrass Amanda in front of her peers and they use colonial discourse to do this. However, Roche structures the novel so that from the beginning the reader is aware of Amanda's graceful and civilised character and Lady Euphrasia's claims have no basis in reality; Amanda is not wild even though she has Irish roots. She is described as having a "benevolent mind,"

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<sup>32</sup> The supernatural descriptions of Glorvina might undermine this point but one will recall how it is Horatio that identifies Glorvina as a supernatural being and thus it is his colonist perception of Ireland as a weird liminal zone that is being displaced onto his descriptions of Glorvina.

and “thoughtless innocence,” and is “modest” and “charming” (Roche 2005, pp.7, 58, 63, 186). Amanda is clearly educated as she regularly visits and borrows books from Tudor Hall’s library when she is in Wales. Even when Roche describes other Irish people in this novel, she does not subscribe to concepts of Irish savagery; instead, she presents a hospitable, though poverty-stricken family. For example, the Byrnes live in a hovel housing three generations of the family. They are quite poor yet still extend a welcome to Fitzalan and Amanda when they are evicted from Castle Carberry. Even though the Byrne’s house is small, Fitzalan is given a room to himself “divided from the rest of the cabin by a thin partition of wood” (Roche 2005, p.336) and the family share what food they have: “Mrs. Byrne gave them one of her fowls for dinner” (Roche 2005, p.345). After Fitzalan dies, Amanda is invited to stay in St. Catherine’s convent. These Irish women may reside in a ruin but they are presented as civilised in their humanity. As highlighted in the previous chapter, these nuns are benevolent and not the cruel women presented in other Gothic novels. In both these novels the Irish characters are presented as dignified, civilised people who are not the savages colonial ideology supposes them to be.

Owenson and Roche must also negotiate the feminization of Ireland, referred to in English colonial discourse as a sister colony which, during the period surrounding the Act of Union, came to be described as “wife” to John Bull, personification of England. Characterizing a country as female excludes this country “from the discourse of law and privileges of ownership” (Bohata 2009, p.186). However, instead of undermining the association between the colony and the feminine, or producing “a reverse discourse of over determined masculinity” (Fleming 2000, p.41), Owenson and Roche draw upon Irish antiquarian images of a feminine Ireland to empower the colony. Owenson’s strategy takes the form of the sovereignty goddess who speaks for the nation she represents. Phillip Freeman notes “the sovereignty goddess is a theme in which a divine female embodiment of the land joins with the ruler in a symbolic marriage”; she authorised the king’s rule and protected the locals and the land (Freeman 2006, p.849).

Owenson’s and Roche’s heroines can be read as part of an Irish antiquarian figure known as the sovereignty goddess. The sovereignty goddess is linked to the banshee tradition through the name *Badhbh* (Lysaght 1986, p.190), and we have already seen how

Owenson's heroines can be seen as banshee figures. While Owenson and Roche do not label their heroines as sovereignty goddesses, the similarities between the sovereignty goddess myth and Owenson's and Roche's heroines suggest that they can be seen as such. In her depiction of Glorvina, Owenson, drawing on Irish folklore, appropriates the Irish myth of the sovereignty goddess. Erin, one of the three Irish sovereignty goddesses, marries one of the Sons of Mil and bears him a child and thus begins the Milesian line in Ireland.<sup>33</sup> The similarities between this myth and Owenson's story link Glorvina to sovereignty goddess. Owenson endorses the Act of Union when Glorvina, the sovereignty goddess, agrees to marry Horatio, the colonial representative, thereby re-enacting the ancient myth which first legitimized Milesian rule of Ireland. While an official, Christian marriage is not portrayed in the novel, Glorvina and Horatio are married, unofficially, in a pagan wedding.<sup>34</sup> Owenson may be suggesting that Glorvina would prefer a pagan marriage under Brehon law, where the woman is not legally subsumed by her husband but maintains significant property and civil rights. Glorvina clearly does not wish to marry Mortimer senior, as her fainting fit demonstrates, and she is less high-spirited than earlier in the novel. Also, the final marriage scene between Horatio and Glorvina is incomplete and ambivalent. It is as if Owenson does not believe as completely in the marriage and Union as it seems up to this fateful point. By drawing on a feminised Celtic tradition, Owenson re-empowers the role of wife and Glorvina and therefore Ireland's status within the Union, indicating that Owenson would prefer to see Ireland and women as more equal partners in Union and marriage.

However, in *The Missionary*, Owenson presents a sovereignty goddess who rejects the colonizer. Luxima is initially presented as the young, beautiful and mysterious woman representative of her country and culture, a sovereignty goddess like Glorvina. However, as Hilarion attempts to convert her, ultimately placing her into a convent, both the depictions of Luxima and the Indian landscape change. Luxima has her hair shorn off, her luxurious clothes are exchanged for a rough habit, and she becomes mentally

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<sup>33</sup>In the twelfth-century *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* (Book of the Invasions of Ireland), the Sons of Mil, legendary forebears of the Irish, are met, following their arrival, by three female figures, identified as divine eponyms of the country – Banba, Fodla, and Erin. The poet-priest Amhairghin assures them that the country will take its name – *Éire* – from them, and they, in turn, prophesy that Ireland will belong to the Sons of Mil for all time (McLean 2004, p.131).

