HAUNTING FEAR

Literary encounters with medieval, renaissance, and gothic ghosts

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DECLARATION

(i) The candidate declares that this thesis comprises only their original work towards the Master of Arts (Thesis Only).

(ii) Due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used.

(iii) The thesis is fewer than the maximum word limit in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices as approved by the Research Higher Degrees Committee.

Cassandra Elaine Whittem

24/05/2018
**Preface**

(i) No work towards the thesis was carried out in collaboration with others.

(ii) No work towards the thesis has been submitted for other qualifications.

(iii) No work towards the thesis was carried out prior to enrolment in the degree.

(iv) No third party editorial assistance was provided in preparation of the thesis.

(v) No multi-authored publications or articles in preparation are included in the thesis.

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ABSTRACT

The ghost is an enduring figure in literature, one that has appeared over centuries in a plethora of different forms. The power of the ghost as a literary figure and the key to its endurance lies in the intense, heightened emotion prompted by the moment of encounter between living and dead. When these moments of heightened emotion are depicted in popular cultural forms, changing cultural expectations governing the expression and representation of emotions are revealed. This thesis examines an emblematic text from three key periods in literary history: the anonymous fifteenth-century romance *The Awntyrs off Arthure*, William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* (c.1605), and Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). It will examine the emotions with which each text engages, through the form, environment and genre in which the ghost appears, and through the language in which these are expressed. By comparing the representation of ghosts in these texts, this thesis offers new insight into the evolving representation and narrative function of the ghost in literary culture, and explores some of the different forms of emotional expression in response to the supernatural.
INTRODUCTION

The words “Who’s there?” are the first to be spoken in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* (2011, 1.1.1). As the scene unfolds, it becomes apparent that while this question may be answered by a man, the speaker entertains the possibility that the answer will be “a ghost”. For Bernardo, who answers it upon his arrival, it is a simple question. However, when the ghost appears, more complex questions are raised, implicitly even if not always explicitly, which trouble the fields of history, theology, and ontology.

While acknowledging the importance of the changing theological and cultural contexts that mediate encounters with ghosts in literary and dramatic texts, this thesis focuses on the emotional content of these encounters. It will examine the confrontation with the ghost as a collision between states of being, which generates a particularly complex pattern of emotional responses. It will consider ghost encounters in three texts, with the first divided from the third by a period of over three hundred years, and investigate the similarities that link and differences that divide the kinds of emotions evoked by these encounters.

 Literary representations of ghosts are shaped by at least three things: theological and philosophical understandings, popular culture, and genre. There is a growing critical literature about the cultural history of the ghost that will inform my exploration of the emotions evoked by the ghost in literature. I will provide a brief sketch of this history as it unfolds during the periods with which my texts are concerned, particularly as it pertains to religion. I begin in this way, because theology provides a good way of canvassing the various and changing
ways in which the ontology of the ghost was understood while also rehearsing the different methods for communicating with and interpreting the ghost.

The Bible offers only one example of what would today be considered a ghost narrative: the Witch of Endor. In this tale, King Saul has banished wizards and necromancers from the land. Ghosts were associated with religions opposed to Judaism, and Saul is therefore affirming orthodox tradition. Nevertheless, when he sees the host of the Philistines drawing near, and realises that he has been abandoned by God for his sinfulness, Saul approaches the witch and asks her to divine the outcome of his upcoming battle (1 Samuel 28:3-25). In a ritual to which the reader is not privy, the witch raises the prophet Samuel’s spirit. Although the text specifies that only the witch can see the spirit, Saul is able to engage in a conversation with him. Through this conversation with the ghost, he learns that he and his sons will be killed in battle and his kingdom given by God to David.

Medieval theologians offered many different interpretations of this story, each of which offered a judgement about the ontological status of the ghost. A summary account is provided by twelfth-century Parisian theologian Peter Comestor:

On the subject of this evocation some say that the evil spirit appeared looking like Samuel, or that it was his fantastic image (that is, raised up by the devil) that appeared there, which was called ‘Samuel’. Others say that with God’s permission it was indeed the soul of Samuel, covered by
a body, that appeared, but for others it was a body that was resuscitated and received the life of a spirit, while Samuel’s soul remained in its resting place (Comestor cited in Schmitt 1998, 15).

In late antiquity, scholars such as Tertulian and Lactandus were confident that Samuel’s real soul had not been raised by the witch. The New Testament story of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19-31) was useful to these scholars in discrediting the arguments of those who took the Bible’s ghost story at face value (Schmitt 1998, 14). From the vantage point of heaven, Abraham tells the rich man, who is now in Hades, that there is no possibility of travelling between the realm of the damned and that of the blessed. He also forbids Lazarus from returning to Earth to warn the brothers of the rich man about their impending fate.

Jean-Claude Schmitt argues that the medieval Church wished to discourage a cult of the dead, while also wanting to distance itself from popular ghost belief, which reflected a pagan legacy (14). According to Schmitt, medieval theologians used the almost complete absence of ghosts in the Bible as evidence that ghosts did not exist (14). Moreover, some New Testament passages seem to explicitly refuse belief in ghosts, such as when Jesus walks on water and admonishes his disciples for mistaking him as a ghost (Matthew 14: 22-33). Meanwhile, pagan ideas around ghosts persisted, such as the belief that a ghost could shapeshift or that it could be banished by burning the remains of the body that it once had (Owens 2017, 21). The ghost of Samuel, and the Witch of Endor who supposedly
summoned him, were framed within the holy text itself as subversive and ungodly, if not explicitly evil. Saul has banned witchcraft and necromancy because they are evil, so when he circumvents this ban for his own purposes by disguising himself, he is portrayed as weak and sinful for doing so (1 Samuel 28:8).

The association of ghosts with paganism did not mean that the existence of ghosts could be rejected wholesale. Medieval theologians still needed to account for the ghosts encounters that were encountered by the laity. However, the question of their provenance remained: If Abraham’s words were true, and spirits could not travel between realms, then where did ghosts come from?

Some authorities like Pope Gregory the Great claimed that these spirits resided on earth, in the places where they had sinned. Gervase of Tilbury’s 1211 account of the ghost of Beaucaire, on the other hand, indicated that ghosts may be trapped somewhere between Heaven and Earth. Others believed ghosts were souls that resided in the upper region of Hell, a place distinct from that reserved for the eternally damned.¹

In the fifth century, Saint Augustine had written extensively on the subject, leading Schmitt to call him the “true founder of the Christian theory of ghosts” (17). Augustine’s writings responded to the pagan foundations of European ghost

¹See two medieval Irish ghost stories, Scél Choirpri (Wiley, 2013), and Fís Adomnáin (Stokes 1870, 14-17).
belief, and centuries later, after the Reformation, they were used to inform the Protestant position on ghosts. Augustine completely rejected the concept of ghosts as genuine spiritual revenants, arguing that neither the body nor the soul of the dead person appeared to the living, but only an imago (spiritual image). His position was that the souls of the dead remained where they were, in Heaven or Hell, and took no part in nor possessed any knowledge of the living’s supposed encounters with them. Furthermore, he argued that souls in a Christian universe would not be able to wander the Earth, irrespective of God’s leave to do so, though he made an allowance for Saints. All other ghosts were either in the minds of those who saw them, or Demons in disguise (22).

Nevertheless, belief in ghosts persisted, across many levels of popular and clerical culture. It is reflected, for example, in the doctrine of purgatory. As a concept, purgatory developed independently from official Church doctrine until it was finally affirmed at the Second Council of Lyons in 1274. This answered the question of where ghosts resided, while also confirming a belief that had been developing independently for centuries—namely that a soul could be redeemed even after death through the prayers, suffrages and almsgiving of the loved ones who survived them. Medieval ghost stories tend to reflect this belief, both in first-hand accounts and literary fictions.

Dan Wiley remarks that, in the Middle Ages, the literary form of the ghost story in fact "found particular favour with ecclesiastical writers" because they “recognised its potential to illustrate a wide variety of eschatological doctrines” (2013, 239). While in some sense keeping pagan ideas alive, the spectres depicted
in these clerical ghost stories promoted doctrines that “favoured the promotion of the liturgy of the dead, the development of piety, the attraction of charitable donations and finally, a reinforcement of the Church's hold over Christian society” (Schmitt, 9).

In the sixteenth century, during the Reformation, purgatory was among the many Catholic doctrines jettisoned by the Protestant movement; and after this had occurred, the subject of ghost belief was taken up again with new vigour by Protestant theologians. The Protestant problem with ghosts was exemplified by the writings of Ludwig Lavater, who develops an argument reminiscent of the one developed by Augustine:

If we hear a noyse that sayth, I am such a soule, we muste thus thinke, that thys talke procedeth of some sleight and subtiltie of the deuill, and that it is not the soule of the dead body that speketh these things, but the Deuill that deuiseth them to deceyue the hearers (Lavater (trans. R.H.), 2:3:120).

The possibility of ghosts being diabolical illusions dovetailed with a widespread fear of Satan's growing influence, which manifested in panic over witchcraft.  

2 See James I of England's highly influential Daemonologie (2008), in which he writes of “The fearefull aboundinge at this time in this countrie, of these detestable slaues of the Deuill, the Witches or enchaunters” (xi).
However, ghosts did not fit neatly into Early Modern classification of demons; they were a more ambiguous entity. If it was possible for an angel to appear in the manner of a ghost, it was equally possible for the Devil to do the same, and nearly impossible for a mere mortal to distinguish between the two.

According to Owen Davies, ghosts of the early modern period often appeared in English literature without an apparent moral mission, though Davies notes that the pre-Reformation narrative of the ghost returning to ensure justice was done remained popular. With regard to ghosts, the new spiritual leaders of England found themselves caught in a dilemma similar to the one faced by the medieval church before the idea of purgatory was developed (2010, vol. 1, xli). They were caught between the duty of eradicating a belief explicitly tied to Catholicism and the recognition that ghosts were useful for providing moral instruction. “At a fundamental level,” writes Davies, “the ghost was powerful proof of the existence of the Christian afterlife” (xli). Ghost stories remained popular in oral and written form, and even showed how the reformation played out “at the parish level”, among the laity. Davies writes that “despite the clear boundaries between Protestantism and Catholicism . . . ghosts show how the negotiations between religion and experience . . . [were] complex and surprising” (xlii).

The rise of empiricism during the Enlightenment subjected ghosts to heightened levels of scrutiny and scepticism. The movement’s emphasis on objectivity, method, and rationality established a “need for more detailed investigation and higher evidential proofs” (Davies, vol.2, xi). Public credulity was
a phenomenon to be deplored rather than tolerated. However, belief in ghosts was by no means eradicated by the Enlightenment. Terry Castle, writing on the resurgence of supernatural literature during this time, notes that the very “rationalist imperatives” that characterised the period may themselves have produced an undercurrent of fascination with the supernatural (1995, 7). The growing popularity of Methodism in the second half of the eighteenth century, which sanctioned belief in guardian angels, demons, and ghosts, often received some of the blame for the persistence of belief in the supernatural. Methodists were accused of fanning the dying embers of superstition, and it was claimed that their encouragement of “such religious enthusiasm abused the emotions” (Davies, x). However, the nature of popular ghost stories had changed from the medieval and early modern modes, moving away from the religiously-oriented stories of purgatory and redemption. The stories that drew the most attention in this period were “not those that involved benign ghosts on specific moral missions. [They were] noisy, intemperate, spirit manifestations that seemed to have no purpose . . . they did not fit accepted definitions of what ghosts were and why they manifested themselves” (xii). As this suggests, during the eighteenth century there was an increasingly self-conscious interest in the experience of fear

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3 In Advice to the People Called Methodists, first published in in 1745, John Wesley, founder of the Methodist movement confirmed their principles included the acceptance of “supernatural Evidence of Things not seen” (cited in Anderson 2012, 53). In addition to this, public knowledge of John Wesley’s personal “household ghost”, “Old Jeffries”, led to Methodism receiving criticism from many sides for “enthusiasm”, as did its association with the Cock Lane Ghost (53, 54). (The owner of the household in which it was found, Richard Parsons, was a Methodist). One notable example of the criticism faced by Methodism was William Hogarth’s print Credulity, Superstition and Fanaticism: A Medley, first published in 1762.
as entertainment, recreation, or delight. Edmund Burke’s notion of “delightful horror” neatly summarises this phenomenon (Burke cited in Otto 2011, 120): it describes an elevated, fundamentally secular, emotional experience that was sought out by many people and, by the end of the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth century, was widely available through Gothic fictions and entertainments such as the phantasmagoria. Supernatural terror had become a commodity that could be bought, sold, and consumed.

Cultural historians such as Owen Davies and Susan Owens provide important historical contexts for changing ideas about ghosts, reflecting shifts in cultural attitudes and practices in religion, politics, philosophy, literature, and art. This study draws on such work, but nevertheless follows a different line of inquiry, emphasising instead the emotions expressed and elicited by the ghost in literary texts. It aims to show that these are important vehicles for the expression and exploration of emotions. Davies and Owens do refer to representations of ghosts in art and literature, but these examples tend to be geared towards the representation of beliefs rather than emotions. The emotion of these examples, while not unremarked upon, is rarely the main point of study.

Conversely, in the emergent field of the history of emotions, supernatural encounters are rarely scrutinised, perhaps because these encounters are viewed with suspicion or thought to be exceptional events, atypical of the real lived experience of historical people. However, the extreme, heightened emotion depicted in scenes of confrontation with the supernatural and the rich imaginative contexts of literary and dramatic texts can reveal cultural attitudes
and conventions around the expression of emotion. (While acknowledging that the term ‘emotion’ was not used in the medieval and early modern periods as it is today, I will, for the sake of consistency and comprehensibility, primarily be using the word ‘emotion’ to refer to all the feelings, affections, and passions expressed and/or aroused by ghosts.)

In the chapters that follow I investigate one literary ghost from each of three key periods in literary history: the middle ages, the early modern, and the eighteenth century. The texts I have chosen are the anonymous medieval romance *The Awntyrs off Arthure* (written in the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century), William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* (c. 1599-1602) and Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). Barbara Rosenwein, an historian of the emotions, writes that the literary texts of a culture may help scholars discover “the modes of emotional expression that they expect, encourage, tolerate, and deplore” (2010, 842). With this claim as my point of departure, by focussing on texts from three different eras, I hope to be able to trace some of the ways in which these modes of expression change over time.

My three texts resonate with each other on a thematic level: they are all stories of royal ghosts; concerned with themes of lineage and succession and eschatological doctrine; and, importantly, stories in which the ghost is *encountered* by the characters in tense and emotionally fraught scenes. Yet these scenes vary considerably in the way they shape and stage the encounter with the ghost. In distinguishing one ghost from the next, one can therefore ask questions like: Does it appear during the daytime or night? Is it accompanied by a clap of
thunder, or is it on fire? Is it corporeal or ethereal? Does it speak? What does it say? Does it bring warnings or demands? Most importantly, how does the ghost affect the feelings of the living?

Those feelings are portrayed in the texts and evoked in their readers, and in part framed by the different generic conventions of poetry (The Awntyrs off Arthure), theatre (Hamlet) and the novel (The Castle of Otranto). For example, the expressive language used in the romance is at once restricted and heightened by its alliterative verse, while the necessity of the ghost being embodied by an actor in a theatrical performance affects the emotion of the scene of encounter. Throughout this thesis, my point of focus will be the emotional language and concepts of ghost literature, which I will use to navigate the generic, historical, theological, and cultural differences between these three texts.

The history of emotions is one of the fastest growing fields in historical and literary studies. It draws on fields such as psychology and anthropology, and its chief sources are historical texts, images, and cultural practices. Thomas Dixon’s broad history of the terminology of emotions, as well as Barbara Rosenwein and Sarah McNamer’s work on reading emotion in medieval literature and culture, will be of particular use to this study. In her scholarship, Rosenwein discusses the idea of social communities possessing their own systems of feeling and argues that reading their texts provides insight into what these communities and the individuals within them assessed as valuable or harmful to themselves (2010, 830). She explores medieval emotional communities uses of “feelings as rhetorical strategies to legitimate certain kinds of political and moral orders”
This will be especially applicable to ghosts, as they possess a unique position as entities concerned with religious, social, and political orders, or more broadly, the moral orders of death and its rituals. McNamer demonstrates how scholars might use literature to illuminate the nuances of medieval emotion through medieval affective meditations on the Passion (2010, 2). This thesis will draw on these methodologies to show that literary language can contribute a deeper understanding of historical emotion and the changes it exhibits.

The scope of this thesis does not allow a comprehensive history of ghost encounters to be developed. My three texts are chosen instead simply as sample of the literature written during these three periods. This study will use historical scholarship and contemporary accounts of ghosts from each period to situate each text within its context. This will allow a more thorough investigation of the texts in question; however, these accounts will be secondary to the three literary texts that will form the primary focus of this study, which is literary, textual, and rhetorical in its orientation rather than concerned with material and cultural history as such.

The lexicon of ghostly emotions is a key object of inquiry, and I will examine continuities and discontinuities in the vocabulary used by each text. In the first chapter I will investigate the Middle English emotion words used in *The Awntyrs off Arthure*, consider the poem’s alliterative style, and reflect upon the poem’s emotional impact. In the second chapter I will examine the emotional language in *Hamlet*, reflecting on the effects produced by the ghost’s ‘embodiment’ by an actor. In the third chapter I will explore the mix of the real and the supernatural
in *The Castle of Otranto*, and discuss the emotional impact of its melodramatic language and style.

I will also look at changes in the relation between the ghost and its environment. I will explore the representation of nature in *The Awntyrs off Arthure*, how this contributes to the otherworldliness of the ghost, and the ways in which this contributes to the ghost’s moral message. I will discuss the relationship of the ghost of *Hamlet* to time and space, and consider the ghost’s ambiguous provenance. Finally, I will investigate the ways in which the ghost of *The Castle of Otranto* is embedded within the fabric of its castle, and how this affects the representation and expression of emotion within the novel.

