As much as the recurrent trope of the found manuscript has been used to foreground questions of authenticity and individual identity, as discussed in the previous chapter, it has also been used to address much broader issues of history and communal memory. To a certain extent, this may seem self-evident; as Jan Assmann notes, while language is considered as present communication, text is always ‘constituted on the basis of prior communication. It always involves the past.’ Texts, Assmann argues, allow for the development of cultural memory, as opposed to communicative or bonding memory: texts encompass not only the knowledge required for practical living, but also ‘the age-old, out-of-the-way, and discarded’ (27). While Assmann focusses on normative and formative texts (that is, texts that codify social behaviour, such as wisdom literature, and texts that formulate a culture’s self-image, such as myths and sagas), the novels examined in the previous chapters indicate that any text may be culturally formative. Robertson's *Testament of Gideon Mack*, for instance, highlights the extent to which formative texts such as Scott’s novels relate to both individual and cultural memory, while Gray’s *Poor Things* suggests that inauthentic or fictive texts may be just as relevant to the establishment of cultural identity.

The trope of the found manuscript, however, problematises the relationship between texts and history. While, as Assmann argues, cultural memory is always personalised and particular, allowing for a vision of the past disowned by historians, the found manuscript by necessity cannot fully be incorporated into a unified cultural memory, insofar as it is recognised as what is neglected and forgotten. The found manuscript, in many instances, not only exists outside codified history, but actively resists it: such texts are used both to explain and contradict received notions of the past. In Romantic-era Gothic, the manuscript
is often used either to reify the ‘unspeakable’ or to redefine apparently supernatural happenings as mundane and unexceptional.\textsuperscript{2} In both cases, the manuscript functions primarily as a critique: it is a way to explain the relation between individual experience and accepted views of the world, but nevertheless exists outside of both paradigms. The found manuscript highlights the way Gothic can be seen as a mode of ‘unofficial history’, and in so doing forces the question of why unofficial histories may themselves be necessary.\textsuperscript{3} Gothic presents a vision of history that remains peripheral: rather than replacing accepted versions of history, the found manuscript questions the stability of any historic narrative.

In this sense, the manuscript can be seen as fundamentally insular. Found manuscripts can be seen as a central example of what Marshall Brown calls Gothic’s ‘principle of solitude’; the manuscript is of interest precisely because it represents an individualised view of the world that cannot, in many cases, be corroborated.\textsuperscript{4} This apparent paradox between texts that can constitute social or cultural memory and texts that remain tied to a particular individual or moment of reading is one of the key features in the novels discussed in this chapter. In these novels the found manuscript can provide access to hidden or traumatic pasts, but such pasts are not easily incorporated into the present. This claim has been made of Scottish literature more generally; as Cairns Craig has influ-
tentially argued, ‘Scotland becomes narratable only when its existence is given narrative potentiality by intrusion from without’.\textsuperscript{5} What sets many Gothic novels apart, however, is their insistence on the textual manifestation of this external intrusion: in the trope of the found manuscript, narrative potentiality is consistently identified and constituted by text. History becomes, in this sense, a matter of textual relation.

The relationship between the past and present as articulated through the found manuscript is further complicated by a frequent emphasis on peripheral places. Alice Thompson’s \textit{Pharos}, Sarah Moss’s \textit{Night Waking}, Jess Richards’s \textit{Snake Ropes}, and Louise Welsh’s \textit{Naming the Bones} focus not only on the relationship between the found manuscript and the past, but between islands and mainland. In each of these novels, the peripheral place is home to peripheral texts. This accords with Jacques Rancière’s rather astonishing claim that the island ‘is the metaphor for the book in general, for the book as a type of being. The space of the island and the volume of the book express each other and thus define a certain world, a certain way in which writing makes a world by unmaking another one.’\textsuperscript{6} Islands, as many critics have noted, are places of shifting relationships, whether it is between ideas of centre and periphery, land and sea, or insider and outsider; they navigate the space between