<sup>34</sup>The marriage does not necessarily have to be represented for the novel to follow a marriage plot.

unstable. The sovereignty goddess and the land are one, and as Luxima begins to reject her forced conversion, fires appear on the landscape with increasing regularity, indicative of her emotions. According to Bohata, “fire and mental illness ... [are] images to present gender and cultural crises” (Bohata 2009, p.181). Luxima’s mental state and the fires across India are therefore representative of the cultural and gender crises created by the colonial and missionary project. The Guru of Cashmire condemns Hilarion to death by fire for seducing Luxima, who is later badly burned by flames. This same fire is spread by rioters in Goa:

they scattered the blazing faggots, and, snatching the burning brands from the pile, they set on fire the light materials of which the balconies, the verandahs, and platforms were composed, till all appeared one horrid and entire conflagration.

(Owenson 2002, p.250)

The fire that consumes the sovereignty goddess is spread across the land by a revolt against colonizing forces, until India is one giant fire. The land and the sovereignty goddess are ablaze, reflecting a rejection of Hilarion and the violence of the missionary project he represents. India and therefore Ireland are represented as ablaze in revolt against the colonial and missionary projects. This outcome is quite different to *The Wild Irish Girl* and is yet further evidence of Owenson’s contradictory writing. Perhaps in this instance Owenson is writing an alternative version of *The Wild Irish Girl* to show that the colonial force can be resisted if it is unwanted by the natives.

Catherine Nash states that there are “connections between control of the female body and landscape” (Nash 1994, p.230). Because colonial domination has not yet reached the peninsula of Inismore or Glorvina; she and the landscape are wild:

Surrounded by a scenery grand even to the boldest majesty of nature, and wild even to desolation – the day’s dying splendours awfully involving in the gloomy haze of deepening twilight – the grey mists of stealing night gathering on the still faintly illumined surface of the ocean, which awfully spreading to infinitude, seemed to the limited gaze of human vision to incorporate with the heaven whose last glow it reflected – the rocks, which on every side rose to Alpine elevation, exhibiting, amidst the soft obscurity, forms savagely bold or grotesquely wild; and those finely interesting ruins which spread grandly desolate in the rear, and added a moral interest to the emotions excited by this view of nature in her most awful, touching aspect.

(Owenson 1999, p.51)



There is also an element of resistance in this passage. Phrases such as “grey mists” and “soft obscurity” suggest that it is difficult to fully capture these lands, even in prose. Horatio refers to his “limited gaze of human vision” to suggest perhaps that taking control of this land is short-sighted and may destroy this land. From the outset Ireland is depicted as an inaccessible landscape, as Horatio’s trip into Dublin Bay suggests:

The springing up of a contrary wind kept us for a considerable time beating about this enchanting coast: the weather suddenly changed. The rain poured in torrents, a storm arose, and the beautiful prospect which had fascinated our gaze, vanished in mists of impenetrable obscurity.

(Owenson 1999, p.14)

Horatio, as colonial representative, has trouble “getting a grasp on his surrounding[s]” and Kilfeather suggests that Owenson’s narrator will have problems understanding the Irish landscape and people (Kilfeather 1994, p.39). Linked to the colonial desire to control this landscape, evident from Horatio’s ancestor taking lands from the Prince of Inismore, is a desire to control the feminine and therefore Glorvina. Irish landscape is feminised through colonial discourse to naturalise masculine colonial dominance. Even though Horatio’s father has a benign motive in marrying Glorvina, his plans for her imply dominance and control:

No, it was only dictated by motives pure as the object that inspired them; it was the wish of snatching this lovely blossom from the desert[sic] where she bloomed unseen; of raising her to that circle in society her birth entitled her to and her graces were calculated to adorn; of confirming my amity with her father by the tenderest unity of interests and affections; of giving her a legally sanctioned claim on that part of her hereditary property which the suspected villainy of my steward had robbed her of; and of retributing the parent through the medium of the child.

(Owenson 1999, p.247)

Mortimer Senior does not consider Glorvina’s feelings about his plans. He would, in gothic fashion, “snatch” her away without her permission and put her on display for his society circle where she would not be seen as an equal but as a curiosity.<sup>35</sup> Mortimer Senior also claims to restore ownership of Inismore to Glorvina, but as a wife Glorvina would still not have any legal claim to these lands. In Female Gothic fiction, and in the realities of early-nineteenth century life, marriage would effectively erase Glorvina. This has repercussions for Owenson’s Glorvina-as-Ireland motif, as it would mean Ireland and

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<sup>35</sup> While Owenson performed as Glorvina in society salons she still reported that her difference made her: “both captive and captivator, able to gain admission to such circles precisely because of her exaggerated difference she represents but isolated and contained by that difference” (Kirkpatrick 1999, p.x).

Irishness would disappear in the Act of Union that Owenson portrays as a marriage, and the total colonisation of Ireland would be fulfilled.

Through different representations of the Irish landscape, Owenson and Roche found a way to comment upon England's colonial dominance in Ireland. By portraying Irish landscape as alternatively wild and domestic, and referencing the Genesis myth and Milton's *Paradise Lost* in particular, Owenson and Roche effectively "write back" to the coloniser. Owenson and Roche draw comparisons and create links between the Irish landscape and the Garden of Eden. This is a myth with particularly gothic connections, both literary and artistic.<sup>36</sup> Describing a landscape as Edenic reinforces colonial concepts of human domination as the virgin land must be conquered; however, by engaging with this colonial discourse, Owenson and Roche argue against colonial domination by showing that paradise can be destroyed by colonialism.<sup>37</sup> Owenson presents Cashmire and Connemara as Edens through intertextual references to *Paradise Lost* and by directly associating characters with Eve and Lucifer. For example, Horatio perceives this small peninsula of Ireland as Edenic:

I had scarcely entered this Eden, when the form of the Eve to whose picturesque fancy it owes so many charms, presented itself.

