THE FUNCTION OF FOLKLORE IN SELECTED ENGLISH GOTHIC NOVELS

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THE GOTHIC BACKGROUND

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In England during the years between 1764 and 1820, a new literary genre, which was called the Gothic novel, originated and flourished. The primary objective of the Gothic novel was to terrify the reader. In order to achieve this objective, Gothic novelists set their stories in ancient castles during remote times when men believed in such things as ghosts and witches and were supposedly ruled by a voluminous catalogue of terrifying superstitions. Gothic novels became a passion in England, and for almost two decades readers shook with terror at the adventures of such heroines as sweet Emily St. Aubert of The Mysteries of Udolpho and innocent young Antonia of The Monk.

Since the principal element in Gothic novels is terror, an essay by Edmund Burke entitled On the Sublime and Beautiful made an important contribution to the development of the genre; for it gave to the novelists a theory of what causes terror in the human heart. The essay suggests that the "sublime" is ". . . the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling"[1] and ". . . terror is in all cases whatsoever, either openly or latently, the

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[1] On the Sublime and Beautiful (New York, 1889), p. 77.

ruling principle of the sublime."[2] Furthermore, the principal means of creating the sublime emotion is suspense, or what Burke calls "obscurity." He says: "To make anything very terrible, obscurity seems in general to be necessary. When we know the full extent of any danger . . . a great deal of the apprehension vanishes."[3] Louis Cazamian points out the relationship between Burke's theory and the practice of the Gothic novelists; he says:

> . . . when he [Burke] closely connected the sublime with terror, and shows the influence of the unseen and the mysterious in the production of fear, he outlines, as it were, before hand the range and scope of the novel of terror.[4]

The key to the success of a Gothic novel, therefore, was its ability to create an atmosphere of suspense by means of "the unseen and the mysterious." In the Preface to his first Gothic novel, Charles Robert Maturin indicates that he is keenly aware of this principle when he says:

> I question whether there be a source of emotion in the whole mental frame, so powerful or universal as the fear arising from objects of invisible terror. Perhaps there is no other that has been at some period or other of life, the predominant and indelible sensation of every mind, of every class, and under every circumstance.[5]

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[2]Burke, p. 41.

[3]Ibid., pp. 41-42.

[4]Emile Legouis and Louis Cazamian, A History of English Literature, Vol. II: Modern Times (1660-1914), by Louis Cazamian, trans. by W. D. MacInnes (London, 1927), 234.

[5]Dennis Jasper Murphy [Charles Robert Maturin], Preface to Fatal Revenge; or, The Family of Montorio, A Romance (3 vols.; London, 1807), I, iv.

For the Gothic novelists, the traditional folklore of England and Europe became an important source for these "objects of invisible terror." Devendra P. Varma says:

> The traditional lore of old, heathen Europe, the richness and splendor of its mythology and superstitions, its usages, rites, and songs, in short everything wild and extravagant, was rediscovered by scholars about the middle of the eighteenth century and was immediately recognized as a source of powerful material by contemporary writers.[6]

To the folklore rediscovered by the scholars, the Gothic novelists added the wealth of folk materials found in the plays by Shakespeare and other Elizabethan dramatists. In this regard, Eino Railo says:

> How . . . did these writers come to light upon the supernatural as literary material? . . . To my mind the most obvious and influential source is Shakespeare, . . . Witches, evil spirits and supernatural beings appear more frequently in Shakespeare's plays than in any later literature.[7]

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[6]The Gothic Flame (New York, 1966), pp. 24-25. This work, which was originally published in 1957, is, in several important respects, the best history of the Gothic novel available. It has a logic, simplicity, and balance in its structure and a clarity of style which are unmatched by any other book on the subject of the Gothic novel. The analysis by Varma appears to be unbiased and fair. The book is obviously the result of careful, competent scholarship. The Gothic Flame also includes the most extensive bibliography available, and this study is especially indebted to it in this respect.

[7]The Haunted Castle: A Study of the Elements of English Romanticism (London, 1927), p. 63. The Haunted Castle has been the object of severe criticism because of such flaws as the awkwardness of its organization and its failure to include a bibliography or index. Nevertheless, this work was an invaluable source for this study since it discusses in detail such elements of folklore as the theme of incest and the Legend of the Wandering Jew.

