I

Gothic temporalities: ‘Gothicism’, ‘historicism’, and the overlap of fictional modes from Thomas Leland to Walter Scott

In 1762, Thomas Leland, a Church of Ireland clergyman, historian, and Professor of Oratory at Trinity College Dublin, published his only novel, *Longsword, Earl of Salisbury*. Praised by *The Critical Review* as ‘a new and agreeable species of writing, in which the beauties of poetry, and the advantages of history are happily united’, *Longsword* enjoyed both favourable reviews and popular acclaim. It was reprinted in 1763, 1766, 1775, and 1790, and twice adapted for the stage as *The Countess of Salisbury*. Yet, the novel remains little read today. In its twinned contemporary approbation and current neglect, *Longsword* stands in direct contrast to Walpole’s *The castle of Otranto* (1764), which famously provoked controversy, especially on the publication of its revised second edition, and now enjoys the relatively uncontested reputation as the *first* British gothic novel. However, it is worth remembering that Walpole’s tale and its self-description as ‘a Gothic story’ appeared in a context in which several, often competing connotations of the term gothic held wide sway in the British popular imagination. It also bears repeating that, in Walpole’s wake, very few writers adopted the terminology ‘gothic’ to describe their fiction, defying the common critical assumption that Walpole began a new literary craze with *Otranto* and, thus, gave birth to ‘the Gothic novel’ as we now know it. Such thinking fosters a neat and compartmentalised notion of the literary gothic and late eighteenth-century fiction as a whole that is at odds with the reality. The unfortunate effect is the marginalisation of texts such as *Longsword* that eschewed Walpole’s overt supernaturalism while pursuing a similar critical exploration of the fraught transition from pre-modernity to modernity.

Compellingly identified by Montague Summers as an important example of ‘historical gothic’ fiction, *Longsword* unsettles many of the expectations
we now have for ‘the Gothic novel’: the tale is primarily set in England, during the reign of Henry III (r. 1216–72); there are no ghosts, goblins, or witches, and the anti-Catholic element of the story focuses not so much on the abuses of the Church but on a kind of institutional corruption that is seen to plague even the highest realms of the nation. In fact, much of the narrative appears to function as a veiled political commentary, lamenting the weakness of a monarch who has allowed himself to be governed completely by an evil minion and urging the return to ‘a wise and virtuous rule’ rooted in England’s long history of liberty. The restitution of such a rule and the king’s regained sovereignty by the novel’s conclusion indicates Leland’s concern with the past as providing essential lessons for the present, particularly in terms of governmental rule and the security of individual rights and liberties.

With its central interest in British history’s relevance to contemporary society, *Longsword* has readily lent itself to analysis as an early example of the historical novel more commonly associated with Sir Walter Scott. The gothic elements of the text indicated by Summers’ terminology have less frequently garnered attention. Rolf and Magda Loeber describe *Longsword* as a pre-*Otranto* gothic novel owing to its inclusion of ‘the odious monk, Reginald, the sire of an unholy brood of monastic fiends and baronial tyrants, who appears in scenes of suspense and terror’. A more convincing argument for *Longsword*‘s ‘gothicism’ lies precisely in the novel’s ‘historicism’. *Longsword*‘s use of history compellingly speaks to contemporary perceptions of Gothic as evocative of the past, its people, and its traditions. In this, Leland’s tale underlines the cross-formal and cross-generic nature of gothic literature as it developed in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Investigating *Longsword* as an early example of either historical or gothic fiction, not both, does an injustice to the text. It also effectively misunderstands the overlap of historical and gothic literary modes in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The same is arguably true for *The castle of Otranto*. Condemned for its excesses and overt supernaturalism, the second edition of *Otranto* was associated with a misleading depiction of the past and its relationship to the present. This was the primary source of concern for critics, as noted in this book’s introduction: that *Otranto*‘s depiction of history might yield misconceptions about Walpole’s contemporary England. Even in its first edition, *Otranto* was understood primarily by way of its relationship to
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the past and viewed as a kind of antiquarian curio that could reveal much about a bygone society and culture. Tellingly, Scott spoke of *Otranto* with particular reference to its ‘accurate display of human character’ and its faithful depiction of ‘domestic life and manners, during the feudal times, as might actually have existed.’ As Maxwell contends, Scott understood *Otranto* as ‘a landmark experiment in the practice of antiquarian historical fiction.’ In turn, Maxwell argues, *Otranto* became a crucial influence in the construction of history in Scott’s own novels.

Thanks to Scott’s pronounced hesitancy to acknowledge his literary influences, the significance of the gothic historicism of texts such as *Longsword* and *Otranto* goes relatively unnoticed. Critical attention to Scott has encouraged the perception of him as the uncontested progenitor of a new genre – the historical novel – notwithstanding the fact that, as Katie Trumpener observes, ‘most of the conceptual innovations attributed to Scott were in 1814 already established commonplaces of the British novel.’ Georg Lukács simultaneously termed *The castle of Otranto* ‘the most famous “historical novel” of the eighteenth century’ and dismissed Walpole’s treatment of history as ‘mere costumery’ brooking no comparison with the depiction of historical character in Scott’s novels. Subsequent scholarship has generally followed suit, proclaiming Scott the creator, *ex nihilo*, of the historical novel with the publication of *Waverley* (1814). In this scenario, the historicism of Walpole’s text is categorised as different in kind from that of Scott’s historical novel. Correspondingly, any gothic elements evident in Scott’s fiction are accidental, rather than symptomatic of the convergence of historical and gothic modes in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Against the abjuration of influence enacted by Scott and modern scholarship alike, this chapter traces the vital inherence of gothic and historical modes from roughly 1762 to 1825. The first section of the chapter focuses on *Otranto* and *Longsword* as specific interventions into contemporary discourse concerning history, historiography, and the transition to modernity. Rather than view such engagement with the past as confined to a later historical fiction tradition more commonly associated with Scott, this section insists that the largely retrospective distinction between late eighteenth-century historical and gothic fiction is misleading. Both *Longsword* and *Otranto*, it argues, demonstrate how inherently intertwined these terms and the literary forms they have come to connote were for
their authors and contemporary society. Both texts similarly underline the very different notions of the term gothic late eighteenth-century writers had in comparison to twentieth- and twenty-first-century constructions. Comparative analysis of these texts as at once gothic and historical thus provides a fresh perspective on the origins of British gothic literature. This is true not just in its re-integration of Leland’s tale into the literary history of the gothic, but also in its suggestion of a more nuanced understanding of the formal, generic, and ideological fluidity that produced the literary gothic.

The second section of this chapter further examines the intersection of historical and gothic modes in the eighteenth century, evaluating several texts that might be seen as the direct inheritors of the historical gothicism of *Longsword* and *The castle of Otranto*. Published primarily in the period between *The castle of Otranto* and what has been called ‘the effulgence of Gothic’ that occurred in the 1790s¹³ these texts defy the prevalent belief that the literary gothic lay relatively dormant in the 1770s and 1780s.¹⁴ Fully engaged in negotiating the relationship between the present and the Gothic past – social, cultural, and political – these texts, including Anne Fuller’s *Alan Fitz-Osborne* (1789) and the works of James White (1759–99), beginning with *Earl Strongbow* (1789), demonstrate that Irish authors in the wake of Leland and Walpole routinely queried the meaning of a Gothic heritage to eighteenth-century Britain.

The final section of the chapter considers the mutable boundaries between gothic and historical modes in fiction produced from 1814 and the ostensible introduction of ‘the historical novel’ onwards. Anne H. Stevens argues that gothic and historical fiction began markedly to differentiate themselves by the 1790s, when ‘two separate traditions with two different and recognizable sets of features’ had emerged. As a result of this process of distinction, Stevens contends, what Scott really develops with his Waverley novels is a discrete ‘novelistic subgenre’, identifiable, despite variations and experimentation, by a specific set of characteristics that helps distinguish it from other forms of prose fiction.¹⁵ Nevertheless, Stevens admits, the ‘generic features’ associated with historical and gothic fiction continue to ‘overlap’, even after the two forms had become unique in the late eighteenth century.¹⁶ This sustained formal intersection emphasises the continuity between historical gothic fictions of the latter half of the eighteenth century and those of Scott and his contemporaries. It also encourages a reassessment of traditional paradigms of the development of the novel in contemporary Ireland. Conventional arguments insist that
the historical novel as exemplified by the Waverley novels never found a successful Irish expression thanks to historical, political, and cultural circumstances that rendered Scott’s conservative narrative of progress abortive. However, as this chapter demonstrates, Scott’s fictions reveal a similar take on the Gothic past as that found in several important, if overlooked, examples of early nineteenth-century Irish fiction.

**HORACE WALPOLE, THOMAS LELAND, AND THE GOTHIC PAST**

By the time he published *Longsword* in 1762, Thomas Leland had already established himself as a serious man of letters, editing, with John Stoke, *The Philippic Orations of Demosthenes* (1754), translating Demosthenes’s *Orations* (1756–60), and publishing *A history of the life and reign of Philip, King of Macedon* (1758). In this context, Leland’s only novel is often presented as generically closer to historiography than fiction, an assessment in keeping with Leland’s own advertisement of *Longsword* as a kind of history-writing. The preface to the novel, in fact, claims that ‘[t]he out-lines of the following story; and some of the incidents and more minute circumstances, are to be found in the antient English historians’ (*Longsword*, vol. 1, [p. iv]). Contemporary criticism of the novel eagerly adopted Leland’s own emphasis on historical truths, praising the novel’s foundation ‘on real facts’ and dismissing its reference to itself as a ‘romance’ as generically inappropriate and far too ‘modest’.17 Although Leland refrained from detailing his source material, his use of ‘identifiable historical sources’ is clear, as Maxwell observes.18 The resulting ‘sense of chronology’ evident in *Longsword* bears comparison with that of preceding historical prose fiction by writers such as Madame de Lafayette (1634–93), Courtilz de Sandras (1644–1712), and the abbé Prévost (1697–1763).19 It also seemed to invite reviews that focused on the novel’s historical content and praised it for its edifying recourse to the past. Naming *Longsword* ‘a new and agreeable species of writing’, *The Critical Review* underlined the novel’s informative and instructive historicism: ‘The story of this romance (as he modestly entitles it) is founded on real facts, and without doing any great violence to truth, pleases the imagination, at the same time that it improves the heart’.20 Similarly, the *Monthly Review* recommended *Longsword* as a tale in which ‘[t]he truth of history is artfully interwoven with agreeable fictions, and interesting episodes’ in such a way ‘that no species of writing could amuse with less injury to the morals, and virtuous manners of the Reader’.21
The terms by which Longsword was assessed are also intriguingly present in the reviews of The castle of Otranto. Even before Walpole appended the subtitle ‘a Gothic story’ to the second edition of his tale, Otranto was concerned with exploring and representing the Gothic past, both as a barbaric, pre-modern era, and as an important phase in the conception of political liberty and virtue. Accordingly, the novel’s reception, in its first and second editions, revolved largely around its conceptualisation of the past and, in particular, its representation of that past’s relationship to the present. As has been well rehearsed by critics of the literary gothic and of eighteenth-century British literature, the first edition of Walpole’s tale, presented as ‘an ancient Italian manuscript’ written by ‘Onuphrio Muralto, Canon of the Church of St. Nicholas at Otranto’ and later discovered, translated, and printed by ‘William Marshal’, appealed to critics, who understood it as an intriguing historical artefact (Castle of Otranto, p. 1). Referring to the savagery of the time period that supposedly produced the tale, the Monthly Review praised Otranto as a relic of the past able to reveal much about the past to modern readers willing to endure ‘the absurdities of Gothic fiction’. The critical about-face performed by the Monthly Review upon the publication of the second edition of Otranto was a direct response to Walpole’s revelation that his tale was not, in fact, an authentic historical object, but instead a modern production masquerading as one. The problem, for critics, was the conflation of past and present enacted by this revelation. As the Monthly Review contemptuously declared, viewing Otranto as a truly ‘Gothic’ text, ‘we could readily excuse its preposterous phenomena, and consider them as sacrifices to a gross and unenlightened age’. When, however, the tale is pronounced ‘a modern performance, the indulgence we offered to the foibles of a supposed antiquity, we can by no means extend to the singularity of a false tale in a cultivated period of learning’. The Monthly Review concluded by excoriating Walpole for debasing himself and, implicitly, society as a whole, by his reification of a brutal past.