(Owenson 1999, p.140)

Inismore is represented as Eden as, according to Horatio, this is where the colonial influence has had the least effect and is the final area of Ireland to be colonised by a supposed "Adam". Adam, as the first man, can also be read as the first colonist as he is the first inhabitant of Eden. Glorvina claims throughout the novel that the remote peninsula of Inismore is the only place in Ireland where one will find the pure Irish character, and Horatio's guide even states that "not a drop of *Strongbonean* flowed in their [the Princes of Inismore] Irish veins" (Owenson 1999, p.38). In contrast to this, Owenson describes Wexford as:

an English colony planted by Henry the second, where scarcely any feature of the original Irish character, or any trace of the Irish language is to be found...Strongly as the ancient British character may be found extant in the natives of *Wexford and its environs*, equally pure will the primitive character of the Irish be met with in the provinces of *Connaught and Munster*.

(Owenson 1999, pp.176-177)

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<sup>36</sup> For example, Milton's influence is evident in Mary Shelley's gothic text, *Frankenstein*.

<sup>37</sup> Eden can be read as man's first colony, with Adam and Eve are the first people there.

As Eden was an idyllic landscape of God's creation, so Connemara is portrayed as the preserve of the pure Irish character and the invasion by colonial forces contaminates the Edenic landscape and the Irish character. Owenson suggests here that colonialism destroys the purity of an indigenous culture. However, this Eden is not safe as Horatio's presence suggests. English blood may enter the Milesian bloodline of the Princes of Inismore as Glorvina and Horatio marry. Even though Horatio-as-Adam's intentions are benevolent, it is inevitable that this Eden of Inismore will be tainted and corrupted just as the Eden of Genesis was inevitably lost to Adam and Eve therefore echoing the gothic themes of exile, ruin and death. Although contemporary readings of Genesis would have blamed Eve for the loss of Eden, it is clear that Horatio-as-Adam is to blame for the loss of Irish purity in Inismore, as his blood will taint the Milesian line. In this way, one can see a gender revaluation by Owenson, which shifts the blame from supposed female weakness to men's incessant need to conquer and invade.

Edenic parallels recur in *The Missionary* through Hilarion's perspectives on the landscape: "For to wander through the lovely and magnificent valley of Cashmire, was but to loiter amidst the enjoyments of Eden" (Owenson 2002, p.197). Luxima is depicted as the Eve of this landscape and is also representative of her Eden, as both the landscape and Luxima are referred to as wild. However, this "wildness" can be read as a romantic, exotic notion of wildness. Hilarion assumes the role of Adam and the entitlement to Eden and Eve that comes with the role. Hilarion belongs to a first wave of western colonial advancement into India; he becomes a master of the land as he pores over maps of the region and learns the language:

He was now equal to his undertaking; for he spoke the pure Hindu with the fluency of an educated native, and read the Shanscrit with ease and even with facility. He had made himself master of the topography of the country ... .

(Owenson 2002, p.101)

Owenson reinforces Hilarion-as-Adam's dominance of the landscape; her choice of words reflects Hilarion's sense of western superiority over the natives, especially as he has gained an exemplary knowledge of the language in such a short time. However, Hilarion is not the Adam he assumes himself to be; he is actually Lucifer. He tempts Luxima as Lucifer tempted Eve with forbidden fruit, and her willingness to follow

Horatio leads to her downfall. While Hilarion is unaware of his satanic nature, Owenson clearly identifies him as an “archangel ruined” (Owenson 2002, p.240):

In using descriptions of Satan to characterize Hilarion she locates her novel deftly in the cross play between romantic revaluations of Satan and Milton’s altogether decisive treatment of the imperial-commercial mission as satanic.

(Balachandra 1999, pp.134-135)

Hilarion is representative of the colonial project, the effect he has on one Indian is an allegory for the missionary/ colonial project’s effect on the Indian nation. The corruption and destruction of Luxima is prescient of the destruction of India through colonialism. The theme of the Fall of Man in *Paradise Lost* and Genesis could be considered as ill-omens of ruin, death and destruction and thus Owenson’s novel is a warning to both the coloniser and the colonised against the imperial project.

The invocation of the genesis myth is present in Roche’s work also. She alludes to Adam and Eve in *The Children of the Abbey* and quotes from Milton’s *Paradise Lost* in both this novel and *Clermont*. In *The Children of the Abbey* Oscar and Adela are represented as Adam and Eve in the Eden of Woodlawn estate with Colonel Belgrave playing the role of Lucifer. Adela from when she is introduced in chapter eleven is hardly mentioned without a reference to apples. Woodlawn is presented as an Eden where the soldiers enjoy in a few days’ revelry, with food and entertainment provided:

A fine basket of apples, and some delicious cider, was brought to Oscar, and he found his entertainer as hospitable in disposition as she was pleasing in conversation ... Adela, so was the charming young stranger called, chattered in the most lively and familiar terms, and at last running over to the basket, tossed the apples all about the table, and picking out the finest presented them to Oscar ... Oscar snatching the bonnet from the ground, Adela flung apples into it, observing it would make an excellent basket ... “Well my friend,” cried she, “do you think you shall find the General’s fruit as tempting as mine?” “Ah!” exclaimed Oscar, half sighing, half smiling, “Hesperian fruit, I fear, which I can never hope to obtain.”

