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# SIR ANTHONY CARLISLE AND MRS CARVER

*Don Shelton*



SIR ANTHONY CARLISLE FRS, FRCS (1768–1840), a nineteenth-century surgeon, is an unlikely person to emerge in a discussion on English Literature, but recent research for a proposed biography has produced evidence for Carlisle as the author of *The Horrors of Oakendale Abbey*,<sup>1</sup> a novel published anonymously in 1797 and attributed to ‘Mrs Carver’.<sup>2</sup>

In his youth, Carlisle believed he was descended from a Lord Carlyle who lost his estates and title in the seventeenth century, the estates being traceable back to Robert de Brus, Lord Annandale. The family was not wealthy and Carlisle was assisted by his half-brother Nicholas when he was appointed surgeon to Westminster Hospital in 1793. The position was voluntary and time spent on his own comparative anatomy experiments was unpaid, so it was necessary for Carlisle and similar young surgeons to find paying work, in order to fund living expenses and experiments while they built up a successful surgical practice. Money was evidently an issue for him, even with assistance from his brother. At the time, Carlisle was friendly with a number of literary figures including Robert Southey, William Godwin, and Thomas Holcroft, and was inspired by their writing: recent research has uncovered the probability that Carlisle was the author of a number of gothic novels, at least until his marriage in 1800. He was, in effect, a man with a literary secret that has appeared from the depths of anonymity, over two hundred years since its concealment. However, Carlisle did leave one visual clue, his miniature portrait by Henry Bone RA, contains two inkwells, a possible sign that he had published under two different identities.

## I

Carlisle’s literary works are an ongoing research project of the present author, but the key to unlocking his literary efforts lies in *The Horrors of Oakendale Abbey* by ‘Mrs Carver’, a name generally accepted by scholars as a *nom de plume*.<sup>3</sup> My initial encounter with *Oakendale Abbey* was the result of pure serendipity (coincidentally, a word coined by Horace Walpole, a distant cousin of Carlisle’s wife)—the novel appearing in an online search for ‘resurrection men’. Examination of a recent edition of *Oakendale Abbey*, published by Zittaw Press in 2006,<sup>4</sup> made readily apparent that the author was familiar with the subject of the resurrectionists: ‘Resurrection men, who brought numbers of bodies to

Oakendale Abbey. They were generally received in the night; and the person who was a chief superintendent, and who paid the man who procured the bodies' (p. 179). The author evidently knew the subject well, as the position of Superintendent existed in anatomy schools, not at private houses such as Oakendale Abbey. The novel can thus be seen as a rare and knowledgeable eighteenth-century reference to the subject of body snatching.

Gradually, coincidences of places and people emerged in the novel, suggesting connections to Carlisle, his family, and the broader history of the Carlyles. The first instance appears in



a reference to Milford Haven in Wales, close to where Carlisle's future father-in-law John Symmons FRS (1745–1831), elder brother of Revd Charles Symmons, had a country estate at Slebech Hall. The heroine, Laura, comments: 'We landed in Milford Haven, at a place which appeared almost uninhabited; and consisted only of an inn and a few houses' (p. 99)—this, when taken with the reference to resurrection men, seemed to me an intriguing coincidence. Then, as with a cryptic crossword puzzle, more and more clues were solved, building an ever-stronger conviction that Anthony Carlisle was in fact 'Mrs Carver', and so the real author of *Oakendale Abbey*. He seems to have been fascinated by the histories of the Symmons and Philipps families (John Symmons' mother being a Philipps), which included the ennobling of Sir Richard Philipps as Lord Milford on 13 July 1776, as well as by their two mansions at Slebech Hall and Piŕton Castle, both near Haverfordwest and Milford Haven in the Welsh county of Pembrokeshire.

The publisher of *Oakendale Abbey* was William Lane of Minerva Press in Leadenhall Street, who solely, or jointly with other publishers, published numerous gothic novels and other fashionable potboilers between 1794 and 1808, mostly by authors who have since been identified, but also some fifty novels by novelists who remain anonymous. *Oakendale Abbey* was first published anonymously in 1797, but later lists record the author as the pseudonymous Mrs Carver.<sup>5</sup> That Carlisle's relationship to *Oakendale Abbey* was built from the bottom-up lies in the fact that almost the last link to be discovered was the late realisation that the name 'Mrs Carver' can be inferred as both a wordplay on 'Mr Car[lisle]' and on his occupation as a surgeon, 'a carver' of meat. It is likely Mrs Carver was coined as a private joke as Carlisle was fond of wordplays.