The final change I will be tracing over the three texts will be in the ghosts’ bodies and voices. I will examine the ghost’s appearance in the *Awntyrs off Arthure*, and how its representation as a decaying corpse reflects the medieval motif of *memento mori*. I will consider the ghost of *Hamlet’s* very human characteristics, evident in his voice and body, and explore the ways in which this affects his relationship with those he encounters, as well as the audience. I will discuss the ghost of *Otranto’s* gigantism and voicelessness, the way in which the ghost is discovered only part by part, and how these phenomena reflect the cultural and social climate of its time of writing. Through my investigations, I will trace changes in cultural attitudes and modes of emotional expression. These changes will follow a movement from religion to secularism, theology to psychology, and from exteriority to interiority, and will be tracked through imaginative and deeply emotional encounters with the supernatural.
The Weeping Ghost

_The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyn_ is a fifteenth-century Arthurian romance that is more often studied for its prosody—its alliteration, end-rhyme and iteration of words and phrases—than for its narrative content (Kane 1951; Hanna 1974). This is perhaps because the poem is structured as a pair of episodes which seem only loosely connected. It begins dramatically enough, however, with a fearful ghostly encounter. An Arthurian hunting party is plunged into apocalyptic darkness in the middle of the day. Amidst the wailing of birds and howling of dogs, a flame appears over the lake—the Terne Wathelyn that gives the poem its name. This flame reveals itself to be the ghost of Queen Guinevere’s mother, who has returned from the dead to give her daughter a warning:

“Muse on þi mirror... Thus dight shul ye be” (71:166-169).

[Muse on your mirror . . . as I am, so shall you be]

The ghost makes several warnings and prophecies of purgatorial torments and of the Arthurian realm’s eventual destruction by Mordred, which deeply
disturbs Guinevere and her escort, Sir Gawain (78:235-325). After this traumatic confrontation, the poem introduces a second episode: the hunting party has set up camp for the night when they are approached by a knight called Galeron who challenges Arthur and his court for the right to certain lands. Gawain accepts the challenge, and the two fight bitterly until a compromise is at last arranged by King Arthur; finally, Galeron is inducted into the company of the Round Table.

While many early critics found the division of the poem into two apparently separate narratives difficult to reconcile, even suggesting that it may have been two separate poems combined (Speirs 1957; Oakden 1959; Hanna 1974), more recent scholarship suggests that the two parts constitute an aesthetically and ethically unified work, with themes and motifs in the first half reflected in the second (Martin, 2010). These are themes and motifs such as the inevitability of death and the soul’s need for to prepare for this event, and the transience of wealth and the violence that it inspires. The ghost is evokes these themes, and heightens and deepens the emotional responses to them.

Historical investigation reveals a subtle and complex system of belief about the supernatural, which is fraught with the politics of power and religious ideology. In Ghosts in the Middle Ages, Jean-Claude Schmitt asserts that “beliefs and the imaginary depend above all on the structures and the functioning of the society and the culture at a given period in time”, and the greatest structuring body in Europe during the Middle Ages was the Church (1998, 3). In early centuries, Schmitt argues, the Church was reluctant to endorse a belief in ghosts because of their association with paganism, and of course, during the early middle
ages the Church exerted profound influence on the literary imagination. Paradoxically, Schmitt shows that a large portion of ghost stories were in fact written by the clergy. This is exemplified in the twelve medieval ghost stories of Royal MS. 15. A. xx. The stories contained in this manuscript were originally recorded by a monk of Byland Abbey, Yorkshire, in around 1400, and were later transcribed and published by M.R. James in 1922. These stories exhibit some pagan ideas of ghosts, such as their ability to assume the shapes of animals and inanimate objects. In one story a tailor named Snowball comes upon a ghost who appears first as a raven, and then a dog, and in another the ghost appears as a flying piece of canvass, before finally the image of a rotting corpse (415, 419). James suggests that the corporeality of the ghost links the tales to pagan folk belief, and indicates a “Scandinavian element” that is “redolent of Denmark” (414). The majority of the Byland ghosts are not the type to appear as shades or in dreams, but creatures with a physical presence in the world. In one tale, a man is able to seize the ghost:

Sed illo visofugerunt omnes exceptis duobus quorum vnus nomine
Robertus Foxton comprehendit eum in egressu de cimiterio etposuit eu
m super le kirkestile (418).

[But with his face seen, all fled except for two of whom one by name
Robert Foxton seized him in egress from the cemetery and put him over
the steps of the church].

22
However, many of these stories also feature a living person conjuring the ghost to speak in the name of Jesus Christ, and many of the ghosts ask for those they meet to help them obtain absolution for their sins (418, 419). Susan Owens questions whether the original tales contained these Christian elements, or if they were later added by the monk (2017, 26). According to Schmitt, this might be possible: ghost stories “found particular favour with ecclesiastical writers” because they "recognised its potential to illustrate a wide variety of eschatological doctrines" (Wiley 2013, 239). While in some sense keeping pagan ideas alive, the spectres depicted in these tales could be deployed in such a way that might sustain doctrines that “favoured the promotion of the liturgy of the dead, the development of piety, the attraction of charitable donations and finally, a reinforcement of the Church’s hold over Christian society” (Schmitt, 9).

Because *The Awntyrs off Arthure* itself is known for being “derivative”, particularly of other Arthurian tales (Twu cited in Haught 2010; Martin 2010), I find the possibility that it is also influenced by these clerical ghost stories quite likely. The appearance of the ghost as a fire above the lake (67:83) is reminiscent of the shape-shifting ghosts of the Byland Abbey manuscript, who take on the form of objects. Much more overt however, is the repetition of the Christian elements found in these medieval ghost stories in *The Awntyrs off Arthure*, including the invocation of purgatory, and plea for suffrages in the Christian tradition. This seems to support Carl Martin’s idea that the “diptych” structure of
the poem uses the two seemingly unrelated stories for the purposes of juxtaposition. By contrasting the nobles’ petty squabbles over land and the splendour of the court against the “grinning, didactic corpse of the dead”, the poet creates a striking *memento mori* that emphasises Christian values of charity in the pursuit of eventual entry to heaven (Martin 2010, 178):

“For al þi fresh foroure,
Muse on þi mirror;
For king and emperor,
Thus diȝt shul ye be” (71:166-169).

[For all your fine fur garments, look on me as a mirror; For whether king or emperor, so shall you be dealt with.]

The *memento mori* motif—the artistic tradition of reminding the viewer or listener of the fleetingness of life and human glory—is one of the key messages of the ghost. The text consistently juxtaposes rich descriptions of finery with similarly vivid details of the grotesque body of the ghost, a body which is

Serkeled with serpentes þat sat to þe sides
To tell the todes þeron my tonge wer full tere (69:120-121).
[encircled all around by snakes, to tell of the (number of) toads upon it would be tiresome]

This description evokes the abject horror of the decaying body, while also using snakes and toads as symbols of Hell to remind the reader of the horrors that await the sinful in the afterlife.

In this chapter I develop a more precise analysis of emotion terms and expressions used in the scene of the ghost. I focus on those words that describe the emotions of the ghost herself, noting how different methods of expression bear on the representation of her emotion. I will return to the Christian values of the text, exploring the relationship between the emotional representation to late medieval affective piety. I go on to explore in detail the environment in which the ghost appears, and its effect on the poem’s emotional economy, as well as examining the poem’s treatment of the physical attributes of the ghost herself: her appearance, abilities, and speech. Finally, I will examine the emotional reactions of the living to the ghost, and consider how they model societal expectations surrounding emotion, gender, and status. Through these investigations, I hope to shed some light on the complex emotions of this ghost encounter, produced in the interplay between its provision of a moral lesson and the entertaining delights of the supernatural.
**Tormented Language**

While many literal and metaphorical expressions of emotion are present throughout the poem, the most intense emotional language is centred around the ghost and those who encounter it, whether directly, such as Guinevere and Gawain, or indirectly, such as Arthur, his knights, and animals. Seventy-two lines into the poem a crash of thunder and a sudden darkening of the sky signal the appearance of the ghost, marking a sudden change in tone, the beginning of the narrative proper and the devastating appearance of the supernatural. Engineering this change in tone are subtler verbal signals: emotion-words that will allow us to study the effect of the ghost.

The word *care* is one of the most often repeated and emotionally-charged in the poem’s 715 lines. Often denoting forms of sorrow and sadness, *care* could also be used to express fear in Middle English. The Middle English Dictionary (MED) entry for *care* lists six different definitions. In the same line, *care* is defined as, “Sorrow, sadness, grief,” and also, “annoyance” and “ vexation” (MED: ‘care’). The entry goes on to list “lamentations, wailing”, “the pain of disease or death”, “the pain of lovesickness”, “distress, hardship”, “difficulty, labour”, “fear or dread”, “anxiety” and “responsibility” among its myriad meanings. In Javier Diaz-Vera’s terminology, *care* can be said to be an emotion-expression with a neutral axiological value, that is, the “positive or negative value” of which “exclusively depend[s] on the situational context” (2011, 90). While stronger literal expressions of fear, such as *afered* (‘afeared’, 399) and *dredge* (‘dread’, 54) are used
in the poem, no other emotion-word is repeated as frequently as *care*. The word thus generates varying levels of intensity and nuance according to the context in which it is used. Its first usage in line 45 of the poem is a very neutral instantiation, referring to the act of comforting agitated hunting dogs: “Conforte her knettes to kele hem of care” (65:45). Later in the poem, however, particularly in the course of Guinevere’s dialogue with the ghost, the word invokes a much stronger valence as a metonymic representation for the horrors of purgatory.

Now am I caut oute of kide to cares so colde;
Into care am I caught and couched in clay (71:151-2).

[Now I am cast out from home and kin, and into troubles so cold. In sorrow I am caught, and laid in the ground.]

So, while at different instances in the poem the word *care* is used to describe at once the agitation of excited animals (65:45), and the great agony of death and purgatorial punishment (71:151-2), this does not weaken the impact of each instantiation. I suggest that it is the semantic flexibility of the word *care* that motivates the poet to use it, because it can be used to describe many different emotions, and each instantiation adds to a cumulative effect of emotional associations that deepens our reading.

Much scholarship on the history of medieval emotions tends to focus on tracing the sociological and linguistic development of single, discrete emotions or
feelings, such as anger or fear. Barbara Rosenwein, however, has noted that the medieval period provides no lists of emotion words like those written by ancient philosophers, so our interpretations of medieval emotion risk being limited by modern conceptions (2010, 832). Indeed, the word ‘emotion’ did not exist within the medieval English vernacular at all, and abstract words such as anger, love, and sadness had different connotations from their modern usage (Lynch 2015, 48). Rosenwein’s solution is to attempt to come to an understanding of medieval conceptions of emotions through the study of the texts in which they are embedded (832). Robert C. Roberts complements this methodology from the perspective of literary studies, emphasising the role of narrative in shaping emotional language and proposing that critics can study medieval emotions better “as readers of narrative than as quasi-scientific taxonomists looking for evidence leading us to facts and systems of thought beyond the text” (2003, 198).

An ambiguous and multivalent word such as care that evokes so many subtle shades and gradations of meaning, used in a scene that draws upon eschatological narratives of purgatory, encourages the reader to consider all of the torments to which it may refer. Moreover, reading the word care within its narrative context shows an overlap of emotions in the text. In the context of the ghost’s speech, the word care means sorrow, certainly, but metonymical connotations of physical pain, fear, and hardship accompany the word in

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narrative context, and allow for a much more vivid and complex portrayal of the suffering being endured.

The inclusion of metaphorical and metonymical expressions of emotion in the study of *The Awntyrs off Arthur* opens up a rich and nuanced world of textual communication of feeling. The ghost’s grief reflects overlapping conceptual fields associating pain with both heat and liquid:

I mot walke on my wey þorph þis wilde wode
In my wonyngstid in wo for to welle (78:315-6).

[I must walk on my way through this wild wood, to my dwelling place to boil in woe]

As the ghost takes her leave of Guinevere and Gawain, she speaks of her abode as a place where she ‘boils’ in woe. While some have glossed this as ‘dwell’ in woe, speculating that the poet left off the ‘d’ to fit the alliterative pattern of the poem, reading the word as it is written, *welle*, suggests liquid, the boiling of a “viscous substance” within a vessel (MED: ‘welle’). Reading the word in this way changes the emotion-concept from that of a spatial place of sadness where one might live to a state of being. Moreover, it is a state of being that reflects a philosophical and medical conception of emotions. This sense of the liquidity of woe was popular in literary, philosophical, and medical discourses during the fifteenth century, and is closely linked to humoural theory (Diaz-Vera 2014, 103). The use of the word
welle in this instance may, in fact, refer to literal boiling, a physical state that could have easily been understood by a contemporary reader as a purgatorial punishment. It is equally possible that the word is meant to refer to a combination of the two meanings, a metonymical expression of both the physical and spiritual torments of the next world.

An experience (or expression) of emotion, in Middle English, often leads to action: Andrew Lynch asserts that as narrative processes in Middle English texts, emotions can be “intransitive, transitive or reflexive”, not simply static “states” (49). He refers to Galenic physiology, in which blood flowed in and out of the heart according to the emotional state of an individual, and either prompted or disabled physical action (49). To this day, we still speak of being ‘paralysed’ by fear, or ‘spurred’ by anger. In *The Awntyrs off Arthure*, emotions are often not named, but described through their relationship to physical action and reaction.

Hit yaules, hit yameres, with waymynges wete,
And seid, with siking sare,
"I ban þe body me bare!
Alas! Now kindeles my care;
I gloppen and I grete!" (68:87-91).

[It yowls and stammers, with tearful lamenting, and said, with a grievous sigh, “I curse the body that bore me! Alas! Now my care is kindled, I despair and weep]
Here we find only two literal emotion-words: *care*, mentioned above, and *gloppen*, which means to be filled with fear or grief. All the other words—*yaules, yameres, waymynges wete, siking sare, grete*—are verbs and adjectives referring to the actions of the ghost. Wailing, stammering, sighing, and weeping function as physical expressions of the grief and fear of the person performing the action. In their MED definitions, all of these words are accompanied not only by the action they describe, as in the case of *yomeran*, “To cry out”, but are also immediately followed by the emotional connotation, “in sorrow, wail, lament; also, groan in grief or pain” (MED: ‘yômeren’). The inclusion of these words in sequence not only provides the poet with ample alliterative fodder in the proliferation of vocabulary, but, again, with variety and nuance of expression. As they accrue, each word builds upon the intensity of the last until the emotions of the moment reach a pitch that is feverish and desperate:

Hit stemeder, hit stonayed, hit stode as a stone;

[It stammered, it was stunned, it stood as still as a stone, it was troubled, it murmured, it fretted as if mad]

While the driving rhythm of alliteration in this section of the poem produces a sense of movement, the metonymic emotion-words also describe the physical movement of the ghost; or, in the case of *stonayed*, the lack of movement. *Stonayed*
indicates a state of shock and bewilderment which appears incongruous at first with the ghost's narrative purpose. Why should the ghost be surprised to find herself at the Terne Wathelyn when she has come explicitly to confront the people there? The physical state *stonayed* refers to the body deprived of movement—as still 'as a stone'—and carries connotations of numbness as well as pain (MED: *stōnen*). Contradictory actions become apparent in these fragments, suggesting the poem's ultimate emotional and ontological disruption: the appearance of the ghost. They conjure an image of frantic distress and emotional devastation on the part of the ghost.

Indeed, the poet appears to give precedence to the emotions of the ghost over those of the living, dedicating over a hundred lines to the description and expression of the former. The ghost's grief is highly broadcasted to the point of being exaggerated, or performed. Gerd Althoff has argued that the performative nature of emotion during the Middle Ages was an important feature of a social signalling system responding to the need to communicate power relations, an “alternative language in a society that needed gestures to supplement words” (in Rosenwein, 830). In his discussion of kings weeping when showing clemency to enemies, Althoff found that this performed emotion was intended to “demonstrate … the intensity of their Christian piety” (830). If we read the ghost's emotions as performative in the same way, it follows that her emotional expression is a form of communication. But what is she communicating?

The performative model for emotions in the middle ages, as proposed by critics such as Sarah McNamer, eschews the popular Galenic interpretation of
emotion. Rosenwein compares this to a “hydraulic” model, in which emotions are “assumed to be already present in the self and either pent up or released” (McNamer, 13). Instead, emotions are participatory and performative, generated by the will of the experiencer. McNamer discusses this affective practice in meditations on the Passion, which were “not crafted primarily to be admired—even by God—as aesthetic artefacts. They had serious, practical work to do: to teach their readers, through iterative affective performance, how to feel” (2). Like piety, emotion could be practised and cultivated. Thomas Dixon also notes an emphasis on the will in medieval emotional theory. While the term emotion was not used in the medieval period, the range of feelings that an individual could experience was categorised into three terms: passions, appetites, and affections. Affections were thought to be the movements of a higher rational soul, directed by reason. While passions and appetites were conceived of as “movements of the lower animal soul”, they were nonetheless directed by the soul, rather than by the body (Dixon, 22). As Dixon states, “Appetites, passions and affections, in the classical Christian view, were all movements of different parts of the will” (22).

Therefore, the experience of emotion carried with it a moral responsibility.

The weeping of the royal ghost in *The Awntyrs off Arthur* might then be seen as a strategic performance of Christian values—if not necessarily piety, then certainly penitence. The ghost has power over the people she encounters. She is privileged with divine knowledge: not only knowledge of the world of the dead, but also the future of the living. In this sense, her open weeping may be best understood as a method of communication: like her words, her actions are a
warning to the living, a glimpse of the fate that may befall anyone who strays into sin.