The critical uproar caused by the second edition of Otranto pointed to the ways in which Walpole’s tale, however glib, was seen subversively to question Enlightenment views of the present’s relationship to the past. Against the Enlightenment ‘narrative of progress’, Otranto posited a troubling historical continuity instead. In this, according to the Monthly Review, Otranto’s use of the supernatural was of particular concern, precisely because it emphasised the disturbing lack of temporal distance between past and present. As Clery observes, ‘Rationally speaking, ghosts and
goblins are not true, but when they appear in the literary artifacts of past ages, they are true to history … For the enlightened reader, ancient romances are at once fictions and historical documents. By this thinking, Clery adds, that which ‘allows for the depiction of irrational impossibilities in works from the distant past’ is also that which ‘must … disallow it in modern fictions’. What made the second edition of Otranto so threatening, then, was its suggestion that superstitious beliefs lived on in the eighteenth century, defying the period’s view of itself as an enlightened age: ‘Description gives rise to prescription’, Clery writes, ‘a nation guided by reason, in an age of reason, will not produce modern literary works which could be mistaken for the products of the age of superstition; if such a work does appear, it must not be countenanced’.

Yet, while the Monthly Review represented Otranto as an anachronistic production at odds with eighteenth-century rationality, it did so by way of a curious appeal to the language of superstition: ‘Incredulus odi, is, or ought to be a charm against all such infatuation’. ‘To disbelieve is to dislike’, the Monthly Review asserted. It thus drew a definitive line between the first edition of Otranto as an historical artefact to be wondered at and empirically assessed and the second edition as a false and therefore more threatening representation of history and, perhaps more importantly, its relationship to the present. At the same time, the review linked rational disbelief to the same irrational and superstitious ideas for which it condemned Otranto: enlightenment understanding, it proposed, necessarily acts as ‘a charm’ to ward off ‘infatuation’. The Monthly Review’s striking combination of superstition and empirical scepticism in this instance evidences, in Diane Long Hoeveler’s phrase, ‘the rise of ambivalent secularization’ in the latter half of the eighteenth century. The literary gothic, for Hoeveler, is the product of the shift between religion-dominated early modern European society to more secular, less religiously inflected social models under the pressure of various socio-political and socio-cultural changes in the mid-eighteenth century. Despite the emphasis in the latter half of the eighteenth century on an Enlightenment understanding of rational historical and social progress, Hoeveler asserted, popular gothic productions such as operas, melodramas, chapbooks, and ballads, not to mention novels, continually referred back to ‘the realms of the supernatural, the sacred, the maternal, the primitive, the numinous, and [the uncanny]’ even as they sought to confine such elements rigidly to the past. What we see in gothic literature, Hoeveler contended, ‘is not a simple forward-moving trajectory that we would recognize as the Enlightenment project’.
but, instead, ‘an oscillation in which the transcendent and traditional religious beliefs and tropes are alternately preserved and reanimated and then blasted and condemned’ – a wavering strikingly present in the Monthly Review’s appraisal of Otranto as well.\(^{32}\)

As is clear from the contrasting critical reception of the first and second editions of Otranto, the tale’s overt supernaturalism presented a simultaneous flirtation with and condemnation of atavistic superstition, a movement that is intrinsically linked throughout to competing notions of historical progression. In this sense, Otranto’s debt to preceding historical fiction is clear. Prévost’s fiction, for example, has been understood as ‘pre-Gothic’ in its charting of a widespread contemporary ‘fear of violent change and its effects on what had been a stable class system’.\(^{33}\) In other words, it anticipates the anxieties about social transformation evidenced in Otranto, as in Longsword before it. Where Prévost’s works fearfully depict ‘violent change’, Leland and Walpole instead suggest what was perhaps more threatening still: that there had been essentially no change or progress from past to present. As with eighteenth-century antiquarian research, in fact, Otranto highlighted, in Rosemary Sweet’s phrase, ‘the constant interaction between past and present’.\(^{34}\) In so doing, Walpole’s text constructed eighteenth-century society as not only indebted to, but essentially a mirror of, the Gothic past it affected to portray.

What set Leland’s Longsword apart from Otranto was its lack of supernatural content. Without Otranto’s explicit depictions of the paranormal, Leland’s tale could be seen to deny any unsettling link between past and present in support of Enlightenment ideals of historical progression. This is suggested by Longsword’s critical reception. From its publication, Leland’s novel was reviewed favourably and, as Watt points out, ‘widely praised’.\(^{35}\) This was so, Clery maintains, because the novel ‘was presented unequivocally as a work of the present which depicted the medieval age in the manner approved by the present’. Longsword was thus seen ‘[to offer] “the advantages of history” – an informative picture of the past which illustrated progress while stimulating through its strangeness – but without corrupting the faculty of judgement with fantastic improbabilities’.\(^{36}\) For Clery, the popularity of Leland’s novel, as well as its ‘universally favourable and unproblematic’ reception, owed primarily to the author’s ‘exclu[sion of] any hint of the supernatural or marvellous’. In resisting the lure of the numinous, Leland was able to appeal to and satisfy contemporary taste for ‘images of the gothic past as [already evident in the works of] Macpherson, Walpole and Chatterton’ while simultaneously avoiding the threatening suggestion
of the present age’s regression to or lack of progression from former unenlightened superstitions or religious dominance.\(^{37}\)

As *Longsword* is so little read today, a brief summary of the tale is useful. The narrative recounts the Ulyssean wanderings of its hero, William, Earl of Longsword, as he travels from France to England after having victoriously prevented French usurpation of English-held lands in France. Like Odysseus, William finds his homecoming both protracted and problematic, not simply because of the misadventures he meets in trying to reach that home but also because his native country offers very little welcome to the returned hero. In fact, William’s homeland spectacularly scorns its defender’s earlier longing and disproves his belief in his country’s essential difference – one based on notions of liberty and governmental justice – from France. Rather than triumphant processions and tears of joy, William returns to a continuation of the struggles he experienced in France. In his absence, his castle has been invaded by Raymond, nephew of the King of England’s corrupt and controlling chief counsel, Hubert; William’s wife has been informed of his death, and his young son has been sent away to a secret destination. As William struggles to reach his home, his wife, Ela, is subjected to Raymond’s lascivious advances and eventually forcefully dragged to the altar in a sham marriage ceremony interrupted at the fateful moment by a messenger bearing the news that William is actually alive. His return to his castle instigates a righting of the private and public wrongs committed in his absence – Raymond hangs himself rather than face justice; Ela and William are re-united; their son is returned to them, and, further afield, the king ousts his evil right hand man and regains authority and control over himself and his kingdom.

With such a conclusion, *Longsword* seems clearly to invite allegorical political readings such as those advanced by Fiona Price and James Watt.\(^{38}\) These will be discussed later in this chapter. Here, it is worth pausing on the manner in which *Longsword* envisions a telling overlap of past and present, pre-modern and modern, which, owing to the novel’s apparent lack of unearthly events, becomes inherently more terrifying, precisely because more rational and plausible, than anything in *Otranto*. Just as with Walpole’s later text, in fact, nothing is as it seems in *Longsword*, and, while critics applauded the novel’s lack of ‘marvellous’ events, Leland’s tale retains striking – if subtle – remnants of the supernaturalism for which the second edition of *Otranto* was later harshly condemned. A case in point: after having vanquished his French foe, William envisions a triumphant return to England ‘loaded with the sports of Gascoigne’, but
his journey is impeded by a vengeful Nature: ‘winds and seas conspired together, and united their unrelenting fury against the bands of England: when the roaring hurricane deafened us with its horrid menaces, and the frequent lightning served to disclose all the terrors of the gloomy deep’ (Longsword, vol. 1, pp. 11–12). When the storm abates, William and his men find themselves beset by nature still, in a kind of elemental punishment for unidentified crimes: their battered ship approaches ‘a coast utterly unknown’ and ‘the rock which lay in ambush to destroy us, assailed our vessel; the waves rushed impetuously through the breach’. ‘Death,’ William says, ‘stood with open arms to receive his prey!’ (Longsword, vol. 1, p. 13).

Later, having been captured by his French enemy, Mal-leon, as he attempts to free a friendly Frenchman who had earlier saved his life, William overhears his captors debating his murder in appropriately eerie circumstances: ‘It was now the dead midnight hour: on that side where my chamber looked down upon the troubled river, I plainly heard my two guards in dreadful conference encouraging each other to the horrid purpose of murder’. When eventually rescued from this fate, William is described as ‘issuing forth as if restored from the grave’ (Longsword, vol. 1, pp. 27, 28). Such language and its connotation of an inherently porous boundary between life and death as well as the numinous and the rational continues with William’s description of D’Aumont, one of Mal-leon’s spies. Taken in by D’Aumont’s lies, William ‘resigned himself entirely to the influence of this new friend, whose power was like that of those infernal imps who, they say, command the winds to roar or be still, and the waves to swell or to subside, as their wicked purposes require’ (Longsword, vol. 1, p. 43). Explaining himself further, William suggests that he had been bewitched:

Hast thou never heard that the enemy of mankind oftentimes presents shocking and frightful phantoms before the eyes of the holy hermit, in order to distract his thoughts and to confound his purposes? Such were the arts by which this Frenchman practiced upon my soul. (Longsword, vol. 1, p. 44)

William’s usurper, Raymond, also implies that his actions have been the result of a strange enchantment. Determining to leave the home he has invaded before forcefully compelled to do so, Raymond laments, ‘Cursed castle! … cursed be the hour in which I first entered these fatal walls! And for ever cursed be the slaves who forced me, against my better reason, to persevere in cruelty!’ (Longsword, vol. 2, p. 59).
The novel’s conclusion envisions the overthrow of such mystical enthrallement. The king is said to exert himself, breaking the spell held over him by Hubert, and ‘ignominiously banishing’ his former ‘wicked favourite’ (*Longsword*, vol. 2, p. 80). The ending thus encourages allegorical interpretations of Leland’s tale, published as it was during the Seven Years’ War (1754–63). Henry’s re-establishment of his rightful rule and the concomitant defeat of enemies both foreign and domestic have frequently been read as a symbolic assertion of (eventual) English triumph over the tyranny and absolutism represented by mid-eighteenth-century France. As Price suggests, Leland’s novel urges England not to fall into the trap of ‘corrupted values’ epitomised by Mal-leon. As if such a warning were too veiled by the fictional nature of the tale, Leland includes what Toni Wein calls a ‘eulogy’ of George III as a ‘glorious Monarch’ (*Longsword*, vol. 2, p. 71). Against Price’s understanding of Leland’s caution to eighteenth-century England, Wein reads this praise of George III as a glorification of present British governance, ‘a chauvinistic tribute to the homeland’, and an attendant understanding of ‘the past as debased in comparison with the glorious future that awaits’. However, such readings ignore the manner in which the past – in the form of superstition and enchantment – continues to impinge upon the present and the future, hindering any unproblematic understanding of the novel’s optimistic ending. Indeed, while William’s apparent resurrection leads to the restoration of his usurped castle and the new ordering of public and private ‘homes’, the memory of past disruption continues to haunt William’s castle in the form of Ela’s ongoing insanity. William’s triumphant, if long awaited, homecoming is undermined by the blank stare, dejected ‘sighs’, and ‘weeping’ with which his senseless wife greets him (*Longsword*, vol. 2, p. 76). Not expecting to find Ela in this state, William gives in, at least momentarily, to despair: ‘No word of congratulation! No look of joy! Is this the happiness which my busy fancy formed! Is this my reception!’ (*Longsword*, vol. 2, p. 76). Ela is said gradually to recover under William’s devoted care, but a suggestive mar on the novel’s sanguine conclusion remains.