(Roche 2005, pp.97, 98, 99, 102)

Adela is associated with Eve as she tempts Oscar with her fruit, which has a double meaning here. Roche reinforces the mythic nature of this association by referring to Adela’s fruit as Hesperian, that is, from Hesperia, which in Greek mythology, is an island in the far west (like Ireland), containing trees which bear golden apples that are guarded

by nymphs.<sup>38</sup> This reinforces the sexual undertones of Adela's interaction with Oscar, as the fruit symbolizes her sexuality as well as Satan and Eve's temptation of man. Colonel Belgrave is depicted as Satan as he lures Adela away from Oscar and Oscar is then banished from Woodlawn/Eden by General Honeywood for his apparent rejection of Adela. Although the focus is on the love triangle between Oscar, Adela and Colonel Belgrave, one cannot ignore the presence of the English army and their occupation of Ireland. Through these Edenic allusions, Woodlawn as Eden as Ireland is presented as domesticated and civilised by the English occupying force. Instead of the wilderness of Eden, provides the setting here. Mara Miller claims that:

the distinction between the garden and the wild can only be one of degree ... [and] ... the garden represents a consistent attempt precisely to control ... .

(Miller 1993, p.162).

The orchard is an image of human order posed upon a previously uncultivated landscape, and in this novel it is a metaphor for the imposition of English order upon the uncivilised Irish population. It could also be read as a reference to how Irish agricultural wealth was appropriated by English colonial forces to increase the Empire's wealth

Woodlawn as Eden, as a space dominated by colonial forces is a metaphor for Ireland in this novel, but when one invokes the concept of Eden, the associated Fall is inevitable. Both Oscar and Colonel Belgrave fall into ruin in this novel, anticipating the eventual fall of colonial dominance in Woodlawn and Ireland. This gothic theme haunts any literary Edenic allusions, and this is evident in Owenson's and Roche's novels. It may be suggested that Owenson and Roche predict an end in these novels to English colonial dominance in Ireland.

### **Building new relationships with the landscape**

English ideologies of a feminine and savage Ireland attempt to reinforce Irish inferiority. Through their descriptions of gothic sublime landscape, Owenson and Roche attempt to change popular perceptions of Ireland from a savage colony to an equal member of the Union. First, Owenson attempts to present Ireland as a location equal in sublimity to parts

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<sup>38</sup> For more information on the Hesperia myth see <http://www.mythindex.com/greek-mythology/H/Hesperides.html>

of continental Europe. This is achieved by comparing the Irish landscape to the works of continental sublime artists:

During the eighteenth century, painters consciously represented such sublime landscapes as the locus of the divine. The most widely known and imitated of these was the Italian painter Salvator Rosa, who peopled his scenes of Alpine desolation wither with gaunt, fervently praying or crucified saints or with banditti lurking to attack innocent travellers. Such English and German landscape artists such as Joseph Wright ... John Martin, Caspar David Friedrich and Phillipe de Louterberg extended the landscape of the sublime to Welsh and Scottish mountains ... .

(Mellor 1993, p.86)

In literature Owenson and Roche extend the landscape of the sublime to Celtic landscapes, as do Wright, Martin Friedrich and de Louterberg. In *The Wild Irish Girl*, Horatio describes the Irish landscape to his friend in terms of the sublime and beautiful:

To him who derives gratification from the embellished labours of art, rather than the simple but sublime operations of nature, *Irish* scenery will afford little interest; but the bold features of its varying landscape, the stupendous attitude of its ‘cloud-capt’ mountains, the impervious gloom of its deep embosomed glens, the savage desolation of its uncultivated heaths, and boundless bogs, with those rich veins of a picturesque champagne, thrown at intervals into gay expansion by the hand of nature, awaken in the mind of the poetic or pictorial traveller, all the pleasures of tasteful enjoyment, all the sublime emotions of a rapt imagination.

(Owenson 1999, p.18)

Horatio repeats the word sublime and picturesque emphasising how the Irish landscape can be considered sublime. Ireland is not just another picturesque destination but has gothic qualities. Owenson consciously draws upon the vogue for the gothic by describing Irish landscape as having “bold features” and “the stupendous attitude of its ‘cloud-capt’ mountains” which may stimulate a masculine sublime experience. Owenson also invokes the obscurity of Burke’s sublime through “the impervious gloom of its deep embosomed glens”. In Ireland “the poetic or pictorial traveller” will see sights to inspire the imagination just as he would in Continental Europe. In his descriptions of a sublime Irish landscape, Horatio invokes the names of artists such as Salvator Rosa and Claude Lorraine to show that Ireland’s landscape is equal in sublimity and beauty to that of mainland Europe:

And if the glowing fancy of Claude Lorraine would have dwelt enraptured on the paradisial charms of English landscape, the superior genius of Salvator Rosa would have reposed its eagle wing

amidst those scenes of mysterious sublimity, with which the wildly magnificent landscape of Ireland abounds.