English ghost stories, at the time of The Awntyrs’ writing, had a noticeably more Christian bent than the great majority of those that came after them. The medieval conception of ghosts owed much to the theology of Peter Lombard and Thomas Aquinas, both of whom discussed the idea of the ‘supernatural’, though not in such terms. They spoke of things that were “beyond nature”, and spoke of these in the same terms as “miracles” (Lombard in Bartlett 2008, 6). That is, something “‘wonderful in itself’ when its cause is absolutely hidden, when there is a power in the thing, which, if it followed its true nature, would produce a different result. Of this kind are the things caused directly by God’s power (the most unknown cause)” (Aquinas in Bartlett, 7). By this definition, the ghost must exist within God’s power in the Christian cosmology or not exist at all. This was a difficult folk belief to extinguish, and the Church instead integrated ghost belief into its system of heaven, hell, and eventually purgatory when it was finally ratified in 1274.

Consequently, the ghost appearing to deliver a warning about the Christian afterlife is a common trope in medieval ghost stories. Wiley investigates a slightly earlier fifteenth-century Irish story, Scél Choirpri Chruim Móelsechlaind meic Móevánaid, from Clonmacnoise, which also features a royal ghost who returns from the dead to warn the living about the fate of sinners. Wiley explores the ways in which the story integrates eschatological doctrine with pre-Christian revenant narratives for the purposes of religious edification. This story, set several
hundred years in the past from its time of writing, features a mix of Christian and folk belief. One such folk superstition represented in this story is that the spirit wears in the afterlife those clothes he gave to the poor while he was alive (244). This superstition is seamlessly integrated into the representation of Christian charity in the story, alongside official Christian doctrine regarding suffrages for the dead such as masses, prayers, and almsgiving (Schmitt, 6). An emphasis on charity is also found throughout many of the Byland ghost stories, and it crops up in *The Awntyrs off Arthure* as well.

Mekenesse and mercy, þes arn þe moost,
And haue pité on þe poer, þat pleses Heuenking.
Síþen charité is chef and þew of þe chastem
And þen almessedede ouer al oþer þing (75: 250-253).

[Meekness and mercy, these are the greatest [attributes], and have pity on the poor, that pleases the Heaven King. Therefore, charity is paramount, followed by chastity, and then almsgiving above all other things.]

The preceding instructions are given by the ghost to Guinevere when she asks how she might best go about bringing herself to “blisse”, or heaven. This follows an exchange in which the ghost provides similar answers for Guinevere
on how she might provide relief to the ghost herself, and help her through the trials of purgatory to achieve "blisse".

**Arthurian Legend**

However, there is one facet unique to *The Awntyrs* that does not feature in the medieval ghost stories above. *The Awntyrs* is first and foremost an Arthurian romance. This means that while it may borrow from these ecclesiastical and traditional ghost stories, it nevertheless belongs to an essentially secular Arthurian tradition. As Haught asserts, it is the tropes and expectations of *this* tradition which would figure most prominently in the interpretation of its contemporary audiences: “From the very beginnings of its popularity... accounts of Arthur's legendary reign have been haunted by audiences' knowledge of how the larger story concludes” (Haught 2010, 3). The result of this foreknowledge is a sense of irony in the poet's juxtaposition of the lush descriptions of the wealth and attire of Arthur and his knights against the ghost's message. It is dramatic irony: while Gawain may not know what befalls Arthur's realm when he asks the ghost to reveal the future to him, the audience does, as they similarly know what will befall their own realm of men come judgement day. For all the ghost's warnings, the readers know that the downfall of Arthur's "legendary reign" is inevitable and any efforts to prevent it futile. This sort of dual role — that of Arthurian romance and ecclesiastical ghost story — goes some distance to explain the diptych structure and apparently conflicting elements that have puzzled many critics. However, the poet seems to be using its eschatological
message more to comment on the Arthurian story, rather than the other way around. While the poem draws from religious sources, especially in the dialogue of the ghost, its primary goal appears to be to entertain or thrill. This is evidenced in the focus given to peripheral things that do not enhance the ghost’s message, and sometimes even detract from it, but which do enhance the dynamism and excitement of the drama.

This is most noticeable in the relationship between the ghost and its environment. While not changing form, like those pre-Christian ghosts able to appear as animals, the ghost of *The Awntyrs* nevertheless maintains quite a close connection to the natural world. These environmental factors help to establish a dramatic scene.

Fast byfore vndre þis ferly con fall
And þis mekel mervaile þat I shal of mene
Now wol I of þis mervaile mele if I mote.
The day wexs als dirke
As hit were mydniȝt myrke;
Thereof Arthur was irke
And liȝt on his fote (67:72-78).

[Directly before midday a great marvel happened, which I will try to describe. The day suddenly became as dark as though it were midnight; Arthur was irritated and dismounted from his horse].
This environmental element doesn’t reflect anything about the ghost’s provenance or divine purpose. The woods were a common setting for medieval romance, and their strong link to royalty was noted by Richard Fitz Nigel, writing in the late twelfth century:

for it [the forest] has its own laws which are said to be based on the wills of princes...moreover in the forest are the kings’ retreats and their greatest delights. For there they go to hunt, leaving their cares behind, to refresh themselves with a little rest … (cited in Jørgensen 2009, 114)

As closely associated with royalty as they were, the woods were the setting for many medieval romances, from Gawain and the Green Knight, to Sir Orfeo, to Tristan and Iseult. Corinne Saunders writes that before the woods became viewed as a “specialized landscape” of royal recreation in medieval romance, they were often characterised in classical texts as a “fearful and prescient setting of divine encounter” (1993, 57). This is not to say that the symbolic landscape of the woods as a place of danger was jettisoned completely, but that it was secularised. Richard Fitz Nigel noted the dangers of the woods, referencing the wild animals that make it their abode:
The kings forest is the preserve of wild animals... that is why it is called a ‘forest’, the ‘e’ of ‘feresta’—that is, a place for wild animals—being changed into an 'o' (cited in Jørgensen, 114).

Bartholomaeus Anglicus, in *De proprietatibus rerum* highlighted the human dangers:

woods be wild places... There is place of hiding and of lurking, for oft in the woods thieves are hid and oft in their [sic] awaits and deceits passing men come, and are spoiled and robbed, and oft slain (cited in Tuan 1979, 81).

The potential danger of the landscape was, according to Saunders, recast by medieval poets as potential adventure (57). In *The Awntyrs*, the associations by classical texts of the forest with danger and magic appear to reassert themselves. The relationship between royalty and the hunt and the woods is certainly present—and particularly strong in the first part of the poem—but this relationship is troubled by an undercurrent of dark and magical possibilities. The reader is encouraged to associate with the ghost herself with the change in environment that accompanies her arrival.

The poet's choice to set the action in a ‘wild wood’ adds suspense to the poem, and adds a horror grounded in the natural world to the metaphysical horrors that threaten the characters. This mixture of natural and supernatural
threats produces a sense of the uncanny. The uncanny—the effect of cognitive dissonance produced when the strange is experienced side by side with the familiar, the presence of the unknown and unexplainable within the ordinary, rational world—is not often explored in criticism of medieval literature. Freud himself precludes fairy tales and classical myth from any experience of the uncanny by virtue of their factitiousness, exempt from the “reality testing” that produces the effect of the uncanny (cited in Castle, 1995, 13). Medieval literature seems to get the same treatment, possibly because the animistic magic that pervades much of medieval literature renders any unnatural occurrences or objects as merely fantastic.

Corinne Saunders does not explore the concept in detail but uses it to describe *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* in her book *Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval Literature*, suggesting that the effect is produced in the poem when “otherworldly allusions [are] never quite made explicit” (Saunders 2010, 194). Marcus Waithe dives deeper, seeking to “rescue the uncanny from an exclusive association with Classical and Romantic sources, and to do so by demonstrating the ways in which two modern revivals of the romance draw their complexity from medieval narrative sources” (2017, 218). The studies of these scholars show that the uncanny is not a structure of feeling that is wholly absent from medieval texts.

An example of an uncanny element in *The Awntyrs* is the descriptions of animals and their reactions to the ghost’s presence. Hunting dogs and woodland creatures are familiar things, but they are not acting as they should. The
sensitivity of the dogs in *The Awntyrs* to supernatural disturbance calls to mind those dogs whose warning whines and barks go unheeded by their human masters in Hollywood horror of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Þe houndes hiȝen to þe holte, and her hede hides,
For þe grisly goost made a grym bere.
The grete greunds wer agast of þe grym bere.
Þe birdes in þe bowes,
Þat on þe goost gowes
Þei skryke in þe skowes
Þat haþeles may here
Hatþelese mîȝt here, þe hendest in halle,

[The hounds hastened to woods and hid their heads when the grisly ghost made a grim noise. The great greyhounds were terrified of the ghost’s outcry, and the birds in the boughs gazed at the glimmering ghost and screeched so loudly that when the most noble of knights heard them, the flesh of neck, jaw, and chin chattered.]

Immense attention to detail characterises the description of the ghost’s physical form. Indeed, the complexity of the ghost’s emotional expression seems almost at odds with the abject description of the body that follows. While her
emotions and actions invite the audience to sympathise with her plight, the grotesque body of the ghost disgusts and alienates the reader.

Bare was þe body and blak to þe bone,
Al biclagged in clay vncomely cladde.
Hit waried, hit waymented, as a woman,
But nauthyr on hide ne on huwe no heling hit hadde (69:105-108).

[Bare was the body and black to the bone, clotted in clay and disgustingly clad. It cursed and wailed as does a woman, but neither its face nor its skin had covering]

While the imagery used in the description of the body of the ghost seems at odds with the sympathetic portrayal of her emotions, it is highly motivated—unlike the imagery of animals and the natural world—to inspire fear of the afterlife, and responds to the conventions of the common *memento mori* theme in medieval literature and art. The portrayal of the physical ways in which her body has distorted and decayed suggests the physical punishments of purgatory. These images are sharply contrasted against the descriptions of lavishness and luxury at the court that appear earlier and later in the poem, reflecting a common convention in *memento mori* art; that of luxurious living alongside death (Martin, 178). Moreover, it reflects what Catherine Belsey labels a “medieval preoccupation with decomposition in the grave” (2014, 36). As evidence of this
she cites fifteenth-century *transi* tombs that depicted “in life-size stone the emaciated corpse in its shroud” (36). The poet’s inclusion of snakes and toads may also be intended to provoke a sense of revulsion:

On þe chef of þe cholle
A pade pikes on þe polle,
With eighen holked ful holle
That floed as þe gledes (69:114-117).

[A toad sat on the top of the jowl and picked on the spirit’s head, whose hollow, sunken eyes glazed like coals]

The snakes and toads serve two functions. Not only do they provoke a physical response of revulsion; they are also biblical symbols of sin and plague, respectively. These elements of the ghost’s physical form tie in tightly to its message, and compound it: they demonstrate the effects of purgatorial punishment on its very body. However, other elements of the ghost’s physicality are more uncertain in their link to religious doctrine.

According to the theology of St. Augustine, what people believed to be ghosts were not the actual bodies (*corpus*) or souls (*anima*) of the dead, but merely impressions of them (*imago*) that appeared to the living without the dead soul’s knowledge (Wiley 2013, 242). While this did not prevent ghost stories from
continuing to be told throughout Europe, Augustine’s arguments and choice of language influenced the way in which ghost stories were told and received (243).

Influenced by Augustine’s initial assertions, the corporeality of the dead was a much-debated question among theologians of the thirteenth century, particularly when discussing the effects that the physical punishments of hell and purgatory would have on the spiritual bodies of the damned (Mowbray 1999, 230). While never quite gauging exactly how literal the “fires of Hell” happened to be, most agreed that there must be some combination of physical and spiritual torment visited upon sinners’ souls in Hell and purgatory. The portrayal of returned souls in popular forms reflected this uncertainty, and in the Awntyrs off Arthure the ghost’s corporeality, or lack thereof, is never firmly established. The poet describes the ghost as being shrouded in “clothing vnclere” (69:119). In the Middle English Dictionary vnclere can mean “not readily discernible, indistinct” (MED: unclēr[e]). This definition suggests the image of a ghost not unlike the popular conception of today, a creature semi-transparent and indistinct, like smoke or mist.

However, this interpretation seems at odds with the fact that the poet also claims that neither the ghost’s face nor skin has covering, a few lines before: “But nauthyr on hide ne on huwe no heling hit hadde” (69:108). This is either an inconsistency overlooked by the poet, or an indication that “clothing vnclere” may not refer to literal clothing. Indeed, the MED’s first definition of vnclere is not “indistinct”, but “not free from moral impurities; guilty; also sinful” (MED: unclēr[e]). It is an adjective with connotations of purgatory, and may therefore
refer to any visual effect produced by its association with that place. And while overwhelmingly clothing and all its derivatives are glossed as garments in the MED, at least one entry provides the definition “spiritual garb... clothing of the soul” (MED: clôthing [ger.]).

The voice of the ghost invites more questions than answers on this subject. One of M.R. James’ ghosts is described as speaking “in the internal organs and not with a tongue but as if in an empty doleum” (418). That is, it speaks without physical vocalisation and perhaps even within the mind of the confronter. The Awntyrs’ poet does not describe the quality of the ghost’s voice, but she speaks loudly and clearly enough, through her wailing and chattering, to make her case to her listeners, and there is nothing to suggest that she is not speaking in any other way than as a human woman might.

There are other suggestions in the poem that the ghost may be more physically present than Augustine’s imago. It may resemble more tangibly those in the Byland collection edited by James: ghosts able to physically harass the living, or to be seized by them (1922, 414). The evidence for this is in Guinevere’s immediate reaction to the ghost, which is to recoil in fear as if it has the ability to physically harm her.

Þes knightes arn vncurtays, by crosse and by crede,
Þat þus in desert haue me laft on my deþday (68:97-98).
From Guinevere’s words it seems that she herself, at least, believes that the ghost may kill her. If this is the case, it certainly explains her fearful reaction towards it. It is possible, of course, that Guinevere’s reaction has less to do with the ghost’s corporeality, or lack thereof, than it has to do with Arthurian narrative convention. Often when ‘marvels’ occur in Arthurian romance it is her role to be upset or frightened. In *Gawain and the Green Knight*, she is implied to have responded in a similar way: when the Green Knight’s gruesome display is finished, Arthur makes a point of comforting his “daunted” queen (*Norton, 195:468-470*) and in the final stanzas of the poem we learn that the Green Knight was sent by Morgan to frighten the queen to death. In this role, she serves as a sort of emotional foil to the more stoic Arthurian men, highlighting their bravery and level-headedness in times of danger by providing a clear point of contrast.

In *The Awntyrs*, as in *The Green Knight*, while Guinevere similarly responds with fear, her companion reacts in quite the opposite manner:

Agayn þe grisly goost Sir Gawyn is gone;
He rayked to it on a res, for he was neuer rad.
Rad was he neuer, ho so right redes (69:111-113).
Towards the grisly ghost, Sir Gawain advances. He rode to it quickly, for he was never afraid. Afraid was he never, as known by those who correctly understand.

While Guinevere is aligned to some extent with the ghost’s emotional disturbance, Gawain appears in opposition to the women, both living and dead. The poet introduces a new fear-word in the negative, rad, in the description of Gawain’s lack of fear.

The word rad literally means afraid or frightened, but also carries connotations of hasty action or eagerness (MED: rad[e]). At first this seems paradoxical, as the poet immediately describes the quick and eager manner with which Gawain rides out to confront the ghost. The obvious explanation for this word choice is its fit within the alliterative scheme of the line. However, the poet’s choice of this word over other fear-words used elsewhere in the poem seems to suggest a more complex attitude to the knight’s bravery. The use of the word rad within the stanza suggests that Gawain rides quickly, but not hastily: that is, he rides confidently and/or bravely, as befitting his status. This is strengthened by his next actions in confronting the ghost.

Þe burne braides oute þe bronde, and þe body bides,
Therefor þe cheualrous kniȝt changed no chere (69:122-3).

[The knight draws his sword and the corpse stands still,
And at that, chivalrous knight’s expression changed not.]

Gawain draws his sword, in warning perhaps, or in readiness to defend himself and his lady. Yet in the confrontation with the horrible figure described by the poet his facial expression does not change. He is a picture of emotional control.

John Burrow notes that poets very rarely linger on facial expression in medieval texts (2002, 82). He also notes the difficulty in distinguishing grades of meaning in the middle English word *chere*, from facial expression, to ‘mood’ more broadly (81). This makes the line between feeling no fear and merely presenting a fearless front difficult to establish. According to Burrow, this ambiguity was a theme that ran throughout Middle English literature, contributing to a keen medieval interest in the face’s ability to conceal the truth of the heart.

Whether Gawain is cowed at all by the ghost and refuses to show it, or whether he genuinely feels no fear, his response to the threat is conditioned by social expectation. Andrew Lynch asserts that in the study of historical emotion, “individual emotion terms, as distinct from more tangible bodily ‘feelings’, are always culturally loaded” (48). He emphasises the importance of recognising emotion as an area in medieval thought “where many discourses overlap, including the traditions of virtue and vice, of sin, of the physiological, psychological and medical studies, and class and gender-based ideologies also, such as the written traditions of war, courtliness, and love” (49). Lynch also notes a distinction between the emotional practices of Christian affective piety and what he calls an “Arthurian politics of emotion”, which centres not on the
relationship of the individual with God but on the relationship of an individual with their sovereign and community (51). While the women of the poem, living and dead, engage with discourses of Christian affective piety, Gawain’s emotions follow more in the vein of this second category. There is an ethical bent to this tradition, in which sovereign and subject are emotionally bound together in the interests of political unity. The conception of fear within this discourse follows from the conceptions of earlier, Anglo-Saxon texts, which interpret cowardice not as excess fear (as in the ancient tradition) but as a “wilful choice” (51). A coward is responsible for his cowardice, which bespeaks an “insufficient love and loyalty”, that is, loyalty to his king and, by connection, his queen. By riding out to protect Guinevere and showing no fear, Gawain is adhering to the social bonds and expectations that maintain the stability and unity of the kingdom in which he lives. The reactions of these characters each model the expected behaviour upon contact with a ghost according to their position, that of both a virtuous knight and a sinful woman respectively.