Online resources attribute several other books to Mrs Carver, although not all sources are consistent in their attributions. For instance, Sheffield Hallam University's CW3 database lists *The Horrors of Oakendale Abbey* (1797), *Elizabeth* (1797), *The Legacy* (1798), and *The Old Woman* (1800).<sup>6</sup> The Open Library also attributes *The Cavern of Death* (1794) to Carver,<sup>7</sup> although a modern edition does not.<sup>8</sup> It is possible some of the other fifty anonymous gothic novels published by the Minerva Press might have been penned by Carlisle: one example is *The Animated Skeleton* (1798), which appears promising.<sup>9</sup>

The writing of gothic novels by educated men was nothing new: Horace Walpole (1717–97) has been identified as the progenitor of English gothic with his *Castle of Otranto* (1764), while Matthew Gregory Lewis (1775–1818) became infamous as the author of the violently pornographic *Monk* (1795). Although from different generations, Walpole and Lewis were both Members of Parliament and independently wealthy members of the Establishment: they were certainly not dependent for their livelihoods on the success of their novels and their incomes would not have been impacted by commercial failure. In contrast, Carlisle was not wealthy: he was trained as a surgeon and needed to establish an income from his chosen occupation. John Symmons, Carlisle's future father-in-law, was a wealthy man, and a noted collector of books and botanical specimens, with a wide circle of friends in London among the nobility and the legal profession, with Walpole being a distant cousin. If we follow the chain of connections between Mrs Carver's works that lead to Carlisle, he must have read Walpole's *Otranto*: in the first volume of *The Old Woman* (1800), we are told:

[A]s to the book she mentioned, neither herself or the man who understood it. It was written by a very ingenious man, in order to display the powers of fancy upon the subject of terror, but by no means intended to be considered as truth, and was called the Castle of Otranto.<sup>10</sup>

Given the nature of Mrs Carver's novels, one can understand why Carlisle might have wished to conceal his identity: such hack authorship would certainly have had an adverse impact on his career, especially after his election to the position of Surgeon at Westminster Hospital. Carlisle married in 1800, was elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1804, and several years later in 1808 was appointed Professor of Anatomy at the Royal Academy. It would have become increasingly harder for him to consider revealing his authorship, especially as the flawed main character in *Oakendale Abbey* was based upon his father-in-law.

The main evidence for the identification of Carlisle as Mrs Carver emerges from within the pages of *Oakendale Abbey* and falls into several categories:

1. names of characters drawn from place-names connected to the history of the Carlyle name;

2. names of characters drawn from place-names close to where Anthony Carlisle was born;
3. the location of part of the story in a place visited by few people in eighteenth-century Britain: Milford Haven, where Carlisle's future father-in-law John Symmons had a country estate;
4. numerous character and other references that strongly suggest the main character is based upon Symmons, whom Anthony Carlisle had known for about ten years;
5. various medical references, which make it clear the author had medical knowledge;
6. detailed references to the resurrectionists, indicating that the author was familiar with the nature and activities of the resurrectionists;
7. the date and location of publishing.

The number of educated men in London in 1797 capable of fitting any four of the above seven criteria could be counted on no more than the fingers on one hand. Carlisle appears as the only person whose knowledge meets all seven categories, as well as being plausibly linked to the pen-name of Mrs Carver. Alternative possibilities considered as Mrs Carver included Anthony's younger brother, Nicholas Carlisle: Against him is that he was not a surgeon; he was unlikely to have visited the Symmons and Philipps in Wales; and he was traveling as a purser on multiple trading voyages to the East Indies when the Carver novels were published. It is very unlikely he had sufficient knowledge of John Symmons, medical matters, and the resurrectionists. Discounted possibilities as author also include Carlisle's future wife Martha Symmons. The main reason for discounting her is owing to matters of delicacy—namely that Lord Oakendale, despite being married, has predatory designs on the heroine Laura (*Oakendale Abbey*, pp. 103, 138), wishing to marry her, until late in the novel when he discovers she is his niece: 'his pride exulted in calling that woman a niece, whom he had a short time before designed and solicited for prostitution' (p. 143). It is improbable that Martha would have created a figure based on her own father in such a negative manner. Other faint possibilities include Carlisle's literary friends, such as Godwin, but it is highly unlikely that any of them had the need to remain anonymous or the collective knowledge displayed in *Oakendale Abbey*, which seems so peculiar to Carlisle himself.