The novel’s ending, then, leaves the reader, like the characters themselves, with an upsetting indication of ongoing disruption – one implicitly upheld by an intriguing textual variant. In the first Dublin edition of the novel, William frames his return home and the incomplete recuperation of his wife in terms that evoke the uncanny, haunting nature of the past and its ability to turn the familiar suddenly strange: ‘He now reflected on his wrongs with emotion,’ we are told (*Longsword*, vol. 2, p. 80). Both the first
and second editions of the novel published in London, however, qualify the ‘emotion’ described with the word ‘less’: ‘He now reflected on his wrongs with less emotion’.42 The indication is that the passage of time has reconciled William both to what has happened and to the changes past events have wrought in his life. These textual variants produce an ambiguity that underscores the novel’s liminality – both comforting and upsetting, both historical and gothic, both pre-modern and modern. As they do so, they undermine any straightforward attempt to read the novel as vindicating present over past, either in fictional or extra-diegetical terms. This indeterminacy is of vital importance in the consideration of the text as a kind of political allegory – an issue to which this chapter now turns.

**LELAND’S HEIRS: ANNE FULLER AND JAMES WHITE**

In suggesting an ongoing link between past and present, both *Longsword* and *Otranto* posited a threatening proximity between pre-modern and modern, calling upon contemporary understandings of the Gothic past to construct Enlightenment Britain as prey to superstitions and fears putatively consigned to history. At the same time, referencing the apparently contradictory understanding of Gothic as indicative of Britain’s noble political roots, Leland and Walpole implied that the nation had become degraded from its august political past. Such a complaint was not new in the 1760s, as suggested by Jonathan Swift’s belief, expressed in his correspondence in the 1720s and 1730s, that upon the recovery of ‘the Gothic system’ relied the present and future liberty of British, as well as European, society as a whole.43 Swift’s views on present politics make it clear that the idea of the Gothic political past as something from which Britain had become far too ideologically removed held wide sway from early in the century. The anxiety with which *Otranto* was met points to a latent fear of acknowledging the kind of social and political regression outlined by Swift. Walpole’s self-professed attempt at generic blending intimated ‘that there must be something awry in contemporary social order’, as W.S. Lewis writes: ‘If the conventions of ancient romance can be revived with success by modern authors, then what does that say about the present?’44 Such thinking clearly feeds into allegorical readings of *Otranto* as exploring questions of rightful inheritance and proper rule. More particularly, *Otranto* is often understood to imagine the (supernatural) overthrow of tyranny and the restoration of legitimate governance at a time when Walpole himself was seriously disaffected with British politics. Over the course of
1763 and 1764, Walpole and his much loved cousin, Henry Seymour Conway, found themselves at odds with the majority feeling in the Commons over a debate centred on the arrest of John Wilkes for seditious libel – a charge related to statements Wilkes had made about the King in the *North Briton*. Severe repercussions fell on Conway, who, in April 1764, was deprived of the civil and military posts he held; so enraged was Walpole at this turn of events that he resolved to overthrow a government that he understood as speedily bringing about ‘a return to absolutism’.45

In the well-rehearsed arguments about the connection between Walpole’s immersion in this tense political affair and *Otranto*, the author is said to channel his discontent with the tyrannical authority of George III and his Tory supporters into an allegory about an equally despotic ruler – Prince Manfred – and his replacement by the legitimate heir to Otranto – Theodore. With the latter representing a wrongfully usurped ‘ancient political order’, and the former political corruption and degeneration, *Otranto* explores, in Price’s terms, ‘the opposition between ancient virtue and modern vice’.46 Price locates a similar investigation in *Longsword*. In that novel, she argues, Leland’s self-professed reliance on the truth of history masks his real intent: to comment upon present politics by way of an implicit process of comparison and contrast with the Gothic past.47 Leland himself cagily disavows any kind of moral lesson along the lines of that applauded by the *Monthly Review*:

> It is generally expected that pieces of this kind should convey some useful moral: which moral, not always, perhaps, the most valuable or refined, is sometimes made to float to the surface of the narrative; or is plucked up at proper intervals, and presented to the view of the reader, with great solemnity. But the author of these sheets hath too high an opinion of the judgment and penetration of his readers, to pursue this method. Although he cannot pretend to be very deep, yet he hopes he is clear. And if anything lies at bottom, worth the picking up, it will be discovered without his direction. (*Longsword*, vol. 1, unpaginated advertisement)

As Price argues, Leland here ‘implies that the language that describes history is not only invisible but ideologically neutral. Any moral lesson issues from the substance of history itself’. Correspondingly, Price contends, *Longsword* becomes an allegory, ‘us[ing] the reign of Henry III, when territories had just been won in Gascony, to warn George III about the dangers of favouritism and absolutism’.48

Price thus views *Longsword* as an allegorical critique, however ‘politically cautious’, of existing political structures in Britain.49 Watt, meanwhile,
understands the text as foundational in the establishment of what he calls ‘the Loyalist Gothic romance’. Such fiction, Watt explains, concerns itself with ‘an unambiguous moral and patriotic agenda’ in the wake of the Revolutionary War in America and in the face of ongoing concerns about France. In this scenario, Leland’s novel is undeniably conservative, not subversive, and is aimed, like Clara Reeve’s later novel, *The old English baron* (1778), at ‘provid[ing] a reassuring moral and patriotic fable during a period of national crisis’. It is to this end that France is negatively epitomised in the aptly named Count Mal-leon, who is described as ‘impetuous’ and ‘env[ious] of [the] superior worth and greatness [of his English enemy, William, Earl of Salisbury]’ (*Longsword*, vol. 1, p. 18). Tellingly, after Mal-leon imprisons Les Roches, the sympathetic Frenchman who had helped William escape, William violently exclaims, ‘[I]s charity so great a crime? Is tyranny suffered to rage thus without control in France?’ (*Longsword*, vol. 1, p. 20). In contrast, William envisions his native land as a ‘seat of honour and security’ (*Longsword*, vol. 1, p. 53).

William’s later return home proves disenchanting, largely because of the effects of misrule in the land. As the elderly knight, Sir Randolph, laments, England is suffering under a tyrannical rule by proxy: ‘We all know with what uncontrouled power Hubert rules in the court of England: how his subtile arts of insinuation have penetrated into the inmost heart of our Henry; and now direct all it’s notions and designs’ (*Longsword*, vol. 1, p. 59). The disparity between the England of William’s longing and that of reality leads Jacqueline, Les Roches’ daughter, who has accompanied William to England in the hope of saving her father from Mal-leon, to remonstrate: ‘Where is that power and influence … in the court of England which Lord William boasted? If his own wrongs cannot there find redress, if he must have recourse to the precarious chance of arms, in vain have I sought relief in this strange land’ (*Longsword*, vol. 2, p. 29). William, in his turn, laments England’s political fall from grace: ‘When shall our distracted country feel the blessings of a wise and virtuous rule? Shall faction and tumult for ever disturb the land, and sordid avarice and slavish adulation for ever surround the throne?’ (*Longsword*, vol. 2, p. 32).

Despite his concerns about the present health of his native country, William continues to believe in the righteousness of English political and judicial systems. Determined to free his castle and his family from Raymond’s tyranny, William throws himself on ‘the justice of [his] liege Lord’ (*Longsword*, vol. 2, p. 36). The king’s response, authorising William to reclaim his estates and his wife, suggests that all is not lost and augurs a return to a more just
rule, a movement apparently, if not definitively, heralded by the novel’s conclusion. With the restoration of private and public order, Leland’s tale implies that the much wished-for overthrow of ‘absolute and violent power’ has occurred, replacing ‘lawless oppression’ with ‘that inestimable blessing, a wise, righteous, and well attempered rule’ (*Longsword*, vol. 2, p. 78).

The interest shared by Leland and Walpole in the political past and present of the British nation is one similarly professed by their ‘heirs’. If, in 1778, Clara Reeve was advertising her novel, *The old English baron*, as ‘the literary offspring of the Castle of Otranto’, another text, only a year later, prided itself on being ‘The Literary Offspring of Longsword, Earl Of Salisbury’. In describing themselves in this way, both texts proclaimed their interest in what Watt calls ‘the non-specific rhetoric of Gothic liberty and vigour’. They also signalled their intentions ‘to explore the mythology of English national identity’, as Scott would later do in his revision of his novels’ ‘Gothic ancestry’. Reeve’s ‘picture of Gothic times and manners’ refers to the understanding of the Gothic past as a foreign and bizarre epoch temporally and ideologically removed from modern-day England (*Old English baron*, p. 2). Although specifically recalling the second edition of *Otranto* with her subtitle, ‘a gothic story’, Reeve tones down the supernaturally excess of Walpole’s tale in order to concentrate on the political and moral virtue of an idealised past. Reeve’s recourse to the past thus suggests, as Maxwell compellingly contends, that ‘virtue is more comfortable, more at home, in a distant period … Morally, at least, the past was better than the present’. Price similarly claims that *The old English baron* ‘argues for the need to return to a gothic origin [of national governance] supposedly connected with liberty’.

Several Irish texts from this period might equally claim to be the literary offspring of both *The castle of Otranto* and *Longsword*, underlining as they do the varying and often ambiguous ways in which the Gothic past was envisioned as an important point of political reference for contemporary Britain. Set, like *Longsword*, during the reign of Henry III, Anne Fuller’s *Alan Fitz-Osborne* (1786) pictures its eponymous hero taking part in the Second Barons’ War (1264–65) against a sovereign despised by his people for giving preference to the non-English counsel of William de Valence, a figure apparently representative of the French-born Peter des Roches, bishop of Winchester. Because of Henry’s dependence on de Valence as well as his injustice as a monarch, the English populace is described as looking to Simon Montford, Earl of Leicester – an obvious (anglicised) reference to the historical figure, Simon de Montfort, who led the opposition
against Henry III in the Second Barons’ War – ‘as the only person who could save the state, and render the people happy.’ Yet, Montford himself proves a tyrant, and just three years after his successful coup, the people begin to call for Henry’s eldest son, Edward, ‘to interpose his authority and save the sinking nation’ (Alan Fitz-Osborne, vol. 2, p. 122).

Joining with Edward in his attempt to regain proper control of the nation is Alan Fitz-Osborne, Jr., along with his uncle and guardian, Walter Fitz-Osborne, and Walter’s son, William. While Alan is serious about his loyalty to Edward, his uncle is an ambitious political chameleon paying lip service to Edward while slyly currying favour with each contesting faction. Walter detests Alan both because of his obvious friendship with and attachment to Edward and because Alan serves as a constant reminder of the sins of Walter’s past, namely his lust-driven murder of Alan’s mother, Matilda, and his subsequent dispossession of Alan of his rightful inheritance. Alan’s increasing resemblance to his wronged father – dispatched to the Crusades in order to allow Walter to court the scornful Matilda – prompts Walter’s determination to kill Alan. But his efforts are repeatedly undermined by the appearance of a ‘phantom’ Matilda, whose ‘pale, ghastly, and bloody’ form conjures him not to kill Alan and demands justice for her murder (Alan Fitz-Osborne, vol. 1, p. 83).

