Introduction

> If this be a translation, for in this age of literary imposition we always doubt; but if it be really so, as from some internal evidence we have reason to suppose, it will only prove that our neighbours are equally craving after novelty with ourselves, and satisfied with the same unsubstantial fare. Is invention at so low an ebb in this island, that we must make every crudity, every trifling publication of the continent our own?
>
> (Review of Anon., *The Misfortunes of Love*, *Critical Review*, May 1785)

'Translated from the French': at first glance, these appear to be four transparent and courageous words for an author to use in the closing decades of the eighteenth century. In the half-century following the Seven Years War, a most brutal and ruthlessly acquisitive Anglo-French conflict, it was deeply problematic to look across the channel for literary inspiration. The translation and adaptation of French fiction was one of the most contested routes of literary commerce in late eighteenth-century Britain. We now know that in the 1770s and 1780s, some 9 per cent of all novels published in Great Britain had been translated from French sources. The figure dropped only slightly in the 1790s to some 8 per cent of the total domestic literary product.[1] Within these statistics, however, there remains a great degree of ambivalence. For as the *Critical Review* observed of the questionable provenance of one so-called literary import, *The Misfortunes of Love. A Novel. Translated from the French*, 'in this age of literary imposition we always doubt'.[2] Temporally alert, this review provides a vivid snapshot of the literary paranoia, suspicion and open hostility that marked the 1780s. While for reviewers Britain's cultural impoverishment – embodied by the uninventive work of translation – was grave enough, the less tangible threat from literary imposture was of more serious consequence. Novels that only masqueraded as 'translations' could cloak significant threats to the literary, political and religious

constitutions of Britain by infiltrating literary, philosophical and sentimental ideas from France.

When seeking to confirm *The Misfortunes of Love* as a translation, the reviewer finds 'internal evidence'. The language of detection here is far from accidental, as the three decades which immediately preceded this review (the 1750s, 1760s and 1770s) were formative in the incremental intrusion of such allegations. As both Linda Colley in *Britons* and Gerald Newman in *The Rise of English Nationalism* argue, many patriotic Britons considered such borrowings from France to be acts of 'cultural treason'. Discussing the proliferation of societies to protect the discrete mercantile and cultural identities of Britain, Colley for example observes: 'Allowing Frenchisms to infiltrate the English language, importing French manufactured goods, polishing themselves "into a refined insincerity" merely because it was fashionable were nothing less than cultural treason, a vicious squandering of true identity.'[3] Manufactoring and inventiveness, explains Colley, were encouraged to remain within Britain. Newman tethers this impetus even more specifically to class, foregrounding the anti-aristocratic animus that was illustrated through a range of cultural referents. Aristocracy became connected irrevocably with effeminacy, foreignness, degeneracy and corruption. Analysing the history of Leonora in Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews,* where a young and naive woman is stolen away from her plain and honest British lover by the dissipated, effeminised Francophile aristocrat Bellarmine, Newman argues that Fielding's interpolated tale is symptomatic of a far wider attack upon moral pollution from France which was firmly aimed at the aristocracy:

> [The] inner logic was inherently anti-cosmpolitan, anti-aristocratic, and nativist. It exploited the energies attached to crude anti-French myth and joined these to ancient notions of aristocratic moral degeneracy. Although in fact it was not so much a logic as an illogical tribalistic jumble of beliefs and perceptions combining rude notions of national character, cultural invasion, moral pollution, social transmission, and collective spiritual disintegration, it nevertheless was the plastic material from which a great variety of protests were to be raised. Indeed it was more than that, for as time passed and circumstances invited, it was capable of being amalgamated with, and hence of lending a semblance of philosophical unity to, so many allied dissatisfactions that in the end it constituted no longer a protest but the base and vehicle of an entire countercultural programme of action.[4]