## II

Making sense of the links between Carlisle and *Oakendale Abbey* is difficult for anyone who has not read the novel, but an attempt needs to be made. The underlying location within *Oakendale Abbey* is a remote mansion in Cumberland, near Carlisle, owned but not visited by Lord Oakendale, where, unknown to him, dead bodies collected by resurrection men from the local area are received and dissected (p. 179). As noted earlier, Oakendale has designs on Laura, a

young woman whom he meets but later discovers is his niece. The novel is set in the eighteenth century and Carlisle portrays himself in the novel as Eugene, a figure from an apparently modest background, who emerges as Lord Vincent, with titles, wealth, and power, eventually winning the hand of Laura. A full examination suggests that the book emerges from a personal fantasy, based upon Carlisle restoring the titles and fortune lost by Lord Carlyle. Several names connected to the Carlyle family history surface in *Oakendale Abbey*. The main character is variously described as Lord Oakendale, Thornaby, and Robert Carleton—thus his title is Robert, Lord Oakendale, with Oakendale Abbey itself described as an empty family pile in Cumberland (p. 25). A strong possibility emerged that ‘Oakendale’ might be a word play on ‘Annandale’, a district in Scotland adjoining Cumberland near Carlisle. The choice of Oakendale as a wordplay to represent Annandale seems an easy progression. The main male character Robert, Lord Oakendale corresponds to Robert, Lord Annandale. Annandale, Thornaby, and Carleton are all names which appear in the Lord Carlyle and De Brus history.<sup>11</sup> In addition, Thornaby and Carlton are the names of two villages close to Stillington in County Durham, Carlisle’s birthplace.

Within *Oakendale Abbey*, there are a number of other links to Anthony Carlisle. For example, it becomes apparent that although the name ‘Lord Oakendale’ comes from the Carlyle family history, as noted earlier, his character is mainly based upon John Symmons FRS, father-in-law of Carlisle. Symmons lived in London, but had a country home at Slebech near Haverfordwest and Milford Haven in Wales, as well as another ancient, and empty, Symmons family mansion some fifteen miles north of Haverfordwest at Llanstinan. Previous Symmons’ mansions are referred to in several reference works: One such example occurs in a book written by Anthony Carlisle’s younger brother, Nicholas, entitled *A Topographical Dictionary of Wales, a Continuation of the Topography of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland* of 1811. When describing Llan Stinan [*sic*], Nicholas notes that ‘[t]he ancient and hospitable Mansion of the Family of Symmons is now rapidly falling to decay’.<sup>12</sup> In the same book, when describing Little Newcastle, which is about two miles south-east of Llanstinan, Nicholas observes: ‘Here is the site of Martel, the ancient residence of the family of Symmons before they removed to Llanstinan’.<sup>13</sup> Samuel Lewis, a later nineteenth-century commentator on Llanstinan comments: ‘there was the ancient mansion of the family of Symmons [...] The turnpike road from Haverfordwest to Fishguard passes through the parish’.<sup>14</sup> Thus, during the late eighteenth century, while the Symmons’ home remained in existence at Llanstinan, about ten miles north of Slebech Hall and fifteen miles from Milford Haven, it was nevertheless vacant and unoccupied. In *Oakendale Abbey*, the vacant Symmons mansion is renamed Oakendale Abbey and ‘transported’ to near Annandale, north of the city of Carlisle, Cumberland.

Although mention is made in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* of the poet and biographer Charles Symmons, his brother John Symmons FRS does not feature in any of the standard biographies and it has been necessary to

research his life from the ground up. Space does not permit a fuller exposition here, but Carlisle met him around 1788 through the anatomist John Hunter. A minor addition to the character of John Symmons as Lord Oakendale in *Oakendale Abbey*, is a reference to him being a ‘senator’, in the book a euphemism for a Member of Parliament (p. 148). Symmons did not serve in Parliament, but his father (also John Symmons) was Member for Cardigan for from 1746 to 1761, and had married Maria Philipps from the Philipps family of Picton Castle.<sup>15</sup> The heroine Laura mentions first meeting Lord Oakendale at Milford Haven, when he is using the name Thornaby. In the novel, Lord Oakendale is married to Miss Rainsford, the only daughter of Lord Westhaven and

was leading a life, not only of inactivity, but of unlimited debauchery of every kind. Two years after the death of the late Earl, Robert found himself so embarrassed and his fortune so little equal to his expenses, that he was under the necessity of repairing it by a marriage, in which love formed no part of the contract [...] (p. 38)

From 1783, John Symmons was one of the twenty-five members of the Noblemen and Gentleman’s Catch Club, along with the Earl of Sandwich and the Earl of March, both noted for their debauchery.<sup>16</sup> The Prince of Wales became a member in 1786, as did the other Royal Dukes between 1787 and 1807.

The name Westhaven would appear to be wordplay on the town of Haverfordwest and its harbour of Milford Haven. Haverfordwest itself, and the estates of both the Symmons and Philipps families all adjoin Milford Haven, with Haverfordwest being within five miles of Picton Castle and Slebech Hall. In focusing on Milford Haven and Haverfordwest, Carlisle has punningly combined both ‘haven’ and ‘west’ to create Westhaven: Carlisle probably avoided using the name Milford, as the real owner of Picton Castle was Lord Milford and the associations would have been too transparent. Continuing the wordplay, he is thus left with ‘Haverford’: again, this is too obvious to use and after another word play—instead we find that the daughter of Lord Westhaven is Miss Rainsford, which carries echoes of Haverford. The connections extend beyond the aristocratic protagonists of the novel: the faithful servant of Lady Oakendale is named Marcel, only one letter different from the ‘Martel’ mentioned above—the estate which the Symmons family occupied prior to moving to Llanstinan (p. 134).

