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LANDMARKS IN THE HISTORY
OF THE
ENGLISH HORROR GENRE FROM WALPOLE TO STOKER

being a thesis presented for the degree
of
Bachelor of Philosophy

by

Andrew O. Lindsay
(M.A. St Andrews)

University of St Andrews
January 1973



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Declaration

The work embodied in this thesis is entirely my own and, unless where specifically stated otherwise, is the result of my own research. The material in this thesis has not been published, or offered for publication, either in whole or in part, and has not previously been presented for a higher degree.

I was admitted as a research student in the University of St Andrews in October 1968 under Ordinance General No. 12, and enrolled as a candidate for the degree of B.Phil. in December 1969 and have engaged in part-time research under the supervision of Dr R.P. Doig, Department of English.

Andrew O. Lindsay, M.A.

Certificate

I certify that Andrew O. Lindsay has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations for the degree of B.Phil., and is qualified to submit this thesis in application for the degree.

Dr R.P. Doig,
Supervisor.

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Prefatory Note

Each chapter has been divided into numbered sections. I adopted this technique for the sake of greater clarity and ease of reference. The numbered footnotes refer, not to the paragraph numbers, but to the footnote numbers inserted in the body of the text.

With a few exceptions, I have given plot summaries of the works under review. In the case of rare works, such as Radcliffe's The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne, this is necessary before meaningful criticism or exegesis is possible. With reference to works which are readily obtainable, but seldom read with care, or which have been distorted by the vagaries of television and cinema, the summary has been included for the sake of accuracy. These summaries have been kept as brief as possible, and do not form part of the argument of the thesis.

A.O.L.

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A.O.L.

CHAPTER ONE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest fear is fear of the unknown. These facts few psychologists will dispute, and their admitted truth must establish for all time the genuineness and dignity of the weirdly horrible tale as a literary form."

H.P. LOVECRAFT: Supernatural Horror in Literature (1927).

1. The purpose of this thesis is to examine the major works of "horror" fiction from Walpole's The Castle of Otranto (1764) to Bram Stoker's Dracula, published in 1897. Attention will be paid to those strains of imagery and peculiarities of characterisation and presentation which persist and develop, as well as to the sophistication which becomes evident as the genre gains momentum. There is considerably more material on hand than the practical design of this study can embody, and many works will have to be left out. The subject is so vast, and expanded so rapidly on both sides of the Atlantic after Poe and Dickens, that it is necessary to be strictly selective.

2. The period has not hitherto been examined in depth as an entirety. The Gothic era has been studied in painstaking and accurate detail by Montague Summers¹ and D.P. Varma,² and the pattern of the popular novel's development in England in the last thirty years of the eighteenth century has been given careful and scholarly treatment by Tompkins.³ Mario Praz⁴ has devoted a large work to the Romantic era,

1. The Gothic Quest (1927); A Gothic Bibliography (London 1941).

2. The Gothic Flame (1957).

3. The Popular Novel in England, 1770-1800 (London 1932).

4. The Romantic Agony (1933).

but his work is extremely specialised, dealing for the most part with algolagnia rather than general literary development, and is therefore peripheral to much of the present work. There has been little effort so far to collate the Gothic Romance with its derivatives in the mid- and late nineteenth century, and this thesis will show that a view of Gothic and nineteenth-century horror fiction as two separate and different phenomena is not justified, and will demonstrate the lines of connexion so far as they can be traced.

3. Horror has been a minor but important part of fictional writing for as long as history is able to chronicle. In the works of Petronius we encounter possibly the first werewolf, while in Pliny's Epistles we read of the encounter in Athens between Athenodorus and the ghost, complete with rattling chains. Instances of horror in our native tongue, from the Anglo-Saxon Beowulf, Chaucer, Shakespeare and Marlowe, are too well known to require mention. The important point is that in nearly all works prior to 1764, the horror was merely employed to underline the remainder of the narrative, rarely as an end in itself. Walpole's novel is one of the fore-runners of the "horror" genre in that the horror is employed purely for its own sake.

4. "Horror", when applied to the literary works, requires definition. In the abstract, horror is a human emotional response, consisting of a reaction to certain objects, powers, manifestations or combinations of circumstances which, good or evil, real or imagined, represent a real and radical disruption of the belief-systems of the individual, stemming from the disruption, actual or apparent, of known physical and natural laws. The chief reaction to horror, before its full power is realised, is the instinct for self-preservation or flight; once the horror is explicit, a mental or physical paralysis results, the term of reference having been removed. Since human emotions are infinitely variable, so also is the

concept of "horror". Certain consistent factors may be cited: the situation in which the horror occurs is generally unexpected; an element of the unknown or the supernatural is generally involved; and the victim is in most cases isolated at the time when the experience takes place.

5. D.P. Varma makes a distinction between horror and terror, as follows:-

Terror creates an intangible atmosphere of spiritual psychic dread, a certain superstitious shudder at the other world. Horror resorts to a cruder presentation of the macabre; by an exact portrayal of the physically horrible and revolting.⁵

Varma uses this distinction to differentiate between the finesse of Radcliffe and the comparative crudity of Lewis. I would retain the use of the adjective "horror" as a generic term; the question of whether the horror is, or is not, made explicit will be obvious in context.

6. There are certain subjects which are traditionally connected with horror fiction, and certain settings in which these subjects are generally described. It will be of value to catalogue these briefly. The subjects, since horror depends so much on the unknown, are usually supernatural — that is, outwith the operation of the normal laws of cause and effect. Fear of the unknown creates the need for a credible belief-system which will give reassurance in the face of doubt. These systems are a priori,⁶ and thence tautological,⁷ and their existence, once established, cannot be assailed by logical means since they cannot be

5. The Gothic Flame, VI, 130.

6. "...the conclusion of a deductive argument is already contained in the premises, any uncertainty there may be about the truth of the premises is necessarily shared by it. But we know that no empirical proposition can ever be anything more than probable. It is only a priori propositions that are logically certain. But we cannot deduce the existence of a god from an a priori proposition. For we know that the reason why a priori propositions are certain is that they are tautologies. And from a set of tautologies, nothing but a further tautology can be validly deduced" (Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic, 1967).

7. Cf. also Kant: "In whatever manner the understanding may have arrived at/...

proved either true or false. Perhaps for this reason, supernaturalism have had a very long life; it may also explain the degree of anthropomorphism evident in many superstitious belief-systems, resulting from a projection of human hopes, fears and aspirations on to a transcendental tabula rasa. Thanks to a vivid pictorial mediaeval demonology, superstition provides an unending reservoir of inspiration for writers in the horror-genre. So wide is the subject of superstition it has been divided here into a series of categories for the sake of convenience.

7. Non-ritual superstition is widespread, and has very often been incorporated into the fabric of social behaviour. Observances such as touching wood and throwing salt over the left shoulder are of very ancient standing, but provide the horror writer with little help. The belief in the power of certain herbs;⁸ the occult significance of the number three,⁹ and its multiple nine; the fact that witches cannot cross running water;¹⁰ the theory that spirits are not reflected in mirrors;¹¹ the general awareness of the power of the crucifix¹² — these and similar superstitious beliefs of remote and sometimes doubtful origin, though rarely used as prima facie material in horror fiction, can be used in the supporting role.

at a concept, the existence of its object is never, by any process of analysis, discoverable within it; for the knowledge of the existence of the object consists precisely in the fact that the object is posited in itself, beyond the mere thought of it. Through concepts alone, it is quite impossible to advance to the discovery of new objects and supernatural beings; and it is useless to appeal to experience, which in all cases yields only appearances" (Critique of Pure Reason (Theology), 1787).

8. Particularly garlic in vampire mythology. Of opium, widely available in its tincture form, laudanum, during the period in question, and its influence on various authors, more specific mention will be made later.
9. Cf. particularly Macbeth, I, iii :
"Thrice to thine, and thrice to mine
And thrice again to make up nine.
Peace! the charm's wound up."
10. Burns, Tam O'Shanter (1791).
11. Stoker, Dracula, passim. Cf. however the haunting of a man by reflected face of his victim, in The Compensation House, by Charles Collins (1866).
12. Stoker, Dracula, passim.

8. The belief in ghosts has never fully disappeared, and has furnished writers in the genre with one of their most reliable characters. The idea of a human spirit returning to haunt his surroundings is one which has terrified mankind since pagan days, and this same theme can be used with hair-raising effect or bludgeon-like insensitivity, depending on the skill of the writer. Ghosts appear in the works of writers as far apart as Pliny,¹³ Chaucer,¹⁴ Shakespeare,¹⁵ Defoe,¹⁶ Dickens¹⁷ and James¹⁸ — none of whom can be regarded as a second-rate writer, and all of whom make use of the revenant to spine-chilling effect. The ghost must not of course be confused with the vampire and the werewolf, who return in physical rather than spiritual and intangible form.

9. The werewolf is not a common figure in literature, although lycanthropy does appear as subject-matter in nineteenth-century tales.¹⁹ This condition, from the Greek lykos (wolf) and anthropos (man) is "a psychiatric state in which the patient believes he is a wolf, or some other non-human animal. Undoubtedly stimulated by the once widespread belief that lycanthropy is a supernatural condition in which men actually assume the physical form of other animals."²⁰ The superstition was widespread, and since it centred around the most dangerous beast of the region, the werewolf — an exact Germanic gloss of lycanthropos — became assimilated into legend. The origin of the superstition may lie in primitive fertility rites involving animals, at which masks and animal skins may have been used as part of the process of sympathetic magic.

13. Epistles (vii).

14. The Nonne's Preeste's Tale.

15. Hamlet, Macbeth, Julius Caesar.

16. Mrs Veal.

17. No. 1. Branch Line; The Signalman.

18. The Turn of the Screw.

19. Notably Marryat's White Wolf of the Hartz Mountains.

20. Encyclopaedia Britannica.

10. The vampire, as a legend, is one of the most horrifying in the world, and is extremely ancient as well as extremely widespread, being traceable in practically every world culture. Many books have been written on the historical aspects of this superstition, of which those of Summers²¹ stand as the most authoritative. The vampire does not appear in literature until the nineteenth century and is entirely absent from the Gothic novels of Lewis and Maturin who, it is thought, would have been only too eager to include a bloodsucking monster among the other horrors. The first appearance in literature is in Polidori's short story, The Vampyre.²² It would be interesting to enquire into the reasons why this superstition did not appear in literature at an earlier date. The significance of the vampire is linked with cannibalism, and the transfer of potency resulting from a physical absorption of part of the victim; and blood itself took on a new significance after the advent of Christianity. In Der Arme Heinrich²³ the blood of a virgin girl, freely offered, is the only cure for the leprosy which afflicts Heinrich as a symbolic punishment for spiritual pride. The historical sacrament of the Eucharist is based on the redemptive power of Christ's blood and, even when separated from religious overtones, is still invested with the most intense emotional significance. It is probably because of the Christian overtones that the defences against vampirism are theological: the crucifix,²⁴ daylight²⁵

21. The Vampire: His Kith and Kin (1928).

22. The Vampyre (1819). Often confused as Byron's work, though in fact Dr Polidori was Byron's physician, and had travelled with him to Italy where the story was written.

23. Hartmann von Aue, Der Arme Heinrich.

24. An obvious defence against real or imagined evil powers, see Dracula, passim.

25. God and his angels are frequently referred to in terms of light; vide John I, viii; Revelation I, xiv-xvi. Also multiplicity of instances of light-dark or good-evil dualism in other major religions.

a wooden stave through the heart,²⁶ garlic flowers,²⁷ the berries of the mountain ash²⁸ and, of course, the ceremony of exorcism. All of those elements will be found in the vampirism-based texts which will be studied.

11. Any study of witchcraft is confused by the fact that authorities differ as to the precise nature of the cult. The two traditional views are embodied in Murray²⁹ and Summers.³⁰ Murray was convinced that witchcraft derived from pagan ceremonies, and was essentially harmless, if occasionally repulsive; Summers holds the view that witchcraft is rooted in Satan-worship, and is dangerous, as well as specifically anti-Christian. Summers' view is perhaps the more traditional, though not necessarily correct, and is certainly a clear reflection of the theories of witchcraft as current in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries -- the Witchcraft Act was not repealed until 1736. The Satanic conception of the witch as an evil being, subordinate to the devil, with the power to disrupt lives, fortunes and property, is one which we see reflected in Elizabethan drama and cropping up in nearly all of the literature which followed. Macbeth, and to a lesser extent, Glanvill's Saducismus Triumphatus,³¹ affected the fictional treatment of witches so radically that anthropologists and historians in the present century have found great difficulty in separating truth from the mass of derivative fiction and cross-currents of tradition, theory, supposition and invention.

12. Ritual magic is not common as a theme in literature; it is frequently confused with witchcraft and, in its genuine form, calls for a good deal of specialised knowledge on the part of the reader. Only in the

26. The heart believed to be the seat of the soul; which belief has lingered on in several figures of speech.

27. See note 8, p. 4.

28. The twigs of the mountain ash were reputedly used to light a fire to warm Mary on the eve of Christ's birth.

29. Margaret Murray, The Witch-Cult in Western Europe.

30. Montague Summers, The History of Witchcraft and Demonology (1926).

31. Joseph Glanvill, Saducismus Triumphatus (1681).

present century has ritual spirit evocation been described accurately, credibly, and with genuinely horrific effect.³² Other authors, such as Lewis and, to a lesser extent, Beckford, have drawn together elements from the various branches of the arcane sciences, merging them into an exotic but essentially meaningless jumble of faintly mystical conjuration. Concerning the actual definition of magic, A.E. Waite³³ is undoubtedly the most reputable authority.

13. Black Magic and Voodoo are occasionally met with; once again, in a very confused way. Waite makes the actuality of these cults perfectly clear while the authors, notably Lewis, surround them with such heightened emotion and plethora of fantastic detail that their real effect is lost. Under the heading of Black Magic must come the theme of the pact with Satan, which is a recurrent one, traceable to the Volksbuch of Johann Spies, published in 1587, from which derives the Faust of Goethe and Doctor Faustus by Marlowe. The pact with the devil appears in several works during the period under study, but with a considerable degree of refinement over the relative crudity of Marlowe. The theme itself is extremely ancient; it appears in Chaucer,³⁴ and Summers has traced it back still further.³⁵

14. Satanism must be separated from Black Magic, as it involves actual worship of the Prince of Darkness as opposed to ritual operations involving lesser spirits of the satanic hierarchy. This revolves round the ceremony of the Black Mass, of which there are very few descriptions

32. Charles Williams, War in Heaven (1930), Ch. 17 passim.

33. Arthur Edward Waite, The Occult Sciences (ca.1895).

34. The Friar's Tale.

35. The History of Witchcraft and Demonology, Ch.7. Summers traces the legend back to a Greek version in the sixth century.

in literature, with the possible exception of Justine,³⁶ by the Marquis de Sade. De Sade's influence on English authors is stressed by Mario Praz;³⁷ certainly many works in the period under study contain elements of perverse cruelty. It is, however, extremely difficult to prove any direct influence, and this will be mentioned with regard to specific works.

15. The settings in which actions of a supernatural kind take place are also invested with a horror of their own. In the eighteenth century, graveyard poetry was popular for some time, and trappings of the churchyard during the hours of darkness, presided over by the hooting owl, rustling ivy and flitting ghost, are met with again and again.³⁸ But nature itself had a "horror" of its own and was able, even without the supernatural trappings, to produce in the viewer feelings of awe and dread, and an awareness of the grandeur, strength and magnificence of Creation. This began, perhaps, with Il Penseroso,³⁹ and is increasingly evident in the poetry of the eighteenth century.

16. The ruined castle or tower is a very frequent setting of many of the terrors in the fiction of the genre. Michael Sadleir⁴⁰ has pointed out that a ruined tower or castle represents, more eloquently than words can express, the triumph of nature over man, and Varma has indicated that ivy is as much an accessory of inorganic decay as worms are of organic.⁴¹ As a setting, The Castle of Otranto is perhaps ill-defined, but subsequent romances and tales make more and more frequent

36. Justine, 1791; reissued in 1797 as La Nouvelle Justine, ou les Malheurs de la Vertu.

37. The Romantic Agony, Ch.3: "The Shadow of the Divine Marquis."

38. Blair, The Grave (1743 etc.) esp. Chapter 2.

39. Milton, Il Penseroso (1632).

40. Michael Sadleir, The Northanger Novels, English Association Pamphlet No. 68 (1927).

41. The Gothic Flame, Ch. 1. p. 20.

mention of ruins, in addition to the rest of what came to be known as the Gothic machinery, which will be discussed in the appropriate place.

17. It is impossible to give a single formula which satisfies every case, and different works have drawn upon the factors mentioned above in greatly differing degrees—some not at all. From this research, I exclude the purely grotesque and ghastly; stories of lunatic surgeons, man-eating plants, and so forth. Vicious cruelty, dissociated from all supernatural or aesthetic considerations, gives rise to a horror which is of quite a different order to that described here: more of a total revulsion. A tale such as The Squaw, by Bram Stoker, draws its effect purely from the singularly ghastly way in which Hutcheson meets his end. It will also be necessary to exclude science fiction, except where the dividing line is so indeterminate—as in Frankenstein—as to make any real distinction between that and horror fiction impossible.

18. It will be seen that the unknown, by its very nature, has caused mankind to synthesise a systematic mode of beliefs with which to explain that which, by its essence, cannot logically be explained. Whether or not one believes in ghosts, or other supernatural phenomena, is immaterial; the reader of this kind of fiction, as with any other, has to suspend his disbelief, and attempt some form of empathic communication with the tale as it unfolds. This process will be accomplished with greater or lesser ease, depending on the skill of the author.

19. The horror story has a function which is similar to that of classical tragedy, in that it acts on a certain emotion—in this case, a sense of cosmic dread, rather than the fear of a predominantly human situation or problem—and brings about a catharsis of that emotion. The greater the empathy the author is able to create, the greater effect will the sublimation or catharsis achieve. It is now a popular idea that the Gothic and Victorian novels are symptomatic of repressed sexuality. Whether or not this is true is irrelevant, and is a question which those

with medical training are best equipped to answer. The point is that they did, and perhaps still do, engage the attention of the reader, and by imparting a frisson, enlarge his emotional experience in one direction.

20. The earliest, crudest horror tales, and the sophisticated and terrifying Lovecraftian suggestion of "the scratching of outside shapes and entities on the known universe's utmost rim",⁴² stem from the same emotion and the same reaction to it. The horror tale is, and always has been, a reflection of man's fear of the infinite and the unknown, even his fears of himself. Lovecraft stated this truth, which underlies all fiction of this kind, in a most telling metaphor:-

One of the most merciful things in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far.⁴³

This thesis examines the extent to which authors have ventured on to these "black seas", and the varied nature of their discoveries there.

42. H.P. Lovecraft, Supernatural Horror in Literature (1927).

43. H.P. Lovecraft, The Call of Cthulhu (1926).

CHAPTER TWO

CHAPTER II
THE BEGINNINGS

"But a new current in taste can be discerned right from the beginning of the eighteenth century; there is a growing tendency to recognise the importance of imagination in works of art. 'Romantic', though continuing to mean something slightly absurd, takes on the flavour of attraction, suited to please the imagination ... the adjective has gradually ceased to retain its connexion with the literary genre (the romances) from which it was originally derived, and has come to express more and more the growing love for wild and melancholy aspects of nature."

MARIO PRAZ, The Romantic Agony (1933), Introduction.

1. The enormous changes which took place in literature during the course of the eighteenth century are, by their very scope and complexity, not able to be coherently summarised in a few pages. And yet it is necessary to examine, in some depth, the nature of the flux from which the first Gothic romance sprang in 1764. Mario Praz, in the quotation which heads this chapter, has pointed out "the growing love for wild and melancholy aspects of nature" which manifests itself increasingly from 1700 onwards, and this is of great significance in many works in the horror genre which followed in the nineteenth century. Its development during the years leading up to Walpole's novel must be examined.

2. The other major thread in the Gothic and subsequent schools for which much eighteenth-century literature is largely responsible is the nature of the characters. It will be seen during the course of this chapter that Walpole, Radcliffe and others owe a great deal to Richardson and Fielding, borrowing not only the female characters largely from these two authors, but also the strict morality and virtue which Richardson in particular stresses so strongly.

3. In addition to those, it will be seen that much of the general antiquarian interest which developed during the course of the eighteenth century exerts a powerful influence on the first writers in the horror genre. This interest in the past is not purely architectural, but is also manifest in the revival of interest in Shakespeare, and in other works such as the old ballads collected by Percy,¹ and the Arabian Nights,² translated into French in 1720.

4. There are other factors besides those already mentioned which combined to give rise to the so-called "Romantic" movement. It would be almost impossible to ascertain the effect of social and political change on the literature of any era, and there are few works in the horror genre which can be shown to derive purely from contemporary events. I would like to consider the literary background to The Castle of Otranto under the headings of nature, character type and antiquarianism; other minor aspects will then be examined where relevant.

5. Love of nature, particularly of its wild, desolate and frightening aspects, has always been present in literature. The description of the dark and evil pool in which Grendel and his dam lurk is one of the earliest,³ and a similar awareness exists in much Anglo-Saxon poetry, such as The Wanderer⁴ and The Seafarer.⁵ It would be wrong to regard this as Romantic, properly speaking. It is certainly vivid description, but is

1. Reliques (1765).

2. By Galland. The translation was made in 1717, and was available in this country very shortly afterwards.

3. Beowulf, ed. Klaeber, lines 1361-1373.

4. Wanderer, e.g. "waþema gebind; nalæs foldan blæd."

5. Seafarer, e.g.

"hægl scurum fleag.
Pær ic ne gehyrde butan hlimman sæ,
iscaldne wæg ..."

Both Anglo-Saxon poems are from the Exeter Book.

far from being an integral part of the work, though such descriptions tend to enhance the emotive aspects of the narrative.

6. In Milton's Il Penseroso (1631-1632?) there is a very fine description of the darker and gloomier side of nature, with the "most musical, most melancholy" sound of bird-song. In the Epitaphium Damonis (1639-1640) there is a reference to "Fluminaque, fontesque vagos, nemorumque recessus",⁶ and the opening lines of Lycidas (1637) describe a gloomy and depressing autumnal scene. The point of these examples, chosen from many, is that the awareness of the beauty inherent in the gloomier aspects of nature was by no means extinct at this period in English letters, but was linked with the classical tradition to such an extent that it can not, in any way, be regarded as an anticipation of romanticism. Perhaps the safest judgement would be to point out that the awareness of Nature's darker and more melancholy side has always been an aspect of classical as well as of romantic literature, particularly in elegiac verse.

7. Milton eschewed the limitations of ~~metre~~^{rhyme} in his long poems, but in the Augustan Age, which in theory began with the accession of George I, the couplet had become the dominant form, and Alexander Pope its most formidable exponent. One can find expressions of the awareness of the powers of nature in Pope's work and that of his contemporaries, but with very few exceptions⁷ they are linked with a rationalism which excludes imagination. Nature and indeed all Creation is, in the Age of Enlightenment, incorporated into a grand scheme in which there is no room for melancholy reflection and wonder. The Essay on Man (1734) makes this explicit; indeed the metrical form and the subject matter adopted by Pope were imitated by countless inferior authors, giving rise to a profusion

6. I.e., caves, rivers, winding brooks and recesses of the woods.

7. E.g., Eloisa and Abelard, whose opening is most uncharacteristic of Pope's normal style.

of rational and pastoral verse, much of which is without merit. Windsor Forest (1713) examines the beauties of nature, but we find nothing of wildness here; the beauty lies in the subordination of natural growth to artificial order, precise regulation of vegetation rather than hoary and picturesque undergrowth. Pope concentrates on good sense, reason and Augustan decorum, and excludes sensibility.

8. The first work which admitted the power of imagination with regard to Nature was The Seasons, by James Thomson. This long poem was completed in 1730. Thomson owes more to the past and to the Augustan literary tradition than to his own invention; the patriotic sentiment is strongly reminiscent of Windsor Forest and the style is latinate, tedious and heavy. None the less, we find an awareness of nature which is lacking in Pope, and which approaches more closely to the spirit of Wordsworth:-

Deep-roused I feel
A sacred terror, a severe delight,
Creep through my mortal frame; and thus, methinks,
A voice, than human more, the abstracted ear
Of Fancy strikes: "Be not of us afraid,
Poor kindred man! Thy fellow-creatures, we
From the same Parent-Power our beings drew,
The same our Lord, and laws, and great pursuit.

(Summer, 540-547)

When faced with nature, Thomson seemed permeated with a power which filled his entire being. In 1730, writing to Dodington, he remarked:-

Travelling has long been my fondest wish ... The storing one's imagination with ideas of all-beautiful, all-great and all-perfect nature — these are the true materia poetica, the light and colours with which fancy colours up her whole creation ...

9. It is in his treatment of the sterner side of nature that Thomson lays the foundations for what was to become, for the authors of the Gothic romance, an important part of their armoury of effects. His description of the raging torrent is a case in point:-

Wide o'er the brim, with many a torrent swelled,
And the mixed ruins of its banks o'erspread,
At last the roused up river pours along
Resistless, roaring; dreadful down it comes
From the rude mountain and the mossy wild,

Tumbling through rocks abrupt, and sounding far;
Then o'er the sanded valley floating spreads,
Calm, sluggish, silent; till, again constrained,
Between two meeting hills it bursts away,
Where rocks and woods o'erhang the turbid stream:
There gathering triple force, rapid and deep,
It boils, and wheels, and foams, and thunders through.

Nature, great parent! Whose unceasing hand
Rolls round the season of the changeful year,
How mighty, how majestic are thy works!
With what a pleasing dread they swell the soul,
That sees astonished, and astonished sings!

(Winter, 94-110)

It is precisely this "pleasing dread" which transforms itself to the "pleasing melancholy" arising from the prospect of wild scenery in the Gothic romances. This passage may be compared with the following:-

Behind the spot where they stood, the rock rose perpendicularly in a massy wall to a considerable height, and then branched out into overhanging crags ... On every side appeared the majestic summits of the Pyrenees; some exhibiting tremendous crags of marble, whose appearance was changing every instant as the varying lights fell on their surface; others, still higher, displaying only snowy points ...

RADCLIFFE: The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794)

He bound his steed to the branch of a shattered oak, and entered a narrow path, which wound among the mountains. He soon reached an open space, nearly square in its form, surrounded on three sides with flowering shrubs and branches, and presenting on the fourth, the entrance to a grotto, whose mouth was thickly overgrown with ivy, woodbines, and a variety of tangling weeds. Osbright heard the well-known murmur of the waterfall; his heart beat quicker as he listened to the sound, and his eyes sparkled in the moonbeams with tears of melancholy pleasure.

M.G.LEWIS: Mistrust (1808)

The sight of the awful and majestic in nature had indeed always the effect of solemnising my mind ... I remained in a recess of the rock, gazing on this wonderful and stupendous scene. The sea, or rather the vast river of ice, wound among its dependent mountains, whose aerial summits hung over its recesses. Their icy and glittering peaks shone in the sunlight over the clouds. My heart, which was before sorrowful, now swelled with something like joy ...

MARY SHELLEY: Frankenstein (1818)

10. The winter side of life lends itself to thoughts of mutability and sadness, and although Thomson may, on occasion, paint distressing scenes, he is never pessimistic or gloomy—Winter ends, typically, with an anticipation of the return of Spring. But the poetry which began to

appear during the next decades of the eighteenth century underlined more and more strongly the dark and dismal aspects of life. The Graveyard School, as it is generally called, was widespread, and produced a great many works, of which the most important and representative are mentioned here.

11. The first work was by Parnell, whose Night Piece on Death (1722) marks the beginning of this kind of poetry. It is elegiac with one important difference: the elegy is not occasioned by the death of any one man, but asserts the fact that all men must die; similar in mood to the Anglo-Saxon mutability poems.⁸ This was followed by the two most famous works in this genre: The Grave (1743) by Blair, and Night Thoughts (1740-1744) by Young.

12. Whereas Thomson had hailed the darkness of Winter as friend, Young addresses himself to darkness, and thence to thoughts of death:-

Night, sable goddess! from her ebon throne
In rayless majesty now stretches forth
Her leaden sceptre o'er a slumb'ring world,
Silence, how dead! and darkness, how profound!
Nor eye, nor list'ning ear, an object finds;
Creation sleeps.

(I, 18-23)

Silence and Darkness! Solemn sisters! twins
From ancient Night, who nurse the tender thought
To Reason, and on Reason build Resolve,
(That column of true majesty in Man),
Assist me: I will thank you in the grave;
The grave, your kingdom.

(I, 28-33)

Robert Blair mentions the terror of dissolution and death in even more specific terms:-

Doors creak, and windows clap, and night's fowl bird
Rook'd in the spire screams loud; the gloomy aisles,
Black plaster'd & hung round with shreds of scutcheons,

8. See Wanderer and Seafarer, in particular.

And tatter'd coats of arms, send back the sound,
Leaden with heavier airs, from the low vaults,
The mansions of the dead.

(33-40)

Although Blair's verse is unpolished in places, and is of variable quality, this kind of passage does remind the reader of the romantic attitude to death as typified in the following lines:-

Who hath not loiter'd in a green churchyard,
And let his spirit, like a demon-mole,
Work through the clayey soil and gravel hard,
To see the scull, coffin'd bones and funeral stole;
Pitying each form that hungry Death hath marr'd,
And filling it once more with human soul?

KEATS: Isabella, XLV

13. Blair also expresses, in common with all the graveyard poets, a view of death as the great leveller, which anticipates Gray:-

When self-esteem, or others' adulation
Would cunningly persuade us we are something
Above the common level of our kind;
The grave gainsays the smooth-complexion'd flattering,
And with blunt truth acquaints us what we are.

(234-238)

Unfortunately he lacks Gray's skill and restraint, and occasionally reverts to straightforward grisly descriptions. This one is strongly reminiscent of Hamlet, most probably intentionally so:-

Scarce a skull's cast up
But well he knew its owner, and can tell
Some passage of his life.

(459-461)

Insofar as Gray can be regarded as belonging to the Graveyard school — for only his Elegy in a Country Churchyard (1751) can be regarded as part of this category — he most certainly is the most refined, having combined the dignity of the classical elegy of the Il Penseroso or Lycidas type with much of the Graveyard imagery, merging these elements into a stately, dignified and restrained whole.

14. There were many other works in the Graveyard school which displayed less merit than the works of Young, Blair and Gray. Bishop Porteous,

in a poem entitled simply Death,⁹ describes some very gloomy scenes in the course of his exposition:-

I seek the shadowy vale
Of Death. Deep in a murky cave's recess,
Lav'd by oblivion's listless stream, and fenc'd
By shelving rocks, and intermingled horrors
Of yew and cypress shade, from all intrusion
Of busy moontide beams, the Monarch sits
In unsubstantial majesty enthron'd.
At his right hand, nearest himself in place
And frightfulness of form, his parent Sin ...

(11-19)

The Reverend Mr Moore, of Cornwall, produced a poem called A Soliloquy written in a Country Churchyard (1763) which, although set in the couplet form, owes much to Gray:-

Struck with religious awe and solemn dread
I view the gloomy mansions of the dead;
Around me tombs in mix'd disorder rise,
And in mute language teach me to be wise.

(1-4)

15. The Graveyard school, by its very nature, made popular a style of imagery which previously had only been used, sparingly, by writers of elegiac verse. Many of the images and much of the vocabulary become embodied in the Gothic stories, and are passed from there to the later offshoots of the horror genre. The words contain a high emotive charge. Some of the most common are: churchyard, grave, tomb, yew, cypress, ivy, decay, bat, owl, ruin, skull, bones, mouldering, charnel, mansions of the dead, curfew bells,¹⁰ ghosts, spectres, terror, horror, leaden sceptre, urn — these occur frequently and become common coin later as the result of the passion for "graveyard" poetry. One anomalous case

9. I have as yet been unable to trace any details of this author; this particular work was included in a very old anthology which was of no use apart from giving the text.

10. Collins, Ode to Evening (1749), as well as Gray's Elegy.

which must be mentioned is that of Lloyd, who in the early 1750s translated Gray's famous Elegy back to what he imagined the best and most fitting form—Latin. This is a unique attempt to blend a contemporary poem with the formalism and dignity of a vanished, classical age; and I think Lloyd missed the point that the poem belongs purely to the English school.

16. In 1745 appeared Cooper's Power of Harmony, that is roughly at the same time as the works by Blair and Young. It is a long poem, and similar in many ways to Pope's Essay on Man which had appeared eleven years earlier. Cooper endows nature with a moral power; a form of pantheism:-

To each nat'ral scene
A moral power belongs; as erst the woods,
Inspired by Dryads, wav'd their awful heads
With sacred horreur ...

(II, 19-22)

Cooper also perceives an identity between that which is beautiful and that which is good, which is strongly suggestive of Keats's Endymion (1818).

Cooper identifies the two qualities thus:-

Beauty and Good, th'unseparable pair,
Sweet offspring of the sky, those emblems fair
Of the celestial Cause, whose tuneful word
From discord and from chaos rais'd this globe,
And all the wide effulgence of the day.

(II, 38-41)

But turning to those things which cause fear and terror in nature, he goes on:-

But what perceive we in those dusky groves,
Where cypress with funereal horreur shades
Some ruin'd tomb; where deadly hemlock chills
Th'unfruitful glebe, and sweating yews distil
Immedicable poison?

With regard to the "pleasing dread" which was noted in Thomson, this is not forgotten:-

Whilst from within the intellectual pow'rs,
With melancholy pleasures on the brow
Of thoughtful admiration fix the sign
Of guiltless transport ...

... Here the mind
Lull'd by the sacred silence of the place,

Dreams with enchanted rapture of the groves
Of Academus ...

He sums up the significance of nature as follows:-

... this fair creation, where, impelled
By that great Author, every atom tends
To Universal Harmony.

Here Cooper is returning to a more conventional eighteenth-century view, resembling that of Pope. It is interesting to note how Cooper places the "melancholy pleasures" — a definite symptom of the growing sensibility — cheek by jowl with the "groves of Academus", which belong without doubt to the Augustan pastoral tradition. This is typical of much of the poetry of the period, which explores the possibilities of imaginative feeling, but in many respects does not deviate overmuch from the secure basis of the classical background.

18. W.Thomson published a poem called Sickness in 1746, and devotes five books to this gloomy subject whose affinities with the Graveyard school are very clear, reflecting James Thomson and Young in the opening lines:-

Affliction, hail!
Thou school of virtue! Open wide thy gates,
Thy gates of ebony! Yet, O, correct
Thy servant, but with judgement, not in wrath,
But with thy mercy, Lord!

(Book I)

And later, he refers to Young and Thomson specifically:-

... from Richmond's green retreats,
Where Nature's bard, the Seasons on his page,
Stole from the Year's rich hand; or Welwyn groves,
Where Young, the friend of virtue and of man,
Sows with poetic stars the nightly song,
To Phoebus dear as his own day! and drowns
The nightingale's complaint in sadder strains
And sweeter elegance of woe ...

(Book V)

These poems all display what A.R. Humphreys has described as a "growing sensitiveness to those moods which lie on the periphery of rationalism".¹¹

11. In the Pelican Guide to English Literature, Vol. IV, p.46.

18. Other works which reflected this growing sensitiveness include Johnson's Vanity of Human Wishes (1749) and Hurd's Letters on Chivalry and Romance (1762). In 1753, Bishop Lowth gave a series of lectures on the sacred poetry of the Hebrews, showing that it attained sublimity without drawing on the Graeco-Roman tradition; while Burke's Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (1756) shows that beauty may be inherent in fearful and terrible objects as well as in classical perfection, and he makes reference to "Gothic" manners and scenes. McPherson's Ossian appeared in the first few years of the 1760s, and was extremely popular, although the debate on authenticity lasted well into the nineteenth century. There is evidence in all of these works of a break from the formalism of the classical tradition, and by 1764 this was becoming more and more explicit.

19. Oriental history and legend had also been "discovered" in the eighteenth century. Galland had translated the Arabian Nights in 1717, and this had become available in English by about 1720. Turkish Tales were published in translation in 1708, and Persian Tales in 1714.¹² The antiquity of the originals increased their charm. Varma has pointed out that they influenced Johnson's Rasselas; they were certainly a source of inspiration for Beckford's Vathek (1781), and Lewis includes three Oriental horror tales in his Tales of Terror (1808). The interest in matters Eastern is reflected in much of the chinoiserie which became so popular in the mid-eighteenth century.

20. The resurgence of sensibility comes at the same time as the revival of interest in Shakespeare. There were nine editions of major value in the eighteenth century, each adding its own contribution to Shakespeare criticism. These were the editions of ~~Roe~~^W (1709), Pope (1725),

12. Varma mentions several others which I have not included here. See Gothic Flame, I.

Theobald (1743), Hanmer (1744), Warburton (1747), Johnson (1765), Capell (1768), Steevens (1773) and Malone (1790). This is reflected in all the Gothic novels, especially The Castle of Otranto, which borrows heavily from Shakespearian tragedy.

21. The significance of dreams has always aroused the interest of authors, and literary examples range from Pearl to the Nonne Preeste's Tale and the tragedies of Shakespeare. Both the Castle of Otranto and Frankenstein owe their conception to dream-images. Radcliffe, it is said, used to eat indigestible food to give herself nightmares which she could incorporate into her stories. Coleridge and de Quincey used opium to heighten dream sensation, and some specific details regarding the link between opium narcosis and literature will be mentioned in a later chapter.¹³ The dream as a feature of the story is first introduced into the Gothic romance by Clara Reeve, in The Old English Baron (1777), and it is very much in evidence thereafter.

22. Up to now, stress has been laid on the changing attitude to nature and the widening break with the classical models in literature as exemplars for authors. This has given an indication of how the picturesque and the move away from the Graeco-Roman tradition changed the face of literature between The Seasons and 1760. But the works I shall be considering are mostly novels, and it would be pertinent to determine what the horror genre owes to the works which went before. If the new attitude to nature gave the Gothic Romance its natural settings, and if the antiquarianism and historical interest led to these settings being established in "Gothic" or mediaeval times, the characters who moved through the pages of these new works were to an extent derivative.

23. This derivation is, to a very large extent, from Richardson.

13. Opium addiction, and the imagery which results from it, is a study of some complexity. The ground has been covered most competently by Alethea Hayter in Opium and the Romantic Imagination (1969). With particular reference to Lovecraft, see the appropriate chapter.

In Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded (1740) and Clarissa Harlowe (1747-1748), he introduced and elaborated the theme of the pursued heroine, whose virtue is threatened as the novel unfolds. Pamela Andrews is threatened by the attentions of Mr B., and Clarissa is in fact seduced by Robert Lovelace. Richardson described Clarissa as a young lady "of great Delicacy, mistress of all the Accomplishments, natural and acquired, that adorn the Sex", and his heroines are possessed of enormous moral strength of fibre, fortifying them in the face of adversity, and compensating for their lack of physical strength. Richardson's skill is so great, and his novels so compelling despite the artificiality of his narrative method, that they achieved very great popularity, and exercised a strong influence on works which followed. Morality is the keynote of Richardson's work — whether or not he and the reader obtain a certain relish from observing the procrastinated rape of the heroine. Virtue is shown as a quality whose intrinsic value can never be gainsaid, and it may be claimed with some justice that Richardson's sense of decorum and morality has a great deal in common with that which we find postulated in the works of Pope. This theme, of Virtue Rewarded, but always following a close pursuit, becomes one of the most ubiquitous in the Gothic romances, and in the tales of horror which followed. It is perhaps unexpected to find this genre based so strongly on such rigid values, but it is so (with a few exceptions), and the credit for this must go to Richardson. This does mean that many later works, with "Gothic" or mediaeval settings — particularly those of Radcliffe — do contain an incongruous element in that the characters do not conform to the historical period in which they are set. This fault is most apparent in The Castle of Otranto (1764). Certain Gothic heroines do derive from Shakespeare, and the villains are generally taken from Shakespearian sources rather than from works such as Sir Charles Grandison or Tom Jones, as might have been expected. Walpole created what was, for a long time, the archetypal Gothic villain, and because of his own personal

inclinations, this contains strong overtones of Macbeth rather than anything deriving from the immediate literary tradition.¹⁴ A minuter examination of this character derivation will be made with reference to specific works.

24. The actual form of the Gothic novel is little different from those which went before, save for the fact that they are shorter (unlike the seven volumes of Clarissa, for example) and, almost without exception, avoid the letter form which Richardson had adopted. This does not recur until 1898, when Dracula was written; much of the action in this work is conveyed through letters, the remainder being a series of journals and diaries. At the time when The Castle of Otranto appeared, the novel was in some disrepute as a literary form since it lacked any skilled exponents, and there was a great deal of inferior material in the circulating libraries. J.M.S. Tompkins throws valuable light on this in her book The Popular Novel in England, 1770-1800 (1932).¹⁵

25. The changes which I have been describing are generally referred to by using the terms Classical and Romantic. They may also be called Apollonian and Dionysian. The change was a very gradual one, although the Romantic movement is generally assumed to begin with the publication of the Lyrical Ballads in 1798. Movements, especially literary ones, rarely "begin" in such a straightforward way, and in this case the move towards Romanticism is set in motion as far back as the publication of The Seasons, and the "Gothic" phase must, strictly speaking, be regarded as an integral part of the move towards to "Romanticism". These names are only approximations, and the most difficult to appreciate is "Gothic", since its meaning changes throughout the eighteenth century.

26. In his Essay on Criticism, Pope makes the following reference

14. See Chapter 3.

15. Chapter I.

to the Middle Ages:-

From the same foes, at last, both felt their doom,
And the same age saw Learning fall, and Rome.
With Tyranny, then Superstition join'd,
As that the body, this enslaved the mind;
Much was believed, but little understood,
And to be dull was construed to be good;
A second deluge learning thus o'erran,
And the monks finish'd what the Goths began.

(685-691)

Again, in the Dunciad, he refers to

A Gothic library! of Greece and Rome
Well purged ...

(I, 145-146)

And later:-

The north by myriads pours her mighty sons,
Great nurse of Goths, of Alans, and of Huns!
See Alaric's stern port! the martial frame
Of Genseric! and Attila's dread name!
See the bold Ostrogoths on Latium fall!
See the fierce Visigoths on Spain and Gaul!

(III, 89-94)

His use of the words "Gothic" and "Goth" reveals very clearly the contemporary usage of the word; like "Romantic", it was disreputable, and signified "barbarous", "rude", "uncivilized" and "ignorant". But as the century progressed, and "romance" became the subject of an intenser interest, so also did the meaning of the word "Gothic" change. Instead of meaning "barbarous", it came to refer more and more to the age in which the Goths lived; in other words, it took the meaning "mediaeval". The Middle Ages, with their romances, became part of the acceptable literary tradition, and these ages, so despised by Pope, were now referred to as "Gothic", the name gaining overtones of imagination and interest. This contrasts, not only with Pope, but with Thomson, who in Winter (953-954) refers to "one vast mind / By heaven inspired from Gothic darkness called." The feeling of primitiveness gave way to quite a different interpretation. Hurd, in his Letters on Chivalry and Romance (1762), asks, "May there not be something in the Gothic (i.e., mediaeval) Romance peculiarly suited to the views of a genius and to the ends of poetry?" Edmund Burke, in his Sublime and

Beautiful (1756), points out that "the Gothic voices energetic strength," and insists that stern beauty, mountains, cataracts, desolate scenes and thunder and lightning may be used to convey a feeling of awe and terror. The meanings of "picturesque" and "mediaeval" are beginning to combine here, and the adjective has lost its pejorative usage. Gothic architecture signifies movement, imagination, the striving towards the point of the arch; while the previous love for classical architecture had been founded on the Grecian norm, which is ordered, complete, perfect and static. When Walpole subtitled his famous novel A Gothic Story, he used the word to convey this complicated, multiple meaning. Varma states, "To Walpole belongs the credit for having reversed the popular conception of the word 'Gothic'. He changed it from an adjective of opprobrium to an epithet of praise" (The Gothic Flame, I, pp. 12-13). One can agree with this judgement up to a point, but the reversal had taken place before Walpole's novel, though he certainly confirmed the usage. The changes in the meaning of the word after Walpole will be examined later.

27. The eighteenth century will be remembered for the numbers of mock ruins which were erected at that time, as well as the extravagant follies and chinoiserie, all constructed to bring artificial and supremely picturesque ruins into the fields and parks of England. The appeal of the ruin was extremely strong, and it is no coincidence that the ancient ruin is a hallmark of Gothic and later horror fiction. It is difficult to know exactly why the ruin should have exercised such a fascination. Michael Sadleir, in The Northanger Novels,¹⁶ claims that the essence of the Gothic spirit is the triumph of decay over order, and goes on:-

Creepers and weeds, as year by year they riot over sill and paving-stone, defy a broken despotism; every coping-stone that crashes from a castle-battlement into the undergrowth beneath is a small victory for liberty, a snap of the fingers in the face of autocratic power ...

(p.7)

16. The Northanger Novels (1927). See p.9 n.40 above.

And he goes on:-

...the appeal of the ruin — as also of the towering crag (another frequent phenomenon of the Gothistic picturesque) — was an appeal of the perpendicular as opposed to the horizontal ... The antithetical style in building is one of pinnacles, of fretted surfaces, of intricate broken shadows ... From this adoption of Gothic forms it was an easy transition to the adoption of similar mental attitudes.

(pp. 7-8)

Apollonian temple to mossy ruin; the groves of Academus to tangled, wild and picturesque woods; clean paving-stones to weedy broken pathways — all of this is part and parcel of the changes in literature up to 1764 and indeed beyond. There was a swelling flux of invention, imagination, sensibility and exploration, and Walpole's Castle of Otranto was founded on this, uniting the various tangled threads and welding them together into a short novel which burst on to the literary scene like a bombshell, establishing itself as the manifesto for the new genre which was to unfold and blossom in the decades that followed.

CHAPTER THREE

CHAPTER III

THE CASTLE OF OTRANTO

"It makes some of us cry a little, and all in general afraid to go to bed o'nights."

Letter from GRAY to Walpole, 30th December 1764

"(The Castle of Otranto is) remarkable not only for the wild interest of the story but as the first modern attempt to found a tale of amusing fiction upon the basis of the ancient romances of history."

SIR WALTER SCOTT, Introduction to Otranto, 1811

1. The Castle of Otranto¹ appeared in December 1764, though the title-page of the first edition bears the date 1765. The second edition appeared in the following year, and subsequent editions were produced on an average of one every two years thereafter. The first edition was supposedly a translation made by one William Marshal, Gent., from the "original Italian" of the mediaeval author. The second edition dropped this pretence and Walpole acknowledged authorship by appending his initials to a Sonnet, addressed to the Right Honourable Lady Mary Coke. In this and subsequent editions the title was expanded to The Castle of Otranto, A Gothic Story.

2. The novel is short and consists of five chapters. Manfred, Prince of Otranto, is preparing, as the story opens, to celebrate the marriage of his son, Conrad, to the beautiful Isabella. Conrad is killed by the mysterious fall of a huge helmet. Manfred, anxious not to be left

1. The Castle of Otranto, A Story, Translated by William Marshal, Gent. from the Original Italian of ONUPHRIO MURALTO, Canon of the Church of St Nicholas at Otranto. London: Printed for Tho. Lownds in Fleet-Street. MDCCLXV. The second edition subtitled "A Gothic Story". My quotations and references are from the OUP 1969 edition, edited by W.S. Lewis, the text being taken from the Works of Horatio Walpole, Earl of Orford (1798), II, 1-90, the last edition of the novel with which the author was concerned.

without an heir, determines to divorce his wife Hippolita and marry Isabella. She flees from him in confusion and terror, and he is prevented from following her by the appearance of a spectre. A young stranger confronts Isabella in her flight, and helps her to escape. Manfred orders him confined under the fatal helmet on suspicion of having been responsible for the death of his son. Strange happenings now abound in the castle. A huge hand is perceived, which terrifies the servants beyond measure. The massive helmet, an enormous sword brought to the castle by a procession of knights and the massive ghostly figure all point to the ancient prophecy, "That the castle and Lordship of Otranto should pass from the present family, whenever the real owner should be grown too large to inhabit it." Matilda, Manfred's daughter, and the imprisoned Theodore fall in love, and she helps him to escape. They meet together at a tomb by night and Manfred, hearing of this, assumes that Isabella is involved. He rushes to the spot and stabs the kneeling figure of a girl, discovering too late that it is his own daughter. He is overcome by remorse and returns to the castle which is shaken by a violent tremor. The walls burst asunder, and the gigantic figure of Alfonso, the true owner of the lands of Otranto (poisoned treacherously) rises heavenwards, proclaiming Theodore the true heir. Isabella and Theodore are eventually married, and pass their days with a gentle melancholy consuming their souls.

3. In his Preface to the first edition, Walpole claims significantly that the book in its "original" was printed at Naples in 1529, in the Black Letter.² This type-face would have given the book the appearance of a mediaeval document, which would have been in keeping with the setting of the tale. He goes on:-

Miracles, visions, necromancy, dreams, and other preternatural events are exploded now even from romances. That was not the case

2. Now "Gothic" type. This usage first recorded in 1781 (OED).

when our author wrote; much less when the story itself is supposed to have happened. Belief in every kind of prodigy was so established in those dark ages, that an author would not be faithful to the manners of the time who should omit all mention of them.

By producing what was purported to be a translation rather than an original work, Walpole was logically able to justify the inclusion of precisely these effects in his novel. At the same time, he was quite adamant that the tale contained the decorum and morality which the contemporary public would admire:-

The piety that reigns throughout, the lessons of virtue that are inculcated, and the rigid purity of the sentiments, exempt this work from the censure to which romances are but too liable.

As well as justifying the inclusion of supernatural machinery in a tale which is essentially a moral one, Walpole asserts that the story follows the dramatic unities, in the best Aristotelian tradition:-

The rules of the drama are almost observed throughout the conduct of the piece. The characters are well drawn, and still better maintained. Terror, 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.

The five chapters suggest the five acts of a tragedy, which is perhaps what leads Walpole to suggest that "Muralto" would have been wiser to cast the story in dramatic form.

4. Despite the fact that Walpole was being deliberately misleading in this preface, his general points are none the less sound. The text, however, is so full of Shakespearean quotations and allusions that no educated reader could have failed to guess that the author was a modern one; while the characters, in their attitudes and manners, belong so patently to the eighteenth century that the translation theory must have been untenable from the outset.

5. Originally, Walpole had attributed the superstition in the novel to the natural beliefs of a Gothic Age, and the purity of the values to a classical dramatic tradition. In the Preface to the second edition,

he makes this distinction once again, in different terms:-

It was an attempt to blend the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern. In the former all was imagination and improbability: in the latter, nature is always intended to be, and sometimes has been, copied with success.

He acknowledges his debt to Shakespeare, thereby justifying his inclusion of the minor characters Jaques and Diego.³ He points out how Macbeth and Julius Caesar are rendered the more powerful by the inclusion of "domestics", and he attacks Voltaire at length for failing to appreciate Shakespeare's mixture of "buffoonery and solemnity". He concludes:-

... I should be more proud of having imitated, however faintly, weakly, and at a distance, so masterly a pattern, than to enjoy the entire merit of invention, unless I could have marked my work with genius as well as with originality.

6. Walpole does not really succeed with his major characters. They give the impression of having been transported, in the case of the females, directly from the pages of Clarissa and, in the case of Manfred, from Macbeth, straight into a mediaeval setting. The fact that the language is deliberately laced with archaic terms does little to relieve this:-

I will go and offer myself to this divorce — it boots not what becomes of me. I will withdraw into the neighbouring monastery and waste the remainder of life in prayers and tears for my child and — the prince! Thou art as much too good for this world, said Isabella, as Manfred is execrable — But think not, lady, that thy weakness shall determine for me. I swear — hear me, all ye angels — Stop! I adjure thee, cried Hippolita...

(IV, 87)

Manfred, in particular, sounds pompous and completely unrealistic at crucial moments:-

Stop! audacious man, said Manfred, and dread my displeasure.