For example, Shakespeare made effective use of ghosts in Hamlet and Macbeth and of witches again in Macbeth. The folklore in Shakespeare's plays has even been the subject of at least one long book, Folk-Lore of Shakespeare, by T. F. Thiselton-Dyer. Varma points out that the Gothic novelists also learned from other Elizabethans besides Shakespeare.[8]

By using folk materials, Gothic novelists capitalized on the eagerness of their readers to explore the mysterious world of the supernatural and to shudder at vague, timeless superstitions. In an essay first published in 1773, Miss Aiken notes ". . . the greediness with which tales of ghosts and goblins . . . are devoured by every ear."[9] This apparent pleasure, she argues, is

> . . . attached to the excitement of surprise from new and wonderful objects. A strange and unexpected event awakens the mind, and keeps it on the stretch; and where the agency of invisible beings is introduced, of 'forms unseen, and mightier far than we,' our imagination, darting forth, explores with rapture the new world which is laid open to its view, and rejoices in the expansion of its powers. Passion and fancy co-operating elevate the soul to its highest pitch; and pain of terror is lost in amazement. Hence, the more wild, fanciful, and extraordinary are the circumstances of a scene of horror, the more pleasure we receive from it.[10]

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[8]Gothic Flame, p. 29.

[9]Miscellaneous Pieces, in Prose (London, 1773), p. 121.

[10]Ibid., pp. 125-126.

A few years after Miss Aiken wrote her essay, one of the most respected of the early critics of the Gothic novel, Nathan Drake, discussed the impact that the supernatural has on the mind; he says:

> Of the various kinds of superstition which have in any age influenced the human mind, none appear to have operated with so much effect as what has been termed the Gothic. Even in the present polished period of society, there are thousands who are yet alive to all the horrors of witchcraft, to all the solemn and terrible graces of the appalling spectre. The most enlightened mind, the mind free from all taint of superstition, involuntarily acknowledges the power of gothic agency.[11]

The Gothic novelists differ widely in the amount and kind of supernatural material they use and the way in which they use it. Dorothy Scarborough explains that, because of the enlightenment,

> . . . the subject [of the supernatural] was surrounded with embarrassments. The conscience of the writer, the appetite of the reader, the jocose associations with turnip-ghosts and horse-play, the anxiety of critics lest youth should be misled and ground lost in the fight with barbarism,--all fell to be considered by the serious writers who were the pioneers of the Gothic style.[12]

Horace Walpole, the first Gothic novelist, apparently gave little thought to such matters since The Castle of Otranto includes such supernatural phenomena as a huge giant, a statue that bleeds, and two ghosts. But such blatant

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[11] Literary Hours: or Sketches Critical, Narrative, and Poetical (2 Vols., 2nd ed.; London, 1804), I, 137-138.

[12] The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction (New York, 1967), pp. 290-291.

supernatural details offended Clara Reeve, and she limits the supernatural in The Old English Baron to the appearance of a single ghost. Mrs. Ann Radcliffe mastered the art of supernatural suggestion without risking whatever embarrassment that might have resulted from the actual use of ghosts and witches; her technique was extremely popular.[13] Matthew Gregory Lewis, who in turn influenced Charles Robert Maturin, exercised very little restraint in the use of supernatural material, because he learned how to use his materials from the German tales of terror or the Schauer roman. According to B. G. MacCarthy, the German stories developed ". . . by contact with the folklore of gnomes, spirits and diabolism."[14] Concerning the way in which these two English novelists employed German folk materials, MacCarthy says: "Lewis's violence and obscenity show one side of the German influence carried to excess. Maturin's Melmoth shows what genius can make of a supernatural legend."[15]

Regardless of how much folklore a Gothic novelist uses, with what restraint or genius he uses it, or what his sources are, literary critics and historians of the Gothic novel generally see folk materials as serving a single

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[13] Supernatural in Fiction, p. 291.

[14] The Later Women Novelists, 1744-1818 (Oxford, 1947), p. 131.

[15] Ibid.

important purpose in a Gothic novel, which is to blend with other features of the story, such as the sentimentality, to create an atmosphere of suspense and terror. But folklore functions in several other ways in some of the most important novels of the genre. Indeed, folklore is such a vital part of the Gothic style that it may be safely affirmed that a Gothic novel can not be read today with understanding and appreciation unless the reader has a specific knowledge of the lore found in it and some insight into how the lore functions. Otherwise, many aspects of the story may appear to be absurd or childish. Therefore, it is the purpose of this study to identify and examine the wide variety of folk elements employed in selected novels and to show how those elements function in such aspects of the art of the Gothic novel as structure, plot, characterization, tone, and theme.

The major terms used in this study, "Gothic" and "folklore," have a variety of meanings and may cause some confusion unless, at this point, each one is briefly discussed and defined in accordance with the way it is used here.