In real life, Miss Rainsford is apparently based upon Anne Trevanion, née Barlow, a widow who, as the last of the Barlows, owned Slebech Hall and the Slebech estate. John Symmons married her for her fortune, as did Lord Oakendale marry Miss Rainsford. Thus, we have John Symmons (Lord Oakendale) marrying Anne Barlow (Miss Rainsford) on 24 March 1773 at Bath, with Slebech thereby becoming the country estate of Symmons, explaining why the previous Symmons mansion at Llanstinan, became vacant in the later eighteenth century. In *Oakendale Abbey*, it is disclosed Lord Oakendale had a younger brother who went to the East Indies and never returned: this plot strand seems based upon



Carlisle's younger brother Nicholas, who made several trips to the East Indies as a purser on trading ships (although he did return).<sup>17</sup>

Carlisle was interested in chivalry and medieval history and transmits this interest to Laura: 'Heraldry was Laura's favourite study, but she could not give up the present time to investigate the arms of the house of Oakendale' (p. 52). John Symmons had a detailed coat of arms that demonstrated his great interest in botany, prepared after his marriage to Anne Barlow, which featured on his personal book plate and would have appeared in books in his library seen by Carlisle (see figure above).<sup>18</sup>

In *Oakendale Abbey*, there is a reference to Thornaby (Lord Oakendale) making annual trips to the Welsh seaside from his London home, to places such as Milford Haven (p. 39). Such an annual activity fits with the Society of Sea Serjeants, a select group of twenty-five southern Welsh gentry that included members of the Symmons and Philipps families and met around July every year for a week at different southern Welsh seaside towns during the mid eighteenth century. John Symmons and Sir John Philipps of Picton Castle were both Sea Serjeants and their portraits were on display during the eighteenth century.<sup>19</sup>

The character of the heroine, Laura Carleton, appears based upon Martha Symmons, the daughter of John Symmons, whom Carlisle married in 1800, but for the plot is converted into the niece of Symmons (Lord Oakendale). Laura's surname—Carleton—was likely selected from the Carlyle history and perhaps because it was a village close to Anthony Carlisle's birthplace. A possible rea-

son for Carlisle to choose the name Laura is connected with Manasseh Dawes (c. 1745–1829), believed to be the uncle of Martha Symmons. In 1776, Dawes anonymously published a belletristic work entitled *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse on Various Occasions*.<sup>20</sup> It is possible that this book was in John Symmons' extensive library, as both he and Dawes were barristers living contemporaneously in London. The book contains a number of satirical pieces with thinly veiled attacks on several public figures, and may have been an inspiration for the style Carlisle chose to employ in *Oakendale Abbey*, with his own thinly veiled references to Carlyle family history and to John Symmons. Dawes' *Miscellanies* is notable for the large number of references to a figure named Laura: the verses and prose that mention Laura consist of partly specific and partly continuing references in an exchange of letters debating love with someone named 'Maria'—possibly referring to Maria Philipps, the wife of John Symmons MP (father of John Symmons FRS). The extensive use of the name 'Laura' in *Miscellanies* seems also to have been the inspiration for Caroline Symmons (a cousin of Martha Symmons and so related by marriage to Manasseh Dawes) to write a long poem about another Laura sometime around 1800, shortly before her death at the age of fourteen in 1803 of consumption. In *Oakendale Abbey*, the mother of Laura Carleton is the exotically named Zelima, who dies when Laura is a child (p. 145)—Caroline wrote a poem entitled 'Zelida', which might possibly have been inspired by *Oakendale Abbey's* Zelima.<sup>21</sup>

### III

The content of *Oakendale Abbey* includes a number of medical references and descriptions that demonstrate the author's medical knowledge—for instance, *accoucheur*, a French word used in medical circles as an alternative to 'midwife' or 'man-midwife' (p. 122). As noted earlier, the novel includes references to anatomists and resurrectionists (or body-snatchers), with whose activities the novel's author appears familiar: 'The dead body of a woman hung against the wall opposite to the door she had entered, with a coarse cloth pinned over all but the face; the ghastly and putrefied appearance of which bespoke her to have been sometime dead' (p. 73). Only someone familiar with anatomical practice would have known that bodies were stored hanging vertically, rather laying flat: 'those unfeeling monsters of society, who make a practice of stealing our friends, and relations from the peaceful grave where their ashes, as we suppose, are deposited in rest' (pp. 157–99). Although Laura faints and falls into the hands of the anatomists, they do not harm her, but carry her still unconscious to a cottage and leave her safe there (p. 75). At one point, amidst some dead bodies Laura is rescued by a kind surgeon with the name Du Fresne (pp. 86–92), who also tends two wounded duellists, as surgeons were called upon to do at the time (p. 93). The surgeon and anatomists are all kind to Laura, possibly reflecting Carlisle's chivalric attitude towards the heroine.