The novel’s conclusion sees Walter punished for his crimes after Alan discovers his father alive in the Holy Land. Together, the wronged Fitz-Osbornes journey back to England to confront their villainous family members. In the ensuing scuffle, Walter is fatally wounded by his resurrected brother. His death is fittingly couched in terms of supernatural revenge: as he lays dying, Walter sees a spectral Matilda ushering him to Hell: ‘Oh horror! – horror! … She holds the dagger o’er my head – Ha! – that crimson stream – it drops – it covers – it stifles me!’ (Alan Fitz-Osborne, vol. 2, p. 340). Matilda thereafter returns to her rightful home, so to speak, when her son exhumes her body from the unconsecrated ground in which Walter buried her and re-inters her in the family’s ancestral vault.

Matilda’s vindication and attendant homecoming are paralleled by the voyage of the newly installed King Edward, as he travels to England from the Holy Land, where he has been engaged in the Crusades. Together, these returns represent the righting of public and private wrongs that have plagued England under the reign of Henry III. In contrast to his father, Edward is portrayed as a compassionate and just ruler, not easily swayed by insinuating men like Walter. Indicatively, while leading the campaign against Montford in a bid to restore his father to rule, Edward refuses to
humiliate his enemies. Instead, he ‘command[s] his soldiers to desist from pursuing the vanquished – “They are Englishmen”, said he, “they are my children. He who has misled them is no more, and they will return to their duty!”’ (Alan Fitz-Osborne, vol. 2, p. 134). However, Edward's mercy and faith in the loyalty of the English people are traits not shared by his father, who eventually begins to suspect Edward himself of treason and sends him on Crusade. Henry soon regrets this decision and calls for Edward's return, but he dies before Edward can reach England. Edward, in his turn, decides to prolong his travels, not feeling any urgency to return now that his father is gone. The novel thus concludes with the suggestion, but not, by any means, the surety of Edward's triumphant homecoming. As with Longsword, a significant shadow is cast over England's national future, despite the death of the problematic and unpopular Henry III. With the new king absent in France, misrule and unrest threaten from the margins.

J.M.S. Tompkins summarily dismissed Alan Fitz-Osborne as evidencing only ‘a little disconnected information about the Barons’ War’ in order to lavish attention on ‘such attractions as the bleeding spectre of Matilda’. Tompkins's negative assessment is voiced as part of an argument centred on the unjust neglect of one of Fuller's contemporaries, James White, a Dublin-born, Trinity College Dublin-educated man, who garnered attention first as a relatively successful translator and novelist, and then as a man with a ‘freakish personality’ that eventually led him into full-blown insanity and death by starvation. Although White's novels – Earl Strongbow (1789), The adventures of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster (1790), and The adventures of King Richard Coeur de Lion (1791) – are notable for the tone of levity they frequently reveal, they also clearly reflect the political concerns of White’s other works, including Hints for a specific plan for an abolition of the slave trade and for the relief of the negroes in the British West Indies (1788), Speeches of M. de Mirabeau (1792), and The history of the revolution of France (1792). Moreover, they channel the same elegiac tone evident in White's poem Conway Castle (1789), which White himself compared directly to Gray’s Elegy written in a country churchyard (1751). Tompkins considered Conway Castle ‘pleasant romantic stuff, slight but graceful, showing the influence of Gray and Collins’, but White’s poem is also strongly indicative of the manner in which its author viewed the relationship between past, present, and future. Much more than ‘an experimental surrender to mere feeling’, as Tompkins has it, Conway Castle refers directly to Britain’s Gothic political and architectural history in order to compare past and present. Describing the castle as it stands in contemporary North Wales,
White outlines its construction in the reign of Edward I and posits that, ‘[e]ven in their present state [of ruin], the walls and Castle of Conway afford the most complete example to be met with in this island, of the strength and grandeur of fortified places in the days of chivalry.’

The Gothic ruins of Conway Castle in White’s poem serve as, in Ina Ferris’s terms, ‘vestiges of antiquity [that] allow for a nostalgic turn to a heroic national past away from the mean-minded and utilitarian present.’

The idealised heroism of the past is represented by Edward I, who is praised in the course of the poem as an ideal ruler:

Blest Chief! that could reject a regal station,  
To loose a fetter’d land, Ambition’s rage controul,  
And rouse to grandeur an afflicted nation. (Conway Castle, p. 7)

Not simply wistful for an aggrandised past, the poem also looks hopefully forward. Speaking to a despairing water-sprite who laments the loss of past days, the narrator asserts: ‘These halls, unhonour’d now, with revelry shall ring, / These oak-crown’d hills return the note of gladness’ (Conway Castle, p. 11). The poem ends on the optimistic prediction that Britain, like Conway Castle itself, will eventually regain its former glory:

Ev’n to the misty cliffs that shade the Cambrian plains  
Shall commerce, child of Peace, grim want disarming,  
Extend her jocund sway; Where lonesome Echo reigns,  
Shall Plenty tune her voice, the village charming. (Conway Castle, p. 11)

With a similar optimism, White’s 1789 novel, Earl Strongbow, engages in a superficial longing for the past that is very quickly overshadowed by a depiction of the necessity of pre-rational epistemes giving way to British modernity, a fictional trajectory long associated with Scott in the early nineteenth century. White’s novel narrates a progressive chronological journey into history, beginning with the visit of an eighteenth-century traveller to Strongbow’s near-ruined castle in the Welsh town of Chepstow. Residing there for some time, owing to his fondness for ‘[the] monuments of ancient grandeur, particularly of the gothic kind,’ this unnamed visitor begins reading a manuscript that tells of a series of midnight encounters between a prisoner in the castle during ‘the reign of Charles the second’ and the ghost of Strongbow himself. During the course of this interpolated narration, Strongbow frequently laments the strange customs of the eighteenth century and contrasts the present negatively with his own times. Although Strongbow says that he is ‘sensible’ of the manner in
which the ‘system of life’ to which he was accustomed might be considered ‘objectionable’, he nevertheless paints the excesses of the present as significantly more problematic:

We handled the battle-ax, you wield the dice-box. We ran at the ring, you play at ombre. Our breakfast was beef and ale, yours is toast and chocolate. Instead of wigs we wore helmets, and were oftener clad in a suit of steel, than in one of cut velvet. We were a stately and robust race, you are an enervated and unmajestic generation! (Strongbow, vol. 1, p. 66)

Despite Strongbow’s evident longing for his own age, the novel elsewhere shows a confirmed resignation to the passage of time. In particular, Strongbow’s invasion of Ireland is depicted as a necessary and beneficial step that benefited both Ireland and Britain as a whole: ‘Accompanying Strongbow’s polemic against [modern] luxury and corruption,’ Watt argues, ‘is a myth of manifest destiny which promotes Ireland’s role as “an invaluable portion of the British Empire!”’

White ultimately refrains from denouncing Strongbow’s invasion of Ireland as a colonial endeavour like that he derided by his involvement in the impeachment of the East India Company’s Warren Hastings. He nevertheless differentiates between the Ireland of the past and the Ireland of the present. Much as Maria Edgeworth would later insist that the Rackrent landlords are a historical – not contemporary – reality in Castle Rackrent (1800), White asserts that the Ireland invaded by Strongbow was in a serious state of degradation, from which it had, phoenix-like, triumphantly arisen by the eighteenth century. Musing on his arrival in Ireland and subsequent role as the first Lord Lieutenant, Strongbow wonders at the changes wrought by passing centuries:

How different were we who invaded Ireland, in language, custom, manners, sentiments, knowledge of navigation and the art of war … from you of the present days! how different too that nation which submitted to our yoke, from that which now forms an invaluable portion of the British empire! Dublin, how changed from what it was when I held the rod of power! (Earl Strongbow, vol. 2, p. 35)

To elucidate the differences between twelfth- and eighteenth-century Ireland, Strongbow describes arriving at the town of Wexford, which he finds in a near ruinous state. The walls surrounding the city and ‘which the Danes had erected with care and cost’ are ‘neglected’ and crumbling; ‘weeds and brambles’ have overtaken the battlements, and, in many places, ‘huge pieces of the wall had given way, the stones having been picked out
to construct adjacent cabins, the possessors of which were too slothful to supply themselves from a quarry’. Worse still, the Irish people seem to regard the walls – the emblems of a past described as glorious and triumphant, if only for the Danes – as a convenient outhouse: ‘The platforms, where the Danes had strode in warlike shew, or sate and discoursed upon the deeds of heroic times, had been long appropriated to the easement of nature’ (Earl Strongbow, vol. 2, pp. 60–1).

Faced with such barbarians, Strongbow unsurprisingly takes control of Wexford with ease. He and his men actually conquer the town unresisted, as their opponents lay sunk in a drunken stupor produced from the overindulgence of a festive saint’s day. Despite this overtly negative – near parodic – image of the Irish people, Strongbow declares eighteenth-century Wexford ‘an ingenious and polite town’ (Earl Strongbow, vol. 2, p. 63). The modern Irish people are also described in glowing terms: ‘brave, hospitable, generous: in activity of body, in hilarity of mind, unrivalled by any of the northern Europeans’. Their future, the narrative indicates, promises to be bright: ‘When enlightened by science, and refined by the labours of the poet and Philosopher (blessings that are stealing fast upon them) they display an intellectual ability, which few nations can equal, and none excel’ (Earl Strongbow, vol. 2, p. 64). Following this encomium, White seems to arrive at the true crux of his political argument: ‘Peradventure, the time may come, when the senate of Britain shall owe its brightest ornament, her theatre its wittiest pieces, her armies their wisest generals, to the nation she now despises’ (Earl Strongbow, vol. 2, p. 65).

When paired with a critique of contemporary British society effected by, in Watt’s terms, ‘an idealizing appeal to the … past’, Strongbow’s assertion of the value, worth, and hitherto unrecognised potential of the Irish people is striking. It suggests that the key to future glory and restored national virtue lies in Ireland’s recognition as an integral contributor to the British nation. Rather than dwell on what White admits was a barbaric, if only momentarily degraded, Irish society and culture, Earl Strongbow insists that the re-assertion of British greatness represented by Strongbow himself may well result from the workings of Irish individuals. Yet, as with Longsword, the novel’s conclusion leaves all such optimism in doubt, casting the rehabilitation of both Irish culture and the British nation itself in terms of potentiality. Indicatively, the novel’s twice removed narration of Strongbow’s tale – told first to a seventeenth-century prisoner kept in Chepstow Castle and then read, in manuscript form, by an eighteenth-century tourist – implies that the cause of Strongbow’s continued haunting
of his former home remains unresolved. Strongbow had first appeared to the Chepstow inmate conjuring him to erect a monument to Otho, a faithful servant, who Strongbow had accidentally killed during a momentary rage occasioned by the news that his beloved Geralda had retired to a convent believing Strongbow to be married. Once this memorial is raised, Strongbow vowed, he ‘shall … desert these ancient towers, and rest in the regions of unembodied beings, till we shall finally be summoned into the presence of our Redeemer’ (Earl Strongbow, vol. 2, p. 130).

Whether Strongbow’s request has been fulfilled remains finally unclear at the end of the novel. The entreaty itself concludes White’s tale, which never returns to the frame narrative involving the eighteenth-century antiquarian enthusiast. That we finally should remain in the seventeenth-century manuscript suggests the foreshortening of distance between the two narrative spaces, creating an ongoing immersion in a tale equated by the more modern narrator to romance. There is no re-emergence from romance to realism, or as Northrop Frye might suggest, from a ‘dream’/‘night’ world of chaos and disruption to restored and invigorated normality. Instead, White leaves us in the past, refusing to return to the contemporary period and thereby foretelling a future in which Strongbow’s tale is continuously repeated and Strongbow himself forced perpetually to haunt his own home seeking resolution and rest. The lingering doubt about the result of Strongbow’s appeal casts a peculiar shade of ambivalence over the tale’s at times whimsical and imaginative take on historical events. Correspondingly, a similar uncertainty is thrown over the future rehabilitation of Ireland and the British nation envisioned by Strongbow as he recounts his past exploits.