(II, 47)

And again:-

Forgive thee! Murderous monster! cried Manfred — can assassins forgive? I took thee for Isabella; but heaven directed my bloody

3. Jaques says that he is "comprehensive that we might meet the ghost of (our) young lord" (I,31), anticipating Mrs Malaprop by some ten years.

hand to the heart of my child! — Oh! Matilda — I cannot utter it — canst thou forgive the blindness of my rage?

(V, 105)

The purity and moral goodness of the heroine derives directly from the immediate literary tradition. Matilda freely forgives her father for having stabbed her and, as she slowly fades away, a crucifix is held in front of her "which she bathed with innocent tears, (and) prepared her for her passage to immortality". With justice does Bianca describe Isabella as "of a cheerful disposition, but her soul is pure as virtue itself". Passion, in the female characters, gives way inevitably to virtue; their thoughts are pure and their strength is their innocent and guileless attitude to life and each other:-

My lovely friend, said Isabella, whose heart was too honest to resist a kind expression, it is you that Theodore admires; I saw it; I am persuaded of it; nor shall a thought of my own happiness suffer me to interfere with yours. This frankness drew tears from the gentle Matilda; and jealousy, that for a moment had raised a coolness between these two amiable maidens, soon gave way to the natural sincerity and candour of their souls. Each confessed to the other the impression that Theodore had made on her; and this confidence was followed by a struggle of generosity, each insisting on yielding her claim to her friend. At length, the dignity of Isabella's virtue reminding her of the preference which Theodore had almost declared for her rival, made her determine to conquer her passion, and cede the beloved object to her friend.

(IV, 85-86)

Varma, referring to the Gothic novels in general, has remarked:-

The Gothic novels present no restful human shades of grey: the characters are mostly either endowed with sombre, diabolical villainy or pure, angelic virtue.⁴

This judgement is true of the heroines of Otranto, but in the case of Manfred, it is not strictly accurate. Walpole appears to have modelled him along the lines of a Shakespearian villain: largely evil, but with redeeming features which, in Shakespeare's work, give rise to the Pity which mingles with the Terror to produce catharsis, but which, in Walpole's novel, never quite succeed in making Manfred a credible figure. Passages

4. The Gothic Flame, I.

such as the following indicate his better points:-

Manfred was not one of those savage tyrants who wanton in cruelty unprovoked. The circumstances of his fortune had given an asperity to his temper, which was naturally humane; and his virtues were always ready to operate, when his passion did not obscure his reason. (I, 30)

Manfred's heart was capable of being touched. He forgot his anger in his astonishment; yet his pride forbad his owning himself affected. (II, 55)

I acknowledge I have been too hasty, said Manfred...Do you grant me the life of Theodore? replied the Friar. I do, said Manfred... (III, 57)

Thou guiltless but unhappy woman! unhappy by my crimes! replied Manfred, my heart is at last open to thy devout admonitions. Oh! could — but it cannot be — ye are lost in wonder — let me at last do justice on myself! To heap shame on my own head is all the satisfaction I have left to offer to offended heaven. (V, 108-109)

Manfred's remorse at the end, after Theodore has been pronounced the true heir, and his revelation of all the foul play which has led to the castle falling from the rightful family, does not, however, ring true. It is altogether too sudden a reversal of character, and his retiral thereafter into a monastery is difficult to find plausible. From the very first line, with its fairy-tale ring, to the last paragraph, the characters move with a curiously unnatural motion across the stage, the pace of the action is so rapid that they cannot develop, which is why the remorse of Manfred is not successful from a literary point of view, but is quite in keeping with a fairy tale. And The Castle of Otranto is, after all, a kind of fairy tale for grown-ups.

7. The use of supernatural machinery in the novel was an innovation, particularly since here it was used purely for its own sake, and not as an minor part of a work. The ghost of Alfonso, with its massive proportions, is far from being the ordinary kind of spectre, and it is perhaps derived from the concept of the geni in Oriental tales, in which

size is equated with strength and power. Varma states⁵ that the word "ghost" does not occur in the novel, but this is surely an oversight: in my edition, the word is mentioned seven times.⁶ The mysterious portrait becomes a stock feature of later romance.⁷ The spectre of the monk, in Chapter 5, appears as a warning to Frederic and, despite the fact that the description is not frightening to the modern reader, it was greatly admired and imitated. The strange sounds heard issuing from vaults and subterranean passages appear again and again in later fiction. So do the settings: the castle is the necessary centrepiece for all Gothic novels, though it is significant that Walpole did not include a ruin in his novel; this aspect of the picturesque, long popular, was first utilised in the horror genre by Mrs Radcliffe. Vaults, tombs, creaking doors, dungeons, fitful gleams of moonlight shining down at crucial moments, breathless pursuits down dark corridors — all of these effects establish themselves firmly in the Gothic tradition thanks to The Castle of Otranto. The same is true of the surprise revelations of identity, the "authentic writing" produced at the climax of the tale, the long-lost heir and the mysterious stranger. Much of this machinery is not original, and the patient researcher could prove much of it as derivative, particularly as the novel was the result of a dream of a giant hand in armour resting on a balcony in a Gothic castle, as Walpole's letters⁸ show.

5. III, 51.

6. P. 27, line 4; p.31, lines 22, 25, 27; p.33, line 5; p.40, lines 13,21.

7. See especially Stoker, The Judge's House.

8. "I waked one morning, in the beginning of last June, from a dream, of which, all I could recover was, that I had thought myself in an ancient castle (a very natural dream for a head filled like mine with Gothic story), and that on the uppermost bannister of a great staircase I saw a gigantic hand in armour" (Letter to Rev. William Cole, Feb. 28th, 1765).

But this would be to miss the point; and it were better to consider the work as sui generis.

8. Walpole's presentation of the Gothic heroine is of crucial importance since it is accepted into the tradition almost unaltered, and persists as an idée fixe up to and including Stoker. Persecuted virtue always triumphs, if we discount such anomalous works as Lewis's The Monk, in which she is submitted to every degradation. We will be able to examine this type of character all through this study. The villain remains passionate and dominated by base motives, though he undergoes considerable elaboration later at the hands of Radcliffe and of Byron, and has undergone considerable change when we come to consider Poe.

9. Along with the imagery, mechanics and characters of the first Gothic tale, the moral ethos which pervades it must be regarded as one of the most significant legacies to posterity. In this respect, Walpole does not deviate from the general contemporary pattern of morality to any great extent, and by its very nature, the horror tale is one in which the forces of good should eventually prevail over the forces of evil. The morality and ethics of the conflict are therefore largely predetermined, as in the case of tragedy; though in the first tales this dichotomy was perhaps made too obvious, too distinct. If The Castle of Otranto is imperfect in this respect, then at least one can agree with Varma's assertion that "a book is valuable in literary history not so much intrinsically as for the influence it exercises upon greater and more significant works".⁹ The novel is a unique work, the first to exploit the macabre purely for its own sake. It established the term "Gothic" firmly as a literary term, and was undoubtedly a motive force of the first order, giving the horror genre its first impetus.

9. Quoted by Varma, with reference to Otranto.

CHAPTER FOUR

CHAPTER IV

ANN RADCLIFFE - THE GOTHIC ROMANCE

"Virtue may for a time be pursued by misfortune, and justice be obscured by the transient triumphs of vice:- but the Power, whose peculiar attributes they are, clears away the clouds of error, and even in this world establishes his THRONE OF JUSTICE."

RADCLIFFE: The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne: A Highland Story, XII.

1. Between the publication of The Castle of Otranto and Radcliffe's first novels, several imitations of the first Gothic Tale had been printed. The most notable was by Clara Reeve, who entitled her story The Champion of Virtue, but reissued it in 1777 as The Old English Baron: A Gothic Story. In her Preface, Reeve pays tribute to Walpole, and admits that his work was the genesis of her own, particularly in its attempt to mingle "the most attractive and interesting circumstances of the ancient romance and the modern novel". She found fault with The Castle of Otranto, particularly with Walpole's use of the supernatural machinery:-

... the machinery is so violent it destroys the effect it is intended to excite. Had the story been kept within the utmost verge of probability, the effect had been preserved, without losing the least circumstance that excites or detains the attention.

With some justice, Reeve claims that the supernatural, if used at all, "must be kept within certain limits of credibility", and in this respect she is the forerunner of Radcliffe, whose "supernatural" effects are engineered with great subtlety and care. Reeve's novel is slight, and the characters uninteresting, but her use of the supernatural is extremely subtle, being restricted to a vision of a ghost in a dream, which brings

about a discovery which can ensure the return of feudal lands to their rightful owner. We see here some of the effects which had been suggested by Walpole, and were to be developed by Radcliffe. The long-lost heir, for example, obviously stems from Theodore, rightful heir of Otranto; and, like Walpole's novel in its first edition, and Radcliffe's Sicilian Romance (1790), the story is supposedly from an old manuscript. The mediaeval setting is not Italian, but the story is set in the reign of Henry VI, in England. Despite some laborious historical touches, such as a tournament, Reeve does not succeed in being convincing; the characters are very much of the eighteenth century and have a puppet-like quality which is mildly ridiculous.

2. Reeve's novel also introduced the dream into the Gothic mainstream, and it recurs frequently in later work. There is evidence in her novel, too, of a sensibility which was absent even from Otranto:-

"... if you have recommended me to this gentleman in order to be rid of me, in that case I will submit to your pleasure, as I would if you should sentence me to death."

During this speech, the tears made themselves channels down Edmund's cheeks; and his two noble auditors, catching the tender infection, wiped their eyes at the conclusion.

This may owe something to Mackenzie's Man of Feeling (1771), which is a series of sketches, profoundly sentimental in character, in which tears flow very profusely, occasioned by sights of sadness, wildness or even beauty. Sterne's Sentimental Journey had been published in 1768, and this work also expresses the increasing capability for sensation and sensibility which, in Walpole, was due more to the convention than to any innate feeling for the subject. From this late eighteenth-century tendency the Gothic heroes, and, later, the villains, do inherit a melancholy spirit, and the capability of being profoundly moved, not just by events, but also by scenery. From this derive the disdainful, haughty yet pensive and stricken heroes of Byron and, more pertinent to the present work, Edgar Allan Poe.

3. Ann Ward was born in London on 9th July, 1764, just five months before the publication of The Castle of Otranto. Her parents, William and Ann, were in trade, although they were linked with nobility, and distantly related to a surgeon of the Royal Household. When she was twenty-three she married William Radcliffe, a graduate of Oxford, who intended taking silk, but who turned instead to management of The English Chronicle. His duties kept him from home a good deal, and Ann Radcliffe took to writing in her considerable spare time. She found the novel of suspense the most conducive form to her talents, and "so far was she from being subjected to her own horrors, that she often laughingly presented to Mr Radcliffe chapters, which he could not read alone without shuddering" (Memoir, 8). Two years after her marriage, she produced The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne (1789) and this was followed in 1790 by A Sicilian Romance. The following year, she produced The Romance of the Forest. Three years later, in 1794, she published The Mysteries of Udolpho, which is her most famous novel. Her last work was The Italian, or, The Confessional of the Black Penitents, which appeared in 1797. After this, her literary output ceased suddenly. She had become very famous, and her last two novels had brought her what was, in those days, a very considerable sum of money. But apart from personal journals, and letters to friends, she wrote no other major work apart from Gaston de Blondville, or, The Court of King Henry III Keeping Festival at Ardenne, written in 1802 but not published until 1826, three years after her death. It is in the anonymous Preface¹ to this edition that it is pointed out:-

In Romance, she probably felt that she had done enough; and, feeling it impossible to surpass her "Mysteries of Udolpho" and her "Italian", declined to subject herself to criticism by publication.

(p. 89)

1. Edith Birkhead, in The Tale of Terror: a Study of the Gothic Romance (New York edn., Russell & Russell, 1963), Vol. III, p. 56, states that the Memoir is the work of T.N. Talfourd. This sounds plausible but I have not been able to confirm it.

Certainly Gaston de Blondville was not intended for publication during her lifetime. It was inspired by the ruins of Kenilworth Castle, of which she was very fond. It is, however, so dissimilar to the mainstream of the Gothic stories which she wrote that it will not be considered here.

4. Because of the wealth of detail with which Mrs Radcliffe renders her descriptions of foreign lands so impressive, it was generally assumed that she had visited the places about which she writes. The Memoir asserts, however, that she left England only once, on a trip with her husband to Holland and Germany, returning via the Rhine. The Edinburgh Review, in May 1823, a few months after her death, put forward the view that she had accompanied her husband to Italy but however attractive this theory may sound it is, regrettably, untenable. She had a very sharp eye for detail, and took copious notes describing scenery which she saw, as well as detailed descriptions of castles, wild landscapes and seascapes. It is obvious from her personal writings² that she was able to create a composite image, with the help of her powerful imagination, leading to those exotic and vivid scenes which she describes so well in her later works.

5. Another fallacy about Radcliffe is that she became insane as the result of contemplating the terrors which she had created in her world of imagination. This is palpably untrue. The Memoir justly makes the point that Mrs Radcliffe herself

... was amazed at an absurd report that, haunted by the images of fear, with which she thrilled her readers, she had sunk into a state of mental alienation. A more unphilosophical foundation for an untruth was never imagined; for it is obvious, that through all her books she holds entire mastery over all the terrors which she employs, and even sedulously prepares the means of explaining them by natural causes.

(p. 94)

In point of fact, she died in her fifty-ninth year, at about 3.0 a.m. on

2. Memoir, attached to Gaston de Blondville (1826).

February 7th, 1823. Dr Scudamore, who attended her in her last illness, and who had been called in on January 11th, came to the conclusion that she had suffered from "spasmodic asthma" which, along with "inflammation affecting the membranes of the brain", caused her eventual, peaceful death. She had never sought the public eye, contenting herself with a quiet home life, enlivened by a love for music (especially Handel) and literature (especially Shakespeare) and an occasional visit to the theatre. As the Memoir says:-

The life of Mrs Radcliffe is a pleasing phenomenon in the literature of her time. During a period in which the spirit of personality has extended its influence, till it has rendered the habits and conversations of authors almost as public as their compositions, she confined herself, with delicate apprehensiveness, to the circle of domestic duties and pleasures.

(p. 1)

6. There is a considerable lack of biographical material about Radcliffe. Varma and others draw largely on the Memoir I have mentioned, frequently quoting it word for word. The facts stated here are perhaps the only ones of significance which can be stated with certainty.

7. In the eight years during which Radcliffe's major novels appeared, her technique and art developed to an extraordinary degree of perfection; and although her first novel, The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne, is a light-weight work, it contains the germ of many of the effects which she was to use with such skill in her later works. Although her last two novels are her masterpieces, and deserve the title of "landmarks" in the horror tradition, it will be pertinent to examine the first three novels as well. From them, as from the hazy mists of early dawn, emerge the first signs of the morality, imagery and techniques of characterisation and description of scenery which made her last two novels so effective, and so very influential in the horror genre thereafter, which bears the stamp of Radcliffe up to the present day. It is because Radcliffe was so influential that I have decided to mention all of her works, though a fully detailed study can obviously not be made in this thesis.

8. The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne: A Highland Story³ was written in 1789. The Earl of Athlin has been killed by the Baron Malcolm. The widowed Countess Matilda is left with a son, Osbert, and a daughter Mary. After twelve years, Osbert wishes to avenge his father's death, and to this end joins forces with Alleyn, a low-born but enthusiastic youth whom he meets on a long walk over the desolate hills near Athlin. Alleyn is enamoured of Mary, and she shows signs of returning his love. On attacking the Castle of Dunbayne, Alleyn and Osbert are captured and thrown into imprisonment. Osbert is only prevented from committing suicide in his despair by the sound of a lute coming into his chamber.

Meanwhile Mary is seized, and faints when she is carried to a gloomy cavern by armed men. She awakens to discover Alleyn beside her, and after conducting her back to the castle, he reveals how he managed to escape with the help of Edric, a soldier. At the mouth of a subterraneous passage leading from the castle he had found Mary swooning in the arms of Malcolm's men, and had rescued her. Alleyn returns to Dunbayne to release Osbert, and is told that Osbert will be killed unless the Countess agrees to hand over Mary for Malcolm's pleasure. The prospect is a terrible one for the young girl, but she agrees for her brother's sake.

Back at Dunbayne, Malcolm arranges an execution in order to torture Osbert, who faints on the scaffold at the thought of his mother's distress. He is conveyed to a new prison, from which he escapes by means of a secret trapdoor to the chambers of a Baroness and her daughter Laura, who had been responsible for the sounds of the lute which had sustained him before. The

3. The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne: A Highland Story, 4th edn. 12^o (London 1811). In my quotations from Radcliffe's works I have, wherever possible, used contemporary editions. I have eliminated the archaic long 's' and dispensed with the practice of prefixing every line of speech with inverted commas. I have also rationalised the chapter numbers, which are misleading in some cases, certain numbers being repeated.

Baroness tells of how she had married the original Baron of Dunbayne, but how he and his son had died while she was absent from the castle. Malcolm, the brother of the late Baron, had imprisoned her in order to gain the lands of Dunbayne, and this state of affairs had lasted for the last fifteen years. The Baroness's daughter and Osbert fall in love, and shortly afterwards, Osbert is able to make good his escape from the Castle of Dunbayne with Alleyn's help.

Back at Athlin, a challenge to single combat is sent to Malcolm, but no reply is received. During a storm, a ship is wrecked near the castle, and Matilda becomes the hostess of a foreigner who agrees to stay at Athlin until another ship can be obtained. It is discovered that he is the Count de Santmorin, a native of Switzerland, anxious to clear up the affairs of the vanished Baroness. He is enraged when he hears of Malcolm's perfidy. Gradually, he becomes aware of Mary's charms and, to the grave unhappiness of the faithful Alleyn, the Countess and Osbert try to arrange his nuptials with Mary, who is distressed at the prospect. The Castle of Athlin is stormed by Malcolm, but his soldiers are repulsed and he falls to Osbert's sword, revealing on his deathbed that the Baroness's son is not dead, but has been sent away. Very soon afterwards, Osbert is attacked and severely wounded by masked men, but on recovering arranges his wedding to Laura.

Alleyn in the meantime has disappeared, and Mary, on the day of the wedding, is captured, and taken to a ruined abbey. There she is rescued by Alleyn, who had gone off to forget her, and Osbert, who arrives shortly afterwards, discovers that it is the Count de Santmorin who has arranged the abduction and the attack on Osbert, for his own ends. Revealing himself, the Count begs for death, but is suffered to leave, uttering expressions of the most abject contrition. On the return of the united party to the castle of Athlin, the Baroness recognises in Alleyn her son Philip, presumed dead. It is discovered that he had been brought up by a local

peasant, but was in fact a foundling. Alleyn is now declared the Baron of Dunbayne, and the two houses are united in felicity by a double marriage.

9. The faults of the novel are many. The characters have little depth, and the motivations arise purely out of the situations created by the movement of the plot. In this respect, the novel resembles Walpole's. The female characters, in particular, are stereotyped, and cast in the common mould of eighteenth-century virtue:-

(Matilda) ... had declined into a gentle and not unpleasing melancholy which gave a soft and interesting character to the natural dignity of her character ...

(I, 6)

while her daughter Mary is almost indistinguishable from Walpole's

Isabella:-

The graces of her person were inferior only to those of her mind, which illumined her countenance with inimitable expression.

(I, 6)

Nature had bestowed on her a heart susceptible of all the fine emotions of delicate passion; a heart which vibrated in unison with the sweetest feelings of humanity; a mind quick in perceiving the nicest lines of moral rectitude, and strenuous in endeavouring to meet up to its perceptions.

(V, 103)

Laura, the incarcerated beauty, is of the same mould:-

The bloom of her youth was shaded by a soft and pensive melancholy ... every feminine grace played around her; and the simple dignity of her air declared the purity and nobility of her mind. On perceiving the Earl, a faint blush animated her cheek ...

(VI, 125)

The wicked Baron, on the other hand, is a wholly evil tyrant, possessed of all the vices of which mankind is capable:-

The mind of the Baron...was agitated with all the direful passions of hate, revenge and exulting pride.

(III, 36-37)

And his deathbed contrition is as unrealistic as the confessions of

Manfred:-

"My Lord," said Malcolm in a low tone, "you see before you a wretch, anxious to relieve the agony of a guilty mind ... "

(X, 220-221)

Despite the fact that the setting is supposed to be mediaeval, the sonnet which Osbert drops to Laura is definitely of the eighteenth century. The Baroness's recognition of her long-lost son after a separation of fifteen years strains the credulity of the reader, despite the birthmark device; and the characters have a habit of being in the right place at the right time with such unfailing regularity that much of the suspense is lost. At the same time, it must be pointed out that much of this is conventional: the reader is capable of appreciating Shakespearian comedy without any difficulty, and accepting the logical improbabilities without demur.

10. Much of the novel is derived from the pattern set down by Walpole. The device of the long-lost heir, recognised at the last moment by a birth-mark, is reminiscent of Theodore; and the subterraneous passages in the Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne are similar to those down which Isabella flees in Otranto. Malcolm and Manfred have much in common; even the name Matilda is common to both novels, though this is probably pure coincidence. In both books, a wedding is interrupted at the last moment, and this curious circumstance recurs in A Sicilian Romance and many later works. The sensibility and tearfulness of the heroes is very similar to that displayed by the major characters in Walpole's work, as well as that of Clara Reeve. Isabella's nobility is very similar to that of Mary, particularly at the point where she hears of Malcolm's evil ransom offer:-

... she resolved, that, since she must be wretched, she would be nobly wretched; since misery dictated one sacrifice, she would devote herself the victim.

(V)

The portrait of Mary which Alleyn gazes at reminds the reader of the picture of Alfonso in Otranto; in both books, the climax of the story takes place in a religious place, the tomb and the ruined abbey respectively. Most important of all, virtue, although pursued relentlessly, eventually triumphs, as the closing passage of the novel, quoted at the head of this

chapter, shows.

11. Although there is no supernatural machinery in the novel, the reader is kept in a state of constant suspense; and Radcliffe, though clumsily, begins to display command of the effects of atmosphere and detail which she uses with superb effect in her later works. The mysterious sound of the lute, drifting mysteriously into the chamber; the Gothic ruins in the woods — those mysterious buildings which occur again and again in the later fiction of horror —, have their inception here. Above all, there is the awareness of the terrible and wild aspects of nature, which Walpole did not mention, and Reeve only hinted at. There are the gleams of moonshine illuminating a secret trapdoor at the crucial moment and, although this device was first used by Walpole, it becomes part of Radcliffe's stock-in-trade. Although the novel is lacking in many respects, and only presents the reader with a monochrome picture of characters and events, descriptions of such scenes as the terrible storm battering round the Castle of Athlin point towards greater things to come.

12. A Sicilian Romance⁴ was written the following year. The action takes place at the end of the sixteenth century. The Marquis of Mazzini, having lost his first wife, has married Maria de Vellorno, a beautiful, captivating, but scheming woman. The Marquis has three children, Julia, Emilia and Ferdinand, by his first wife, and they are cared for by a governess, Madame de Menon. A strange light is seen in a deserted wing of the castle of Mazzini, and an old servant, Vincent, dies on the point of revealing a dreadful secret about that very part of the building. A young nobleman, Hippolitus de Vereza, arrives at the castle, and although the Marchioness is infatuated with him, he clearly prefers Julia, who returns his affection. Exploration of the haunted wing reveals nothing, but

4. A Sicilian Romance, 2 vols. 3rd edn., 12^o (London 1796).

strange sounds and shapes are seen at night, which the Marquis explains by mentioning that a century before, a prisoner, Henry della Campo, had died there, and that his ghost had certainly returned.

Julia and Vereza reach a definite understanding, but during his absence, the Marquis informs Julia that she is to be married to the Count de Luovo, a most unpleasant man. Two of his previous wives had died of nervous disorders, and his son had left home, and was presumed dead. The wedding is arranged and they determine to escape. Ferdinand leads his sister from the castle, but is surprised by the Marquis who stabs Hippolitus, takes Julia back, and confines his son Ferdinand in a dungeon. On the wedding day, Julia is found to have vanished. The Count de Luovo goes off in search of his reluctant bride, and in the course of a fruitless search, enters a cave of banditti whose leader he recognises as his own son, Riccardo. Ferdinand, meanwhile, hears hollow groans in some vaults adjacent to his dungeon, and is terrified. Madame de Menon discovers the Marchioness in a compromising situation with a new lover, Vincini, and leaves the castle in disgust. During her wanderings, she encounters Julia, who has escaped with her maid Caterina, at whose sister's cottage she is staying. Together they seek refuge in the monastery of St Augustin, where Julia gains the confidence of a nun called Cornelia who, she discovers, is the sister of Hippolitus. She tells the melancholy news of his supposed death, much to Cornelia's dismay.

The Marquis hears that Julia is in the monastery, and comes to demand his daughter. The abbot refuses to let her go, saying that he knows a dreadful secret which he will reveal to the world if he persists in his persecution. The abbot, however, has a sullen and fickle nature, and after a second visit by the Marquis, informs Julia that she must marry Luovo or take the veil. She reluctantly chooses the latter alternative, but Ferdinand, who has escaped from his dungeon, makes his way into the monastery, and informs his sister that Hippolitus is not dead. They

escape by night, meeting on the way a friar who heard the last confession of the dying Vincent, and knows the dread secret. He tells them nothing, however. The two young people embark in a ship, but are wrecked and driven back to the shore of Sicily, where they are given hospitality.

Hippolitus, in the meantime, gains Sicily and comes to the monastery to find that his sister has died, and that Julia has gone. He goes off in search of her, and in a ruined house sees banditti rifling the dying body of a man who seems to be Ferdinand. Elsewhere in the house he comes across his beloved Julia, and they escape once more, though they fear that Ferdinand is lost for ever. They are chased by Luovo's men, and run for shelter to a cave. Hippolitus guards the entrance and is captured, but Julia finds a secret door deep in the recesses of the labyrinth, and on opening it is confronted by a woman who turns out to be her mother, Louisa Bernini, who had not died (an effigy was buried) but who had been kept locked up since the advent of Maria at the castle of Mazzini. Vincent had been responsible for bringing food to her, though since his death the Marquis had discharged this duty. She had been responsible for the strange noises in the castle.

The Marquis, in the meantime, decides to poison his first wife, but hardly has he left the deadly food when he is himself seized with terrible pains. The second Marchioness is found to have committed suicide, and in a letter reveals that she has left a poisoned drink for him. With his dying breath he reveals the dread secret to Ferdinand, who rushes to the cave, finding it empty. Eventually he comes across a lighthouse, wherein he discovers his mother, Julia and Hippolitus. The latter had escaped from Luovo's men, found Julia and Louisa, and taken them to safety, before they could eat the poisoned food. Ferdinand becomes the sixth earl of Mazzini, Hippolitus and Julia are happily married, and Madame de Menon returns with them to the castle, where they live the remainder of their days in complete felicity. The novel ends with the assertion that virtue

must always triumph over evil.

13. This novel shares many of the faults of its precursor. The characters are still propelled hither and thither by the plot, and are as featureless as those in the earlier novel. Emilia and Julia belong to the usual model of heroine:-

The person of Emilia was finely proportioned. Her complexion was fair, her hair flaxen, and her dark blue eyes were full of sweet expression. Her manners were dignified and elegant, and in her air was a feminine softness, a tender timidity, which instantly attracted the beholder. The figure of Julia was light and graceful — her step was airy — her mien animated, and her smile enchanting. Her eyes were dark, and full of fire, but tempered with modest sweetness. Her features were finely turned — every laughing grace played around her mouth, and her countenance quickly discovered all the various emotions of her soul. The dark auburn hair which curled in beautiful profusion in her neck, gave a finishing charm to her appearance.

(I, 13-14)

The Marquis is a spiteful, wicked man, and of Luovo we are told little save that he "delighted in simple, undisguised tyranny". Ferdinand and Hippolitus are filled with sensibility, like Walpole's Theodore, and the earlier Alleyn. Since there is the bare minimum of physical description, it is difficult to tell the characters apart, except by name. Julia, like Mary in the earlier novel, has auburn hair; and they are almost identical in other respects. The Baroness's recognition of Philip in the first novel is difficult to accept; and Louisa's recognition of her daughter after the lapse of so many years is even more incredible. The plot is helped along by a series of misadventures and coincidences, depending on the characters being in the right place at the right time.

14. On the other hand, we observe in this work a degree of sophistication which was absent in The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne, even admitting these flaws. For the first time, we are introduced to the banditti, who figure in many later tales. Once more, a wedding is interrupted at the last moment, and this recurs in later works. The idea of the imprisoned wife, based on the Baroness Malcolm, introduces a theme of incarceration which occurs again in later works, and returns in Jane Eyre

and, with devastating effect, in the stories of Edgar Allan Poe. The idea of the providential gleam of moonlight, illuminating the means for escape, is used with greater subtlety here, and the scenes of pursuit are more convincing than those in her first novel. Once again a missing child turns up, but Riccardo is a bandit, not a long-lost heir, and this attaches a new interest to the device. The description of the ruins, the flights down passageways, and the sufferings of the heroines are much more delicately handled. The person of the confessor in The Castle of Otranto returns in the form of the Abbot of St Augustin, an unsympathetic figure, sullen and moody, and perhaps the only character to be motivated internally rather than by externals. He is the forerunner of the evil and fascinating Schedoni in The Italian. As in The Castle of Otranto and The Old English Baron the story is supposedly taken from a manuscript, and this becomes established in very many stories in the genre, even up to those of Lovecraft. Many later works are either based on old writings or reported statement, in which a narrator recalls a past event.⁵

15. A Sicilian Romance introduces, for the first time in Radcliffe, the suggestion of the supernatural. Radcliffe never used a "genuine" ghost in her tales,⁶ and her wraiths and phantoms are always explained away in a supremely rational way. But she is still able to create an atmosphere of chilly suspense, and the haunted wing of the Castle of Mazzini is a case in point. The suggestion, carefully planted, that the ghost of della Campo is responsible for the mysterious sights and sounds is enough to make the reader, along with Ferdinand, feel decidedly uneasy when the "hollow sound" is heard echoing into the dungeon. Despite this occasionally tiresome habit of explaining the phantoms away, this device is more effective

5. Examples range from Scott (Wandering Willie's Tale), Poe (MS found in a bottle), Le Fanu (Carmilla, Sir Dominick's Bargain) and Stoker (Dracula) to Lovecraft (The Statement of Randolph Carter).

6. Except in Gaston de Blondville, which is atypical.

than the spectre of the monk, blatantly revealed by Walpole. As Lady Macbeth pointed out:-

'tis the eye of childhood

That fears a painted devil. (Macbeth, II, ii, 56-57)

Like Reeve, Mrs Radcliffe refuses to engineer her effects so clumsily; she hints rather than describes: she suggests a tentative outline, and leaves the reader's imagination to supply the rest. Her skill, in short, lies in the delicate use of suggestion, and even in this relatively immature novel it is possible to glimpse the beginnings of what was later to become a fine art.

16. The Romance of the Forest⁷ was published in 1791, and, according to the subtitle, the novel is "interspersed with some pieces of poetry". It is a longer novel than the first two, running into three volumes in its first edition. The plot, briefly, is as follows:-

Pierre de La Motte, having been discovered as a swindler, is forced to flee Paris with his wife. The time is the seventeenth century. With him, he has two servants, Peter and Annette. At night, they are lost in a storm, and La Motte goes to a cottage to ask the way. He is imprisoned, and his captors present him with a beautiful young girl of about eighteen, and demand, at gunpoint, that he take her and depart for ever, otherwise they will both be killed. La Motte and his wife console the young woman as they drive away, though she can say little about what has happened, being too upset. In company with the girl, Adeline, they discover a Gothic abbey in a forest, and after some exploration decide to stay there, since part of it is habitable.

They all settle down to a fairly routine existence, and la Motte finds, to his relief, that his sins show no signs of catching up with him. Adeline reveals that she is the only child of one Louis de St Pierre, of Paris, who confined her in a convent when she was very young. She refused to take the veil when she grew older, and her father had taken her from the

7. The Romance of the Forest, Interspersed with some pieces of poetry by the authoress of A Sicilian Romance, 3 vols., 12^o (London 1791).

convent and to a lonely house where, she felt sure, some awful danger would come to her. At this point, she had been taken away by La Motte. The months pass by, but La Motte becomes gloomy and reserved. Madame La Motte assumes that he is in love with Adeline, and grows cool in her manner to the girl, who is deeply upset. La Motte finds an underground chamber with a chest in it, containing a skeleton. His son, Louis, turns up at the abbey, and appears to have a distinct fondness for Adeline, though his mother discourages this. Soon afterwards, a party of men arrive at the abbey, and it is discovered that their leader, the Marquis of Montalt, is the owner of the ruins. When La Motte and the Marquis meet, they obviously recognise each other, and there are signs of anger on both sides; they retire to discuss some secret matter between themselves.

Meanwhile, Adeline is strongly drawn to a young man, Theodore, who is part of the Marquis's company. The abbey, apparently, is haunted, and local people will not go near it since, it is rumoured, someone was once imprisoned there, and came to an unfair death; Adeline ponders over this disturbing story, and has a series of most distressing dreams, in which images of death and terror come to her in a most vivid form. Theodore goes off to a distant province, having just had time to warn Adeline of some awful danger concerning her very life. In her room that night, she discovers a secret door leading to a room in which she finds a dagger and an ancient manuscript. The Marquis comes to the abbey, and declares he loves Adeline; she will not accept his suit, but she promises to be civil to him, since their residence at the abbey depends entirely on the Marquis's good will. When she looks at the manuscript, she finds that it is a personal diary, written by a prisoner in the abbey in 1642. Over a period of several nights, she reads this manuscript in her room, sometimes with the uneasy sensation that someone is sighing very close to her. The old writing does not disclose the identity of the prisoner, who describes his three

weeks of incarceration, and the impact of the terrible news that he must choose to die either by the sword or by poison. With a despairing sense of impending death, the writer had not proceeded further.

Peter, in the meantime, tells Adeline that the Marquis has evil designs on her, and she resolves to escape. She is foiled, and taken by force to Montalt's castle, whence she escapes, thanks to the timely arrival of Theodore, who takes her off to safety. He confesses his love, which she returns, and informs her that he has left his regiment to come to her assistance. They reach an inn, but in a scuffle with the Marquis's men Theodore is wounded on the head. A doctor is called, and concludes that his life is in danger, but thanks to the ministrations of another physician he recovers. The Marquis himself arrives at the inn, and Theodore manages to wound him severely before being taken away as a prisoner. Adeline is sent back to the abbey, where La Motte locks her in her room, explaining that he has no other course of action. The Marquis, when he recovers from his wound, goes to the abbey and promises to help La Motte by means of his power at court if La Motte will help him. He reveals that La Motte must kill Adeline that very night. Although he is aghast at the enormity of this action, he goes to her room with a dagger. Her innocence moves him so much that he cannot bring himself to commit the deed; she awakens, and La Motte helps her to escape with Peter.

They go to Lyons, and thence to Savoy, where they stay with Peter's sister. The journey has made Adeline ill, and she awakens from her fever to find herself in the Château de Lenoncourt, under the care of a clergyman of noble family called La Luc. Adeline is adopted by the kindly old man, and his daughter Clara is a suitable companion for her. All her worries seem to be over, but she is still tortured by the thought of her beloved Theodore. While La Luc, Clara and Adeline are out one day, they meet with a stranger called Verneuil, who assists Clara after an accident with her horse. After this noble gentleman has left the house, La Luc

goes with the two young ladies to Nice, for his health's sake. There Adeline meets Monsieur Amand, a melancholy young gentleman who overhears Adeline playing the lute, and confesses that he has recently lost a wife who resembled Adeline in every respect. La Luc's health has still not improved, so they set sail for Languedoc, where they meet up with Verneuil again, who conducts them to a château belonging to a friend of his called Mauron. They are surprised by the entry of Louis de La Motte, who reveals that Theodore is sentenced to death, and also that the young man is, in fact, La Luc's son.

Pierre de La Motte is meanwhile conveyed to the Chatelet in Paris, having been formally charged by the Marquis de Montalt when Adeline was found to have escaped with his connivance. The charge is a grave one: in addition to his earlier crimes, he had attacked and robbed the Marquis shortly after his arrival at the abbey, which gave the Marquis a hold over him. La Luc and the others go to visit Theodore, who is doomed to die the next day, but hear that the sentence has been stayed, because of certain information which has come to light during the trial of La Motte. A stranger called Du Boffe admits that he, with an accomplice called D'Aunoy, had been bribed by Montalt to remove a girl from a convent, the Marquis claiming that the girl was the natural daughter of an illicit union between himself and a nun. When Adeline hears this, she determines to go to Paris, to speak in La Motte's defence, though the very idea that the Marquis of Montalt is her father fills her with horror.

Du Boffe's accomplice D'Aunoy comes on the scene, and is forced to confess the truth. He reveals that in 1642, under orders from the Marquis of Montalt, he had captured the Marquis's half-brother, Henry, and imprisoned him in the abbey, where he had been put to death. Henry's daughter had been handed to him, and — under the assumed name of St Pierre — he had brought her up from infancy, receiving money from the Marquis in return for his silence. It is now clear that the Marquis of Montalt had coveted

the wealth of his half-brother Henry, and had had him murdered after the early death of his wife, and arranged for Adeline to be kept ignorant of her own high birth. There is a solemn trial, to which the Marquis is summoned to answer for his crimes, but word is brought that he has committed suicide in prison by taking poison, first leaving a confession which ensured that Adeline would receive her rightful inheritance and legacy. La Motte — who had previously been sentenced to death for the attack on the Marquis — now has his sentence changed to banishment, and Adeline gives him and his wife enough money to set them up in England.

Theodore is pardoned, and marries Adeline. They return with La Luc and Clara to Lenoncourt. Verneuil, it seems, is related to Adeline, and the melancholy M. Amand, it is discovered, has been married to Adeline's cousin. Louis de La Motte, who had always admired Adeline and would have dearly liked to marry her, is forced to regard her purely in terms of friendship, which, because of his innate nobility, he does willingly. The novel ends on a pleasant scene of domestic bliss at Lenoncourt.

17. The characters in this novel are drawn with greater care than those in the earlier works. Adeline and Theodore are more credible; and they are not motivated purely by circumstance, but more often by the unpredictable conduct of La Motte. Externally, at any rate, Adeline conforms to the type already established in Radcliffe's other works:-

She was now in her nineteenth year; her figure of middling size, and turned to the most exquisite proportions; her hair was dark auburn, her eyes blue, and whether they sparkled with intelligence, or melted with tenderness, they were equally attractive.

(II, 72)

She was, indeed, an object not to be contemplated with indifference ... The negligence of her dress, loosed for the purpose of freer respiration, discovered those glowing charms, which her auburn tresses, that fell in profusion over her bosom, shaded, but could not conceal.

(VI, 217)

Her tribulations are more protracted, she has the prevarications of La Motte and the jealousy of Madame La Motte with which to contend, and she

has not any family to support her, and is therefore completely alone in the world. Although she often complains about her fate, and composes numerous sonnets and poems to illustrate her feelings she is, nevertheless, a more convincing character than Mary or Julia. Theodore — whose name is reminiscent of the character of the same name in The Castle of Otranto — is filled with sensibility, love, faith, enduring courage, and all the other qualities of the Gothic hero. Like Hippolitus and Alleyn before him, he has to go through many tribulations before gaining the hand of his beloved, but his own tortures are more vivid, and excite suspense to a greater degree, since he is faced with all the machinery of the law, and not just the spite of the villain.

18. La Motte is a very interesting character, and easily the most complex figure which Radcliffe so far has created. He is neither hero nor villain; he is capable of cowardice:-

"... I may wait in security, and perhaps hear something of what passes. My family will not be known, or, at least, not hurt, and their uneasiness on my account, they must learn to endure."

These were the arguments of La Motte, in which, it must be owned, selfish prudence was more conspicuous than tender anxiety for his wife.

(IV, 137-138)

At the same time, he shrinks from real crime:-

"Adeline dies!" interrupted the Marquis, in a low voice scarcely human. "Do you understand me now?" — La Motte shrunk aghast — "My Lord!..."

(XIV, 5)

When he considered the innocence and the helplessness of Adeline, her orphan state, her former affectionate conduct, and her confidence in his protection, his heart melted with compassion for the distress he had already occasioned her, and shrunk in terror from the deed he was urged to commit.

(XIV, 8)

Vice had not yet so entirely darkened his conscience, but that the blush of shame stained his cheek, and his tongue faltered when he would have told his guilt.

(XIII, 254)

His redeeming feature is that he is prepared to sacrifice his liberty for Adeline's sake, which leads to a sentence of death. It is perhaps fitting

that he should be allowed to go free, albeit in exile. His very character lends movement and suspense to the plot, since it is by no means certain what he will do with Adeline. The scene where he creeps to her bedside with the dagger anticipates a similar, terrifying incident in The Italian, but even here the effect is stunning. The reader is unaware of the precise nature of the hold which the Marquis de Montalt has over him, hence La Motte's motivation is unpredictable.

19. As in The Castle of Otranto, this novel introduces for the first time in Radcliffe's work what Walpole would have called "domestics". These take the form of Annette and Peter, the servants of La Motte. Annette is scarcely mentioned, but Peter plays an important part in the action, and his down-to-earth wisdom, his simple goodness and his straightforward utterances add a new dimension to the novel:-

"Some old Abbot," said he, "was formerly buried here, as the Marquis's people say; and it's like enough that he belonged to the abbey yonder. But I don't see why he should take it in his head to walk; he was not murdered, surely?"

"I hope not," said Adeline.

(X, 98)

Jaques and Diego, in The Castle of Otranto, were vaguely amusing, but Peter has not been included here for comic effect; Radcliffe is clearly trying to convey the language of ordinary people, and to make her novel more realistic, in which aim she clearly succeeds.

20. The other characters are not described in any great detail, and are rather stock figures. La Luc is a kind, sweet old gentleman, and his illness and misery over Theodore's unhappy plight arouse the sympathy of the reader, but he is not described in depth. Clara has an "interesting" face — the adjective seems to be one of Radcliffe's favourites — but she fills the role expected of her. Verneuil, Amand and even Louis de La Motte do not seem to have any outstanding features. Madame La Motte, née Constance Valentia, plays an important role in that her jealousy of Adeline, although mistaken, causes the girl a great deal of heartbreak. But there

is little or no physical description. Even the Marquis de Montalt is in the common mould of Gothic villain—he is scheming, ruthless, evil and determined, although his machinations are better concealed in this novel than, say, those of Malcolm in The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne, which are always quite transparent. But he follows the conventional pattern, dying by his own hand, leaving behind a full confession, as Malcolm and the Marquis of Mazzini had done before him. It is this lack of accurate physical description which makes her early characters so nebulous, and so much of a type. The heroine has, of course, the elegant figure, blue eyes and auburn hair which one can expect, but Radcliffe has not, as yet, learned to describe facial expression, movement, personal habits and inner thoughts with any degree of skill, and the result in this novel—with the exception perhaps of Peter—is a body of curiously puppet-like figures, monochromatic, merging into each other, with nothing to make them into memorable people. The result is that the novel, although to a lesser extent than her first two works, tends to sound stilted and affected.

21. Radcliffe's use of suspense in this novel has reached a new level. The entire plot hinges on the mystery of Adeline's parentage, and this secret is very well concealed until very nearly the end of the story—the red herring which suggests that the Marquis de Montalt is her father takes the reader by surprise, and the truth is all the more surprising when it is revealed. The discovery of the manuscript excites the reader, but Adeline does not read it all at once; she is forced to break off because of other commitments, or fading light, and occasionally because of fear. The revelation is spread over more than two chapters, which are very exciting in consequence. Peter is on the point of revealing a dread secret, but is prevented from doing so by the sight of La Motte appearing through the trees, and has to postpone the conversation until a later date. The chambers in the abbey are not explored all at once; La Motte turns back before the full extent of the hidden rooms can be ascertained, and the

reader is left to wonder exactly what is to be found there. There are many other touches of this kind, all of which point to a greater confidence in writing, and a surer appreciation of what is necessary to keep the interest alive.

22. The use of supernatural suggestion is also very much better in this work. La Motte and Peter hear strange sounds in the abbey — these are only caused by owls and rats, but Radcliffe is able, for a moment, to convey the suggestion of something much worse:-

... he felt a superstitious dread stealing upon him. He was now, perhaps, standing over the ashes of the dead. If spirits were ever permitted to revisit the earth, this seemed the hour and the place most suitable for their appearance. La Motte remaining silent, Adeline said, "Were I inclined to superstition" — She was interrupted by a return of the noise, which had been lately heard. It sounded down the passage, at whose entrance they stood, and sunk gradually away.

(II, 45-46)

The discovery of the skeleton is horrible enough, and to this may be added the superstitious dread of the local people, none of whom will venture near the abbey. Adeline, reading the manuscript in her room, fancies she hears an echo of her own voice, as she talks out loud to herself. Her fear rises to a high pitch:-

There was a glass before her on the table, and she feared to raise her looks towards it, lest some other face than her own should meet her eyes ... A hollow sigh seemed to pass near her ...⁸

(IX, 59)

Most particularly must be mentioned Adeline's dream, which is much more vivid than the dream in Reeve's Old English Baron, and quite terrifying in its import:-

... lifting the pall, she saw beneath it a dead person, whom she thought to be the dying Chevalier she had seen in her former dream: his features were sunk in death, but they were yet serene. While she looked at him, a stream of blood gushed from his side, and descending to the floor, the whole chamber was overflowed; at the same time some words were uttered in the same voice she heard before; but the horror of the scene so entirely overcame her, that she started and awoke.

(VII, 273-274)

8. Cf. The Compensation House, by Charles Collins, 1866. See above, p. 4, note 11.

Despite the fact that every gruesome and seemingly supernatural event may be given a perfectly rational explanation — Radcliffe's trade-mark — the hints and suggestions of this kind do much to excite the interest and involvement of the reader.

23. Like the Abbot of St Augustin, the Lady Abbess in whose care Adeline had been placed as an infant is of quite a different type from the other characters in the novel, once more pointing towards the masterly creation of Schedoni in The Italian. Radcliffe's characters in the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic church seem to have an innate villainy which is concealed by a façade of guile and sophistry:-

The Lady Abbess was a woman of rigid decorum and severe devotion; exact in the observance of every detail of form, and never forgave an offence against ceremony. It was her method, when she wanted to make converts to her order, to denounce and terrify, rather than to persuade and allure ... Finding me unmoved by menace, the Lady Abbess now had recourse to more subtle measures: she condescended to smile, and even to flatter; but hers was the distorted smile of cunning, not the gracious emblem of kindness; it provoked disgust, instead of inspiring affection.

(III, 89, 91-92)

24. Apart from the facts already mentioned, the novel contains most of the stock Gothic effects which will be summarised later. We find a manuscript; there is a surprising revelation of identity; overtones of passion and avarice; the incarceration of an innocent person; and, of course, the Gothic building and the nearby ruined tomb. The description of scenery is excellent; Radcliffe's picture of the dawn breaking is very fine indeed:-

The first tender hints of morning now appeared on the verge of the horizon, stealing upon the darkness; — so pure, so fine, so aethereal! it seemed as if Heaven was opening to the view. The dark mists were seen to roll off to the west, as the tints of light grew stronger, deepening the obscurity of that part of the hemisphere, and involving the features of the country below; meanwhile, in the east, the hues became more vivid, darting a trembling lustre far around, till a ruddy glow, which fired all that part of the Heavens, announced the rising sun. At first, a small line of inconceivable splendour emerged on the horizon, which, quickly expanding, the sun appeared in all his glory, unveiling the whole face of nature, vivifying every colour of the landscape, and sprinkling the dewy earth with glittering light.

(II, 54)

Over all of this, there is imposed the theme of the persecuted heroine, and the strong morality which we have already noted. Perhaps most important of all are the scenes created by Radcliffe which, like separate tableaux, remain in the mind. Two of these are particularly worthy of note: the entry of La Motte, with poignard at the ready, into Adeline's room in Chapter XIV, and Adeline's fearful reading of the manuscript, in Chapter IX, when she seems to hear the echo of her own voice, in a kind of hollow sigh. This novel prepared the way for The Mysteries of Udolpho and The Italian, in which this device of freezing and capturing an instant of time, with the characters seemingly poised at the crucial moment, is used with telling effect.

25. The Mysteries of Udolpho⁹ was published in 1794. The action of the novel takes place in France and Italy, and the story begins in the year 1584. Monsieur and Madame de St Aubert live in the pleasant Château of La Vallée, with their daughter Emily. The larger estates at Épourville have to be sold to M. and Mme. Quesnel, who are related to the St Aubert family, but who have no refinement of taste or manners. After the death, following an attack of fever, of Emily's mother, the young girl is very surprised to observe her father kissing a miniature portrait of a young and beautiful woman. They go to Languedoc for the sake of the old man's health, and on the way they encounter Valancourt, a young man who takes a great liking to Emily. After some days, St Aubert hears that he is financially ruined, and, being unable to complete his journey, stops at a cottage owned by a peasant, La Voisin, and takes to bed. The woods nearby are reputedly haunted, strange music is heard, and the nearby castle is never visited by the local people. St Aubert hears that it had belonged

9. I have used the Everyman edition, 2 vols. (London, 1962).

to the Marquis and Marchioness of Villeroi, both of whom are now dead. This news affects him profoundly, and he declines rapidly, warning Emily on his deathbed that she must guard against sensibility and her own foolish emotions. He asks Emily to promise that she will take some papers from a concealed place in La Vallée and burn them unread. She willingly gives the promise, and St Aubert dies soon afterwards.

On her return to La Vallée, Emily hears that she is to be under the care of her Aunt, Madame Cheron, who is a heartless, cruel and self-seeking woman. Valancourt comes to La Vallée, and talks with Emily in the garden; here he is discovered by Madame Cheron, who takes exception to the young man's continued presence. When Emily is taking up the secret papers, as she promised, her eye is caught by a "sentence of dreadful import" but, being a dutiful daughter, she burns the paper otherwise unread. She also finds the miniature of the fair, but unknown, woman. Emily is taken to stay with Madame Cheron at Toulouse, whither Valancourt follows. At first the Aunt will hear nothing of any suggestion of a courtship, but when she discovers that Valancourt is related to a rich, successful and influential lady called Madame Clairval, she changes her mind.

But meanwhile Montoni, a dark and surly-looking Italian nobleman, has come on the scene, and he marries Madame Cheron, which means that Emily's own nuptials are indefinitely postponed. They move to Italy, where Emily is plagued by the unwelcome attentions of a Count Morano, who pays constant court to her. The party move to the Apennines, and the gloomy Castle di Udolpho, a gigantic edifice, crumbling in parts, built on the side of a precipice. Emily concludes that she has been brought here so that Montoni will be able to marry her off to Morano, but her fears are, in this respect, groundless. Annette, the servant girl, tells Emily of the Marchioness Laurentini, whose ghost was supposed to haunt the castle. Emily later finds a veiled portrait, and returns later to lift the veil, collapsing

instantly on the floor in an extremity of terror. (The reader is told only that it was "no portrait".) Morano arrives, and breaks into Emily's room to warn her of terrible danger, accusing Montoni of murder and of having usurped the castle from its rightful owner. But he is surprised and wounded by Montoni, who has him taken away.

Valancourt, in the meantime, is in Paris, sunk in dissipation, and thinking little of his beloved. Montoni, who is now frequently seen round the castle with evil-looking men, grows surly with his wife, and tries to force her to sign away her rights to her estates. At a banquet, Montoni's glass shatters when it is filled with poisoned wine, which rises hissing to the brim. There is a great fight in the banqueting hall, and Madame Montoni is dragged away. Emily is now alone, except for Annette, and is anxious for news of her aunt. Barnardino, a servant, takes Emily on a nightmarish journey through the darkest and most terrible places in the castle to where, he claims, Madame Montoni is confined. But when she arrives in the room, there is nothing but a bed, of which she can see little because of the obscuring curtains. When these are timidly pulled aside, she sees a fresh corpse, streaming with blood, and marked with dreadful wounds. She assumes that her aunt has been killed, and, before she can flee, she is taken from the castle by Barnardino and some other men. Montoni's men appear, there is a fight, and Emily is returned to the castle.