(Owenson 1999, p.18)

Kathryn Kirkpatrick comments on this:

Horatio here elevates Irish landscapes over English ones by positing painters adequate to paint each. The French painter Claude Lorrain (1600-82) is suited to English landscapes, but the 'superior genius' of the Italian painter Salvator Rosa (1615-73) is required for Ireland. Horatio's tastes reflect those of Sydney Owenson, who documented her admiration for the Italian painter in her biography *The Life and Times of Salvator Rosa* (1824). As Owenson's own biographer, Mary Campbell, observes, Rosa's Romantic Italian scenery 'synthesized with the scenery of the West of Ireland in her landscape of the imagination' (London 1988, p.33).

(Kirkpatrick 1999, p.255)

By associating Irish landscape with Rosa's art, Owenson suggests that Ireland's scenery is just as worthy of the painter's attention as other locations across Europe. Kirkpatrick also highlights how Horatio's assertion of Irish landscape's superiority above the English. English colonial discourses always depict every aspect of Ireland and Irishness as inferior to England and Englishness but in this scene Owenson shows how Ireland is superior to England, thus undermining English colonial assertions about Ireland. Rosa was a seventeenth-century Italian painter who "was adopted as a hero by painters of the Romantic movement in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries" (The National Gallery 2002).<sup>39</sup> Rosa's landscapes inspired Ann Radcliffe to recreate his paintings, and Owenson clearly had a deep interest in Rosa's work also. By referencing these artists, Owenson associates high culture with Ireland, thus further undermining colonial concepts of Ireland as a savage place. She also exoticises the Irish landscape to attract English popular interest in Ireland, in the hopes that the English will take an interest in the welfare of Ireland.

Through her descriptions of Irish landscape, Owenson also participates in the promotion of Ireland as a location for British tourism. In the eighteenth century:

wild nature and scenic beauty claimed greater attention as the aesthetic of the picturesque began to make its way through English and European culture.

(Hadfield and McVeagh 1994, p.238)

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<sup>39</sup> For more on Rosa's work visit <http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/artists/salvator-rosa>

Owenson capitalises upon this trend by including many passages devoted to the description of Ireland as a picturesque and gothic sublime land. British travellers would usually travel to the European continent to view picturesque scenery, but in the early nineteenth century Napoleon had effectively “closed the Continent to the English” (Hadfield and McVeagh 1994, p.238). Owenson takes the opportunity to promote Ireland as a landscape equal in beauty to that of continental Europe to attract English tourists and to hopefully change perceptions of Ireland as a savage outpost on the edge of Europe. In doing this Owenson may be attempting to negotiate a new kind of relationship between Britain and Ireland. Instead of being a source of wealth, Ireland as part of the Union could function as a “holiday” resort for the British. Tourism could bring wealth back into the Irish economy. Owenson effectively uses the gothic genre and its massive readership to promote Irish tourism abroad. She does this by presenting Ireland as a gothic setting with sublime landscape and as a location to study Irish antiquarianism. While the English were excluded from continental Europe at this time, Ireland as seen through *The Wild Irish Girl* would seem an ideal holiday location for the British Gothic enthusiast, amateur antiquarian or landscape artist.

Roche also makes the Irish landscape appear attractive to the British reader in *The Children of the Abbey* by drawing upon Irish gothic characteristics of antiquarianism and Catholophilia and portraying the Irish landscape as sublime. Among the Irish locations Roche presents are Dublin and Enniskillen:

By the dawn of the next morning the vessel entered Dublin, and Fitzalan shortly after brought Amanda from the cabin to contemplate a scene which far surpassed all her ideas of sublimity and beauty, a scene which the rising sun soon heightened to the most glowing radiance.

(Roche 2005, p.92)

Roche describes Dublin Bay in terms of the sublime and beautiful, yet this is not just another sublime scene; it is *the* sublime scene as it surpasses Amanda’s concepts of the sublime and beautiful. Roche then presents Enniskillen and Woodlawn as idyllic pastoral landscapes and “the inhabitants of the town hospitable and polite” (Roche 2005, p.96). Roche advertises Ireland’s gothic landscape at Woodlawn where an island in the middle of a lake contained:

the ruins of an ancient building, which, from the venerable remains of its gothic elegance, was most probably, in the days of religious enthusiasm, the seat of sacred piety: the old trees in groups



formed a thick canopy overhead, and the ivy that crept along the walls filled up many of the niches where the windows had formerly been; those that still remained open, by descending to the ground, afforded a most enchanting prospect of the lake; the long succession of arches, which composed the main body of the chapel, were in many places covered in creeping moss . . . .

(Roche 2005, p.102)

In this passage Roche capitalises upon the gothic by advertising Ireland's antiquarian ruins. She exploits British and Protestant Catholophilia by combining religious and gothic elements into one ruin. After reading this passage one may be interested in visiting such a place to indulge in gothic, romantic scenery. This scene is also made "safe" for the potential British tourist as Woodlawn is owned by General Honeywood who has at his command a battalion of the British Army.

As well as renegotiating the colonial relationship between Britain and Ireland, Owenson and Roche attempt to renegotiate gender relationships with nature. This could have an impact upon the colonial relationship between Britain and Ireland as this relationship is also gendered through the John Bull/ Hibernia symbolism. Owenson and Roche engage with the sublime to do this. While female characters in these novels have a kinship with nature, male characters are often placed in opposition to nature, attempting to dominate the landscape, an activity that is central to colonialism. Owenson and Roche present the benefits of an affinity with the land through the feminine sublime. Mellor claims that female Celtic authors engage with the feminine sublime in a unique manner:

The second tradition of the female sublime is located in those women writers who grew up in Scotland or Ireland or Wales, surrounded by the mountainous landscapes explicitly celebrated as sublime by numerous English writers and painters. For these writers ... sublime landscapes are home scenery, the location of blissful childhood memories. Confronting magnificent mountains and lakes, their characters experience a heightened sensibility, not of anxiety, but of love, reverence, and mutual relationship. Often their protagonists respond to a mountainous landscape or a radiant sunset with the same loss of ego or consciousness ... But for these women writers, this experience brings with it no oedipal anxiety, no recognition of human frailty or mortality. Instead, they represent it as a flowing out, an ecstatic experience of co-participation in a nature they explicitly gender as female. For them, this female nature is a *female friend*, a sister, with whom they share their most intimate experiences and with whom they cooperate in the daily business of life, to the mutual advantage of each.