With its layered narratives and considered comparisons of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century society, Earl Strongbow attests to Irish gothic literature’s keen interrogation of the Gothic past and its bearing on the present. Whether they use overtly supernatural effects, as in Alan Fitz-Osborne, or confine themselves to more subtle indications of a hauntingly recurring past that can be simultaneously endowed with positive and negative attributes, as in Longsword and Earl Strongbow, the works discussed here clearly evidence an ongoing overlap of the formal, generic, and ideological characteristics of what we now refer to, separately, as gothic and historical fiction. As such, they urge a reconsideration of our current understanding of gothic literary production and its active engagement with the fraught notions of Enlightenment progress and modernity. Moreover, they prompt a re-evaluation of the nineteenth-century development of the historical
novel later associated with Scott, an issue considered in the final section of this chapter.

**Irish Gothic in the Age of Walter Scott**

Published in the same year as Scott’s *Waverley*, Regina Maria Roche’s *Trecothick bower; or, the lady of the west country* (1814) provides an instructive example of the continued intersection of historical and gothic literary modes in early nineteenth-century Irish fiction. Centred on the treachery of Morcar, the Earl of Sebergham and a great favourite of his monarch, Edward IV (1442–83), the novel combines a historical setting with repeated descriptions of sublime scenery, explained and unexplained supernatural events, and a series of disastrous shipwrecks, imprisonments, duels, and attempted rapes. Determined to marry Lady Emmeline, the daughter and heiress of the Baron of Trecothick, Morcar betrays her lover, Edmund, by sending him on a fool’s errand to France on the pretext of furnishing him with the means of regaining his reputation – tarnished due to his family’s unsuccessful support of the house of Lancaster at the Battle of Barnet (14 April 1471). In the meantime, Morcar prevails on Emmeline’s parents to allow him to marry her instead, whisking them away from their family seat in Cornwall to Grey Cliff Tower, his ancestral home in ‘the north’.

Emmeline’s sublime experience of the north is further enhanced by ‘the traces of antiquity every where discernible’ (*Trecothick bower*, vol. 1, p. 148). These take the form of edifices such as Morcar’s ‘ancient fortress’, ‘the ancient intrenchments lying contiguous’ to Pendragon Castle, and ‘the remains’ of ‘the temple in which the greatest of the divinities of the Pagan Saxons was worshipped’ at Kirby Thore (*Trecothick bower*, vol. 1, pp. 154, 152, 149). As suggested by the latter example, the ‘ancient grandeur’ Emmeline locates in the ruined temple relates not just to its natural and architectural appearance but also to its association with popular traditions (*Trecothick bower*, vol. 1, p. 149). This attention to folk beliefs and customs recurs throughout Emmeline’s trip to the north, as when, for instance, she and her travelling companions ‘visit the curious grottoes on the banks
of the Emont here [near Penrith]’ which are supposed, ‘according to the traditions of the vulgar’, to have provided a home for ‘a giant named Isis, who unmercifully devoured every thing living that came his way’ (*Trecothick bower*, vol. 1, pp. 153–4). At Pendragon Castle, Emmeline is intrigued by the ‘tradition’ surrounding ‘the prince’ said both to have given his name to the castle and to have ‘died by poison put into a well, early in the sixth century’ (*Trecothick bower*, vol. 1, p. 149). Later, upon reaching Grey Cliff Tower, Emmeline is enchanted by the tradition of St Herbert, ‘the remains of whose romantic heritage, in a beautiful island of the lake’ form part of Morcar’s estate (*Trecothick bower*, vol. 1, p. 157).

The vestiges of ancient architecture that Emmeline encounters, along with their associated legends and traditions, function in much the same manner as do the ruins of Conway Castle in White’s poem of that name. In other words, they allow Emmeline and us, as readers, to escape into a heroic, semi-mythologised past distant from the base realities of the present. This is, in effect, the whole reason behind Emmeline’s willingness to embark on the trip in the first place: escape from Morcar’s persistent demands for an immediate marriage. While the north thus appears to represent a romanticised if still backward, pre-modern chronotopic and geographical space, Emmeline’s return to the more modern realm of her own home is accompanied by a sense of dread attached to her impending marriage to Morcar: ‘At length the day for setting out on this [their return to Trecothick Castle] arrived; fancying herself, in the preceding journey, escaping from something dreaded, very different were the feelings of Emmeline on that and the present one’ (*Trecothick bower*, vol. 1, p. 202). The journey south soon becomes even more upsetting than anticipated when Emmeline’s mother falls ill and dies, temporarily postponing her marriage but also pointing to a more general sense of illness plaguing the nation at large.

In fact, from the start of the novel, Edward IV has been presented as unfit to rule: ‘dissipated’, unable to command his people’s ‘heartfelt homage’, and far too heavily swayed by the conniving Earl of Gloucester, who is himself ambitious, calculating, and unprincipled (*Trecothick bower*, vol. 1, p. 4; vol. 3, p. 10). Edward’s eventual death, followed by Gloucester’s defeat, and his replacement by Henry VII, augur a return to political stability as well as the eventual righting of private wrongs that have seen Trecothick dispossessed of his estate and title, Edmund convinced of Emmeline’s infidelity and married to another woman, and Emmeline freed from her secret marriage to Morcar but tricked into believing Edmund no longer cares for her. Petitioned to reinstate the Baron of Trecothick to
his former position, Henry VII immediately grants the request and punishes the man behind the deception that had originally caused it. Unlike Edward IV, Henry VII, we are told, ‘was not impervious to the voice of truth’; more than that, he appears intent on ‘acquir[ing] a reputation for equity and justice’ (*Trecothick bower*, vol. 3, p. 241). He also ensures Edmund’s restoration to favour after Edmund distinguishes himself fighting for Henry in the battle against Gloucester.

Henry’s new reign signals the restitution of just rule and the righting of both public and private wrongs that have plagued the novel. Yet, as in *Longsword*, jarring reminders of the past continue to emerge in the present. The most striking instance of this occurs in the apparent mirroring of Emmeline’s fate with that of the heroine featured in the interpolated tale of St Herbert, narrated to her by Morcar at his family home in Keswick. At surface level, the narrative operates analogously to earlier patriotic ‘celebration[s] of actual, if mythologized, historical figures and/or events’ and is intended, like them, ‘to connect with or tap into … a living past’ in order to engage with national history and identity.74 Historically, St Herbert was an ascetic hermit known for living in seclusion on the island of Derwent Water and dying on the same day – 20 March 687 – as his close friend and spiritual adviser, St Cuthbert, to whom he paid a yearly visit.75 In Roche’s hands, he becomes a once powerful Saxon chief who contributed to the conquest of ‘the northern part of the island [of Britain]’ and helped form the Anglo-Saxon Heptarchy that would eventually become a unified kingdom in the ninth century (*Trecothick bower*, vol. 1, p. 159). Despite his final renunciation of the world, the military force he is seen to exert, particularly over the neighbouring Cumbrians, lives on when his enemy’s ancestral inheritance is won by ‘the chance of war’ by another ‘noble Saxon’, from whom Morcar is descended (*Trecothick bower*, vol. 1, p. 195).

Morcar recites this narrative to Emmeline with pride, suggesting that he intends her to interpret it as evidence of his impressive lineage. Its obvious connection to Emmeline’s own experience in Herbert’s betrayal of Cathol over desire for Morna clarifies Roche’s concern: to align this Germanic Gothic heritage not just with Morcar’s own treachery but also with the political instability and misrule with which he is linked. Indeed, Morcar’s favour with Edward rests on his acquiescence to his monarch’s whims; Edward prefers him over his other advisers because Morcar is ‘ever ready, without rebuke or animadversion, to assist him in any bold emprise or licentious frolic’ (*Trecothick bower*, vol. 1, p. 4). As Edward’s
rule comes to a disastrous end, so, too, does Morcar, but not without lingering effects on Emmeline, who receives several mystifying visits from cloaked strangers suggesting that Morcar still retains his power over her. She must therefore relinquish her opportunity to marry Edmund when he returns to Trecothick after being restored to royal favour. More than that, the continued, if briefly interrupted, internecine warfare depicted in Herbert’s narrative is one that, despite Henry’s accession to the throne, continues to characterise Emmeline’s England. Tellingly, Henry’s reign is never fully established by the end of the novel, nor do we receive confirmation that his ‘principal [aim]’ of proving an equitable and just ruler is fulfilled (Trecothick bower, vol. 3, p. 241).

Clearly evocative of earlier historical gothic fictions such as Longsword and Alan Fitz-Osborne, Trecothick bower conceals in its quasi-authentic historical details a cautionary, if superficially optimistic, political commentary on the rule of the Prince Regent, and future king of England, George IV (r. 1820–30). Much like Longsword before it, Trecothick bower appears to call upon George IV to secure national and international peace at the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars, against all the odds presented by his infamous personal and political exploits. Yet, its frequent recourse to supernatural figures and events, and its hesitancy fully to ratify a narrative of progress signalled by Henry’s accession to the throne casts significant doubts on the present and future security of the British nation. For this, the novel might easily be dismissed as indicative of the general failure of the historical novel in Ireland. As the traditional argument goes, Irish writers were unable successfully to mimic Scott’s promotion of union with Britain as both the inevitable and the desired end to historical rebellion and unrest in Scotland. This was due, it is often said, to the very recent nature of the Anglo-Irish Union and the violence surrounding it, not to mention the history of dispossession it seemed to revive. Thomas Flanagan influentially argued that, when nineteenth-century Irish authors attempted to reproduce Scott’s historical novel, they inevitably ‘brought with them the old, sullen grudges and the old delusive lies’, rendering them incapable of ‘transcend[ing] hatred, accusation, and guilt’. The most they succeeded in doing was producing ‘a slavish conformity to the kinds of plot and character which [Scott] developed’. James Cahalan similarly contends that Scott’s famous ‘moderation’ was ‘impossible … for Irish historical novelists faced with a present that was nearly as nightmarish as the past’.