The word "Gothic" derives from the word "Goth," a racename for the Germanic people of Northern Europe,[16] who subjugated Italy for several centuries until they were

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[16]Alfred E. Longueil, "The Word 'Gothic' in Eighteenth Century Criticism," MLN, XXXVIII (December 1923), 453.

finally vanquished in the middle of the sixth century A.D. Centuries later, the style of architecture which dominated the Middle Ages took its name from the Goths, although, according to Agnes Addison, they had nothing to do with its invention.[17]

As the period of the Middle Ages came to a close and the Renaissance increased its influence in Southern Europe, the word "Gothic" fell into disrepute because Renaissance men began to associate the Gothic style with the barbaric nature of the Goths themselves. John Ruskin attempts to explain this phenomenon by suggesting that, although the Goths probably did not develop Gothic architecture,

> . . . they and their buildings together exhibited a degree of sternness and rudeness which, in contradistinction to the character of Southern and Eastern nations, appeared like a perpetual reflection of the contrast between the Goth and the Roman in their first encounter. And when that fallen Roman, in the utmost impotency of his luxury, and insolence of his guilt, became the model for the imitation of civilized Europe, at the close of the so-called Dark ages, the word Gothic became a term of unmitigated contempt, not unmixed with aversion.[18]

The word used to express this contempt was "barbarous." In the mind of the Renaissance critic, this word expressed the qualities of "ignorance, cruelty, or savageness" which he saw in the Gothic style.[19]

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[17] Romanticism and the Gothic Revival (New York, 1967), p. 34.

[18] The Stones of Venice (New York, n.d.), p. 155.

[19] Longueil, p. 455.

Attitudes toward things Gothic began to change, however, during the eighteenth century as interest in the Middle Ages developed into a romantic passion. By the end of the century, the word "Gothic" had two additional meanings. In his book Letters on Chivalry and Romance, Richard Hurd uses the word to mean "medieval." In this work Hurd contrasts the "poetical manners" of the heroic period with those of the medieval period. He champions the medieval period over the heroic period and thereby greatly enhances the prestige of Gothicism. Longueil credits Hurd with achieving a ". . . re-neutralizing of the word 'Gothic.'" He says, "Under his pen it loses its implication of libel and becomes once more a staid adjective of description--'mediaeval,' without prejudice or explicit prepossession."[20]

Soon others followed Hurd's lead. When Horace Walpole called The Castle of Otranto a "Gothic Story," he meant that it had a medieval setting.[21] A few years later Clara Reeve referred to her novel, The Old English Baron, as ". . . a Gothic story, being a picture of Gothic times and manners."[22] Like Walpole, Reeve thought of her story as having a medieval setting with the glamorous and

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[20]Longueil, pp. 456-457.

[21]Ibid., p. 457.

[22]Preface to The Old English Baron: A Gothic Story (6th ed.; London, 1799), p. vi. Subsequent references to this work are included in the body of the text.

mysterious aura associated with that remote period: ". . . lonely castles, haunted towers, subterranean passages, knights in armor, magic."[23]

Because of the success of these two early Gothic novels and the flood of similar stories which soon followed them, the word "Gothic" eventually also came to mean "supernatural." Imitators of Walpole and Reeve recognized the fact that the supernatural elements in their novels, such as ghosts, had captured the public fancy. As Gothic novelists emphasized the supernatural more and more, the original reason for calling these stories "Gothic," the medieval setting, was forgotten almost entirely in favor of this new, more dramatic meaning. Concerning this evolution of the term, Longueil says:

> [T]he term 'Gothic' itself imperceptibly underwent a change in the direction of specialization to meet the new conditions, gradually lost all connotation of mediaeval, and became at last, as a literary term, a mere synonym for that grotesque, ghastly, and violently supernatural in fiction which had become the outstanding feature in 'Gothic' novel writing. Gothic romance became, concretely, the romance of the supernatural, and 'Gothic' identified itself with ghastly.[24]

To support this contention, Longueil points out that in 1798 Nathan Drake used the word "gothic" to mean "supernatural" when he wrote: "The most enlightened mind, the

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[23]Longueil, p. 458.

[24]Ibid., p. 459.

mind free from all taint of superstition, involuntarily acknowledges the power of gothic agency."[25]

Of these three meanings, "barbarous," "medieval," and "supernatural," only the last two are applicable to the Gothic novel. The first Gothic novels ostensibly had their settings in the Middle Ages. By the 1790's, the novelists were setting their works in more modern times, and the need for a Medieval setting was eventually forgotten altogether. Instead of a Medieval setting, Gothic novels were expected to include at least the hint of supernatural forces, so that a "Gothic" novel was a "supernatural" novel.

As it has already been established, folklore was the primary source for the supernatural element in Gothic novels. Authors employed the traditional lore about such supernatural beings as ghosts and witches. Their uses of folklore also included the taboo against incest, legends, such as the Legend of Faust, and superstitions, such as the superstitions regarding the burial of the dead.