(Mellor 1993, pp.96-97)

Mellor's description of the Celtic mode of the feminine sublime can be found in Owenson's and Roche's novels. We have already seen how Owenson draws comparisons between the Irish landscape and sublime artwork. These part-Celtic women writers who grew up in Ireland include scenes where their Celtic heroines view and experience nature in the manner Mellor describes. Mellor's identification of this mode of the sublime could be considered as characteristic of novels identified as Irish Female Gothic fiction. In Chapter One and Two I showed how Owenson and Roche engage with the masculine, negative sublime in their novels to locate their work within the Gothic genre. Owenson and Roche also write scenes where their heroes and heroines experience a positive feminine Celtic mode of the sublime to show how a less antagonistic relationship between man and land, and between coloniser and colony may be mutually beneficial.

Roche first shows how Celtic women, who grew up surrounded by sublime landscape benefit from a positive relationship between nature and human. Amanda Fitzalan delights in the scenery of her Welsh home; it is the site of her childhood memories:

[Amanda's disposition] delighted equally in the sublime and the beautiful ... Spontaneous praise burst from the lips of Amanda, and she felt all that calm and sweet delight which ever pervades a mind of religion and sensibility on viewing the rural beauties of nature.

(Roche 2005, p.5, 489)

In keeping with Mellor's definition, Amanda suffers no oedipal anxiety or awareness of her mortality; instead she is calmed and soothed by the sublime surroundings. This continues throughout *The Children of the Abbey* as female characters share their intimate experiences with different aspects of nature. Amanda's mother loved to walk by the sea, and Amanda and Mrs. Duncan indulge their sorrows when they walk by the sea.

[Malvina's] favourite avocations often detained her from her room; or else she wandered out, about the romantic rocks on the sea-shore ... She [Amanda] explored all the romantic paths about the house; but the one she chiefly delighted to take was that which led to the sea. She loved to ramble about the beach; when fatigued to sit down upon the fragment of rock and look towards the opposite shore ... .

(Roche 2005, p.440)

Mrs. Duncan and Amanda develop a bond from their common interest of rambling by the sea to indulge their sorrows. In this instance the ocean is a friend who quietly listens, does not judge or reveal her secrets. The vastness of the ocean does not overwhelm these

women; instead they find supportive female relationships based upon understanding. Glorvina also experiences this “co-participation with nature” (Mellor 1993, p.96-97) as she often takes long walks around the Inismore peninsula and is also knowledgeable of all the healing plants in the area. In contrast to this beneficial relationship women have with nature, Owenson describes a relationship between man and nature that is confrontational.

Two of Owenson’s heroes, Hilarion and Horatio, stand opposed to nature at the start of their respective stories. These men view nature as an enemy, but through their trials they either submit to the dominance of nature or learn to love the land. Hilarion stands opposed to nature for most of the novel; he also rejects “feminine” emotions of love for Luxima.<sup>40</sup> Owenson frames this relationship as a battle between Hilarion and the natural world:

[He] sighed to retire to some boundless desert, to live superior to nature, and to nature’s laws, beyond the power of temptation, and the possibility of error; to subdue, alike, the human weaknesses and the human passion ... .

(Owenson 2002, p.73)

Hilarion equates human weaknesses and passion with nature and wishes to be above them, god-like, but the problems he encounters in India challenge this opinion of himself. Hilarion nearly dies from exhaustion and dehydration in the journey to Goa, making him recognise that he is subject to his environment and therefore nature. Horatio’s feelings for Luxima also challenge his will to control his natural human emotions. This passage also highlights how Hilarion is afraid to be human, afraid to be dominated by human emotions and nature. In this sense Hilarion engages with the masculine sublime where he attempts to gain control over something very powerful that threatens to consume him. Hilarion eventually submits to the dominance of nature as he retires to live in the jungles of Cashmire as his love and grief for Luxima engulf him:

Nature, reclaiming her rights, unopposed by the immediate influence of the world, now taught him to feel her power, through the medium of the most omnipotent of her passions.

(Owenson 2002, p.145)

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<sup>40</sup> It is worth noting that Owenson displaces descriptions of wildness from the natives to emotions in *The Missionary*. Being “wild” denotes an inability to control something and Horatio feels in control of India as he has learned the language and mapped the landscape; however, he is not in control of his or Luxima’s emotions leading to him labeling feelings as “wild”.

Nature forces Hilarion to acknowledge her power over him – he is mortal and human and as such subject to nature and emotions. His attempt to dominate nature fails and Hilarion struggles to accept that nature, gendered as female, has power over him. Through Hilarion, Owenson shows how destructive the male ego can be to men.

In *The Wild Irish Girl* Owenson shows us the benefits of accepting one's place as part of the natural world. Horatio is at first opposed to the land his father banishes him to:

I myself will become your partner in exile, for it is to my estate in Ireland I *banish* you for the summer.