More recently, Emer Nolan has summed up the conventional arguments concerning the Irish historical novel as a powerlessness ‘[to depict] historical
change in what Georg Lukács calls a “felt relationship” to the present’ because ‘Irish history did not lend itself very readily to plots about enlightened reconciliation, or gradual but steady progress’.81

Such assessments are connected, as Nolan points out, to wider arguments about the development of Irish Romantic fiction and the oft-repeated claim that the realist novel was ‘almost impossible to write in nineteenth-century Ireland’.82 In Terry Eagleton’s memorable phrasing, Ireland lacked the ‘settlement and stability’ necessary to the realist novel.83 If Irish writers continued to eschew realism in the nineteenth century, Jacqueline Belanger counters, it suggests not an Irish literary or cultural failure but the need to reconsider ‘the critical prominence we have given to realism itself’.84 Such questioning is integral to nineteenth-century Irish fiction in its particular deployment of non-realist genres, such as sensation fiction, as Siobhán Kilfeather persuasively argued.85 These genres ‘offered writers the opportunity to interrogate the mechanisms by which grand historical narratives invade and evacuate individual subjectivities in what are conventionally presented as the private spaces of home, family, and sexuality’.86

To suggest, however, that non-realist genres were a particular marker of nineteenth-century Irish literary production is tacitly to reify traditional accounts of Scott as having rejected romance and the gothic literary mode in order to triumph realism and the historical novel. Thus, while Scott was an avid reader of terror literature and confessed a youthful inclination for ‘the wonderful and terrible, – the common taste of children, but in which I have remained a child even unto this day’,87 his Waverley novels are seen to shun the gothic and ‘the clichés of extravagant romance’ for the ideals of ‘historical realism’.88 What made Scott’s historicism different from that of preceding gothic fictions such as *Longsword* and *The castle of Otranto* was the detail he bestowed on his depiction of the past and the manner in which he presented it. According to Lukács and those that have followed him, Scott’s historicism ‘reproduced a coherent, credible, and consistent image of a specific historical era’; that of earlier writers such as Fuller, Leland, Walpole, and White, created, in contrast, a ‘vague impression of the past acceptable in fictions which concentrated upon situations of terror’.89 Moreover, as Price points out, the key to Scott’s ‘new’ perspective on history, as postulated by Lukács, was the manner in which he transformed violent and rapid political change into ‘inevitable development’.90

For Lukács and indeed, many of Scott’s contemporaries, the historical verisimilitude characteristic of the Waverley novels relied upon a rejection
of the trappings of earlier gothic fiction. Yet, ‘Gothic modes of history’, Fiona Robertson writes, ‘were not preparations for the real thing but ways of presenting the past and imaginative responses to the past which survive in the Waverley Novels’. This gothic practice, Robertson continues, fundamentally ‘intrude[s] into, complicate[s], and fashion[s]’ the Waverley novels. Scott may have distanced himself from the influence of gothic literary production in order to promote the view of his novels as original and groundbreaking, but his works repeatedly reveal a continued engagement with the Gothic past in its many guises.

An earlier monograph by the present author looked at the manner in which the past in Scott’s Waverley novels frequently threatens to break free from the containment imposed upon it by the author’s celebrated commitment to progress and the concomitant relegation of the past to ancient history. Like that study, this book aims not to provide a detailed analysis of Scott’s fiction but instead to call attention to Scott’s enduring, if conflicted, depictions of the Gothic past, particularly in the form of superstition, legends, and popular folklore. Cahalan positions Scott’s use of such material in his works as confirmation of his commitment to historical verisimilitude; as a fundamental component of Scottish history, such tales provide an important element of accuracy and authenticity to Scott’s depiction of the past. Certainly, this was how Scott represented his engagement with the supernatural, leading several contemporary readers to deride, as James Hogg called it, Scott’s ‘half-an-half’ perspective: ‘Even Sir Walter Scott is turned renegade and with his stories made up of half-an-half like Nathaniel Gow’s toddy is trying to throw cold water on the most certain though most impalpable phenomena of human nature’.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge similarly complained that Scott ‘relates ghost stories, prophecies, presentiments, all praeter-supernaturally fulfilled’ only ‘most anxious[ly] to let his readers know, that he himself is far too enlightened not to be assured of the folly and falsehood of all that he yet relates as truth, and for the purpose of exciting the interest and emotions attached to the belief of their truth’.

Coleridge’s assessment of Scott’s engagement with the supernatural and other elements of folkloric belief supports Ian Duncan’s recent identification of ‘two valences of romance’ in Scott’s works. On the one hand, Duncan asserts, ‘romance signifies an individualist estrangement from real life, a puerile narcissism and egotistical delusion’ that must be corrected, ‘outgrown or cured’. On the other hand, ‘romance signifies the heritage of a cultural identity that is lost but ethically true, an historically
alienated ancestral patriarchy recalled in vision or legend." Contemporary reviews of Scott’s works evidence warring accounts of ‘the heritage of a cultural identity’ evident in the use of, for instance, witches, soothsayers, prophecies, spirits, and grey ghosts. Thus, as The Critical Review’s assessment of Waverley indicates, the description of superstitions and supernatural beliefs is inevitable in an authentic depiction of Scottish historical reality: ‘Our tale (and where is there a Scottish tale without them) has its superstitions, its witcheries, and its second sight’. But, the illustration of such beliefs should be condemned, as the use of the supernatural in the second edition of Otranto was, precisely because it indicates the continued existence of atavistic and irrational perspectives in the present day. This is why The Critical Review censured Guy Mannering (1815), refusing ‘exclusively [to] compliment the morality of the piece’ on account of its encouragement of ongoing belief in ‘marvellous’ ideas such as second sight. The second sight may be an authentic historical and, indeed, present reality in Scotland, The Critical Review suggested, but the representation of it as such in a modern work of fiction aimed at English readers was not to be applauded. The Monthly Review similarly condemned the use of second sight in the novel as a ‘gross improbability’ and an ‘absolute moral impossibility’. While it could be countenanced in ‘the regions of romance’, Scott’s celebrated realism forbade it entering here:

[I]n a species of writing which founds its only claim to our favour on the reality of its pictures and images, the introduction of any thing that is diametrically contrary to all our ordinary principles of belief and action is as gross a violation of every rule of composition as the appendage of a fish’s tail to a woman’s head and shoulders.

As indicated by these reviews, Scott’s fiction was often implicated in the problematic transition from pre-modernity to modernity at the heart of gothic literary production. Despite the association of the Waverley novels with realism and historical truths – one central to the differentiation of ‘novel’ and ‘romance’, as Chapter 2 will discuss in more detail – they frequently introduced an ambiguity about the relationship of the past and present, as did Scott’s poetic works before them. Francis Jeffrey was particularly scathing about Scott’s version of history in Marmion (1808). Considering that work in the Edinburgh Review, Jeffrey dismissed its reliance on romance, suggesting that its ‘images borrowed from the novels of Mrs. Ratcliffe [sic] and her imitators’ promised not to amuse but to bore its readers. In particular, Jeffrey objected to ‘the insufferable number,
and length, and minuteness of those descriptions of antient dresses; and manners, and buildings; and ceremonies, and local superstitions; with which the whole poem is overrun; such details were, according to Jeffrey, fundamentally out of place in a ‘modern’ text:

We object to these, and to all such details, because they are, for the most part, without dignity or interest in themselves; because, in a modern author, they are evidently unnatural; and because they must always be strange, and, in a good degree, obscure and unintelligible to ordinary readers.¹⁰⁴

Later, echoing the language of earlier reviews of Walpole’s Otranto, Jeffrey argued that the kind of details Scott provided are very welcome when found ‘in old books … because they are there authentic and valuable documents of the usages and modes of life of our ancestors’. ‘In a modern romance, however’, Jeffrey declared, ‘these details being no longer authentic are of no value in point of information’ and, therefore, threaten to fatigue readers.¹⁰⁵

Tedium was not Jeffrey’s principal concern, as is evident in the caution with which he concluded his review. Writing that he believed it his ‘duty to make one strong effort to bring back the great apostle of the heresy to the wholesome creed of his instructors’, Jeffrey claimed to want ‘to stop the insurrection before it becomes desperate and senseless, by persuading the leader to return to his duty and allegiance’. Scott’s ‘duty’, as Jeffrey saw it, was the abandonment of ‘the wicked tales of knight-errantry and enchantment’.¹⁰⁶ Central to Jeffrey’s review, then, is the suggestion that the repeated representation and re-presentation of history in the form of ‘stupid monkish legends … ludicrous description[s] of Lord Gifford’s habiliments of divination … and … various scraps and fragments of antiquarian history and baronial biography’ threatened to confuse the distance between past and present in readers’ minds.¹⁰⁷ The danger here, as with the second edition of Otranto, was the collapse of the distinction between history and present-day reality, one that, in the context of Scott’s popularity, had potentially serious consequences, both for the course of English literature and for the wellbeing of its readers.¹⁰⁸ Accordingly, while Jeffrey ‘ostentatiously object[s] on aesthetic grounds that Scott’s historical details are unauthentic and therefore tedious’, as Michael Gamer argues, he ‘nevertheless asserts that Scott’s work are indeed … calculated recastings of history … capable of achieving political effects’.¹⁰⁹

Jeffrey’s negativity – though not repeated in his future assessments of Scott’s poetry – evidences the way in which Scott’s ‘recourse to the
“rudeness” of the distant past’ was often linked ominously to gothic romance. Murray Pittock argues that ‘the supernatural Gothic in Scott is almost always associated with the infantilized, credulous Scotland of the Jacobite and Catholic past’, but Scott frequently reveals a rather more equivocal attitude to the ‘marvellous’ historical details to which Jeffrey objected. In Waverley, tellingly, the hero’s attempt to reason with Fergus Mac Ivor over the appearance of the fateful Bodach Glas, or ‘grey ghost’ – a folkloric figure supposed to presage death – is ultimately abortive, as the destiny it foretells is fulfilled, if in a slightly different way than Fergus assumed it would be, by the end of the novel. On the one hand, Waverley’s resolute rationality, even at the moment of Fergus’s execution, coupled with Fergus’s death signals the containment of a superstitious belief associated with Catholicism and traditional Highland culture. On the other hand, Fergus’s execution proves the essential truth of the Bodach Glas’s prediction, suggesting the ongoing import and relevance of such beliefs. Similarly, in The bride of Lammermoor (1819), the cryptic Ravenswood family prophecy is satisfied, despite Edgar Ravenswood’s initial, sceptically modern take on its forecast. As he is swallowed by quicksand, becoming ‘invisible, as if [he] had melted into the air’, Ravenswood transforms into legend himself, underlining its continued power and potency.

Similar inconsistencies about superstition, legend, and folkloric belief might be traced in a majority of the Waverley novels, emphasising a striking line of continuity between Scott’s historical novels and those of his Irish contemporaries. Chief among his imitators in Ireland were Charles Robert Maturin and the Banim brothers. Scott maintained a lengthy correspondence with the former and was heavily influenced in the composition of The bride of Lammermoor by Maturin’s hybrid tale, The Milesian chief (1812). Typically, Scott never acknowledged this influence, and his relationship with Maturin is generally seen as an unbalanced one, with Maturin gaining immeasurably more from it than Scott. Certainly, Maturin remained grateful for the financial assistance and literary patronage Scott provided over the years, and he was also very ready to admit the inspiration he found in Scott’s works. In composing his final novel, The Albigenses (1824), for instance, Maturin confessed that he had purposely followed the example of Scott’s Ivanhoe (1820):

[T]he work … has been flattered by some literary men to whom I have read it, with a strong resemblance to ‘Ivanhoe’ which I admit was my model, – I have studiously avoided the faults so justly charged on Melmoth, and tried to form myself on the style of my friend Sir Walter Scott.
Conventionally read as a paltry imitation of Scott’s model, *The Albigenses* is not, in fact, Maturin’s first or only fictional engagement with the issues of historicity, authenticity, and the translation of popular culture into print central to the Waverley novels. But, it is often held up as proof of the failure of the historical novel to thrive in Ireland, an assessment linked to the obvious overlap of gothic and historical modes of fiction in *The Albigenses*. The novel is a fascinating example of the cross-formal nature of early nineteenth-century literature, combining an investigation of the Catholic Church and the Albigensian sect of the thirteenth century and identifiable, if anachronistically deployed, historical figures with lycanthropes, power-hungry abbots, mad crones, cross-dressing women, and a Black Knight that recalls the expunged Satan in Maturin’s earlier play, *Bertram; or, the castle of St Aldobrand* (1816). More than that, in its particular linkage of past and present, the novel insists on the kind of qualified historiographical accuracy associated with Scott’s historical novel while using historical fact urgently to locate the past’s intrusion into the present.