But some elements in Gothic novels, which appear to be aspects of folklore, may not be genuine; it is necessary, therefore, to arrive at a suitable definition of the term "folklore." Defining the word is a recurring problem in folklore studies. The Standard Dictionary of Folklore Mythology, and Legend gives a long list of suggested

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[25] Literary Hours, I, 138.

definitions.[26] Although there are many points of argreement among these definitions, sharp differences of opinion also exist, and the differences reveal the confusion which exists among the folklorists themselves on what is meant by the word. Kenneth and Mary Clarke conclude that the list at least shows that ". . . there is no official definition" of folklore.[27] Therefore, the Clarkes suggest a definition of their own; it is as follows: "Folklore consists of all lore (knowledge, wisdom, action) transmitted by tradition."[28] It is this wording which provides a working definition for this study. The various elements of lore which appear in the novels, such as "legend" and "superstition," will be defined as they are discussed in Part II.

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[26]Maria Leach, ed., Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend (2 Vols.; New York, 1949-1950), I, 398-403.

[27]Introducing Folklore (New York, 1963), p. 6.

[28]Ibid., p. 7.

CHAPTER II

THE GOTHIC REVIVAL

In The Faerie Queene, Edmund Spenser describes a "stately Pallace" having

> . . . many loftie towres,
> And goodly galleries far over laid,
> Full of faire windowes and delightful bowres.[1]

In England this idyllic description of a medieval castle established an early date for an interest in the Gothic style, an interest which lay half-dormant, however, for over a hundred and fifty years before it came to life with phenomenal vigor during the last half of the eighteenth century in a lavish display of Gothic architecture and Gothic literature.

During the years between Spenser and what is generally called "The Gothic Revival," John Milton and Alexander Pope, among others, kept an interest in Gothicism alive with idyllic descriptions of their own. In Il Penseroso, Milton describes a Gothic structure in terms similar to those used by Spenser:

> But let my due feet never fail,
> To walk the studious Cloysters pale,
> And love the high embowed Roof,

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[1] The Complete Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser, Student's Cambridge Edition, ed. by R. E. Neil Dodge (Boston, 1908), I.iv.4.

> With antick Pillars massy proof,
> And storied Windows richly dight,
> Casting a dimm religious light.[2]

Pope falls momentarily under the Gothic spell in "Eloisa to Abelard":

> To these lone walls (their day's eternal bound),
> These moss-grown domes with spiry turrets crown'd,
> Where awful arches make a noonday night,
> And the dim windows shed a solemn light.[3]

Besides the poets, antiquaries also helped to keep alive an interest in England in Gothic materials during the cold neoclassical period. B. Sprague Allen claims, in fact, that it was the antiquaries who, years before the revival, ". . . preserved a veneration for the past, and cherished the buildings which had been inherited from the Middle Ages even when Gothic architecture was losing its prestige."[4] Allen cites a book entitled Antiquities of Warwickshire, which was brought to Oxford in 1656 and which influenced Anthony à Wood, an antiquary and historian, to attempt a similar work based on the Oxford area. Although Horace Walpole is generally credited with inspiring the Gothic Revival, Allen argues that Wood demonstrated an appreciation of medieval architecture fifty years before Walpole did.[5]

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[2]The Poetical Works of John Milton, ed. by Helen Darbishire (London, 1958), 155-160.

[3]The Complete Poetical Works of Pope, Cambridge Edition, ed. by Henry W. Boynton (Boston, 1931), 141-144.

[4]Tides in English Taste (1619-1800) (2 vols.; Cambridge, Mass., 1937), II, 44.

[5]Ibid., 49.

Although some scholars (Allen, for one) object to the expression "Gothic Revival," no one has suggested a better term for this particular aspect of the revolution in English taste that occurred during the eighteenth century. At the beginning of the 1700's, the rules of neoclassicism governed all the arts, from gardening to literature. These rules were rigid and almost inflexible. The seriousness with which the disciples of neoclassicism regarded the rules may be seen when one reads some famous lines from the Essay on Criticism by Pope:

> First follow Nature, and your judgment frame
> By her just standard, which is still the same;
> Unerring Nature, still divinely bright,
> One clear, unchanged, and universal light,
> Life, force, and beauty must to all impart,
> At once the source, and end, and test of Art.[6]

Pope also saw, however, that too rigid an application of rules inevitably led to bad taste. For example, in his Moral Essay IV, "Of the Use of Riches," he abhors the tasteless symmetry that was sometimes used in expensive gardens:

> No pleasing intricacies intervene;
> No artful wildness to perplex the scene;
> Grove nods at grove, each alley has a brother,
> And half the platform just reflects the other.[7]

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[6] Works of Pope, I. 68-73.