(Owenson 1999, p.6)

Ireland is depicted here as a place of exile for the English, where men can no longer enjoy the benefits and luxuries of English society. However, during his exile in Ireland, Horatio finds himself, he discovers his true identity:

Thus suddenly withdrawn from the world's busiest haunts, its hackneyed modes, its vicious pursuits, and unimportant avocations – dropt as it were amidst scenes of mysterious sublimity- alone- on the wildest shores of the greatest ocean of the universe; immersed amidst the decaying monuments of past ages; still viewing in recollection such forms, such manners, such habits (as I had lately beheld), which to the worldly mind may be well supposed to belong to a race long passed beyond the barrier of existence, with 'the years beyond the flood,' ... While the novel train of thought which stole on my mind seemed to seize its tone from the awful tranquillity by which I was surrounded, and I remained leaning on the fragment of a rock, as the waves dashed idly against its base, until their dark heads were silvered by the rising moon ... My soul, for the first time, had here held communion with herself; the 'lying vanities' of life no longer intoxicated my sense, appeared to for the first time in their genuine aspect, and my heart still fondly loitered over those scenes of solemn interest, where some of its best feelings had been called into existence.

(Owenson 1999, pp.51-52)

Horatio has a sublime experience here that connects him with his authentic self.

Separated from England's "busy haunts", "hackneyed modes" and "vicious pursuits", and placed in a landscape that reflects his isolation (a peninsula on an island on the western edge of Europe), Horatio is provided with the space to acknowledge his true self. He does not engage with the masculine sublime in this setting; instead, Horatio's relationship to the landscape is more reminiscent of the feminine sublime. He is "immersed" in the landscape, rather than struggling to escape. This contrasts with Hilarion's constant struggle with nature. When a man accepts his place in the world as subject to nature and part of nature, he finds his true self like Horatio. Living opposed to the natural world

places man in turmoil as he struggles against his own nature and the world around him, like Hilarion. In this manner Owenson also interrogates the patriarchal associations between women and nature and men and culture. She identifies Luxima and Glorvina as women who see nature as a friend and are in harmony with their surroundings and then shows us through Horatio, the benefits, and Hilarion the hardships, to be endured if one accepts his place in the natural world, or rejects it. Through the feminine sublime, Owenson attempts to show men the benefits of being part of nature instead of trying to dominate it. By creating a closer relationship between men and landscape, the exclusivist rhetoric of associating women with nature and men with culture is undermined.

The domination that the masculine sublime aspires to resonates with aspects of the colonial project. Colonialism is also an attempt to dominate a landscape. Within colonial discourse restructuring gendered relationships to nature could restructure the colonial relationship to the colony. Owenson seems to be suggesting that if colonial forces were to have a feminine sublime relationship to the landscape, that is, if Britain was to be in partnership, in a true union with Ireland, both the Irish and British would benefit. Certainly, the way in which Owenson and Roche address issues of Irish identity, gender, and landscape are to benefit those subjugated Irish and women. By subverting colonial ideologies and empowering the feminine representations of Ireland through elements of Irish Gothic antiquity and the feminine sublime, Owenson and Roche present a positive and dignified Irish and feminine identity as equal to their supposed English and masculine superiors.

## Conclusion

Siobhán Kilfeather asks: “Is the Gothic always the nightmare of the oppressor, or can it be a vehicle for dissent from below?” (Kilfeather 2006, p.91). From my detailed study of four gothic texts I suggest that reading Owenson’s and Roche’s novels as Irish Female Gothic fiction, registers the nightmare of the oppressed, rather than the oppressor, and that these are not just vehicles for dissent but voices suggesting the need for change from below. The oppressed in this instance are women and the Gaelic-Irish, and Owenson and Roche register in these novels how both sections of Irish society around 1800 were subjugated by the English and men respectively.

Both Irish and English women were subject to patriarchal law which imprisoned them in the domestic sphere to ensure male control over female sexuality, and also excluded them from the political world. The marginalized position of women at this time may have influenced a gendered split in Irish Gothic fiction. Typically in Irish Gothic fiction one finds a theme of fear of marginalization; however, as Owenson and Roche as women are already marginalized, this theme is not present in their work. This is but one of the many ways studies of Irish Gothic fiction devoted to male-authored texts have overlooked women’s contribution to the genre. Either this theme is not characteristic of Irish Gothic fiction or critics need to take a more nuanced approach, that is, to consider gender when studying Irish gothic fiction, just as one considers gender when discussing more mainstream Gothic texts.

Similarly, Owenson’s and Roche’s approach to presenting Catholicism in their novels deviates from supposed standard norms of Irish Gothic fiction. Instead of demonising Catholicism like their male counterparts, Owenson and Roche portray Catholicism and Irish Catholics in a benign light, perhaps because of their shared disenfranchised position. There was no need for women writers to participate in the practice of demonising Catholicism as these women were excluded, like the Catholic-Irish from the realms of power. Women in Ireland, whether they were Gaelic-Irish, Anglo-Irish or Ascendancy had no power structure to maintain through religious oppression like their male counterparts. In this manner gender difference once again influences the way women in Ireland write gothic fiction.

Siobhán Kilfeather states:

At the period when an English national identity appeared to be consolidating itself under a Whig hegemony, the metropolitan colonies experienced a surge of resistance to that consolidation, and that this resistance was not only articulated from the position of those groups which were excluded from political and social power, but also erupted within the governing classes. One site of ideological fissure in late eighteenth-century Ireland is gothic fiction.