Guinevere’s role in particular, as emotional foil to the more stoic men of Arthur’s court, may be linked to medieval understandings about femininity and emotionality. Galen and his adherents understood women to be generally more ‘cold and wet’ than men and this humoral constitution had implications for emotional behaviour. Pseudo-Albertus Magnus Women’s Secrets identified “femininity’s material wetness” as functioning on several levels: “weeping is indicative of women’s ignorance, for dampness coarsens the women’s brains and hinders their ability to learn; it points to their excessive wickedness, for it is by
the way of abundant tears that ‘evil humours leave the body through the eyes’” (cited in Gertsman 2012, xii).

_Crying in the Middle Ages_, a book of interdisciplinary essays collected by Elina Gerstman shows a myriad of meanings for the medieval act of crying. Tears, Gertsman argues, “were considered to be a very powerful and effacious liquid,” able to “cure ills and release souls from purgatory; they pointed to holiness and identified falsity; they were seen as an excess of humors and as signs of sanctity...” (xi). Gertsman also notes the power of tears to redeem the spirit. Referring to Pseudo-Origen’s _Homelia de Maria Magdalena_, she notes that the “repentant sinner’s weeping allowed her to be the first to see the resurrected Christ and to beget the Saviour in her womb” (xii).

In this context, Guinevere’s centrality to the poem and her role as protagonist is easily explained. _The Awntyrs_ is a condemnation of Arthurian vice, of which it could be argued that Guinevere is the central figure, because of her adulterous affair with Sir Launcelot—in many accounts the inciting incident in the downfall of the Arthurian reign. Leah Haught notes this “aura of moral blemish” that surrounds Guinevere, adding that the message of the ghost serves only to “broaden our awareness of Guinevere’s shortcomings by adding a vain preoccupation with appearance and a lack of concern for the poor to the more traditional ‘luff paramour’ as potential sources of moral weakness to which Guinevere is particularly vulnerable” (2010, 5).

She is certainly closely linked to the sinful ghost. Interestingly, the poet describes her distress in the same terms as the ghost’s, using the words _gloppen_
and *grete* (68:92). Even before the narrative revelation that the ghost is Guinevere’s mother, the two wailing women are connected in terms of the emotional language used to describe them. Key differences, however, arise in the context of instantiation. While the ghost seems to *gloppen* in grief, the word is used to describe Guinevere’s reaction in a connotation that more closely aligns with the sense of being “filled with fright or alarm” (MED: *gloppen*). As the character to whom the ghost’s message is explicitly directed, it makes sense to see Guinevere as the protagonist and point of access for the reader to the narrative. The ghost’s message is directed at her, and through her it is directed at the reader.

**Grim Tidings**

What makes *The Awntyrs off Arthure* truly remarkable, as an example of a medieval ghost story, is how much importance is placed on the emotionality of the ghost herself. The expression of this emotionality is manifold and meticulous, found in the literal and metonymic word choices made by the poet. The variety and colour of the emotion-words used in *The Awntyrs off Arthure* bespeaks a sophisticated and nuanced understanding of emotion, even in speculation on the—if not imaginary, then certainly unknowable—hardships of purgatory. In its aim to inspire fear in the horrors of purgatory, the poem performs a strange version of Christian affective piety, in which it is not the merely penitent, but the already damned who must demonstrate their emotional commitment to God to achieve salvation. What results is a remarkably human ghost, for all her snakes
and toads, with whom it is possible to identify. While the description of her corpse invites the audience to imagine confronting her, her rich inner-world, expressed in the first person, invites the audience to imagine being her. The reason for this is simple. Her message, “Be war be my wo” [Be warned by my woe] (73:195), is intended not only for the characters within the poem, but for the audience as well.

It is for this reason that Guinevere is the natural protagonist of the scene. Her position within the Arthurian tradition, as the noble but fatally-flawed sinner, aligns her with the great majority of the audience. She plays a reliable and consistent emotional role within the Arthurian narrative. Her response to the ghost’s presence—her weeping and wailing—is a model of the social expectations for medieval women in the face of extreme distress. Gawain’s reaction to the ghost stands in stark contrast with the behaviour of Guinevere and the ghost, and is a model of chivalrous, knightly behaviour. Studying the reactions of these two characters reveals cultural and social expectations surrounding the experience and performance of extreme emotion at the time of the poem’s writing. Moreover, it is in these characters and their actions within the encounter that a point of connection can be found between the memento mori theme of earlier ecclesiastic and traditional ghost stories, and the greater Arthurian story.

_The Awntyrs off Arthur_ reflects many of the abilities and characteristics associated with ghosts at its time of writing, both those that relate to accepted Christian doctrine and more popular folk beliefs. The question of the ghost’s physical presence is ultimately unanswered. The prospect of bodily harm wrought by the ghost in this life is less important to the narrative than the
prospect of harm in the next. However, the ambiguous description of the ghost's physical form causes some confusion between these threats, and it is perhaps this that produces the confused reactions from the living within the story. Indeed, this may be the reason that past critics of the poem have had difficulty trying to reconcile this apparently odd ghost episode—with its mixture of sometimes conflicting Christian ideas and folk beliefs—with the more straight-forward Arthurian narrative of contested land and combat that follows it. The acceptance into the poem of so many literary traditions with so many conflicting elements produces a richly textured and layered world that is more than a little uncanny.

However, closer study of the poem reveals that on a thematic level these disparate traditions are not in conflict, but rather complement and comment on one another. The liturgical focus on the final judgement that characterises so many ecclesiastic ghost stories reflects the sweeping, inevitable doom that hangs over the Arthurian legend, and vice versa.

Moreover, other elements present in the poem suggest an aim not merely to educate, but to entertain. In the rich descriptions of the dramatic environment, the inclusion of traditional folk elements and the poet’s masterful use of language and imagery create tension and suspense. It is the use of conflicting elements and ideas that produces a sense of the uncanny, and ultimately an engaging and exciting scene of encounter that prefigures many ghost stories to come, through the Early Modern period and into the eighteenth century.
CHAPTER 2 | HAMLET

Dark Thoughts

The appearance of the ghost in Hamlet’s very first scene sets into motion the complex revenge drama and the extreme emotions characteristic of this genre, including lust, hatred, fear, and paranoia. Its title character Hamlet is represented as intensely emotionally volatile, a tinder box requiring only a spark to push him over into explosive madness—a spark which is ultimately provided by the appearance of the ghost.

The strong theme of madness that results has given support to the popular interpretation, first published by W.W. Greg in 1917, of the ghost as an element projected from Hamlet’s psychology, if not entirely a figment of his imagination. This emphasis on psychology also owes much to the psychoanalytic readings of the play that dominated criticism during the twentieth century. Freud briefly discussed the play in his 1911 book The Interpretation of Dreams, when he interpreted Hamlet as a psychologically realistic character who could be analysed. Freud’s book was hugely influential, sparking further psychoanalytical readings of the play by the likes of Earnest Jones in 1949. Though Freud’s controversial Oedipus Complex interpretation was thoroughly contested in the following decades, psychologically based interpretations of Hamlet’s supernatural elements have been a persistent theme in the play’s interpretative tradition. Scholars have continued to diagnose Hamlet with a variety of disorders,
moving gradually away from psychoanalytic readings and towards cognitive-behavioural ones. Some argue that Hamlet exhibits compliant-aggressive behaviour, others depression, but all agree that Hamlet is a representation of a man in emotional turmoil before he even encounters the ghost (Lidz 1975; Natoli 1986; Morin 1992; Firouzjaee & Pourkalhor 2014).

The ghost is performed in a dramatic context as real: most other characters see and interact with it. Through these interactions, the world of *Hamlet* is established as one in which a supernatural element really exists, although the exact nature and origin of this element remain ambiguous. Like the author of *The Awntyrs*, Shakespeare draws upon different traditions for his ghost and the narrative that it recounts; and both texts embrace the ambiguous possibilities in the figure of the ghost. The clear appeal of using psychology to discuss Hamlet's vision of the ghost may have something to do with the quandary it poses when considered as an actual supernatural entity. While the ghost’s references to Christian rites of burial (1:5:76-79) suggest that it comes from a Catholic cosmology appropriate to its medieval Danish setting, critics such as Roy Battenhouse have noted that the apparition cannot be understood as a figure consonant with a Catholic cosmology. Battenhouse argues that “the ghost shows far too much vindictiveness to be a saved soul” (cited in West, 56).

Upon encountering his son, the ghost of old Hamlet commands him:

> **Ghost:** If thou didst ever thy dear father love—

> **Hamlet:** O God!
Ghost: Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder (1:5:23-25).

The question which occupied Battenhouse and West is still discussed decades later. Andrzej Wicher agrees that this is a strange action for a Christian ghost in purgatory, as Christian ghosts are “usually... interested in reducing the burden of their sins, and not increasing it” (2009, 141). Wicher ventures beyond the theology of the early modern period in his explanation of Hamlet’s apparition, projecting a line of inspiration that extends much further into the past. Wicher argues that Hamlet inherits a tradition of medieval dream visions which greatly influence the ghost’s portrayal, particularly his calls for vengeance (2009, 140). This call to murderous action lies at the heart of scholarly debate around the morality, and by extension, the origin of the ghost. This action suggested to Battenhouse in 1951 that the “fires” in which the ghost must abide “Til the foul crimes done in my days of nature / Are burnt and purged away” (1:5:12-13) are some sort of pagan construction of purgatory, rather than a Catholic one. The references to Catholic rites, however, in the lines “Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin / Unhouseled, disappointed, unaneled” (1:5:76-77), suggest that it operates within a Christian pneumatology, that is, a Christian theory of spiritual beings and phenomena. Robert West suggests that matching the ghost of Hamlet with any one paradigm of spirit lore simply cannot be done (57). West acknowledges that the “pneumatology in the play is largely a matter of equivocal hints and passing references sure to leave an audience with some fairly arbitrary
interpreting to do” (62). The ghost of old Hamlet is “forbid / To tell the secrets of my prison house” (1:5:13-14).

Later criticism focuses on the historical elements of the play to try and illuminate this element. Stephen Greenblatt eschews psychology, observing that criticism that emphasises the psychological aspects of the ghost encounter “has the odd effect of eliminating the Ghost as ghost, turning it into the prince’s traumatic memory or, alternatively, a conventional piece of dispensable stage machinery” (2001, 298). Greenblatt asserts that the vagueness with which Shakespeare addresses the ghost's provenance can be attributed to the turbulent political and religious climate of Reformation England, in which the existence of ghosts, and the purgatory from which they may come, was a topic of intense argument between Catholics and Protestants. Greenblatt’s argument, while plausible, does not preclude the usefulness of psychological interpretations. In fact, this very ambiguity deepens and enriches the emotional possibilities that accompany the ghost’s appearance.

The inability of critics to come to any consensus on the ghost’s provenance reflects the introduction of uncertainty into the scene of encounter. This uncertainty distinguishes Hamlet from the medieval ghost stories discussed in the previous chapter, and has a significant impact on the emotions that he elicits, both in the characters he confronts, and in the audience. In this chapter I argue that the ghost’s provenance is elided or downplayed because the ghost’s role within the story is less to illuminate or allude to an afterlife, than to be an emotional trigger for the characters, driving them to action (or freezing them in
inaction, as the case may be). I emphasise the way in which the ghost allows the past to invade the present. Specifically, it is the emotion of the past, personified by the ghost (anger and a desire for revenge) that imposes itself upon and causes a disruption within the present. These emotions are almost forced upon Hamlet by the ghost, seeming to take over and control him:

Hamlet: And thy commandment all alone shall live
Within the book and volume of my brain (1:5:102-103)

Other characters may not feel the emotions of the ghost themselves, but they are certainly affected by them, and they respond with a variety of emotional reactions.

This chapter will begin by examining the emotional language of the scene of encounter: the ways words and structure of emotional expression affect its atmosphere and character. It will then reflect on the impact of the story’s theatrical form by examining the physical, embodied nature of the ghost and those who encounter it. It will closely analyse the abilities and limitations of the ghost, especially regarding how these relate to environment and time. It will finally investigate the multiple religious and folkloric traditions from which the ghost is drawing, tracking changes in expectation that occur over time, especially around changes in the role of the ghost within narrative.
The Spectre on the Parapet

The emotions of this first encounter set the tone for the rest of the play. The ghost is initially unnamed, but is called a “thing”; a “dreaded sight”. After a few lines of dialogue to prolong the suspense, it is eventually revealed that the group waits upon a ghost, one that they have already seen twice. The audience, like Horatio, learns from the guards that the ghost appears at the same time every night, and that this time is drawing near. Unlike the ghost of the Awntyrs off Arthure, this ghost has appeared before, and is expected. This implies that it has not yet fulfilled its intentions in returning to the land of the living.

It is night, and men cannot be immediately identified. The phrase “Who's there?” repeatedly punctuates the scene; even fellow guardsmen carry the threat of the supernatural, until they make themselves known. The disrupted rhythms of the versification add to the sense of uneasiness; many lines are aborted before the pentameter is completed. At other moments, one character will begin a line which will be finished by the next:

Horatio:    Friends to this ground
Marcellus:  And liegemen to the Dane (1:1:16-17).

This gives the dialogue a quick and tense pace, as the two characters are not even able to use a complete line of verse to express themselves. The scene builds slowly towards a confrontation. Instead of a single moment of disruption to the natural order that produces a single moment of shock and fear, Shakespeare's
ghost encounter is drawn out over a long period, allowing the moment of initial shock to pass and make way for more disturbing questions.

While they wait for the apparition, the characters discuss the unstable state of the country, as well as classical ghosts that appeared in similar turbulent political climates. By connecting the appearance of the ghost to those ghosts that "squeak[ed] and gibber[ed]" when Julius Caesar was assassinated, Shakespeare also links the supernatural with political disturbance, and, more significantly, assassination. This scene establishes Denmark as at once a country on the verge of war, and also one haunted by the threat of the supernatural. However, it is not about Norway’s armies that Francisco speaks when he says, “I am sick at heart” (1:1:9). The startled reactions of the guards convey their uneasiness as the time that the ghost will appear draws near:

Barnardo: When yond same star that’s westward from the pole
       Had made his course t’illume that part of heaven
       Where it now burns (1:1:38-40).

Horatio stands apart from the guards. While they anxiously await the appearance of the ghost in fear, Horatio is initially sceptical of the ghost’s existence. Their dialogue reflects contemporary conflicts regarding spectre belief:

Marcellus: Horatio says ’tis but our fantasy,
          and will not let belief take hold of him (1:1:25).
Moreover, Horatio’s initial scepticism mitigates the possibility of audience scepticism, encouraging them to follow his emotional journey. Consequently, Horatio’s reaction to evidence of the ghost’s reality is all the more powerful because his change in attitude is so dramatic. It shakes him to the very core:

Horatio: Before my God I might not this believe
Without the sensible and true avouch
of mine own eyes (1:1:57-59).

Sarah Outterson-Murphy discusses this reaction: “Horatio’s emphasis on his own sight as the grounds for his belief not only invites playgoers to identify with that belief, but also provides a mechanism by which Horatio’s response to the Ghost can model a similar response from playgoers” (259). The audience, after all, can also witness the ghost. After having been encouraged to identify with Horatio’s scepticism, they are then invited to join him in his suspension of disbelief.

When the ghost finally does appear, the pace of the scene becomes feverish. At first only Horatio speaks to it, begging it to impart its otherworldly knowledge. He repeats: “speak to me!” and “Oh, speak!”, before finally, the cock crows, and the ghost prepares to depart. The three try to detain him with their weapons, but to no avail. This would certainly have called for some creative staging and choreography, to reflect the implied incorporeality of the ghost that renders it
invulnerable to the guards’ blows, but contemporary accounts do not make mention of this.

Stanley Wells offers the possibility that two actors may have played the ghost, one hiding behind the arras as the other emerges elsewhere (1991, 62); however, there is no indication of a technique like this in the text. The Elizabethan theatre utilised machinery that allowed for the raising and lowering of actors from below the stage (Longman 2016, 30). This was often the method of entrance for stage ghosts, as it gave the impression that they were emerging either from their crypts beneath the Earth, or from Hell itself (Childs 1962, 464). This machinery was loud, so if the ghost were meant to slip in unseen, it is unlikely this method would be used. *Hamlet’s* ghost likely entered through the arras. The arras was meant to represent solid walls, therefore making the ghost appear to have the power to walk through walls (DeLuca 1973, 150). The effect of this would have been unsettling, as audiences would have been unused to the ghost appearing in this way.

This “strangeness” of the ghost is, importantly, “compounded by the terror of the characters in the story” (Belsey 2014, 38). Similar to the emotional modelling in *The Awntyrs off Arthure*, it is through the cues provided by the characters that the audience feels the threat posed by the ghost, and the appropriate emotional response, such as the repeated exclamations of the characters. The guards and Horatio, established as military men, respond in a militaristic manner to the ghost. Their quick shouts and defensive violence therefore give it a sense of martial danger of its own. However, its mystery is also
emphasised as the guards frantically speculate on the motivations behind these actions:

Marcellus: It is offended
Barnardo: See, it stalks away (1:1:52-53).

Catherine Belsey contrasts Shakespeare's treatment of the ghost of Old Hamlet to other contemporary stage ghosts. The stage-ghosts of Shakespeare's day owed much to Senecan tragedy (Belsey 2014, 38). They were spectatorial in nature, often appearing in the prologue to frame the action of the play, but existing outside of the playworld, watching the action alongside the audience. Like the ghost of Hamlet, they desired revenge for the wrongs done to them in life. While driven by similar motives, the ghost of Hamlet acts differently. He speaks directly to, and interacts directly with the characters, and his agency is felt throughout the play by nearly all characters. Moreover, as Belsey suggests, “there is little evidence that [stage ghosts which frightened early modern audiences] had the same effect on the fictional characters they haunted” (38). *Hamlet*, according to Belsey, is one of the first to do this. This fear on the part of the characters manifests in both dialogue and bodily expression:

In Barnardo’s description, Horatio “mirror[s] the Ghost they see... [laying] the foundation for the play’s deeper exploration of the ghost's effects on Hamlet himself” (Outterson-Murphy, 257). Outterson-Murphy suggests that the ghost in some way invades its spectators, affecting not only their emotions but their bodies as well: “First, upon seeing the Ghost Horatio responds that the spirit ‘harrowes me with feare and wonder’ (1.1.44). Horatio’s word ‘harrowes,’ though it may seem an odd choice (and Q1 has a more stereotypically ghostly word, ‘horrors’), metaphorically suggests bodily penetration and disruption by the Ghost as by a plow harrowing soil” (257).