Her trials now multiply: a silent, flitting figure is seen on the battlements outside her room; she finds that Madame Montoni is still alive, but wasted away to a shadow, and confined in a small room; and Montoni is now quite withdrawn, and involved more deeply in dark plans with his cruel companions. Madame Montoni dies, and is interred in a vault beneath the castle, whereupon Montoni turns his attentions towards Emily, and requests her to sign away her rightful inheritance. A cavalier called Verezzi appears on the scene, and physically pursues Emily, who signs Montoni's paper on the understanding that he will protect her from Verezzi. Strange music

is heard at night, and Emily thinks she recognises a song which Valancourt had loved, but this comes from a young man called Du Pont, who had been imprisoned by Montoni, and who had lived near Emily at La Vallée, adoring her from afar. With the help of Annette and her lover Ludovico, Du Pont and Emily manage to escape from Udolpho and make their way to a seaport.

The scene now changes to Château-le-Blanc, near which St Aubert had died. In the year of St Aubert's death, the property had been inherited from the Marquis of Villeroi by the Count of Villefort, whose children now live with him at the château. Blanche is a pretty and charming young girl; Henri, the son, does not figure largely in the story. The house-keeper is called Dorothee. During a storm, a ship is wrecked near Le Blanc, and Emily, who had been aboard, is taken in by the Count of Villefort, and rapidly becomes very friendly with Blanche. Apparently the strange music is still heard near the Château, and Dorothee claims that the miniature which Emily had seen her father embracing with such feeling is of none other than the late Marchioness.

Valancourt and Emily meet again, but they are estranged because she hears of his conduct in Paris. They part, feeling that it is better to do so, despite his tears of remorse. Dorothee and Emily visit the room in which the late Marchioness had died; they see her portrait, and the pall on the bed, everything left as it had been on the day she died. The pall moves, and the apparition of a human countenance is seen above it, and Emily flees in terror. Ludovico offers to stay in the haunted room overnight, but the next morning he is found to have disappeared. Emily returns to La Vallée after a few days, and during her absence Blanche is captured by brigands, only to be rescued by Ludovico, who tells her that the haunted room was in fact used by smugglers, who had captured him. A nun in the nearby convent of St Clair recognises Emily, and is convinced that she must be the daughter of the late Marchioness. The nun grows ill, and on her deathbed confesses that she is Signora Laurentini, who had fled to the

convent rather than remain in Udolpho. Villeroi had promised to marry her, and had taken her to Udolpho, but had returned to marry the second Marchioness. Laurentini, in a jealous fit of spite, had proved to Villeroi that his new wife had, in fact, loved another man, and had only accepted Villeroi's suit under protest. In a moment of anger, Villeroi had poisoned the Marchioness, and shortly afterwards died of despair, promising to spare Laurentini's life only if she retired to the convent. It is revealed that the late Marchioness was St Aubert's sister.

At the end of the novel, we hear that the horrid mystery behind the veiled portrait is that of a corpse, putrefying on a couch, and Emily had been convinced that this was the body of Laurentini. But this, it seems, was only a wax image, placed there as an aid to penance by some former member of the house of Udolpho. Valancourt and Emily are reconciled and married, and Du Pont, as becomes the silent admirer, withdraws. The family estates at Toulouse, formerly belonging to Madame Montoni, and the old St Aubert estates at Épouville, are returned to Emily, who administers them wisely.

26. Since its appearance in 1794, The Mysteries of Udolpho has seldom been out of print, a distinction afforded to relatively few long novels of the eighteenth century. During the nineteenth century, it was regarded as a model of excellence. Even when Dracula appeared in May 1897, the reviewer in the Daily Mail wrote: "In seeking a parallel to this weird, powerful and horrible story, our minds revert to such tales as 'The Mysteries of Udolpho' ... " The novel is mentioned in Jane Austen's Northanger Abbey but it is noteworthy that Austen does not include Radcliffe's story in the list of the "horrid" books which fascinated Catherine Morland. It was this novel of suspense which firmly established Radcliffe as a practised exponent of terror and a manipulator of eerie suggestion. Examples of this occur all through the novel. The reader is told of a

"sentence of dreadful import", though its text is never revealed; this is connected with the mysterious miniature embraced so fondly by M. de St Aubert, which finally turns out to be Emily's aunt. The veiled portrait¹⁰ which, when revealed, causes Emily to faint in sheer terror is a source of fascination until the implausible explanation in the last pages of the novel. The haunted woods around Le Blanc keep Emily, Blanche and the reader wondering, until Agnes is finally shown to be responsible. The shocking corpse under the portal in Udolpho is a source of stark terror, particularly since there is reason to believe that it is Madame Montoni; the open grave which Emily comes across raises the question of its intended occupant; the trail of blood which "glared" on the stairs, although only from a wounded guard, leads Emily to believe that her aunt has been most foully murdered; and the strange flitting shapes on the battlement, though merely Du Pont who has escaped from his cell, does, for many chapters, succeed in convincing the reader of a genuine supernatural appearance. The strange pall which moves in front of Emily's terrified eyes is manipulated by pirates who have gained entrance to Le Blanc, but this is not revealed until later, and for a considerable time does appear to be another manifestation of the supernatural. Despite these laboured, logical and eminently reasonable explanations — the surnaturel expliqué — Radcliffe still creates pictures and scenes of enormous power. The explanations do not seriously detract from the merit of the novel; although the fears of the characters are shown to be groundless, they are none the less convincing at the time. Within the walls of Udolpho, Radcliffe uses hints and suggestions to heighten the suspense during the hours of darkness:-

"So with that Caterina took the lamp — Hush! ma'amselle, I surely heard a noise."

Emily, whom Annette had now infected with her own terrors, listened attentively; but everything was still, and Annette

10. Cf. The Castle of Otranto, and the walking portrait in Stoker's The Judge's House.

proceeded:

"Caterina went to the north gallery, that is, the wide gallery we passed, Ma'am, before we came to the corridor, here. As she went with the lamp in her hand, thinking of nothing at all — There, again! cried Annette suddenly — "I heard it again! It was not fancy, ma'amselle!"

"Hush! said Emily, trembling. They listened, and continuing to sit quite still, Emily heard a slow knocking against the wall. It came repeatedly. Annette then screamed loudly, and the chamber door slowly opened. It was Caterina, come to tell Annette that her lady wanted her.

(Vol. I, Ch. XVII, p.243)

The fact that the terror arises from very ordinary events does not lessen its effect. Emily is no more nervous than any normal person, confined in a strange building, and her reaction is perfectly understandable. Suspense is maintained by a series of such "false alarms", and the reader's curiosity is never allowed to flag.

27. The novel must, however, be faulted from the point of view of structure and presentation. It is a long work, and divides into two distinct parts. The first moves logically from La Vallée to Udolpho, presenting us en route with a corpus of characters with whom we become familiar; yet at Chapter XXXV, Radcliffe returns us abruptly to Château-le-Blanc, which was only mentioned briefly at the beginning of the novel, and introduces us to the Count of Villefort and his family. Admittedly, the remaining twenty-two chapters do tie up several loose ends, such as the mystery of the miniature and the fate of Laurentini, but the break with Udolpho is too sudden, and the providential shipwreck on the very doorstep of Le Blanc is extremely clumsy, considered as a literary device. If the interlude at Le Blanc is intended as an epilogue to the horrors of Udolpho, then it is unduly protracted; if it is intended as a separate section, then Radcliffe has shown less than her customary skill in incorporating it into the mainstream of the narrative, and one regrets that the title of the novel does not do fuller justice to its content.

28. Similarly, Radcliffe incorporates such a vast number of people and events in her canvas that it is well-nigh impossible to keep track of

them separately, and she frequently jerks the reader from one scene to another in an attempt to keep the life histories of all the characters up to date. The result of this may be seen in the opening sentences of the following chapters:-

- XX: It is now necessary to mention some circumstances which could not be related amidst the events of Emily's hasty departure from Venice ...
- XXI: We now return to Valancourt, who, it may be remembered, remained at Toulouse some time after the departure of Emily ...
- XXII: Leaving the gay scenes of Paris, we return to those of the gloomy Apennine ...
- XXXIII: We now return for a moment to Venice ...
- XXXV: We now return to Languedoc ...
- XXXVIII: The Lady Blanche, meanwhile, who was much left alone, became impatient for the company of her new friend ...
- LI: Emily, meanwhile, was still suffering anxiety as to the fate of Valancourt ...

Many of the chapters begin in the morning, and the reader becomes familiar with opening phrases such as "The following day" or "On the following morning". This is hardly a fault, but it does give the narrative the flavour of a diary rather than of a sustained narrative.

29. Radcliffe's portrayal of the picturesque, always noteworthy, is excellent in this novel, and as an example of her powers, the approach to Udolpho¹¹ stands out as the most vivid piece of descriptive writing in the novel, setting the scene, and preparing the reader for the terrors to come:-

Towards the close of day the road wound into a deep valley. Mountains, whose shaggy steeps appeared to be inaccessible, almost surrounded it. To the east a vista opened, and exhibited the Apennines in their darkest horrors; and the long perspective of retiring summits rising over each other, their ridges clothed with pines, exhibited a stronger image of grandeur than any that Emily had yet seen. The sun had just sunk below the top of the mountains she was descending; but his sloping rays, shooting through an opening of the cliffs, touched with a yellow gleam the summits of the forest that hung upon the opposite steeps, and streamed in full splendour upon the towers and battlements of a castle that spread its extensive ramparts along the brow of a precipice above. The splendour of these illumined objects was heightened by

11. Cf. the approach to the castle of Count Dracula, in Stoker's novel, which is very similar in style.

the contrasted shade which involved the valley below.

"There," said Montoni, speaking for the first time in several hours, "is Udolpho."

(Vol. I, Ch. XVIII, pp. 229-230)

One of the most interesting effects in this novel is the use of contrasted light and darkness. Apart from making the ramparts of Udolpho stand out the more vividly, this technique increases the mystery within the castle walls:-

... she entered an extensive Gothic hall, obscured by the gloom of evening, which a light glimmering at a distance through a long perspective of arches only rendered more striking. As a servant brought the lamp nearer, partial gleams fell upon the pillars and the pointed arches, forming a strong contrast with their shadows that stretched along the pavement and the walls.

(Vol. I, Ch. XVIII, p. 231)

This kind of scene impresses itself strongly on the mind by virtue of its precision; Radcliffe's accurate observation and detailed word-picture has the exactness of a fine etching. The "partial gleams" are a recurring motif in the Gothic novel; they cast just enough light to show a flitting shape or a ghastly object, but not enough to permit of any but the vaguest conclusions as to their real nature:-

... then the light of a torch, which seemed to issue from the portal below, flashed across the court, and the long shadow of a man, who was under the archway, appeared on the pavement ...

(Vol. II, Ch. XXVI, p. 17)

... as they came opposite to the open door leading to the saloon, Emily, in the partial gleam which the lamp threw into it, thought she saw something glide into the obscurer part of the room.

(Vol. II, Ch. XLII, p. 205)

Radcliffe's scenery is either calm and idyllic, as at La Vallée, or threatening and terrible, as at Udolpho. Her castles can be peaceful and eminently ghost-free, or gloomy and illuminated only by deceptive torchlight. She shows herself to be adept at suiting the scenery and lighting conditions to the action almost with the same care as a stage-director; in short, she manages to manipulate that elusive and indefinable quality called "atmosphere".

30. In this novel, Radcliffe makes extensive use of the device whereby characters are momentarily "frozen" at a crucial point in the action, and described in detail. This greatly increases the impact which those scenes make upon the mind of the reader. At the fateful banquet, where the poison rises hissing in Montoni's glass, shattering it into a thousand fragments, the guests are subjected to Radcliffe's close scrutiny:-

... two of the cavaliers arose, and seated her between them.

The elder of these was a tall man, with strong Italian features, an aquiline nose, and dark penetrating eyes, that flashed with fire when his mind was agitated, and even in its state of rest retained somewhat of the wildness of the passions. His visage was long and narrow, and his complexion of a sickly yellow.

The other, who appeared to be about forty, had features of a different cast, yet Italian, and his look was slow, subtle, and penetrating; his eyes, of a dark grey, were small and hollow; his complexion was a sunburnt brown, and the contour of his face, though inclined to oval, was irregular and ill-formed.

Eight other guests sat round the table, who were all dressed in a uniform, and had all an expression, more or less, of wild fierceness, of subtle design, or of licentious passions.

(Vol. I, Ch. XXIII, 317)

The description of the eyes is particularly important, since Schedoni, the evil monk who so completely dominates The Italian, has a gaze which few people care to meet, and his strength arises from his ability to bend the will of others to his own by means of his extraordinary powers which border on hypnotism.¹² The scene where Emily's aunt is buried is another case in point; here Radcliffe specifically likens the description to a picture:-

At the moment in which they let down the body into the earth, the scene was such as only the dark pencil of a Domenichino, perhaps, could have done justice to. The fierce features and wild dress of the condottieri bending with their torches over the grave into which the corpse was descending, was contrasted by the venerable figure of the monk wrapt in long black garments, his cowl thrown back from his pale face, on which the light gleaming strongly showed the lines of affliction softened by piety, and the few grey locks which time had spared on his temples: while beside him stood the softer form of Emily, who leaned for support upon Annette; her face half averted, and shaded by a thin veil that fell over her figure ...

(Vol. II, Ch. XXX, p. 47)

12. It will be remembered that the theories of Mesmer were extremely popular at the time.

This technique increases the vividness of the narrative, and the scenes thus described remain in the mind of the reader long afterwards, permitting him to recall the most crucial moments of the novel as clearly as if a close-up picture had been supplied at each moment of crisis.

31. As a character, Emily does not depart radically from the pattern already established in the earlier novels. She is of a noble family; she suffers long and patiently, and is finally reconciled with her suitor after many separations and tribulations. Her appearance and qualities are entirely predictable:-

In person, Emily resembled her mother; having the same elegant symmetry of form, the same delicacy of features, and the same blue eyes full of tender sweetness. But lovely as was her person, it was the varied expression of her countenance, as conversation awakened the nicer emotions of her mind, that threw such a captivating grace around her.

(Vol. I, Ch. pp. 5-6)

She is eminently sensible to the beauties of nature, and composes many sonnets and verses to express her feelings. Despite the fact that the action of the novel is meant to take place in 1584, they bear a strong resemblance to the verses of the eighteenth century:-

The Glow-worm

How pleasant is the green-wood's deep-matted shade
On a midsummer's eve, when the fresh rain is o'er;
When the yellow beams slope, and sparkle through the glade,
And swiftly in the thin air the light swallows soar!

(Vol. I, Ch. I, p. 16)

Her father, on his death-bed, endeavours to remind her of the dangers of overmuch sensibility:-

You see, my dear, that though I would guard you against the dangers of sensibility, I am not an advocate for apathy. At your age I should have said that is a vice more hateful than all the errors of sensibility, and I say so still. I call it a vice, because it leads to positive evil. In this, however, it does no more than an ill-governed sensibility, which, by such a rule, might also be called a vice ... I would not teach you to be insensible if I could. I would only warn you of the evils of susceptibility, and point out how you may avoid them ... beware of priding yourself on the gracefulness of sensibility ... Sentiment is a disgrace instead of an ornament, unless it leads us to good actions.

(Vol. I, Ch. VII, pp. 82-83)

Emily may be physically weak, but in common with the heroines in Radcliffe's previous novels, her strength is in her mind, and in her sure knowledge that in the midst of adversity, she does that which is right:-

To her own solitary chamber she once more returned, and there thought again of the late conversation with Montoni and of the evil she might expect from opposition to his will. But his power did not seem so terrible to her imagination as it was wont to do: a sacred pride was in her heart, that taught it to swell against the pressure of injustice, and almost to glory in the quiet sufferance of ills ...

(Vol. II, Ch. XXX, 51)

This character trait conforms to a pattern which was common in the eighteenth century, and although it may now appear objectionable and priggish, it does not deserve our critical censure. Emily's decision to renounce Valancourt as a result of his reprehensible behaviour in Paris is a painful one, and is another example of the very strict moral standards which govern the conduct of the heroine. Valancourt has sinned, and no matter how deep Emily's love for him may be, decorum and dignity demand that he must be rejected. This attitude seems to bear a close affinity to the attitude to love and marriage as treated in Shakespearian comedy — a comparison which it would be interesting to examine in closer detail.

32. Valancourt is only slightly more complex than Osbert, Hippolitus and Theodore; his single lapse renders him more credible and more human. Otherwise he is very similar; his attitude to love is chivalric, and he sheds emotional tears at crucial moments:-

"Emily," said Valancourt, no longer master of his emotions, "is it thus you meet him whom once you meant to honour with your hand — thus you meet him, who has loved you, suffered for you? — Yet what do I say? Pardon me, pardon me, Mademoiselle St. Aubert, I know not what I utter ... " ... His voice faltered with the last words, and his countenance changed, while, with a look of ineffable tenderness and grief, he gazed upon her for an instant, and then quitted the cottage.

(Vol. II, Ch. LI, pp. 297-298)

Madame Cheron, who becomes Madame Montoni and dies miserably in the east turret of Udolpho, follows the pattern of the evil Marchioness in A Sicilian Romance and foreshadows the Marchesa in The Italian. She is ambitious, cruel and utterly selfish:-

Madame Cheron ... seemed indefatigable in her attempts to deprecate Valancourt; towards whom she felt all the petty resentment of a narrow pride.

(Vol. I, Ch. XII, p. 138)

She possesses "a habit of considering herself to be the most important person in every affair that concerned her niece ... " and her selfishness takes no regard for the happiness of others:-

The conduct of Madame Cheron in this affair had been entirely governed by selfish vanity ... She wished to see her niece marry ambitiously; not because she desired to see her in possession of the happiness which rank and wealth are usually believed to bestow, but because she desired to partake the importance which such an alliance would give ... Thus had she consented to involve her niece in an engagement to which she saw only a distant and uncertain conclusion, with as little consideration of her happiness as when she had so precipitately forbidden it ...

(Vol. I, Ch. XXI, p. 143)

33. The character of Montoni is Radcliffe's greatest achievement in this novel. He is described with some care, and makes his first, innocuous appearance very near the beginning of the novel:-

Among the visitors assembled at dinner were two Italian gentlemen of whom one was named Montoni, a distant relation of Madame Quesnel, a man about forty, of an uncommonly handsome person, with features manly and expressive, but whose countenance exhibited, upon the whole, more of the haughtiness of command, and the quickness of discernment, than of any other character.

(Vol. I, Ch. II, p. 23)

This stress on physiognomy becomes increasingly evident in Radcliffe's novels; it is also evident in the descriptions of the guests at the banquet quoted earlier, and in The Italian the facial aspect of Schedoni is mentioned again and again until the reader can almost see his eyes burning their way from the printed page. Montoni is cruel, self-seeking and ambitious, and his designs, unlike those of Cheron, are of the grand order. He marries Madame Cheron purely to gain control of her estates, he is in league with banditti, and he exhibits no signs of remorse at any time. He has the ambition of Macbeth, and all the rage of the tyrant:-

Montoni, his lips trembling more than before, replied only, "If you value your own safety," addressing Emily, "you will be silent. I shall know how to interpret your remonstrances should you persevere in them."

Emily raised her eyes calmly to heaven. "Here is, indeed, then,

nothing to hope!" said she.

"Peace!" cried Montoni, "or you shall find there is something to fear."

He turned to his wife, who had now recovered her spirits, and who vehemently and wildly remonstrated upon this mysterious suspicion; but Montoni's rage heightened with her indignation ... he was totally and alike insensible to the distress of his wife, and to the pleading looks of Emily, whom he made no attempt to raise, but was vehemently threatening both, when he was called out of the room by some person at the door.

(Vol. I, Ch. XXIII, pp. 319-320)

His death in captivity is reported by hearsay, in a brief sentence or two:-

Montoni, who, being considered by the senate as a very dangerous person, was, for other reasons, ordered again into confinement, where it was said he had died in a doubtful and mysterious manner, and not without suspicion of having been poisoned.

(Vol. II, Ch. XLVI, p. 240)

William Ruff¹³ points out that "it would be in bad taste to give a long, painful end to the Marquis ... so he kills himself in a sentence". Quite apart from the fact that this judgement contains a factual error—Montoni is suspected of "having been poisoned"—Ruff misses the point that, once Montoni's dominion over Emily is ended, his death does not concern her to any great extent. Ruff is suggesting that Radcliffe is fastidious; but her description of "a corpse stretched on a kind of low couch, which was crimsoned with human blood" surely proves that she is not. She is capable of describing the most unpleasant scenes, but only where their inclusion is directly relevant. One last point which may be made regarding Montoni, which has already been mentioned concerning the guests at the banquet, is the expression of his eyes "in which the rising tempest of his soul flashed terribly" (Vol. I, Ch. XX, p. 281) and his total distrust of such weak fancies as superstition:-

"We will leave this room," said he, "and the subject of our conversation also; it is too solemn." ... Notwithstanding his efforts to appear at ease, he was visibly and greatly disordered.

"Why, signor, you are not superstitious," cried Verezzi, jeeringly; "you, who have so often laughed at the credulity of others?"

13. William Ruff, Ann Radcliffe, or, The Hand of Taste (Yale, 1949).

"I am not superstitious," replied Montoni, regarding him with stern displeasure, "though I know how to despise the commonplace sentences which are frequently uttered against superstition. I will inquire further into this affair."

(Vol. I, Ch. XX, p. 296)

All of these qualities, added together and constantly stressed in the course of the narrative, give an impression of Montoni as a figure not only embodying great wickedness, but also enormous mental strength, equal almost to that of Emily.

34. This novel, for many years considered a paradigm of its kind, was the first in the English language convincingly to combine romance with the beautiful and terrible in nature, and with sombre buildings in which supernatural suggestions stalk eerily down dimly-lit corridors.¹⁴ The habitual morality is very evident, and is openly expressed in the concluding lines of the novel:-

Oh! useful may it be to have shown, that though the vicious can sometimes pour affliction upon the good, their power is transient and their punishment certain; and that innocence, though oppressed by injustice, shall, supported by patience, finally triumph over misfortune!

(Vol. II, Ch. LVII, p. 344)

35. The Italian¹⁵ was published in 1797, and was the last of Radcliffe's novels to be published during her lifetime. It opens with a brief prologue. Some travellers in Italy, in the year 1764, visit the church of Santa Maria del Pianto, and in its gloomy recesses see a tall, striking figure. This, they are told, is an assassin who had claimed sanctuary there. When they voice their surprise, the travellers are told of a terrible confession which was made in that very church several years before, and are informed that the circumstances surrounding this awful disclosure were described in a manuscript written by a student of Padua. This document is made

14. Walpole's castle is too artificial to be taken seriously.

15. The Italian, or the Confessional of the Black Penitents, 3 vols. (London, 1797).

available, and from it, the story of The Italian is unfolded. The assassin is unconnected with the tale the manuscript has to tell, and disappears in the obscurity of the church.

In 1758, Vincentio di Vivaldi first set eyes on Ellena Rosalba. Struck by her beauty, he follows her home, discovering that she lives with an aged aunt, Signora Bianchi, and is of humble station. Her abode is the Villa Altieri, which he visits several times in the hope of seeing Ellena, though on each occasion he is approached by the mysterious figure of a monk who warns him of some danger. Vivaldi tries to follow his strange monitor, but is always unsuccessful. To Signora Bianchi, he confesses his love for Ellena. His mother, the Marchesa di Vivaldi, is however indignant at the thought of a match with one of no rank. We learn that the Marchesa has a private confessor, a monk named Schedoni, from the nearby Dominican convent of Spirito Santo. Vivaldi presses his suit, and Bianchi agrees to further their union, feeling that her own life has almost run its course, and that her charge will need the attention of a worthy husband. On the next occasion on which Vivaldi returns to Altieri, the mysterious monk warns him that there is death in the house, and Signora Bianchi is found to have died in mysterious circumstances, the appearance of the corpse suggesting poison.

Vivaldi meets Schedoni in his mother's room, and asks him point-blank if he is responsible for delivering the strange warnings. With effortless skill, Schedoni turns the questions aside. Bianchi is buried, and Ellena invited to stay for a while in the nearby convent of Santa Maria della Pietà, but before she can accept, she is seized by armed men and carried a considerable distance to the monastery of San Stefano where she is conducted by a nun (whose face exhibits "gloomy malignity") to the presence of the Abbess, a petty, proud, selfish and evil woman. Ellena realises that her abduction has been engineered by the Marchesa di Vivaldi to prevent her alliance with Vivaldi.

Vivaldi, meanwhile, goes with his servant Paulo to the ruins of the fortress of Paluzzi where the monk is once more encountered, telling them that "she departed an hour ago". Vivaldi, assuming that Ellena has died, pursues the monk, but he and Paulo find themselves in a room containing nothing but a few blood-stained garments. To their horror, the door is locked behind them, and they are trapped in the darkness. Paulo relates the story of the evil confession, but is able to say only that it was made by a figure clad in white, who vanished as soon as the confession was made. On the following morning they find the door of the cell unlocked; they rapidly make their way to Altieri to find Ellena gone, and Beatrice, the servant, unable to give any coherent information. Vivaldi goes to the Dominican church to seek out Schedoni, and accuses him of being responsible for Ellena's abduction, and of locking him in Paluzzi overnight: Schedoni makes no reply, and Vivaldi is chased from the church by some brothers of the convent. Eventually he sets out, in the guise of a pilgrim, to follow up the nebulous clues which he has amassed regarding Ellena's whereabouts.

Schedoni, who has been deeply angered by Vivaldi's attitude, goes to the Marchesa and gives her a cleverly distorted account of the affair, and inflames her emotions to anger. Ellena, in the meanwhile, has been informed by the Abbess that she must either marry a more suitable person, already selected for her, or take the veil. She declines to accept either course, and is imprisoned in her room. During one of her few excursions, she meets a nun called Olivia to whom she feels attracted; Olivia promises to help as much as she can, but the Abbess finally declares that Ellena must take the veil, and arranges the day on which this ceremony is to take place. Vivaldi, on the course of his pilgrimage, arrives at the convent just as the ceremony is being carried out, and interrupts at the crucial moment. He cannot prevail against the Abbess, and the Abate is effete and unhelpful. Thanks to a celebration in the convent, Vivaldi is able to

engineer an escape, and, leaving Olivia behind, Vivaldi and Ellena make good their escape, though observed by two men in the garb of Carmelites whom Vivaldi suspects of being spies. They make their way to the shore of Lake Celano, where they seek refuge in religious houses, and determine to marry on the following day.

The Marchesa and Schedoni meanwhile are of the opinion that the marriage has already taken place, and Schedoni is aware that they are on the shores of Celano, though he refuses to reveal his source of information. Schedoni suggests that the only solution is Ellena's death, which will avoid the dishonour which would otherwise result from such a poor match. Schedoni eventually makes it clear that he will kill Ellena; and that he knows the ideal spot for such a deed. Vivaldi and Ellena are in the very midst of their nuptials when interrupted by officers of the Inquisition who remove Vivaldi, though not without a struggle, and charge him with the crime of abducting a nun from her convent. He is taken to Rome and the dungeons of the Inquisition, separated from Paulo, examined, and threatened with dire torture should he not confess to everything.

Ellena is meanwhile taken to a house on the shore of Lake Celano, where she is received by a man of evil aspect. She is placed in a shabby room and kept prisoner. On the following day she is allowed to walk on the shore where she meets Schedoni and is terrified by him. She is returned to the house, and once more confined to her room. Schedoni — who, it seems, was formerly the Count di Marinella — now decides that the murder shall be carried out on that very night. Spalatro, the owner of the house, has ghastly premonitions, but Schedoni mounts to the room and is about to strike at Ellena's sleeping figure when he recognises a miniature portrait of himself around the neck of the sleeping girl. He realises that she is his own daughter, and is unable to complete the deed. She awakens, and he confesses his relationship to her. On the following day, they set out together for Naples, though Schedoni has private misgivings as to what the Marchesa

will think of the new turn of events. Dogged by Spalatro, the two make their way across country, accompanied by a guide. In one town, they see a play staged, wherein a father murders his daughter: the guide points out this with relish to Schedoni, who is forced through emotion to remove himself from the scene. The guide reveals that he has heard of Spalatro through the tale of an old man called Marco who visited that house by the shore once and saw terrible things there; Schedoni, his suspicions aroused, dismisses him from his service. Ellena, much to her joy, is allowed to retreat to the safety of Santa Maria della Pietà in Naples — the Abbess is a genuinely good woman — and Schedoni resumes his Dominican habit, and reports to the Marchesa, who is displeased by his account of the affair.

Paulo and Vivaldi, in the meantime, are still imprisoned with the Holy Inquisition, and Vivaldi has been charged with the question of whether he ever insulted a monk on holy ground. Vivaldi sees that it is Schedoni who has been responsible for his confinement; and to his astonishment is visited in his cell by the same mysterious monk who gave him the warnings so many times as he approached the Villa Altieri. This strange monk — who appears to be able to walk through stone walls and guarded doors — tells Vivaldi that he must tell the Inquisition that Schedoni has been disguised as a monk for fifteen years, but was originally a Count; he also orders Vivaldi to ask the tribunal to summon a Father Ansaldo di Rovalli, who will give evidence concerning a dreadful confession made by Schedoni. The monk then disappears, and the guard outside Vivaldi's cell is convinced that no person has left or entered. Vivaldi accordingly makes the required statement, and throws the tribunal into confusion. Ansaldo is called, and on being ordered to reveal the secret of the confession, declares that a monk in a white habit had confessed to the sin of killing his brother, marrying his widow, and later, in a fit of jealousy, killing her also. The strange monk, now named as Nicola di Zampari, accuses Schedoni of the crimes. The trial is held, and the case for the prosecution put forward.

Schedoni, Count Ferando di Marinella, had arranged for Spalatro to murder his brother, the Count di Bruno; and, having disposed of him, has married di Bruno's wife, after carrying her off. Evidence is produced to support this; and as Schedoni leaves the tribunal — condemned to death — he reveals to Vivaldi that Ellena is safe, and that he is Ellena's father.

Ellena, in the meantime, receives a visit from Olivia who has received permission to come to Santa ^{Maria} della Pietà, and Beatrice the servant is able to recognise her as Ellena's mother. She is able to point out that the miniature is of the evil brother, and that Ellena's father was, in fact, the Count di Bruno murdered by Spalatro on Schedoni's orders. After Ferando (Schedoni) had married Olivia, a daughter had been born, but had died. Although Schedoni believed that he had killed his second wife, in fact she had survived and had gone to San Stefano for safety. Schedoni is therefore Ellena's uncle.

The Marchesa, meanwhile, has died; confessing to her many crimes against Ellena and her son, and repenting of her rashness. Just before her death, she insisted to the Marchese that they must withdraw all objection to the marriage. Schedoni, in the dungeons of the Inquisition, is visited by Vivaldi and his father, and the monk confesses to his many crimes. Nicola di Zampari, whose hatred of Schedoni knows no bounds, is also present in the cell. Schedoni takes poison, and transmits some to his enemy Nicola, and they both die: Schedoni with a "demoniacal sound of exultation". Once the Marchese is convinced that Schedoni is not Ellena's father, and that the girl is of truly noble family, he is happy to see Vivaldi and Ellena married.

36. From the point of view of plot, character and pace of action, this novel must be regarded as Radcliffe's best. Unlike The Mysteries of Udolpho, which was long, rambling, and divided rather clumsily into two parts, this novel is coherent, quick-moving, and contains nothing which is irrelevant to the action. The scenes of terror, though containing little

of the supernatural, are vivid and exciting. The word "Gothic" does not appear in the novel, and Radcliffe creates her suspense entirely from the situations in which the characters find themselves. There is less reliance on coincidence, and although Ellena and Vivaldi are rather uninteresting figureheads, the character and person of Schedoni utterly dominates the novel — a gaunt, introspective, mysterious and malign figure, radiating a fateful and terrifying power.

37. The influence of Lewis's famous novel The Monk, published in 1796, has been examined by Birkhead and others, and a closer examination of common content will be made in the appropriate chapter. It cannot be proved conclusively that Radcliffe had read The Monk, though it is extremely probable, considering that novel's infamous reputation, and the virtual certainty that Radcliffe would have read such a memorable work in the genre to which she devoted herself so assiduously. The Monk, like The Italian, is centred round an apparently saintly priest who eventually commits the most dreadful crimes; there are Inquisition scenes in both works, as well as persecuted nuns and strong anti-Roman sentiment, though in Radcliffe's case this is delicately handled, and directed only where censure is deserved.

38. Much of the novel is set amidst darkness and gloom, reminiscent of Macbeth; strong overtones of this tragedy appear in the scene where Schedoni is about to murder Ellena. The chapter in which this scene takes place is headed with a quotation from Macbeth:-

I am settled, and bend up
Each corporal agent to this terrible feat...

And much of the conversation between Schedoni and Spalatro is strongly reminiscent of that between Macbeth and his wife:-

"The bloody hand is always before me! and often of a night, when the sea roars, and storms shake the house, they have come, all gashed as I left them, and stood before my bed! I have got up, and ran out upon the shore for safety!"

"Peace!" repeated the Confessor, "where is this frenzy of fear to

end? To what are these visions, painted in blood, to lead?"

(Vol. II, Ch. IX, p. 282)

"Give me the dagger, then," said the Confessor, after a long pause, "take up the cloak, and follow to the staircase. Let me see, whether your valour will carry you thus far."

(Ibid., p. 284)

At the foot of the staircase, he again stopped to listen.

"Do you hear any thing?" said he in a whisper.

"I hear only the sea," replied the man.

"Hush! it is something more," said Schedoni; "that is the murmur of voices!"

They were silent.

(Ibid., p. 285)

The wine, with which Schedoni also had found it necessary to strengthen his own resolution, did not secure him from severe emotion ...

(Ibid., p. 290)

The gloom of the dungeons of the Inquisition is described in great detail, and creates an atmosphere of sombre terror:-

... he opened the iron gate, and the prisoners, having alighted, passed with the two officials beneath the arch, the guard following with a torch. They descended a flight of broad steps, at the foot of which another iron gate admitted them to a kind of hall; such, however, it at first appeared to Vivaldi, as his eyes glanced through its gloomy extent, imperfectly ascertaining it by the lamp, which hung from the centre of the roof. No person appeared, and a death-like silence prevailed ...

(Vol. II, Ch. VI, pp. 186-187)

He passed through several avenues, and then ascended; soon after which, he again descended a very long stair-case, such as he had not any remembrance of, and they passed over a considerable extent of level ground. By the hollow sounds which his steps returned, he judged that he was walking over vaults ... A second flight appeared to lead him into subterraneous vaults, for he perceived the air change, and felt a damp vapour wrap round him ... He was, at length, again led forward; and soon after, he heard the heavy grating of hinges, and perceived that he was passing through several doors ... His conductors stopped again, and Vivaldi heard the iron rod strike three times upon a door; immediately a strange voice spoke from within, and the door was unclosed. Vivaldi passed on, and imagined that he was admitted into a spacious vault, for the air was freer, and his steps sounded to a distance.

(Vol. III, Ch. VI, pp. 189-191)

Admittedly Radcliffe had succeeded in conveying a similar atmosphere in The Mysteries of Udolpho, but here she does not require such additional effects as a veiled portrait or a flitting spectre; the scene is adequate in itself, and is so dramatically described that the reader experiences

no difficulty in envisaging the scene.

39. Ellena is very much the standard Gothic heroine: unfortunate, persecuted, pursued, filled with terrors for her own safety, and constantly finding herself in dangerous situations. She also has the trait which was noted in Emily, of self-righteousness:-

"It is I only, whom am injured," said she to herself, "and shall the guilty oppressor triumph, and the innocent sufferer sink under the shame that belongs only to guilt! Never will I yield to a weakness so contemptible. The consciousness of deserving well will recall my presence of mind, which, permitting me to estimate the characters of my oppressors by their actions, will enable me also to despise their power."

(Vol. I, Ch. VI, p. 169)

This mental refutation of the Abbess shows this trait most explicitly, and a similar attitude is also evident in Olivia:-

"A severe punishment was threatened to those, who should approach with any compassionate attention; thank God! I incurred it, and endured it, also, with secret triumph."

A gleam of satisfaction passed over Olivia's countenance as she spoke this; it was the sweetest that Ellena had ever observed there.

(Vol. I, Ch. XI, p. 331)

However objectionable this may appear to the modern reader, it is quite in keeping with the morality current at the end of the eighteenth century, with stress laid on decorum and the knowledge of what is right and true.

40. Vincentio di Vivaldi is similar; his refutation of the Inquisition displays the same proud awareness of his own rights, and the certain knowledge of his own innocence. Otherwise he is very much the typical hero figure; given to tears both of joy and sorrow, and chivalric to a fault. Paulo, his servant, is a more lively figure. His devotion to his master is touchingly sincere; his refusal to be parted from him in the halls of the Inquisition displays the most extreme loyalty; and his blunt speech endears him to the reader, and transforms him into one of the most realistically likeable personalities that Radcliffe created.

41. The Marchesa is a villainess in the tradition of the Marchioness in A Sicilian Romance, and her machinations to prevent the marriage of

her son and Ellena, although on a grand scale, are reminiscent of the intrigues of Madame Cheron in The Mysteries of Udolpho. The Marchese is not a convincing character; largely because he plays a very small part in the novel, until the end, where his consent to the wedding is a necessary formality. The wicked Abbess of San Stefano is derived from the Abbess in The Romance of the Forest; she is cruel, selfish and unjust, but her crimes are petty, and of little importance. It is interesting to compare her with the Abbess of Santa ^{Maria} della Pietà, whom Radcliffe describes at some length as being particularly worthy of praise. Spalatro is a ruffian, and a tool in the hands of Schedoni; and although his first appearance to Ellena terrifies her, from the wildness of his face, he is seen later to be weak and incapable of independent thought or action. Nicola di Zampari is instrumental in bringing about the downfall of Schedoni; he is never accurately described; his very presence is wraith-like, to the extent that Vivaldi is almost convinced that he is dealing with a ghost. It is unfortunate that Radcliffe does not enlighten us as to why Nicola hated Schedoni so strongly. He has a power which is terrifying:-

... Nicola, who was somewhat withdrawn from the circle, stood gazing at him with the malignity of a demon. His glowing eyes just appeared under the edge of his cowl, while, rolled up in his dark drapery, the lower features of his face were muffled; but the intermediate part of his countenance, receiving the full glare of the torch, displayed all its speaking and terrific lines.

(Vol. III, Ch. XI, p. 390)

This close-up of the face is, as we have seen, a favourite device of Radcliffe, as is the double adjective: wherever possible, she uses adjectives in pairs to heighten the dramatic effect. But the mystery surrounding Nicola remains with him to the end, and we never fully understand him.

42. It is the person of Schedoni that is Radcliffe's greatest single triumph; her most potent and terrifying creation. His presence dominates the novel, even when he is not directly involved in the action, and even in death, he remains a figure of starkest terror. Radcliffe describes him with care, particularly his countenance and eyes:-

His figure was striking, but not so from grace; it was tall, and, though extremely thin, his limbs were large and uncouth, and as he stalked wrapt in the black garments of his order, there was something terrible in its air; something almost superhuman. His cowl, too, as it threw a shade over the livid paleness of his face, increased its severe character, and gave an effect to his large melancholy eye, which approached to horror. His was not the melancholy of a sensible and wounded heart, but apparently that of a gloomy and ferocious disposition. There was something in his physiognomy extremely singular, and that cannot easily be defined. It bore the traces of many passions, which seemed to have fixed the features they no longer animated. A habitual gloom and severity prevailed over the deep lines of his countenance; and his eyes were so piercing that they seemed to penetrate at a single glance into the hearts of men, and to read their most secret thoughts; few persons could support their scrutiny, or even endure to meet them twice. Yet, notwithstanding all this gloom and austerity, some rare occasions of interest had called forth a character upon his countenance entirely different; and he could adapt himself to the tempers and passions of persons, whom he wished to conciliate, with astonishing facility, and generally with complete triumph.

(Vol. I, Ch. II, pp. 80-81)

This demoniac and subtle figure is further described in some interesting similes:-

Schedoni observed all its progressive movements, and, like a gaunt tyger, lurked in silence, ready to spring forward at the moment of opportunity.

(Vol. II, Ch. III, p.114)

Elsewhere (II, Ch. IV, 119) he is described as having a "vulture-eye", which together with the "tyger" image created an excellent impression of his savagery and subtlety. The power of his countenance to terrify the beholder is dreadful:-

A dark malignancy overspread the features of the monk, and at that moment Vivaldi thought he beheld a man, whose passions might impel him to the perpetration of almost any crime, how hideous soever. He recoiled from him, as if he had suddenly seen a serpent in his path ...

(Vol. I, Ch. IV, p. 124)

The reference to the serpent is surely not accidental; Schedoni has many affinities with Milton's figure of Satan, particularly in the expression of the face and eyes:-

Thus Satan talking to his nearest mate
With head uplift above the wave, and eyes
That sparkling blazed;

(Paradise Lost, I, 192-194)

Even at the moment of his death, Schedoni's devilish power is sufficient to terrify all who behold it, and has a fearful effect on Nicola:-

Schedoni, as was evident from the sudden change of expression in his countenance, discovered him; his eyes, as they settled on Nicola, seemed to recollect all their wonted fire, and the malignant triumph, lately so prevalent in his physiognomy, again appeared as in the next moment, he pointed to him. His glance seemed suddenly impowered with the destructive fascination attributed to that of the basilisk, for while it now met Nicola's, that monk seemed as if transfixed to the spot, and unable to withdraw his eyes from the glare of Schedoni's; in their expression he read the dreadful sentence of his fate, the triumph of revenge and cunning. Struck with this terrible conviction, a pallid hue overspread his face; at the same time an involuntary motion convulsed his features, cold trembling seized upon his frame, and, uttering a deep groan, he fell back, and was caught in the arms of the people near him.

(Vol. III, Ch. XI, pp. 407-408)

Schedoni has the power to manipulate all others who stand in his way, no one is able to prevent him in the execution of his designs, and his moment of weakness in which he spares Ellena arises from his love for what he imagines to be his own flesh and blood. Of all the characters that Radcliffe created, Schedoni is the most convincing, and the most totally evil. When he is set against the character of Malcolm, the refinement in Radcliffe's technique is immediately evident: Malcolm is a stock villain with no character or personality worth speaking of, Schedoni is infinitely deep and subtle. His influence on the horror genre is very great — from him come the villains of Poe, the strange, haunted Hero-Villains of Byron, with the same terrible eye: even that most dreadful creation, Dracula, contains the same malignant power of personality radiating through his eyes. Radcliffe provides a bridge between Shakespeare and Milton, and all the most significant villains of the nineteenth century.¹⁶

43. The descriptions of nature in the novel are very similar to those already described in Udolpho. The Italy which Mrs Radcliffe describes

16. Praz, The Romantic Agony. Praz draws an interesting comparison between Schedoni and Cassius (op.cit., II, p. 87 n. 28).

here is very much more contemporary, and so details such as the fiesta, the manners of the people, their dress and habits, are described with a much more practised hand, and are considerably more convincing. As always, scenes of the grand in nature are set down with particular care:-

She saw only pinnacles and vast precipices of various-tinted marbles, intermingled with scanty vegetation, such as stunted pinasters, dwarf oak and holly, which gave dark touches to the many-coloured cliffs, and sometimes stretched in shadowy masses to the deep vallies, that, winding into obscurity, seemed to invite curiosity to explore the scenes beyond. Below these bold precipices extended the gloomy regions of olive trees, and lower still other rocky steeps sunk towards the plains, bearing terraces crowned with vines ...

(Vol. I, Ch. VI, pp. 153-154)

Along this deep and shadowy perspective a river, which was seen descending among the cliffs of a mountain, rolled with impetuous force, fretting and foaming amidst the dark rocks in its descent, and then flowing in a limpid lapse to the brink of other precipices whence again it fell with thundering strength to the abyss, throwing its misty clouds of spray high in the air, and seeming to claim the sole empire of this solitary wild.

(Vol. I, Ch. VI, pp. 155-156)

This novel also contains "frozen" scenes of great power, particularly the one in which the murder of Ellena is plotted and almost carried out; and the scene in the Inquisition where Schedoni brings about the death of Nicola. The strangely haunting prologue to the novel is of great power, and prepares the reader for the gloom and malignity which stalk the pages of this novel, which must certainly be accounted Radcliffe's greatest, and a work of enormous importance to posterity.

44. From this study of Radcliffe's works, we can see a pattern of consistent imagery, plot and character; this pattern becomes more refined as her literary skills increase. Her use of supernatural suggestion, in particular, becomes very skilful in her later works. From her novels, we can assemble a corpus of ideas and effects which lay at the heart of the Gothic novel. The term "Gothic", up until the publication of The Monk, and notwithstanding in The Italian, is a composite one, containing elements of all the ideas, characters, situations and suggestions which Radcliffe used.

So much of this was passed on to later writers in the horror genre that a list will be useful at this stage. The lacunae are many, but it will give an outline of what was meant by "Gothic". Apart from the Castle itself, that Gothic centrepiece, may be mentioned:-

- (i) The device of the manuscript, or some similar historical distancing effect.
- (ii) The heir, or long-lost child.
- (iii) The auburn-haired heroine.
- (iv) Persecuted characters, usually the heroine.
- (v) The wicked nobleman.
- (vi) The interrupted nuptials.
- (vii) Religious characters, not always pleasant.
- (viii) A ruinous abbey or mansion, hidden in a wood.
- (ix) Fierce and rapacious banditti.
- (x) Gleams of torchlight or moonlight at crucial moments.
- (xi) Secret doors and secret panels.
- (xii) The "subterraneous passage".
- (xiii) Caves and grottoes.
- (xiv) Desolate, wild, rugged scenery.
- (xv) Wild storms on land or sea, often at night.
- (xvi) Shipwreck.
- (xvii) The haunted, deserted wing of the castle.
- (xviii) Hollow groans, strange lights and vague, flitting shapes.
- (xix) Deathbed confessions.
- (xx) Mysterious music.
- (xxi) Mysterious, noble and fascinating strangers.
- (xxii) Death by poison.
- (xxiii) Portraits, often obscured or newly discovered.
- (xxiv) Overtones of melancholy.
- (xxv) Contrasted virtue and vice.
- (xxvi) The Inquisition.
- (xxvii) Miniatures and rings.
- (xxviii) Imprisonment of wives, relations and rivals.
- (xxix) A chivalric attitude of love: amour courtois.
- (xxx) Emphasis on decorum and good taste.

45. Radcliffe and Austen have much in common; both lived at about the same time, and aimed at the same audience. Like Austen, Radcliffe is a moraliste, though her approach is radically different. This juxtaposition of grisly terror with eighteenth-century morality has led William Ruff¹⁷ to remark:-

Why anyone should think of The Mysteries of Udolpho as a Gothic Romance when it has such sermons of the dangers of sensibility and the pictures of scenery and manners I have described, I do not

17. Ann Radcliffe, or, The Hand of Taste.

know ...

Two-thirds of the book ... is about the course of true love, and not about Gothic horror at all.

Ruff appears to have missed the point entirely. "Gothic" does not concern itself purely with horror, but with the peculiar nature of the circumstances in which the characters find themselves, and this is just as significant in the horror genre as any specific object of horror. It is quite possible to create a Gothic setting without any horror at all, as in The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne. The works do contain a strong morality, and a rigid ethical code governing romance, but this is not incompatible with the Gothic spirit, which requires this inflexible morality as a necessary foil to the inevitable dangers and threats:-

"You may find, perhaps, signor," said Emily with mild dignity, "that the strength of my mind is equal to the justice of my cause; and that I can endure with fortitude, when it is in resistance of oppression."

"You speak like a heroine," said Montoni contemptuously; "we shall see whether you can suffer like one."

(The Mysteries of Udolpho, XXX, p. 51)

Although Ruff considers that Radcliffe is a paradoxical figure in that "her subject is shocking, and her morality flawless," the quotation above shows the very essence of the Gothic story, and illustrates the light-dark contrast which lies at its very centre. The purpose of the horror tale is to depict evil, vice or cruelty temporarily rampant; the entire motive force would be lost if there were no virtue with which to oppose vice. The reader of Radcliffe — and of any work in the horror genre — must align himself with the forces of good, suffer the tribulations and fears; and be relieved by the outcome. This depends on empathy, and a certain suspension of disbelief: and this truth lies at the cornerstone, not only of Radcliffe, but of every major writer in the genre.

46. Radcliffe's influence on later writers in the genre is considerable. In the first half of the nineteenth century, frequent reference is made to her. Scott admired her work intensely, and there are traces of her

influence in many of his works. The Mysteries of Udolpho and The Romance of the Forest are, in Ruff's neat phrase, "preserved in the vinegar of Northanger Abbey". Her influence on the Romantic movement was considerable, especially from the view of character portrayal. It would be possible to trace the development of the Byronic hero from Shakespeare via Montoni, Schedoni et al., and although this is not within the scope of the present work, it is admissible here to suggest that her works mark a transitional point in the development of the novel from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century; from the tentative buddings of imagination to its full flowering in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Ruff has declared that "her novels are the charnel house of the poetry popular in the eighteenth century, and if she occasionally uses a fresh image, time has killed its beauty ... " One can only assume that he is making reference to the gloomy, pensive and melancholy school of thought prevalent in the 1740s and 1750s, or the Graveyard School, but she enlivens the gloomy morbidity of these poems with a vivid interest which became, in her hands, a new, fascinating and extremely popular form. She is free from pessimism and despair. If read in the correct spirit, remembering the tastes and attitudes of the time, her novels are full of the most engaging interest; and, even without this proviso, are compelling and sincere, as well as exciting. Ruff's sweeping condemnation is less than fair. Building on the foundations laid by Walpole and Reeve, she created a fashion as well as a supremely adaptable body of effects — a priceless legacy for those writers who followed. The repercussions of Radcliffe's novels are still to be felt in the horror genre, and in the nineteenth century they were one of the most potent forces in the development of this branch of literature.

CHAPTER FIVE

CHAPTER V

MATTHEW GREGORY LEWIS : THE MONK

"An author, whether good or bad, or between both, is an animal whom every body is privileged to attack: for though all are not able to write books, all conceive themselves able to judge one. A bad composition carries with it its own punishment — contempt and ridicule. A good one excites envy, and entails upon its author a thousand mortifications: he finds himself assailed by partial and ill-humoured criticism: one man finds fault with the plan, another with the style, a third with the precept which it strives to inculcate; and they who cannot find fault with the book, employ themselves in stigmatizing its author. They maliciously rake out from obscurity every little circumstance which may throw ridicule upon his private character or conduct, and aim at wounding the man since they cannot hurt the writer. In short, to enter the lists of literature is wilfully to expose yourself to the arrows of neglect, ridicule, envy, and disappointment. Whether you write well or ill, be assured that you will not escape from blame."

(The Monk, Vol. II, Ch. V)

1. Immediately after the publication of The Monk,¹ its author became a celebrity. The shocking nature of the book ensured its instant success, since it followed broadly the lines already taken by Walpole and Radcliffe, but adding a considerable amount of gross detail and a strong sexual element, as well as a new and less diffident generation of spectres and phantoms. There has been confusion regarding the date of publication: Birkhead² and others give 1795 as the date of emergence — it certainly was composed in the late summer of 1794, but in fact did not appear in print until early in 1796. This has been substantiated by Summers, in the Gothic Quest (1927), who points out that the reason for the confusion lies in an

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1. Matthew Gregory Lewis, The Monk (Grove Press, 1952) with Introduction by John Berryman; unexpurgated text prepared by L.F. Peck.
 2. Edith Birkhead, The Tale of Terror, A Study of the Gothic Romance (1921; New York edn. Russell and Russell, 1963).

error in The Life and Correspondence of M.G. Lewis (1839), Vol. I, p. 151, which gives the date as 1795, although the Monthly Magazine or British Register of March 1796 lists it as a new publication.³ Although this point is not in itself significant, it does mean that only one year separates The Monk from The Italian; not two, as Birkhead has stated.