[7] Ibid., 115-119.

These lines suggest the extent of English obsession with the rules of neoclassicism; but the expression "artful wildness" reveals something of the spirit that was destined to revolt against the strictures of neoclassicism.

The complexities of this revolt, and of the unblushing romanticism that eventually resulted from it by the end of the eighteenth century, are beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, a brief review of some of the major features of romanticism that began to dilute the influence of neoclassicism should enhance an understanding of the Gothic Revival that began shortly after 1750.

Although the critical term "romanticism" practically defies definition, Ernest Bernbaum notes several characteristics commonly considered "romantic" which may be found in the literature of the first half of the eighteenth century. Perhaps the earliest indication of romantic feeling appears in the play Love's Last Shift (1696) by Colley Cibber; for a strong vein of sentimentality appears toward the close of this play. Sentimentality also exists in the philosophy of the Earl of Shaftesbury and in many of the tales published in The Tatler. Another feature of romanticism, which Bernbaum discusses, is an interest in the past demonstrated by the ballad collections of Allan Ramsay, The Ever Green and The Tea-Table Miscellany, which were both published in 1724. A third characteristic of romanticism, an appreciation of nature and of rural life, appears in the

works of many poets published before 1745. The most famous example, The Seasons by James Thomson, includes the following lines from "Winter":

> With frequent foot,
> Pleased have I, in my cheerful morn of life,
> When nursed by careless solitude I lived
> And sung of Nature with unceasing joy,
> Pleased have I wandered through your rough domain.[8]

And a fourth characteristic traditionally associated with romanticism, a concern with death, appears in the works of the Graveyard School of Poets prominent in the 1740's. Such poems as Night Thoughts by Edward Young and The Grave by Robert Blair reveal a morbid preoccupation with the horror of death.[9]

This romantic restlessness evident in the literature published during the first half of the eighteenth century appears in many of the other arts as well, such as in gardening and in architecture. In the second quarter of the century, for example, an architect named Batty Langley, along with his brother, published several books which included discussions of the Gothic style. Agnes Addison calls Langley "a forerunner of the Gothic Revival,"[10] because developments in architecture led directly to the Gothic Revival.

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[8] The Complete Poetical Works of James Thomson, Oxford Edition, ed. with notes by J. Logie Robertson (London, 1908), 6-10.

[9] Guide through the Romantic Movement, 2d ed. (New York, 1949), pp. 8-14.

[10] Romanticism and the Gothic Revival, p. 28.

The Gothic Revival began slowly. For various reasons, neoclassicists resisted its mounting popularity. The principal objection to Gothicism was its lack of simplicity; for, as A. O. Lovejoy says, in the mind of the neoclassicist, "To want simplicity was to fail in 'conformity to nature,' . . . [which was] the supreme criterion of excellence applied then."[11] According to Lovejoy, other principles of neoclassicism violated by Gothic architecture were its lack of "symmetry" and "regularity," and its failure to have a "universal acceptability."[12] These formidable objections slowly lost their importance when the neoclassicists began to see the parallel ". . . between Gothic forms and actual natural objects or primitive dwellings" and when they began to make ". . . the transfer of the aesthetic principle of irregularity--as a newly discovered implication of the rule of 'imitating Nature'--from [gardening] to architecture."[13] Lovejoy emphasizes the importance of gardening in the history of the Gothic Revival; for, he says, the

> . . . aesthetic ideas first developed and popularized in the latter art [gardening] were carried back into architecture. And in this . . . lies a large part of the explanation of the first Gothic revival

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[11] "The First Gothic Revival and the Return to Nature," MLN, XLVII (November 1932), 426.

[12] Ibid., pp. 428-430.

[13] Ibid., p. 437.

> in actual architectural design, and of the new appreciation of England's glorious heritage of medieval Gothic buildings."[14]

During the 1740's, the trend toward romanticism and a new appreciation for the wildness and naturalness of the Gothic style began to accelerate rapidly. An important reason was that the interest in the past, which Ramsay had demonstrated twenty years before with his collections of ballads, had become a passion in the minds of many people. The two Warton brothers, Richard Hurd, Thomas Percy, James Macpherson, and Horace Walpole all shared this passion. In his poem "The Pleasures of Melancholy," Thomas Warton shows his love for ancient ruins and the melancholy mood they evoke:

> Beneath yon ruined abbey's moss-grown piles
> Oft let me sit, at twilight hour of eve,
> . . . . . .
> . . . . . Or let me tread
> Its neighbouring walk of pines where strayed of old
> The cloistered brothers: through the gloomy void
> That far extends beneath their ample arch
> As on I tread, religious horror wraps
> My soul in dread repose.[15]

Kenneth Clark credits another work of Thomas Warton's, Observations on the Faery Queen, with being the first published work to attempt to trace the origin and development of Gothic architecture.[16]

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[14]"The First Gothic Revival," pp. 428-430.