While the reactions of the guards represent a standard, contemporary emotional response to a ghost’s presence, the main characters’ reactions highlight aspects of their personalities. Hamlet, for instance, distinguishes himself from his countrymen by responding to the ghost with rash bravery:

Hamlet: Why, what should be the fear?
     I do not set my life at a pin’s fee,
     And for my soul, what can it do to that,
     Being a thing as immortal as itself?
     It waves me forth again. I’ll follow it (1:5:64-8).

Unlike the response of Gawain in the *Awntyrs off Arthure*, this reaction does not model an expected audience response, but further illuminates Hamlet’s troubled character as established in the previous few scenes. Hamlet’s bravery is not in
service of any social bonds or mores, as Gawain’s is. On the contrary, his response rejects the advice of those most loyal to him. In this way, the ghost encounter becomes a measuring stick for Hamlet’s character; its strangeness highlights the extent to which Hamlet’s own mind is already disturbed, through his almost casual response to it.

Shakespeare uses the trappings associated with theatrical representations of melancholy to emphasise Hamlet’s strangeness (Anglin 2017, 15). Rather than revealing his character, they obscure it. Hamlet’s melancholy, combined with his intelligence, makes him unpredictable. While his melancholy has long been associated with inaction, Hamlet’s own particular melancholy is, as Freud astutely points out, a restless state of being that seems always on the verge of erupting into violent action (1999, 225). What results is a protagonist as strange and unknowable as the ghost which he confronts, producing a scene of confrontation in which the actions of both ghost and living are unpredictable and carry the potential for violence. Moreover, there is a sense that, besides the family connection, Hamlet’s emotional instability strengthens his connection to the ghost: it is what allows the ghost’s words to unseat him and to affect him so deeply.

**Violent Passions**

In the early modern era, the term ‘emotion’ was not commonly used, and the spectrum of human feeling was categorised into passions, appetites, and affections (Dixon 2003, 233). Even within this broader paradigm there were
competing taxonomies, and substantial disagreement on how many passions there were (Paster et al. 2004, 2). While many drew careful distinctions between the passions and affections, many did not, and used the terms interchangeably (2).

The early modern period was a stage of transition in theory of emotion. It marked a period of movement from the medieval understanding of feeling, in which passions and affections were thought to be active motions of the will or intellect, to an understanding in which passions and affections were medicalised, bodily functions that could not be entirely controlled. Galenic humoralism, the idea that dispositions and emotions were produced and affected by fluids within the body, continued to be widespread. Under this model, a certain tendency towards one disposition indicated an excess of one of four bodily fluids: black bile, yellow bile, blood, and phlegm. However, the nature of the relationship between these fluids and emotions was beginning to change. The medieval conception was that these humours produced passions that were separate to the rational mind, and which it could control and direct. The mind’s role in early modern humoralism was more erratic. Speculation about the role of “imagination” suggested that mere ideas could make people physically sick, as Robert Burton indicated in his 1621 publication The Anatomy of Melancholy: “the mind most effectually works upon the body, producing by his passions and perturbations miraculous alterations . . . cruel diseases and sometimes death itself” (1893, 288).

In the early modern period, passions and affections were beginning to be seen as chemical reactions, between the soul, body and the world with which they
interacted, volatile and largely involuntary. The body became “radically labile, prone to ... lapses from the temperate mean of civility... Early modern subjects experienced strong passions as self-alteration: being moved immeasurably ‘besides’ oneself” (Paster et al., 16). There was little distinction made between the psychological and physiological elements of the passions: as they were “articulations of a soul lodged in a body that, surprising to our post-Enlightenment sensibilities, knew no stringent division between organic corporeality and elevated psychological activity” (2014, 12).

The description of bodily responses to fear offered up by Shakespeare differs in some respects from the Awntyrs off Arthure’s weeping and wailing:

Ghost: But that I am forbid
To tell the secrets of my prison house
I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,
Make thy two eyes like stars start from their spheres
Thy knotted and combinèd locks to part,
And each particular hair to stand an end
Like quills upon the fearful porpentine (1:5:13-20).

Shakespeare paints a picture here of widened eyes and raised hackles. It is not a weeping face, but an alert, watching, and listening face. This reflects something different from the affective piety of the weeping Guinevere, whose encounter
with the ghost reinforces her religious view. This instead reflects a face that is shocked by what it sees, a sight that brings great emotional disturbance to the viewer.

Later when he can see the ghost and his mother cannot, she describes his physical reaction to it in a similar manner:

Queen: Forth at your eyes your spirits wildly peep,

And, as the sleeping soldiers in th’alarm,

Your bedded hair, like life in excrements

Start up and stand an end (3:4:120-124).

The expression described is one of shock and fright. From the exclamations in the dialogue it is possible to deduce that the primary—or at least initial—disturbance the ghost brings to those who confront it is an affective one that produces bodily response. Yet this is a different emotional disruption to that experienced by the characters in *The Awntyrs off Arthure*. While Guinevere weeps for mortal fear at first, she ultimately fears for her own and her mother’s souls. Hamlet’s expression is one of shock, and it is the shock of having beliefs dislodged, rather than confirmed. There is a different quality to the fear that this ghost brings: the quality of uncertainty.

The ghost’s face is hardly described. While the script indicates that his visor is raised, exposing his face, and that the face is pale, little else about it is described in the dialogue. This may be to give freedom of expression to the actor; however,
it is possible that the ghost, not being from this world, does not express emotion in the bodily human fashion described above, because he is not human. He, after all, has no body, and therefore no humours. The ghost’s own emotions are consequently a mystery at first. Although we are given no description of the ghost’s manner of physical expression in the way that we are for the Awntyrs off Arthure, it is possible to draw some clues from the dialogue as to his emotional state:

Horatio: And then it started like a guilty thing
Upon a fearful summons (1:1:152-3).

As his story of betrayal and fratricide reaches its climax, his expression becomes more frantic, and he implores Hamlet to listen closely:

Ghost: List, list, oh, list! (1:5:22).

Ghost: Oh horrible, O horrible, most horrible! (1:5:80).

These repeated phrases indicate some level of distress, as do his graphic descriptions of his murder and his vehement cursing of the perpetrator.

However, because he is silent for so long, the ghost’s physical movements initially comprise the entirety of his interactions with the living. His movements are described in the stage directions to a much greater extent than those of the
other characters, for example in the direction "It spreads his arms" (1:1:129). This focus on the ghost's physical movement, particularly at this point in the scene before it has spoken, may show that the ghost is careful with his words. In his appearances to most characters he is most often silent, and he speaks at length to Hamlet alone. The communication of the ghost’s emotions and intentions through physical movement is therefore very important to his characterisation.

The script emphasises the ghost’s physicality as its most remarkable characteristic. As Kent Cartwright points out, the soldiers marvel not at the Ghost’s ‘otherworldliness’ but at its ‘human resemblance to the king that’s dead’ (in Outterson-Murphy, 256). Great importance is placed on its body and embodied movement as the key to understanding its nature, purpose, and identity. While the physical appearance and characteristics of the ghost are not described in detail, clues to his appearance are provided in the dialogue, even suggesting costuming. The Ghost is described as being “Armed at point, exactly cap-à-pie" (1.2.199), which Robert Lublin notes as a “term... used to describe a kind of heavy armor that encases the whole body and was typically worn on horseback” (632). Lublin adds that this style of armour would have been obsolete at the time of Hamlet’s first performance, and used primarily only for ceremonial functions. It therefore would have “hearkened back to a medieval ethos of violence” invoking past notions of masculinity and honour (632). This was not a common appearance for early-modern stage ghosts, most of whom would have worn “burial clothes, white sheets, or day clothes”. Lublin asserts that Hamlet presents the only instance of an early-modern stage ghost wearing armour (632).
The ghost’s connection to his temporal life is thereby emphasised over any connection to a spiritual afterlife, as might have been the case if he had worn burial clothes.

The ghost of Hamlet’s father appears only to men, and speaks only to his son. His relationship to the queen is explored, but only through these purely male interactions. While the ghost seems to resent her actions in marrying his murderer, calling her “seeming virtuous” (1:5:46), he takes care to instruct Hamlet to protect her, or at least to take no action against her:

Ghost: Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive
Against thy mother aught. Leave her to heaven,
And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge
To prick and sting her (1:5:85-88).

This, it appears, is a ghost that retains the feelings and emotions of his living self, who cares about his wife to some extent. The ghost’s last appearance in the play takes place immediately after Hamlet kills Polonius:

Ghost: Oh, step between her and her fighting soul.
Conceit in weakest bodies strongest works.
Speak to her, Hamlet (3:4:114-116).
Importantly in this scene, Gertrude can’t see the ghost. However, he is staged as a perceptible reality, a physical body on the stage that the audience can see but that the Queen cannot. It may be, however, not that the Queen’s perception is faulty, but that the ghost can choose and control to whom it appears. Early modern spirits could choose to be visible or invisible at will, according to contemporary philosopher Lavater (Outterson-Murphy, 268).

Queen: Alas, how is’t with you,
That you do bend your eye on vacancy,
And with th’incorporal air do hold discourse? (3:4:117-119).

Whether or not this is the case, the ghost occupies a liminal space, neither the living embodied King, nor a figment of the imagination, but exhibiting elements of both.

Because the form of the story is theatrical, the representation of the body of the ghost is integral. Hamlet’s ghost must be played by an actor, and is therefore in many ways the most physically present, corporeal ghost of the three texts. Yet these bodily elements of the ghost do not necessarily render him corporeal; in fact, every line suggests otherwise: “Stay, illusion!” (1:1:129). It is possibly for this reason that Shakespeare emphasises at every opportunity its incorporeal, air-like qualities.

Similarly, when the sentinels attack the ghost with their swords, they are unable to harm it in any way, explaining “For it is as the air invulnerable”
Often the ghost is referred to as a “shade” or a “figure”, suggesting that the body of the ghost is not entirely solid or present: it is an image of a body, and not one that can entirely be trusted. The word “figure” in particular, asserts Outterson-Murphy, “unleashes the idea that the Ghost may be a mere figurative representation, a demonic (or theatrical) illusion rather than a true substance” (257). Herein lies the primary difference between the ghost of the *Awntyrs off Arthure* and the ghost of *Hamlet*: the quality of the unknown. While the *Awntyrs* ghost is certainly a sinful one, the nature of its sinfulness is not in question, nor is its veracity. For Hamlet, the question of the Ghost’s origin is a very pertinent and disturbing one. He himself poses the question of whether it is in fact not the ghost of his dead father, but a demon disguised to tempt him to sin. The nature of the ghost’s origin is ambiguous: he exhibits the qualities and abilities of a variety of ghost traditions, including the Catholic understanding of purgatory, classic Senecan shades, as well as the revenants of Icelandic sagas, and while Shakespeare gives his audience no confirmation of the ghost’s ability to interact with his environment, the language used to describe him certainly reflects the embodied nature of the ghost. He is often described in terms such as “figure” or “form”, implying that his visual appearance may not reflect his true nature.

Barnardo: In the same figure like the King that’s dead. (1:1:43).

Horatio: Together with that fair and warlike form

In which the majesty of buried Denmark
Did sometimes march? (1:1:49-51).

However, the corpselike nature of the ghost is also emphasised in the dialogue, calling to mind the crypt or burial place of the body itself, and the grotesqueness therein.

Hamlet:  
Why thy canonized bones, hearsèd in death, 
Have burst their cerements, why the sepulchre, 
 Wherein we saw thee quietly interred, 
Hath oped his ponderous and marble jaws 
To cast thee up again, What may this mean, 
That thou, dead corpse, again in complete steel 
Revisits thus... (1:5:47-53).

The purpose of this corpselike description is twofold. On the one hand, it is reflective of Scandinavian revenants appropriate to the play's historical setting; on the other, it also has a practical function, as Outterson-Murphy notes: “Such comments on the Ghost’s lifelike appearance” also “acknowledge and exploit the actor's solidity and life” (Outterson-Murphy, 256). The reference to the ghost as “dead corpse” may reflect the contemporary costuming customs for stage ghosts. Contemporary accounts of the play indicate that the face of the ghost was whitened, such as in Pale Thomas Lodge's Wits Miserie, in which he describes the Devil “Hate-Vertue” as “pale as the Visard of ye ghost which cried so miserably at
The ghost's like an oyster wife, *Hamlet*, revenge” ... (Lodge, 6). Some scholars speculate that flour may have been used to affect this paleness, and suggest that it reflects an early-modern fear of sickliness, or the idea of a long-suffering body after death (Outterson-Murphy, 258).

The ghost’s connection to his environment is also unconventional. He appears not at his place of death, nor where he was wont to spend most of his days in life, but on the battlements of the castle. This liminal space reflects the ghost’s own liminality: it is neither inside nor outside the castle, just as the ghost is neither present in the world nor truly gone. In this way, the ghost is similar to emotion itself. According to Gail Paster, early modern people conceived the passions not as “internal objects’ or even ‘bodily states.’” They instead comprised “an ecology or a transaction... passions characterise the microcosm’s shifting interaction with a continuously changing macrocosm” (2004, 18). The ghost’s relationship to its environment reflects this interaction, particularly its relationship with the environmental factor of time. The play takes great care to communicate that it is always at the same time every night that he appears, and that he disappears with the dawn. De Carlo suggests that this focus on the time of the ghost's appearance suggests “a portal for the unnatural and otherworldly” that hinges on temporal limitations, leading Horatio to question, ”What art thou that Usurp'st this time of night?” (1.1.46). The ghost himself references his temporal limitations with a strong sense of urgency:

> Ghost: But soft. Methinks I scent the morning air;
Brief let me be (1:5:58-9).

The ghost has a limited time frame in which to convey his story to Hamlet before he is, presumably, dragged towards purgatory once more. His appearance is connected to “the bell then beating one” (1:1:41), and his disappearance is heralded by the crow of the cock—natural portents to an unnatural occurrence. Unlike the Awntyrs off Arthure, the impact of the ghost upon the natural world is limited. His appearance does not affect the cock that crows; rather, it is the cock which exerts influence over him. For De Carlo, this provides a fixed point amidst all the ghost’s “spatial, moral, and ontological” uncertainty at which the ghost becomes tangible. Time and nature, for the ghost, act somewhat like the humours of the living, ruling its experience of the world. Moreover, what Paster refers to as the liminality of early modern emotions (literal and metaphorical; internal and external) is reflected in the very liminality of the ghost itself (Paster et al. 18). In many ways, the ghost is emotion: an emotion so strong it persisted after death; a force strong enough to hold power over the living and enact change.

Time may be the ghost’s primary limitation within the world of the living, but his greatest power is in the words he speaks. Until he confronts Hamlet alone, the ghost communicates very little, despite being implored by Horatio to speak. From his very first words to Hamlet, “Mark me,” the ghost emphasises the importance of Hamlet’s listening (1:5:2). The ghost’s purpose, like the ghost of the Awntyrs, is his message:
Ghost: Pity me not, but lend thy serious hearing
To what I shall unfold

Hamlet: Speak. I am bound to hear.

Ghost: So art thou to revenge, when thou shalt hear (1:5:5-8).

The words spoken by the ghost are powerful. It is the very act of listening that drives Hamlet to action, and the dialogue of the ghost suggests as much:

Hamlet: His form and cause conjoined, preaching to stones
Would make them capable (3:4:127-128).

While he may be unable to physically interact with the characters of the play, his words affect them in a much more significant way than the Senecan ghosts of previous tragedies, and indeed, the ghost of the Awntyrs off Arthure. Moreover, the contents of the ghost’s message set it further apart from previous ghosts. The ghost of Guinevere’s mother names no other agent in her death, and it can be presumed she died of natural causes. She died, like the ghost of Hamlet, “unanneled”, but as a result of her own actions rather than anyone else’s. Consequently, she does not appear to demand any sort of justice, but simply to serve as an example and warning to the living. Ultimately, her actions are consistent within the medieval framework of purgatory in which she is situated. The ghost of Hamlet’s actions, in contrast, are not.
Dim Shapes

It might be reasonably argued that the inhabitants of Hamlet’s medieval Denmark would exhibit a pre-Reformation Christian worldview. However, in such a religiously turbulent climate as Jacobean England, an explicitly Catholic protagonist would run the risk of alienating the audience, or worse. Therefore, the ghost is never explicitly said to have come from purgatory, as purgatory was a Catholic doctrine that had been rejected by the Protestant movement. The ghost must come from somewhere, but Shakespeare is careful never to give that place a name. He often refers to it obliquely, in a manner that Stephen Greenblatt speculates would be “deeply suspect to a Protestant [audience]” (233). The ghost’s torments in the afterlife are certainly not glossed over, but, unlike in the Awntyrs, they are almost entirely peripheral to the reason for his return.

A contemporary treatise on ghosts and their motivations, The Supplication of Souls by Thomas More, gave an explanation for the ghost’s concern for the affairs of the living. According to More, the spirits of the dead could become “heartsick that they [would] fade from the minds of the living” (Greenblatt, 229). This reflects a shift during the early modern period of focus from the place of ghosts within a religious cosmology, to a focus on the temporal lives of ghosts. Correspondingly, the passions of the ghost of Hamlet are base and human rather than divine. While the emotions of the ghost of The Awntyrs that drove her to return to the present were a product of her environment in death, those of Old Hamlet concern almost exclusively his life on earth.
This is not to say that the supernatural elements of the ghost are downplayed. They are simply used to a new end: instead of illuminating the ghost’s divinity (or relationship thereto), they obscure it. Purgatory is heavily alluded to in the ghost’s dialogue, but the ghost reveals little about the nature of that place.