2. The Monk is a very violent book, and contains passages which, even by modern standards, are in poor taste. It is therefore not surprising that it aroused charges of indecency when it appeared, and was exposed to critical censure of the more virulent kind. It is possible that Lewis knew full well the reception the book would receive, and included the cynical paragraph which I have quoted above as an anticipatory thrust against his opponents. Coleridge called the novel "a poison for youth, and a provocative for the debauchee" and condemned the "libidinous minuteness" of the sexual episodes which occur with some regularity throughout the novel. Similar criticism came from the Monthly Review, the Scots Magazine and others. Lewis prepared an expurgated edition, but his reputation had been made, and even down to the present time the novel is regarded as in some way monstrous, evil and terrible — an archetype of immoral writing.⁴ Perhaps for this reason, it has not been found necessary to

3. Also noted in Praz, The Romantic Agony, II, (p. 86), note 23a.

4. In an anonymous leading article in the Times Literary Supplement (Detective Fiction Supplement) of February 25, 1955, there occurs the following statement: "Even Monk Lewis's she-devil Matilda is only introduced as a short-cut to Anselmo's violation of the chaste Agnes — the real end of this lubricious Richardsonian novel." It is difficult to understand how the author contrived to cram so many errors into such a short space. The Monk's name is, of course, Ambrosio. He does not violate Agnes, and only encounters her once — in the confessional (Antonia is intended). Matilda may arguably be a she-devil, but her purpose is to corrupt the Monk, in which the rape of Antonia is merely one stage leading to the true end of the book — Ambrosio's eternal damnation. The novel is very far from being Richardsonian. The author has plainly never read it, and his virulent condemnation of it as lubricious is obviously an opinion which he has gleaned second-hand from someone equally ill-informed.

give it serious critical attention. In his book The English Novel (1954), Walter Allen dismisses it in one or two brief lines, and Tompkins⁵ mentions it only briefly, and in no detail. It cannot be gainsaid that Lewis is of considerably less importance than Radcliffe or Poe, and yet this single novel does mark an abrupt transition between the Gothic school of gentle suspense and delicate suggestion to the later type, which concentrates mainly on more overt terrors. It is not a monstrous invention of a diseased mind — indeed, the book is so derivative that very little apart from the general plan can be said to belong to Lewis alone. A considerably condensed plot summary will show the bare outline of the story, which splits into two parts: the adventures of Ambrosio, the monk of the title; and the tribulations of Agnes and Raymond, which form the sub-plot.

3. The novel opens with a view of the interior of a Capuchin church in Madrid, filled with a crowd of less than devout worshippers. Don Lorenzo, a young cavalier, sees the beautiful Antonia, and decides to marry her. We discover that Lorenzo has a sister called Agnes, who is a nun. She is involved in an affair with Raymond de las Cisternas. Ambrosio gives a sermon which is greatly admired by all — his person and voice are striking — but once he is alone, he is filled with spiritual pride over his own eloquence. He is tended by a single servant, Rosario, who seems filled with a dreadful secret that cannot be told. Agnes goes to confession, but a letter falls from her clothing which makes it clear that she is in love with Raymond, is pregnant by him, and intends to escape. Ambrosio, in horror, takes Agnes to the Abbess.

In the meantime, Rosario decides to confess to Ambrosio the secret which had been causing so much inner torment: Rosario is in fact a woman

5. J.M.S. Tompkins, The Popular Novel in England, 1770-1800 (1932).

and is, moreover, in love with Ambrosio, having entered the convent for the purpose of being closer to him. Ambrosio is determined that she must leave, but Matilda — as "Rosario" is properly called — exposes her bosom and makes as if to stab herself. Ambrosio looks at the exposed breast with "insatiable avidity", finds it difficult to arrange his ideas, postpones his decision, and suffers all that night from licentious dreams. The following day he is bitten by a serpent, but Matilda cures him by sucking the poison from his hand. She now begins to weaken, and, lying in bed, confesses her lust for him. Ambrosio is tempted further by the fact that Matilda is identical to the picture of the Madonna in his cell. At length she succeeds in seducing him; he forgets his vows and sanctity and they fall into a prolonged and lustful embrace.

Elsewhere, Raymond is telling Lorenzo how he had met Agnes. He had taken an assumed name, and gone to university. During a journey in the forest near Strasbourg, he had been forced to take shelter in a cottage for the night. Thanks to the warning of the wife of the cottager, he had realised that in the night someone was going to make an attempt on his life, for financial gain. He managed to escape, after a desperate struggle, incidentally saving the Baroness Lindenberg. The Baron, grateful, had invited Raymond to the Castle, where he met Agnes, then sixteen years of age and destined for the convent because of a vow made by the mother when ill during childbirth. Raymond had confessed to the Baroness that he was in love, but she construed this as referring to herself, becoming extremely jealous when the truth emerged. Agnes was to be sent to the Convent of St Clare.

The Castle of Lindenberg was haunted by the spectre of a Bleeding Nun, which appeared every five years on the 5th of May. Raymond had told Agnes to disguise herself appropriately, and make her way from the castle. On the night, the bleeding figure of a nun had entered the coach, but the

horses, in terror, had caused the carriage to be upset. When Raymond looked around, there was no sign of Agnes — it had been a genuine visitation. The ghost visited him every night. Eventually, with the help of a mysterious man (who is identified as The Wandering Jew) the ghostly nun was made to speak and revealed herself to be Beatrice, a great-aunt of Raymond's grandfather. She had been brutally killed during a quarrel over the possession of the estates, and her remains deposited outside the castle walls. Raymond had then restored the ashes to their rightful place, and the hauntings had ceased. He then made his way to Madrid, and was attacked by an assassin hired by the vindictive Baroness. He had been helped by Agnes' father, one Don Gaston, who had unwittingly informed Raymond that she was in the Convent of St Clare. He managed to gain entrance, and for some time they had continued to meet in secret. She had become pregnant, and plans were made for the escape.

At this point, Lorenzo is in possession of all the facts, and he agrees to use his influence to help. The Mother Superior of St Clare refuses to cooperate, and tells Lorenzo that Agnes is ill. A few days later, they are told that Agnes has died in childbirth, and that the child is likewise dead. Ambrosio, meantime, is totally in Matilda's power. She is still very ill, but says she can cure herself if Ambrosio will promise never to reveal how she does it. He agrees, although his conscience troubles him greatly. They go to the vaults. On the way, Ambrosio hears the Prioress talking about a dreadful punishment for Agnes and feels inclined to intercede on the young nun's behalf, but Matilda forbids him to do so. She goes alone into the vault, there is a flash of light and the sound of thunder, and she emerges from the building cured. Ambrosio has now lost some of his interest in her, but his lustful appetite has been awakened, and he looks at the rich and lovely women who come to confession with a new eye.

One day the beautiful Antonia comes, begging for his intercession, since Elvira (her mother) is very ill. Although he has vowed never to leave St Clare, he goes out — ostensibly to visit Elvira, but in reality to be nearer to Antonia. She is innocently familiar with him, which inflames his lust to an even greater extent. Working the conversation round to love, he makes her admit that she regards him highly; his will finally dominates him, and he begins to embrace her. They are interrupted by Elvira — much to Antonia's relief — and Ambrosio is told never to return to the house. He is confused and very worried for the sake of his reputation. Matilda, realising that he desires Antonia, promises to help, telling him that she can raise the Devil and gain his help. He is afraid, and doubtful, but she persuades him. In a magic mirror, he is allowed to see Antonia taking off her clothes before bathing, and he completely surrenders himself to Matilda's power. The Devil is summoned, and arrives in the form of a beautiful youth with a star on his forehead, and crimson wings. His features are noble and melancholy as he gives Ambrosio a sprig of myrtle which will open all doors, and render Antonia unconscious.

Raymond, meanwhile, is pining away for the love of Agnes who is dead. Theodore, his servant, goes to the convent dressed as a beggar and tries to ascertain the true facts, and is given a basket of fruit by a nun called Ursula: she appears to know the truth about Agnes, and in the fruit is concealed a note requesting that the Prioress be removed forcibly from the Convent, since she has committed a dreadful crime. Lorenzo, meanwhile, enamoured of Antonia, goes to her window and serenades her. In the early hours of the morning, Ambrosio goes to the house, and makes his way to Antonia's room with the help of the magic myrtle. He rips off her clothes, and is about to gain his lustful desires when he is discovered by Elvira. She threatens to unmask him in public, and he suffocates her — Antonia is unconscious the while. The following night, the ghost of Elvira appears to

Antonia, prophesying that they will be united in three days. Ambrosio goes to lay the ghost, and Antonia is innocently glad to see him. Matilda and Ambrosio plot to have her drugged and carried to the Convent, apparently dead, where she will be in his power. This is duly done at the same time as a religious procession is taking place.

Lorenzo and Theodore go to the parade and seize hold of the Prioress who is charged with murder by Ursula. The crowd go berserk and the Prioress is horribly torn to pieces and the convent set on fire. Ambrosio meanwhile rapes Antonia, and is filled with revulsion afterwards. Matilda brings news of the fire and the arrival of the Inquisition, and when Antonia screams for help, Ambrosio stabs her. Lorenzo bursts in, and she dies in his arms, fulfilling the prophecy of her mother; Ambrosio is captured and taken to the Inquisition. In a miserable dungeon, Agnes is found with the putrefying remains of her child. She has been drugged by the Prioress and incarcerated, being forced to suffer the taunts of the Prioress every day. She now wishes to marry Raymond, and this is now finally possible. Lorenzo, after a long period of mourning for Antonia, marries Virginia, formerly a nun of St Clare, and herself the unhappy subject of much suffering.

Now, imprisoned and tortured by the Inquisition, Ambrosio feels the weight of his sins heavy upon him. Matilda is condemned to burn, but at night she appears in his cell, free. She has sold her soul to the Devil, and she tells him how he too can escape by the same means. He realises that the charges of rape, murder and sorcery will certainly cause him to be put to death, and yet he hesitates to take the last, awful step. He hears that he is doomed to be burned that very night. As the guards come to take him, he feverishly seeks to find the passage in the book which will summon the Devil. At last he succeeds, and Lucifer appears in his true, ghastly, terrifying form. Appalled, Ambrosio refuses to sign. The Devil

tells him that Matilda is a spirit from hell, sent to damn him. As the guards begin to unbar the door of the cell, Ambrosio finally signs. He is removed from his cell, but the Devil takes him to the summit of a high mountain and casts him from the top. Smashed and injured fatally, Ambrosio undergoes ghastly torment for six days before death finally claims him.

4. Before undertaking any detailed exegesis of the work itself, it will be necessary to examine in detail the character of Ambrosio, who quite definitely dominates the book. Lewis was fascinated by the character of Montoni, which had been created in 1794, and Ambrosio is a logical extension of the villain who lives only to satisfy his own feelings and desires. Lewis's character is at once cruder and subtler. He is a violent character, and never quite attains the same mysterious and repellent grandeur as Montoni or, for that matter, Schedoni. But with Lewis we have a glimpse of something which does not enter into the description of Montoni, and only unconvincingly into the portrayal of Schedoni: we see the actual process of corruption taking place. Superficially, Ambrosio resembles Schedoni, which lends support to the argument that Radcliffe was to a certain extent inspired by the concept of a Catholic priest:-

He was a man of noble port and commanding presence. His stature was lofty, and his features uncommonly handsome. His nose was aquiline, his eyes large, black and sparkling, and his dark brows almost joined together. His complexion was of a deep but clear brown; study and watching had entirely deprived his cheek of colour. Tranquillity reigned upon his smooth unwrinkled forehead; and content, expressed upon every feature, seemed to announce the man equally unacquainted with cares and crimes ... Still there was a certain severity in his look and manner that inspired universal awe, and few could sustain the glance of his eye, at once fiery and penetrating.

(Vol. I, Ch. I, p.45: my italics)

It is interesting to compare the sentence I have underlined with Radcliffe's description of Schedoni, particularly in the passage quoted on page 85 above. Ambrosio does not, however, have the same malign aura at the beginning of the novel as Schedoni: the process of corruption is slower and more

particular. Ambrosio's spiritual pride manifests itself early in the action, and this is partly responsible for his downfall:-

When he remembered the enthusiasm which his discourse had excited, his heart swelled with rapture, and his imagination presented him with splendid visions of aggrandizement. He looked around him with exultation, and pride told him loudly, that he was superior to the rest of his fellow-creatures.

(Vol. I, Ch. II, p. 64)

His underlying lustful nature — another contributory factor in his moral decline — is evident in the sexual overtones to his feelings towards the Virgin Mary, represented in his room by a picture:-

... "how graceful is that turn of head! what sweetness, yet what majesty in her divine eyes! how softly her cheek reclines upon her hand! Can the rose vie with the blush of that cheek? can the lily rival the whiteness of that hand? Oh! if such a creature existed, and existed but for me! were I permitted to twine round my fingers those golden ringlets, and press with my lips the treasures of that snowy bosom! Gracious God, should I then resist the temptation?"

(Vol. I, Ch. II, p. 65)

It is precisely this which allows the forces of evil to assail his purity, since Rosario, alias Matilda, the precise likeness of the portrait, comes in to interrupt his reverie, and later supplies him with the temptation which he is unable to resist.

5. Ambrosio, unlike many of the creations of Radcliffe, is not a portrait in black and white. His mind is constantly assailed by doubts, and he is very much aware of the hypocrisy which develops within himself as his career of sin and dissipation becomes more and more tortuous. Agnes, when he turns her over to the Prioress, strikes at the very core of his weakness:-

And where is the merit of your boasted virtue? What temptations have you vanquished? Coward! You have fled from it, not opposed seduction. But the day of trial will arrive. Oh! then, when you yield to impetuous passions; when you feel than man is weak, and born to err; when, shuddering, you look back upon your crimes, and solicit, with terror, the mercy of your God, oh! in that fearful moment think upon me ...

(Vol. I, Ch. II, p. 72)

He is quite aware of the possibility of truth in the words of Agnes, and

conforms to type immediately:-

"I have done my duty," said Ambrosio to himself. Still did he not feel perfectly satisfied by this reflection. To dissipate the unpleasant ideas which this scene had excited in him, he descended into the abbey-garden.

(Vol. I, Ch. II, p. 73)

It is in the garden that he meets Rosario, and where the awful disclosure of her identity is made. Surely the choice of such a place for the onset of fatal temptation is not accidental. Here, the fatal charms of Matilda's body are displayed to him. Here he undergoes agonies of doubt. And here he is bitten by a serpent, which leads logically and inexorably to his final fall from grace. The symbolism of the Garden has been overlooked by most critics, who prefer to dwell upon the details of the seduction; but Lewis's technique here is considerably more subtle than it appears. Temptation in Eden was followed by a rationalisation, tending to justify the forbidden act with a series of arguments designed to excuse the transgression, or at any rate to mitigate it. Ambrosio follows this pattern:-

The monk reflected that to vanquish temptation was an infinitely greater virtue than to avoid it; he thought that he ought rather to rejoice in the opportunity of proving the firmness of his virtue. St. Anthony had withstood all seductions to lust, then why should not he? Besides, St. Anthony was tempted by the devil, who put every art into practice to excite his passions; whereas Ambrosio's danger proceeded from a mere mortal woman, fearful and modest, whose apprehensions of his yielding were not less violent than his own ...
... Ambrosio was yet to learn, that to a heart unacquainted with her, vice is ever most dangerous when lurking behind the mask of virtue.

(Vol. I, Ch. II, p. 103)

6. After possessing Matilda, Ambrosio is filled with the most intense remorse, and he seeks in vain for a way to expiate his offence. But Lewis shows us that the descent to hell is easy, and the return from it well-nigh impossible. Once having known the delights of the flesh, Ambrosio is unable to contemplate existence without them. It is at this point that blatant hypocrisy is added to his list of crimes. He begins to lose interest in Matilda, and views the women who come to confession with a lascivious eye. The decline has set in, he is powerless to resist

the forces at work within himself, and yet he must keep up appearances. And so, Macbeth-like, he is drawn deeper and deeper into his double life, and every transgression becomes easier to commit, and more necessary. By the time he goes to Antonia's house, lust is uppermost in his mind, and he can think only of how to accomplish his aims:-

Grown used to her modesty, it no longer commanded the same respect and awe; he still admired it, but it only made him more anxious to deprive her of that quality which formed her principal charm.

(Vol. I, Ch. VII, p. 255)

Having almost succeeded with Antonia, and now unable to think of anything else, Ambrosio allows himself to be present at a ritual of Black Magic, from which he gains the means of achieving his desired prey. But before he can do so, he has to add murder to the accumulating list of crimes on his conscience, and his final conquest of Antonia in the underground vault is nothing more than the most brutal and violent rape. Having taken her virtue, and having thereby finally achieved his desire, he no longer regards her with interest; he casts her glances of loathing, and he is inwardly aware of the enormity of what he has done:-

The very excess of his former eagerness to possess Antonia now contributed to inspire him with disgust; and a secret impulse made him feel just how base and unmanly was the crime which he had just committed. He started hastily from her arms. She, who had so lately been the object of his adoration, now raised no other sentiment in his heart than aversion and rage.

(Vol. III, Ch. XI, p. 368)

Her murder, as she rushes for help, is savage and inhuman, and Ambrosio realises that he is doomed. Ambrosio's mind naturally turns back to the position of respect that he once held:-

But a few weeks had elapsed, since he was pure and virtuous, courted by the wisest and the noblest in Madrid, and regarded by the people with a reverence that approached idolatry. He now saw himself stained with the most loathed and monstrous sins, the object of universal execration, a prisoner of the Holy Office, and probably doomed to perish in tortures the most severe.

(Vol. III, Ch. XII, pp. 401-402)

He is aware that prayer cannot help him, and that he does not deserve the

pardon of Heaven. He resigns himself to despair, and yet is tormented doubly by his sure knowledge that death itself is not simply an end:-

... his knowledge was too extensive, his understanding too solid and just. He could not help feeling the existence of a God. Those truths, once his dearest comfort, now presented themselves before him in the clearest light; but they only served to drive him to distraction. They destroyed his ill-grounded hopes of escaping punishment ...

(Vol. III, Ch. XII, p. 405)

He abandons himself to rage, fear and terror. And yet, when Matilda tells him that he too may save himself at the price of his soul, he still hesitates:-

"Matilda, your counsels are dangerous; I dare not, I will not follow them. I must not give up my claim to salvation. Monstrous are my crimes; but God is merciful, and I will not despair of pardon."

(Vol. III, Ch. XII, p. 409)

Until the last, Ambrosio wavers pitifully and pathetically between hope and despair. Even when taken from the dungeon by the Arch-fiend, he still tries to fall on his knees to pray. The dissolution is complete, and his "despairing" death forms the logical conclusion.

7. Ambrosio emerges from the pages of the novel as a real, if singularly dissipated, man. For the first time in the Gothic Romance, real worldly vice is allowed to intrude, and the heroines have to suffer in fact what Radcliffe's heroines merely feared. This is an extension, and arguably a logical one, of the Radcliffe romances and the popular sentimental novels of the day. There are hints in the novel which suggest some sort of analogy with the Fall of Man — the temptation in the garden, the bite of the serpent, and the blandishments of Matilda. The death of Ambrosio, likewise, is reminiscent of Genesis:-

Blind, maimed, helpless and despairing, venting his rage in blasphemy and curses, execrating his existence, yet dreading the arrival of death destined to yield him up to greater torments, six miserable days did the villain languish. On the seventh, a violent storm arose: the winds in fury rent up rocks and forests: the sky was now black with clouds, now sheeted with fire: the rain fell in torrents, it swelled the stream; the waves overflowed their banks; they reached the spot where Ambrosio lay, and, when they

abated, carried with them into the river the corpse of the despairing monk.

(Vol. III, Ch. XII, p. 420)

It is an anti-creation; a destruction and a purging of the evil which is inherent in the monk. The use of the word "despairing" is significant. Ambrosio despairs of life, and of salvation: this is clear. But a measure of his despair must lie in the fact that he realises the utter futility of his evil acts, the negative quality of his achievements in lust and crime, and the paltry evil of all of those things in the face of God whom he, of all men, should have served best. At no point in the book do we feel that Lewis is aligning himself with Ambrosio. The book may contain lewd and horrible passages, but despite the sensational overtones the message is still a moral one, pointing to the insufficiency of carnal desire and temporal pleasure. Ambrosio is constantly and painfully aware that his actions are sinful, and yet he cannot desist from them. The never-ending struggle within his own conscience, and the super-imposed hypocrisy which his own cowardice forces him to adopt makes him a vivid and tragic figure. The nature of his crimes makes it impossible for the reader to identify with him, but there is a gripping fascination in his gradual, struggling, agonising descent into damnation, drawn inexorably by forces which his natural impulses and initially naive nature make it impossible for him to resist.

8. Lewis's sources for the novel were extremely numerous, and it will not be necessary to catalogue them all here. An interesting light is cast on Lewis when we remember that Radcliffe, Sade and he were all contemporaries, and all took as their basic theme the persecution of a heroine by the forces of evil. Their approaches were, naturally, very different; and it is very doubtful if Sade had any influence on The Monk. Justine and Juliette were first printed in 1791 and 1796 respectively, and so it is possible that Lewis could have had access to the former: certainly

both Justine and The Monk feature scenes of sexual debauchery in the dungeons of a convent. But this was not an invention of Sade; a novel entitled Intrigues Monastiques, ou l'Amour encapuchonné had appeared in 1739, and contained a similar scene to that of the rape of Antonia; and this may have inspired Monvel in his play Les Victimes cloîtrées (1791) which Lewis had certainly seen.⁶ The passage quoted above in which Ambrosio entertains salacious thoughts about the picture of the Madonna is taken word for word from Schiller's Der Geisterseher, published in 1789. Tompkins⁷ points out that Georg Herzfeld, writing in Herrigs Archiv, CXI, has demonstrated⁸ that two-thirds of The Monk has been lifted almost without alteration from an anonymous German romance, Die blutende Gestalt mit Dolch und Lampe, oder, die Beschwörung im Schlosse Stern bei Prag. Lewis himself cites as his main source the story of the hermit Barsisa, which appeared in no. 148 of the Guardian in 1713, in which Satan, alarmed by the holiness of Barsisa, sends him the daughter of a king to heal, and then tempts him to seduce and then kill the maiden. Barsisa is arrested and signs himself over to Satan, who betrays him. The story of the Bleeding Nun is likewise commonplace in the eighteenth century, most of the stories centring around a young girl forced to take vows against her will who, falling prey to her own sensual nature, is led into danger and finally murdered. This is also adapted in Diderot's La Religieuse, an anti-Catholic

6. Praz, The Shadow of the Divine Marquis, passim.

7. Tompkins, op. cit., VII, p. 245, fn. 1.

8. Herzfeld was in error. The book from Prague was later compared with the German translation of The Monk, and found to be plagiarised from it. See E. Railo, The Haunted Castle (1927), pp. 345-346, n. 97. Tompkins ought to have taken note of this, as it materially affects our judgement of Lewis.

work of great power which appeared in 1796. Other sources and parallels are mentioned by Praz,⁹ but from the foregoing it is evident that The Monk is not entirely original. The most important consideration must be, however, the impact which the novel had on the English tradition. Here it is clear that Lewis was the instrument of a violent revolution in the Gothic spirit. He intensified the novel, and added new and violent effects to the established Gothic machinery, already described in Chapter IV. He brings a new and ghastly meaning to the device of incarceration which, though based on Radcliffe, leads to the more horrible descriptions of entombment to be found, for instance, in the short stories of Poe.¹⁰ In common with Sade, he helped create a new race of heroines whose virtue was not only threatened, but actively violated. From his knowledge of German sources and his fascination for The Mysteries of Udolpho he created what was, in essence, a new genre — the Tale of Terror, as opposed to the genteel Gothic Romance, based on suspense. Genuine, unexplained and terrifying phantoms walk abroad, for whom there is no rational explanation:—

The door was thrown open with violence. A figure entered, and drew near my bed with solemn measured steps. With trembling apprehension I examined this midnight visitor. God Almighty! it was the bleeding nun! It was my lost companion! Her face was still veiled, but she no longer held her lamp and dagger. She lifted up her veil slowly. What a sight presented itself to my startled eyes! I beheld before me an animated corpse. Her countenance was long and haggard; her cheeks and lips were bloodless; the paleness of death was spread over her features; and her eyeballs, fixed steadfastly upon me, were lustreless and hollow.

(Vol. II, Ch. IV, p. 170)

For Lewis, the vaults and crypts of the Gothic buildings have come to hold new terrors;¹¹ and the veil of suggestion and circumlocution has been lifted.

9. Praz, op. cit., notes and addenda to Chapter II.

10. E.g. The Cask of Amontillado.

11. Cf. Romeo and Juliet, esp. device of drugging to produce death-like state. Also cf. quotation Vol. II, Ch. VI, p. 235: "The morning is on the point of breaking, let us return to the abbey lest day-light should betray us."

"In Lewis's wonderworld there are no elusive shadows; he hurls us without preparation or initiation into a daylight orgy of horrors."¹²

9. Lewis's anti-Roman feelings found very strong expression in this work, as is patently obvious from the plot summary. This lack of restraint is a flaw; and the contrast with Radcliffe is striking: she introduces the Inquisition in The Italian, but apportions blame only where it is due, and is quite capable of describing members of holy orders who are not governed by spite and malice. Lewis gives us Ursula and Virginia, it is true, but the Prioress — although originally a Radcliffe creation — becomes a monster of depravity which the author of The Italian could never have painted. Her death, deserved or not, is particularly horrible, and protracted to an extent that is completely unnecessary:—

They (the rioters) tore her from one another, and each new tormentor was more savage than the former. They stifled with howls and execrations her shrill cries for mercy, and dragged her through the streets, spurning her, trampling her, and treating her with every species of cruelty which hate or vindictive fury could invent. At length a flint, aimed by some well-directing hand, struck her full upon the temple. She sank upon the ground bathed in blood, and in a few minutes terminated her miserable existence. Yet though she no longer felt their insults, the rioters still exercised their impotent rage upon her lifeless body. They beat it, trod upon it, and ill-used it, till it became no more than a mass of flesh, unsightly, shapeless, and disgusting.

(Vol. II, Ch. X, p. 344)

Radcliffe may well have taken parts of The Monk and adapted ^{them} in her own tale, but she retains her sensitive and light touch. In The Italian, the scenes in the Inquisition gain their effect from the sombre mystery of the place; in Lewis, the instruments of torture and pain are described, and the physical anguish of Ambrosio is detailed with something like exultation. Schedoni dies from poison, but Ambrosio lingers for six days undergoing unspeakable torment, feasted upon by flies, his eyes ripped from his head by eagles. In addition to this anti-Catholic feeling, there is the question of Lewis's sexual deviation, which certainly affected his libidinous descriptions and suggests strong affinities with the love of cruelty expressed

12. Birkhead, op. cit., IV, p. 64.

so vividly in the works of Sade. This is, however, a question for a trained psychiatrist to explore and does not materially affect the conclusions of this thesis.

10. This work, taken along with Radcliffe's The Italian, is the last major novel of the eighteenth century and, as has been indicated, marked the beginnings of a new fashion in the horror genre. The influence of The Monk on The Italian is, in my opinion, superficial. Ellena and Antonia are similar, as are Bianchi and Elvira. Schedoni may be based on Ambrosio, but the resemblance ends there. Both novels contain scenes in the Inquisition, and this may very well have been suggested to Radcliffe by Lewis's grim descriptions. Both novels contain as their central pivot a character of obscure birth who has stooped to vice and must pay the price, and the two prelates are possessed of the piercing eye, though in this instance it is possible that Lewis took the lead from Radcliffe's Montoni. Artistically, The Italian was the better work. The Monk, for all its faults, remains the more vivid, and stands as a prominent milestone in the history of macabre literature.

CHAPTER SIX

CHAPTER VI
THE ROMANTIC POETS AND FRANKENSTEIN

1. It would clearly be impossible, in a thesis of this nature, to omit mention of the so-called Romantic poets. Obviously, their connexion with the horror genre is peripheral: they did not produce any significant addition to the horror tale in prose, though much of their poetry can be viewed as within the mainstream of the genre, and this will be discussed here. In addition, Byron and Shelley were connected with two of the most influential works in horror literature, and may have had a hand in their inspiration. I shall confine myself to a consideration of certain works by Byron, Keats, Shelley and Coleridge. At best, this will be a sketchy account; there is room for an entire work of research on the links between horror and romanticism. My principal considerations will be to show how these authors were affected by the genre, how they used it, and what additions they made to it. Obviously it will be pertinent to consider Mary Shelley's Frankenstein in this chapter.

2. Unlike the term Gothic, the adjective "romantic", when applied to literature, is practically impossible to define. There is a loosening of formalism, of course, and the inclusion of many subjects previously not treated poetically. The French Revolution did much to give the movement added impetus. The phenomenon of figures such as Byron, Shelley, Keats, Coleridge and Wordsworth occurring more or less simultaneously at a historical epoch when new ideas, political systems and industrialism were in a state of flux is clearly unique, and perhaps it is true to say that the adjective "romantic", if it is to be applied at all, may only be applied to these figures and to those directly influenced by them. In this respect, at least, the romantic and horror movements in literature are very close;

in fact, it is sometimes very difficult to differentiate between them. The Gothic novel had a very great influence on the Romantics who, in a sense, used them as a source for the next stage in the slow development of the horror genre into the nineteenth century.

3. Even while at school, Shelley had been fascinated by the Gothic novels, and early in life had produced two of his own, Zastrozzi and St. Irvyne, the latter appearing in 1810, when he was but eighteen years of age. He later produced a long Gothic poem called The Wandering Jew.¹ In The Sensitive Plant, Shelley describes the passing from perfection and beauty to decay and corruption, and his language is that of the graveyard:-

But the mandrakes, and toadstools, and docks and darnels,
Rose like the dead from their ruined charnels.
(116-117)

It is the long poem The Cenci which provides us with the clearest glimpse of Shelley's indebtedness to the Gothic school. The poem tells of the destruction of a noble family in 1599, under the pontificate of Clement VIII, and here are to be found some fascinating parallel passages with those already established by Radcliffe and Lewis:-

Yet I fear
Her subtle mind, her awe-inspiring gaze,
Whose beams anatomize me nerve by nerve
And lay me bare, and make me blush to see
My hidden thoughts.
(I, ii)

Oh, dart
The terrible resentment of those eyes
On the dead earth! Turn them away from me!
They wound:
(V, ii)

This is very closely akin to Radcliffe's description of Schedoni in The Italian, which Praz² identifies as kindred to Tasso's description of

1. Shelley, Poems Published in 1820, ed. Hughes with introduction (Oxford).

2. Praz, The Romantic Agony, II, p. 55.

Satan in Gerusalemme Liberata:-

Orrida maestà nel fero aspetto
Terrore accresce, e più superbo il rende;
Rosseggian gli occhi, e di veneno infetto
Come infausta cometa, il guardo splende;

There is some typical Gothic description — surely more suited to verse than prose — which recalls parts of The Mysteries of Udolpho:-

Two miles on this side of the fort, the road
Crosses a deep ravine; 'tis rough and narrow,
And winds with short turns down the precipice;
And in its depths there is a mighty rock,
Which has, for unimaginable years,
Sustained itself with terror and with toil
Over a gulf ...

... beneath this crag
Huge as despair, as if in weariness
The melancholy mountain yawns; below
You hear but see not an impetuous torrent
Raging among the caverns, and a bridge
Crosses the chasm; and high above there grow
With intersecting trunks, from crag to crag,
Cedars, and yews, and pines, whose tangled hair
Is matted in one solid roof of shade
By the dark ivy's twine.

(III, i)

Cenci, in his eagerness to corrupt and destroy his daughter's soul, is an extension of the Gothic villain of the Montoni pattern:-

Heaven, rain upon her head
The blistering drops of the Maremma's dew,
Till she be speckled like a toad; parch up
Those love-enkindled lips, warp those fine limbs
To loathed lameness!

(IV, i)

4. It is in Byron, that most powerful and terrifying figure, that we discern the appearance of the Fatal Man. It would be very difficult to determine how much of this is literary invention on Byron's part, and how much is a deliberate reflection of his own tormented relationships with the women who loved him. The simplest expression of this occurs in Manfred, II, where we find the line:-

My embrace was fatal

and later:-

I loved her, and destroy'd her.

The Byronic figures which loom so large and dreadful in his poems nearly always contain this overtone, which may well be cognate with the destruction which follows those who associate themselves too closely with Radcliffe's evil characters (viz. the death of Madame Montoni). The appearance of Byron's chief characters, and their mental states, seem closely akin to Radcliffe's Schedoni:-

And now Childe Harolde was sore sick at heart,
And from his fellow Bacchanals would flee;
'Tis said, at times the sullen tear would start,
But Pride congealed the drop within his ee:
Apart he stalked in joyless reverie ...
(Childe Harold, I, vi)

My injuries came down on those who loved me —
On those whom I best loved: I never quell'd
An enemy, save in my just defence —
But my embrace was fatal.
(Manfred, II, i)

This should have been a noble creature: he
Hath all the energy which would have made
A goodly frame of glorious elements,
Had they been wisely mingled; as it is,
It is an awful chaos —
(ibid., III, i)

Sun-burnt his cheek, his forehead high and pale
The sable curls in wild profusion veil;
And oft perforce his rising lip reveals
The haughty thought it curbs, but scarce conceals.
Though smooth his voice, and calm his general mien,
Still seems there nothing he would not have seen:
His features' deepening lines and varying hue
At times attracted, yet perplex'd the view,
As if within that murkiness of mind
Work'd feelings fearful, and yet undefined;
Such might it be — that none could truly tell —
Too close inquiry his stern glance would quell.
There breathe but few whose aspect might defy
The full encounter of his searching eye;
He had the skill, when Cunning's gaze would seek
To probe his heart, and watch his changing cheek,
At once the observer's purpose to espy,
And on himself roll back his scrutiny,
(The Corsair, I, ix)

That brow in furrowed lines had fixed at last,
And spake of passions, but of passions past:
The pride, but not the fire, of early days,
Coldness of mien, and carelessness of praise;
A high demeanour, and a glance that took
Their thoughts from others by a single look.
(Lara, I, v)

The underlined passages above point closely to the influence of Radcliffe, and indicate another Gothic trait: the mysterious past of the hero, which has so strangely moulded his features. The terrifying aloofness reminds us of Montoni and Schedoni — and the verb "stalk" points, in both Schedoni and Childe Harold, to the restless, lonely energy which gives these characters their vitality. The piercing eyes of Schedoni are clearly seen in those of the Corsair and Lara,³ and this we see also in the person of the Giaour:-

Dark and unearthly is the scowl
That glares beneath his dusky cowl.
The flash of that dilating eye
Reveals too much of times gone by;
Though varying, indistinct its hue,
Oft will his glance the gazer rue,
For in it lurks that nameless spell,
Which speaks, itself unspeakable,
A spirit yet unquell'd and high
That claims and keeps ascendancy;
And like the bird whose pinions quake,
But cannot fly the gazing snake,
Will others quail beneath his look,
Nor 'scape the glance they scarce can brook.
(The Giaour, 11.832-845)

This awful hypnotic gaze is also found in the famous passage from Coleridge's Ancient Mariner:-

He holds him with his glittering eye —
The Wedding-Guest stood still,
And listens like a three years' child:
The Mariner hath his will ...

while a very similar effect is to be found in Lamia by Keats, of which I shall have more to say later in this chapter:-

The bald-head philosopher
Had fix'd his eye, without a twinkle or stir
Full on the alarmed beauty of the bride,
Brow-beating her fair form, and troubling her sweet pride.
Lycius then press'd her hand, with devout touch,
As pale it lay upon the rosy couch:
T'was icy ...

3. An interesting, if minor, example of Byron's debt to Lewis, whom he greatly admired, is expressed in the Times Literary Supplement, May 11, 1946; in a letter H.N. Fairchild notes that Byron has taken a passage from Lewis's poem The Exiles (in The Monk, Vol. II) and incorporated it in Don Juan, II, 18-20.

A fuller examination of Byron is not possible here, but from the long poems I have mentioned, the following traits of the Byronic Hero/
Fatal Man may be listed:-

- (a) notable or noble birth, mysterious childhood and family background;
- (b) haughtiness and pride, an aloofness arising from massive accumulated experience in the past;
- (c) a facial expression which indicates passions, either present or past, despite a conscious attempt to subdue them;
- (d) a piercing eye which very few dare to meet;
- (e) an awareness of destiny;
- (f) a fatal influence on women;
- (g) an imposing physical form, as well as facial features of the kind mentioned in (c) above;
- (h) sensibility: a capacity for strong feeling, usually deliberately suppressed, though having had full reign at some mysterious past time;
- (i) a love for solitude, generally among the wilder places;
- (j) considerable material wealth.

The majority of items mentioned in this list can be found in embryonic form in the main characters of Radcliffe; Walpole's Manfred and Lewis's Ambrosio also share many of these attributes. It is not suggested that Byron is a slavish imitator of Radcliffe — on the contrary, he expands his characters and describes them in far greater depth and detail than Radcliffe was capable of doing — but he has strong affinities with her. His heroes are in the Gothic mould, and his titanic stature as a poet and public figure did much to further character traits which would otherwise have remained concealed in the comparative obscurity of the eighteenth-century romances.

5. John Keats is a very different figure. His gentle and tender nature, lacking the elemental strength of Byron and the questing virility of Shelley, helped to create a corpus of poetry which is equally notable, but diametrically opposed in tone. Keats does not give us any Fatal Men,

nor could he have constructed a convincing villain. The heroes of his works conform to quite a different type. The most significant are Lycius (Lamia), Lorenzo (Isabella), Porphyro (The Eve of St Agnes), Endymion, in the poem of that title, and possibly the Knight at Arms in La Belle Dame sans Merci. Without exception, they follow in the footsteps of Radcliffe's Alleyne, Hippolitus, Theodore, Valancourt and Vivaldi, in that they are pale creatures of sensibility, filled with an innate sense of amour courtois and incapable of a mean or improper action. In common with the heroines of Keat's poems — who so strongly resemble those of Radcliffe — they are filled with a mystic sense of Beauty and Truth. The Gothic novel was founded on the contrast between Truth and the seemingly omnipotent forces which threaten it. Byron took the side of the threatening forces: Keats championed Truth, and worked it into a rare and beautiful tapestry in his tragically small corpus of poems. Byron has — along with Keats — much in common with Poe; and while to Byron must go the credit for the definitive synthesis of the Fatal Man, to Keats must go equal approbation for his picture of the Fatal Woman, which became in the hands of Baudelaire, and later nineteenth-century authors, a figure of immense power.

6. It is not necessary to study works of antiquity in any great detail to realise that Fatal Women have always been present. Perhaps the immediate ancestor in the Romantic era was Sin, that dreaded female figure who sprang from the head of Satan, and by incestuous union with him produced death (Milton, Paradise Lost, II.) Certainly it is the character of Matilda in The Monk who heralds the beginning of a new generation: the lovely creature whose whole purpose is to destroy, to corrupt and to weaken. (It would perhaps be possible to consider Lady Macbeth in this light.) After Matilda, the appearances of this phenomenon become more frequent. The strange and evil Geraldine appears in Christabel, written between 1797 and 1800. Coleridge describes her beautiful appearance, not

without its frightening aspect:-

There she sees a damsel bright,
Drest in a silken robe of white,
That shadowy in the moonlight shone:
The neck that made that white robe wan,
Her stately neck, and arms were bare;
Her blue-veined feet unsandal'd were
And wildly glittered here and there
The gems entangled in her hair.
I guess, 'twas frightful there to see
A lady so richly clad as she —
Beautiful exceedingly!

and in The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, 1798, he paints the familiar and dreadful form of Death's mate:-

Her lips were red, her looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold:
Her skin was white as leprosy,
The Nightmare Life-in-Death was she,
Who thicks man's blood with cold.

Even in Lamia (1820), Keats described the fateful charms of the creature turned into a perfect woman from her original serpentine form, thus deceiving Lycius as surely and completely as Matilda deceived Ambrosio. But it is in the posthumous La Belle Dame sans Merci, written in 1819, that we find the purest and most chilling evocation of the powers and charms of the Fatal Woman:-

I met a Lady in the Mead
Full beautiful, a faery's child;
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild —

I made a garland for her head,
And bracelets too, and fragrant Zone:
She look'd at me as she did love
And made sweet moan —

But whereas Ambrosio was tempted to sin, and lose his sanctity and very life, the peculiar horror of the Fatal Woman is the attraction, which, even with full knowledge, transmutes and changes the victim:-

And this is why I sojourn here
Alone and palely loitering;
Though the sedge is withered from the Lake,
And no birds sing.

It is this dreadful fascination, quite without antidote, which so interested

Baudelaire. It is even more strongly marked in Poe's tales, particularly Ligeia, whose eyes fascinate the narrator with such terrible power; and a similar attitude is clearly discernible in Berenice, Eleonora and Morella. As will be demonstrated in a later chapter, the Fatal Woman comes to have a close relationship with the vampire (with whom Baudelaire identified her), a trait which is most strongly evident in Le Fanu's vampire-tale Carmilla (1872), and again in Stoker's masterly Dracula (1897).

7. Another element which creeps into the Gothic arsenal at about this time is the theme of incest, never very far beneath the surface in the works of Byron, and a matter of interest to Shelley. Dating back to Oedipus, the incestuous relationship is plainly stated in Pericles, but certainly hinted at in Manfred's determination to marry the bride of his son, who has just been killed. In his drama, The Mysterious Mother, Walpole makes this shocking subject assume greater proportions, and in the Romance of the Forest, Radcliffe hints at the possibility of an incestuous link between the Marquis and Adeline. Byron was, of course, suspected of having lived in sin with his step-sister Augusta, and, although he evidently enjoyed tormenting his wife Annabella with the suggestion that this may have been the case, there is no conclusive proof of it. The subject, however, fascinated him. It is significant that Antonia, in The Monk, is in fact Ambrosio's sister, so that he has unwittingly committed the crimes of matricide and incest in addition to his other transgressions. Shelley originally intended The Revolt of Islam to have the title Laon and Cythna who were to be brother and sister; but the publisher objected, and the work was changed. The Cenci likewise contains strong overtones of incest. Sade gloried in it. The main character in Polidori's Ernestus Berchtold (1819) discovers his wife to be his sister. One could even find traces of it in the tales of Poe, himself married to a cousin. Railo⁴ studies this

4. Railo, The Haunted Castle, VIII, passim.

in considerably more depth, and adds some interesting observations about Hamlet, but the main conclusion may be deduced from the facts already stated. It has already been seen that the Persecuted Heroine can be traced back at least to Richardson's Pamela (1740) and her development through the tortuous labyrinths of the Gothic novels has been traced as far as Lewis, where we find her finally losing her virtue and her life. Gone is Richardson's "principle of procrastinated rape": here the pursuit is less than fair, with malice and even satanic powers aligned against the unfortunate maiden. But even in The Castle of Otranto, the breathless flight of the heroine through the subterranean vaults was not free from a certain sexual element, insofar as she knew herself to be pursued by Manfred who had already expressed his intention of marrying her, by force if necessary. Lewis made the erotic aspects of the persecuted maiden explicit, but they are certainly present earlier. The Gothic theme of mistaken identity and mysterious birth is already established. Perhaps it was inevitable that, sooner or later, an incestuous union would take place. Lewis is the first to portray it, but the Romantic era was not slow to build upon this foundation.

8. Frankenstein is perhaps one of the most misunderstood novels ever written; it has many faults and tends to be tedious, but it is far more than a tale about a monster, and it would certainly be totally misleading to suppose that it is simply a story about a savage and evil creature, "devoid of all feeling".⁵ Yet such is the influence of the cinema screen that this novel has become a household word, and is tragically seldom read. The source of the story is well known. Mary Shelley, having married the poet in 1816 after the suicide of his first wife, passed the summer of that year in a villa near Geneva, in company with Shelley, Byron,

5. Lewis, A Concise History of English Literature, Vol. XXVI (Oxford, 1934), p. 297.

Dr. John Polidori and M.G. Lewis.⁶ During a spell of inclement weather, the company amused themselves by reading German horror tales and discussing the theories of Darwin. As the Preface to the novel tells us, Mary Shelley suffered a most violent and upsetting dream in which she seemed to see a gruesome being, given life by artificial, scientific means. The story was written shortly afterwards, and published in 1818. Originally it had been intended that Shelley and Byron should also try their hands at something of the kind, but Shelley produced nothing, and Byron a mere fragment. This was later elaborated with Byron's permission by Polidori into a novel called The Vampyre, which appeared in the New Monthly Magazine in April 1819. It will be necessary to examine this work separately in another chapter.

9. Frankenstein opens with a series of four letters, written by one Robert Walton to his sister, Mrs Margaret Saville, in England. He has been in Russia, and is on his way home through regions of thick pack-ice. One day, after some particularly thick fog, he sees a gigantic figure on a sled, disappearing rapidly into the distance. Shortly afterwards, to the amazement of the ship's company, a man comes aboard, almost frozen to death, and in the throes of strong emotion. He recovers, and tells his story to Walton.

Victor Frankenstein, as he turns out to be, relates the story of his childhood, and the eventual attainment of a place at the University of Ingolstadt, where he is guided through the mysteries of science by M. Waldman and M. Krempe. Fascinated by the thought of creating new life from parts of bodies which had once been alive, he devotes himself entirely to this task, and on one dreary night in November finally succeeds in his aim. He is so horrified by what he has done that he falls ill, and has to return

6. In fact, Lewis did not join the company until August; Mrs Shelley's diaries show that work on Frankenstein had begun in June or earlier.

home, where he slowly recovers. On returning to Ingolstadt he hears that his young brother, William, has been violently murdered. His step-sister, Elizabeth, with whom he is in love, had given him a little miniature to wear around his neck, which must have attracted the murderer. Suspicion becomes centred on Justine Moritz, a maid in the Frankenstein household who had undergone severe tribulations; she is tried and executed, to the horror of Victor who realises that his creation is responsible for the act.

While riding one day in the Alps, Victor again meets the monster he created, and hears its tale. It describes its sensations on realising that it is alive, and how it received instruction from the inhabitants of a cottage, peering at them through a chink in the woodwork, learning their speech and their beliefs. It comes to understand that it has feelings as well, and occasionally does little tasks for them while they are absent, watching their gratification and surprise with contentment. One day it goes into the cottage when de Lacy — an old man, formerly of a noble family and now afflicted with blindness — is alone. For the first time, the monster is able to converse with another sentient being; but the others soon return and it is driven out.

On arriving at the outskirts of Geneva, it encounters young William who, as he recoils from the monster, childishly blurts out that his father is called Frankenstein; it kills the child and, taking the miniature from his neck, places it on a young lady who is close by, who will thereby be implicated. Having been responsible now for the deaths of William and Justine, it demands that Frankenstein create a female as company, promising that if this condition is met, it will go with its mate to a remote region and trouble the world no more. Frankenstein agrees, and goes to England for the purpose of research, having arranged to marry Elizabeth immediately on his return. He travels with a close friend, Clerval, and

after a journey which takes him, incidentally, through St Andrews, he goes to a remote place in the Orkney Islands to begin his task. With Clerval safely on the mainland, he proceeds with and has almost completed the task when he sees the face of his original creation staring at him through the window. Overwhelmed with a horror of what he is doing, he destroys the thing on which he is working. The monster swears revenge, promising to be with Frankenstein on his wedding night. On his arrival on the mainland of Ireland, having been blown off course in a storm, he discovers that Clerval has been murdered, and falls into a fever. His father arrives from Geneva to see him, and Victor finds that he has been charged with Clerval's murder. He is acquitted, however, and returns to Geneva.

He and Elizabeth are married, but on the night of the wedding she is brutally murdered. Frankenstein vows to track down the monster, and pursues it through the Black Sea into Russia, and ever further north, into the bleak Arctic regions. There he is at the point of death, when he sights the ship on which Walton is a passenger. The monster has not been found, and has evidently slipped his clutches for ever.

After his account of the whole dreadful story, Victor becomes weak, and eventually dies peacefully. Walton leaves the cabin, and on returning to it shortly afterwards finds the monster bending over its dead creator. Full of bitter anguish and remorse for all the misery which it has caused it determines to end its own life rather than live on with the memory of the suffering it has caused. With a final look at its creator, it leaps from the window of the cabin on to the ice, and is instantly lost in darkness and distance.

10. The plot summary has been included here because it differs in fact so radically from those curious versions which some critics so assiduously condemn; when one reads the judgement of Professor Leguis,⁷

7. See note 5, p. 116 above.

for example, it is impossible to imagine that he has ever read the novel. The faults of the work, nevertheless, are several. The tedious narrations of Walton have no logical place in the novel; the whole device is inept and unnecessary. Likewise, the long and detailed account of Frankenstein's early life and education has no bearing on what follows, and the account of the journey through England on the way to the Orkneys contributes nothing to the novel and is not even written in such a way as to excite the reader's interest in what is to follow. The scenes in which the monster watches the inhabitants of the cottage are very protracted, and Mrs Shelley's portrayal of their innate goodness and kindness seems laboured and overdone. The accident whereby the monster happens to come into possession of Paradise Lost, Plutarch's Lives and The Sorrows of Werther is almost ridiculous. And the stilted language in which the monster is made to speak, despite a certain sombre dignity in parts, is so unreal and implausible that it seriously detracts from the effect the words are intended to produce. The characters are, for the most part, flat and uninteresting. Elizabeth could have stepped into the eighteenth-century Geneva of the novel straight from the pages of Radcliffe, and Clerval is simply a convivial companion for Frankenstein. Justine Moritz⁸ is more interesting, because she sacrifices herself knowing her own innocence. The only real characters in the story are Victor Frankenstein and the creature he has made. And yet, despite its flaws, the novel does possess a certain power in parts, and makes its point with a force which is reminiscent of Kafka's Die Verwandlung, a tale which is strikingly similar to Mrs Shelley's in many ways.

11. The character of Victor is, in itself, unexceptional; the interest lies in his reaction to the horrible situation in which he finds himself involved. It will be remembered that the full title of the novel is Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus. The link with Shelley's own

8. Justine is, by an odd coincidence (?), the name of the tormented heroine in Sade's novel of that name.

masterpiece on the Prometheus theme would be an interesting one to explore in depth; certainly Prometheus Unbound was composed in 1819 and published the following year, and so it is conceivable that he may have debated the subject with his new wife, and even suggested ideas which she put into her novel. But interesting though this conjecture may be, I think it is much more likely that Mary Shelley subtitled her book with the original Prometheus legend in mind.⁹ Prometheus, son of Iapetus and Themis, was reputed to have fashioned mankind out of clay, and when Zeus caused man to be deprived of fire, he stole it from heaven, for which he was chained to a rock on Mount Caucasus where eagles fed on his liver, which was restored each night, until his release by Hercules. The parallel with the case of Victor Frankenstein is obvious — he fashioned his own creature, and his punishment is that he has to suffer the consequences of his own creation. Victor is a mere mortal, and yet by creating this nameless being he has taken upon himself the responsibility of a God; and obviously he is incapable of dealing with the ensuing effects. That is his tragedy. The tragedy of the monster is that he exists, and that his creator detests him, and that he has nowhere else to turn. Locked in the toils of this paradox, Frankenstein and his creature struggle to extricate themselves, but the problem is such a weighty one that neither is able to find a viable solution. Victor Frankenstein began with the best of intentions, and found himself embroiled in murder:-

... my heart overflowed with kindness, and the love of virtue. I had begun life with benevolent intentions, and thirsted for the moment when I should put them into practice, and make myself useful to my fellow-beings. Now all was blasted: instead of that serenity of conscience, which allowed me to look back upon the past with self-satisfaction, and from thence to gather promise of new hopes, I was seized by remorse and the sense of guilt, which hurried me away to a hell of intense tortures, such as no language can describe.