Newman traces this philosophical transformation to the decades between the mid 1740s and the mid 1780s, decades which, he argues, were crucial to the 'launching of English nationalism'.[5] Colley is even more specific

in arguing that 'economic and cultural nationalism' in Britain becomes increasingly strident 'with the outbreak of war in 1756'.[6] This national stridency is something that, as Kathleen Wilson further explains, legitimated Britain's ongoing imperial struggles in these decades:

> Imperial struggles were viewed at home as battles over the national character, and support and defence of the empire were privileged as national duties. It was in the context of these nationalistic struggles that the mercantile imperialist perspective justified both the right of Britons to trade freely with the world and their domination of it: They were freer than the French, less barbarous than the Spanish, more civilized than the savages. Empire was, in contemporary conceptualization, the means to becoming more independent and self-contained as a nation, rejecting foreign influences and introducing English virtue wherever the English dared to tread.[7]

English 'virtue' was juxtaposed to what Newman and Wilson have both identified as 'Aristocratic "effeminacy", foreignness and corruption' that were deemed to be corrosive to 'both national manners and political virtue'.[8]

This book will argue that the Seven Years War – responsible for sharpening the already fraught relationship that England held with France – is in many ways responsible for the complex, ambivalent origins of the Gothic romance in 1764. While what Winston Churchill famously called the 'first world war' cemented new global alliances of commercial, religious and cultural interests between 1756 and 1763, it also confirmed a long-standing hostility between England and France.[9] The hostility can of course be dated back as far as the Norman Conquest of 1066. The impact of the Norman invasion was 'staggering', and led to a protracted (and in many respects) ongoing anxiety about the infiltration of French culture in British life.[10] After the outbreak of the Seven Years War in May 1756, the dominant topic of public debate in Britain was the possibility of an invasion by France. William Hogarth's engravings entitled *The Invasion* luridly depicted the possible consequences. *The Invasion* imagines the infiltration of French culture into England as a consequence of the war. The first engraving ('France') shows a rapacious French monk sharpening the edge of an axe as he and some soldiers embark for England on a boat loaded with Catholic paraphernalia. Its companion piece ('England') illustrates the dire consequences of this imagined invasion, with drunk and carousing British soldiers laughing at a crudely caricatured drawing of the French king upon the wall of an inn. Hogarth worked consistently to foreground the fears of invasion in England during the Seven Years War, portraying the French as venal, lecherous, violent and (above all else)

1. William Hogarth, 'The Invasion', 1756. Plate One: France; Plate Two: England [author's own collection]

Catholic.[11] His engravings capture particularly well England's recasting of France as its diabolically Catholic other. England, Hogarth's art suggests, would be engulfed by this violent, acquisitive Catholic neighbour if it did not remain alert.

James Gillray's later engravings strike a similar chord. *A Phantasmagoria – Scene – Conjuring up an Armed Skeleton* (1803), the cover image for my book, takes Hogarth's image of the drunken, impotent British soldier in 'England' one step further.[12] Gillray draws upon the modish appetite for all things Gothic by placing an armed skeleton version of Britannia at the heart of the image. It portrays the death of Britain's martial vigour, the dire consequences of peace won through concession to the French in the Treaty of Amiens of 1802. The spectralisation of Britain is represented through the surrendered territory that is being fed to the fire by the three witches from *Macbeth.* Here, they are politicians Henry Addington (then prime minister), Lord Hawkesbury and Charles James Fox. A simian version of William Wilberforce crouches in the foreground singing a 'Hymn of Peace'.[13] The engraving's synthesis of Anglo-French hostilities with Gothic imagery suggests that by 1803 the British audience for this engraving would be alert to the interconnections between the Gothic, cultural borrowings from France and Anglo-French hostilities.