Ghost: ... But that I am forbid

To tell the secrets of my prison house (1:5:13-4).

However, the ramifications of this obfuscation extend beyond politics. Without the certain knowledge of where the ghost has come from, the audience is unable to rely upon the ghost’s truthfulness. From the evidence that they are given, the audience can conclude that the ghost is not from Hell, because he specifies he is only doomed for “A certain term” (1:5:10). However, this relies on the premise that the ghost speaks the truth. In the Awntyrs off Arthure the ghost’s veracity is never in any doubt. The ghost gains nothing by warning her daughter and Gawain of their earthly and posthumous futures; her warnings and instructions are entirely for the benefit of the living. The instructions of the ghost of Hamlet, however, serve his own ends. Is the ghost therefore an agent of the devil? Hamlet entertains the idea.

Hamlet: ...The spirit that I have seen

May be the devil, and the devil had power
T'assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps
Out of my weakness and melancholy,
As he is very potent with such spirits,
Abuses me to damn me (3:1:519-24).

The authoritative text on ghosts during this period was *Of Ghosts and Spirites Walking by Nyght* by Swiss pastor, Ludwig Lavater. It was originally published in Zurich in 1572, but translations were published throughout Europe. These heavily influenced both popular thought, and philosophy, including the only surviving “native thesis” on the subject in England, *Of Specters* by Oxford student and clergyman Randall Hutchins 1567-86 (Davies 2010, xxxix). Owen Davies characterises Lavater as epitomising the protestant problem with ghosts: the difficulty of reconciling the rejection of Catholic doctrine regarding ghosts with the weight of contemporary and historical testimony. He rationalises ghost belief as primarily imagination, but in the rare case of actual encounters, he asserts that ghosts are either angels or, more commonly, “manipulative, machinating devils” merely in the guise of dead loved ones (xl). Lavater’s references to faces and heads swelling recall the ghost’s and Gertrude's descriptions of the horrified face of the person who confronts a ghost:

It often chaunceth that those mens faces and heads do swell, which haue séeene or heard spirits, or haue ben blasted with them: and some are taken mad, as we sée by experience. I remember wel it hath hapned, that
some supposing they haue séeene armed men, who were readie to take
them, haue therefore assayed to slay themselues: which thing may be by
craft of the Deuil (Lavater, 96).

Nor does the fact that the ghost appears to feel emotions harm this theory.
In Augustine’s theory, though the Devil had no flesh, he was ruled by the passions
of jealousy, enmity and anger (Dixon, 33). Greenblatt notes that Hamlet’s
response to the ghost’s “dangerous ambiguity” is to ignore it (237). “I’ll call thee
Hamlet” he says in a manner that Greenblatt calls “impetuous”, with “desperate
impatience” (238). This reveals at once Hamlet’s impatient, frustrated nature, as
well as glossing over questions about the ghost’s origin, leaving it shrouded in
mystery. It even adds more elements to the mix, as Hamlet addresses the ghost
as a corpse.

Hamlet: Let me not burst in ignorance, but tell
Why thy canonized bones, hearsèd in death,
Have burst their cerements, why the sepulchre,
Wherein we saw thee quietly interred,
Hath oped his ponderous and marble jaws
To cast thee up again. What may this mean,
That thou, dead corpse... revisits thus... (1:5:46-52).
This reveals an element of Norse influence, recalling revenants of Icelandic sagas, in which “the dead returned to harm the living”, a belief that had been widespread all over Europe (Belsey, 37), more concerned with buried treasure and revenge than with salvation. Horatio’s questions to the ghost reflect these beliefs as well:

Horatio:    Or, if thou hast uphoarded in thy life

            Extorted treasure in the womb of earth,

            For which, they say, your spirits oft walk in death,

            Speak of it! (1:2:138-141).

The most important question raised by this element is, according to West, the question; “Above all is [the ghost] dangerous in accordance with the pagan European tradition?” (38). Could the ghost, and would the ghost, desire to physically harm the characters? The fear of the unknown raised by the ghost’s possible association with the Devil is compounded by the possibility of physical harm. West proposes that the possibility of ghosts inflicting physical harm would not have been alien to Shakespeare’s audiences, and was one way in which the fear of ghosts was rationalised more broadly during the early modern period: “revenants did physical damage; they spread pestilence; their interlocutors might die” (39). It would also rationalise the fear of the characters towards the ghost, reflected in their attempt to attack it with their swords (1:2:143). The ghost of Hamlet therefore posed at once both a physical and a metaphysical threat. With
the elision of any explicit reference to a particular pneumatological tradition, these different traditions are not at odds in *Hamlet*. Rather, the influence of all of them can be seen, and work together to create the ominous and threatening tone of the ghost encounter.

This mixing of traditions was not limited to Shakespeare's writing, and would not have been unfamiliar to the audiences. In popular ghost belief, these different narratives were always intertwined: "even the most partisan Catholic might affirm the reliability of pagan ghost stories and at the same time reject the pagan explanations of them" (West 1968, 57). However, the choice to use elements from all the traditions within the play was, West asserts, a conscious one, since “the dramatist could delineate spirits consistently if he chose to” (62). Greenblatt agrees, asserting that “the issue is not, I think, simply random inconsistency. There is, rather, a pervasive pattern, a deliberate forcing together of radically incompatible accounts of almost everything that matters in Hamlet” (239). Why, then, did Shakespeare make this choice? The ghost's inconsistency and ambiguity, by this account, fits into a general theme of inconsistency and ambiguity that runs throughout the whole play, encompassing, among other things, Hamlet's madness, his delay in seeking revenge, and Gertrude's implied complicity in the original murder. A possible reason for the ambiguity is to maximise the fear; through the possibility of physical harm as in pagan tradition, but also with the connection to the threat of the Christian afterlife, in which all of the audience would believe. As West argues, central to the drama of the scene is
the fundamental “unaccountability” of the ghost (65). However, it is not merely fear that the ghost introduces.

Hamlet’s world is turned upside-down with the revelation of the ghost, and things are never the same for him from that moment on. Goethe notes this, characterising Hamlet as “a fine, pure, noble and highly moral person... [who] goes to pieces beneath a burden that it can neither support nor cast off” (quoted in Greenblatt 2001, 229). This burden is knowledge—of his father’s murder, and his uncle’s betrayal—but it is also emotion. The ghost permeates the atmosphere, buffeting the body and soul of Hamlet.

In comparison with *The Awntyrs*, a contrast emerges in the role of the ghost, which can be summed up as a shift from beseeching to demanding. In *Hamlet*, as in *The Awntyrs*, the past returns to deliver a message and a lesson, but what the past has to teach Hamlet is not necessarily in Hamlet’s best interest. Like the ghost of *The Awntyrs*, the ghost of *Hamlet* provides some knowledge of past events, but his knowledge is never confirmed beyond a flimsy connection between a re-enactment of the murder and the King’s response to it. Nor does the ghost reveal the future, or provide moral lessons. He refuses to provide Hamlet knowledge of the torments of the afterlife, but he does make a demand. The demand made by the past upon the present is much greater than the demand of *The Awntyrs’* ghost. He demands action—not action that will save his soul, but action that will further damn him, and with him, Hamlet himself.

The emotional language of the play is therefore much more suspenseful and anxious in the scenes leading up to and including the scene of encounter. Those
who express bravery come across as mad, not stoic, like Sir Gawain. Nor are those who express fear depicted as pious. Emotional language and dramatic techniques are used instead to reveal character. Moreover, the theatrical form of the play places great importance on embodied emotion, even referencing embodied emotion and detailed facial expression in the dialogue. The ghost’s emotional expression is hobbled somewhat by the uncertainty surrounding his face and body. He is repeatedly referred to as an “image” or “figure”, suggesting that his true nature is not as it appears. How he appears is, of course, because of the theatrical form, as a solid human being, and a not unusually emotive and expressive one. Indeed, the meagre descriptions of his appearance detailed in the script, such as his armour and the paleness of his face suggest a living, walking corpse similar to the revenants of Icelandic Sagas, who, like this ghost, would return from the dead to violently settle scores. However, the ghost’s ability to turn invisible and the multiple references to his incorporeality within the play point to multiple ghost traditions, of which early modern writers had many from which to take inspiration.

This, of course brings up the pertinent question regarding the ghost’s body: that is, how the ghost is able to feel emotion with no humours, as the dialogue and narrative indicate that he does. It is possible that the ghost is, as Hamlet himself suggests, an agent of the devil within an early Christian framework, possessing no body but able to feel evil passions such as jealousy and envy. Accepting a framework such as this, however, disregards many other elements of the ghost’s
character, such as his mercy towards Gertrude and the pagan elements described above.

I suggest instead that the ghost is, almost paradoxically, an *embodiment* of emotion. This is corroborated by the ghost’s interaction with his environment, as well as the power that his words have over the living, including its ability to cause its listeners’ eyes to widen, their hair to stand on end, and their blood to freeze. In many ways, it is the movement from the medieval conception of passion as wilful action of the soul to a more complex relationship between soul, body and environment, that allows the moral ambiguity of *Hamlet’s* ghost to exist. Moreover, the elements of the unknown and the uncertain that are introduced by this ambiguity are what makes the ghost encounter of Hamlet so gripping and dynamic, and have since influenced and shaped hundreds of ghost stories that have come after it.
Irrational Fears

*The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole is widely credited as the work that inaugurated the genre of the gothic novel. It follows the Italian Prince Manfred, who, upon the loss of his only son, determines to divorce his wife and marry his late son’s betrothed, for fear that he won’t be able to produce another heir. His evil deeds awaken a giant ghost and set into motion a sequence of events that lead to Manfred’s murder of his own daughter and eventually the loss of his throne. The story is considered a classic today more for its influence on later works than its merit. In Judith Wilt’s assessment, its only virtue is that it contains “half a dozen memorable tableau” of shocking or iconic scenes that would go on to inspire numerous sketches and paintings in the late eighteenth century (Wilt 1980, 26).

The ghost in this story is vastly different from those we have discussed in previous chapters. Unlike Guinevere’s mother and Hamlet’s father, this ghost does not warn or prophesise. Instead, it acts of its own volition and upon the physical environment around it. Of the three this is the most corporeal, physically present ghost, and yet it is also the least human. The shade of Alfonso (whose heir is the rightful ruler of Otranto) is not only a ghost, but a giant, and one with prodigious magical powers over both man and environment (Walpole 1929, 113). In this chapter I will explore the emotions evoked by this colossal ghost.
within its cultural and literary context. The eighteenth century has traditionally been viewed as a time of rationalism and rapid secularization. During this time, “traditional” magical beliefs “in ghosts, witches, demonic possession, astrology, divination, omens and the like”, were supplanted by the scientific and empirical ideologies of the Enlightenment (Thomas, cited in Castle 1995, 15). Although the Enlightenment is normally considered a time when the irrational, superstitious beliefs and practices of previous centuries were rejected, this was when the popularity of supernatural literature, and in particular, the ghost story, soared to new heights (Clery 1995, 2).

Diane Hoeveler links the resurgence of supernatural literature to the politics of religion, citing strong anti-Catholic sentiment within the middling and lower classes in which such literature was extremely popular. She notes that many of the evils of these stories, whether perpetrated by man or monster, can be linked thematically even if not explicitly to Catholicism. She cites works such as The Monk by Matthew Lewis and a variety of gothic chapbooks as evidence for her claims (2014, 19). In contrast, Terry Castle argues that the eighteenth century was actually a time “of paranoia, repression, incipient madness”, and that the transformative power of the Enlightenment over people’s attitudes has been overstated (1995, 7). She argues that supernatural thinking did not undergo a decline and resurgence; instead it transformed into the psychologized supernatural, in which hallucinations took the place of spectres as thoughts gained a peculiar tangibility, as represented by Anne Radcliffe’s The Mysteries of Udolpho. Castle proposes that the eighteenth-century’s obsession with the
supernatural was in fact a re-emergence of an idea that the anti-superstitious discourses of the time had repressed (15). A third view is offered by Sarah Tindal Kareem, who prefers not to refer to ‘the supernatural’ in eighteenth century literature, but to ‘the marvellous’ instead, rejecting the assumption that supernatural and the secular are mutually exclusive. According to Kareem, the literature of the eighteenth century did not embrace irrationality wholesale; instead it employed “equivocal feelings: doubt and diffidence, feelings that are at once destabilizing and exhilarating, and that foster a pleasure in the sensation of not knowing—of wondering—itsel...” (2014, 15). For Kareem, at this time the marvellous in literature was reframed: marvellous objects and events were portrayed neither as explicitly supernatural nor completely secularized, and the conflict between these “competing explanatory systems” produced the sensation of wonder (15). Such literature, Kareem asserts, “enchants not despite but because of its sceptical impulses” (16).

This chapter will follow the structural framework established in the previous two, with a few additions. It will provide a historical and theoretical context in which to situate the novel, focusing in particular on eighteenth-century theories about the relationship between emotion and literature. I go on to discuss Walpole’s use of realism, space, and how these aspects of the novel inflect the emotions in the story. I discuss Kames’ theory of Ideal Presence in relation to Walpole’s use of emotive language, and the emotional impact of the Burkean Sublime on Walpole’s writing. I then examine in detail the ghost’s appearance, abilities, relation to his environment, and, most significantly, his relation to the
history of that environment. Through these investigations, I will be able to reveal some of the complexities of emotion as represented in *The Castle of Otranto*, and highlight the similarities and differences between this text and those at the centre of the previous chapters.

**Vicissitudes**

In both of his prefaces to *The Castle of Otranto*, Walpole apologises for the supernatural elements of the story. The first preface is supposedly written by the novel’s translator, who claims to be working from an Italian manuscript. The second, in Walpole’s own voice, responds to the novel’s unexpected popularity and the criticisms that arose as a result of this popularity. Together, the prefaces attempt to justify the author’s use of “Miracles, visions, necromancy, dreams, and other preternatural events”, which Walpole (in the guise of the fictitious translator who authored the first preface) concedes do not gel with what was then the normal mode of novel writing (1929, lxxi). This mode followed a didactic principle that assumed literature would reflect and endorse historical progress, and would adhere to the conventions of realism. Consequently, an ancient text (such as *Otranto* claimed to be) might be excused for the representation of supernatural phenomena, because although not real, they were at least “true to history” and represented the beliefs prevalent at the time of writing (Clery, 55). However, a modern novel could not be excused such frivolous subject matter.

In the eighteenth century, the link between literature and moral education ensured that responses to texts that represented the supernatural were
ambivalent. On the one hand, as Sasha Handley notes, ghosts could fulfil a moral role, returning from the dead to “uphold principles of social and moral justice and to expose secrets and lies”, and could therefore be “an imaginative tool with which to refine emotional sensibilities and hone moral virtue” (2007, 123). On the other hand, sympathetic engagement with ghosts in texts could result in readers “transgress[ing] the somewhat hazy boundary between fiction and reality” (123). Handley argues that while Walpole’s ghosts reinforce to some extent the tenets of moral justice, his “engagement with these figures stemmed from his appreciation of their aesthetic value” (200).

Could it be for this reason that Walpole faced censure? The rise of rationalism in the eighteenth century led many to believe that superstitions, including ghost belief, were “a slavery of the mind... hampering the progress of a rational society (Davies 2010, xiv). Not only did ghost belief threaten the rational mind, it also threatened the emotions. This argument was commonly used in response to the rise of Methodism, which affirmed the existence of guardian angels, devils and ghosts. Owen Davies, for example, in his account of ghost belief in the eighteenth century, notes that Methodists “stood accused of fanning the dying embers of superstition...” because they endorsed the existence of ghosts and that such “enthusiasm’ abused the emotions” (x). For many at the time, even the mere representation of such ‘superstition’ in literature was considered harmful.

5 See the review quoted on page 96
Belief in the power of literature to affect the emotions and minds of its audience was strong in the eighteenth century. Sympathetic engagement with literature, in which the emotions depicted in books impress themselves upon their readers, was considered so powerful that it could be dangerous (Kerr et al. 2016, 13). Reading about wanton behaviour could corrupt young ladies’ morals; reading about madness could drive a reader mad; and if one read too many ghost stories, it put one at great risk of hallucinating a ghost oneself (Castle 1995, 183). This model made “no allowance for the reader’s reflective distance” from the subject matter of the text. Instead, fiction was accorded “extraordinary powers to corrupt or improve” the reader, making authorship an undertaking of great moral responsibility (Clery, 59).

Working within this model, *Otranto* can be seen as an attempt to exploit this power of fiction to rouse the emotions of readers. It took advantage of readers’ desire for emotional engagement and experience of horror, excitement, and pity, all from the comfort of a reading chair. The novel’s prefaces make it clear that Walpole’s aim in writing was to excite the imagination and the emotions, rather than make any attempt to reflect reality or provide moral edification. “Terror,” he writes, “the author’s principal engine, prevents the story from ever languishing; and it is so often contrasted by pity, that the mind is kept up in a constant vicissitude of interesting passions” (lxxii).

As in the early modern period, the dominant terms for discussing emotional life in the eighteenth century were still “passions” and “affections” (Dixon, 62). The meaning of the word passions remained for the most part unchanged, serving
as a very general emotional term, but often referring in particular to the more violent feelings. The term ‘affections’ changed meaning slightly, moving away from its association with piety and approaching the meaning of a newer term, ‘sentiments’. The term ‘sentiment’ referred to a “potentially rational . . . lively state of mind”, and simultaneously to a more specific experience that was at once “both a thought or opinion and a feeling” (Dixon, 64). Both terms were viewed as cognitive and subjective, felt preferences which were “potentially rational” (64). At this time, the term ‘emotion’ was coming into use, but no firm meaning was yet attached to it, and its uses tend to be “vague and equivocal . . . sometimes [meaning] something like movement or agitation, sometimes . . . an apparent synonym or stylistic variant for ‘passions’” (65). Amid the emerging schools of religious revivalism and British moralism, the eighteenth century produced a diverse range of theories of emotion, ranging from the traditional Christian model of emotions as a movement of the will, and emotion as a discrete faculty with its own causal powers (70). For revivalists, much of the traditional Christian model was maintained, such as the distinction between appetites and passions. However, the importance of will and the “reduction of all affections and passions to love of God or love of the world” was neglected (66). Moralist emotional theory, on the other hand, often centred upon the relationship between the individual and the social body or State. Emotion was a morally and even politically loaded subject for all schools during this period.