One of the resurrection men, Patrick, states he was born in Carrick, Ireland—again, Carrick is a name associated with the Carlyle family history. Patrick says he ‘joined a set of coiners in the neighbourhood of Penrith, where they were soon after discovered, taken, and brought to condign punishment’ (pp. 178–79). ‘Condign’ is an unusual word, correctly used—an indication the author was familiar with it and knew hanging was the punishment for counterfeiting coins. Patrick is revived after execution and his description of the resuscitation parallels a case with which Carlisle was familiar: that of Patrick Redmond who was revived from an actual hanging in Cork on 24 February 1767. It was said this Patrick had been hanging for twenty-eight minutes when the mob rescued the body, and carried it to an appointed place, where a surgeon was in attendance to perform an experimental bronchotomy: an incision in the windpipe, which produced the desired effect of reviving Redmond within less than six hours. A collection was made for the poor fellow, and efforts made to obtain his pardon.<sup>22</sup> The account provided by *Oakendale Abbey*’s Patrick uses the words of a medical person:

The first idea of recollection he experienced (after the noise of the crowd and the mob that tended him to the gallows had ceased) was of extreme pain in his head and neck, and a violent oppression upon his lungs. He struggled for a few seconds, and gained respiration; a mist before his eyes seemed to vanish and recovered sight [...] and he tried to articulate; but found his throat so swelled that he could only utter a gurgling sound. (p. 180)

Carlisle’s knowledge of the skeleton of the eight-foot-tall Irish Giant concealed for five years by the anatomist John Hunter is the inspiration for a scene in *Oakendale Abbey*:

They approached the trunk, wherein the skeleton was deposited. Lord Oakendale ordered his servants to lift up the lid; and the light had no sooner glanced upon the the ghastly figure, than the man, dropping the lid from his hand exclaimed, ‘God preserve us! Here is a dead man, bigger than a giant. With saucer eyes, and huge limbs!’ (p. 112)

#### IV

The circumstantial and textual evidence linking *Oakendale Abbey* to Carlisle and Symmons is so compelling, that there is no other real candidate as author. If the evidence identifying Carlisle as the author of *Oakendale Abbey* can be accepted, the other novels attributed to Mrs Carver can be reviewed for evidence supporting Carlisle as author, but with a base case established via *Oakendale Abbey* they do not require such a high burden of proof. Space permits only a brief discussion of one other: *The Old Woman*. Its publication was announced on 5 June 1800 in the *Star* newspaper and on 17 June 1800 in the *Morning Chronicle*. *The Old Woman* contains more plays on names and medical references

that support a link to Carlisle. Unlike the gothic-tinged *Oakendale Abbey*, *The Old Woman* is an epistolary novel, consisting of a long series of letters between the characters without intervening dialogue or text. Towards the end of the novel, it is revealed that the main location within the story, Arkley Castle, is reached from Ireland via Milford Haven (II, letter 2), a location which appears in *Oakendale Abbey*. Arkley Castle might then represent Piçton Castle, the ancestral home of the Philipps family, close to Milford Haven and only a mile from Slebech Hall owned by John Symmons. At the time *The Old Woman* was published in 1800, the head of the Philipps family was Lord Milford, formerly Sir Richard Philipps, 7th Bart., and nephew of Bulkeley Philipps, whose granddaughter Mary Philippa Artemisia Grant eventually inherited Piçton Castle. Lord Milford was raised to the peerage in 1776, as a peer of Ireland, despite the Philipps family having no estates in Ireland, with his choice of Milford relating to the nearby Milford Haven. Even so, the Irish peerage might explain why some of *The Old Woman* novel is set in Ireland.

Seen in this way, the author's choice of 'Arkley Castle' as the main location in the novel is based upon several factors. Firstly, the suitability of Piçton Castle as the ideal setting for the story; secondly, wordplay on Carlisle's own initials 'A. C.'; and thirdly, a play on Arkley on the name of Bulkeley Philipps, uncle of the wife of John Symmons. Richard Philipps, Lord Milford was then the owner of Piçton Castle, so his name could not be used, but Bulkeley Philipps was the heir to Piçton Castle, so a play on his name makes sense as a source for Carlisle. In *The Old Woman*, Arkley Castle is referred to as having a vast number of rooms, with some closed off and unused parts of the castle—so much so, that someone is able to live semi-secretly in an unused portion of the castle. This concept seems far-fetched until one sees images of Piçton Castle, which has four above-ground levels, several wings, and scores of rooms.<sup>23</sup>

The choice of names of two other characters *The Old Woman* appear as plays on the names of close friends of Carlisle. Mr Goodworth, a clergyman, for the author William Godwin, husband of the author Mary Wollstonecraft and father of Mary Shelley, who trained as a clergyman before he became a writer. The other character Elinor Safforey, might be seen as a distortion of Edith Southey, wife of Robert Southey. Both characters appear within the first two paragraphs of the novel.