A similarly doubled use of history is also present in Maturin’s lesser known, posthumous short story, ‘Leixlip Castle: an Irish family legend’ (1825). As in *The Albigenses*, Maturin here carefully constructs a specific historical context, beginning the narrative proper with a description of ‘[t]he tranquillity of the Catholics of Ireland during the disturbed periods of 1715 and 1745’. He also notes the widespread if ‘secret disgust’ felt by many Irish Jacobite sympathisers ‘at the existing state of affairs’, observing that, in response, many ‘quitt[ed] their family residences and wandere[d] about like persons who were uncertain of their homes, or possibly expecting better from some near and fortunate contingency’ (‘Leixlip Castle’, p. 1). Maturin’s brief sketch of this period in Ireland is, as Trumpener suggests, based in fact, as many Irish Catholics did experience the quiet despair to which Maturin refers. Not trusting his readers to realise the accuracy of his fictional report, however, Maturin appends a brief preface to the tale intended to emphasise the narrative’s factual basis: ‘The incidents of the following tale are not merely founded on fact, they are facts themselves’ (‘Leixlip Castle’, p. 1). All the principal incidents related are, Maturin insists, ‘facts’, derived from his own family history (‘Leixlip Castle’, p. 1).

Despite this heavy emphasis on verifiable fact, Maturin classifies the tale in his preface as ‘a fine specimen of Gothic horrors’ (‘Leixlip Castle’, p. 1), emphatically highlighting the strange and unnatural events characterising his narrative. Indeed, as suggested by the tale’s subtitle, the narrative
The gothic novel in Ireland revolves around not just a ‘story, history, [or] account’ of the Blaney family passed down through the generations, but also the less verifiable beliefs ‘handed down by tradition from early times and popularly regarded as historical’. Here, Maturin both draws on Scott’s use of such material and anticipates the revival of interest in Irish legendary material signalled by the publication of Thomas Crofton Croker’s *Fairy legends and traditions of the south of Ireland* (1825–28). Moreover, like Scott, Maturin displays a contradictory attitude to the supernaturalism at the heart of his tale. As Trumpener argues, Maturin ‘evokes the supernatural to demonstrate what needs to be rooted out of a culture if it is to advance’ only ‘to suggest the impossibility of such suppressions and to stage the inevitable return of the repressed’.

The tale is set in the titular castle, rented in 1720 by a disaffected Catholic baronet, Sir Redmond Blaney, who removes to Leixlip with his three daughters in disgruntlement over the victorious boastings of his Whig neighbours ‘in the north’ (‘Leixlip Castle’, p. 1). While Blaney himself undergoes a process of ‘tranquilization’ at Leixlip castle, ‘losing’ his tenacity in political matters, his daughters begin to register in fatally supernatural ways the continued hold of the past on the present (‘Leixlip Castle’, p. 3). First, the youngest daughter disappears with ‘an old woman, in the *Fingallian* dress (a red petticoat and a long green jacket)’, to be seen fleetingly over the next ten years, ‘as diminutive in form, as though she had not grown an inch since she was ten years of age, and always crouching over a fire, … complaining of cold and hunger, and apparently covered with rags’ (‘Leixlip Castle’, pp. 3, 4). Then, the eldest daughter is murdered on her wedding night by her suddenly deranged bridegroom – hitherto recognised as ‘a [Catholic] gentleman of competent fortune and unexceptional character’ (‘Leixlip Castle’, p. 4) – in a scene reminiscent of Scott’s *The bride of Lammermoor*. Finally, the middle daughter, left largely to her own devices, imbibes from the servants a ‘taste for superstitious and supernatural horrors’ that eventually has ‘a most disastrous effect on her future life’ (‘Leixlip Castle’, p. 5). One ‘withered crone’, in particular, promises to show the susceptible Anne her future husband on Halloween eve (‘Leixlip Castle’, p. 5). Predictably, the affair ends badly for Anne: soon after her divination, she marries the Scottish Jacobite Baronet, Sir Richard Maxwell, and lives happily together with him for years until they become suddenly and irreconcilably estranged. The cause of their separation is Maxwell’s discovery in Anne’s possession of ‘an iron weapon … encrusted with blood’, the dark reminder of that long ago Halloween eve, when
Anne saw not her future husband, but ‘[a] vision of indescribable horror’ (‘Leixlip Castle’, p. 12). It turns out that this blade was the weapon used by Maxwell to kill his younger brother at a feast meant to ‘harmoniz[e]’ the ‘deadly feud’ between them, and thrown by him from the deck of the ship in which he escaped from Scotland to Ireland ‘on the night of the 30th of October’ (‘Leixlip Castle’, pp. 12, 13).

Eventually, Maxwell is terrifyingly confronted by the past he had attempted to forget each year, ‘retiring to his own chamber, and remaining invisible to his family on the anniversary of the 30th of October’ (‘Leixlip Castle’, p. 11). Similarly, while Blaney seeks to flee the continued memory of political defeat and dispossession in Kildare, the power of the past dramatically transforms Leixlip Castle into ‘a living tomb’ for Blaney and his daughters. Indeed, as Pittock contends, the very fact that Blaney rents, rather than purchases, Leixlip Castle is a compelling reminder of Irish Catholic dispossession: ‘the displaced Catholic aristocracy can only hire the history they once owned’. The fates of all characters involved are what Trumpener identifies as a sign of ‘suspension or regression’ associated with ‘[t]he failure of the Jacobite cause’. While Blaney and Redmond equally attempt ‘to flee the political fallout from the ’15 and the bellicosity of clan society’, escape is ultimately impossible. Instead, the past continues to intrude upon the present with devastating personal, familial, and, it is suggested, socio-political effects. In Maturin’s narrative, Pittock argues, the Catholic aristocracy represented by Blaney and Maxwell has ‘no future’; like Edgar Ravenswood in The bride of Lammermoor, Blaney and his family simply become part of the legends that have been so fatally a part of their history. As such, they remain a potent symbol of the convergence of past and present.

Published the same year as ‘Leixlip Castle’, John and Michael Banim’s The fetches also comments perceptively on the adjoining, sometimes overlapping, nature of past and present. One of the novels included in the Banim brothers’ Tales by the O’Hara family (1825), The fetches generally has been eclipsed in studies of the Irish historical novel by John Banim’s The Boyne water (1826), which is itself frequently dismissed as a servile and ineffective imitation of Scott. The many arguments about The Boyne water and its inability accurately to reproduce Scott’s model in Ireland need no rehearsal here. Contemporary reviews of The Boyne water and Banim’s The Nowlans (1826), however, warrant a brief consideration. These reviews are worth noting because they highlight the apparent distinction between Scott’s use of history and Banim’s – a difference that forms the
basis for most modern analyses of the Irish historical novel – while also underlining another element of Banim’s imitation: his use of the supernatural. Take, for example, the *Monthly Review*, which condemned Banim for ‘awakening’ in *The Boyne water* ‘the memory of all that fierce spirit of religious dissention, which near a century and a half, and the gradual influence of more tolerant and charitable principles, have scarcely had power to soothe and to put to rest’. It then identified Banim’s ‘worst fault’ as his ‘palpable and servile imitation of Scott’, one that was ‘almost always unskilful’. This ersatz reproduction of Scott’s model was particularly offensive in its use of the supernatural, indicated in Banim’s presentation of the sibyl, Onagh. ‘[I]n the highest degree ridiculous’, Onagh evidenced the author’s ‘depraved taste for the preternatural’, one that ‘violates all reason and probability, by the introduction of unreal visions of witchcraft, in the very midst of authenticated scenes of real life’.135 In a similar vein, the *Monthly Review* likened *The Nowlans* to debased popular fiction such as gothic romance: ‘The coarse delineation of such utter depravity, is the ordinary and stock resource of inferior fiction-mongers; who labour to make up, by thickening and deepening the naked horrors of their plots, for the want of interest with which they otherwise lack the ingenuity to invest their narratives’. Despite Scott’s distancing of himself from such unoriginal authorship, the *Monthly Review* nevertheless linked him to it as well in noting that many of the ‘wonderful’ and ‘strange’ accidents and coincidences to be found in *The Nowlans* owe directly to Banim’s ‘broad imitation of Sir Walter Scott’.136

In its carefully constructed historical context and its exploration of the folkloric belief in a banshee-like figure, *The fetches* anticipates both the attention to historical detail and the threatening evocation of the supernatural found in *The Boyne water* and *The Nowlans*. As Connolly observes, its introduction, entailing an epistolary exchange between Abel and Barnes O’Hara detailing the production of the ensuing tale, ‘marks the passage of everyday time within which novels are written, published and read’.137 At the same time, in its focus on ‘the superstition of “The Fetch”’, the novel ‘acknowledg[es] the endurance of “primitive times” in the present, chiefly in the shape of a living tradition of wonders and superstitions’.138 As in Scott’s conflicted attitude towards romance, we might detect in *The fetches* an interest in relaying the superstition authentically – an issue discussed at length in the novel’s ‘Introduction’ – annexed to an apparent commitment to dispelling its power.139 Constructing the narrative as incontrovertible, the introduction informs us that it is an edited version...
of the ‘notes of a true and real Fetch history’ written by ‘the celebrated Doctor Butler’ (*The fetches*, pp. 133, 132). Butler is himself a central character in the tale, the medical attendant of the young Kilkenny College student, Tresham. He and Tresham represent apparently divergent perspectives on ‘national superstitions’, as Richard Haslam has argued (*The fetches*, p. 114). While Tresham gives in to a passionate but academic interest in the fetch – a spectral impersonation of a living individual whose appearance in the morning or the evening augurs long life or certain death, respectively – Dr Butler ‘is hostile to all forms of superstition’.

It soon becomes apparent that Dr Butler is not simply intended to cure Tresham of his consumptive illness but also of his dangerous fascination with the fetch. Like Edward Waverley, Tresham is presented as seriously misguided by his education. ‘[A] deep reader, and an exceeding visionary’, Tresham is ‘superstitious, moping, and melancholy’, and is known by his fellow students as ‘a Rosycrucian, … a soothsayer and ghost-seeker’ (*The fetches*, pp. 149, 150). Thanks to the advantages of education and travel afforded to ‘a young gentleman … the descendant of an English family, settled in the south of Ireland’, Tresham presents himself as less obviously mired in superstition than his dwarfish servant, Larry (*The fetches*, p. 143). Tresham’s ‘supernaturals’, unlike Larry’s, are said to be ‘systematized so as to suit his intellect and education’ (*The fetches*, p. 196). In contrast, Larry remains attached to the confused ‘primitiveness of raw material’ (*The fetches*, p. 196). While ‘Tresham is more scholarly than Larry’, Haslam writes, ‘their metaphysics differ in degree rather than kind’.

Faced with the superstitious beliefs of both men, Dr Butler determines to lead them out of their backward understanding, using fear and deception as his weapons. Ultimately, though, he begins to doubt his own rational commitment to disproving the fetch:

> Rejecting from the first, with laughter and scorn, every thought of supernatural omen, and crushing it under a load of manly indifference, there now and then stirred, however, in the bottom of the doctor’s soul, and under all that philosophical pressure, a something, that like an incipient earthquake at the base of a real mountain, slightly disturbed the mass. (*The fetches*, pp. 358–9)

By the end of the novel, Dr Butler’s rationality has turned against him, for, when Tresham sees his lover, Anna, for a final time, the lies Dr Butler has told him for the sake of his health convince him that he is seeing her fetch. Anna, too, believes that what she sees – ‘so dreadfully like’ Tresham (*The fetches*, p. 385) – is his fetch. She conjures him to speak to her and
convince her that he is Tresham in the flesh, but as he does so, he falls to the ground in a deadly swoon. Anna now realises that Tresham has been slowly dying for months, becoming confirmed in the opinion that ‘the Fetch does not come in vain’ (*The fetches*, p. 387). Now even more convinced than ever that Tresham’s fetch had earlier appeared to her, Anna catches the body of her lover in her arms and throws herself over the precipitous cliff on which they are sitting. She is impelled to do so, in part, by the image of ‘two figures, the counter parts of her lover and herself, standing, hand in hand, together’ under the nearby waterfall (*The fetches*, p. 391). Her family and friends witness her last act and ‘her fearful scream, as if of joy, not terror’ (*The fetches*, p. 392).