[15]Eighteenth Century Poetry & Prose, ed. by Louis I. Bredvold, Alan D. McKillop, and Lois Whitney (2d ed.; New York, 1956), 30-31, 39-44.

[16]The Gothic Revival, An Essay in the History of Taste (New York, 1929), p. 42.

The 1760's saw the publication of several works which, through their enthusiasm for antiquities or for the Gothic, or both, helped make the Gothic Revival a fact. Two immensely popular works in their day were Thomas Percy's ballad collection, Reliques of Ancient English Poetry, and James Macpherson's Poems of Ossian, which was a fraudulent work supposedly translated from the Gaelic. Even greater contributions to the Gothic Revival came from Richard Hurd and Horace Walpole. In 1762 Hurd published his Letters on Chivalry and Romance, a work which employs with remarkable effectiveness the word "Gothic" as a synonym for the word "medieval." Many scholars of this period laud the contribution to the Gothic Revival which Hurd made. For example, William Lyon Phelps credits Hurd with speaking more forcefully and more authoritatively for the Gothic style than the Wartons. Beginning with the publication of Letters on Chivalry and Romance, he says, ". . . everything with a Gothic flavor rose rapidly in public esteem."[17]

Nevertheless, Horace Walpole is the man generally considered to have had the greatest influence on the Gothic Revival. His prominence results primarily from two achievements. As Wilmarth Lewis says, "He [Walpole] made 'the Gothic revival' popular by building Strawberry Hill and by

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[17]The Beginnings of the English Romantic Movement: A Study of Eighteenth Century Literature (Boston, 1893), p. 115.

writing The Castle of Otranto."[18] In 1747, Walpole purchased a property which he named Strawberry Hill. Included in the purchase was a house which he described in a letter as being ". . . a little plaything house . . . [and] the prettiest bauble you ever saw."[19] Between the years 1753 and 1776, C. L. Eastlake states, Walpole added to his house

> . . . bit by bit, so that the whole at length became a straggling but not unpicturesque mass of buildings. 'It was,' says an old writer, 'the amusement of his leisure; and circumscribed in its dimensions as it is now seen, it enabled him to perform with sufficient success his original intention, which was that of adapting the more beautiful portions of English or Gothic castellated and ecclesiastical architecture to the purposes of a modern villa.'[20].

This castle at Strawberry Hill, in turn, inspired his second contribution to the Gothic revival, The Castle of Otranto. Concerning his novel, Walpole wrote in another letter as follows:

> Shall I even confess to you what was the origin of this romance? 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. In the evening I sat down and began to write, . . . The work grew on my hands, and I grew fond of it. . . . In short I was so engrossed with my tale, which I completed in

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[18] Collector's Progress (New York, 1951), p. 31.

[19] A letter to H. S. Conway, June 8, 1747, The Letters of Horace Walpole, Earl of Oxford, ed. Peter Cunningham (9 vols.; London, 1880), II, 86.

[20] A History of the Gothic Revival in England (n.p., 1872), pp. 44-45. Eastlake does not identify the "old writer."

> less than two months, that one evening I wrote . . . till half an hour after one in the morning, when my hand and fingers were so weary, that I could not hold the pen to finish the sentence, but left Matilda and Isabella talking, in the middle of a paragraph.[21]

In the same letter, he pointed out that Strawberry Hill provided inspiration for some of the details of his fictional castle. He wrote:

> You will even have found some traits [in Otranto] to put you in mind of this place. When you read of the picture quitting its panel, did not you recollect the portrait of Lord Falkland all in white in my gallery?[22]

But if Strawberry Hill inspired Walpole to write a single novel, then, in reality, it inspired hundreds of novels indirectly; for The Castle of Otranto was only the first novel of a new genre, the Gothic novel.

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[21] A letter to William Cole, March 9, 1765, The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence, gen. ed., W. S. Lewis, Vol. I: Horace Walpole's Correspondence with The Rev. William Cole, ed. by W. S. Lewis and A. Dayle Wallace (New Haven, 1937), 88.

[22] Ibid.