(Kilfeather 1994, p.36)

Owenson's and Roche's writing epitomizes what Kilfeather describes here. As women, Owenson and Roche were excluded from political and social power and they were arguably part of the governing classes. By writing in a gothic mode Owenson and Roche participated in the resistance to English dominance. Their Irish Gothic fiction was a voice for dissent from below and it took the form of the heroine. Not only is she the focus of the story, but she is also the site of Owenson's and Roche's engagement with the cult of sensibility. Clearly aware of this cultural and literary trend, these writers alter certain aspects of the traditional sensibility heroine to highlight Irish issues such as the widespread poverty among the Gaelic-Irish. By focusing the novel upon a female protagonist, Owenson and Roche's novels deviate from traditional Irish Gothic fiction and are more in line with Female Gothic norms. This shows how Owenson's and Roche's work cannot be considered as either Irish or Female Gothic in current studies. To fully understand these novels we must accept their differences and hybridity and the label Irish Female Gothic fiction provides this. Owenson's and Roche's heroines are surprisingly mobile which is unusual in Female Gothic texts where the heroine is often imprisoned. Glorvina's, Luxima's, Amanda's and Madeline's mobility, I suggest are part of an imagined version of the Grand Tour for women at this time. Their mobility can also reflect the pre-marital, pre-sexual lives of the heroine. When the heroines are married they are imprisoned within the domestic realm. This adventure, travelling across countries and countryside, is reminiscent of the Grand Tour, one last adventure, one last experience of freedom before the heroine is effectively shackled to the domestic and maternal realm. This is a characteristic of Owenson's and Roche's work that diverges from established Female Gothic or Irish Gothic traits, hence showing the need for an alternative category to describe gothic works written by women with a significant claim to Ireland.

Owenson deliberately portrays her heroines to evoke a nationalist sensibility, and to register native suffering under an oppressive colonial regime. Three of these writer's heroines can be interpreted as participating in a performative nationalism as sovereignty goddess figures. This trope engages with discursive problems experienced by the native Irish as they are presented as savage, feminine and weak in English pro-colonial literature. Owenson and Roche empower their heroines through a process of performative nationalism. As these heroines are representative of their nations or culture, the authority of the sovereignty goddess symbol undermines colonial discourses which portray the natives as weak.

Identity is another concern present in these novels, this stems from the erosion of Celtic culture in the British Union. The heroine in Owenson's and Roche's novel is the focus of these identity issues. Owenson's heroines participate in a performative nationalism to communicate their heritage and culture through the clothes they wear. In this manner, Owenson's heroines battle against the threatened erasure of their cultural identity by the colonial projects in Ireland and India. While Roche's heroines do not participate in performative nationalism, she focuses upon the heroine's ancestry to raise issues of identity. Amanda has Irish and Scottish ancestry, yet she claims to be Welsh. This emphasises the Celtic nature of Amanda's character, and through her noble attempts to struggle through various gothic horrors in *The Children of the Abbey*, she asserts a dignified Celtic identity in the face of a colonial discourse that would identify her as savage. Madeline's mysterious ancestry is the focus of *Clermont*. By denying her knowledge of her Irish mother, Clermont excludes Madeline from her Irish heritage. Because Madeline is unaware of her true ancestry, she is subjected to many gothic horrors throughout the novel. A clear sense of identity it seems is pertinent to Owenson's and Roche's heroines as their Celtic identities are constantly under the threat of erasure from men and male structures, such as Madeline's father and Horatio-as-England in *The Wild Irish Girl*.

In Chapter One I demonstrated how Owenson's and Roche's novels can be read as part of a Gothic and Irish Gothic tradition, however, certain deviations from Irish Gothic characteristics present in their texts mean that Owenson and Roche are omitted from current Irish Gothic studies. Christina Morin suggests that:



Current criticism of the Gothic novel often appears equally concerned with categorization, engaging in similar acts of convention-identification that frequently do injustice both to the unique features of a given Gothic text and to the hybridity of Gothic fiction as a whole. Combined with critical attention to the national tale and historical novel, this continued urge to label, categorize, and circumscribe the literary Gothic arguably explains why early Irish Gothic fiction remains relatively unexplored: late eighteenth-century Irish Gothic novels largely fail to conform to the parameters established by twentieth-and twenty-first-century literary criticism.

(Morin 2011, p.82)

Such an observation is pertinent to existing studies of Owenson's and Roche's novels too. While Owenson's and Roche's novels can be read as part of other literary traditions, this is not reason enough to omit them from Irish Gothic studies. My thesis suggests another reason for this omission: gender. As women, Owenson and Roche had a different experience of living in Ireland compared with their male counterparts, and it is for this reason that their novels often differ from the parameters of established Irish Gothic criticism.

This thesis is limited by my focus on four works by two writers and as such, it is just a step towards developing a broader understanding of Irish Gothic fiction written by women. This study could be expanded by considering the entire range of Owenson's and Roche's work, in particular, Roche's novels after 1820, as these novels focus more upon Irish issues. To identify more fully the characteristics of Irish Female Gothic of this period, one would need to engage in an in-depth study of their writing and other writers of the period such as Maria Edgeworth. However, my thesis may provide a starting point for such a study, just as Siobhán Kilfeather's article was the starting point for my own project.

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