There are several words used in *The Old Woman*, which when linked to Carlisle, signal an author demonstrating his knowledge of obscure words, a habit of Carlisle. The words include the French phrase *mauvaise honte*, 'bashfulness', 'sheepishness' (I, Letter 21). The *OED* records the first usage of this term as 1721, in Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's correspondence: although relatively uncommon in eighteenth-century literature, the term does appear in Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773) and Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1794). Another obscure word in *The Old Woman* is 'carasposa' (I, Letter 21), also rarely used in eighteenth-century English literature, and more famously used in the

masculine form in Jane Austen's *Emma* (1816). From the Italian *cara sposa*, 'a dear wife or a devoted wife', it could be used in an ironic manner such as in the poetic 'Dialogue Between a Macaroni and his Cara Sposa' in *The Comforts of Matrimony; or Love's Last Shift* (1780) by Ned and Edward Ward. This poem may even allude to the clergyman William Dodd, who was hanged for forgery in 1777 and was referred to as the 'Macaroni Parson'. Carlisle may have sourced the word from the Wards' book, though another interesting possibility is Arthur Murphy's *The Way to Keep Him: A Comedy* (1792), which records: 'Lady Constant may be the happy wife the *Cara Sposa* of the piece'.<sup>24</sup>

Insofar as medical evidence supporting Carlisle as the author of *The Old Woman* is concerned, there is a substantive reference indicative of medical knowledge:

Without having studied Lavater, I could read from St. Edward's looks what passed in his mind, and although they are far from intelligent, (for his eyes always seem to be hunting for his wits,) yet I could collect distrust, malice, and something like exulting pleasure. (II, letter 12)

This is an allusion to Johann Kaspar Lavater (1741–1801), Swiss poet and physiognomist, whose work was studied by Carlisle. Lavater's name would be forgotten but for his work in the field of physiognomy, notably through *Physiognomische Fragmente zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntnis und Menschenliebe* (1775–78). The fame of this book—which found admirers in France and England as well as Germany—rested largely upon the handsome style of publication and the accompanying illustrations. The English edition was translated by Thomas Holcroft in 1789, who happened to be a friend of Carlisle's.<sup>25</sup> Such a medical book would have been of interest to Carlisle and a book certain to have found its way into John Symmons' collection. Previously, on 26 April 1797, Robert Southey made an obvious reference to Lavater in a letter:

Carlisle and I, instead of our neighbours' 'Revolutionary Tribunal,' mean to erect a physiognomical one, and as transportation is to be the punishment, instead of guillotining, we shall put the whole navy in requisition to carry off all ill-looking fellows, and then we may walk London streets without being jostled. You are to be one of the Jury, and we must get some good limner to take down the evidence. Witnesses will be needless. The features of a man's face will rise up in judgment against him; and the very voice that pleads 'Not Guilty,' will be enough to convict the raven-toned criminal.<sup>26</sup>

In *The Old Woman*, several lengthy passages describing at length the swollen and drowned body of a woman appear to have been written by a medical man who was familiar with the state of drowned bodies and knew how to describe them. One description of lesser importance commences:

[A] dear good fisherman brought the heavenly news that she was drowned in the sea near Holyhead. Dear blessed man! such people

can never be sufficiently rewarded. The other man was a parish-officer, who came to certify the account, and to know what is to be done with the body. Thanks to her unfortunate stars, and my better fate. She had lain too long in the water for any means to be used towards effecting her recovery; yet St. Edward, silly fellow! had so forgotten his resentment as to make this the first enquiry. 'Lord help your honour,' says the good countryman, 'her a been dead a long while; why the fish had begun upon her, and you could scarce tell a feature that her had: her cloaths all drapt off by bits, and we could only save these here papers that was in her pockets—they be dried and persarved—and two rings upon her fingers, as we have honestly brought to your honour; and it is all a had about her.' (II, Letter 15)

In a lengthier passage, the drowned victim is described more in the manner of a medical examination, and at length by Ann Clifford in a letter to Elinor Safforey:

I took some slight refreshment, and endeavoured to collect my spirits in order to encounter the sad scene in which I had engaged, and to inspect, as far as circumstances would admit, the body of our unfortunate friend, both for my own satisfaction as well as yours. According to my directions, Lucy had ordered the coffin to be so slightly screwed, that the lid was easily again taken off.— There is a something in the contemplation of a dead body, even under the most uninteresting circumstances, which is awful in the extreme. I confess, when I entered the room, I shuddered, not with horror or fear, but an indescribable sensation seemed to overpower me, and it was some moments before I could recover myself sufficiently to approach the coffin, and when I beheld the mangled features of our dear departed Julia, I could not avoid uttering a shriek of terror. Lucy supported and encouraged me to examine the features of her beloved mistress; the frequent sight having rendered her less shocked at the contemplation of an object so dreadful.