CHAPTER III

A BRIEF SURVEY OF THE GOTHIC NOVEL

In a sense, the history of the Gothic novel began well before the publication of The Castle of Otranto by Horace Walpole in 1764. Several novels published between 1740 and 1764 had introduced many of the elements which Walpole incorporated into his novel. Samuel Richardson's Pamela (1740), for example, popularized sentimentality with the tribulations of a helpless heroine. In Ferdinand, Count Fathom (1753), Tobias Smollett skillfully employed an atmosphere of terror and supernatural suggestion to arouse a feeling of suspense in the reader. The techniques employed by Smollett remind most scholars more of the novels by Radcliffe than of The Castle of Otranto, especially because Smollett, like Radcliffe who followed him, gave natural explanations to the supernatural incidents. "All the same," Varma argues, "Smollett's attempt remains an interesting precursor of Walpole's achievement."[1] Another important element, the historical setting, appeared in a novel by Thomas Leland entitled Longsword, Earl of Salisbury, an Historical Romance, which was published in 1762, two years before The Castle of Otranto appeared.

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[1] Gothic Flame, p. 40.

By 1764 conditions were right for the writing of the first Gothic novel. Perhaps all that was lacking was the inspiration of Strawberry Hill, and only Horace Walpole had access to that. In any case, most scholars agree that The Castle of Otranto was the first Gothic novel. For example, Edith Birkhead says, "To Horace Walpole . . . must be assigned the honour of having introduced the Gothic romance and of having made it fashionable."[2]

Although the honor of beginning a new genre belongs to Walpole, Walpole himself was unsure of how his strange book would be accepted. Like several of his contemporaries, such as Thomas Chatterton and James Macpherson, Walpole misrepresented the authorship of his book. On the title page to the first edition, he claimed that someone named William Marshal had translated The Castle of Otranto from an Italian story by Onuphrio Muralto. In the Preface to the first edition, Walpole wrote:

> The following work was found in the library of an ancient Catholic family in the north of England. It was printed at Naples, in the black letter, in the year 1529. How much sooner it was written does not appear. The principal incidents are such as were believed in the darkest ages of christianity; but the language and conduct have nothing that savours of barbarism. The style is the purest Italian.

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[2]The Tale of Terror: A Study of the Gothic Romance (London, 1921), p. 16. This work was an important early contribution to the study of the Gothic novel. At the time it was published, it was probably the best book available in English on the subject. Since that time, however, its importance has largely been supplanted by the works of Railo, Summers, and Varma.

> If the story was written near the time when it is supposed to have happened, it must have been 1095, the era of the first crusade, and 1243, the date of the last, or not long afterwards.[3]

Walpole's fears may also account for the fact that the first edition was limited to five hundred copies.[4]

When his novel was given a popular reception, Walpole gained the courage in a second edition to admit his authorship and to explain that he had

> . . . resigned his performance to the impartial judgment of the public, determined to let it perish in obscurity, if disapproved; nor meaning to avow such a trifle, unless better judges should pronounce that he might own it without a blush (p. 7).

Despite public acceptance of the book, some modern critics feel that a blush was still appropriate; for The Castle of Otranto is, indeed, a strange book and may have little appeal to modern readers. The plot concerns a tyrannical villain named Manfred, who has usurped his position as Prince of Otranto but must have male heirs to keep it. Just when his son, Conrad, is about to marry the beautiful Isabella and apparently secure his future hold on Otranto, a giant helmet crushes Conrad to death. Since his wife will obviously bear him no more sons, Manfred determines to divorce her and marry Isabella himself. But Isabella flees

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[3] The Castle of Otranto, A Gothic Story, ed. with an Introduction by W. S. Lewis (London, 1964), p. 3. Subsequent references to this work are indicated in the body of the text.

[4] Collector's Progress, p. 78.

through the subterranean caverns of the castle. She is assisted in her momentary escape by a young peasant named Theodore, who resembles Alfonso, the former owner of Otranto. When Manfred catches Theodore, he condemns the boy to die. Before the sentence can be carried out, however, Theodore is identified as the son of Jerome, the friar, who begs for his life. Jerome, as it turns out, is the former son-in-law of Alfonso, so that Theodore, as the grandson of Alfonso, is the rightful heir to Otranto. At the conclusion of the story, Manfred is enraged by the way in which events have gone against him, and he murders his own daughter by mistake. In remorse for his crimes, he turns to religion and gives up his false claim to Otranto.

Obviously the plot of the novel is not its most memorable or innovative feature. Key elements in the plot appear in several of Shakespeare's plays. Railo points out that there are several parallels between The Castle of Otranto and Hamlet, such as usurpation and the appearance of ghosts.[5] Despite a lack of originality in the plot, as Howard Phillips Lovecraft says, The Castle of Otranto combined for the first time in one novel most of the Gothic elements that its imitators would ever include. He writes:

> This novel dramatic paraphernalia consisted first of all of the Gothic castle, with its awesome antiquity, vast distances and ramblings, deserted or

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[5] Haunted Castle, p. 35.