(IX, 90)

9. Aeschylus produced the first dramatic version of the legend.

The monster, likewise, relates how at the beginning its thoughts had been benevolent:-

"Oh, Frankenstein, be not equitable to every other, and trample upon me alone, to whom thy justice, and even thy clemency and affection, is most due. Remember, that I am thy creature; I ought to be thy Adam; but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed. Everywhere I see bliss, from which I alone am irrevocably excluded. I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous."

(X, 101)

12. The repulsive aspect of the monster is the main factor contributing to its misfortune. Naturally it cannot comprehend the universal detestation which it encounters. Even after saving a child from drowning, it is shot at and almost killed by the father, who assumes that the monster has attempted to murder his child. The old man — who is physically blind — is the only character in the novel who has the clearness of insight to treat the creature on its own terms. This may be regarded as a parable of the loathing and misunderstanding which characterises the attitudes of many people, even today, to such things as disease, senility and mental illness. In the crudest possible terms, Mrs Shelley is demonstrating the folly of judging from appearances. The monster's soul "glowed with love and humanity" and yet it is condemned to eternal solitude.

13. I cannot completely agree with Eino Railo¹⁰ when he claims that Mary Shelley "enriched the stage-setting of terror-romanticism by making its mysterious centre ... a laboratory in which the deepest of all secrets, the skill to awaken life in inorganic matter, is ultimately discovered". This is to suggest that Frankenstein is, at its "mysterious centre" only science fiction. Victor, it is true, bestows life on lifeless (not inorganic) matter, working in laboratory conditions, but a mere twelve paragraphs span the discovery of the secret and the final accomplishment

10. Op. cit., III, 157.

of the idea, and I do not think this is accidental: the scientific basis of the monster's conception and creation is vivid but subordinate to the purpose of the story, which is basically didactic, expounding a form of social philosophy which, inevitably, bears a close relation to that expounded by Godwin, Mrs Shelley's father, and included in Caleb Williams and St. Leon. Where Mrs Shelley has succeeded is in writing a novel which, for all its Gothic overtones and gruesome descriptions, is not set in some dim historical past, but at a contemporary period in time: Victor is the modern Prometheus. Frankenstein is the first novel so far described which is set in its own time. This is, in my opinion, far more significant than its "scientific" basis, which is vague in the extreme and secondary to the modernity of the theme.

14. The Gothic influences in the novel are easily detected; they do not, however, form an integral part of the action and it may be argued that they are included simply because they had come to be part of the normal pattern of novel-writing at that time. The wild and terrible descriptions of scenery are similar to those in The Mysteries of Udolpho:-

It is a scene terrifically desolate. In a thousand spots the traces of the winter avalanche may be perceived, where trees lie broken and strewed on the ground; some entirely destroyed, others bent, leaning upon the jutting rocks of the mountain, or transversely upon other trees. The path, as you ascend higher, is intersected by ravines of snow, down which stones continually roll from above; one of them is particularly dangerous, as the slightest sound, such as even speaking in a loud voice, produces a concussion of air sufficient to draw destruction upon the head of the speaker. The pines are not tall or luxuriant, but they are sombre, and add an air of severity to the scene. I looked on the valley beneath; vast mists were rising from the rivers which ran through it, and curling in thick wreaths around the opposite mountains, whose summits were hid in the uniform clouds, while rain poured from the dark sky, and added to the melancholy impression I received from the objects around me.

(X, 98-99)

The character of Victor is not, externally, so very different from that of Valancourt; and, as has been indicated, Elizabeth is hardly to be distinguished from the Gothic heroines of Radcliffe:-

The saintly soul of Elizabeth shone like a shrine-dedicated lamp in our peaceful home. Her sympathy was ours; her smile; her soft voice, the sweet glance of her celestial eyes, were ever there to bless and animate us. She was the living spirit of love to soften and attract ...

(II, 29)

The monster, of course, has no place in the Gothic tradition hitherto and, with the exception possibly of Caliban and Mr Hyde, does not make any other notable appearance. It is possible to consider the monster as an externalisation of the evil aspects of the Gothic villain — an alter ego of Victor himself — thus transforming the internal hypocrisy of Ambrosio into the literal division of good and evil in this novel; but this view, however true it may be of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, is not easy to apply here. The monster himself is too complex a figure to be viewed merely as evil; there is much justice in what he says, and despite his crimes of vengeance it is possible to justify many of his actions. The novel, interestingly enough, contains a slight hint of incest in the relationship between Victor and his step-sister Elizabeth, but to lay stress on this would be to distort the fabric of the novel.

15. The influence of Frankenstein on later literature is extremely difficult to determine. It is such a curious book, with such an original idea at its heart, that no direct influence can be seen, other than obvious adaptation and plagiarism. But the modern setting was a break from the Gothic tradition, and this offered a clear lead to those who came later. It is not a great work in absolute terms, but it is one of the few in the horror genre which has a serious moral purpose as opposed to a nominal one.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CHAPTER VII

CHARLES ROBERT MATURIN — MELMOTH THE WANDERER

"I have been on earth a terror, but not an evil to its inhabitants. None can participate in my destiny but with his own consent — none have consented — none can be involved in its tremendous penalties but by participation. I alone must sustain the penalty."

Melmoth the Wanderer, XXXVIII, 408.

1. Melmoth the Wanderer¹ was published in 1820. It is interesting to reflect on the implications of this. Coleridge and Wordsworth were both well into middle age, and had produced their best work. Byron had only four years to live; Shelley two years; and Keats was to die the following year. Radcliffe had ceased writing, and was to die in 1823. Walpole had been dead for twenty-three years. Austen was dead, and all her work published. Scott, in addition to The Lay of the Last Minstrel (1805), had produced some of his best novels: Waverley (1814), Guy Mannering (1815), The Antiquary (1816) and Ivanhoe (1819) among them. And a new generation of authors was beginning to spring up: Dickens was eight years old, the Brontës were in their infancy, and Eliot had just been born. Maturin's astounding novel therefore comes at the end of an era, and it was the last great Gothic novel. It is a work of immense range and power. All the suspense of Radcliffe, all the terrors of Lewis, and all the superhuman diabolism of the romantic poets are to be found in its pages. I have said it marked the end of an era, and its own brilliance only made this conclusion

1. Hebrew מלמד (Melammed) signifies 'teacher'. It would be interesting to investigate the derivation of the name Melmoth with this in mind.

more final. The force of the narrative tears the reader from page to page. Maturin's talent for description brings scenes to vibrant, instant life; while in Radcliffe they seemed gentler -- rather like some lovely painting in watercolour. It would have been extremely difficult to follow Melmoth the Wanderer with another novel in the Gothic spirit, without its seeming feeble in comparison. And so it remains as a massive monument marking the end of the Gothic road, although many minor paths remain, as we shall see, to wind their way into the literature of the nineteenth century and beyond.

2. Charles Robert Maturin was born in Dublin on September 25th, 1780. His father was an official of the Irish Postal Service. After taking his degree at Trinity College, Maturin was ordained in 1803, and served as an assistant in the country parish of Loughrea, returning to Dublin shortly after his marriage to become the curate of St Peter's.² For a time life proceeded pleasantly, and he wrote two novels, The Family of Montorio (1807) and The Wild Irish Boy (1808), both of which were fairly popular. Shortly afterwards, his father was dismissed from his post on a charge of corruption, and Maturin now found it necessary to support himself and his wife on the meagre stipend of a parson. Other financial difficulties occurred, and Maturin had to depend on writing to keep him from poverty. His personal habits, which appear to have been extremely eccentric, and the powerful nationalist overtones of The Wild Irish Boy, had made him unpopular in church circles, and it was clear that he was very unlikely to be raised to a more lucrative position. In 1812 he published The Milesian Chief, also revealing strong Irish Nationalist views, which made him still more unpopular. In 1816, thanks to the cooperation of Sir Walter Scott and Byron, his first play, Bertram, was a huge success in London; but although Maturin tried to produce an equally popular

2. It is interesting to note that Maturin's grandfather succeeded Swift as Dean of St Patrick's, Dublin.

sequel³ he failed, and was soon close to poverty again. Bertram had, moreover, contained passages of blasphemy, which finally removed all possibility of his preferment. In 1818, he wrote Women, or, Pour et Contre; Melmoth the Wanderer appeared in 1820 and the last novel, The Albigenses, was published in 1824, the year of his death from accidental poisoning. The violent outbursts against religious corruption which are so typical of Maturin's work led to ignorant prejudice against him, and the frequently scandalous views placed in the mouths of certain of his characters, notably Bertram and Melmoth, unfortunately led to the collapse of his reputation in church circles. Of the works noted, mention need only be made of Melmoth the Wanderer in any detail, the rest not having sufficient stature to justify their inclusion here. The Fatal Revenge, or, the Family of Montorio is set in the Castle of Muralto,⁴ and centres round the monk Schemoli (very obviously derived from Schedoni) and his determination to right the wrong done by the usurper of his estates of Muralto. The novel contains many elements from Walpole, Radcliffe and Lewis, and has scenes of great power, but the plot is too weak for the massive size of the novel, which stretches to three volumes, and the general effect is one of random confusion. Like Mrs Radcliffe, he explains away the terrors of the plot, and this is done in such an off-hand manner at the very end of the mammoth work that the reader feels cheated. The Wild Irish Boy does not fall within the scope of the horror genre, nor does The Milesian Chief, though all of his works — including the successful Bertram, or, the Castle of St Aldobrand — contain elements which may be classed as Gothic: ruined towers, caves, unfortunate heroines, murders. It is only Melmoth the Wanderer which is a true work of supernatural horror, and it stands out in the corpus of Maturin's writing much as Dracula stands

3. Notably Manuel (1817) and Fredolfo (1819).

4. Cf. Onuphrio Muralto, Walpole's pseudonym in the first edition of The Castle of Otranto.

out from the minor works of Bram Stoker. The novel is lengthy and complex, and since some parts of it have been misconstrued by certain critics, there follows a brief synopsis of the novel's structure, as well as a fuller summary in the next section:-

- A.1 Ireland, 1816. Old Melmoth on deathbed visited by young Melmoth, the heir. Shown portrait (1646) and told original is still alive. Inherits estate and a strange manuscript.
- 2 STANTON'S tale — persecution, and temptation in his extremity by the Wanderer.
- 3 Shipwreck: arrival of MONÇADA, a Spaniard, who relates a long tale, taking up virtually the remainder of the novel in a continuous narrative, in which the destinies of the other characters unfold.

- B.1 MONÇADA's own misfortunes: kept in convent against his wishes, forced to take vows. His final escape, betrayal, and sufferings in the Inquisition, where he is tempted by Melmoth. His final escape to the vault of the Jew Adonijah, where he copies out a long manuscript, containing the material which follows:-
- 2 The TALE OF THE INDIANS. Immalee on lush island in isolation. Visit of Melmoth, and his attempt to corrupt her mind. Her purity and genuine love for him.
- 3 ISIDORA DI ALIAGA in Madrid — alias Immalee, now brought to civilization. Mysterious marriage to Melmoth.
- 4 FRANCISCO DI ALIAGA on way to Madrid to wed Isidora to a suitor he has selected. Stranger in lonely inn tells TALE OF GUZMAN, in which WALBERG sees his children starve and is tempted by Wanderer.
- 5 FRANCISCO DI ALIAGA and Melmoth, who relates the tale of the unhappy love of ELINOR MORTIMER, and her temptation. Melmoth's warning to Francisco regarding Isidora.
- 6 Marriage of Melmoth and Isidora discovered. Disappearance of Melmoth. Isidora's confinement, temptation and death in the dungeons of the Inquisition.

- C. The return of the Wanderer to Ireland, to confront young Melmoth and Monçada, who cannot finish his narrative. The truth about his awful temptation revealed. The dream of the Wanderer, and his death.

3. (A.1) John Melmoth, a student in Trinity College, Dublin, is called to his Uncle's house in Wicklow, as the old man is seriously ill. He finds the estate badly run down, and the miserly old man attended by scheming domestics. In a closet adjacent to his uncle's room, he sees a portrait and is amazed to be told that the original is still alive, despite the fact that the date on the picture is 1646, and the action of the narrative takes place in 1816. The old miser dies, leaving John all the estates and goods; the will mentions an old document which, it is suggested,

would be better burned unread. John takes up residence in the house and reads it.

(A.2) He discovers that it relates the tale of an Englishman, Stanton, who during a visit to Spain witnesses a marriage, during which the priest, Olavida, dies in horror on becoming aware of the presence of a totally evil being in the room. The following year, in London, Stanton comes across the person who had been responsible for this terror, and seems to hear strange music. The Wanderer, as it turns out to be, tells Stanton that he will be confined in a madhouse, and will receive a visit from him there. Shortly afterwards, as a result of the spite of a greedy relative, Stanton is indeed confined in Bedlam, and almost loses his reason through the awful things he is compelled to see and hear. He hears a tailor, insane with joy at the burning of the Rump Parliament, and a weaver, driven insane by a sermon of Peters, who passes from states of religious hysteria into bouts of dreadful blasphemy. The Wanderer appears, and tempts Stanton in terms which the manuscript does not make clear, offering him his release. Stanton refuses vehemently. On his release from Bedlam, his single obsession is to track down the Wanderer. At this point the document ends. Melmoth burns the portrait, and the following morning awakens to find marks on his wrist like the imprint of a powerful grasp.

(A.3) In a terrible storm, a ship is driven on to the shore, and a Spaniard — Monçada — is rescued from it and brought to the house. During his slow recovery, he relates his story to John Melmoth. The tale is long and involved, and is protracted over a number of days.

(B.1: Monçada's own misfortunes) Alonzo Monçada is destined for monastic life, and discovers that his mother has made this vow during the difficult birth, and has been held to it by the unscrupulous Director of the order. He is illegitimate, and has only met his brother Juan once.

In deference to his mother's most earnest entreaty, he submits to the vows, and yet cannot reconcile himself to the evil and hypocritical way of life of the brothers and the spiteful and cunning Superior. He rashly tells one monk that he will only submit gladly to monastic life if God sends a sign, such as the drying up of a certain fountain, and the withering of a tree beside it. On the following day, all assemble to witness the apparent miracle which seems to be the divine reply. Alonzo hears, however, the deathbed confession of the monk in whom he had confided his thoughts, and discovers that the whole "miracle" had been artificially contrived to deceive him. The monk, as he dies, relates how much he has hated his monastic life, and condemns bitterly the petty, malicious and pointless charade which he has been obliged to follow. Alonzo receives a letter, smuggled in from his brother Juan, in which a possible plan of escape is mentioned. Juan has discovered what has happened to Alonzo, and is ashamed and grieved. Alonzo is told to write a testament to a higher authority, relating his situation, and requesting the reversal of his vows. Paper is obtained for this, but the Superior becomes suspicious and causes his cell to be ransacked — fortunately however the testament has left the monastery. He is brutally ill-treated after the Superior learns of the request that has been made. An advocate visits him several times to ask questions, and the Superior is powerless to prevent it; but in revenge Alonzo is forbidden to enter the chapel, and all his possessions are removed from his cell. He is starved, the brothers avoid him with loud cries, and at night the Superior causes him to hear dreadful whispers suggesting sexual intercourse with the Holy Virgin, hoping that he will confess this and lay himself open to a charge of heresy. Eventually he is summoned before the Bishop, an astute and fair man, who questions him closely with the result that the Superior is thoroughly discredited. But to his dismay, he hears that his plea for release has failed. Juan

smuggles another letter to him, suggesting that he can escape from the monastery by stealth. To this end, Alonzo is aided by a parricide, who has sought refuge for his sins and has been bribed to help. The escape takes place, but Alonzo has misgivings about the parricide, who eventually stabs and kills Juan and delivers Monçada into the hands of the Inquisition. Here he is charged with heresy, apostasy, fratricide and sorcery. He is visited in his cell by a stranger, who discusses the possibility of escape in puzzling terms, finally making an offer which Monçada rejects in the utmost loathing and horror. The Wanderer (for he it is) goes off, but later appears among the inquisitors at the trial, and Alonzo realises he is doomed. Fortunately, a fire in the prison permits him to escape, and he takes refuge with a pathetic Jew, masquerading as a Christian for his own safety. From there, he witnesses the sickening, brutal murder of the Chief Inquisitor. He is forced, however, to flee down a dark tunnel when the Jew is visited by officers of the Inquisition, and finds himself in an underground vault, dominated by the presence of Adonijah, the Jew, who gives him sanctuary. In return, he has to copy out a manuscript. This forms the next stage of Monçada's tale.

(B.2: The Tale of the Indians) On a remote but luxuriantly verdant island lives Immalee. She is quite alone, and perfectly innocent and pure. The Wanderer arrives, and she greets him happily. He begins to teach her about the evils of the world, and of religions in particular, showing her the coast of India through a telescope. Around the various temples there, she sees scenes of intolerance, ignorance, greed and violence. The Wanderer shows how Christianity differs, and Immalee is converted to that faith. In reply to her innocent questions about the rest of the world, Melmoth relates at great length the vice and corruption of society, and the vicious, ignorant despotism of those fortunate enough to be in power. She is tearful and despairing; but through this begins to shine a genuine

love for the Wanderer. He is aware of this, and tries to make himself hateful to her, but she persists in loving him all the more. Despite himself, the Wanderer is touched. In the midst of a ghastly storm, he tells her that if they are ever to enjoy love, it must be in the midst of such an elemental scene. "Will you be there?" she asks, and he has to reply that he is indeed fated to be present everywhere. But she cannot agree to his cruel demand to be wed in darkness and live amidst violence, and he vanishes from the island, never to return.

(B.3: Isidora di Aliaga) Some three years later, in Madrid, the Wanderer again sees Immalee, who has now been restored to her mother, Donna Clara, and her brother, Don Fernan. The house is frequented by a wordly priest called Father José. At night, Melmoth visits Isidora (as she is now known) and she reaffirms her love for him. He appears softened, and says that they can marry. She joyfully agrees, on condition that he will approach her parents in the accustomed manner and tell them from whence he comes. He utters one monosyllable ("hell", presumably) which terrifies her. A letter arrives from Don Francisco di Aliaga, Isidora's father, stating his intention of bringing a suitable suitor to wed Isadora: Don Gregorio Montilla. On hearing the news Isidora is filled with sadness, and that night consents to being taken away by Melmoth to be married on his own terms. In the dark of night, in a ruined church, they are joined in matrimony by an indistinct figure whose hands are as cold as death.

(B.4: Don Francisco — the Tale of Guzman) Meanwhile Isadora's father, en route to Madrid, stops at an inn, and briefly glimpses the Wanderer (who has the power to cover great distances instantly.) A stranger offers to tell Don Francisco about an episode in the life of that mysterious character, whom everybody seems to shun, and as it is getting late he agrees. Guzman, a very rich man, had fallen ill, and decided to bestow part of his wealth on his sister and her husband. They had come from Germany with their children — Julia, Ines and Maurice. The eldest son was called Everhard, and

their father's name was Walberg. For a time they had lived in great comfort, but Guzman died, and the scheming monks had produced a will in which it was stated that every last penny of the fortune must go to the church. Walberg, faced with dire penury, had been helped a little by a good priest, who brought money for food. But soon this was gone, and the pangs of hunger had set in. Walberg's mother had died, and they were forced to bury her themselves, since she was not a Roman Catholic. Everhard had been found almost dead one night, having opened his veins and sold his blood in return for money for food. Julia had tried, but was unable, to force herself to prostitution for the sake of her family. With children near to death, Walberg had been approached by the Wanderer, who offered them all the food they could eat if Walberg would agree to one condition. He had resisted, and at the last moment, the friendly priest had been able to inform them that the true will had been found, and that all was well. The tale ended, the stranger retires to his room, and Don Francisco receives a visit from the Wanderer himself. He offers to tell a tale, but the Don is tired. Whereupon the Wanderer takes him to the next room, and shows him the narrator of the Walberg story — dead.

(B.5: Francisco di Aliaga — Elinor Mortimer) On the following day, Melmoth encounters Don Francisco, and tells him a tale about an English family — the Mortimers.⁵ Sir Roger, on hearing of the Restoration, dies happily, leaving behind his sister and three grandchildren. Margaret, the daughter of his eldest son, killed at the Battle of Newby, is the heiress to the vast fortune. His second son had formed an unsuitable union and had been banished, but the daughter of that marriage, Elinor, lives at Castle Mortimer. She is a delightful creature. Sir Roger's only daughter had married a preacher called Sandal and had been forbidden to return to

5. Apparently based on fact; the wife of Walberg was also, apparently, modelled on a real person.

the castle, but on the death of the preacher had been given an allowance. The child of this marriage, John Sandal, has gone to sea. On his return, he falls in love with Elinor, and she with him. Sir Roger's sister, Ann, knows of the will left by Sir Roger in which it is stated that if Margaret should marry John Sandal she will inherit the entire fortune, while if Elinor should marry him Margaret will receive only £5,000 and the remainder of the estate will go to other branches of the family. The widow Sandal gets to hear of this. The day appointed for the wedding of John and Elinor arrives, but the bridegroom does not arrive and is afterwards seen riding away from the church at a furious rate. Elinor, in despair, leaves Castle Mortimer and goes to Yorkshire, where she hears that John and Margaret have been married. In childbirth, Margaret becomes very ill, and Elinor, who has come back to the castle, nurses her. She gives birth to still-born twins and shortly dies. John is overcome with sorrow, and the faithful Elinor gives him solace. On her deathbed, John's mother, the widow Sandal, reveals that she deliberately told her son that he had been born of an illegitimate union between herself and Elinor's father; believing this, John had fled the marriage, believing it to be an incestuous one. When John hears the truth he becomes insane, and Elinor nurses him. Melmoth approaches her and tempts her — the prize being John's return to health. But when she hears the price, she runs in terror to the house of a minister. Together they approach the Wanderer, who is visibly affected by the sight of the minister, and goes off, never to return. The old vicar tells Elinor how, as a very young man, he had seen Melmoth apparently die. And yet, in his old age, he has now seen him again — unchanged. At the conclusion of this tale of the Mortimers Melmoth describes Immalee and her rescue from the island in thinly veiled terms, and urges Don Francisco to protect his daughter. The nobleman disregards the advice, and they part.

(B.6: The death of Isidora) Donna Clara has been amazed at the overnight disappearance of Isidora, who however returns the following morning, reticent about all that has taken place. She meets her new husband by night, and because they have always met in a clandestine way she begs him to come forward to the family and claim her. She tells him that she is pregnant, and the Wanderer is moved to tenderness and promises that the child shall be a Christian. Hearing of the imminent arrival of Montilla, Isidora begs the Wanderer to take her away before the impossible marriage takes place. At midnight on the eve of the nuptials, he is on the point of doing so when interrupted by Don Fernan and the rest of the household. Don Fernan rushes at him, to protect the honour of his sister, and Melmoth kills him — entirely in self-defence, reproving the dying man for not heeding his warning to desist from violence. He disappears. Isadora's true state is discovered, and the child is born, and to her relief duly baptised. For her sin, she is taken to the Inquisition, and there questioned. The Inquisitors are confident that they will have the Wanderer in their power as long as they hold his wife and child. But they tell Isidora that the child must be taken from her and placed in a convent. When they come to carry out this threat they find that she has deliberately strangled the infant. Dying of a broken heart, she seeks solace in confession. The priest, in horror, hears of her marriage, and tells her that the officiating priest had died — before the wedding took place. Shortly before her death the Wanderer appears in the cell and offers her release and happiness — but the price he demands is too great, and she rejects him. As she dies, the priest begs her to think instead of paradise, and — with an ironical echo of her earlier words — she dies in an extremity of doubts and terror: "'Paradise!' uttered Isidora, with her last breath — 'Will he be there?'"

(C: Conclusion) As Monçada reaches the end of this tale, he is interrupted by the arrival of the strange form of a man. He and young Melmoth realise in a moment of terror that it is the Wanderer who stands before them. He is weary, and explains that his allotted time has come to an end. The secret of his awful temptation now is made clear. He had gained the span of one hundred and fifty years of life from the Devil, in exchange for his soul at the end of that period. The agreement was subject to the condition that the Wanderer could retain his soul if he could find someone willing to exchange places with him. This was the nature of the terrible temptation—and nobody, during the entire time, had submitted to it. Knowing that the end is at hand, the Wanderer asks for a room in which to sleep for the last time. He dreams of a massive lake of fire, in which every billow is a human soul, tossed in unremitting and relentless agony. He is tottering on the brink, gazing down at this appalling sight. He falls, clutching at figures on the face of the cliff—those he has tempted. They elude his grasp, and as the hundred and fifty years come to a close the fiery waves receive him. On awakening from this terrific nightmare, he begs to be left alone in his room. Soon Monçada and Melmoth hear terrible sounds issuing from it. At last, all is silent. They enter and find the room empty, but outside is a trail leading towards the sea—a path bearing signs of a terrible struggle. At the edge of a towering cliff, they find the Wanderer's handkerchief. There is no other sign of his fate.

4. "There is scarcely any book of merit which has been so completely forgotten as Melmoth the Wanderer, and few authors have been so soon neglected as Charles Robert Maturin." This is the judgement of the anonymous author of a major article in the Times Literary Supplement,⁶ who

6. "Maturin and the Novel of Terror," anonymous article in Times Literary Supplement, 26 August, 1920.

goes on to remark that in spite of all its defects of construction, "no other novel conveys in a more real way the thrill of horror." The wild acclaim which the work received is matched only by the uncanny rapidity with which it has been forgotten. Balzac, in one^{of} his Études Philosophiques, went so far as to say that "l'œuvre de Mathurin n'est pas moins puissant que celle de Goethe", and if this seems exaggerated praise one can at least agree with Charles Baudelaire who, in an essay entitled De l'essence de rire (1865), gave his opinion of the work:-

Célèbre voyageur Melmoth, la grande création satanique du révérend Maturin. Quoi de plus grand, quoi de plus puissant, relativement à la pauvre humanité que ce pâle et ennuyé Melmoth?

Even Oscar Wilde adopted the pseudonym of Sebastian Melmoth — the first suggested by the arrows on his prison clothing.⁷ One reason for the fascination in France for this novel may lie in the fact that, whereas in England it represented the last important Gothic achievement and came comparatively late in the Romantic movement, the French absorption with material of this kind was only gradually becoming evident. One factor which may render the book difficult for modern readers is its great length, but the faults of structure — though given prominence by most critics — are not as serious as may at first appear.

5. Maturin has adopted the best device for conveying the passage of time. Birkhead is being less than fair when she describes the tales as being "strung together in a complicated fashion".⁸ Axton⁹ realises that the structure is a "conscious artistic device" and describes the various tales as "nested within one another like the boxes of a child's toy". To be strictly accurate, the tales merge into one another — while

7. Lovecraft had a correspondent called Donald Wandrei, and frequently referred to him as Melmoth, for obvious reasons.

8. Birkhead, op.cit., IV, 86. She states, wrongly, that the bridegroom is killed at the wedding.

9. Axton, Introduction to Melmoth the Wanderer.

incorporated in Monçada's narrative — and as they progress, so do the characters, particularly Isidora/Immalee and the Wanderer himself. Although the structure is complex, the cross-references make it instantly comprehensible, and the number of characters is kept to a minimum. As a novel, it is far better in construction than The Mysteries of Udolpho, and one is never at a loss to know the relationships between the characters as the lengthy exposition unfolds. The Tale of the Indians is the nerve-centre of the work; in it, the philosophical nature of the religious and social evils which abound in the work are expressed in the form of a parable which is crucial to an understanding of the book, and yet which does not interfere with the flow of the action. The book begins and ends in the present — in Melmoth's house in Ireland — and Monçada's narrative takes up the remainder of the novel, with the exception of Stanton's tale in the manuscript which is, however, relatively short. Suspense is maintained until the end, when the true nature of Melmoth's horrid offer is revealed. The last few pages, which give an account of the last moments of the Wanderer, are masterly in their supremely poetic and telling evocation of eternal damnation, while the actual fate of the Wanderer is not described. There could hardly be a more powerful contrast with a work such as The Monk, where visual horror takes pride of place. This is not to suggest that Maturin's scenes of horror are weaker — they are, in fact, very much more savage; but Maturin is aware of the necessity for restraint and innuendo as a dramatic device, and he puts this to full use.

6. The character of Melmoth the Wanderer ranks as one of the greatest in the horror genre. He is evil, certainly, but he has the capacity for good, and is capable of emotions and actions which do him credit. He is essentially a tragic character, in the tradition of Macbeth and Doctor Faustus. Like the wandering Jew in The Monk, he is a commanding and imposing figure, who rarely smiles, and his glance, in the Radcliffe/Lewis/

Byron tradition, is one which few people can bear:-

Olavida rocked, reeled, grasped the arm of a page, and at last, closing his eyes for a moment, as if to escape the horrible fascination of that unearthly glare (the Englishman's eyes were observed by all the guests, from the moment of his entrance, to effuse a most fearful and preternatural lustre), exclaimed, "Who is among us?"

(III, 26)

But although Melmoth resembles Schedoni and the Giaour in externals, the complexity of his character reaches far beyond. He has a terrible wildness, like a dreadful cry of despair:-

And a kind of wild and terrible energy nerved his frame, and strengthened his voice, as he spoke and cowered over pale and prostrate loveliness, that seemed in profound and reckless humiliation to court its own destruction, as if a dove exposed its breast, without flight or struggle, to the beak of a vulture.

(XVIII, 247)

And his moods can vary from one extreme to the other. To Isidora, he is capable of something very close to love:-

Heaven only knows the source of that wild fondness with which he contemplated her, and in which was still mingled something of ferocity. His warm look seemed like the glow of a sultry summer day, whose heat announces a storm ...

(XXXIV, 389)

And yet love is something which he cannot sustain, not for hatred of Isidora, but hatred of himself:-

"Immalee!" said the stranger. The Indian looked up, and with a mingled feeling of grief, amazement, and compunction, beheld him shed tears. The next moment he dashed them away with the hand of despair; and, grinding his teeth, burst into that wild shriek of bitter and convulsive laughter that announces that the object of its derision is ourselves ...

... "Hear me, wretched girl!" he cried in tones that seemed alternately tremulous with malignity and compassion, with habitual hostility and involuntary softness; "hear me! I know the secret sentiment you struggle with better, better than the innocent heart of which it is the inmate knows it. Suppress, banish, destroy it. Crush it as you would a young reptile before its growth had made it loathsome to the eye, and poisonous to existence!"

(XVIII, 244)

At times, the Wanderer seems to relish his chosen mode of existence; he appears to take a perverse delight in cruelty:-

And Melmoth, as he spoke, flung himself on a bed of hyacinths and tulips that displayed their glowing flowers, and sent up their odorous breath right under Isidora's casement.

"Oh, you will destroy my flowers!" cried she, while a reminiscence of her former picturesque existence, when flowers were the companions alike of her imagination and her pure heart, awoke her exclamation.

"It is my vocation — I pray you pardon me!" said Melmoth, as he basked on the crushed flowers and darted his withering sneer and scowling glance at Isidora. "I am commissioned to trample on and bruise every flower in the natural and moral world — hyacinths, hearts, and bagatelles of that kind, just as they occur."

(XX, 265)

Even so, this petty malice is forgotten in the flood of genuine regret and longing which overcomes him as he reaches the end of his life:-

He paused, and though on the verge of his dark and doubtful voyage, he seemed to cast one look of bitter and retrospective anguish on the receding shore of life, and see, through the mists of memory, one form that stood there to bid him farewell.

(XXXVIII, 409)

Although he earnestly desires to have Isidora as his wife, and uses his diabolical gifts to achieve his aim, and an heir who will pray for him "even when its prayer falls parched and hissing on the fires that burn for ever", some sense of moral worth deep in his being compels him to warn Don Francisco to guard his daughter. And when the warning is unheeded, and Don Fernan is slain, Melmoth — far from exulting — speaks in terms of bitter reproach:-

"Wretched old man!" he exclaimed, looking on him as the unhappy father strained his glazing and dilated eyes to see who spoke to him, and at length with difficulty, recognized the form of the stranger — the companion of his fearful journey some months past — "Wretched old man — you were warned — but you neglected the warning — I adjured you to save your daughter — I best knew her danger — you saved your gold — now estimate the value of the dross you grasped, and the precious ore you dropt! I stood between myself and her — I warned — I menaced — it was not for me to intreat. Wretched old man — see the result!" — and he turned slowly to depart.

(XXXV, 397)

We are reminded strongly of Byron's Fatal Man, but here he is infused with a certain uneasy humanity. There is almost a schizophrenic split in his personality. We can detest Montoni; we can fear Schedoni; we can watch

the downfall of Ambrosio, and our feelings are not with them. The Wanderer is quite different: there is a satanic side to him, and yet this is off-set by the tragic potentialities of what he might have been. As Praz has shown at length, this is a common trait in literature, deriving from the paradoxical and difficult figure of Milton's Satan, but Melmoth is the apex of the type. In him, we see the awakening realisation in prose for the need to portray more complex mental states: Melmoth is the first really great character in the genre.

7. In some respects, Immalee/Isidora is also derivative. Obviously, she is a persecuted heroine, although this is an over-simplification: she also symbolises a redemptive power, reminiscent of Helena in All's Well That Ends Well. Her tragedy is that she so nearly succeeds. In this respect, although she is the successor in name to Emily de St Aubert and, with her auburn hair and childlike innocence, very similar to so many of Radcliffe's creations, she plays an active part in the course of the novel, rather than allowing herself to be carried from one situation to another. She represents the power of Good and Truth, and it is a devastating twist of irony that it is only Melmoth who is capable of appreciating this — Donna Clara, Don Fernan, Don Francisco and Father José are too bound up with their genteel prejudices to be aware of her most obvious qualities. She can weep at cruelty, and delight in a simple flower; and yet she has the strength of will to kill her own child rather than have it taken from her and perverted by a corrupt religion and a cruel society. Her goodness is not simply innate: it is an active, driving, tangible force. It is this which captivates Melmoth, and makes him detest himself for corrupting her. In this novel, the Church — which should be the ultimate Right — is seen in fact as an active force of evil and repression, persecuting Isidora in her last moments and hastening her untimely death. Her true worth is recognised only by the wretch she cannot save, and who — with

inner torments of frightful intensity — drives her to the grave. She is therefore more than just an unfortunate "victim-consort" to Melmoth: she is beyond a doubt the most human and convincing heroine within the scope of this study:-

They approached with a motion that seemed simultaneous and involuntary — and uttered together, in accents that seemed to issue from one mouth, "Deliver your child to us."

In a voice as hoarse, dry, and natureless, the prisoner answered, "Take it!"

The men looked about the cell — it seemed as if they knew not where to find the offspring of humanity amid the cells of the Inquisition. The prisoner was silent and motionless during their search ... When it was concluded, however, the prisoner, bursting into a wild laugh, exclaimed: "Where would you search for a child but in its mother's bosom? Here — here it is — take it — take it!" And she put it into their hands. "Oh, what fools ye were to seek my child anywhere but on its mother's bosom! It is yours now!" she shrieked in a voice that froze the officials. — "Take it — take it from me!"

The agents of the Holy Office advanced; and the technicality of their movements was somewhat suspended when Isidora placed in their hands the corse of her infant daughter. Around the throat of the miserable infant, born amid agony, and nursed in a dungeon, there was a black mark ...

(XXXVII, 403)

8. Like The Fatal Revenge, this novel leans heavily on the Gothic tradition, employing practically every effect which had become such a necessary part of this type of fiction. Apart from those aspects already mentioned, we may cite the mysterious portrait, reminiscent of The Castle of Otranto and The Mysteries of Udolpho; the shipwreck, which made its first appearance in The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne; the manuscript device; the interrupted wedding — in the cases of both Isidora and Elinor Mortimer; the evil and corrupt Superior; the ruinous church; secret passages and vaults; wild storms; confessions; strange music; scenes in the Inquisition; incarceration; corpses and skeletons; wills and testaments; confused family histories; blood; tears and suffering. The major supernatural figure in the book is that of the Wanderer himself, who is strongly reminiscent of the Wandering Jew as described vividly by Lewis. Yet the book is more than just a collage of hackneyed effects.

There is no clear and delicate distinction between right and wrong. Evils are displayed, certainly; and sanctity is depicted in contrast, but Maturin has created many shades of moral grey; and the powers of good are not on the winning side. Neither are the powers of evil — and this paradox elevates the novel far above the pleasant but facile romances which came before.

9. Another ingredient of the novel which is misleading is the strong anti-Catholic element. This may, in part,¹⁰ be derived from similar sentiments expressed in The Italian and, more forcibly, in The Monk. There are points of similarity which are too obvious to mention. Since Maturin was ^aclergyman, and Church of England at that, perhaps it is not so very surprising that he was well equipped with theological facts and the ability to express them. The book is, on the surface, a savage attack on the Catholic Church, and on monastic life in particular. The Holy Office of the Inquisition comes in for virulent criticism — perhaps not so surprising considering that its persecutions continued in Spain until 1834. Many scenes in the convent are plagiarised from La Religieuse, by Diderot. Instead of relishing the monastic horrors, Maturin's viewpoint is always clear. His most abrasive satire is employed in his descriptions, which have the power of Voltaire or Swift:—

... I received a striking proof of that foundation on which, in despite of a miracle, my repugnance to monastic life rested. Someone, it was said, had committed a slight breach of monastic duty. The slight breach was fortunately committed by a distant relation of the Archbishop of Toledo, and consisted merely in his entering the church intoxicated (a rare vice in Spaniards), attempting to drag the matin preacher from the pulpit, and failing in that, getting astride as well as he could on the altar, dashing down the tapers, overturning the vases and the pix, and trying to scratch out, as with the claws of a demon, the painting that hung over the table,

10. In Maturin's Preface, he states that he "made the misery of conventual life depend less on the startling adventures one meets with in romances, than on that irritating series of petty torments, which constitutes the misery of life in general, and which, amid the tideless stagnation of monastic existence, solitude gives its inmates leisure to invent, and power combined with malignity, the full disposition to practise."

uttering all the while the most horrible blasphemies, and even soliciting the portrait of the Virgin in language not to be repeated ... the youth who had committed this sacrilegious outrage appeared in the hall of the Jesuits, where the Superior and a few monks were assembled, read a short exercise which one of them had written for him on the pithy word "Ebrietas", and departed to take possession of a large benefice in the diocese of the archbishop his relative.

The very next day after the scandalous scene of compromise, imposture and profanation, a monk was detected in the act of going, after the permitted hour, to an adjacent cell to return a book he had borrowed. As a punishment for this offence, he was compelled to sit for three days at refection, while we were dining, barefooted, and his tunic reversed, on the stone floor of the hall. He was compelled to accuse himself aloud of every crime ...

(V, 81-82)

The unfortunate monk is later scourged and beaten to death. It is a violent description, it is true, but it is repeated for a purpose. The scene in which the chief inquisitor is murdered must rank as one of the most appallingly violent pieces of descriptive writing in existence — it is more violent than Lewis's description of the murder of the prioress, which it closely resembles in many particulars. Yet even here, Maturin is able to add a footnote to prove that his description is founded on fact. Perhaps the most pointed diatribe against the Catholic church is contained in the following conversation between Melmoth and Isidora:—

"... when they brought me to a Christian land, I thought I should have found them all Christians."

"And what did you find them, then, Immalee?"

"Only Catholics."

"Are you aware of the danger of the words you utter? Do you know that in this country to hint a doubt of Catholicism and Christianity being the same would consign you to the flames as a heretic incorrigible? Your mother, so lately known to you as a mother, would bind your hands when the covered litter came for its victim; and your father, though he had never yet beheld you, would buy with his last ducat the faggots that were to consume you to ashes; and all your relations in their gala robes would shout their hallelujahs to your dying screams of torture. Do you know that the Christianity of these countries is diametrically opposite to the Christianity of that world of which you caught a gleam, and which you may see recorded in the pages of your Bible, if you are permitted to read it?"

(XX, 264)

Even allowing a substratum of truth, this judgement is severe, but the exaggeration is part of Maturin's plan, since the novel is a parable of

religious oppression and social despotism which Melmoth, damned as he is, feels more strongly than anyone else.

10. Maturin's style helps to give the novel an extra dimension. His talent for an apt phrase and a close eye for detail helps to make it more interesting to read, although passages of dogmatism and bombast give a very uneven impression. The telling description of John Melmoth's arrival at his uncle's house is a case in point:-

As John slowly trod the miry road which had once been the approach, he could discover, by the dim light of an autumnal evening, signs of increasing desolation since he had last visited the spot, — signs that penury had been aggravated and sharpened into downright misery. There was not a fence or a hedge round the domain: an uncemented wall of loose stones, whose numerous gaps were filled with furze or thorns, supplied their place. There was not a tree or a shrub on the lawn; the lawn itself was turned into pasture-ground, and a few sheep were picking their scanty food amid the pebblestones, thistles, and hard mould, through which a few blades of grass made their rare and squalid appearance.

(I, 7)

The simple realism of this description of Ireland in the early years of the nineteenth century contrasts strongly with the macabre grandeur of the Wanderer's dream on the eve of his death:-

He dreamed that he stood on the summit of a precipice, whose downward height no eye could have measured, but for the fearful waves of a fiery ocean that lashed, and blazed, and roared at its bottom, sending its burning spray far up, so as to drench the dreamer with its sulphurous rain. The whole glowing ocean below was alive — every billow bore an agonising soul, that rose like a wreck or a putrid corse on the waves of the earth's oceans — uttered a shriek as it burst against that adamantine precipice — sunk — and rose again to repeat the tremendous experiment! Every billow of fire was thus instinct with immortal and agonising existence, — each was freighted with a soul, that rose on the burning wave in torturing hope, burst on the rock in despair, added its eternal shriek to the roar of that fiery ocean, and sunk to rise again — in vain and — for ever!

11. K.K. Mehrotra¹¹ has said that Maturin and Lewis were the "belated advocates" of an outmoded genre. This is surely unfair. Mayo¹²

11. K.K. Mehrotra, Horace Walpole and The English Novel (Oxford, 1934), p. 162.

12. Robert D. Mayo, "How long was Gothic fiction in vogue?" Modern Language Notes, LVIII (1943). He points out that between 1804 and 1806, 72% of the Lady's Magazine contained "Gothic" romances, and/

has shown that although the Gothic romance did indeed decline in popularity during the second decade of the nineteenth century, the "appeal was still fresh in the public mind". The frightening uniqueness of this novel spells, instead, the culmination of the genre. A new age was dawning, but this novel drew together all the threads of the old into a single opus which, under the powerful and brilliant imagination of its author, dominated everything which had gone before. This novel stands, Janus-like, at the end of a long series of romances and tales of essentially similar design, and yet points the way forward, stylistically, to Dickens and beyond. In the end, however, it defies any cut-and-dried categorization. Like The Castle of Otranto, which launched the Gothic novel on its course, this novel, marking the end of that curious and eventful voyage, is sui generis, definitive and final. Only traces remain in later fiction, and they will be pursued in later chapters.

and that this trend died out almost completely by 1814. He does not, however, accept the view that Scott's Waverley "ousted" the Gothic romance, as Sadleir claimed. As far as I am able to judge, his figures relate to published work, but this may not be such a reliable indication of what is actually read: the Gothic romances of Radcliffe ran into several new editions in the period of "decline" he mentions.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CHAPTER VIII

AMERICA - HAWTHORNE AND POE

That motley drama! - oh, be sure
It shall not be forgot!
With its Phantom chased for evermore
By a crowd that seize it not,
Through a circle that ever returneth in
To the self-same spot;
And much of Madness, and more of Sin
And Horror, the soul of the plot!

...the play is the tragedy "Man,"
And its hero, the conqueror Worm.

quoted in EDGAR ALLAN POE, Ligeia.

1. Melmoth the Wanderer marked the end of what I have called the Gothic mainstream, and it depended largely on the corpus of imagery contributed by Radcliffe and Lewis, as well as material made available by the poets of the early nineteenth century. After the gentle suspense of Radcliffe, the new form which culminated in Melmoth is often termed Schauerromantik. There follows no definitive, final break with the Gothic tradition, simply a continuation of much of its general mood, with two exceptions: these are the new interest in psychological states, already glimpsed in Melmoth, and the use of a new form, the short story. In this latter respect, Hawthorne and Poe are of prime importance. Although the two writers were contemporaries, they could hardly have been more dissimilar in personality and outlook. Their approaches to the subject of horror are diametrically opposed. But together, they raised the short story to a pitch of rare perfection which has seldom been bettered, and gave the horror genre a new twist, away from the long and tortuous novels of the Gothic authors towards a condensed exploration of a single incident or effect.

2. The horror genre received its first impetus in America from the imported novels of Radcliffe, and the inevitable poor imitations, but the first significant native works were produced by Charles Brockden Brown, who was born in Philadelphia on January 17, 1771. He was something of a child prodigy; was able to converse fluently with an adult vocabulary by the age of ten, and had written the four novels for which he is remembered by the age of twenty-eight. These were inspired in part by Radcliffe and more notably by Godwin, whose St Leon — a jumbled tale about the elixir of life — enjoyed considerable popularity at the time. Brown's first novel was Wieland, subtitled The Transformation (1798), which clearly demonstrated Brown's most distinctive trait: an interest in morbid psychology. The novel is based on an actual incident which occurred near New York: a farmer, believing he heard divine voices, killed his livestock, wife and children before being captured and confined. In the novel, Wieland, a religious fanatic, hears voices which order him to sacrifice those things most dear to him, and believing in the divine origin of this phenomenon, he murders his wife and children. Eventually he becomes insane on discovering that the voices originated from a skilled ventriloquist,¹ whose motives are not clearly explained. This contrived solution is obviously Radcliffian, although the scene of Wieland's trial, and the examination of his abnormal mental state, are completely new, though not sufficient to give the novel any great stature.

3. Ormond and Arthur Mervyn are both concerned with the effects of the yellow fever, the former novel being chiefly remembered for the person of Constantina Dudley, considered by Shelley to be the ideal female

1. Old Testament Greek for familiar spirit is ἑγχαοτραμυθος or ventriloquist — Vulgate pytho, Heb. ôbh ; trans. to person controlling spirit. Cf. also ventriloquism in Schiller's Die Geisterseher, with Cagliostro. It is unlikely, however, that Schiller and Brown were aware of the significance of the Greek translation of the Hebrew. See 1 Samuel 28, 3-20; see also Montague Summers, History of Witchcraft and Demonology, V, 177.

character.² Perhaps Brown's best novel is Edgar Huntly, or Memoir of a Sleepwalker (1799), which owes much to Godwin's Caleb Williams. The villain, an Irishman called Clithero, murders the brother of his patron, Mrs Lorimer, and in a fit of rage murders her also — or so he believes. He flees to America, where he is employed by Edgar Huntly. Soon afterwards Waldegrave, a friend of Huntly, is found murdered. By keen observation, Huntly discovers that Clithero has committed the crimes while in a somnambulistic state. Clithero disappears, and Huntly follows him, only to lose his way, undergoing fearful ordeals among the Indians. At the end of the book it is discovered that Mrs Lorimer is still alive, but Clithero commits suicide, and Edgar Huntly finds himself likewise afflicted with the habit of sleepwalking. In some respects, this novel anticipates Poe, whose sharp eye for detail and deduction led to the first true detective tales; and Brown's plots contain Sin and Madness which pave the way for the more memorable works of Hawthorne and Poe. Although it was left to these two writers to elevate abnormal psychology and obsessive guilt into an art-form of their own, Brown did much of the preparatory groundwork. A prominent American critic³ has said:-

He proved that an artist could depict with insight and sympathy a human soul under temptation to commit crime, or bending under the load of crime already committed. Under his touch the abnormal took on dignity.

Brown is not a figure of real importance in the genre, but it is significant that he had already chosen the mind as the theatre for his terrors, rather than an external set of Gothic circumstances. His two great successors began to produce their short stories in the early 1830s, and it is

2. Peacock, Memoirs of Shelley. The chief influences on the young Shelley were, apparently, Faust, Die Räuber, and the novels of C.B. Brown. Noted by Birkhead, op. cit., XI, 197-198.

3. Arthur Hobson Quinn, American Literature: An Historical and Critical Survey, II (New York, 1936).

a tribute to Brown's modernity that thirty years had to elapse before others were able to continue in the vein which he had already explored in some depth.

4. Although Nathaniel Hawthorne produced his best short stories at the same time as Poe, and outlived him by over a decade, I shall consider him first. Hawthorne's works are in the minor key, and essentially philosophical, which has led to his partial eclipse by the astonishing power and vitality of his contemporary. He was born in Salem, Massachusetts, on July 4, 1804, the ancestral name being Hathorne — one of Hawthorne's forbears presided at the Salem witch trials. When he was seventeen, Nathaniel went to Bowdoin College in Maine, New Brunswick, where his fellow-students and friends included Longfellow and Franklin Pierce, who became President of the United States in 1852. Three years after his graduation, he produced a juvenile novel entitled Fanshawe (1828), and began writing short stories in the first years of the 1830s. By 1839 he was employed as a measurer of salt and coal in the Boston Custom House, a post which he held until 1841. He married Sophia Peabody, the daughter of a dentist, in 1842. His first major novel was The Scarlet Letter (1850), followed by The House of the Seven Gables in 1851, and The Blithedale Romance in 1852. At the age of fifty, he went to Europe, and between 1858 and 1861 produced his Notebooks which gave his impressions of America, England and Italy. Inspired by the latter country, which he visited in 1858, he wrote The Marble Faun, which appeared in England with the title Transformation. After his return to America, the outbreak of the Civil War cast a dark shadow over his life, particularly as Pierce was involved. In his last years, he made attempts to produce more novels, none of which was completed; these include Septimus Felton or The Elixir of Life. He died in his sleep at the Pemigwasset Hotel in Plymouth, New Jersey, on May 18, 1864.

5. Henry James⁴ has noted:-

Hawthorne's career was probably as tranquil and uneventful a one as ever fell to the lot of a man of letters; it was almost strikingly deficient in incident, in what may be called the dramatic quality.

Admitting the truth of this judgement, we must look elsewhere for the source of Hawthorne's imaginative power, and we arrive at his Puritan background, which gave him much of his Weltanschauung so far as his writing is concerned, without materially affecting the fabric of his life. His themes are Identity, Sin, Conscience and Punishment, and he weaves these ideas into his novels and tales with great care to form profound and telling allegories.

Nothing is more exclusive or interesting than this almost exclusively imported character of the sense of sin in Hawthorne's mind; it seems to exist there merely for an artistic or literary purpose. He had ample cognizance of the Puritan conscience; it was his natural heritage; it was reproduced in him; looking into his soul, he found it there. But his relation to it was only, as one may say, intellectual; it was not moral and theological. He played with it and used it as a pigment; he treated it, as the metaphysicians say, objectively. He was not discomposed, disturbed, haunted by it ...⁵

Hawthorne at his best was a powerful symbolic writer, whose treatment of the subject of sin points forward unmistakably to Melville and beyond, and influenced Henry James himself. Of his novels, which must be mentioned briefly, Fanshawe may be disregarded; it is an unimpressive tale of unhappy love which bears no resemblance to his later work. The Scarlet Letter is, however, important. Set in the seventeenth century, it centres on Hester Prynne who has an illegitimate child, Pearl, and for her adultery is condemned to wear upon her breast a badge with the scarlet letter 'A', signifying adulteress. Her husband, under the pseudonym of Chillingworth, discovers that Hester's lover is the Rev. Arthur Dimmesdale, a weak man who has not dared own up to being Pearl's father. For seven years, Chillingworth persecutes Dimmesdale, who finally makes a confession, and dies — a

4. Henry James, Jun., Hawthorne, English Men of Letters series (London, 1879), Introduction.

5. Ibid., III, 58-59.

broken wreck, half-crazed with guilt and remorse. Here, Hawthorne is indicating the utter futility of punishment for crime, and observing how inappropriate and harsh retribution can be. The study of conscience and guilt points forward to Dostoievsky. A morbid, gloomy, brooding atmosphere of dark evil completely dominates the novel. The symbolism is occasionally clear, as in the case of the scarlet letter, which physically burns on contact, but mostly rarified:-

... light threads of symbolism, which shimmer in the texture of the tale, but which are apt to break and remain in our fingers if we attempt to handle them.⁶

The name Pearl is itself symbolic, a fact which has been overlooked by James. The child represents, to some extent, the redemptive power of innocence, and this is made most strongly explicit in a passage where the infant crosses a river, leaving Hester on the other side. Something in this trifling separation affects the mother, almost as if she has been bereaved. This is dismissed by James as belonging "to the lighter order of a story-teller's devices", but the resemblance between the scene in the novel and that of the Middle English poem Pearl is so striking⁷ that it seems most likely that the author was intending the allegorical significance of the anonymous poem to be taken into account, adding yet another facet to the complicated view of sin, death and redemption which lies at the core of this haunting novel.