There is, in this conclusion, an implied verification of the fetch and its prophetic powers. As with Roche’s *Trecothick bower* and Maturin’s ‘Leixlip Castle’, then, *The fetches* might be seen to confirm the prevailing belief that Scott’s historical novel simply did not suit nineteenth-century Irish reality. As Connolly contends, ‘Characterised by beliefs that were supposed to belong to the past or to the infancy of culture, the literature of early nineteenth-century Ireland might be said to fail to produce uncanny effects because of the vitality of certain cultural practices – including the culture of supernatural belief’. Yet, Scott’s works themselves endow the mystical and eerie with a similar enduring strength. What these works help to highlight, therefore, is not the failure of Scott’s model in Ireland, but instead the inadequacy of current conceptualisations of Scott’s historical novel. Critically influenced and informed by gothic literary production, the historical novel was never a complete or irrevocable departure from it. Instead, the historical and the gothic converge throughout the early nineteenth century, producing a hybrid literary form that relies heavily on an evocation of the Gothic past and a continued interrogation of the meaning of history to present reality. To attempt to understand these forms as separate and distinct entities is both unwittingly to endorse Scott’s self-interested endeavour to construct his ‘original’ genius and to misunderstand the cross-generic nature of Romantic literary production.

**Conclusion**

The issue of formal and generic overlap is one not solely confined to the categories of gothic and historical fiction, as shown in the next chapter. Instead, just as the texts discussed here threatened to dismantle eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century notions of social, cultural, and political
progress and modernity, so too did their cross-formal and cross-generic nature present problems to literary notions of evolution and improvement. This is most readily apparent in the literary gothic’s continued refusal to adhere to the terminological distinctions by which we now order late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century literature. In particular, although literary scholars often make a distinction between ‘romance’ and ‘novel’ in this period, early Irish gothic fiction, like much of the British fiction we now know of as ‘gothic novels’, flirted with both terms. In so doing, this literature complicates both late eighteenth-century and more recent views of the novel’s triumph over earlier forms of prose fiction and suggests the many layers of formal and generic overlap denied by retrospective constructions of ‘the gothic novel’.

NOTES

1 The Critical Review, 13 (March 1762), 252.
2 The Countess of Salisbury was performed in Dublin and London in 1765 and 1767, respectively; Loeber and Loeber, A guide to Irish fiction, p. 748.
4 Thomas Leland, Longsword, Earl of Salisbury: an historical romance, 2 vols (Dublin, 1762), vol. 2, p. 32. Further references are to this edition and are given in parentheses in the text.
6 Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber, ‘The publication of Irish novels and novelettes’, p. 28.
7 Ian Campbell Ross highlights this formal crossover, arguing that ‘historical, sentimental and Gothic fiction [frequently] overlap’ in eighteenth-century Irish prose fiction. The examples he notes include Leland’s Longsword, Anne Fuller’s Alan Fitz-Osborne (1787) and The son of Ethelwolf (1789), and Regina Maria Roche’s The children of the abbey (1796), all of which are discussed in more detail later in this chapter; Ian Campbell Ross, ‘Prose in English, 1690–1800: from the Williamite Wars to the Act of Union’, in Margaret Kelleher and Philip O’Leary (eds), The Cambridge history of Irish literature, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), vol. 1, p. 273.
13 See Miles, ‘The 1790s: the effulgence of gothic’.
14 Punter argues that although *Otranto* originated a genre, it was another thirteen years before a successor appeared’ in the form of Reeve’s *The old English baron*; Punter, *The literature of terror*, vol. 1, p. 47. See also note 31 above, p. 23.
15 Stevens, *British historical fiction before Scott*, pp. 49, 121.
19 *Ibid*.
20 *The Critical Review*, 13 (March 1762), 252.
29 Clery translates ‘incredulus odi’ as ‘to believe is to dislike’; *The rise of supernatural fiction*, p. 54.
33 Hoeveler, *Gothic riffs*, pp. 47, 41.
35 Watt, *Contesting the gothic*, p. 47.
36 Clery, *The rise of supernatural fiction*, p. 60.
37 *Ibid*.
38 See Price, ‘Ancient liberties?’, and Watt, *Contesting the gothic*.
43 Writing to Alexander Pope in 1721, Jonathan Swift expressed his admiration for ‘the wisdom of that Gothic Institution, which made [Parliaments] Annual’ and connected the absence of that same institution in present-day England with an inherent lack of liberty: ‘I was confident our Liberty could never be placed upon a firm foundation till that ancient law were restored among us.’ Later, Swift bitterly complained, ‘We see the Gothic system of limited monarchy is extinguished in all the nations of Europe. It is utterly extirpated in this wretched kingdom, and yours must be the next.’ See Jonathan Swift to Alexander Pope, 10 January 1721, and Jonathan Swift to William Pulteney, Earl of Bath, 8 March 1734[–35]; in David Woolley (ed.), *The correspondence of Jonathan Swift, D.D.*, 4 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1999–2007), vol. 2, p. 360, vol. 4, p. 66.
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46 Price, ‘Ancient liberties?’; p. 27.
50 Watt, *Contesting the gothic*, p. 47.
52 For a contrasting view of Leland’s depiction of Mal-leon, see Price, ‘Ancient liberties?’; p. 23.
55 Watt, *Contesting the gothic*, p. 51.
56 Ian Duncan, ‘Walter Scott, James Hogg and Scottish gothic’, in Punter (ed.), *A companion to the gothic*, p. 75.
59 Another Irish text that follows the example set by Leland and might be classed, like it, as a loyalist gothic romance as identified by Watt is Stephen Cullen’s *The castle of Inchvally: a tale – alas! too true* (1796), discussed in more detail below, p. 100.
60 A central character in both *Longsword* and *Alan Fitz-Osborne*, the historical des Roches was complicit in de Burgh’s fall from royal favour in 1232 but himself fell from favour by 1234, when he was banned from the court and unceremoniously told ‘to meddle no more in political affairs’. Despite his lack of official court position through much of the 1220s and 1230s, de Burgh was
viewed with distrust because of the influence he held over Henry III, who had spent much of his childhood in the bishop's household and care. This hostility was compounded by de Burgh's birth and upbringing in France, which, it seems, laid him open to suspicion from the native English baronage, members of whom accused him of, among other things, displaying favouritism towards fellow emigrés and plotting a French takeover of England; Nicholas Vincent, ‘Roches, Peter des (d. 1238)’, *Oxford dictionary of national biography* (Oxford, 2004; online edn, 2008), www.oxforddnb.com, accessed 17 July 2013.

61 Anne Fuller, *Alan Fitz-Osborne, an historical tale*, 2 vols (London [1787]), vol. 2, p. 11. Further references are to this edition and are given in parentheses in the text.


63 Ibid., p. 145. Tompkins (p. 156) notes that White's death was recorded in the register for the Church of St James, Abson: ‘1799, James White, Esq.: (he ended his existence by Famine – supposed to be insane) his name not learnt for sometime. March 15th.’

64 The latter two are translations from the works of Rabaut de Saint-Étienne (1743–93).


66 Ibid.

67 James White, *Conway Castle; a poem* (London, 1789), unpaginated advertisement. Further references are to this edition and are given in parentheses in the text.


69 James White, *Earl Strongbow: or, the history of Richard de Clare and the beautiful Geralda*, 2 vols (Dublin, 1789), vol. 1, pp. 4, 10. Further references are to this edition and are given in parentheses in the text.

70 Watt, *Contesting the gothic*, p. 43.

71 Ibid.


73 Regina Maria Roche, *Trescothick bower; or, the lady of the west country*, 3 vols (London: A.K. Newman, 1814), vol. 1, p. 147. Further references are to this edition and are given in parentheses in the text.

74 Watt, *Contesting the gothic*, p. 51.

By 1814, the Prince Regent was acting effectively in place of his ailing father, George III.

That Roche believed he had done so is clear in her dedication to Contrast (1828), where, in committing the novel to Princess Augusta, Roche praised her brother, George IV, as ‘[having] signally advanced the glory of this country, by every means in his power, and who, by his humane and liberal patronage, has encouraged and called into action the various energies and talents of a free people’; Contrast, 3 vols (London: A.K. Newman & Co., 1828), vol. 1, p. xi.


Ibid., p. 189.


Ibid., p. 86.


Robertson, Legitimate histories, p. 6.

Ibid., p. 48.


Robertson, Legitimate histories, pp. 7–8.


Cahalan, Great hatred, little room, p. 7.


Duncan, Modern romance and transformations of the novel, p. 59.
Jeffrey suggests that Scott’s particular use of history in *Marmion*, combined with his popular appeal, promised to create ‘an indiscriminate taste for chivalrous legends and romances in irregular rhime’. In this, Scott was bound to attract ‘as many copyists as Mrs. Radcliffe or Schiller’ at the same time that he became ‘the founder of a new schism in the catholic poetical church, for which, in spite of all our exertions, there will probably be no cure, but in the extravagance of the last and lowest of its followers’; *ibid.*, 34.


On the similarities between the two novels, see Robertson, *Legitimate histories*, pp. 214–25.

For the correspondence between Maturin and Scott, see Fannie E. Ratchford and Wm. H. McCarthy, Jr. (eds), *The correspondence of Sir Walter Scott and Charles Robert Maturin, with a few other allied letters* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1937).

Morin, Charles Robert Maturin, p. 155.


On Scott’s recommendation, Maturin omitted the bodily representation of the devil – referred to as the Black Knight – from Bertram before the play was successfully performed at Drury Lane Theatre in May 1816. Scott later came to regret his advice, reprinting, with some inaccuracies, the excised sections in his review of Maturin’s later novel, Women; or, pour et contre (1818). See Ratchford and McCarthy (eds), The correspondence of Sir Walter Scott and Charles Robert Maturin, and Sir Walter Scott, Review of Women; or, pour et contre by Charles Robert Maturin, Edinburgh Review, 30.59 (1818), 234–57. For a useful comparison of the three principal texts of the play, including the manuscript Maturin sent to Scott, the Larpent copy, and the performance text, see Jeffrey Cox, Seven gothic dramas, 1789–1825 (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1992), pp. 315–83.

The tale was originally published in The literary souvenir; or, cabinet of poetry and romance (London: Hurst, Robinson, & Co., 1825), pp. 211–32.


Trumpener, Bardic nationalism, p. 223.


Trumpener, Bardic nationalism, p. 225.

Original emphasis.

Ibid., p. 223.

Pittock, Scottish and Irish Romanticism, p. 232.

Trumpener, Bardic nationalism, p. 224.

Ibid.

Pittock, Scottish and Irish Romanticism, p. 232.


137 Connolly, A cultural history of the Irish novel, p. 178.
139 On the discussion between Abel and Barnes O’Hara about the representation, in print, of orally transmitted legends and superstitions, see Connolly, A cultural history of the Irish novel, pp. 178–82. For the argument that the fictional creation of the O’Hara brothers ‘reinforces the air of authenticity that infuses their work’, see Hand, A history of the Irish novel, p. 83.
141 Ibid.
142 Ibid.
143 Ibid., p. 116.
144 Ibid., p. 117. Contemporary reviewers equally detected a confirmation, rather than deflation, of the myth of the fetch; see La belle Assemblée, 3rd ser., 1 (May 1825), 217–18.