The body was dressed exactly as it was found in the water, that is, the remains of the dress, for it was partly torn to pieces, and the face so entirely mutilated, that it must be impossible to ascertain from that whether or not it was really Julia. The size and shape corresponded with her's, and the hair is the same colour, but upon examining the hands, I think they appeared larger, and not so beautifully formed as were Julia's; but this might be accounted for by having been so long under the water, and being swoln. Her stockings and the remains of her linen were marked J.S. and Lucy says, she could swear to the work being her's. The gown was the very one in which she had dressed her on the day she was missing.

These are proofs strong enough of the body's being no other than that of our unhappy friend, even were any wanting; but the letters, the rings, and the smelling-bottle, which is now sent, and was a present from myself to her, with the initials of my own name upon it, are all such convincing testimonies, as to require no other; and as to the face, as I said before, it is so entirely mutilated, that no trace of feature or countenance could possibly be discovered.

After I had contemplated the body, heard, and joined in the lamentations of Lucy, and breathed a most humble and devout wish for her eternal happiness, I ordered the coffin to be screwed down, and attended by all the servants, who were, I believe, real mourners, we proceeded to the parish-church, which is very near the castle, and there in the vault of her ancestors were deposited the sad remains of Julia St. Edward [...] Why then should we lament? 'Tis true, the circumstances of her death were shocking, and it was impossible to behold her disfigured corpse without terror; but the ultimate event to her is the same as if she had been surrounded by pitying friends and weeping kindred.

To the lovers of this world, death is more formidable than to all others; it appears to them an end to all enjoyment, and a suspension of all hopeful expectation: but to those who have experienced the pangs of disappointed hope in all they held most dear, what is it but a relief from toil, from sorrow, and anxiety, and opens to them a prospect of everlasting peace in a world of better spirits.

(II, Letter 16)

A further medical reference in the novel is clearly connected with surgery, the resurrectionists, and dentistry practice of the late eighteenth century, when surgeons also operated as dentists. That Carlisle practised dentistry is specifically mentioned in a letter by Robert Southey: sugar was unrefined and large quantities were consumed by the wealthy, and although it was expensive, it was so popular that the teeth of the wealthy rotted until they were black. To remedy this visual defect, healthy teeth were often transplanted directly from young servants into the mouth of their master or mistress to replace the rotted teeth. A variation of this appears late in *The Old Woman*:

Do you remember how poor Mrs. Loveless was reprobated, for having her daughter's teeth taken out after she was dead, and placed in her own mouth? Why now really, I see no such great matter in it. The girl died when she was only seventeen; had an amazing fine set, which it would have been a sin to have let rot in the grave. Mrs. Loveless's were beginning to decay, and whose could have been so natural to her as her own child's? I declare I should have done just the same, only I would have taken care to

have been more secret, and not given an opportunity for people,  
 who affect fine feelings, to have abused me. (II, Letter 20)

The novel concludes with a quotation from Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which provides a further link to Carlisle, as his wife's uncle, Revd Charles Symmons, later became famous for his commentary on the *Life of Milton* (1806) that prefixed his edition of Milton's prose works:

The wife, where danger or dishonour lurks,  
 Safest and seemliest by her husband stays,  
 Who guards her; or with her the worst endures.  
 (Book IX, ll. 267–69)<sup>27</sup>

## V

Taken together, the references from the novels allow a confident attribution of *The Horrors of Oakendale Abbey* and *The Old Woman* to Carlisle. The case of *Oakendale Abbey* offers a persuasive example of how it may be possible to determine the author of an anonymous gothic novel by reviewing for specialist technical knowledge or by sifting through facts connected to real places or people. In this example, the accumulation of material became so overwhelming, that the case was provable in the same way as a murder without a body may be provable with enough circumstantial evidence. No reference has yet been found to Carlisle as an author in the correspondence of his friends; however, there is evidence of the influence of Carlisle appearing in the novel *The Adventures of Hugh Trevor* (1794–97) by Thomas Holcroft and in the poem 'The Surgeon's Warning' (1796) by Robert Southey. In addition, a separate line of research traces the influence of Carlisle on another anatomical gothic masterpiece—Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818). Carlisle's role in the work of Southey and Holcroft, and the reasons for regarding him as an influence on *Frankenstein*, are explored in depth in the first full biography of Carlisle, written by the present author: *The Real Mr Frankenstein: Sir Anthony Carlisle and the Social Genesis of 'Frankenstein'*. 