6. The House of the Seven Gables is concerned with the inherited evil which blights a family from a previous time. It is set in a crumbling old house — reminiscent of the Gothic centrepiece — occupied by Hepzibah Pyncheon, an unfortunate old spinster who has to suffer the effects of a

6. Ibid., VI, 169.

7. Pearl. In this Middle English poem, a father, mourning the loss of his child, falls asleep and dreams that he sees her on the far bank of a river. She chides him for his unthinking grief, and teaches him to have faith, and bear the loss bravely.

curse put on her family by the original owner of the property. The novel is noteworthy for the character of Judge Pyncheon, an evil hypocrite who is an active force for evil, and whose death enables the story to end happily. Evil, suggests Hawthorne, is not restricted to one generation; if it is massive enough, the repercussions can reverberate down the corridors of generations. The Marble Faun concerns Count Donatello, a gentle and kind man who in appearance resembles the famous statue by Praxiteles. His nature, normally "faun"-like, is transformed by the realisation that Miriam,⁸ a young art-student with whom he is in love, is desired by another man. In a moment of rage, Donatello kills his rival, and, smitten with pangs of conscience, is forced to confess to the deed. Again, the questions of sin, conscience and punishment are central to the tale; the symbolism is not as marked as in the other novels.

7. These brief and superficial summaries of Hawthorne's novels — which merit greater attention, and, indeed, separate research — are given here to demonstrate Hawthorne's method in putting forward the concept of sin. He is a master of suggestion. James has said that he "combined in a singular degree the spontaneity of the imagination with a haunting care for moral problems", while Darville Libby⁹ has indicated the author's subtlety with a telling comparison: his characters are "motives and passions personified" and he "would never have made Poe's Raven speak a word, and yet a bowing of the head and a drooping of the wings would have told all that is said in 'nevermore'". Longfellow¹⁰ noted his "power of

8. Railo, op. cit., VII, 266. He compares Miriam (despite her innocence) with Matilda, from The Monk. This seems only true to a point. Miriam is, however, similar to Beatrice in Rappaccini's Daughter, in that her innocence causes the downfall of the hero, in an indirect way.

9. Darville Libby, in an article entitled "Hawthorne and the Supernatural," Overland Monthly (February 1869), 138-143.

10. H.W. Longfellow, writing in the North American Review (April, 1842).

finding the elements of the picturesque, the romantic, and even the supernatural, in the every-day, common-place life, that is constantly going on around us". Poe himself¹¹ wrote of Hawthorne's works that they "belong to the highest region of Art — an Art subservient to genius of a very high order", and went on to point out that his most distinctive traits are "invention, creation, imagination, originality". Hawthorne is sometimes difficult to read, and occasionally very obscure, and his love of the "common-place" — especially in his novels — separates him at a stroke from the abnormal and horrific situations in which so many of Poe's characters find themselves. It is necessary to understand this in order fully to appreciate the contributions which he made to the "horror-genre" — his horror is rarely explicit, but is none the less real for that.

8. It was in the short story form that Hawthorne excelled, and the most notable are Young Goodman Brown (1835), The Minister's Black Veil (1830) and, most terrifying of all, the masterly Rappaccini's Daughter, written in 1844. This list excludes much of his best work; with an author of Hawthorne's calibre it is difficult to be selective, but in my opinion these works express most vividly, in their own way, the terror arising from evil, and its effects on those with whom it comes into contact.

9. Young Goodman Brown is set in Salem, where the hero of the title lives with his wife Faith. While absent from home on a short journey by night, he meets an old man beneath a tree who, in a series of dreadful innuendos, convinces Brown that the apparent sanctity of those he most loves and respects is not all that it might seem. Wandering on his own, deep in thought, he witnesses a Sabbath and recognises all the most pious people of Salem, worshipping the powers of darkness. His wife, too, stands there, ready for initiation. Awakening from this dreadful vision, unable to decide whether it is real or imagined, he returns home, a changed man. The company of his neighbours, the religious ceremonies, and even the

11. Edgar Allan Poe, writing on Hawthorne's Twice-Told Tales in Graham's Magazine (May 1842).

presence of his wife become insupportable. His life is touched with horror, and he dies, eventually, without ever escaping its morbid influence. This tale, on its own, does not appear particularly fearsome, but Hawthorne achieves his effects with a multiplicity of allusions, which constantly raise doubts in the reader's mind:-

But the only thing about him that could be fixed on as remarkable was his staff, which bore the likeness of a great black snake, so curiously wrought that it might almost be seen to twist and wriggle itself like a living serpent. This, of course, must have been an ocular deception, assisted by the uncertain light.

Simple words and phrases convey considerably more than their surface meaning:-

"... if I convince thee not, thou shalt turn back. We are but a little way into the forest yet."

"Too far! too far!" exclaimed the goodman, unconsciously resuming his walk.

The vision of the Sabbat is anticipated by an unearthly effect of atmosphere:-

While he still gazed upward into the deep arch of the firmament and had lifted his hands to pray, a cloud, though no wind was stirring, hurried across the zenith and hid the brightening stars. The blue sky was still visible, except directly overhead, where this black mass of cloud was sweeping swiftly northward. Aloft in the air, as if from the depths of the cloud, came a confused and doubtful sound of voices.

I do not think the use of the words "black mass" to describe the cloud is accidental; Hawthorne was too skilful a craftsman to have failed to have intended a double meaning. The despair of the goodman, the evil of the Sabbat, and the agonies of nature are merged into one gruesome effect:-

He paused, in a lull of the tempest that had driven him onward, and heard the swell of what seemed a hymn, rolling solemnly from a distance with the weight of many voices ... The verse died heavily away, and was lengthened by a chorus, not of human voices, but of all the sounds of the benighted wilderness pealing in awful harmony together.

The full horror, the deep extent of the sin of the Sabbat is summed up in the words of the "sable form" who addresses the congregation:-

"It shall be yours to penetrate, in every bosom, the deep mystery of sin, the fountain of all wicked arts, and which inexhaustibly

supplies more evil impulses than human power — than my power at its utmost — can make manifest in deeds. And now, my children, look upon each other."

They did so; and, by the blaze of the hell-kindled torches, the wretched man beheld his Faith, and the wife her husband, trembling before that unhallowed altar.

Hawthorne ends by wondering whether it was a dream, or whether it happened in fact. The point is unimportant: the effect on the goodman is the same. His heart, once innocent, has been touched by a consciousness of the full dreadful import of evil, and for him, there is no joy left in life:

"... they carved no hopeful verse upon his tombstone, for his dying hour was gloom." Sin, for Hawthorne, has the power to repel, but it sullies all that it comes near. The tale is an allegory of temptation, corruption and moral despair and disillusionment. The ambivalence of the language leads the reader into an enigmatic maze of allusions surrounding the power of evil. The action of the tale, as in so much of Hawthorne's work, takes place largely in the minds of the protagonists: the physical setting is vivid, and is intended to symbolise, and merge with, the mental states of the characters.

10. The Minister's Black Veil, subtitled A Parable, is notable for its extreme simplicity. Mr Hooper, minister of Milford parish, arrives to preach one morning wearing a crepe veil over his face. The parishioners are astonished; some are so nervous that they have to leave the church. Speculation, naturally, is rife. His presence casts gloom over a wedding, and renders a funeral almost unbearably solemn. He is deserted by his wife since he refuses to lift the veil, even in her company. Even on his deathbed he refuses to lift the covering from his face. The tale is a very vivid one, but its superficial simplicity conceals its very essence, as in the short stories of Kafka. The character of Mr Hooper is conveyed through the mouths of the townsfolk, and the mystery of the veil is explored through their first reactions:-

"I can't really feel as if good Mr Hooper's face was behind that piece of crape," said the sexton.

"I don't like it," muttered an old woman, as she hobbled into the meeting house. "He has changed himself into something awful only by hiding his face."

"Our parson has gone mad!" cried Goodman Gray ...

Hawthorne places all kinds of doubts and ideas in our mind about the reason for this veil:-

... while he prayed, the veil lay heavily on his uplifted countenance. Did he seek to hide it from the dread Being whom he was addressing?

He also indicates the effect which it has on others:-

... perhaps the palefaced congregation was almost as fearful a sight to the minister as his black veil to them.

Because of this veil, Hooper is shunned by the people except when his services are called for. "None, as on former occasions, aspired to the honor of walking by their parson's side." At the same time, Hawthorne makes it clear that Mr Hooper fears himself, and his own macabre, veiled reflection. There even seems, for a moment, to be the suggestion of some supernatural agency at work, since, at a funeral, the corpse of a young girl is seen to shudder when he bends over it, exposing his face to the dead features. But this is partially deflated by the observation that "a superstitious old woman was the only witness of this prodigy". At first, no one is prepared to ask the minister out-right why he wears the veil, and when a deputation finally calls at the manse, they cannot summon up the courage to put the question to Mr Hooper: "Were the veil but cast aside they might speak freely of it, but not till then." Even his wife can only discover that the veil is a "type and symbol", evidently as dreadful to Hooper as to those who look at him:-

"It is but a mortal veil — it is not for eternity! Oh! you do not know how lonely I am, and how frightened, to be alone behind my black veil. Do not leave me in this miserable obscurity forever!"

Even on his deathbed, he is not prepared to release himself from his veil, and with his dying words, the solution of the parable is made clear:-

"When the friend shows his innermost heart to his friend; the lover to his best beloved; when man does not shrink from the eye of his

Creator, loathsomely treasuring up the secret of his sin; then deem me a monster, for the symbol beneath which I have lived, and die! I look around me and lo! on every visage a Black Veil!

The veil — a symbol of concealment — covers up Hooper's own secret sins, and is a voluntarily imposed penance. But Hooper is also an offered sacrifice to atone for the sin of his fellow-men; he has made himself a living symbol of the moral veil of deceit and hypocrisy which obscures the mental vision of his parishioners, and his death is necessary to complete the sacrifice. On assumption of the veil, significantly, his efficacy as a minister is increased; he becomes "a man of awful power over souls that were in agony for sin", and this arises from his own awareness of the nature of Sin in the abstract, and his willingness to take the embodiment of Sin upon himself. The veil symbolises Sin as surely as the Cross symbolises Redemption; it is similar in purpose to Hester Prynne's scarlet 'A', and in this case excites the awe and the curiosity which draw people from far and wide to quake in terror before his awful sermons. Hooper is not a monster, he is not mad, and he has not changed physically. He is a martyr who, by his own macabre example, mirrors the souls of his congregation; he suffers physical darkness and "miserable obscurity" to save others from the darkness within their own souls. This frightening, yet profoundly moral tale offers us a clear glimpse of the essential nature of self-sacrifice.

11. Rappaccini's Daughter is his most horrifying tale, and is filled with a haunting sense of impending evil and doom. The Tale opens, whimsically, with the claim that it is a translation from the works of a French author, Aubépine.¹² This affords Hawthorne the opportunity to note that his (i.e., Aubépine's) works "might have won him greater reputation but for an inveterate love of allegory, which is apt to invest his plots and characters with the aspect of scenery and people in the clouds ..."

12. A typical Gothic device, here with a new twist.

The story concerns a student, Giovanni Guasconti, who arrives at Padua to pursue his studies there. From the window of his room he can see an exotic garden, tended by Dr Rappaccini and his beautiful daughter, Beatrice. The student notes that the flowers in the garden appear to be venomous, since the doctor will not approach them without mask and gloves. Professor Baglioni warns Giovanni that Rappaccini is a brilliant but evil scientist who has made his mark as an authority on rare and deadly poisons. Disregarding this advice, the student buys flowers and throws them to Beatrice, noting that they seem to wither and die at her touch, as do small animals which approach her too closely. Making his way into the garden to meet Beatrice, the student notes that her breath is identical to the scent of a particularly ghastly plant in the centre of the garden, which even Dr Rappaccini dares not approach. They fall in love; though Giovanni is horrified to note after a while that there is a livid mark on his wrist where she touched him, and that his own breath is fatal to small insects, and causes flowers to wither and die. Realising that Beatrice has poisoned him in some terrible way, he obtains a vial of potent antidote from the kindly Professor, and immediately reproaches Beatrice for her actions. She is, however, entirely innocent, having been used as a living experiment by the evil Dr Rappaccini since her birth. Realising that her love is sincere, he gives her the antidote. But, as poison has been life to her, the antidote is death. Giovanni, touched with the terrible fate of being poisonous to all who come near him, is left alone. This tale is quite definitely one of Hawthorne's best, and certainly the most frightening. It crawls with the suggestion of corruption, poison, evil and death. From the first sight of Rappaccini, the reader is conscious that some evil is afoot: he is a "tall, emaciated, sallow, and sickly looking man, dressed in a scholar's garb of black. He was beyond the middle term of life, with gray hair, a thin gray beard ..." The garden itself, despite a certain

beauty, also contains terror, since Rappaccini avoids contact with his plants like one "walking among malignant influences, such as savage beasts, or deadly snakes, or evil spirits ...". And doubts about Beatrice are planted in the reader's mind when he reads that she "handled and inhaled the odor of several of the plants which her father had most sedulously avoided". She is also, or so it seems to Giovanni, the "human sister" of the noxious plants. The central plant in the garden, fatal even to Rappaccini, is tended by Beatrice, leaving Giovanni to doubt "whether it was a girl tending her favourite flower, or one sister performing the duties of affection to another". Her deathly presence is hinted at, though at the beginning Hawthorne leads us to doubt whether our eyes have been deceived or not:-

... it seemed to Giovanni ... that his beautiful bouquet was already beginning to wither in her grasp. It was an idle thought; there could be no possibility of distinguishing a faded flower from a fresh one at so great a distance.

Giovanni is drawn to her with a mixture of love and horror, which mingle to produce a fatal attraction, founded on hope and dread.

12. Beatrice's obvious innocence, once established, further complicates the narrative. She is described as deriving pleasure from Giovanni's company "not unlike what the maiden of a lonely island might have felt conversing with a voyager from the civilised world".¹³ Knowing her own state, she refuses to allow Giovanni to touch her, and nothing can wound her more than the knowledge that the man she loves blames her for the misdeeds of her father:-

"Yes; spurn me, tread on me, kill me! Oh, what is death after such words as thine? But it was not I. Not for a world of bliss would I have done it."

Rappaccini has contrived to make of Giovanni a lover fit for his daughter. His impious blessing, with the very hands which had "thrown poison into

13. Very probably a reference to Immalee, in Melmoth the Wanderer, whose innocence is likewise exploited.

the stream of their lives", is for them to pass into the world at large, "most dear to one another, and dreadful to all besides". The action of the antidote shatters the experiment, and leaves Giovanni totally isolated from his fellow men.

13. Evans¹⁴ has pointed out the allegorical significance of the tale, which Hawthorne makes fairly explicit:-

Was this, then, the Eden of the present world? And this man, with such a perception of harm in what his own hands caused to grow — was he the Adam?

Beatrice must then be viewed as the Eve, which raises the question of incest raised by Evans in his article. Granting that incest was a subject which was of great interest to the Romantic poets, and even to Poe, I think the real significance lies elsewhere. There is a strong link between Beatrice, blighted with deadly toxins, yet filled with innocent love for Giovanni, and the Beatrice of the Divine Comedy, taken by Dante as a figure symbolising spiritual salvation. Beatrice contains elements of all the standard Gothic heroines, and, but for her father and his experiment, would have resembled them more closely. Hawthorne has confronted us with the dreadful paradox of duality at the very heart of her being.¹⁵ Like Lewis's Matilda and Coleridge's Geraldine, she is a Fatal Woman:-

"Am I awake? Have I my senses?" said he to himself. "What is this being? Beautiful shall I call her, or inexpressibly terrible?"

Praz coined the telling phrase "the beauty of the Medusa" and Beatrice, in her innocence, is Medusan. Despite herself, she is a vampire figure¹⁶ sharing sisterhood with the evil plants in the garden, the New Eden.

14. Oliver Evans, "Allegory and Incest in Rappaccini's Daughter," in Nineteenth Century Fiction (Hawthorne Centenary Edition, 1964).

15. Also an idée fixe in Poe's works.

16. Cf. Lucy and Mina in Stoker's Dracula.

Giovanni's half-love, half-horror is identical to the fatal fascination experienced by the victim of a cobra or a vampire — an almost conscious wish to submit to the fangs which will bring death.

14. We may view the tale, then, as an allegory of modern life in which Sin, represented and symbolised by Rappaccini, fills each of us with its essence so that — knowing what is right and good — we are able to perform only evil deeds. At the same time, this tale is powerful and interesting on the surface level, and by no means depends on its allegorical significance for its impact. It is interesting to note that the setting is not New England, but Italy; though it dates to before the author's visit to that country. The same atmosphere of evil dominates the story, however, and from the neutral standpoint of Hawthorne, we see the characters drawn into the web of horror against their wills.

15. Hawthorne was an innovator in the genre. We find, it is true, the same interest in abnormal mental states which we noted in Brown, and several peculiarities of style which link him to the Gothic school: for instance, the device of the persecuted heroine (The Scarlet Letter, Hester; Rappaccini's Daughter, Beatrice; The Marble Faun, Miriam; and, in Young Goodman Brown, the character of Faith). The emphasis, however, has changed, and Hawthorne is more interested in moral problems and the nature of motivation in its various forms. Railo¹⁷ notes a continuation of Radcliffe's castle of Udolpho in The Marble Faun: the castle of Monte Beni's Owl Tower reminds the reader of the east turret, and the alabaster skull there reminds us of the waxen image, required for the purposes of penitence in bygone days. But his awareness of the nature of sin and conscience looks forward instead of backwards: it anticipates Kafka in Der Prozess and Das Schloss. It may be said that Hawthorne lived before his time.¹⁸

17. Op.cit., III, 168.

18. Cf. Dostoevsky, Crime and Punishment (1866), and Melville's Moby Dick (1851).

A.H. Quinn has noted:-

In his work we see the essence of romance, a distillation freed from accidents and improbabilities. It is freed, too, almost from reality ...¹⁹

This rarified and symbolic approach to his subject is summed up best by Hawthorne himself who is quoted in a Notebook of 1840 as saying:-

... we are but shadows; we are not endowed with real life, and all that seems most real about us is but the thinnest substance of a dream — until the heart be touched. That touch creates us — then we begin to be — thereby we are beings of reality and inheritors of eternity.

With Poe, we are plunged into a world of conscious verbal and imaginative artistry, exclamations, overt terrors, and dreadful situations; with Hawthorne the picture is gentle yet telling, timeless, universal and profound; the horror has to be deciphered carefully from the skilfully wrought pages.

16. The contrast between Hawthorne and Poe is startling, even in the matter of biography. Edgar Poe was born on January 19, 1809, in Boston. His parents were both on the stage; the father, David Poe, disappeared from the family in 1810, and Poe's mother died shortly afterwards from consumption. Edgar was unofficially adopted by John Allan of Richmond, and with his step-parents Edgar spent five years in England, and attended school there and in Richmond. Because of financial difficulty, he was unable to continue his university education beyond the first year, and entered the army, where he was successful and popular. In 1830 he went to West Point as a cadet, but the remarriage of John Allan made him realise that he was unlikely to receive any further money, so he deliberately contravened regulations and was dismissed. He stayed for a time in Baltimore with his aunt, Mrs Maria Clemm, and while there, produced his short story A Manuscript Found in a Bottle which won him a prize and led finally

19. A.H. Quinn, op.cit., VII.

to his appointment to the Southern Literary Messenger. He married his thirteen-year-old cousin Virginia Clemm, and shortly afterwards moved to New York where he published his first and only novel, Arthur Gordon Pym. From New York he moved in 1840 to Philadelphia where his first volume of short stories, Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque, appeared, without receiving much critical acclaim. He worked with Burton's Gentleman's Magazine and then with Graham's Magazine. In 1844 he returned to New York, where he worked with the New York Mirror and attempted to make a success of a literary journal of his own, producing the Broadway Journal which failed on its first issue in 1846. The publication of the famous poem The Raven in 1845 had at last brought him recognition, but he was filled with despair on the death of his wife in 1847. He had some desultory affairs, none successful, and died at Baltimore in 1849, in tragic and uncertain circumstances.

17. This sketchy biographical outline of Poe's life gives some idea of the trials and disappointments which he had to undergo. His literary executor, Rufus Griswold, published a number of calumnies about Poe, and enlarged the unfortunate episodes in his life out of all proportion. Until comparatively recently, Poe was regarded as dissolute and vicious,²⁰ and Hervey Allen's biography²¹ has shown the enormity of Griswold's spite. Poe was not an opium addict, though he certainly had tried laudanum, and was fairly familiar with its effects. He had a very low tolerance to alcohol — a circumstance which is treated in several of his tales, notably Hop-Frog and The Black Cat. He did not die as the result of a drinking bout; it is more than likely that he encountered the

20. J.A.T. Lloyd, The Murder of Edgar Allan Poe (London, 1931), attempts to rectify this.

21. Hervey Allen, Israfel: The Life and Times of Edgar Allan Poe (London, 1927).

supporters of some candidate for political office in Baltimore and, the polling booths being open, was drugged and taken from booth to booth to register a false vote. The whole fallacious tale of Poe's thoughtless ingratitude to John Allan is simply invention on Griswold's part.

18. Poe is, beyond a doubt, the most famous author of horror-stories, and has been the subject of an enormous amount of critical attention, much of it vapid. There are two schools of thought about the author: one is the traditional American view of Poe as a purely American journalist and author, owing nothing to outside influences. This is markedly seen in the work of A.H. Quinn.²² On the other hand, we have the views of European authors, particularly Lemonnier, who notes Poe's influence on the detective novel:-

Remarquez en effet qu'Edgar Poe a fait de son héros un Français, et qu'il a choisi la France pour y situer l'action de ses trois contes policiers. Sans doute, il l'a fait surtout pour s'éloigner de l'Amérique pour donner libre jeu à son imagination.²³

The real truth probably lies somewhere in between. Poe was very much an American at heart, but very well acquainted with the world at large. Michael Allen²⁴ has demonstrated how Byron, Coleridge and De Quincey influenced him, especially in his love for histrionics, critical poses, and confrontations. (He accused Longfellow of plagiarism in a series of violent attacks in various magazines.) Poe makes frequent reference to opium, partly as a literary device, it is true, but partly due to experience, and the influence of De Quincey. Poe's own influence on later authors will be examined in a later section of this chapter.

19. Edgar Allan Poe wrote over sixty short stories, although only

22. Op.cit., VII, passim.

23. Leon Lemonnier, Edgar Poe et les Conteurs Français (Paris, 1947): "Le Roman Policier," p. 137.

24. Michael Allen, Poe and the British Magazine Tradition (Oxford 1969).

one tale which reached the proportions of a novel.²⁵ Since I have to limit myself to landmarks, I shall only be able to discuss his most notable tales, those which cover the widest possible range of subject and treatment. These will be as follows (in chronological order):

Berenice (1835), Ligeia (1838), The Fall of the House of Usher (1839), William Wilson (1839), The Oval Portrait (1842), The Masque of the Red Death (1842), The Pit and the Pendulum (1843), The Tell-Tale Heart (1843), The Black Cat (1843), The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar (1845), The Cask of Amontillado (1846). Despite the inevitable and regrettable lacunae in this list, it does represent a cross-section of the different approaches to horror which Poe made. Because of its great complexity and importance, I shall leave consideration of The Fall of the House of Usher until last.

20. Birkhead, in rather a sketchy outline of Poe,²⁶ dismisses Berenice as "gruesome". The tale bears closer examination. The central figure in the story — one could hardly call him the hero, in the conventional sense of the word — is called Egaeus, and his abode is a grey, gloomy, ancient building, full of tapestries and ancient paintings. Living there since childhood, he has stagnated and, absorbed unhealthily in the strange books with which the library is filled, has come to regard the outside world as a vision and his own fantasies as the only real truth. His cousin, Berenice, has been stricken with a strange disease which has caused her to waste away and has made her subject to catalepsy. Egaeus is overcome by an opium-engendered state of hypersensitivity, in which he becomes

25. I.e., Arthur Gordon Pym. It is interesting to note that in Magritte's painting La Réflexion Interdite on the mantelpiece under the mirror which reflects the back of the viewer's (Poe's?) head, there is a copy of this book.

26. Op.cit., XI, 213-220.

obsessed with trivia. He speaks of marriage to Berenice, but some time before the wedding he becomes aware of her teeth, which begin to exercise a morbid and overwhelming fascination on his mind. Berenice falls victim to her disease and is buried. Egaeus has a black-out, and on recovering, finds himself clotted with mud and gore. Berenice, his horrified servant tells him, had been buried alive and has just been discovered. On the table before Egaeus is a box containing her teeth.

21. The story is told in the first person, there is a slight resemblance between Egaeus and Edgar, and Berenice is a cousin — but it would be dangerous and misleading to look further in Poe's life for help in unravelling this tale. Here we can see aspects of a character which Poe was to make his own: learned, intellectual, philosophical, a dreamer, an aesthete; an aloof, tragic figure given to self-analysis. In Berenice, we have the beginnings of an idée fixe: a woman, once lovely, but now touched with disease, and even in death, possessed of the most profound influence over the lover. In Poe, we have the most dramatic presentation of the Fatal Woman, to be echoed later by Baudelaire in France.²⁷ In his Philosophy of Composition, à propos of The Raven, Poe had stated that death was at its most "poetical" when it "most closely allies itself to Beauty; the death, then, the death of a beautiful woman is unquestionably the most poetical topic in the world." And this is paralleled by Baudelaire's famous statement, from the Journeaux Intimes: "Je ne conçois guère un type de Beauté où il n'y ait du Malheur." In this tale, too, we find the theme of premature burial, which recurs often in Poe, along with entombment in walls, beneath floorboards, in dungeons or in vaults, and is inherited in part from Radcliffe. A strong vein of claustrophobia runs through Poe's work — his stage is narrow and restricted. Egaeus is effectively entombed

27. Praz, op. cit., IV, 253. He notes that Walter Pater sees the ultimate origin of the Fatal Women in the Giaconda, with the haunting and enigmatic smile.

in the building, just as surely as Berenice is buried in the grave. Above all, the close study of an abnormal state of mind here reaches a terrifying pitch of realism:-

I had no thoughts but for the teeth. For these I longed with a phrenzied desire. All other matters and all different interests became absorbed in their single contemplation. They — they alone were present to the mental eye, and they, in their sole individuality, became the essence of my mental life.

The grisly conclusion of the tale points to the results of obsession,²⁸ and the Latin motto only intensifies this.²⁹ The story is almost a case-history of monomania; the first person narrative with its overtones of insanity and obsession will be found to occur again and again, almost as a hall-mark of Poe's fiction.

22. Ligeia is one of Poe's most popular tales, frequently anthologised. It is prefaced by a quotation purporting to be from Joseph Glanvill, though this has never been traced and is now assumed to be an invention of Poe himself.³⁰ The line, whose import lies at the heart of the tale, is: "Man does not yield himself to the angels, nor unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will." Ligeia, whose eyes exert such a strong influence on the unnamed hero of the tale, falls ill; before dying she makes her husband repeat the poem The Conqueror Worm (some lines from which head this chapter). On the point of death, she repeats the line from Glanvill. Her husband remarries, taking as his new wife the Lady Rowena Trevanion of Tremaine, quite unlike the Lady Ligeia in appearance. They live in a refurbished abbey, where Rowena falls ill and is confined to bed. The narrator falls into an opium stupor, in which he sees some drops of a ruby fluid enter a wine-cup which is then drained

28. See also Baudelaire, La Chevelure.

29. Literal translation: 'I was told that if I visited the grave of a friend, my cares would be somewhat alleviated.'

30. E.g., David Galloway, note in Selected Writings of Edgar Allan Poe (London, 1967), p. 527.

by Rowena. Within four days she is dead, and lying enshrouded on the bed. To the horror of the husband, the corpse appears to move, but on investigation all life appears to be extinct. Another moan is heard; the husband rips off the shroud to uncover the Lady Ligeia — who opens her eyes.

23. The settings of this tale and Berenice are very similar: the abbey here is reminiscent of Radcliffe's Romance of the Forest, and has similar external features: "verdant decay" hangs from it, and the "savage aspect of the domain" surrounds it. But in Poe's hands the abbey becomes claustrophobic, a place of terror and confinement. The room in which Rowena dies is pentagonal in shape, and in furnishing is similar to the room described in The Raven, in Poe's essay The Philosophy of Furniture, and in the famous The Fall of the House of Usher. The surroundings are heavy, oppressive and baroque. The eyes of Ligeia are those of a Fatal Woman, pulling the hero into their sphere of influence and, as in the case of Schedoni, external signs of intense powers of will which here conquer the grave itself. Her influence is strong all through the tale, almost as if she had not died — the hero describes the "unhallowed hours" of his marriage to Rowena almost as if bigamy had been committed. And indeed something of the sort is true, since Ligeia uses the frailer body and will of Rowena as a means of returning to the world. In this tale, we find again the hyperaesthetic hero, with all the tendencies which we noted in Berenice. His obsession with the minutiae of Ligeia's appearance, his ennui and extreme receptiveness to sense impressions, combine with the profuse richness of the setting of the tale to produce, at the end, an effect of intense horror. The theme of reincarnation had been attempted by Poe in Morella (1835), in which the dead woman returns in the person of her own daughter, but Ligeia is much more convincing.

24. William Wilson uses, in the first few paragraphs, some material

which refers to Poe's own schooldays in England, but this is only by way of introduction, and the rest of the tale is pure fantasy of a very high order. The hero of the story — or, more accurately, the villain — comes across a boy of the same name and date of birth in the school where he is sent to study. This alter ego suffers from a singular malady, being unable to converse in anything other than a low whisper. Much to the annoyance of the William Wilson of the title, this newcomer copies him in manner, gesture and habit. Later, at Eton, the whispering figure interrupts him at a wild carousal, and ruins his enjoyment of the party. At Oxford, the double intervenes again to reveal Wilson's cheating in a game of cards with Lord Glendinning. Even as far afield as Rome, the double intrudes on Wilson, interrupting his seduction of a pretty but married countess. Overcome with rage, Wilson drags the double into a room and engages in a fight with him. The result is mortal for the double who, speaking for the first time in a normal voice, exactly the same as Wilson's, tells him that he has murdered himself.

25. This tale is notable for the fact that it is the first piece of pure psychological horror-fiction in the English language, introducing for the first time what virtually amounts to schizophrenia.³¹ After the initial presentation of the two Wilsons as merely doubles, it is made clear at the end that they are, in fact, one and the same person. When the tale opens, Wilson (this is a pseudonym, according to the narrator) has passed into the state of being an "object for the scorn — for the horror — for the detestation" of his race, and a victim of "sublunary visions". In his childhood, claims Wilson,

"[I was] a cause of serious disquietude to my friends, and of positive injury to myself. I grew self-willed, addicted to the wildest caprices, and a prey to the most ungovernable passion."

31. Cf. Study on Three, BBC Radio programme, 11 August 1972. In a talk entitled "Psycho-horror", Christopher Evans suggested that Jekyll and Hyde is the first psychological horror tale.

His imperious character gives him ascendancy over all but the alter ego who is able to thwart all the bullying, hoaxing, bravado and mental torture which Wilson can invent, combining this with a "most unwelcome affectionateness of manner". Wilson always wins the victory, but the double "contrived to make me feel that it was he who had deserved it." The two find themselves oddly attracted to one another, and despite constant "petulant animosity" they are constantly together. In this it is easy to distinguish, in symbolic form, the two mental states of the manic depressive: the dominant, forceful and aggressive persona, balanced by the submissive, affectionate and sensible self. At the same time, I view Wilson as the mind, and the Doppelgänger as the conscience, as is hinted at in the (fictitious) opening quotation:-

What say of it? What say (of) CONSCIENCE GRIM,
That Spectre in my path?

The low whisper of the double suggests the subdued but persistent murmur of the conscience. It is also noteworthy that the double only interrupts Wilson during the course of his most reprehensible actions — the carousal, the gaming and the seduction. At no point does the double appear to have an independent existence. Even in death, he merges with Wilson in a single identity of voice and appearance which is so strong as to suggest to the killer a "large mirror — or so it seemed to me in my confusion, and ... mine own image". The parallel with Jekyll and Hyde is obvious, and yet Stevenson's work was more than forty years in the future when this tale was penned. This tale is about a man who is, literally, in two minds. He is torn between his "ungovernable passion" and his conscience, which seeks to reform him in this striking living symbol. By murdering his own conscience, he naturally suppresses any good impulses in his mind. This is why Wilson describes himself as such a monster of depravity at the beginning of this retrospective tale. There is little traditional horror in this work, but in Wilson's strange duality we see a new approach to the question

of haunting; for Wilson is a man who haunts himself.

26. The Oval Portrait is quite different in tone and style, showing one more facet of Poe's extraordinary ability in creating situations of terror. The anonymous narrator, aided by his servant Pedro, makes his way to a distinctly Gothic castle:-

... one of these piles of commingled gloom and grandeur which have so long frowned among the Apennines, not less in fact than in the fancy of Mrs Radcliffe.

Since he has been wounded — a circumstance which is not explained — he retires to a small turret room. After reading for some while, he moves the candles by his bedside, and is struck by the portrait of a young woman. The expression is so lifelike that he is startled. Taking up a convenient volume which gives the histories of the paintings in the room, he reads how the model and the artist had been man and wife. Intoxicated with his new bride, the artist had asked her to sit for him. She had done so patiently, day after day, while the artist worked at the task, becoming more and more absorbed in his creation. She endured for a long time without complaint, though she grew pale and ill. At last the artist had finished, and as he had exclaimed "This is indeed Life itself!" he had turned to find his wife dead.

27. On the surface this seems to be a pleasant little cameo of a tale, but its implications are fairly profound. The setting of the tale is pure Gothic — the castle might be Udolpho — and the device of the portrait, which is always popular in Gothic tales, is given a new twist here. Poe is exploring the relationship between art and reality; or between reality and fantasy. The likeness draws life from the real woman, just as the affections of the artist move from his wife to the representation of his wife. The woman is sucked dry by the process of creation, it is her very being which is being transferred: "And he would not see that the tints which he spread upon the canvas were drawn from the cheeks of her

who sat beside him." This metaphor is made more explicit in his final cry of "This is indeed Life itself!" — and the tragedy is that the metaphor has become fact. Life has gone from the model into the creation of the artist, which is why it remains there, years later, to startle a stranger. The device of the portrait or miniature as a means of recognition of a long-lost heir has already been noted, but The Oval Portrait belongs to the same category as those works which contain haunted portraits. These include The Castle of Udolpho, where the mystery is explained rationally, The Monk, where the portrait of the Virgin is introduced to aid Matilda in her seduction of Ambrosio, and Melmoth the Wanderer, in which the eyes of the portrait gleam of their own accord, and where the burning is followed by a supernatural visitation. Late developments include Stoker's tale The Judge's House, where a portrait steps from its frame to hang a young student, petrified with fear; and, of course, Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray, which is markedly similar to Poe's tale. The haunted, or walking portrait was, of course, first noted in The Castle of Otranto, and a reflection is found in Lovecraft's short novel The Case of Charles Dexter Ward.

28. The Masque of the Red Death is an allegory which, although on a subject which fascinated Hawthorne, could only have been written by Poe. During an outbreak of plague, Prince Prospero and a thousand friends confine themselves in a castellated abbey and, for several months, indulge in every kind of merrymaking. One evening, the prince holds a masked ball in a very unusual suite of rooms; seven in number, with windows corresponding in colour to the decoration of each chamber. The turns and twists in the design of the rooms mean that every few paces bring the viewer to a new perspective. The first room is blue, the second purple, the third green, the fourth orange, the fifth white, the sixth violet, and the seventh room is hung with black. Here the windows are blood-red; in this room,

too, is a gigantic clock of ebony. Braziers in a corridor cause the windows of each room to transmit a coloured light, so the effect in the seventh room is ghastly in the extreme. At the stroke of midnight, a stranger appears in the guise of a victim of the Red Death. No one dares approach him with the exception of Prospero, who immediately dies. The revellers follow the figure to the black room, where they find a mask and a shroud, but no sign of any living person. One by one they drop dead, until only the Red Death is left.

29. The tale is an allegory which points out the futility of those who seek to cheat death by taking refuge in frivolous pastimes. The slow, fearful and inexorable passage of time is suggested by the huge clock. It causes an uneasy hush to fall on the revellers when it strikes; it shows them that "the evil hour" is merely being postponed:-

... while the chime of the clock still rang, it was observed that the giddiest grew pale, and the more aged and sedate passed their hands over their brows ... But when the echoes had fully ceased, a light laughter at once pervaded the assembly: the musicians looked at each other and smiled as if at their own nervousness and folly ...

The sound of the chime comes from the "brazen lungs" of the clock — a telling figure of speech which reminds us of the poem The Bells, written some years later, where the brazen bells signify Despair. The seventh chamber has the "red-litten" windows which we shall find in The Fall of the House of Usher, with the same ominous significance; apart from being, in this tale, the colour associated with the Red Death itself. It will also be seen that the colours of the windows correspond broadly to those of the rainbow — they are mostly primary colours. Apart from affording vivid decorative contrast, this perhaps indicates a deeper substratum of symbolism: could the revellers, in pursuing the masked figure through the seven rooms, be enacting a gruesome symbolic reflection of their own head-long flight through the spectrum of life to the blood-red of their own deaths, face to face with the clock, and the figure of despair? I think

this construction is perfectly admissible, and it adds another dimension to the allegory. Again we find the claustrophobic element: the revellers literally entomb themselves in the abbey, and confine themselves still further in the seven mysterious rooms. The sombre pace of the tale, the lack of quotation at the head, and the third person narrative all combine to give the story the qualities of a parable.

30. The Pit and the Pendulum is, to the layman, the best-known of Poe's short stories, and is notable for its masterly treatment of suspense and total, overwhelming horror of immediate death. The tale begins in medias res, with the narrator condemned to death by the Inquisition at Toledo. After swooning, he finds himself in a pitch-black place and immediately fears he has been buried alive. He is, however, in an exceedingly dark dungeon, the extent of which he attempts to measure. Tripping on his torn garment, he narrowly misses falling into a pit, which seems extremely deep. He falls asleep, and on awakening discovers that he has been tied to a wooden platform under the swing of a huge pendulum with a heavy, sharp blade attached. It descends towards him, and he saves himself from it with seconds to spare. The iron walls of the prison are now heated, and its shape is altered so that he is driven towards the pit, into the depths of which he can see for the first time. Fainting with horror, he totters on the brink, to be rescued in the nick of time by the French, who have taken Toledo.

31. Like Radcliffe, Lewis and Maturin before him, Poe takes the Inquisition as his stage here, but there is no anti-Roman sentiment; the situation is all-important. Once again, entombment is at the forefront of the tale, both literal (in the dungeon) and imagined (when he fears he has been buried alive.) The narrator is not insane, but he is driven close to it by an extremity of horror. The workings of his secret thoughts are examined closely and carefully, and it is almost impossible not to be

drawn empathically into sharing his terror. The suspense is thrilling. A simple action, such as coming round from insensibility, is described with great care and in great detail:-

Very suddenly there came back to my soul motion and sound — the tumultuous motion of my heart, and, in my ears, the sound of its beating. Then a pause in which all is blank. Then again sound, and motion and touch ... Then, very suddenly, thought, and shuddering terror ...

Even the irrational and half-crazed fancies engendered by fear are explored fully:-

... my vision fell upon the seven tall candles upon the table. At first they wore the aspect of charity, and seemed white slender angels who would save me; but then, all at once, there came a most deadly nausea over my spirit ...

Under the descending blade — which represents the scythe held by Father Time³² — the victim undergoes fear, hysteria, dullness of mind and, finally, acute terror which brings with it the capacity for clear, logical thought. The differing reactions to fear are fascinating, and Poe's description of them indicates his brilliant grasp of the very essence of fear. When the victim sees into the pit for the first time, Poe makes one of his greatest strokes:-

Yet, for a wild moment, did my spirit refuse to comprehend the meaning of what I saw. At length it forced — it wrestled its way into my soul — it burned itself upon my shuddering reason. — Oh! for a voice to speak! — oh! horror! — oh! any horror but this!

Poe never reveals what the victim actually saw, and this deliberate omission is a sure act of near-genius: the nearest approach to this had been made by Maturin, who left the details of Melmoth's fate to the imagination. But Maturin had at least hinted, in the dream sequence, at Melmoth's fate. Apart from knowing that the pit is extremely deep, we know nothing about Poe's horror. With justice then, James Russell Lowell

32. Cf. earlier significance of ebony clock in The Masque of the Red Death. In 1838, Poe had written a tale called A Predicament (The Scythe of Time) in which the heroine had been decapitated by the hand of a huge clock.

could write³³ of Poe in 1845:-

In raising images of horror, he has a strange success, conveying to us sometimes a dusky hint, some terrible doubt, which is the secret of all terror. He leaves to imagination the task of finishing the picture, a task to which only she is competent.

The conclusion of the tale, with the timely escape, is perhaps not very convincing, but the inexorable logic of the story dictates only three choices: escape, some new torture, or death in the pit. Perhaps it is irrelevant to quibble about the ending, since the crescendo of horror is clearly the most important factor in the tale. This work explores, as no other work of Poe's has done, the insane acuteness of mind which overcomes those who are faced with the grim prospect of immediate, terrible death.

32. The Tell-Tale Heart examines another facet of abnormal psychology. The narrator becomes obsessed by the eye of an old man living in the same house. In the night, he shines a lantern into the room, and opening it slightly, casts a chink of light, by chance, on the open eye of the man, who has awakened. For over an hour, the old man sits up in bed in a state of terror, while the victim of the obsession keeps the light trained on the eye. At last, the beating of the man's heart becomes so loud that the narrator fears it will be heard by neighbours. He leaps into the room, and the old man dies of fright. The body is disposed of by cutting it into small pieces and secreting it beneath the floorboards. The police pay a call; the narrator grows nervous, until finally, convinced that he can hear the beating of the tell-tale heart, he admits to the deed.

33. This tale is only a few pages long, but it is a brilliant piece of imaginative writing. Once again, it is a first person retrospective account, and the narrator is quite clearly completely deranged. Yet he is

33. Lowell is quoted by the anonymous author of "Images of Horror — The Unknown and Familiar," Times Literary Supplement (February 25, 1955). The article is based on Lowell's quotation. Varma also quotes this paragraph, but writes, "... only he is competent," which upsets the whole meaning of Lowell's observations.

firmly convinced of his own sanity, which gives a gruesome twist to everything he says:-

Hearken! and observe how healthily — how calmly I tell you the whole story ... Now this is the point. You fancy me mad. Madmen know nothing. But you should have seen me.

This perverted logic dominates the character of the lunatic. The obsession with the eye is akin to the other obsessions we have noted; again the eye has a particular power to fascinate: this may now be seen as a central idea in Poe, and it will be seen to recur in the person of Roderick Usher who has "mad hilarity" in his eyes, which appals the visitor to the house. The old man has "the eye of a vulture — a pale blue eye, with a film over it". It is referred to here as the Evil Eye, which demonstrates that the murderer obviously feels that it casts some malign influence over him. The dreadful game of watching takes up much of the tale, we can almost feel the suspense mounting as we share the vigil in the darkness, watching the eye and listening to the pounding of the heart:-

The old man's terror must have been extreme. It grew louder, I say, louder every moment! — do you mark me well? I have told you that I am nervous, so I am. And now at the dead hour of the night, amid the dreadful silence of that old house, so strange a noise as this excited me to uncontrollable terror. Yet, for some minutes longer I refrained and stood still.

The repetition of words and phrases — "louder", "so I am", — underlines the excitability of the madman. Poe frequently uses this device to emphasise the nervousness of his characters, and it succeeds brilliantly here. When the madman finally bursts into the room with "a loud yell", it is quite logical that the old man should almost at once perish from fright — it is a chilling climax to the crescendo which has been so carefully built up. The logical way in which the madman disposes of the body makes gruesome reading:-

If you still think me mad, you will think me so no longer when I describe the wise precautions I took for the concealment of the body. First of all, I dismembered the corpse. I cut off the head and the arms and the legs ... I then took up three planks from the flooring of the chamber, and deposited all between the scantlings.

I then replaced the boards so cleverly, so cunningly, that no human eye — not even his — could have detected any thing wrong. There was nothing to wash out — no stain of any kind — no bloodspot whatever. I had been too wary for that. A tub had caught all — ha! ha!

The most frightening thing about this passage is the completely unemotional tone in which it is delivered: "I cut off the head and the arms and the legs." The use of the words "wise", "wary", "cleverly" and "cunningly" also indicate quite clearly that the narrator is convinced of his own sanity; his cleverness obviously is identified with sanity in his mind. He can even afford a little self-satisfied laugh at his own thoughtfulness in providing a tub to catch the blood. The dénouement centres round another obsessive fear, namely, that the beating of the heart would be heard by neighbours. When the officers search the house, he is able at first to place the chair over the corpse in "the wild audacity" of his "perfect triumph", and to satisfy the officers: "my manner had convinced them." The tell-tale heart in his ears is like the spectre at the banquet, and sets in motion the hysterical fears which overpower him, and force him to confess. This tale is perhaps the first to describe in detail the mental processes of a homicidal maniac, and it is a terrifying insight.

34. The same subject is carried on in The Black Cat, written within a few months of The Tell-Tale Heart. The narrator again begins by disclaiming madness, and again the tale is retrospective. After a quiet and ordered childhood and early married life, he had been given a cat called Pluto. Through alcohol, his personality changes, and in a fit of perverseness he cuts out one of the cat's eyes. Shortly afterwards, he hangs it from a tree. His house is burned down, and in the plaster of the smoking ruin is seen the shape of a cat. In a miserable tavern, he comes across a cat very like Pluto, which follows him home, and shows signs of great affection. He loathes the beast after a time, since on its breast it carries a white mark resembling the gallows. In the cellar, the cat

gets under his feet, and he picks up an axe in a rage. His wife, attempting to protect the cat, rouses him to insane fury, and he strikes her dead. He then walls up the body in a niche in the cellar, and finds to his relief that the cat has vanished. When officers visit the house, he takes them to the cellar. They are satisfied until the murderer, in a fit of bravado, strikes the wall where he knows his wife is entombed. There is a dreadful scream from behind the bricks. The cat has been walled up with the corpse.

36. This tale is a further improvement, since it shows the gradual descent into infamy, and the circumstances leading up to the murder, which in this case is not premeditated. The narrator's early years are happy:-

I married early, and was happy to find in my wife a disposition not uncongenial with my own. Observing my partiality for domestic pets, she lost no opportunity of procuring those of the most agreeable kind ...

Poe himself had an extremely low tolerance to alcohol, and the description of the alteration in personality is probably drawn in part from experience. But the narrator is filled with a "fiendish malevolence, gin-nurtured", and kills the cat, finally, in a spirit of perverseness: "Who has not, a hundred times, found himself committing a vile or a silly action, for no other reason than he knows he should not?" This, too, in Poe's works is almost an idée fixe: it is found as an insane desire to do the most ridiculous, dangerous and foolish things for no real reason.³⁴ It is this which makes the madman place his chair directly over the corpse of the old man, and it is this which causes the murderer in the present tale to commit that foolish action — almost in a moment of madness — which is his undoing:-

"By the bye, gentlemen, this — this is a very well constructed house." (In the rabid desire to say something easily I scarcely

34. Cf. Baudelaire, Le Mauvais Vitrier: "Mais qu'importe l'éternité de la damnation à qui a trouvé dans une seconde l'infini de la jouissance?" Also, the acte gratuit, which figures in Gide, especially in Les Caves du Vatican.

knew what I uttered at all.) "I may say an excellently well constructed house. These walls — are you going, gentlemen? — these walls are solidly put together," and here, through the mere phrenzy of bravado, I rapped heavily with a cane which I held in my hand, upon that very portion of the brickwork behind which stood the corpse of my wife ...

Again, the nervous repetition of words and phrases points to the overwrought state of mind of the person who speaks: similar instances are to be found in the speeches of Hamlet, conveying very much the same idea. It would be superfluous to dwell at any length on the symbolism of the second cat — the gallow patch on its chest does give the narrator some unconscious premonition of the fate to which he is destined, his feeling of loathing for the animal springs from this even before the crime is committed; but although this adds some interest to the plot, it takes second place to the development of the narrator's character, from a mild and inoffensive young man to a "phrenzied" murderer, whose mind is balanced on the razor-edge of insanity.

36. Poe's most terrible tale is undoubtedly The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar. The bare outline of the story is extremely simple. On the point of death. M. Valdemar permits himself to be mesmerized, the object of this experiment being to determine whether death can be delayed by artificial means. After the heart has ceased to beat, and the circulation of blood in the body has stopped, a voice is heard to issue from the corpse which, in response to questioning, says that the body is dead. For seven months the body is left in this state, and amazingly, there is no putrefaction. Finally the trance is broken, and the corpse quickly dissolves until there is nothing left but a liquid mass. The tale is related in such a straightforward and scientific manner that it was for a time commonly believed to be the account of a true event. Mesmerism was, of course, extremely popular in Poe's day, and it is not inconceivable that such an experiment could take place. But the effects of it are gruesome in the extreme; the simplicity of the central idea being equalled

only by the power of imagination which must have been necessary to construct such a notion. The dead voice of M. Valdemar is frightening to hear:-

The voice seemed to reach our ears ... from a vast distance, or from some deep cavern within the earth. In the second place it impressed me ... as gelatinous or glutinous matters impress the sense of touch.

This description was, I think, in the back of H.P. Lovecraft's mind when he dreamt so vividly of the frightening episode which later was expanded into The Statement of Randolph Carter:-

... a voice — a thing which I cannot describe by any words I know. Shall I say that it was hollow — very deep — fluid — gelatinous — infinitely distant ...?³⁵

The cumulative sense of horror; the wonder and doubt as to the strange preservation of M. Valdemar; the curiosity as to what will happen when the trance is broken — all of this leads up to the final paragraph, with its grotesque, horrifying description:-

For what really occurred, however, it is quite impossible that any human being could have been prepared.

As I rapidly made the mesmeric passes, amid ejaculations of "dead! dead!" absolutely bursting from the tongue, and not from the lips of the sufferer, his whole frame at once — within the space of a single minute, or even less, shrunk — absolutely rotted away beneath my hands. Upon the bed, before the whole company, there lay a nearly liquid mass of loathsome — of detestable putridity.

The influence of this story, apart from that on Lovecraft which I have already noted, may be seen in H. Rider Haggard's She and Bram Stoker's Dracula, in which the dissolution through accelerated ageing of a preternatural character is described.

37. The Cask of Amontillado is an extremely polished, sardonic tale of revenge. Montresor, of an ancient family, has been slighted by a friend named — inappropriately, as it turns out — Fortunato. By appealing to his vanity in the matter of wine-tasting, Montresor lures Fortunato into his extensive vaults. They pass through, on the pretext of going

35. Letter to Galpin and Moe, December 11, 1919.

in search of a pipe of Amontillado. At the end of the vaults, Montresor pushes Fortunato into a niche, and manacles him. Then he walls him up, alive.