Such supple hostility as that exhibited by both Hogarth and Gillray was not of course one-sided. In the final decades of the eighteenth century, France's most popular nomenclature for England was 'perfidious Albion'.[14] In 1759, for example, Robert-Martin Lesuire published a novel about the English entitled *Les sauvages de l'Europe*.[15] Telling the story of a French couple travelling in England, the novel's picaresque structure capitalised upon the French vogue for travel narrative.[16] In this particular narrative, translated into English in 1764, the landscape explored was a nightmarish version of England that was characterised by riots, hangings, prisons, asylums and brutal Francophobia. The novel's 'hero' Delouaville observes and experiences English prisons as spaces 'where English ferocity overwhelms and intombs heroism' and where he can only 'curse the hour when they fell in the power of the English'.[17] The novel illustrates that, for one French author at least, British nationalism was becoming increasingly unpalatable with, as Colley observes, Britons defining themselves 'by reference to who and what they are not'.[18] Combined with Britain's particularly brutal military campaigns during the war, this sharp increase in aggressive cultural nationalism, captured so effectively by Lesuire's *Les sauvages de l'Europe*, contributed to a general recalibration of French attitudes towards

England. France began to compare England to Carthage owing to the latter's ruthless military protection of mercantile interests, and denounced it as a breeding ground of 'pirates', 'assassins', 'usurpers', 'perjurers', 'vultures', 'brigands' and 'homicidal monsters'.[19]

With such an arsenal of insults available to the French and English media, it is not surprising that this hostility infiltrated the two nations' cultural exchanges at every level. Whether all cultural exchanges were infected as well as affected by such aggressive hostility remains, however, open to question. Edmund Burke, for example, famous for his trenchant derision of the French Revolution in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), anonymously intervened on Anglo-French relations in the *London Magazine* in 1758, at the height of the Seven Years War. The equivocally titled 'The humble REMONSTRANCE of the MOB of Great Britain, against the Importation of French Words, &c.' curiously conjoins the adjectival 'humble' with 'MOB'. This in turn implies that the 'REMONSTRANCE' 'against the Importation of French Words, &c.' is less straightforwardly tribalistic than it first appears. 'It is with infinite concern that we behold an inundation of French words pouring in upon us,' Burke begins, 'and this at a time too, when there is some sort of merit in detesting every thing that is French.'[20] If the first clause of this sentence straightforwardly participates in the decrying of cultural borrowings from France, then the latter clause makes one aware of the pragmatic lip service paid to denigrating such cultural inundation, that 'there is some sort of merit' in decrying French influence. And so the short article continues. On the one hand it foregrounds the unimaginative, unthinking annexation of French words into the English language; on the other, it laughs gently at these borrowings. One of many examples of the lexical importations that it light-heartedly chides remains commonplace in everyday speech in English:

> *Je-ne-sçai-quoy*, though of French extraction, we shall not presume to find fault with, because it has been naturalized, and productive of infinite good in England; it has helped many an unfortunate girl to a husband, has indeed sometimes parted man and wife, but has soon brought them together again; seldom fails of healing up the breaches it had made between friends; has fitted out fleets and armies, and brought them home again; has been a theme for orators, in velvet and in crape, and has furnished matter for many volumes.[21]

With a deft touch, Burke juggles the absurdity of the French phrase and British manners, morals, politics and literature. The strong emphasis upon draping (velvet and crape) both foregrounds and mocks the perceived

effeminisation of British culture through French influence. *Je-ne-sçai-quoy*, an empty, meaningless phrase, exposes a vein of cyphers at the heart of British culture by its applicability to love entanglements and martial and political endeavours all at the same time.

The conclusion of the piece returns us to the heart of the battlefield with the plea

> We therefore humbly pray, that French words, as well as French dress and French manners, may be laid aside, at least during the continuance of the present war; for we are apprehensive, should language and customs descend to us, we should be taught by their example, on the day of battle, to *f– – te le camp*.
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> For these reasons we pray as above; and shall, as in duty bound, hold them in everlasting abhorrence.[22]

The elision of the French phrase glosses over one of the more rude lexical importations. '[*F*] – – *te le camp*', translated more politely as 'abandon ship', carries connotations of surrender. 'Surrender' should be unthinkable for the British patriot, but the author fears that it may become inevitable if the importation of French language and customs does not cease. The unstable compound of war, martial cowardice, linguistic and modish borrowings in this essay tells us much about the perceived pressures of 'duty' that authors felt to deride and repulse French customs and manners at this particular moment in history. The emphatic resolution to hold all things French in 'everlasting abhorrence' that concludes the piece rings increasingly hollow as one registers the anxiety that underscores the repetition of the verb 'pray' and the admission that the author is 'apprehensive' that French language and culture will 'descend to us'.