Confronted by the text’s alleged aesthetic failings, Otranto’s fictitious translator justifies its subject matter with the assertion that “Whatever [the
author's] views were, or whatever the effects of his execution of them might have, his work can only be laid before the public at present as a matter of entertainment” (lxxi). He thereby excludes the work from any moral accountability. In his second preface, Walpole describes the book as a reaction to the current style of novel writing, a style which he felt “cramped imagination” with its “strict adherence to common life” (lxxv). The solution Walpole proposed was a synthesis of the two modes, the fantastic ancient and mimetic modern: a novel in which the marvellous is treated in realistic terms, and fully-drawn characters respond supernatural stimuli in a naturalistic, credible way. He believed that this would enable readers to experience, through sympathetic engagement with characters’ realistic reactions to the fantastic subject-matter, a level of heightened emotion that simply could not be reached by the more realistic scenarios of modern novels.

Once his authorship of the novel was made public, critical responses confirmed Walpole’s expectations of censure. While under the impression that the novel was a rediscovered medieval manuscript, the 1765 Monthly Review recommended Otranto to those

who can digest the absurdities of Gothic fiction, and bear with the machinery of ghosts and goblins … for it is written with no common pen; the language is accurate and elegant, the characters are highly finished; and the disquisitions into human manners, passions and pursuits,
indicate the keenest penetration, the most perfect knowledge of mankind (quoted in Clery 1995, 53).

After the novel was discovered to be a fake, this praise was retracted and Walpole strongly criticised;

But when, as in this edition, [it] is declared to be a modern performance, that 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. It is, indeed, more than strange that an Author, of a refined and polished genius, should be an advocate for re-establishing the barbarous superstitions of Gothic devilism! (quoted in Clery, 53).

In this review, the 'keen knowledge of mankind' that initially impressed the critic seems to have been forgotten. In my view this 'knowledge' is evident in the mixture of ancient and modern modes which Walpole brings together, which produces the interplay between the marvellous and the realistic that Kareem argues, produces the experience of wonder (15). This combination of aesthetic modes allows Walpole to create scenes that produce a profound emotional affect. To achieve this, Walpole maintains tight control over the spaces, images, and characters in his novel.


**Supernatural Realism**

One of the ways this control is achieved is through Walpole's use of space. The novel has been described as having a theatrical tone, which has been variously attributed to the influence of Shakespeare on his work, and also the conventions of Neoclassical drama, which was experiencing a vogue during the eighteenth century (Kukkonen 2017, 140). Karin Kukkonen notes that, particularly in the five-act structure of the novel and its naturalistic depiction of the characters, *Otranto* adheres to the Neoclassical elements of drama. The result is a novel that is very self-contained, with a “theatrical feel” (148).

This ‘theatrical feel’ is based on restriction: just as the time period in which the action takes place is limited to around forty hours, the “compass of events” is similarly limited to a few locations; the castle, the monastery, and the underground tunnels that connect them. This creates a feeling of claustrophobia: characters wander through halls that seem interchangeable with each other and which seem able to open onto any scene. This makes for “a fast-paced, tightly constructed Gothic novel” in which some “play-like” situations are made possible that may otherwise have threatened the reader’s suspension of disbelief (140). For example, Manfred’s mistaken murder of Matilda in the final act of the novel can occur only in an environment as cramped and obscure as the Castle of Otranto, where any dangerous characters might lurk around the corner. Walpole’s use of space and environment is therefore at once Neoclassical, because it is contained, and also gothic, because it is obscured. While *The Awntyrs off Arthure*, and even *Hamlet*, give a sense of a broader world that exists beyond
the scenes depicted in the story, *Otranto* does not. Reading this restriction through the lens provided by Kareem, Walpole’s depiction of the Castle is tightly controlled and not reliant on any irrationality inherent in the reader; instead it confronts and confounds their scepticism and rationality with a lack of information in order to produce the desired emotional effect, be it interest, confusion, destabilization, or excitement.

In her reading of Isabella’s flight, Kukkonen emphasises the importance of space as it relates to embodied emotion in *Otranto*. Isabella is in the dark, unsure of her surroundings, and her responses to the sounds she hears are both physical and emotional. She runs, freezes, steps back in fear. However, as Kukkonen notes, “this emotional, embodied response takes her closer to Manfred, from whom she is fleeing” (143). As this suggests, Walpole creates a space that is confusing and threatening, not just for Isabella, but for the reader as well. “Walpole”, writes Kukkonen, “designs the experience of the passage scene in a highly-embodied fashion and relies on the interconnectedness of spatial perception and emotion” (143). But Walpole uses more than just visual data to create this effect. He also evokes auditory and sensory aspects of the scene, writing for example about “awful silence”, “blasts of wind”, and “total darkness”, in order to create a fully realized picture. When the narrative is focalised through Isabella, her reaction to the space is therefore accessible and tangible to the reader.

Lord Henry Kames noted a similar effect in his 1762 essay *The Elements of Criticism*, which he named ‘ideal presence’:  

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The power of language to raise emotions, depends entirely on the raising such lively and distinct images as are here described: the reader’s passions are never sensibly moved, till he be thrown into a kind of reverie; in which state, forgetting that he is reading, he conceives every incident as passing in his presence, precisely as if he were an eye-witness (69).

In this state, according to Kames, an imagined world becomes tangible to the reader, not only visually, but with sounds and smells as well. It is this power to transport the reader that affords literature its power of “sympathetic contagion”, which enables emotion to be communicated. Once a reader is transported to the scene of the story through ideal presence, they may be moved by it.

E.J. Clery recounts a contemporary example of this phenomenon in action, in an eighteenth-century production of *Hamlet*. Several accounts by spectators of this production attributed their fear not to the appearance of the ghost itself, but to a sympathetic reaction to the actor’s physical expression of fear towards the ghost (42). The physical expression of Isabella’s emotions in the passage scene are similarly powerful—Isabella’s flight, her hesitation, her shriek—so that the audience’s involvement in the scene, as Kames’ notion of ‘ideal presence’ suggests, allows them to sympathetically experience these emotions. The visualisation and embodiment of these emotions are key to this process. Walpole describes those who confront the ghost in very physical terms, and their
physicality makes emotions clearly visible: “The servant... came running back breathless, in a frantic manner, his eyes staring, and foaming at the mouth” (2). During Isabella’s flight from Manfred, Walpole writes of her heightened emotional state: “Every murmur struck her with new terror” (12). Much later in the book, when Manfred is confronted with news of the gigantic sabre of Alfonso, the description of his reaction is similar: “The first sounds struck Manfred with terror” (46). The use of a word such as “struck”, which conveys emotion as having a physical effect on the body is not limited to this occasion. Similar expression can be found dotted throughout the novel. After hearing that “The company [were] ... struck with terror and amazement”, we learn that the “young peasant, who heard [the sound] too,” has also been “struck with horror”. On occasions like these, Walpole represents affect and emotion as a physical process which moves from external stimulus to bodily sensation.

Like the anonymous poet of the Awntyrs off Athure, Walpole’s descriptions recall and even extend the medieval association of emotion with blood. Whereas in the earlier work, emotion causes the movement of blood throughout the body, in The Castle of Otranto blood changes state, curdling like milk, and freezing like ice: “In a moment she thought she heard the step of some person. Her blood curdled: she concluded it was Manfred” (12). Later, in Prince Frederic’s encounter with the supernatural, we learn that his blood “froze in his veins” (95). Here too, this writing takes advantage of visual and sensory links to emotion, giving feeling a visual form.
In the very early nineteenth century, a study by Charles Bell on anatomy and expression concluded that “the expression of an emotion cannot be attributed solely to the activity of the mind; rather, the mind is the indirect source while the heart and lungs… are the direct source of the expression of an emotion” (cited in Hartley 2001, 74). Bell cites the flushing of the face and fluttering of the breast as emotional responses to support this theory (76). The heart and blood were not where emotion originated, but their involvement was paramount to the expression of emotion.

The importance of images in Otranto’s narrative is possibly what has led to its dismissal as a book containing “half a dozen memorable tableaux” of shocking or iconic scenes, and little more of literary interest (Wilt 1980, 26). A moment in the first scene of the book illustrates this, where Walpole describes a sound from the courtyard as “a confused noise of shrieks, horror, and surprise” (2). In this sentence, Walpole leads the reader from “shrieks”, the aural signals of emotions, to the bodily feelings that cause these sounds. Moreover, the layering of emotionally laden terms in this sentence produces an unsettling effect, creating a sort of emotional gestalt that incorporates both sound and feeling. Indeed, the entire novel can be summed up as a gestalt of horror—a series of images and impressions designed to have an emotional impact.

It is hardly surprising to find that over the course of the narrative the word horror is used twelve times; ‘terror’ is used sixteen times; ‘fear’, fourteen times; ‘amaze’, eleven times; ‘fright’, five times; ‘shock’, eight times; ‘grief’, sixteen times; ‘agony’, nine times; and ‘despair’ five times. The word ‘alas’ is used twenty-five
times. On average, one extreme, negative emotion word is used per page of the 104-page novel. The plethora of emotive terms used to create an aesthetic impact, recalls the description of the ghost’s body in *The Awntyrs off Arthure*: in both, the layering of detail upon horrific detail creates a powerful image. This layering, in conjunction with Walpole’s collocation of the realistic and the marvellous, may produce a myriad of responses: interest, delight, confusion, even a sense of overwhelming existential dread: Walpole’s “vicissitude of interesting passions” (lxxii).

This is best exemplified in the encounter with the helmet of Alfonso. The “terror and amazement” experienced by the bystanders reflects in many ways the Burkean notion of the sublime:

The horror of the spectacle, the ignorance of all around how the misfortune had happened, and above all, the tremendous phœnomenon before him, took away the prince’s speech. Yet his silence lasted longer than even grief could occasion. ... seemed less attentive to his loss than buried in the meditation on the stupendous object that had occasioned it. (3)

The helmet’s immense size, the obscurity of its origin and mystery of its appearance in the court make it a sublime object. Edmund Burke describes an experience of the sublime as a “state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror” (cited in Handley, 55). It is as Emma
Clery writes, as “an apprehension of danger in nature or art without the immediate risk of destruction” (54).

The sublime is commonly divided into three stages. In the first a spectator is brought to a standstill by an object too vast, magnificent or marvellous to comprehend. In the second they are transported, surmounting this standstill. This is experienced as the removal of a veil between this world and a larger one. In the final stage the viewer is brought back to herself, but now with the relationship between the mind and object restored in a fresh form “such that the very indeterminacy which erupted in phase two is taken as symbolising the mind’s relation to a transcendent order” (Weiskel 1976, 24).

Although this describes the normal course of sublimity, Peter Otto argues that the characters’ response to the helmet is distinctive. While “An experience of the sublime usually moves rapidly from standstill to transport and then inflation”, this scene in *Otranto* skips the last two steps (Otto 2015, 695). The helmet scene is blocked at the second stage, in which meaning and the self break down. It is an aborted or suspended sublime in which “time, space, signs, substances, meaning and materiality, break down” (694).

The language of this scene enhances this sense of disconnect, switching between sensational and emotive to mundane and descriptive rhetoric, creating what Emma Clery calls a “bottleneck in the affective flow” of the scene (78). Moreover, by leaving the sublime unresolved, Walpole “opens a gap between the intensity of perception and epistemic knowledge, which gives the first a degree of independence from the second”, producing what Otto calls a theatre of
sensation rather than representation (696). Walpole's characters are trapped in a world that is breaking down, in which perception is divorced from reality and is producing emotional responses that range from horror, to awe, to curiosity.

As he suggests in his prefices, Walpole wants to transport his readers back to “those dark ages” in which “every kind of prodigy” could be believed (lxxvi). The implies is the first in a sequence of marvellous phenomena, the meanings of which are shrouded in mystery. Those that encounter the ghost in Otranto, for example, must confront their lack of ontological security, and acknowledge their mortality, their ignorance, and their powerlessness. Even when the ghost is not physically present in the scene, its existence is felt in the marvellous occurrences that provoke intense emotional disruption in the characters.

**Feminine Feelings**

Some of the most intense emotions in the story can be found in the descriptions, words, and actions of the three female characters. For the most part, these women do not encounter the ghost directly, but their emotions are nevertheless aroused by the presence of the ghost to others and his influence on events. Unlike Guinevere in The Awntyrs off Arthur, who not only confronts the ghost but is also closely linked with it, the women of Otranto are quite removed from the ghost affecting them. They react only to the consequences or effects of its appearances and never confront it directly themselves. Moreover, the connection between Guinevere and the ghost of the Awntyrs shows and
emphasises Guinevere’s sinfulness, whereas for the women of *Otranto*, the ghost is an opportunity to perform their virtue.

When Conrad’s body is discovered, the women in his family react with grief, sorrow, and amazement, which they attempt to suppress, but sometimes cannot contain. For example, after Conrad’s death, “Matilda . . . smothered her own grief and amazement, and thought of nothing but assisting and comforting her afflicted parent” (3). Similarly, “Hippolita herself, amidst the transports of her own sorrow, frequently demanded news of her lord” (6). She urges Isabella to “Console him . . . and tell him I will smother my own anguish rather than add to his” (8). These responses to emotion follow the conventions of the sentimental novel typical of the late eighteenth century, to which Markman Ellis attributes “a complex aesthetic logic akin to the sublime, that discovers pleasure in distress and misery” (1996, 16). Nevertheless, their clear purpose within the story is to illustrate feelings of duty indicate the moral character of those who experience them. Whatever “interesting passions” Walpole may have intended to stir up in his readers through sympathy with the women of *Otranto*, they were certainly not immoral ones.

Female emotion was a topic of intense literary interest in the eighteenth century with which novelists, satirists and moral philosophers alike were concerned. The 1760 play *Polly Honeycombe* satirised common beliefs on this topic, depicting a girl’s obsession with and then her attempt to imitate heroines in her sentimental novels, leading to her corruption and (sexual) downfall (Kerr et al., 165). Walpole’s frivolous and fantastic subject-matter, and the violent
emotions his book portrays made is possible that he would be censored for the negative effect it might have on impressionable minds. However, for satirists and moral philosophers alike, the expression of passion, sympathetic or otherwise, “was legitimate if it was shackled to the cause of virtue” (Kerr et al., 17). The actions of the women of Otranto certainly meet this criterion.

Hippolita, who stands at the centre of this virtuous trinity, is the only character in the story to swoon, and she does so twice. The first occasion is brought on by anxious uncertainty: “The princess Hippolita, without knowing what was the matter, but anxious for her son, swooned away” (2). The second occurs when she sees the procession for her murdered daughter: “the mightiness of her grief deprived her of her senses, and she fell lifeless to the earth in a swoon” (98). This is the most extreme forms of embodied emotion in the novel: the moment when the emotion being expressed is so powerful that the sensibility that makes emotion possible is pushed over into insensibility. According to Naomi Booth’s survey of the swoon in eighteenth-century literature, the gesture is one of “inarticulacy itself, constituting a paradoxical attempt to communicate incommunicability, to make legible the impossibility of sustained female expression and consciousness in an available language (2014, 582).

The descriptions of Manfred’s emotions are similarly used to illuminate his moral character, in this case to show his corruption and evil. Manfred is also characterised by his emotions, and in many ways is identified completely with them. ‘Wrath’ or variations of that word are used 13 times throughout the novel, overwhelmingly in reference to Manfred or, as he is sometimes known, “the
tyrant” (41). He is also often referred to as enraged or displaying rage in some way: “starting from his trance in a tempest of rage” (4); “more enraged at the vigour” (4); “Manfred, less apprehensive than enraged” (2); “‘What are ye doing?’ cried Manfred wrathfully” (2). As the point-of-view-character, however, the reader is allowed access to Manfred's psyche at a much deeper level than that of the other characters. He is consequently a much more complex character than many of his counterparts, and the only character whose emotions respond not only to outward stimuli, but to internal turmoil also, represented as a “tempest of mind” (23). In one paragraph, noticing that his wife responds to his cruelty with “tenderness and duty”, his feelings transition from shame, to love, to remorse, then outrage, followed by “exquisite villainy” (23).

Manfred is in some ways a tragic hero; rather than a caricature of evil, he is a man whose flaws outmatch his virtues. Following the process of his thought allows the reader to see that his rage betrays a deep insecurity: Manfred is threatened far more by his ghost than Gawain and Hamlet are by theirs. Unlike Gawain, the power that drives his actions when confronted with the supernatural comes from fear rather than a lack of it. It is also perhaps this difference in attitude towards the supernatural on the part of the characters, that marks a significant point of difference between this ghost and those of the previous two texts. For a great part of story, the characters in Otranto by and large refuse to acknowledge its existence:
Hippolita ... met her Lord, and assured him that the vision of the gigantic leg and foot was all a fable; and no doubt an impression made by fear, and the dark and dismal hour of the night, on the minds of his servants (22).

A deep and hollow groan... They listened; but perceiving no further noise they both declared it to be pent-up vapours (60).