38. The tale is told, for the most part, in a lively reported dialogue, which is an advance on the monologue form which dominates so much of Poe, and casts a distorting shadow over the events being described. The tale is also replete with dramatic irony, which gives it a particularly macabre flavour. Montresor's subtle play with his victim is ghastly to watch, the more so since Fortunato, through natural dullness and alcohol, is incapable of realising Montresor's deadly malice. The murderer constantly gives his victim the opportunity of withdrawing, knowing full well that he will not: "'Come,' I said with decision, 'we will go back. Your health is precious.'" And a little later, Fortunato admits to having a cough, and fails to notice the deadly seriousness with which Montresor replies to his little joke: "'Enough,' he said, 'the cough is a mere nothing; it will not kill me. I shall not die of a cough.' 'True — true,' I replied." As if anxious to warn his victim of the danger into which he is walking, Montresor explains that his coat of arms is a "huge human foot d'or, in a field azure; the foot crushes a serpent, whose fangs are embedded in the heel." Likewise, the family motto, "Nemo me impune lacessit," is full of evil significance for Fortunato, though he does not realise it. The foolish victim, flushed with the wine, shows Montresor a sign which proves that he is a mason. Grimly, Montresor produces a trowel, saying that he too is a mason. He means it in deadly earnest, but Fortunato takes it for a jest. Even when he is manacled in the niche, the unfortunate man does not comprehend what has happened, even when Montresor sarcastically asks if he will go back, knowing full well now that it is too late:-

"Once more let me implore you to return. No? Then I must positively leave you. But I must first render you all the little attentions

in my power."

"The Amontillado!" ejaculated my friend, not yet recovered from his astonishment.

"True;" I replied, "the Amontillado."

Fortunato slowly begins to realise his fate; at first moaning in terror and finally adding screams of supplication. Montresor screams as well, and the picture of victim and madman screaming in unison as the bricks are piled into place must rank as one of the most vivid and ghastly in horror literature. Fortunato gives one last plea, and meets with a pleasant but implacable reply: "For the love of God, Montresor!" "Yes," I said, "for the love of God!" In the last few lines, Montresor simply echoes everything that Fortunato says. The effect on the doomed man is devastating. Locked in his dreadful prison, still wearing the cap and bells from the gay celebration he had been attending, he can only tremble and shake in the darkened niche, with only a single brick remaining to be cemented in place. Poe uses the theme of entombment many times, but the sheer terror of it is most explicit in this tale. It is rounded off with a fiendish touch:-

I forced the last stone into its position; I plastered it up. Against the new masonry I re-erected the old rampart of bones. For the half of a century, no mortal has disturbed them. In pace requiescat!

This tale is frequently anthologized; as a story of malign revenge it has very few equals.

39. The Fall of the House of Usher is an extremely important landmark in the horror genre; one of the best-known of all short stories of terror, capable of several different interpretations, and constructed with very considerable skill to produce a crescendo of unaccountable unease which culminates in the stark terror of the conclusion. The narrator arrives at the House of Usher, and is depressed greatly by his first view of it. He has answered the summons of his friend, Roderick Usher, who is apparently very ill. When he meets his friend, he is amazed to note that

his character and appearance seem to have changed; he has become hyperaesthetical, almost rarified, unable to tolerate all but the most insipid and tiny sense impressions. Usher's sister, Madeline, is also very ill, and she dies shortly after the arrival of the narrator. Her body is placed in its coffin, and laid to rest in a deep, copper-sheathed vault under the house. After some days, she returns from the vault, bringing about the death of her brother from sheer terror. The narrator flees from the house, which sinks beneath the surface of the tarn in which it is situated.

40. The conventional interpretation of this tale is that the House is symbolic of Usher himself, and also his entire family tree. So the title clearly has two meanings. The zig-zag fissure in the wall of the house signifies a similar split within the character of Usher. Character, ancestry and building are therefore fused into a single image. But the symbolism is deeper than this, since it also probes and explores the connexions between Usher's mind and the fabric of the house. The vacant and "eye-like" windows are like those of a skull, and they are closely parallel to the "red-litten" windows of the Haunted Palace, symbolising Usher himself. Both the fungus which hangs on the building and Usher's wispy hair are described as "web-like", signifying decay in both the physical and mental senses — in the building and in its tenant. The character and his environment — "whence, for many years, he had never ventured forth" — have a symbiotic relationship, since the house can only stand as long as Usher remains alive. The poem The Haunted Palace, itself roughly symbolic of Usher himself and his singular ennui, hints at evil things "in robes of sorrow" which bring about the spiritual degeneration of the Palace, hence Usher. The exact nature of those "evil things" will be examined shortly.

41. Turning to Usher himself, we note the familiar hyperaesthesia,

which renders him painfully sensitive to all but certain sounds, sights and textures. He has enormous mental powers, and great ability as poet, musician and artist, but this is entirely introspective: entombed, as it were, in Usher himself, who is virtually entombed in the house. Indeed, there does not appear to be any outside world; the narrator has to travel for a whole day through "a singularly dreary tract of country" to arrive at his destination. The multiple images of withdrawal are expressed in his wild improvisations of certain tunes, and in one amazing image expressed in a painting:-

... the interior of an immensely long and rectangular vault or tunnel, with low walls, smooth, white, and without interruption or device. Certain accessory points of the design served well to convey the idea that this excavation lay at an exceeding depth below the surface of the earth. No outlet was observed in any portion of its vast extent, and no torch, or other artificial source of light was discernible; yet a flood of intense rays rolled throughout, and bathed the whole in a ghastly and inappropriate splendour.

This terrifyingly claustrophobic image, which reminds one of the surrealist fantasies of Dali, represents a deeper level of Usher's mind. It is the central core of his existence, the lowest level of his own subconscious. He is trapped there, for he sees "no outlet". The infinity of length signifies stasis: no change or development is possible. The depth below the surface of the earth indicates the depth of consciousness at which this state is to be found. The "ghastly and inappropriate splendour" points to the impossibility of escape, he is trapped in the blinding light of his own awareness, like a specimen under a microscope. In this white, glaring prison he can travel infinitely without materially altering his surroundings. Tunnel, house and Haunted Palace therefore fuse into a new triple symbol of entombment. Usher's self-analysis and "morbid acuteness" of sense have cut him off from reality. He is trapped inside his own mind. The fantasies there are more terrible than the reality, just as the reflection of the house in the tarn gives a shudder "even more

thrilling than before" to the narrator.

42. The person of Madeline raises several important questions. She is Usher's twin sister, linked by close ties and, like so many of Poe's heroines, destined to a premature grave. There seems to be almost an incestuous love between brother and sister. And yet she is, for him, the personification of "the grim phantasm, FEAR". Certain aspects of her appearance are interesting. Her presence fills the narrator with "dread" and "stupor", and in her coffin he notes "the mockery of a faint blush upon the bosom and the face, and that suspiciously lingering smile which is so terrible in death". Usher is quite aware she has been buried alive — like the villain in The Tell-Tale Heart, he can hear her struggles to escape, and in the silence of the night can hear her heart beating. Her return, covered in blood, to claim her brother, is the terror to which he has always known he must eventually succumb. J.O. Bailey³⁶ has suggested that both she and the house itself are vampires. This seems arguable to a point; her effect on the narrator, for example, would appear to suggest that in time he could fall victim to the same terrors as Usher, and the classical symptoms of vampirism certainly seem explicit. Yet the blood-sucking element is not introduced, and it is more logical to view her as a Fatal Woman in the mould of Matilda, in The Monk, and Berenice and Ligeia in Poe's own works. She is similar to the vampire in Baudelaire who weakens men's souls:-

Sur ce lit est couchée l'Idôle, la souveraine des rêves ... Voilà bien ces yeux dont la flamme traverse la crépuscule; ces subtiles et terribles mirettes, que je reconnais à leur effrayante malice! Elles attirent, elles subjuguent, elles dévorent le regard de l'imprudent qui les contemple.³⁷

Here, Madeline is a truly complex figure — an intermixture of spiritual and traditional vampire. At the same time, Usher seems afflicted with the

36. J.O. Bailey, "What happens in The Fall of the House of Usher," an article in American Literature (1964).

37. Baudelaire, La Chambre Double.

same malady, and it is feasible to conclude that, as the house itself — "the physique of the gray walls and turrets" — has defined "the morale of his existence", so the ambiguous brother-sister relationship has drained itself of vitality, leaving Usher's nerve-centre exposed so that — as De Béranger's quotation at the head of the tale suggests — his heart, with every mundane trapping of normal existence drained away by the house and Madeline, becomes like a lute: "Sitôt qu'on le touche, il résonne."

43. This "morbid acuteness" of the senses comes close to insanity of a kind, and it is self-catalysing; in his microcosm, Usher undergoes gradual metamorphosis, turning ever further inward on himself, until reality and fantasy are inextricably joined. Usher's last words include the exclamation: "Madman!" This could refer to Usher, or to the narrator. In the former case, which is not very likely, it would indicate Usher's final realisation of his situation; in the second case, which I think is much closer to the truth, it would show that Usher has reached the point where insanity is the only truth, the rest being, for him, meaningless. In that last moment of terror, Usher, trapped in the crimson-windowed house,³⁸ retreats into the "red-litten" windows of The Haunted Palace — his own mind — and finally penetrates into that ghastly tunnel of white, where the "phantasm FEAR" confronts him in the person of his sister. She is the "evil thing in robes of sorrow", rising in her shroud from the tomb.

44. There are some Gothic influences in the tale — notably the crumbling mansion, the grand rooms with their exotic and luxurious furniture, and of course the vault in which Madeline is entombed. But the tale contains multiple threads of allusion, woven into the Gothic framework: a catena of symbolic levels which all lead to the central idea of the House, and its many meanings. The collapse of the House is more than just the fall of a building; it symbolises the end of Usher, Madeline, the Usher-Madeline

38. Cf. The Masque of the Red Death. The red windows signify imminent death.

symbiosis, the Usher line, Roderick's mind, the Haunted Palace and the Usher-building symbiosis. It is, in short, an allegory of the death of a soul; the snapping of a mind stretched to breaking-point; the shattering of a lute under massive stresses and malign forces. A definitive interpretation may never be put forward, but this exegesis has touched on the more important factors which combine to make this tale one of the finest examples of the psychological horror story.

45. It would be difficult to sum up Poe in a few lines, for his influence was so great. Despite the fact that he did much of his work for magazines, Poe — according to Hervey Allen³⁹ — continued "inadvertently to address himself to an audience élite enough to be capable of remembering and cherishing what was valuable". His poetry, which unfortunately cannot be examined here, shows evidence of extreme care in its construction, though it is hard to believe that he composed The Raven in exactly the same manner as described in The Philosophy of Composition. His influence on the short story at its birth is enormous. He strongly influenced writers in America such as Ambrose Bierce and Lovecraft. His influence was very great in France, particularly on Baudelaire and the race of poets who followed. It may be said with justice that he invented the detective story, and he was the first author to make convincing use of cryptography, in The Gold-Bug. Poe's distinctive style was also passed on, particularly to Lovecraft, who never quite succeeded in making it his own. The device of a short story in the first person, revealing the abnormal character of the narrator, may be attributed to Poe.

46. His influence in France was particularly notable. Lemonnier⁴⁰ has noted:-

Les beaux jours du romantisme étaient passés, mais il n'était point mort cependant. Certaines de ses tendances survivaient,

39. Op. cit., pp. 432-433.

40. Op. cit., Introduction.

puisque les conteurs conservaient, comme Poe lui-même, le goût de l'horreur et du mystère.

P.F. Quinn⁴¹ has said: "It is with pride, obviously, that Baudelaire associated himself with the opinions of Poe." The close links between decay and beauty are also found in the works of the French author, as is the spirit of perverseness I have already noted. Baudelaire made explicit the duality which has been noted in Poe's characters: "Qui parmi nous n'est pas un homo duplex?"⁴² And elsewhere he speaks of the "ciel intérieur" and the "ciel du crâne", concepts which lie at the heart of Poe's work.

47. Lemonnier considers that Poe was the originator of the roman policier, leading eventually to Simenon, largely because of the American author's setting of his tale in France, and the person of C. Auguste Dupin as the logical detective. Railo⁴³ considers that Conan Doyle is a direct imitator of Poe; and certainly Sherlock Holmes derives much of his substance from Dupin. Summing up the French attitude to Poe, Lemonnier⁴⁴ goes on:-

A la fin du romantisme et pendant tout le réalisme, Edgar Poe a exercé une influence sur le conte fantastique: il l'a dépouillé de ses dernières attaches superstitieuses, il l'a donné la vigueur d'une monographie; il a mis à nu ... le mécanisme psychologique de l'homme, soit dans ses instincts les plus bas, soit dans ses aspirations les plus ambitieuses.

48. Although Poe owed much to the Gothic genre, he was selective in what he took from it. His leading ideas are all Gothic in flavour: entombment, persecution, hypnotic influence, decaying buildings, unfortunate heroines and, of course, the subterranean imagery. But he reworked this into a new and compelling form, much condensed, and very terrible because of the psychological detail. His greatest merit lies in the fact

41. The French Face of Edgar Poe (Illinois, 1957).

42. Baudelaire, essay on Asselineau in La Double Vie.

43. Op. cit., p. 303.

44. Lemonnier, op. cit. This is part of a general assessment of Poe which concludes the book.

that in the midst of Gothic imagery, he was able to describe fully the minds of the characters. On the Gothic stage, for the first time, they become utterly convincing. The external horrors are, in Poe's work, mirrored by equally frightening internal horrors — in the "ciel du crâne" of which Baudelaire has written. While Hawthorne was anxious to explore the questions of sin and punishment, Poe, taking these as faits accomplis, examines the states of mind arising from sin or punishment. A.H. Quinn⁴⁵ has said of Poe that his tales "are primarily short stories of effect. That his characters are often types is true, but that is because they live in an atmosphere of the abnormal or wonderful." This is true only up to a point. The characters in Poe do tend to conform to a certain type, but no two have the same mental problems. They are not governed by their surroundings, as Quinn suggests, but rather are extensions of the surroundings; a logical part of the external circumstances in which the stories are set. Poe's settings vary from ordinary homes to castellated abbeys, from taverns to dripping vaults, they are not all abnormal or wonderful. The effect of Poe's tales always comes from the minds of the characters, never from the settings on their own. Poe never uses the rational explanations favoured by Radcliffe; he is a master of "dusky doubt", and this renders his stage of horrors all the more fearful. The immensely tall rooms with tapestried walls always seem to have malign influences lurking in the background — note how often the tapestry moves without reason,⁴⁶ and how often there are forces at large outside which make the confinement in the microcosm almost desirable: in The Masque of the Red Death, for instance.

49. Quite apart from being a master of suspense, language and style, Poe's use of claustrophobia is noteworthy, and is indeed one of his

45. Op. cit., V.

46. Another typically Gothic device. A terrifying and new usage is found in Lovecraft's tale The Rats in the Walls.

most distinctive features. Here, the Gothic vault has taken on a new significance. It is a symbol of the "ciel du crâne" which underlines the introspection of the characters. It induces a feeling of moral suffocation and spiritual dread. His other dominant motif is that of hyperaesthesia. Alethea Hayter⁴⁷ has shown that this is a symptom of opium narcosis, and suggests that Poe was extremely familiar with the use of laudanum. Certainly it is mentioned explicitly in many of his tales: Egaeus, for instance, is an addict; so is the narrator of Ligeia; and Roderick Usher is familiar with its effects, as is indeed the narrator, as is clear from the opening of the tale.⁴⁸ It is, however, extremely difficult to decide how much of this is literary convention, gained second-hand from De Quincey and others, and how much is first-hand experience. American critics, including A.H. Quinn, deny that Poe ever took opium (or at the very most sampled it more than once or twice), while others, notably Baudelaire and other French critics, claim that he was an addict. Poe seemed to enjoy hoaxes, and although he did once try to commit suicide with laudanum, the dose was so miscalculated as merely to make him ill. I think he would have liked people to believe that he was an addict, but the circumstances of his life rule this out — one of the effects of the drug is extreme lethargy, and this is one criticism which could hardly be levelled at Poe. It would be fair to say that he did try opium; it is admissible to say that the hyperaesthesia described in his works, and the descriptions of opium narcosis, are founded on experience; but wrong to place him in the same category as the confirmed addict.

50. The repressed sexuality in Poe's work, and the incestuous overtones of much of it, have received much critical attention which is not

47. Opium and the Romantic Imagination (London, 1968). Chapter VI is devoted to Poe, and is extremely interesting.

48. The narrator notes "an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the afterdream of the reveller upon opium". Cf. also Tale of the Ragged Mountains.

justified. Poe was never very successful with women, although his marriage appears to have been happy, and he was a popular figure at tea-parties where he had opportunity to display his brilliance. It is possible that his marriage to Virginia represented a desire to be admired and looked up to, rather than a need for an equal partner. Love, in his tales, always seems blighted with the shadow of the tomb, but it is false to attribute this to the death of Virginia since most of Poe's notable works such as Ligeia and Berenice had appeared before her decease. I do not agree with Praz when he states:-

The sight of his mother dying of consumption when Poe was hardly three years old, could not fail to leave in the child an indelible impression which later transposed itself into the figures of Berenice, Morella, Eleanora, Ligeia.⁴⁹

This fascination with death is probably Poe's own view of what was, after all, an established literary convention when he was writing; perfectly explicit in the works of the Romantics, particularly Keats. The whole question awaits the work of some future researcher, skilled in the unravelling of psychological enigmas; and I am not convinced that such research would materially add to our judgement of Poe's work.

51. In the end, we must view Edgar Allan Poe as a highly original, intelligent and astute author, possessed of a perfervid imagination, occasionally naive, given to melancholy and occasional dissipation, often seeking refuge in his own mind. It is fashionable to consider him truly great; he has been likened to Goethe, and G.T. Bettany⁵⁰ is disinclined to deny him genius, but Michael Allen⁵¹ is probably nearest the mark when he likens him to De Quincey. He was an innovator, and worked with the short story when this potent form was still in its infancy. He is undoubtedly one of the greatest writers of short stories that ever lived, and succeeded

49. Praz, op. cit., I, 27.

50. G.T. Bettany, Introduction to Tales of Mystery and Imagination, Minerva Edition (London, 1890).

51. Op. cit., Conclusion.

with a wide variety of subjects within this form. If he was not quite a genius, at least his accomplishment was enough to dominate the horror genre throughout the rest of the nineteenth century and influence its course well into the twentieth.

CHAPTER NINE

CHAPTER IX

ENGLAND: FROM SCOTT TO STOKER

1. I have endeavoured to show how Poe and Hawthorne together dominated nineteenth-century American literature. Their imitators were many: Hawthorne's allegorical method and the obsessive monologues of Poe were taken over by many lesser writers. Ambrose Bierce is one of the most notable, but the best of his fiction centres on the Civil War; his horror tales are occasionally powerful (as in The Middle Toe of the Right Foot, The Suitable Surroundings and The Damned Thing, not forgetting the uncanny Moxon's Master¹). His bitter cynicism, which made him many enemies, seems to pervade his written work, and is especially evident in The Devil's Dictionary. Despite his originality, I cannot include him here, where "landmarks" have to be considered.

2. The case in England is very different. Between the publication in 1820 of Melmoth the Wanderer and the appearance of Dracula in 1897, no authors emerged, as in America, to dominate the genre. This is not to suggest that the horror-tale lapsed: on the contrary, many works of great merit were produced, which elevated the genre to a hitherto unknown level of sophistication. But the genre was not materially affected by any single author. Instead, we find a gradual elaboration of certain important constituents of the Gothic novel, and the introduction of an entirely new theme. The Gothic traits to be continued were the devil compact and the persecuted heroine. At the same time, the psychology of evil, hinted at in Maturin and explicit in Hawthorne and Poe, was to evolve still further, making an interesting appearance in Hogg's Confessions of a Justified Sinner (1824)

1. The only significant work to derive from Mary Shelley's Frankenstein.

and reaching its apex in the works of Stevenson, notably Markheim (1887), written a year after the brilliant Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, which gave the dualistic nature of man a completely new emphasis by splitting the character into separate identities — which Poe had attempted in William Wilson, in 1839. The new theme was that of vampirism, first given literary substance by Byron, although it is closely allied with the fatal woman we find in Geraldine, as painted by Coleridge. From there, the theme mingles with the residuum from the Gothic period, gradually fusing into a literary pattern which has its climax in Dracula. The number of works which deserve consideration in this chapter is very great, but I shall restrict myself very severely to works falling within three categories, which form the remainder of the chapter. In the first section (paragraphs 3-6) I shall deal with general Gothic influences in the nineteenth century. In the second section (paragraphs 7-10), I shall examine the literary treatment of the devil-pact, as it appears in Scott and Le Fanu; and the final section will be concerned with the literature of vampirism, notably Dracula, which does not appear to have received any critical attention whatever and is relegated to the footnotes of most text-books on literature. This final section will occupy paragraphs 11 to 29.

3. The Gothic influences in the works of Sir Walter Scott must be mentioned. He was, as is widely known, a devotee of Radcliffe and the whole Gothic school, and his novels bear the unmistakable mark of this interest. His heroines, particularly, seem cast in the mould of Emily de St. Aubert; in addition, he uses other Gothic effects in his novels. In Guy Mannering (1815), there is doubt over Bertram's birth, and at the end, he takes over the title. In The Black Dwarf (1816), the disfigured Sir Edward Manley saves Grace Armstrong from robbers, and intervenes to prevent the marriage of Isabelle de Vere and Sir Frederick Langley, whom she dislikes. This is reminiscent of many Gothic romances, and is indeed

present in Radcliffe's first novel. In The Antiquary, Lovel is discovered to be the rightful heir of Glenallan; and the theme of interrupted nuptials occurs again in The Legend of Montrose (1819) where Menteith is stabbed during the ceremony which is to unite him with Annot Lyle, whose true birth is again in doubt. Lucy Ashton, in The Bride of Lammermoor (1819), is the archetype of the persecuted heroine, and Wolf's Crag recalls the castles and ruined abbeys in so much of Radcliffe. The brooding and hot-tempered Master of Ravenswood has his origins in Montoni. Ivanhoe, also published in 1819, is mediaeval in setting, like Clara Reeve's The Old English Baron. Both The Monastery and The Abbot (1820) explore the fortunes of the Avenel family at the time of Mary, Queen of Scots; in the first novel we find Halbert and Edward Glendinning vying for the hand of Mary Avenel, much as Valancourt and Du Pont sought the favours of Emily. The White Lady of Avenel is an interesting supernatural phenomenon, which is not explained away but allowed to achieve the status of a genuine ghost, more in keeping with the spectral appearances in The Monk than with those in earlier romances.² The Abbot mentions the mysterious heir of Avenel. The Pirate (1821) is set in the Shetlands, and has an exciting shipwreck, a feature of much of Radcliffe's work, while in Kenilworth (1821) the person of Amy Robsart supplies us with one of the most vivid and powerful examples of the persecuted heroine in Scott; she dies miserably after a contrived and unwelcome marriage to the earl of Leicester. The midnight wedding in Melmoth the Wanderer is reflected in St Ronan's Well (1823), where Clara Mowbry is married to a man she both fears and hates. Peveril of the Peak, also published in 1823, has a Manx setting: here we find Alice Bridgworth betrayed by Edward Christian, and threatened with the licentious attentions of the nobility. Unwelcome marriage also occurs

2. Scott was delighted when M.G. Lewis visited Edinburgh, and rated The Monk very highly.

in Quentin Durward (1823) where Isabelle de Croye is forced to wed Campo-Basso; and a similar idea is found in The Betrothed (1825), in which Eveline Berenger is finally freed from her vows to de Lacy³ to wed her sweetheart Damian. The Talisman (1825) centres round another mysterious birth — Sir Kenneth — who turns out to be Prince David of Scotland, and is thereby entitled to marry the woman he loves, a common enough Gothic condition. In Woodstock (1826), there is an interesting reflection of the surnaturel expliqué of Radcliffe, as the Royalists "play at ghosts" in the old mansion to ward off possible intruders. This scanty outline of Gothic effects in Scott will show that the ethos of the old romances still survived into the nineteenth century, as did the technique of historical distancing — a technique which Scott refined very considerably, taking Scotland as his subject, and giving considerable attention to historical accuracy of detail, which was unimportant to Radcliffe. Most important, we see that the Gothic morality has survived, with its emphasis on rank, fitness and decorum. There is suffering portrayed in the novels of Scott, but there is almost always a just retribution for the malefactors.

4. The ethos of the Gothic school survived in other works in the nineteenth century. Melville's Moby Dick (1851) continues the allegorical method laid down by Hawthorne, and the psychological insight practised by Poe. The general tenor of much of Hawthorne's work is seen in Dostoievsky's Crime and Punishment (1866). The theme of the persecuted maiden is found, with interesting variations, in Victor Hugo's Notre Dame de Paris (1831). In English, the person of Amy in Little Dorrit (1857) is akin to the redemptive heroines of Radcliffe, and her selfless attention to her father is reminiscent of the devotion of Emily de St. Aubert, or even Immalee.

3. Cf. de Lacy, the blind man in Frankenstein.

Great Expectations (1861) depicts the eerie encounter between Magwitch and the hero, and the pathetic figure of Miss Havisham, entombed alone with her memories after her desertion on the eve of her wedding. Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights (1847) contains a number of purely Gothic effects. Heathcliff — of unknown birth and elemental temperament — is one of the most vivid and terrifying figures in our literature, and a refinement of the Gothic and Byronic villains, tempered with a certain sultry humanity. The undercurrent of hatred and revenge, perfectly set in the wild Yorkshire moors, gives the book extraordinary power. Despite the English setting, and the peculiar form of narration by the genteel housekeeper, this novel has no more to do with England than Radcliffe's Italian has to do with Italy. Brontë, like Radcliffe before her, has created a twilight world, full of gloom and terror, in which the characters find themselves propelled and manipulated by forces beyond their control. The exact details of the geographical location are interesting but unimportant: the novel transcends the region in which it is set. This novel is one of the most interesting examples of the merging of Gothic material into the body of a work which is, after all, not directly in the Gothic tradition.

5. Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre (1847) also contains several Gothic motifs. The incarcerated wife of Rochester is an obvious example bringing to mind the fate of the first Marchioness of Mazzini in A Sicilian Romance, and her presence, as in Radcliffe's novel, causes strange sounds which frighten the hearers, especially Jane, who hears the sound of a mysterious person outside the door of her room. Indeed, Thornfield Hall at night has much the same effect on Jane as Udolpho has on Emily. Rochester, a man of the world, with a commanding and rather grim presence, retains the external characteristics of Montoni or Melmoth, as well as a handsome appearance tempered with Byronic aloofness. In this novel, Jane fulfils the role of

the redemptive heroine, and her supernaturally inspired impulse to go to Thornfield at the end of the novel could almost have been taken verbatim from a Gothic novel. George Eliot's Romola (1863) has, like many Gothic novels, a mediaeval setting, and the tribulations of Romola herself are in line with those of Radcliffe's heroines. Perfidy is supplied by Tito Melema, who, in forcing Tessa to undergo a mock wedding, reminds us of similar episodes in Melmoth the Wanderer, St Ronan's Well and Quentin Durward. Romola's attitude of noble self-sacrifice is typical of the works which came before. Adam Bede (1859) is strikingly similar in many respects to Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter, published a few years earlier. Hetty (cf. Hester) is seduced by Arthur Donnithorne (cf. Arthur Dimmesdale), becomes pregnant and is forced to flee. Eventually, after much sorrow, she is transported for the murder of her child. This theme of persecution survives, in the English novel, up to Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles (1891), which has the significant title appended, A Pure Woman. Once again we find the death of an illegitimate child. Tess is abandoned by Angel Clare and returns to her seducer, whom she eventually murders for the sake of Clare, who is willing to take her back. She is convicted and hanged; her purity has brought her only misery. The underlying ideas here are probably closer to Sade than to Radcliffe and Scott, but the theme of the persecuted maiden is one aspect of the Gothic school which remained a potent influence in English literature for the whole of the nineteenth century.

6. This brief summary will suffice to indicate the general fact that "Gothic" did not end, conclusively, with Maturin, but that the underlying values and many of the special effects lingered on, perfusing the literary mainstream, and metamorphosing as they became incorporated with the literary tradition. It is wrong to regard the Gothic period as an isolated phenomenon. Quite apart from the fact that no new literary move-

ment can exist in isolation, it may be seen that Gothicism set up a wave which reached literature in English, French and German almost immediately, and the ripples of which were still felt eighty years after the publication of Melmoth the Wanderer.

7. The devil pact occurs in several works of literature, its first notable appearance being in Marlowe's Doctor Faustus (ca. 1588), based on German material centred round one Johannes Faustus, who studied at Wittenberg in the early sixteenth century. The theme is, not surprisingly, absent from the works of Radcliffe, but is found again in The Monk and is at the core of Melmoth the Wanderer. Redgauntlet (1824) contains one of Scott's most masterly pieces of writing, Wandering Willie's Tale. Related by the blind fiddler in Scots dialect, this narrative is constructed with great artistry, and has a direct, homely power which raises it above the stylized and literary writings of Lewis and Maturin, with their elaborate and exotic accounts, abounding in metaphor. Steenie's blunt common-sense and capacity for clear thought — typical Scottish characteristics — save him from damnation, and give a flavour of authenticity to the plot:

... that put Steenie mair and mair on his guard. So he spoke up like a man, and said he came neither to eat, or drink, or make minstrelsy; but simply for his ain — to ken what was come o' the money he had paid, and to get a discharge for it ...

The jackanape, the constant companion of the old Sir Redgauntlet, is aptly called Major Weir, a reference to the hypocritical Puritan leader of that name who was executed in Edinburgh on Monday, 11 April, 1670, in his seventieth year, after confessing his crimes in an outbreak of remorse and contrition, and described by Scott as a "celebrated wizard".⁴ Steenie's

4. This is inaccurate. His sister Jean was hanged the following day for witchcraft and incest, but Thomas Weir died by strangling, and his remains were afterwards interred in Whitefriars Church. These two circumstances preclude the possibility that he was a wizard. He was in fact indicted for adultery, incest, fornication and bestiality.

journey to the phantom castle of Redgauntlet, and his quest for the receipt, make exciting reading; and certain details such as the white-hot chanter he is given to play are frightening to read. The powerful imagination of the plot and the prosaic motivation of the chief character contrast strangely. The story is short, but one of the best of its kind.

8. Sheridan Le Fanu's tale, Sir Dominick's Bargain (1872), is subtitled A Legend of Dunoran and is set as firmly in rural Ireland as Redgauntlet is in Scotland. The tale opens with a description of a Gothic setting: the rocks are "time-worn and lichen-stained"; there are walls, ruined now, and "mantled here and there with ivy"; and the traveller is surprised by the sudden view of an "old ruined house". This is the house of Dunoran. There, while walking in the ruin, the traveller meets the hunchback who tells him the tale of Sir Dominick Sarsfield and his untimely death.

9. Sir Dominick, in desperate need of money, is contemplating suicide when he is approached by a handsome stranger with the attractive offer of ample funds for seven years, after which Sir Dominick's soul must be rendered up. The nobleman agrees, and is told that the agreement will be ratified after the lapse of eight months and twenty-eight days. By the time this date arrives, Sir Dominick is again heavily in debt, and agrees to the bargain, making a blood pact. His business ventures thrive, and he is able to pay off all the debts, and only the fulfilment of the bargain fills him with fear. He visits the devil again, to find him in his true, terrifying shape, and returns home knowing that on the first of March, his life will be at an end. On the night of the twenty-eighth of February, he shuts himself in his room with a priest, and to his delight survives the night. A great celebration is planned, to which all his friends are invited. Just before midnight sounds, Sir Dominick is reminded that it is a leap year. The clock strikes, and the devil enters to

claim Sir Dominick.

10. This tale, narrated by the hunchback in an Irish brogue, is on a par with that of Scott. The second appearance of the devil in his true form is clearly drawn from the tradition of Doctor Faustus and The Monk. This meeting in the wood is chilling and dramatic:-

In place of looking the fine young gentleman in goold lace and grand clothes he appeared before, he was now in rags, he looked twice the size he had been, and his face smutted with soot, and he had a murtherin' big steel hammer, as heavy as a half-hundred, with a handle a yard long, across his knees.

The awful revelation to Sir Dominick that his hour of danger is nigh, and not a day in the past, is handled skilfully in a few telling lines:-

... it was not far from the stroke of twelve when Sir Dominick, sitting at the head of the table, swears, "this is the best first of March I ever sat down with my friends."

"It ain't the first o' March," says Mr Hiffernan of Ballyvoreen. He was a scholar, and always kep' an almanack.

"What is it then?" says Sir Dominick, startin' up, and dhropping the ladle into the bowl, and starin' at him as if he had two heads.

"'Tis the twenty-ninth of February, leap year." says he. And just as he was talkin', the clock strikes twelve ...

Sir Dominick is lifted up by the devil, and his head smashed like an egg against the wall. A late visitor to the house sees two people walking from it, one of them in the likeness of Sir Dominick:-

... and they looked only like shadows; and as they passed him, he could not hear the sound of their feet ...

The tale is only a few pages in length, but Le Fanu is able to create an atmosphere of gloom and anticipation which holds the reader spellbound till the last page. Wisely, the tale is not protracted beyond the dénouement; the traveller tips the hunchback, thanks him for his story, and makes off into the dusk. Several incidental points in the narrative are strongly similar to the opening pages of Melmoth the Wanderer; Maturin and Le Fanu were both Irish. As with Scott's tale, the effect is obtained not merely from the action, but from the peculiarly regional way in which it is presented, as well as the interplay between the narrator and the events he describes. Sir Dominick is a typical Irish landowner of the

early nineteenth century, and Steenie in turn is a hard-working, canny Scot. In both tales, the narrator is a grandson of the actual witness of the incident — in Le Fanu's tale, Old Connor had been in a chair by the fireside when the devil had come to claim his just victim. Le Fanu's tale is an Irish version of Scott's, but even if it is not original in its concept, it is none the less an extremely fine story.

11. The rise of the vampire in nineteenth-century literature is one of the most interesting phenomena in the horror-genre, although vampirism itself is rooted in prehistory, as was briefly indicated in the opening chapter of this thesis. There are picturesque references in the Arabian Nights, and Summers⁵ has noted references to vampirism in poems by August Ossenfelder and Wieland, but it was Goethe's Die Braut von Korinth, derived from Phlegon, and Leonore (1773) by Bürger, which most firmly established the vampire in literature. Bürger's ballad was not translated into English until about 1796. The vampire is absent from the pages of Radcliffe, as might be expected, but is not to be found in Lewis or Maturin, who revelled in almost every other form of horror. Coleridge made oblique references to vampirism in his Christabel (1797) although there are difficulties of interpretation involved. Sade's Justine and Juliette, published in the last years of the eighteenth century, both contain scenes of perverse blood-letting, but this is very much on the periphery of the vampire tradition in literature and need not be discussed here.

12. On April 1, 1819, there appeared in the New Monthly Magazine a story entitled The Vampyre: a Tale by Lord Byron. In retrospect, the date of publication is amusingly apt, for the tale was in fact the work of John William Polidori, M.D., who was Byron's physician and travelled

5. Montague Summers, The Vampire, his Kith and Kin: see Chapter V, "The Vampire in Literature."

with him to Italy, and who was present at Coligny when Frankenstein was planned. The tale was based on a fragment which Byron had started but never completed. As Polidori stated:-

... a noble author having determined to descend from his lofty range, gave up a few hours to a tale of terror, and wrote the fragment published at the end of Mazeppa ...⁶

This first vampire tale is related in a very restrained fashion, which is hardly surprising, since Polidori himself said, à propos of his novel Ernestus Berchtold (1819), "A tale that rests upon improbabilities, must generally disgust a rational mind."

13. The tale centres round Mr Aubrey, a young gentleman left alone in the world but for a sister, who meets a certain Lord Ruthven, and is fascinated by him and by the "dead grey" of his eyes, which seem to detest every happiness. Aubrey goes to the continent with him, to find that Ruthven spreads shame, terror and misery wherever he goes. In Greece, Aubrey falls in love with the beautiful Ianthe, who tells him stories about vampirism which chill his blood. She herself falls victim to a vampire, and Aubrey grapples with the monster as it escapes. Shortly afterwards, Ruthven is injured by a bullet, and soon is on the point of death. He forces Aubrey to swear to keep silence about him for a year and a day. Aubrey agrees, and after the death of Lord Ruthven, he returns to London. To his horror, he finds Ruthven there, and hears a whisper, reminding him of his oath of silence. Falling ill with nervous strain, he is confined to bed and while in a dangerous state of health, hears that his sister is to be married. When he asks the name of the bridegroom, he is horrified to hear the name of Lord Ruthven. Knowing that his oath will expire the following day, he begs for the wedding to be postponed. Dragging himself from his bed, he finds Lord Ruthven in the house, and in an agony of emotion, has a fatal attack. Before he dies, he warns the

6. Ernestus Berchtold (1819), Introduction.

servants, who rush to the room occupied by the sister to find Ruthven gone, while she lies there, having "glutted the thirst of a Vampire!"

14. Because of the close association with Byron, the tale had an immediate success; many reprints and imitations were quickly available, while Nodier's Le Vampire, based on the novel, enjoyed huge success in Paris the following year. Summers⁷ gives a detailed account of all the various prose and dramatic versions of the novel. This work is set firmly in the Gothic mainstream. Ruthven is rather a Byronic villain, and Aubrey's sister, with Ianthe, are beautiful heroines, cruelly persecuted by the dreadful creature from beyond the grave. Polidori at least avoids the pitfalls of a happy ending, and he leaves the reader wondering when and how Ruthven will strike next. There is a minimum of description of blood and gore. The Vampyre must be likened to The Castle of Otranto; it is not, in itself, an outstanding work, but it laid the foundations for a new and terrifying kind of horror-tale.

15. Thomas Preskett Prest was an extremely prolific writer of the mid-nineteenth century, most of whose tales were "shockers" of the most blatant kind. It has been estimated that he wrote at least two hundred books, yet he is almost entirely unknown today, apart from his Sweeney Todd: the Demon Barber of Fleet Street, and Varney the Vampire, or, The Feast of Blood. The latter book was published in 1847, and appeared again, in parts, during 1853. It is a massive book, containing two hundred and ten chapters which extend to almost one thousand pages (it is an extremely rare book). The following extract, drawn from the opening chapter, contrasts very strongly with the restrained style of Polidori, and with the subtleties of Le Fanu and Stoker who were to perfect this branch of the genre:-

The solemn tones of the old cathedral clock have announced midnight —

7. Summers, op.cit., V, passim.

the air is thick and heavy—a strange death-like stillness pervades all nature. All is still as the very grave. Not a sound breaks the magic of repose ...

There is an antique chamber in an ancient house. Curious and quaint carvings adorn the walls ... The window is latticed, and filled with curiously painted glass and rich stained pieces, which send in a strange, yet beautiful light ...

The bed in that old chamber is occupied. A creature formed in all fashions of loveliness lies in a half sleep upon that ancient couch—a girl young and beautiful as a spring morning ...

A tall figure is standing on the ledge immediately outside the window. It is its fingernails upon the glass that produce the sound so like the hail, now that the hail has ceased ... she tries to move—each limb seems wedged down by tons of lead—she can but in a hoarse faint whisper cry—

"Help—help—help—help!"

And that one word she repeats like a person in a dream. The red glare of the fire continues. It throws up the tall gaunt figure in relief against the long window. It shows, too, upon the one portrait that is in the chamber, and that portrait appears to fix its eyes upon the attempting intruder, while the flickering light from the fire makes it look fearfully lifelike ...

The figure turns half round, and the light falls upon the face. It is perfectly white, perfectly bloodless. The eyes look like polished tin; the lips are drawn back, and the principal feature next to those dreadful eyes is the teeth—the fearful looking teeth—projecting like those of some wild animal, hideously, glaringly white, and fang-like. It approaches the bed with a strange, gliding movement ...

... With a plunge, he seizes her neck in his fang-like teeth—a gush of blood, and a hideous sucking noise follows. The girl has swooned, and the vampire is at his hideous repast!

It cannot be denied that there is a certain power in Prest's description of the vampire; and his style, though ornate and repetitive, has a certain primitive compulsion. The description of the window is very similar to that in The Eve of St Agnes, by Keats; the girl is a typical Gothic heroine; the portrait is similar to that in The Castle of Otranto or Melmoth the Wanderer; the eyes of the vampire are like those of Lord Ruthven. But the gross detail very soon cloy, and the entire chapter has an element of sexual sadism which is rather unhealthy. Prest's novel is, however, the best example of the "penny dreadful" which gained such popularity in the nineteenth century, and it is far better than most. The works by Le Fanu and Stoker which will be considered next stand out all the more strongly in relief.

16. Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu is now chiefly remembered for his

novel Uncle Silas (1864), and his masterly tale The House by the Churchyard (1861-1862) as well as Sir Dominick's Bargain already mentioned. In 1872, he produced Carmilla, a vampire tale which, for the first time, takes Eastern Europe as its setting, and introduces many of the ideas which were to be elaborated later by Stoker.

17. Laura lives with her father and a governess in a pleasant Schloss in Styria (Steiermark, Austria), surrounded by beautiful scenery, close by the picturesque ruins of the village and castle of Karnstein. When only six years old, young Laura had experienced a curious dream in which she had seemed to see a beautiful young girl kneeling by her in the bed, and caressing her. This had been interrupted by a most unpleasant sensation, like two sharp needles running into her breast. The servants had found a warm hollow on the bed, but no sign of an intruder. The room was exorcised, and the incident has faded to a dim memory.

News is received that General Spielsdorf, a close neighbour, has lost his only daughter; he writes of the "fiend who betrayed our infatuated hospitality", but gives no clue as to details. Later that day, a coach is upset outside the castle, and a young girl is thrown clear. Her guardian, an evil-looking old woman, gives the girl into the charge of Laura's father and, once the coach is righted, drives on without any explanation. To Laura's surprise, the newcomer is identical to the strange visitor in her dream of childhood. Carmilla, as she is called, is very reticent about her background, but seems strangely drawn to Laura, who soon feels a strong attraction to her new friend, tempered with a curious nausea. Shortly afterwards, several deaths are reported in the area, and blamed on the visitations of the oupire or vampire. The sound of the music accompanying a funeral procession affects Carmilla very badly. A hunchback visits the castle, offering charms against the oupire, noting, at the same time, Carmilla's teeth: "Long, thin, pointed, like an awl, like a needle — ha, ha!"

The following day a portrait arrives at the castle, having been cleaned. It depicts Mircalla, Countess of Karnstein, to whom Laura is related. The portrait, painted in 1698, is an exact likeness to Carmilla who, it seems, is also related to the Karnstein family. The next night, Laura has a ghastly dream in which a "sooty-black" animal creeps over her body until she feels the pain of two needles in her breast. The voice of her dead mother intervenes with a warning, and Laura awakes to see Carmilla at the foot of the bed. Carmilla's room is found to be empty, but in the morning she appears and explains that she suffers from sleep-walking. A doctor is called to attend Laura, who seems anaemic, and he speaks some words to her father which cause him concern. General Spielsdorf arrives soon after, and as they ride to the Castle of Karnstein, he explains what happened to his daughter, Bertha. Apart from the fact that the guest was called Millarca, and had been caught in flagrante delicto, the case is identical to that of Laura and Carmilla. His researches have proved that his guest was indeed Mircalla, Countess of Karnstein, a known vampire.

Carmilla appears on the scene, recognises the General, and disappears. The tomb is opened, and the fresh body of the anagrammatic Carmilla is found inside, floating in blood to a depth of seven inches. A sharp stake is driven through her heart, and the corpse utters a piercing scream. The body is then burned, and the story concludes with a few antiquarian notes about vampires in general, and the happy news that Laura made a full recovery.

18. The story is clumsy in places, yet it is extremely readable, and the suspense builds up in a most satisfying manner. There are no unnecessary characters, and no elaboration of the plot. Vampirism is not mentioned until the very end of the tale; though the innuendo becomes more and more forceful, and is augmented by the fact that Laura and her father

appear unaware of the threat to Laura's life. The gruesome description of the death of Carmilla is all the more terrible after the restraint earlier in the story. The details which surround the killing of the vampire are Eastern European in origin and are substantially accurate. Although Le Fanu does not say so, and although his biographer,⁸ regretably, has nothing to say on the subject, it is almost certain that his source was Calmet.⁹ There is no Gothic villain in this tale, and none of the usual stage-effects of haunted castles and subterranean vaults. The villain is Carmilla, who for the first time introduces a lesbian and incestuous relationship into the pages of horror-fiction, and who yet has many of the attributes of the Fatal Woman described elsewhere in this thesis. Typically, Laura's reaction is one of mixed attraction and loathing, which is universal in vampire lore. The historical distancing effect is used here: the tale opens with a short prologue to the effect

8. P.M. Ellis, Wilkie Collins, Le Fanu and Others (London, 1951).

9. Don Augustin Calmet, Dissertation sur les Apparitions des Anges, des Démons et des Esprits, et sur les Revenants et Vampires de Hongrie, de Bohême, de Moravie et de Silésie, 2 vols. (Paris 1746). This work was translated into English in 1759. Among other incidents, it relates the tale of Arnold Paole, a native of the village of Medreĭga, in Hungary, who died of suffocation after being trapped under a fallen cart of hay. He was buried in 1731. Shortly after his death, four people in the village died after claiming to have been visited by the dead man. Forty days after burial, the body was exhumed and found to be in a state of perfect health. He was staked and burned. In the weeks which followed, seventeen other people suffered from the visitations of vampires, some of whom had been buried for long periods, as much in some cases as one hundred days. They all had to be destroyed. The whole affair was supervised by the district governor of the area, or Hadnagy, as well as military authorities including three qualified surgeons, Flickinger, Siedel and Baumgartner, who submitted a signed report to the Imperial Council of War in Vienna on January 7th, 1732. The report concluded that vampirism was proven. This case is quoted by Polidori in the Introduction to The Vampyre, and there does not seem to be any scientific evidence to explain what exactly happened at Medreĭga.

that the story is contained in certain papers, and has been the subject of a learned treatise, but this is unconvincing and would have been better omitted.

19. Laura is quite in keeping with the heroines of Radcliffe and Scott. She is insipid, and one cannot help feeling that she is simply a lay figure to be threatened by Carmilla. Unlike Antonia and Immalee, she is spared death. Carmilla quite definitely dominates the tale; she is a threatening figure, and the obvious connexion between the needles in Laura's dream and the description of her teeth given by the hunchback is quite sufficient to show us how the tale will develop. Le Fanu must have read Don Calmet fairly thoroughly, and he does not present vampirism as an illusion. Certainly the European setting is entirely in keeping with history, and Le Fanu must go down as the first author to depict the vampire in its native environment.¹⁰ In doing so, he laid the foundation for Bram Stoker's Dracula.

20. Bram Stoker's most famous novel, Dracula, a Tale, was published in May, 1897, and a legend was born.¹¹ Count Dracula, like Frankenstein, is a household word, but the incredible distortions of the filmmakers have seriously spoiled the reputation of what is, beyond a doubt, the most masterly horror-story in the whole history of the genre. Like Maturin and Le Fanu, Stoker was Irish; he was Henry Irving's right-hand man, and helped him found the Lyceum Theatre in London, after the early days in Dublin. Although he wrote several other novels and short stories, Dracula remains his best work, the more surprising since it was his first novel. From Carmilla, published twenty-five years before, Stoker was inspired by the idea of an eastern European setting, and his subsequent research into vampirism naturally led him to the cradle of such beliefs — Transylvania and Walachia, now united in Romania. A great deal of the detail in the novel is based on historical fact, including the person of

10. See also Montague Summers, The Vampire in Europe (1929).

11. See Appendix II.

Dracula himself. Though Stoker had never visited Transylvania himself, he knew of it second-hand, through books and correspondence, and he was frequently amused and flattered to be complimented on the accuracy of his descriptions of Transylvania with which the novel opens and closes.

21. Jonathan Harker, a solicitor's clerk, has been sent to Transylvania to negotiate the purchase of an estate at Carfax, England, with a certain Count Dracula, of whom he knows nothing. In his journal, Harker describes his journey through Munich, Vienna, Buda-Pesth, Klausenberg and Bistritz.¹² At Bistritz he finds that a room has been reserved for him by the Count, and a seat booked on the coach which will next day carry him to the Borgo Pass, leading to Bukovina, where he will be met by the Count. Harker is disturbed when he is begged by the landlord's wife not to go to the castle, and he accepts a rosary from her. The following day, he is given many such small gifts by his fellow passengers on the coach. It is night when they reach the Borgo Pass, and though the driver has been hastening, the Count's coach meets them, to the evident terror of everyone on board.

After a terrifying encounter with wolves, Harker is brought to the partly ruined castle where he is welcomed by Dracula, a tall thin man, dressed entirely in black, with a large white moustache. Harker notes that all is not as it should be. Despite his most careful observation, the Count is seen neither to eat nor to drink, and never appears during the day. His suspicions that there are no servants in the castle are also confirmed when he finds the Count laying the table for supper. Soon he discovers that he is a prisoner in the castle, surrounded by locked doors. He finds that the Count is not visible in mirrors, and refuses to have one in the castle. While resting one day in a portion of the castle he has been warned not to enter, Harker is attacked by three ghostly women who are

12. Now Cluj and Bistrița.

about to bite his neck when they are interrupted by the Count. Eventually, after an arduous climb down the castle wall, Harker makes his way to a chapel vault where he discovers the body of the Count in one of a number of packing cases, ready for shipment to England. Harker returns later and, wishing to destroy this evil thing which, unawares, he has helped in its quest, he seizes a spade to strike off its head. But the eyes open at the last second, and the blow merely glances from the forehead, leaving a deep gash. The following day he discovers that his papers and clothes have been taken away, yet he determines to escape. At this point his journal ends.

The scene now changes to Whitby, where we find Mina Murray, an assistant schoolmistress engaged to Harker and unaware of what has happened to him. There is an exchange of letters between Mina and her friend Lucy Westenra, who tells her of her various suitors. These include Quincey P. Morris, a Texan; Dr John Seward, a physician in charge of a large lunatic asylum nearby; and the Hon. Arthur Holmwood, later Lord Godalming. Arthur is the successful suitor, and the disappointed lovers promise to be good friends to Lucy and her husband-to-be. Through the medium of letters and phonograph recordings, we learn that Seward is disappointed — though absorbed with one of his patients, a zoophagous maniac by the name of Renfield, who feeds on flies.

Lucy takes to walking in her sleep during her stay with Mina at Whitby, and still Jonathan does not return. During their walks on the shore, they meet Mr Swales, a garrulous old man who tells them interesting stories about the tombs on the foreshore. Shortly afterwards, a violent storm drives a boat ashore at Whitby, the only survivor being, apparently, an immense dog which is seen to leap ashore. The only remaining member of the crew is dead, lashed to the wheel with a crucifix under his hand. The log of the ship shows her to be the Demeter from Varna, and it tells of the

panic which seized the crew as they realised that something supernatural was aboard, until finally they had either disappeared without reason, or deliberately jumped to their deaths in the sea. The boxes on board are taken into the care of a Whitby solicitor to whom they have been consigned, and it is seen now that the solicitor lives in the same street as Mina and her guest Lucy. The following day, the body of the sailor is buried. Old Swales is found dead, with a look of intense horror on his face.

Lucy sleep-walks again, and is found by Mina, with a red-eyed figure bending over her. On subsequent nights she attempts to get out of her room, and two small wounds are discovered on her neck. Seward is called in and diagnoses anaemia, but calls in his friend Abraham Van Helsing, who takes on the case. Seward also notices a sudden change in Renfield, who talks of his "Master" being at hand. Mina receives word that Jonathan is in Buda-Pesth, in hospital there after some dreadful ordeal which he cannot describe. She travels to him and they are married; he gives her his journal, and begs her not to read it.