Nigel Leask has argued that whether or not authors of the Romantic period supported or decried imperialism is less pressing than exploring how they registered their anxiety. Such anxiety, Leask argues, 'registered a sense of the internal dislocation of metropolitan culture … [and] could also lend support to its hegemonic programme'.[23] This can 'sometimes block or disable the positivities of power' but is 'just as often *productive* in furthering the imperial will'.[24] At first glance, 'The humble remonstrance of the MOB of Great Britain' seems to participate in such a promotion of British nationalism, but one could argue that rather than 'furthering' British nationalism, the parody of *British* lexical borrowings from France in fact leans more towards a disabling of 'the positivities of power'. In its exposure of the absurdities of harnessing military hostilities to cultural reciprocity between France and Britain, the article mobilises a healthy scepticism towards the escalating hysteria

over borrowing from France by blending the discourses of fashion and war quite seamlessly.

The development of one particular literary hybrid in the immediate aftermath of the Seven Years War further crystallised and articulated national anxieties concerning the importation of war, fashion and literature. The so-called 'translation' by William Marshal that Horace Walpole (MP) published on Christmas Day in 1764 as *The Castle of Otranto* duped its literary critics. Its precise chronological moment of emergence and its translational masquerade both contributed to the discursive frame of a literature that is strongly implicated in the consequences of the relationship between Britain and France. In the wake of Walpole's literary subterfuge and one of the most significant wars of the eighteenth century, the range of generic signifiers that we now associate with the Gothic begins to cluster.

The Castle of Otranto is linguistically and generically freighted with the effects of the Seven Years War. What W. S. Lewis characterised as Horace Walpole's 'erratic' political career had consequences for Walpole's artistry that he himself refused to admit.[25] In 1756, for example, Walpole complained to George Montagu: 'The cold and the wet have driven me back to London, empty London! where we are more afraid of the deluge than the invasion.'[26] It is an observation which, as with so much of Walpole's correspondence, reveals little about his own views upon the possibilities of invasion. The light evasiveness of this political reference is reproduced within Walpole's gently performative dismissal of the significance of his own novel. At the time of the composition of *The Castle of Otranto*, for example, Walpole wrote to William Cole that he was 'very glad to think of anything rather than politics'.[27] To Madame du Deffand in 1767 he would argue that it was not 'the book for the present age, which seeks only *cold reason*'.[28] He would contradict this position later in 1784 by observing to Hannah More: 'It was fit for nothing but the age in which it was written, an age in which much was known; that required only to be amused.'[29]

These positions, assumed in private correspondence, deny the hefty contexts to the composition of *The Castle of Otranto.* These correspondences are the private spaces where Walpole cultivates the aristocratic, Francophile persona that, during the escalating conflict, was connected with degeneracy and effeminacy by the clubs and societies which sprang up to protect national interests. Of these connections, Kathleen Wilson notes that in the propaganda which began to proliferate in Britain with the cause of protecting national interests, '"effeminacy" denoted a degenerate

moral, political and social state that opposed and subverted the vaunted "manly" characteristics – courage, aggression, martial valour, discipline and strength – that constituted patriotic virtue'.[30] While Horace Walpole felt free to exercise 'effeminate' subversion in some correspondence, publicly he assumed a different position. To defend his literary experimentation in *The Castle of Otranto*, Walpole aligned his novel with the works of William Shakespeare, and against French dramatic models, thereby appealing to the national mood in Britain. In the second edition of his novel, Walpole also confessed to the translational imposture that he assumed in the first edition, and attempted his novel's recuperation under the more patriotic frame of a 'Gothic Story'. While labelling one's product 'A Gothic Story' may suggest a form of patriotism and Whig complacency about the past, the reasons underscoring Walpole's choice of this subtitle are more complex. The novel seeks to reassure its English readership of its patriotism by tempering its continental origins with a nationalistic discourse.