## NOTES

This paper is condensed from research into Anthony Carlisle, which is to be published and is available as a full eBook biography, as of October 2009. More details regarding this work can be found at <<http://therealmrfrankenstein.blogspot.com>>. The author is very grateful for helpful comments received from Peter Garside in the preparation of this extract.

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2. See *The English Novel, 1770–1829: A Bibliographical Survey of Prose Fiction Published in the British Isles*, 2 vols (Oxford: OUP, 2000), item 1797: 33.
3. Thanks for supporting evidence are due to Serena Potter, Zittaw Press, and Curt Herr, who wrote the introduction to the Zittaw edition of *Oakendale Abbey*.

4. Mrs Carver, *The Horrors of Oakendale Abbey* (London: Minerva Press, 1797; rptd Zittaw Press, 2006). Subsequent references are to the Zittaw edition.
5. According to Dorothy Blakey, 'Mrs Carver' is listed as the author of *Oakendale Abbey* in the Minerva Library Catalogue for 1814—see *The Minerva Press, 1790–1820* (London: British Library, 1939), p. 181; Appendix 1: 1797.
6. 'Mrs Carver', *CW3: Corvey Women Writers on the Web*. Online: Internet (Apr 2009): <<http://www2.shu.ac.uk/corvey/CW3/AuthorPage.cfm?Author=MC2>>.
7. *The Cavern of Death* (1794), *Open Library*. Online: Internet (Apr 2009): <<http://openlibrary.org/bl/OL13377163M/The-Cavern-of-Death>>.
8. *The Cavern of Death* (London: James Bell, 1794; rptd Chicago: Valancourt, 2005).
9. *The Animated Skeleton* (London: Minerva Press, 1798; rptd Seattle: Valancourt, 2005).
10. Mrs Carver, *The Old Woman*, 2 vols (London: Minerva Press, 1800). Rptd in the *Chawton House Library: Novels Online* portal. Online: Internet (Apr 2009): <[http://www.chawtonhouse.org/library/novels/carver\\_old.html](http://www.chawtonhouse.org/library/novels/carver_old.html)> (1, Letter 9). Subsequent references are to the Chawton edition.
11. See Ruth Margaret Blakely, *The Brus Family in England and Scotland, 1100–1295* (Woodbridge and New York: Boydell Press, 2005), for further information on Thornaby (p. 189) and Carlton (pp. 16, 191).
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13. *Ibid.*
14. Samuel Lewis, *A Topographical Dictionary of Wales* (London: S. Lewis, 1845), p. 105.
15. See the entry for 'Symmons, Charles (1749–1826), poet and biographer', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004–). Online: Internet (Aug 2009): <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26884/26885?back=#,26884>>.
16. Viscount Gladstone, Guy Boas, and Harald Christopherson, *Noblemen's and Gentleman's Catch Club: Three Essays Towards History* (London: Cypher Press, 1996), p. 109.
17. Charles Hardy, *Register of Ships, Employed in the Service of the Honourable the United East India Company, from the Year 1760 to 1810* (London: Heseltine, 1811), p. 166.
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19. Francis Jones, 'Portraits and Pictures in Old Carmarthenshire Houses', in *The Carmarthenshire Historian*. Online: Internet (Apr 2009): <<http://carmarthenshirehistorian.org/cgi-bin/twiki/view/Historian/PortraitsAndPicturesInOldCarmarthenshireHouses>>.
20. Manasseh Dawes, *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse on Various Occasions* (London: For the Author, 1776).
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22. Charles Bernard Gibson, *The History of the County and City of Cork*, 2 vols (London: T. C. Newby, 1861), II, 204.
23. See the Piñton Castle website for images: <<http://www.piñtoncastle.co.uk>>.

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25. J. C. Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy*, translated by Thomas Holcroft, 3 vols (London: Robinson, 1789).
26. Robert Southey to Joseph Cottle, 26 Apr 1797; in Linda Pratt (ed.), *The Collected Letters of Robert Southey: Part One: 1791–1797*. Online: Internet (May 2009): <[http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/southey\\_letters/Part\\_One/HTML/letterEEEd.26.212.html](http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/southey_letters/Part_One/HTML/letterEEEd.26.212.html)>. Southey also made several direct references to Lavater in his letters between 1793 and 1797.
27. Charles Symmons (ed.), *The Prose Works of John Milton; with a Life of the Author, Interspersed with Translations and Critical Remarks*, 7 vols (London: Joseph Johnson, 1806).

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