Lucy, who is due to be married to Arthur in a month, becomes much worse, and each morning finds her weaker. Arthur eventually has to give her some of his own blood by transfusion. Van Helsing protects her with flowers of garlic, but Mrs Westenra foolishly removes them, and when they enter the room she is on the point of death. On the following night, Mrs Westenra sits up with Lucy, who describes in her journal how a wolf appears at the window, causing her mother to die of fright. The servants are drugged, and she has to spend the next night alone. When Arthur and Van Helsing see her on the following morning, her throat is mangled and she dies shortly afterwards; the wounds vanish shortly before her death, and her canine teeth seem to increase in length. Mina and Jonathan, unaware of this tragedy, come home, and on the way Harker notices the Count, who

seems much younger. Lucy is buried in Hampstead.

Shortly afterwards, small children are found in the churchyard, and tell of a "bloofer lady" who took them there. They all have slight throat wounds. Van Helsing, after reading Jonathan's journal, realises that Lucy is responsible; he visits the grave, and finds that the coffin is empty. The following day they return, and Lucy is found to be in the coffin, looking extremely healthy and well-nourished. Arthur is finally convinced of the necessity of destroying the body, and after the stake has been driven through the heart, the face regains its previous expression of tranquillity.

The friends decide to track down the boxes of earth, realising that Dracula plans to gain more victims and hide them there. Renfield is meanwhile found to have developed abnormally advanced powers of reasoning. Van Helsing gives the friends an account of vampire lore, and all swear to join in the search for the fiend who caused Lucy's death. Renfield is extremely anxious to be allowed out of the asylum. The friends find that Dracula has bought a house in Piccadilly, and go there to wait for him. Unsuccessful, they return, to find that Renfield has been brutally attacked in his cell. In his death agony, he says enough to make the friends realise that Dracula has been using his body as a refuge in order to be close to Mina. They find her in Dracula's arms; and he escapes, leaving Mina in a state of hysteria, because he has forced her to drink some of his blood. Van Helsing puts a piece of the Host on her forehead, but it burns her. They now realise that unless Dracula is finally destroyed, Mina will become nosferatu, like Lucy. In Carfax, they place a piece of the Host in each box, making it useless as a refuge for Dracula, and they almost corner him in Piccadilly, whence he escapes with a warning that time is on his side.

Mina discovers that, under hypnotism, she can tell where Dracula is.

The friends use this piece of good fortune to follow the Count back to Transylvania. Van Helsing goes with Mina to the Castle, and he places the Host in Dracula's tomb, rendering it uninhabitable. The rest of the friends finally catch up with the box which contains Dracula; it is in a cart drawn by ferocious gypsies in Dracula's employ. After a desperate struggle they succeed in wrenching the box from the cart and pulling open the lid. The sun has almost set, but even as Dracula's eyes open, they drive a knife through the heart, and the body crumbles to dust. Quincey Morris is fatally injured, but as he dies, he sees a vision of Mina, and realises that the mark has gone from her forehead, and that the curse has forever passed away.

22. The structure of the novel is unusual, and strangely effective. It opens with the journal of Harker, and continues with letters interchanged, personal diaries and journals, newspaper reports, medical documents and transcriptions of phonograph recordings. Within the framework of the twenty-seven chapters which make up the book, these forms of narration follow each other swiftly. In several places, the journal entries occupy many pages; elsewhere, they follow each other with break-neck rapidity. This device is borrowed from Wilkie Collins. Its effect is not, as might be imagined, to confuse the reader. Once the characters have been introduced and have become familiar, this technique allows Stoker to show the action to us through several different eyes, almost always in the first person. Thus it is easy to view the same event through the eyes of a number of characters, and to understand their feelings and emotions at all times. Stoker uses this method with the same skill as an experienced film director, with camera shots from various angles.

23. The balance and inner construction of the novel is very fine. It opens with a Transylvanian scene, where Harker is at the beginning,

blissfully unaware of the trials and terrors which are to come. This reaches a climax of sheer terror; it is almost certainly the most brilliant piece of sustained suspense in all the literature of the macabre. The novel closes with scenes around Dracula's castle, this time with the underlying sense of the necessity to struggle against time, for Mina's sake. Again, the climax of the story is almost unbearable. In the central chapters we find a smoothly developing narrative, in which the figures of Lucy, Mina, Jonathan, Seward, Quincey Morris, Arthur, Van Helsing and Renfield gradually fuse together in an absorbing and entirely convincing crescendo of suspense and horror. Renfield supplies a very clever sub-plot. In a sense, he is analogous to Dracula himself—he is zoophagous, and believes that by absorbing the live forces of living creatures he is prolonging his own life. The unpleasantness of eating flies pales to insignificance, later, with the reality of Dracula's attacks on Lucy and Mina. Renfield is concerned with progressively larger animals as Dracula's hold on him increases:-

"... rats! hundreds, thousands, millions of them, and every one a life; and dogs to eat them, and cats too. All lives! all red blood, with years of life in it; and not merely buzzing flies!

(XX, 249)

The obsession of Renfield is an exact parallel to that of Dracula: he is equally insane through his desire to prolong his life, and bring others to the dreadful state of vampirism. The sub-plot is, in fact, integral to the entire novel. The effect of the domestic scenes after the high adventure in Transylvania is one of almost intolerable bathos. Summers views this as a fault in the novel:-

So tense a strain could not be preserved, and consequently when we are abruptly transported to Whitby and the rather tedious courtships of Lucy Westenra, who is a lay figure at best, we feel that a good deal of the interest has already begun to evaporate.¹³

13. Summers, The Vampire, His Kith and Kin, V, 334.

I cannot agree with this judgement. While granting that Mina and Lucy are not strongly characterised, it is unfair to suggest that Stoker was not capable of prolonging the tension. Bathos can be a deadly and effective element of suspense, and by deflating the tension at this point, Stoker deftly brings the reader back to the reality of contemporary life; it is a transition from the horrible to the mundane and ordinary; it is the sudden hush after the scream of terror, which holds the suggestion of even more terrible menace. Here, Stoker is contrasting the twin worlds of normality and terror which are, as the novel progresses, to be so nightmarishly brought into conflict. Stoker is a master of climax and anticlimax, and, by careful use of innuendo, he never allows the interest to flag for an instant. We know, as the other characters do not, what has really happened to Jonathan in Transylvania; hence the significance of the twin wounds on Lucy's throat is all too obvious, while a nicely managed dramatic irony prevents Seward, Arthur and Van Helsing from guessing at the cause until it is too late. Similarly, the incident of the Demeter¹⁴ has more significance for the reader than the protagonists in the story. The way in which the reader, as well as the other characters, is kept in suspense as to the fate of Harker is another pointer to the fine dramatic touch which created the structure of the novel.

24. The characters in the novel are extremely interesting. There are no more than is strictly necessary, and they are all distinct personalities. Swales, the garrulous old man, serves his purpose with his slightly comic account of the graves in his strong accent. Bilder, the zoo-keeper, is a Cockney, and gives his account about the escaped wolf in

14. In mythology, the Roman Ceres. Her function was to bring grain to the inhabitants of the earth. After the death of her daughter, Persephone, the child was permitted to return to the world of the living for part of the year: possibly harvest-symbolism. The grain carried by the Demeter is the seed of vampirism; and the return is, literally, from the grave. I think the name of the ship was selected by Stoker with this myth in mind.

a thoroughly realistic and entertaining fashion. Quincey Morris is a stylized Texan, and his American accent, particularly in the courtship scene, adds an extra dimension to the face of the novel. Jonathan is rather an ordinary young man, and Mina is not outstanding — she, like Lucy, is more of a lay-figure to be submitted to the attention of Dracula, as Summers suggested. Seward is learned, well-meaning, but not very interesting as a person. Renfield, on the other hand, is all too credible. His madness, his cunning and his obsession are expertly detailed. Abraham Van Helsing comes close to dominating the novel. His accent is strong, his English is stilted and often inaccurate, but he is far from being a caricature. He is gentle by nature, deeply learned, courteous and lovable, and his desperate sincerity endears him to everyone:-

"God! God! God!" he said. "What have we done, what has this poor thing done, that we are so sore beset? Is there fate amongst us still, sent down from the pagan world of old, that such things must be, and in such a way? This poor mother, all unknowing, and all for the best as she think does such thing as lose her daughter body and soul; and we must not tell her, we must not even warn her, or she die, and then both die. Oh, how we are beset! How are all the powers of the devils against us!"

(XI, 124)

The choice of Van Helsing's Christian name was not accidental: Bram Stoker was christened Abraham — his father had the same name — and if the author identifies himself with anyone in the book, it is with this elderly professor who devotes himself so conscientiously to the welfare of his friends. Stoker himself corresponded with a member of Budapest University while preparing the manuscript of the novel, and Van Helsing is made to write to Buda-Pesth to his friend Arminius, for similar information. This leaves only Dracula to be considered as a character, and, oddly, he does not figure largely in the novel. At the beginning the description we have of him is unusual — tall, white-haired, sharp teeth, slightly pointed ears, foetid breath, finger-nails trimmed to a

sharp point, hairs in the centre of the palm, and abnormal physical strength. As the novel progresses, he appears younger — regains his vitality with the blood of his victims. At the zoo, Thomas Bilder notices a man who appears to disturb the wolf, and describes him as

"... a tall, thin chap with a 'ook nose and a pointed beard with a few white hairs runnin' through it. He had a 'ard, cold look, and red eyes ... he pointed out the animiles to me and says 'Keeper, these wolves seem upset at something.'

"'Maybe it's you', says I ... he smiled a kind of insolent smile, with a mouth full of sharp white teeth.

'Oh no, they wouldn't like me,' 'e says."

(XI, 127)

This little snatch of reported dialogue is quite sufficient to remind us of the Count's malignity, while his acts of violence against Lucy — though never witnessed — confirm his total evil. His philosophy is summed up in his contemptuous outburst against the friends after evading their clutches in Picadilly:-

"You think to baffle me, you — with your pale faces all in a row, like sheep in a butcher's. You shall be sorry yet, each one of you! My revenge is just begun. I spread it over centuries, and time is on my side."

(XXIII, 273)

His cunning and ingenuity are amply shown by his treatment of Jonathan in the Castle; his command over wolves, bats, rats and dogs illustrates his uncanny supernatural powers. He is one of the most terrifying figures in the pages of supernatural literature, and it is a tribute to Stoker's powers of characterisation that, after the first few chapters, there is no need to bring him directly into the story until close to the end — the knowledge of his presence is more than enough. He and Van Helsing are the chief protagonists in the novel, the symbols of simple goodness on one side, and the full satanic power of the Pit on the other.

25. In many respects the novel appears to follow the Gothic tradition, though in point of fact, Stoker knew little about the Gothic novels, and the Gothicism is purely accidental. Here we have the persecuted heroines, the shipwreck, the arch-villain, the castle, the pursuits,

the tears, the sensibility, the strength of moral rectitude faced with the ultimate in evil. Unwittingly, Stoker has accomplished what Walpole set out to do deliberately — to merge the old romances and the new. In The Castle of Otranto, this meant mediaeval superstition in conjunction with polite eighteenth-century morality. In this work, Mina and Lucy, safe in Whitby, represent the ideal Victorian society, involved in their pleasant domestic activities, their loves and hopes. Dracula represents all that is evil in the past, soaked in bloody legend and acts of barbarism. Stoker brought these two elements into direct and terrifying conflict, and this is what gives the novel its immense power. Gothicism and modernity are juxtaposed, and the former element is made to seem completely credible from the historical evidence we hear from Van Helsing and Dracula himself. To the readers in the gas-lit towns and cities of 1897, the impact was enormous, and the book was a phenomenal success. This novel falls directly into the line of the vampire novels which preceded it, and which Stoker had read — and it is infinitely better than any of them. It also fits into the Gothic tradition, despite the fact that Stoker never intended it to do so, and was surprised and gratified at the success of his first published work.

26. I have already mentioned Stoker's use of dramatic irony, but innuendo and oblique references also abound in the novel, and help create much of the tension. In his Journal, Harker notes that as he gets into the coach bound in the direction of the castle, he hears words signifying "hell", "witch", "vampire" and "werewolf". Not realising their significance, he makes a note: "Mem., I must ask the Count about these superstitions." Likewise, certain features of the Count's appearance make the reader uneasy, particularly the vulpine appearance with the hairs in the centre of the palm. Harker's failure to observe the Count in the shaving-mirror is even more disturbing. The first threat to Harker comes after

he has cut himself shaving:-

"When the Count saw my face, his eyes blazed with a sort of demoniac fury, and he suddenly made a grab at my throat. I drew away, and his hand touched the string of beads which held the crucifix. It made an instant change in him, for his fury passed so quickly that I could hardly believe that it was ever there.

'Take care,' he said, 'take care how you cut yourself. It is more dangerous than you think in this country.'" (my italics)

(II, 30)

Again, Seward's descriptions of Renfield, though couched in medical language, are — although no-one but the reader is able to realise it — equally applicable to Dracula himself. This is made explicit in Seward's almost idle comment: "I wonder at how many lives he values a man?" Mina's sight of the "great bat" flitting around Lucy's window recalls Harker's dreadful view of Dracula climbing down the castle wall "with his cloak spreading out around him like great wings", and Mina, back in Whitby, sees on Lucy's window-sill "something that looked like a good-sized bird". The howling of the dogs in Whitby reminds us — but not the innocent participants in the tale — of the various shocking experiences Harker has to undergo with the wolves in Transylvania. Van Helsing describes his ablest pupil, Seward, with the image of a seed of grain, developing to full promise; while the Demeter, as I have shown, brings a different and entirely horrible variation to bear on this metaphor. Blood plays an important part in the novel. The central issue is perhaps scriptural in origin — Anima enim omnis carnis in sanguine est: unde dixi filiis Israel: Sanguinem uniuersae carnis non comedetis, quia anima carnis in sanguine est: et quicumque comederit illum, interibit. Lucy absorbs the blood of several of her friends, thus placing herself in a "blood-relationship" with them, symbolising supreme sacrifice; Dracula consumes it, since the life of the body is in the blood, as Leviticus says. There is anticipation of the events in Whitby when we note, upon the Count's desk, a letter addressed to a solicitor there. It is with a shock that we realise, in the passage which Summers considers anticlimactic, that Mina lives in the

same street. One could cite several other instances of innuendo and subtle cross-reference in this novel; but those examples already quoted will suffice to show that in addition to the bare bones of the plot, there is a strong underlying current of allusion which makes the gradual unfolding of the action all the more exciting.

27. Despite the loathing which the characters in the tale very obviously feel for Dracula, Stoker himself remains discreetly in the background. But, through his characters, he does add one touch of the most extraordinary humanity which is unexpected and extremely moving. After Dracula has been exposed to the sun and pierced with the knife, his body crumbles to dust, as it abruptly reaches its true age:-

It was like a miracle; but before our very eyes, and almost in the drawing of a breath, the whole body crumbled into dust and passed from our sight.

And then Stoker, with what must surely be a stroke of genius, adds a brief paragraph:-

I shall be glad as long as I live that even in that moment of final dissolution there was in the face a look of peace, such as I never could have imagined might have rested there.

The effect of this humanity is one of the most impressive things about the novel. The death of Quincey at the end of the novel is thereby rendered all the more poignant: "And, to our bitter grief, with a smile and silence, he died, a gallant gentleman." Dracula is the only novel in the horror genre which ends on such a note. Death is the great leveller, and the two characters — good and evil — both meet their end in a state of contentment. In my opinion, these last pages are the finest of their kind ever written; in comparison, the concluding sections of The Monk and Melmoth the Wanderer are clumsy and crude.

28. Stoker's other work is of a markedly inferior quality. Only the novels The Lady of the Shroud and The Jewel of the Seven Stars¹⁵

15. Now filmed, and entitled (by some bizarre twist of the imagination) Blood of the Mummy's Tomb.

deserve mention. Of his short stories, The Squaw and The Judge's House rank as his best, though even they cannot stand comparison with his first, and greatest, work. The discrepancy is so marked that H.P. Lovecraft considered that Dracula might have been touched up by a superior hand.¹⁶ Ludlam, Stoker's biographer, has shown that this could not have been the case; the troubles which beset Stoker after the disastrous fire which destroyed the Lyceum Theatre unsettled him, and radically altered his life. Dracula simply happened: it is an experiment which succeeded brilliantly, and it is perhaps unfair to seek for reasons to explain Stoker's failure to live up to his early promise.

29. Dracula marks the end of this investigation, and is fittingly the last landmark of the nineteenth century. It was the first work to depict convincingly the sudden, terrifying eruption of an age-old terror from the fetters of the past to threaten modern ages. The Invisible Man by H.G. Wells was produced in the same year, and The War of the Worlds was published the following year. In both novels, the threat to the characters is based on scientific imagination — in one case the impact of a new drug; in the other, a visitation from another planet. His most prophetic novel, The First Men in the Moon, was published in the year of Victoria's death. Science fiction was now established; and there was no longer the same need to delve into the past to find the necessary horrors to send a chill down the spines of the readers. The Martians took the place of the gaunt, terrifying villains; and the new technological era was to oust the Gothic castle and the picturesque ruin from the prominent position they had held for so long. Dracula, therefore, a work of

16. Howard Phillips Lovecraft, in a letter to Frank Belknap Long, à propos of The Lair of the White Worm — one of Stoker's least successful tales — wrote on October 7th, 1923: "The plot idea is colossal, but the development is so childish that I cannot imagine how the thing ever got into print — unless on the reputation of Dracula ... either Dracula (Mrs Miniter saw Dracula in manuscript about thirty years ago. It was incredibly slovenly. She considered the job of revision, but/...

matchless power and originality, marks the watershed between the old era and the new: the end of a literary tradition which had endured for over a century.

...but charged too much for Stoker) and The Jewel of the Seven Stars were touched up Bushwork-fashion by a superior hand which arranged all the details, or that by the end of his life (he died in 1912, the year the Lair was published) he trickled out in a painful and inept senility."

CHAPTER TEN

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

1. The first purpose of this thesis has been to provide a critical review of the most significant works in the horror genre from The Castle of Otranto to Dracula. Several of them are well-known, while others are familiar enough names, but have not received the critical attention they deserve. For this reason, plot summaries have been included, and it is hoped that in the case of rarer works these will prove of value.

2. Secondly, I have been concerned with showing how the genre progressed from relative crudity to a level of remarkable sophistication. Although the Gothic novel per se ended with Melmoth the Wanderer, the spirit and ethos linger on as a strong influence on writers throughout the nineteenth century. The motif of the persecuted heroine is one of the most lasting influences in literature of this kind; the central image of the castle is another. Most critics are unwilling or unable to draw a clear line from the Gothic novel to Dracula, but are distracted by anomalous and brilliant authors such as Poe, and conclude that the diversification of the genre does not permit the validity of an approach to the entire nineteenth century in the light of the Gothic beginnings. One of the most interesting facts is that as the pure Gothic novel declined, the literature of vampirism took firmer root, and many Gothic traits were carried over and incorporated into the new works. I consider that there is a strong and largely unbroken horror-tradition in the period under review, with the eighteenth-century and Gothic ethos surviving

practically unaltered into even the later works such as Dracula. There is no case for regarding the Gothic impulse as an isolated literary phenomenon.

3. When one considers the amount of interest generated by the horror tale, it is surprising that so little serious critical attention has been paid to this branch of literature. Several reputable critics, as I have shown, have regarded the entire genre as in some way frivolous, and have dismissed it in a few phrases, some of which reveal lamentable ignorance of the genre as a whole. I find it impossible to share this view. Any branch of serious literature — particularly such an influential one, which has attracted the attention and interest of some of the most famous authors in our English heritage — deserves to be taken seriously: there is much here which is of real and lasting merit. In view of its admittedly sensational nature, it is important to differentiate between the nuggets and the dross.

4. It has been suggested that the novel of suspense or terror is a symptom of repressed sexuality, and that the bite of the vampire is a mixture of eroticism and sadism. It would be unwise to discount this theory entirely, but in my own opinion, it can be greatly over-stressed. Much of this kind of criticism is based on Freudian psychology, and it seems illogical to attribute motives and interpretations in retrospect, to psychoanalyse works of literature which pre-date psychoanalytical techniques. Surrealists, in particular, have been anxious to claim the Gothic novelists as their own. It appears to make more sense to approach the works in the spirit in which they were written. Amateur psychology is an intriguing pastime, but, when applied to literature, can lead to faulty and ludicrous conclusions.

5. As I remarked at the beginning of this thesis, horror is one of the oldest and most fundamental of emotions and, because of this, the

horror tale expresses something which is very close to each of us. Perhaps this branch of literature fulfils an inner need, now that external horror is to a large extent absent from our lives. The successful tale of terror allows us to purge our emotions by permitting us to identify empathically with the protagonists in the situations portrayed. Like Rappaccini's garden, the horror genre contains many terrible and exotic blooms, laid down by some of the most ingenious minds of all time. Like Giovanni, we feel their fascination, and experience that paradoxical attraction and repulsion which is, after all, part and parcel of the mingled web of our emotions and which, in the end, defies analysis.

A P P E N D I C E S

Appendix One

Some Major Critics in the Field of the Horror Genre — A Critique

In the course of this thesis, I have made reference to several authors who have produced significant works of criticism in the field of literary horror. It will be of value to examine and evaluate their work, particularly in the case of that anomalous figure, Montague Summers.

1. EDITH BIRKHEAD: The Tale of Terror, a Study of the Gothic Romance (London, 1921)

This work is interesting, but lacking in real depth analysis. She draws many useful parallels, and cites many telling comparisons which, in some cases, anticipate the work of Praz (q.v.). But the material is superficial; she does not do justice to Poe, and the work is seriously flawed by the lack of a bibliography. This book must now be regarded as little better than interesting background reading, and is very much out of date.

2. MARIO PRAZ: The Romantic Agony (Oxford, 1933)

It is very difficult to evaluate this work. Professor Praz is obviously extremely learned and, in the revised edition, the book is replete with impressive notes and addenda. As far as the horror genre is concerned, the relevance of The Romantic Agony is occasional and peripheral. On the whole, it is a study of *algolagnia* or Schadenfreude in literature, and within this narrow limit must be regarded as definitive. One of the most attractive features of the book is its scope — it draws its sources

from Latin, Greek, French, German and Italian and presents an extremely absorbing synthesis under the general headings into which the book is divided. As far as I am able to judge, the views of the author are perfectly sound, and backed up with an impressive corpus of evidence. The work is therefore an extremely valuable source, and mandatory reading for the researcher in horror and allied fields.

3. EINO RAILO: The Haunted Castle: a Study of the Elements of English Romanticism (London, 1927)

This book is disappointing because of its unequal quality. Railo discusses the horror genre under a number of headings, which are summarised at the beginning, and devotes a great deal of space to Lewis. Although a vast range of material is covered, the detail is occasionally scanty and unsatisfying. The chief defect of the work, and one which almost completely invalidates it, is the lack of bibliography and index. Railo has many interesting points, and several passages which are of great value, but these are difficult to find and reference is impossible. A revised edition, with essential appendices, would be considerably more useful.

4. AUGUSTUS JOSEPH-MARY MONTAGUE SUMMERS: A Gothic Bibliography (London, 1941); The Vampire, His Kith and Kin (London, 1928); The Vampire in Europe (London, 1929); The History of Witchcraft and Demonology (London, 1926)

The works of Montague Summers present the critic with an enigma, which stems largely from the character of the man himself. He called himself "Father" Montague Summers, and claims to have taken Holy Orders, though there is no evidence of this unless one accepts the possibility of ordination by a schismatic bishop, perhaps on the Continent. Although his works claim to present the orthodox Catholic view of such phenomena

as witchcraft and vampirism, they do not carry the imprimatur, and have been widely criticised, not without reason. It cannot be denied that he was very deeply learned in theology, and his works are scholarly, methodical, detailed and painstaking. His major work of scholarship in the horror field is A Gothic Bibliography, which is a veritable mine of information, and unlikely ever to be bettered. Summers has catalogued every work of fiction which falls into the Gothic school; some exist only in a unique copy. It is when he turns to supernatural phenomena that great care must be taken in interpreting his work. In The History of Witchcraft and Demonology he interprets the known facts in a way which he imagines is orthodox, but which is in fact almost entirely mediaeval. His facts are well ordered, his bibliography is vast; his sources and references are beyond reproach, his command of scripture cannot be faulted, and his reading of obscure authors in several languages is most praiseworthy. With such masterly command of the subject, it is unfortunate that the quality of his exegesis is unsound. For those who disagree with his views, he reserves the most unacademic scorn:-

Even the ultra-cautious — I had almost said sceptical — Father Thurston acknowledges ... (II,63)

It may be noticed, too, how many of the names which Miss Murray has catalogued in such conscientious and alas! impertinent detail are those of well-known saints ... (I,41)

Such banal ramblings would provoke a smile, were it not for the pity that any person can be so self-deluded ... (VI,265)

At the same time, he accepts without question the authority of standard Catholic authors:-

S. Jerome, whose authority would, of course, be entirely conclusive ... (V,179)

Summers even accepts the views of Kramer and Sprenger, co-authors of the Malleus Maleficarum, one of the most evil and misleading books ever written, which sent thousands of innocent men and women to horrible deaths, and which is clearly the work of fanatical and diseased minds. This is

because it received the approval of Innocent VIII who is ipso facto infallible — at least in Summers' eyes. I have enormous respect for the scholarship of Summers, but I cannot always accept the interpretation he puts on his facts. The exception is his chapter on the witch in literature — an absorbing essay which is extremely valuable because it does not rest on dogma. He also produced two works on vampirism, The Vampire, His Kith and Kin and The Vampire in Europe. The former contains a scholarly chapter on the vampire in literature which is essential reading for the researcher in the field. These books are documented with great care, and contain the same massive bibliographies which characterise his other works. I believe these two works to be definitive. If the personal opinions of this most remarkable author can be left aside, the volume of sheer factual information is most useful.

5. J.M.S. TOMPKINS: The Popular Novel in England, 1770-1800 (London, 1932)

This is a very sound work of criticism, covering a brief span of literary history in considerable depth. Apart from the fact that Dr Tompkins does less than justice to Lewis, the work is of great merit. Naturally, Gothic novels only form a very small part of the literary scene which Tompkins is examining, and for the purposes of this thesis the work has been most useful for background.

6. DEVENDRA P. VARMA: The Gothic Flame (London, 1957)

I have referred to Varma's book frequently in the course of this thesis, and have found it most valuable. The book has a useful and comprehensive bibliography and an adequate index. Varma deals in great detail with Radcliffe, Lewis and Maturin, but after this the work loses much of its impetus; the concluding chapters seem to be lacking in force, and strike one more as a collection of odd facts rather than a reasoned exposition of later elements of Gothic romanticism. Dracula is mentioned

only briefly and in passing. There are one or two factual errors, which are of little importance. Varma occasionally quotes without citing references, which can be irritating, and his description of the classic symptoms of vampirism is taken directly from the closing pages of Carmilla, without acknowledgement. For the most part, however, the book is very scholarly; it is a sound work of criticism as far as it goes, and it would be ill-advised of any researcher in this field to ignore it.

Appendix Two

Dracula — an Historical Note

1. It is frequently assumed that Stoker's famous novel has a purely fictional basis. While most of it is, obviously, pure fantasy, the character of Dracula is drawn from life; and most of the details of Transylvanian history which Stoker puts into the mouths of Dracula and Van Helsing are substantially factual. They centre round this hazy historical personage about whom Stoker read in the British Museum, while other assistance was given by a friend in the University at Budapest, mirroring the Arminius-Van Helsing relationship in the novel. It is now impossible to discover exactly which books Stoker consulted, though it is practically certain that they included Paget's two volumes entitled Hungary and Transylvania. After investigation, I have managed to piece together the historical background to which Stoker refers in the novel. My own sources have been primarily Romanian, in the absence of any English texts on the subject.¹ The following is an extremely abbreviated summary of my findings.

2. In the fifteenth century, the country which has been recently united as Romania was divided into several autonomous regions, notably Moldavia, Transylvania and Walachia. At the time, Europe was threatened by Turkish invasion, and the state of Walachia — bounded in the north by

1. The Search for Dracula, by McNally and Florescu, promises to be most useful when it is published. D.P. Varma's book The Quest for Dracula, based on field research, is due to be published in 1973. Gabriel Ronay has just produced a book called The Dracula Myth. There is also an American text called The Dracula Archives. These works are so recent — or in some cases not yet available — that I have not been able to consult them.

the Carpathians and in the south by the Danube — was particularly vulnerable. The famous Hungarian leader, János Hunyadi, was effective regent of Hungary during the minority of László (Ladislav) V, following the death of Wladislav III at the disastrous Battle of Varna in 1444. Hunyadi was Walachian by birth, and later became Voivode² of Transylvania. Among his allies was Vlad II of Walachia, who became Voivode of that region in 1435. Vlad had been a fearless fighter against the Turks, but had been captured by them, along with two of his sons; and on his release he led the armies of the Sultan into Transylvania in 1438. While in Constantinople he appears to have been awarded the Order of the Dragon, which may have given him the nickname Dracul, though in Romanian this also signifies Devil. He was upbraided by Hunyadi, and changed loyalties to fight on the Christian side at the Battle of Varna. After the defeat, he treacherously captured Hunyadi and held him captive, for which Hunyadi executed him, along with his eldest son, in December 1446. The successor to the throne, a weak prince by the name of Wladislav, was too pacific, and in the last year of his life Hunyadi installed one of Dracul's sons, who became Vlad III and was made Voivode of Walachia in the spring of 1456. Hunyadi died of plague in August of the same year.

3. Vlad III³ was an immensely gifted man, who seems to have been afflicted with a perverse love of cruelty. He had been imprisoned along

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2. The term Voivode signifies the absolute ruler of a district; it might be translated as Prince. He was supported by boyars, military leaders drawn mostly from peasant classes. The Voivode would reside in the main city of his region, and tour his principality each year.
 3. The numbering of the Voivodes is difficult. The Encyclopaedia Britannica claims that Vlad Ţepeş was Vlad IV, and Varma has written to tell me that he was Vlad V. However, Iorga — the prominent Romanian historian — has produced a detailed chronological list which clearly indicates that Vlad Ţepeş was, in fact, Vlad III. This is substantiated by the Mediaeval History (Cambridge). I regard this evidence as definitive. Vlad IV was a brother of Ţepeş, and was known as the Monk; he ruled as Voivode from 1482 till 1495. His son later became Vlad V, but ruled for only two years, being executed on Turkish orders on January 12th/....

with his father by the Turks, and had learned several lessons from them which he put into practice without delay. In order to consolidate his throne, he executed a large number of his boyars by impaling them on wooden stakes, the punishment reserved by the Turks for Christians who consorted with Mohammedan women, or who entered mosques. Because of this bizarre method of execution, he became known as Țepeș — The Impaler. He defied the Turks successfully during the six years of his reign, and in 1461 descended to the Danube and carried out massive slaughter there, using his favoured method, after which he casually counted the victims to amuse himself. The Sultan crossed the Danube to drive him back to Hungary, and is reported to have wept when he saw the rows of stakes, each with its contorted victim. In November 1462 he was recalled to Hungary by order of King Matthias Corvinus, the younger son of Hunyadi, and seems to have spent some time in prison there, though he is later spoken of as harassing the Turks from Transylvania. He regained his Walachian throne in 1476, in the autumn, but died a few weeks later in an ambush set by his enemies.⁴

4. Țepeș and his father Dracul seem to have amalgamated in legend; a situation made all the more confusing by the fact that Țepeș also signed himself Dracul, perhaps because he also was a member of the Order of the Dragon. After his death the legends began to multiply, and in the generations which followed, the terror of his name grew rather than diminished.

5. It is interesting to note the obvious connexion between Vlad's chosen method of execution and the method used traditionally to destroy

12th, 1512, when still a very young man. I have seen no evidence to support the contention that Vlad the Monk practised the same atrocities as his brother, and his son Vlad V hardly lived long enough to gain a reputation equivalent to that of his infamous cousin Țepeș.

4. Varma has evidence to the effect that Țepeș was killed by the Turks, decapitated, and his head sent to Constantinople for public display.

vampires. There is room for further research here, but it seems reasonable to assume that if the Dracul-Țepeș amalgamation came, in the course of time, to represent evil incarnate, then the most appropriate defence against such virulent evil would logically stem from the atrocities committed by this shadowy and frightening figure from the past. Stoker does not seem to have been conscious of this fact, or perhaps chose to overlook it. The last authenticated case of staking a suspected vampire was at Sujos in Serbia, in January 1910. An account of this appeared in Le Matin for the 4th of January of that year.

6. Contemporary woodcuts show Dracul-Țepeș as a sullen, distinguished man, with slightly protuberant eyes, an aquiline nose, a heavy chin and a wide moustache. By all accounts, he was a brilliant strategist and statesman as well as a ruthless fighter. One of his residences does indeed stand on the site described by Stoker, and he is also known to have inhabited Hunyadi's fortress at Hunedoara as well as the castle at Bran, near Brașov. Stoker's facts are, therefore, quite accurate.

7. Vlad was not a vampire in the conventional sense of the word, though it would be true to say that he took an unholy delight in blood-letting. This may have been a contributory factor in the vampire legend. In fact, the most notorious case of vampirism of a kind similar to that described by Stoker took place in Hungary in 1610, where Elizabeth Báthory, a sister of István (Stephen) Báthory of Poland, was found to have murdered several hundred people for the purpose of bathing in their blood for its rejuvenating properties. She was walled up in her castle at Csejthe by order of Matthias II of Hungary. The word vampire is perhaps ultimately derived from the Turkish uber 'witch',⁵ a term applied to Țepeș in contemporary manuscripts. Etymologically, the word contains no reference

5. Miklosich, Etymologie-Wörterbuch der slavischen Sprache.

to blood-drinking unless one derives it from the Greek πίνω 'to drink',⁶ or the Lithuanian wem̃pti,⁷ which has the same meaning. The Turkish derivation would seem more appropriate, considering the political structure of Europe in the fifteenth century.

8. From this, it is easy to see why Dracul-Țepeș should have been such an obvious choice as the central figure in Stoker's novel. As a concluding note, it must be pointed out that there is one fact about the historical Dracula which Stoker never knew; it would undoubtedly have delighted him. His tomb, in a monastery north of București, was opened by a team of archaeologists in 1931. It was empty.

6. Mentioned by Summers in The Vampire, His Kith and Kin, I, 18.

7. Ralston, The Songs of the Russian People, quoted by Summers, loc. cit.

Appendix Three

Howard Phillips Lovecraft — the Successor to Poe?

1. H.P. Lovecraft is one of the most remarkable personalities in the genre; and his work displays such originality, and has become so popular of late, that his inclusion in this appendix is both fitting and necessary. Lovecraft does not fall directly into the mainstream of the horror tradition, except in a few of his tales, but his knowledge of it, and a certain linguistic debt to Poe, bring him closer to the nineteenth century than to his own. A brief biographical sketch will be necessary if the work is to be fully appreciated and understood. Lovecraft once wrote: "There is no field other than the weird in which I have any aptitude for fictional composition. Life has never interested me so much as the escape from life." The escapist, dream-like quality of so many of his stories will be better understood when we examine the outline of Lovecraft's short and peculiarly secluded life.

2. Howard Phillips Lovecraft was born on August 20, 1890, in Providence, Rhode Island. His father, Winfield Scott Lovecraft, was a salesman, but shortly after the boy's birth became afflicted with paresis and died soon after. The mother, Sarah Lovecraft, née Phillips, was a genteel if slightly neurotic woman, obsessed with the need to protect her son from the harshness of life. As a result of her influence, Howard knew relatively few children of his own age, and was precocious to such an extent that he was often misunderstood by his playfellows. Much of his time was spent in the library of his maternal grandfather, of whom he was extremely fond: Whipple V. Phillips. He was soon a capable and omnivorous reader. The works in the library were old, many dated to the

eighteenth century, and he soon grew to love the leisurely diction and the long 's' of the old pages through which he browsed. His first writings are very much in this style, and later, the elaborate structure of Poe's style appears in the stories and poems which he wrote. His earliest reading included Greek and Roman mythology, to which was later added the wonder of the Arabian Nights; this led later to the genesis of the strange mythology which he made his own. One of his ancestors had been called Hazard, and with this in mind he created the first of the numerous pseudonyms which he used in later life: Abdul Alhazred, who later becomes the author of the Necronomicon, the grimoire of the Cthulhu mythology.

3. By the time he was sixteen, Lovecraft was already writing steadily. His interests had now broadened to include astronomy and chemistry: these two sciences also were of great value to him in his later writing. He contributed a series of astronomical articles to a local paper while he was still at school. By this time, he had already written a fair amount of verse in the style of the eighteenth century, as well as one or two reasonable short stories. Already the weird fascinated him; it would be safe to say that the overwhelming majority of Lovecraft's works contain at least an element of the unseen, the macabre or the terrible. The child is father of the man: in a sense Lovecraft never lost the boyish, untiring devotion to his hobbies. The grown man who once sadly remarked that "adulthood is hell" was simply remembering that those days of intellectual development and discovery of literature could never be recaptured. His health — he suffered from "nervous trouble" of some undefined kind — made it impossible for him to go to university as had been hoped; and since the death of his grandfather in 1904, the family fortunes had been steadily declining. He made a tentative effort to join the army in 1917, but the frantic reaction of his

mother, and his failure in the medical examination, caused him to abandon the idea. In 1914 he had joined the United Amateur Press Association (UAPA), and its official magazine, the United Amateur, published a tale he had written when he was eighteen—"The Alchemist". After this, he began work on the short stories which were latterly to make him famous, though only one book was published during his lifetime and nearly all of his stories were written for popular magazines. The founding of the magazine Weird Tales provided an ideal source, and "Dagon" was published in 1917. In May 1921 his mother died after a nervous breakdown. Howard, in his letters, seems to have accepted this stoically enough: he rarely exhibited much emotion over important matters.

4. Lovecraft now became a "ghost-writer" and revisionist. His contacts through the UAPA gave him a wide circle of friends, with whom he began to correspond. One of these was Mrs Sonia Greene, a Brooklyn widow who, although ten years older than Howard, with a grown-up daughter, was immediately attracted by him. It would be difficult to imagine two more dissimilar people: Sonia was extravert, beautiful and sociable, and kept a fashionable hat-shop in Fifth Avenue, while Howard was painfully shy, unused to the company of women, a complete stranger to romance, and extremely plain in looks, being tall and thin, with a pale face and a long jaw. They were married in 1924. Lovecraft hated Brooklyn and was extremely miserable there, and the marriage only lasted for about eighteen months. Although the reasons are unknown, it seems from the letters that money had been the main stumbling block. In no place does Howard ever reproach Sonia, and he appears simply to have accepted the separation as inevitable. Thereafter, women were of no importance to him. In a letter to Derleth,¹ E.H. Cole described Lovecraft as "as sexless a

1. August Derleth, H.P.L. — A Memoir (New York, 1945): no longer available, though I have seen the manuscript.

person as I have ever known", and concludes that he married Sonia out of an appeal to his chivalry. From New York he escaped once more to Providence, where, apart from occasional journeys to visit friends, he remained for the rest of his life. He lived with two aunts, and when one died he remained with the other at 66 College Street. He took to writing at night, and drawing the shades and writing during the day by electric light. In winter he seldom ventured out, since he had become extremely sensitive to cold.

5. One of the most fascinating features of Lovecraft's literary output is his correspondence, which almost took the place of conversation. He had about a hundred regular correspondents, and Derleth has estimated that he wrote about five million words in his letters. He always wrote in longhand, in a fine script, in the style and manner of the eighteenth century he loved so much. Towards the end of his life, he began to feel that his work was not of a sufficiently high standard; he postponed revision, and had to be actively encouraged by his friends on many occasions before sending manuscripts for publication. In 1936, he began to feel that the end was near, but he accepted this stoically, and worked on till the end. He died in the early morning of March 15, 1937. Death was caused by a combination of cancer of the intestine and nephritis. His friends remember him as a kindly affectionate friend, a fascinating and erudite correspondent. He was sincere, generous, honest, and quite without envy or malice. He had great reserves of strange and often surprising knowledge, despite the fact that he never left America and had never had the benefit of a formal higher education. He died in his prime, and we can only conjecture sadly what he might have produced had he lived on.

6. Lovecraft's work may be divided into several sections, most of which do not concern us in this brief summary. His early work is mostly

scientific, and consists for the most part of articles and essays on astronomy and allied subjects. His poetry, which is sometimes good, is for the most part in the style of the eighteenth century. His correspondence, as I have indicated, was vast and varied. The juvenilia are tedious to read, being very similar in style to the tales of Poe. In about 1919, Lovecraft became fascinated with the works of Lord Dunsany, who is remembered for a very individual kind of gentle, allusive fantasy. From this, Lovecraft evolved his own special style, adding certain place-names and leading ideas which recur through all his work. The first major work of this kind is The Silver Key (1926), and this was followed in 1932 by Through the Gates of the Silver Key. Together, they present a misty world in which time and space are distorted: a sort of Alice-in-Wonderland landscape full of vague suggestions and haunting symbols. While he was writing these works of fantasy, he had the idea of a new mythology, and in due course of time there emerged the Cthulhu Mythos.

7. All of Lovecraft's most terrifying and brilliant stories are based on this mythos, and although they have been widely imitated, no-one — not even his literary executor August Derleth, who completed several tales from sketches left by Lovecraft — has ever reproduced their uncanny weirdness. The source of the mythos is most probably to be found in the Greek and Roman mythology which delighted the young Howard — the mythos is parallel in many respects to the Christian system of angelic and demoniac hierarchy. According to Lovecraft, primal good was represented in the Elder Gods, strange but benign beings from a star in the region of Betelgeuse, who visited this earth millennia ago, to intervene in the struggle between good and evil. The evil gods, known as the Great Old Ones, are in constant struggle against mankind as it evolves, but are cast out; and although they remain hidden, they can only be raised by

certain very ancient and terrible rites, vaguely hinted at in certain manuscripts, and mentioned in the Necronomicon by Abdul Alhazred. These beings, claims Lovecraft, are responsible for all the legends of giants, demons and malevolent creatures in tradition. The Satan of the Great Old Ones is Cthulhu²—subject only to the influences which are hinted at but never seen: Azathoth and Nyarlathotep, who are not subject to normal laws of time and space. Cthulhu, corresponding to a water-elemental of some kind, is a gigantic creature which lurks beneath the sea-bed, forever sealed in a dead city called R'lyeh, but ready to issue forth at the correct command. This titanic, monstrous thing is in the background of most of the tales in the mythos.³ They also refer to Hastur, who has dominion over the air as Cthulhu rules the sea, and Shug-Niggurath, representing fertility. They are served by a race of ghastly amorphous things they have created, called shoggoths, one of which makes an appearance in At the Mountains of Madness, in a genuinely terrifying passage. From his knowledge of New England, Lovecraft created a series of towns and villages in which the tales of the mythos are set. Innsmouth contains inhabitants who have strange, frog-like mouths, who smell vile, and who seem more at home in the water than on land. Arkham is shunned by all righteous people because of the things which happen there. And there is Dunwich, a small, dirty hamlet in which an inhabitant succeeds in calling up something unbelievably dreadful from "beyond" in The Dunwich Horror. The tales are always based on mundane reality, into which the horror intrudes almost imperceptibly until its full force is suddenly, awfully, apparent.

2. Lovecraft pronounced it "coo-too-loo".

3. Although Lovecraft adored cheese, coffee and chocolate, he loathed and detested all kinds of sea-food. Perhaps this has some connexion with the creation of Cthulhu as a sea-monster.

8. Although the idea of a hideous sea-creature had first appeared in 1917 with Dagon, it is in The Call of Cthulhu (1926) that the mythos first took real, tangible form. An outburst of insanity and devil worship convulses the world, and several horrible rites are practised in strange places. A professor has discovered something which his posthumously opened notes describe as a Cthulhu-cult. In the journal of a sea-captain (who later died) is set down the discovery of a peculiar island, thrust up from the sea bed by some cataclysm. When the crew land, they unwittingly free Cthulhu. Apart from the captain there are no survivors — most perish from sheer fright. It is this appearance of the Great Old One which has caused the evil in the world to multiply. R'lyeh sinks again to the ocean bed — but for how long? A similar idea is presented in the long short story entitled At the Mountains of Madness, written in 1931 and partly inspired by Poe's Arthur Gordon Pym since it is set in Antarctica. An expedition finds some bizarre and unexplained remains, and, in a journey over a range of uncharted and dangerous mountains, finds a city with carvings on the walls representing what they take to be fabulous creatures, bearing a disturbing resemblance to the objects discovered under the ice. Then the appearance of a shoggoth, left behind in those dim ages, brings the whole thing to shocking reality. Both tales are in a sense typical of Lovecraft's method. He set out, quite deliberately, to create an atmosphere of truth, logic and utter normality. Apart from the one selected horror, the rest of the tales are as realistically true to life as possible. His citing of various verifiable scientific facts and authorities is impressive; one hardly notices the intrusion of fictitious works until at last the horror is upon us — with, apparently, a perfectly rational explanation. According to Derleth, major American libraries still receive, each year, a number of requests for the Necronomicon. At his best, Lovecraft has an uncanny

knack of merging fact and fantasy into a compulsive, ghastly unity.

9. Much of Lovecraft's work stemmed from dreams: indeed, The Statement of Randolph Carter (1919) follows exactly the account of a dream he gave in a letter to some friends on December 11th of that year. In the dream, he was Randolph Carter. Samuel Loveman, a close friend, was later transformed into the researcher who descends into a crypt with a long telephone cable, leaving Carter outside with a receiver. The ensuing tension is very well handled, and the story has a macabre final twist when a glutinous voice announces to Carter over the line that his friend is dead. The Outsider (1921) is one of his best short stories, frequently anthologised, and very similar to the obsessive monologues of Poe. The opening is very strongly reminiscent of Poe's Berenice, and with its description of childhood in an ancient castle, with only books for company, is in a sense symbolic of Lovecraft himself, as is the title. Face to face with a dreadful object at the end, the narrator stretches out his fingers to it while stumbling, only to touch a mirror. Imprisoned with the Pharaohs (1924) was ghost-written for Harry Houdini, and the best of the Cthulhu mythos came in the following years. The Rats in the Walls, obliquely related to the mythos, is arguably the best tale of its kind ever written; it is a Poe monologue in structure, and its contents easily rank with the best of that author. His only novel, The Case of Charles Dexter Ward, appeared between 1927 and 1928, and was followed by The Whisperer in Darkness (1930), The Shadow over Innsmouth (1931) and The Haunter of the Dark (1935). These works are all very close to being brilliant, particularly The Whisperer in Darkness, which, although it presents no visual horror, contains such an overwhelming amount of innuendo as to be extremely frightening; and a fiendish final twist, something in the style of Poe's Valdemar, which confirms all the suspicions the reader has been made to feel during the tale. But it is in The

Shadow out of Time, written in 1934, that we find the fullest exposition of the mythos and, in my opinion, Lovecraft's greatest work.

10. In this tale, a lecturer is suddenly afflicted with some strange malady, and begins to act in such a peculiar fashion that he is deserted by all but his son. He spends much of his time reading, and travelling to strange places. After a time, he makes an equally sudden return to normality, but is immediately afflicted with strange dreams in which it becomes apparent that his mind had been transported back to the Carboniferous era by the Elder Gods, in order that they might use it to gain information about the distant future. In a series of disturbing nightmares, he pieces together more and more information, and even relives his experiences, finding — to his horror — that he had taken their form. He is asked to go to Australia to see some interesting excavations, and they seem very familiar to him. By accident, he falls into a deep shaft, and after wandering in the dark, finds himself in the very place where he had stood in his dreams. There, he finds a history of the twentieth century in his own handwriting. Although the conclusion is obvious from the beginning, it does present a chilling confirmation. Again, Lovecraft spares no effort to make the tale as plausible as possible. The effect is uniquely impressive.

11. Many of Lovecraft's tales deal, in some way, with vaults, caverns, underground places, buried buildings, the interior of vast buildings, and other places far below the surface of the earth. In many of these subterranean places there is a sub-vault, containing something which is too awful to be revealed. The descent, in The Rats in the Walls, through basement to cellar, to sub-cellar, to crypt, is a case in point, as is the underground castle in The Outsider. It would be very interesting to investigate this in depth; and it is tempting to conclude that this symbolism — as in Poe — suggests a subconscious wish for total

seclusion, similar to the Whipple library, or to that dim study in Providence where he remained with the shutters drawn during daylight hours. In this respect, too, he is in the mainstream of the Gothic tradition. But the subterranean vault, with its Lovecraftian associations, is very different from the underground passages down which so many Gothic heroines ran in fear and terror. It is interesting to note that there are very few women in Lovecraft's stories — possibly he did not have sufficient experience of them to characterise them properly — and there is seldom, if ever, any humour. His use of innuendo, in certain places, is strikingly similar to Poe's:-

... there are combinations of very simple natural objects which have the power of thus affecting us, still the analysis of this power lies among considerations beyond our depth.

(EDGAR ALLAN POE, The Fall of the House of Usher)

... we may only say that there is about certain outlines and entities a power of symbolism and suggestion which acts frightfully on a sensitive thinker's perspective and whispers terrible hints of obscure cosmic relationships and unnameable realities behind the protective illusions of common vision.

(H.P. LOVECRAFT, The Case of Charles Dexter Ward)

It has been noted that in a short story entitled The Colour out of Space, in which a meteorite causes plants to mutate in a ghastly way, and has an equally horrible effect on livestock and humans, Lovecraft appears to anticipate radioactivity and the atomic age. This, in my opinion, is unjustified; though as a coincidence it is very striking.

12. Lovecraft may have been influenced by Poe, Dunsany, Machen, Blackwood, Bierce and others, but his work is for the most part entirely original. The language is often difficult, and the tales have to be read slowly and carefully — there are no cheap thrills and no short cuts to horror. This is all the more surprising, since all of his work was produced for the magazine market. Sonia Greene once wrote an article on "Commercialism — the Curse of Art", and Lovecraft doubtless shared her views; like Poe, he aimed to satisfy his own ideals, which were very

high. The public came second. He was fairly knowledgeable about horror literature, and has many perspicacious passages in his essay Supernatural Horror in Literature, completed in 1927, but one feels that he has not read all the books which he mentions.⁴

13. Because of his chosen subject matter, and the curious facts of his life (which are not generally known), all kinds of strange theories were put forward after his death by so-called experts. Bergier, for example, writing in the introduction to a French edition of some of his tales, notes:-

Il connaissait un nombre incalculable de langues, y compris quatre langues africaines: Damora, Swahili, Chulu et Zani, et de dialects ...⁵

This is absolute nonsense — Lovecraft knew a little about several languages, but admits in his letters that he has no fluency in any. Other false notions — that he was anti-Semitic; died insane; or was a misanthrope — are largely inventions of unprincipled critics seeking to embellish their own reputations by riding the wave of Lovecraft's popularity after his death. We may sum him up more accurately as a man utterly and absolutely devoted to his craft; a man whose mastery of the evocation of terror was of a very high order; a tall, rather gaunt, but extremely kind gentleman whose early death left a real and painful gap in the lives of those who had known him. I have mentioned him several times in the course of this thesis because, as Machen and Blackwood were to prove the successors to Stoker in Britain, so Lovecraft is the logical successor to Hawthorne and Poe in America. Through his vast

4. This is confirmed in a letter to J.F. Morton of January 5, 1926: "... and when I came to Melmoth, I carefully went over the two anthology fragments which constitute all I can get of it — it's a joke to consider the rhapsodies I've indulged in without having ever perused the opus as a whole!"

5. Jacques Bergier, Introduction to Démons et Merveilles (Paris, 1955).

correspondence it is possible to view the creation of horror tales from the inside, as it were, and to share in the genesis of some of the best horror fiction ever written. His deep involvement with the subject, and his lack of interest in anything but the realm of weird fiction, make him a fascinating character; his works establish him as a truly great writer.⁶

6. Maurice Levy has produced a short book about Lovecraft, but I have not yet seen it. August Derleth very kindly allowed me to borrow the manuscript of H.P.L. — A Memoir, which is but a brief outline, and not a fully-fledged critical evaluation. For my other sources, see in the Bibliography under Chalker, Derleth, Lovecraft, Keffer and Wesson.

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