'Nationalism', observes David A. Bell, 'almost irresistibly calls forth images of immemorial pasts, of lengthy and unbroken lineages, of deep bonds between particular peoples and particular lands. New constructions therefore tend to be presented as acts of *reconstruction*, recovery and regeneration.'[31] The recovery of a Gothic past was well under way in eighteenth-century Britain, with Viscount Henry Bolingbroke in his 1743 *Remarks on the History of England*, for example, tracing the origins of the English parliament back to the political structures of the Goths.[32] Walpole's invention of 'A Gothic Story' in the 1765 second edition of *Otranto* participates in this politicisation, pragmatically tethering his continental romance to the recovery of an 'immemorial past'.

We know from private correspondence that Walpole entertained scepticism towards the 'national' sense of the Gothic which was promoted in the 1760s, 1770s and 1780s by authors such as Bishop Richard Hurd and Thomas Warton. Of Warton's *History of English Poetry*, for example, Walpole privately (and archly) observed to William Mason that he 'never saw so many entertaining particulars crowded together with so little entertainment and vivacity'.[33] Pragmatic, therefore, is the way in which I read Walpole's belated annexation of the term 'Gothic story' to his literary excursion. This is a gesture, I argue in Chapter 1, that Walpole repeats in the nationalist paratextual material which he also appends to his drama *The Mysterious Mother* (1768). Although Horace Walpole's literary work is heavily indebted to French writing, it is clear that he felt increasingly compelled to mask any French influence.

Sporting the sign of the other, argues Nigel Leask, can 'inoculate' an author and his or her culture from the threat of the foreign other.[34] The converse of this position also holds true. Sporting the sign of an ancient 'Gothic' British lineage can also protect an author from the critical threat of his or her own nation, a nation which has become increasingly alien through its hostility to all things French. The embryonic Gothic genre of eighteenth-century Britain is consistently coy about its French inspiration. My research has demonstrated that despite this reserve, the Gothic provides a striking example of the literary respect that prevailed between France and England during military hostilities. While the formation of Britain occurred precisely because of the proximity of its 'natural' enemy France, the protean literature of terror exposed the tensions of this subject position.[35] Although the literary works that are now characterised as 'Gothic' evince in places ambivalence about their French neighbour, they are nonetheless sprung from French sources, nurtured by French culture, and formative in their veiled, measured, contemplative, independent and often witty responses to Anglo-French hostilities.

'Antagonism', Robert and Isabelle Tombs acknowledge, 'is not the sole key to Franco/British relations.' 'Self-criticism, discussion, admiration and emulation' helped to construct the two nations' identities.[36] There is much evidence of mutual exchange between France and England throughout the eighteenth century, some positive, some sceptical and some negative. David Hume and Horace Walpole, for example, both enjoyed hospitality and civility during sojourns in Paris, and Voltaire experienced a similar welcome in England.[37] Despite substantial hostility from periodicals, reviews and newspapers, there is much evidence to suggest that the literary genre of the Gothic played a covert part in maintaining this reciprocity between 1764 and 1820. *Britain, France and the Gothic, 1764–1820* suggests that while Gothic novelists in Britain were acutely aware of their country's troubled relationship with its French neighbour, they all nonetheless dared to look across the Channel for inspiration, be it through the realms of translation, adaptation or unacknowledged plagiarism.

The sources from which the Gothic romance develops are not necessarily, however, what we may now recognise as 'Gothic' sources. 'The Import of Terror', the punning subtitle of my study, is designed to capture two observations in particular: first, that the 'import' of Britain's 'literature of terror' lies in its covert negotiation of the Anglo-French relationship; and second, that this literature of terror is developed from French importations more substantially than has hitherto been acknowledged. Whether these importations were, in their first French iteration, recognisably Gothic