Unlike the characters of Awntyrs and Hamlet, who, though frightened, immediately accept and acknowledge the ghost as part of their world, the characters of Otranto respond by and large with denial. When the servants tell Manfred of their encounter with the ghost, at length and in a state of agitation, his response is “‘Peace dotards! . . . and follow me; I will know what all this means.’” He does not believe them, and so goes to investigate himself, but after setting out on this mission, he is distracted by his search for Isabella. When the princess comes to inform him that there was no ghost, he readily believes her, despite the evidence of his own eyes that supernatural events have occurred. Further, for much of the story Manfred does not confront the ghost of Alfonso directly. While it is apparent that the presence of the supernatural has unsettled or ‘disordered’ him, he is so obsessed by his own earthly desires that doesn’t directly confront the entity’s existence. This appears to be a theme in the novel, for Frederic, a heroic character, falls victim to the same flaw: “The portents that had alarmed him, were forgotten in his desires” (94).
In Theatre and Ghosts, Mary Luckhurst and Emilie Morin examine this disruptive ability of the ghost: “[n]either living nor dead, present nor absent, the ghost functions as a paradigmatic deconstructive gesture... and can thus disrupt the chronologies and topographies of dominant historical and socio-political discourses and suggest alternative, suppressed narratives... [often] unresolved social violence is making itself known” (2014, 1). The characters of Otranto feel this disruption, but either do not know or cannot accept its origin. Despite the ghost’s obvious physical threat to them, the characters of Otranto do not react as if they are afraid of being physically harmed; their fear seems instead to derive from the strangeness of what they are witnessing. After several encounters with the supernatural objects associated with the ghost, Manfred even grows numb to it, often denying it or ignoring it all together:

Manfred, almost hardened to preternatural appearances, surmounted the shock of this new prodigy; and returning to the hall, whereby this time the feast was ready, he invited his silent guests to take their places.

(52)

When confronted with a ghost, the Medieval and Early Modern reaction seems to be to confront it and conjure it to speak. In Otranto the ghost goes avoided or ignored. It therefore must act upon the world. In order to achieve its goals, the ghost of Otranto must kill. And yet, unlike the ghost of the Awntyrs off Arthure and even of Hamlet, the ghost of The Castle of Otranto is not represented
as able to feel emotions. In fact, it can hardly be called a subjective character with interiority at all. Almost purely a “deconstructive gesture”, the ghost itself is deconstructed. In all scenes of encounter, the ghost appears only in fragments: first, the helmet that crushes Conrad at the beginning of the novel; then the tale that the domestics tell of the disembodied leg, an experience that is not only fragmented but also once removed from the reader; the arrival of the sword; and finally, the revelation of the entire giant at the end of the story. This is the only occasion when the ghost speaks: “Behold in Theodore the true heir of Alfonso!”.

Even in this scene, however, nothing is revealed that suggests the ghost's interiority. While its motives, once deciphered, are fairly straightforward, the ghost functions more as a plot mechanism or an element of the setting than as a character. Indeed, its primary function seems to be the emotional disturbance it provokes in the characters it confronts, by bringing to light historical guilt and shame to act as a catalyst for this disturbance. The generation of these emotions is both the ghost’s narrative function, driving forward the plot, and to some degree also its aim within the world of the story. It is the most mysterious and the most inhuman ghost of the three texts, and yet while it lacks interiority, it possesses the most agency.

In contrast again to the previous two texts, the castle spectre of Otranto is not the only ghost that appears in the novel. Truly, Otranto is a haunted house. Manfred encounters another when, while attempting to trap Isabella in the hallway, a portrait of his grandfather “utter[s] a deep sigh, and heave[s] its breast” before “quit[ting] its pannel” (10). Later, when pursuing a young girl, the
Marquis Frederic also confronts a ghost, this time a skeletal monk, apparently the same monk that led him to the giant's sword and corresponding prophecy (68). These are convenient spectres, designed to provide shock and spectacle rather than to drive the plot. Indeed, these ghosts are dismissed by E.J. Clery as “more monitory than directly portentous” (71). They both appear to stall or alarm a character in the middle of some villainous action, giving their quarry time to get away or, in the case of Frederic, to scare them from the path of villainy. These ghosts are more closely aligned than the ghost of Alfonso with the medieval ghost of *The Awntyrs of Arthure* and those in M.R. James’ stories. They are very physical ghosts, particularly the monk who appears to Frederic as a corpse. The scenes in which they appear highlight the importance of fear, particularly religious fear, in the pursuit or protection of virtue. They appear, deliver their warning, and disappear.

The ghost of Alfonso, on the other hand, appears again and again. His presence permeates the castle and, even when he is absent, it is always possible that he might appear again. Moreover, he is normally experienced through his effects on the environment rather than through a direct encounter. Indeed, he is linked to his environment so closely that he seems to have become one with it. It is possibly for this reason that he is also a giant.

The idea of a giant ghost was an unusual one at the time of Walpole's writing. The effects of the ghost's colossal size on the emotions that it evokes are manifold. As I have mentioned, for much of the novel is only experienced in parts—a helmet, a leg, an arm—and so he is felt as mysterious, an unknown quantity
that can only be revealed piece by piece. He is more physically threatening because of his size, and the violence he is able to commit all the more devastating for it. The primary effect of the ghost’s size, however, is that he becomes inescapable. He is impossible to avoid and evade because he is all-pervasive within the castle and its grounds. He is the castle, so he’s castle-sized. Therefore, if he, like the ghost of *Hamlet*, is the emotion of the past returning in and disrupting the present, then he figures more than the emotions of a mere man. Alfonso personifies something grander, befitting his size: the emotions of a castle, or its people.

This goes some way towards explaining Manfred’s inability to remain secure in the castle. The ghost appears, as Otto writes, at “a point of crisis, when Manfred is no longer able to govern the border between Otranto and its environment, its past and its future” (694). But, just as importantly, the ghost revealed in this crisis is closely related to the material environment in which it appears, in this case the castle. Earlier ghosts, including those who appear in the previous two texts, do not seem to be bound to their environments as much as to the people immediately concerned with their lives and deaths. In the *Awntyrs off Arthure*, the key relation is that between mother and daughter, in *Hamlet* it is the relation between and father and son. The ghost of the *Awntyrs* is a ghost that is unbound, that appears in an open, natural environment that has no bearing upon its life or death. It is simply drawn to the living person with whom it has unfinished business. Going from this, to Hamlet’s encounter on the parapets, and
finally to *The Castle of Otranto*, there appears to be a shift from outside to inside, a shift that is completed in the trope of the haunted house.

As far as historical ghosts are concerned, the plot of *Otranto* is much closer to Hamlet’s revenge plot than a cautionary tale like the *Awntyrs*. However, unlike the ghost of Hamlet’s father, who tries to spur his son to action, this ghost is able itself to intervene in the world of the living, most often through violence.

At its most basic level, the moral of the story may be, like *Hamlet*, to do with the usurpation of sovereignty or authority. Unlike old Hamlet, however, the wrongs against the ghost of Otranto aren’t perpetuated by anyone living during the time when the ghost appears. In fact, the ghost’s animosity towards Manfred is based not on his (many) flaws, but entirely on his birth, the fact that he is the descendant of the usurper. In contrast, the true usurper, seems to have been able to enjoy his ill-gotten sovereignty untroubled by supernatural interference. Unlike Hamlet, *Otranto* takes place three generations removed from the usurpation. E.J Clery notes this, and comments that “there is a hint of the arbitrary ways of the powers of right that will throw the reader’s sympathies and antipathies into question, undermine the ‘moral’ of the story” (72). In his first preface, Walpole acknowledges that the moral of the story is weak: “I wish he had grounded his plan on a more useful moral than this: ‘the sins of the father are visited on their children to the third and fourth generation’”, which seems a very “remote” punishment (lxxii). One effect of Walpole’s decision to distance the characters from the original crime for which they are being punished is that it provides a way of controlling what the characters know. The ghost’s motivation
and goals remain a mystery throughout the story to all but Manfred, and his knowledge is murky—he knows about the prophecy, but he does not know what the ghost intends to do.

Nevertheless, however vague and inconsistent its goals may be, *Otranto's* ghost reflects Walpole’s own “notorious fascination with things royal and genealogical” (Clery, 73). Furthermore, at Walpole’s time of writing, Britain had “a unique cultural identity distinct in particular from Catholic Europe”, where his novel was set (Chaplin cited in Hoeveler, 16). The cultural environment which gave birth to *The Castle of Otranto* was one shaped by the Protestant Reformation, Catholic Counter-Reformation and the “dynastic upheavals” that both of these movements brought about (16). These are themes with which the novel is intensely preoccupied, and consequently it lends itself to an allegorical reading. When read in this way, Alfonso may represent the ghost of a society rather than individuals; but by destroying the castle with which its own identity is involved, the ghost reveals the illegitimacy of every order. For many readers the experience of reading *The Castle of Otranto* is ultimately unsatisfying, in part because of the ghost’s contradiction and inconsistency. Alfonso appears to signal “the loss of natural order”; however, as Clery notes he also, “through the goal of reinstating order, act(s) as a metaphysical extension of it” (74). The moment of supernatural revelation, when the ghost finally reveals itself and St. Nicholas appears, doesn’t unequivocally point to a transcendent reality. This short scene seems in part farcical, as if it had been hastily tacked on to the end of the story. This confirms Walpole’s claim that *Otranto* is a work fashioned not for religious or moral
edification, but for entertainment. The same aim is evident in the “gratuitously violent and sensational resolution of the story,” in which “the unusually physical phantom leaves the castle in ruins” (Clery, 72). A traditional framework of religion and morality is certainly present within the text, but is not supported by the fates of the characters in the plot.

When the castle is finally destroyed, the effect is almost paradoxical, as the heir, whose succession Alfonso returned as a ghost to secure, now has nowhere to live. This weakness of the moral and arbitrary “whimsical” nature of the prophecy —warning that retribution will come, “whenever” —has, according to Clery, a “decisive, ironising effect on an allegorical reading” (72). Moreover, when the authentic order is uncovered, it ascends to heaven and disappears, and as such remains out of reach. The ending is strangely discordant, producing a sense of melancholy instead of vindication. However, Walpole is not interested in sending a message, but in rousing a feeling.

In her study of gothic works, Diane Hoeveler argues that they often “appear to imaginatively inhabit a historical milieu that is considerably different from (and earlier than) the one in which they were actually produced” (9). Crawford agrees, stating that initially the surge of gothic literature that followed the publication of Otranto was only called Gothic and unified in this way “because they were set in the ‘Gothic Ages’... rather than the present day” (ix). While this may be true of Otranto and the texts it went on to inspire, much the same can be said for the previous two ghost stories. Both the Awntyrs off Arthure and Hamlet are set several hundred years earlier than the time in which they were written.
Hoeverler suggests that by doing so, these texts addresses anxieties about the past resurging. This holds even more true for ghost stories. Indeed, one might say that a ghost is the past returning in the present. One of the chief differences between the three texts I have been considering lies in the element of the past that the ghost represents. In *Hamlet* the ghost represents a personal past, which although concerned with royal succession, emphasises personal betrayal and family relationships. *The Awntyrs off Arthure* falls somewhere between these two poles, delivering a divine message that concerns both personal (spiritual) and state issues. However, by setting their action far in the past, each story also evokes that “ruder age” which “held each strange tale devoutly true” (Scott cited in Otto, p.690). In each tale, the reader is a stranger in this old world, and inside that world the past is haunting the present, but only in *The Castle of Otranto* does that past have such a material presence and impact on the present.
CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapters, I have tracked a series of similarities and differences between ghosts represented in texts from different times.

Among the differences is the ghost's physical appearance, which range from a ghost with a substantial, corpse-like body, to a pale shade that appears in the living likeness of the deceased, to a fragmented giant who for much of the novel is not clearly distinguished from the castle he inhabits. These bodies reflect the emotions they experience and/or elicit in others. The ghost of The Awntyrs provides a warning of the fate that awaits after death. She serves as an animated memento mori, with her own emotions of anguish eliciting fear in her onlookers. These emotions are religious at their core, and are inextricably linked to modes and mores of behaviour concerned with penitence and piety. The ghost of Hamlet appears as an incorporeal pale shade in the likeness and armour of the late King of Denmark. His appearance binds him to his earthly life, and enhances the ambiguity of his provenance and intentions. The emotions he elicits are closely related to the events of his life. They deal with personal relations, with wrongs committed against himself, and with earthly desires such as vengeance. The emotions elicited by the ghost of The Castle of Otranto are confused and unclear. He barely speaks at all, and seems to possess no emotions of his own. He is not an individual with personal motivations, but almost a force of nature in a world where the laws of nature are fluid.

As one moves from the earliest to the latest text, the locations in which ghosts are encountered move from outside to inside. The ghost of The Awntyrs is
found in the “wilde woode” (78:315), Old Hamlet walks on the battlements, a liminal space, midway between inside and outside, and finally the ghost of Otranto is found inside the Castle, where he seems to be a part of its very fabric. This movement from outside to inside is also a thematic one. The ghost of The Awntyrs is more than human. Her appearance in the woods connects her to the natural world and, through the natural world, to God. In contrast, the battlements upon which Old Hamlet is encountered are a liminal space, reflecting the liminality of the ghost. It is a being that is stranded apparently between life and death, who appears in a place that is midway between inside and outside. The fact that his ghost does not seem firmly connected to either world, reinforces its ambiguity. Finally, the ghost of Otranto’s link with the castle underlines that this ghost is the historical guilt that binds all the characters together, a phenomenon firmly inside this world.

These differences can all be linked back to the demand made by each ghost. In Awntyrs off Arthure it is a simple warning, which is rooted in religious concerns about the afterlife, and the behaviour of the living in this world that was thought to determine our fate within the next. In Hamlet, the warning has changed to a demand that is completely incompatible with religious moral expectations—it is a demand for vengeance in the form of murder. Our third ghost is largely silent for the duration of the story but is able to act directly upon the living. The movement I am tracing, from outside to inside, parallels a shift from a response to the ghost framed by religious concerns to one that is primarily interested in the emotion for its own sake.
The differences between these stories seem to reflect a shift in the concerns of the authors between the three periods. Many concerns are, of course, shared by all of the authors: questions of succession, the fate of the realm, ancestral or familial duty; but the focus of each text is different from the others. *The Awntyrs off Arthure* is primarily concerned with the religious implications of the ghost's appearance—with questions of the afterlife, sin, and virtue within its Arthurian context. *Hamlet*'s concerns are more psychological. All its religious elements are ambiguous, and therefore the play's focus is drawn instead towards the inner turmoil of the characters adrift in their ambiguous, treacherous world. Finally, the focus of *The Castle of Otranto* seems to be on historical guilt and the ways in which it reasserts itself—the “sins of the father” and how they are visited on his sons (Walpole, lxxii). The ghost’s all-encompassing presence within the environment shocks the characters who confront it on an existential level.

The similarities between the stories are equally significant. For example, in every text when the ghost is physically present and, as such, an entity within the real world. Even in *Hamlet*, where later appearances of the ghost are invisible to other characters, the play never explicitly frames the ghost as a figment of Hamlet's imagination. So, in all of these stories the ghost represents a genuine disruption of reality that is the catalyst for the extreme emotions that are experienced. Similarly, themes of royalty, succession, prophecy, and murder are shared by the texts, which for this study have provided context in which these emotions can be read and compared to each other.
These studies show that detailed attention to the language of emotions in relation to ghosts can uncover a richly textured emotional world the contours of which change from one period to the next. Further, they demonstrate how changes in the language of the texts respond to larger, conceptual changes in historical ideas about emotion and, conversely, how such conceptual shifts influence the shifts in literary representations of the ghost encounter.

In *The Awntyrs off Arthure*, the way emotions are expressed in metonymical terms reinforce their status as actions performed by the experiencer. This is particularly apparent in the reactions of Guinevere and Gawain to the ghost, in which they model expected or appropriate reactions for their respective classes and genders. Moreover, this medieval idea of emotions as an action that is performed ties into the apparent religious/moral motivation of the story, expressed when the ghost makes her warnings about sin and the afterlife. The representation of emotions as conscious, intentional actions supports the interpretation of the text’s purpose as moral edification.

In *Hamlet*, the verbal descriptions made by the ghost and later by Gertrude of the changes in Hamlet’s facial expression reflect the early modern belief in the ability of emotions to effect bodily changes in those who experienced them, to the extent that they could make people physically sick. In this conception, even elevated emotions were linked inextricably to organic corporeality. The varied and often erratic responses of the many characters who confront the ghost in this story show that this relationship between body and emotion was an unpredictable and often volatile one.
The eighteenth century saw the theory of emotions return to a moral framework. However, this framework eschewed the religious questions of the medieval conception of emotion and focused primarily upon the relationship between the individual and the state, and between the past and the present. This is reflected in the period’s categorisation of literature as dangerously influential, and in attempts to limit the subject matter it could explore (Kerr 2016, 13; Castle 1995, 183). *The Castle of Otranto* works assumes the power of literature to evoke the illusions of the past and in so doing, raise the emotions of its readers to dizzying heights.

This study also shows how a change in the role of the ghost within literature reflects a subtle change in the role and purpose of ghost literature within culture. Each text, although to a different extent, exists for the purposes of entertainment; however, in each text this entertainment orbits around a different set of questions—which are in turn religious, psychological, and existential. And these differences can then suggest the extent to which responses towards the ghost and the function of ghosts have shifted over the periods between these three texts. It illuminates the relation between ghosts and emotions, and how this relation is used in literature to explore social, political, and cultural power structures.

The method used in this study could be used in further research to explore the way the supernatural is used in literature as a basis for the exploration of extreme or heightened emotion. As the scope of this thesis was limited to three texts, it is hard to conclusively say why representations of the ghost changed, although as I have suggested some of the causes can already be seen in outline.
Further research, using a much broader and more comprehensive range of texts, may be able to more definitively mark out changes in modes of emotional expression in literature, and posit more confidently the factors driving these changes.

The history of emotions has allowed me to move with great freedom between these three centuries. Although I have not provided a comprehensive history I have been able to demonstrate the value of what can be uncovered in such a broad if discontinuous history, by investigating moments in a cultural history—moments which are indicative and symptomatic—of the tangled relations between emotions and the supernatural. Approaching the history of ghosts and emotion in this way, through the close reading of literary texts, provides a demonstration of the texture, depth, and nuance necessary for such a history, and an acknowledgement of the complexity that the study of emotions cannot avoid.
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