> ruined wings, damp corridors, unwholesome hidden catacombs, and galaxy of ghosts and appalling legends, as a nucleus of suspense and daemoniac fright. In addition, it included the tyrannical and malevolent nobleman as villain; the saintly, long-persecuted, and generally insipid heroine who undergoes the major terrors and serves as a point of view and focus for the reader's sympathies; the valorous and immaculate hero, always of high birth but often in humble disguise; the convention of high-sounding foreign names, mostly Italian, for the characters; and the infinite array of stage properties which includes strange lights, damp trap-doors, extinguished lamps, mouldy hidden manuscripts, creaking hinges, shaking arras, and the like. All this paraphernalia reappears with amusing sameness, yet sometimes with tremendous effect, throughout the history of the Gothic novel.[6]

Without doubt Walpole's boldest experiment was in his use of the supernatural. Some truly fantastic occurrences take place in the novel: a huge helmet is capable of such feats as crushing young Conrad to death and of waving its plume back and forth, apparently as a warning or an omen of evil; a portrait leaves its frame and walks; a statue bleeds three drops of blood from the nose; parts of the body of a giant are seen at various times; and the ghost of a hermit makes an appearance.

After The Castle of Otranto, the Gothic novel took many forms. In 1777, Clara Reeve published an historical (or pseudo-historical) novel entitled The Champion of Virtue. A year later a second edition bore the title The Old English Baron: A Gothic Story. In her Preface to the second edition, Reeve admits her debt to Walpole. She says,

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[6]Supernatural Horror in Literature, an Introduction by August Derleth (New York, 1945), pp. 25-26.

"This Story is the literary offspring of The Castle of Otranto, written upon the same plan" (p. v). Features from The Castle of Otranto appear in the types of characters found in The Old English Baron. The novel includes a usurper, Sir Walter Lovel, who wrongfully took the title and estate of the deceased Lord Lovel. The rightful owner of the castle is Edmund Twyford, who, like Theodore in The Castle of Otranto, is a young peasant of noble qualities. Before the story ends, like Theodore, the noble birth of Edmund has been revealed, his property has been restored, and he has married the beautiful heroine.

In her Preface, Miss Reeve also claims an historical basis for her story: "[I]t is distinguished by the appellation of a Gothic Story, being a picture of Gothic times and manners" (pp. v-vi). Supposedly the novel is set in the fifteenth century, but, as Railo observes:

> [T]he characters speak and act pretty much as people did in the eighteenth century . . . with the same polite expressions and conversational style, so that the period of Henry VI fades into the background.[7]

Another feature of the Preface to the second edition of The Old English Baron is its attack on the use of the supernatural in The Castle of Otranto. Miss Reeve says:

> [I]t [Otranto] palls upon the mind . . . and the reason is obvious, the machinery is so violent, that it destroys the effect it is intended to excite. Had the story been kept within the utmost verge of probability, the effect had been

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[7] Haunted Castle, p. 14.

> preserved, without losing the least circumstance that excites or detains the attention (p. ix).

To illustrate what she means, Miss Reeve then says: "We can conceive of a ghost, we can even dispense with an enchanted sword and helmet, but they must be kept within certain limits of credibility" (pp. ix-x). As one might expect, therefore, Miss Reeve shows more restraint in this regard than Walpole does; for the only supernatural element in her novel is the ghost of Lord Lovel.

In addition to her limited use of the supernatural, Miss Reeve also contributed the "haunted apartment" motif to the genre, although it was certainly not an original idea. In his essay about ghosts, Joseph Addison says:

> My friend Sir Roger has often told me with a great deal of mirth, that at his first coming to his estate he found three parts of his house altogether useless; that the best room in it had the reputation of being haunted, and by that means was locked up.[8]

Similarly, in The Old English Baron a legend has it that a suite of rooms in the castle of Lord Lovel is haunted. Unearthly groans are frequently thought to come from there. The Baron Fitz-Owen decides to test the courage of Edmund by having him spend three nights in the haunted apartment to see if the legend is true. On the very first night, a warrior in armor appears to him in a dream. Eventually Edmund learns the terrible truth--that the apartment is

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[8] The Spectator, with Introduction and notes by George A. Aitken (London, 1898), II, No. 110 (1711), 138.

indeed haunted by the ghost of his murdered father, Lord Lovel, whose body was buried there under the floor of a closet.

The success which Miss Reeve had with this motif inspired other Gothic novelists to use it, the most notable of whom was Mrs. Radcliffe. Sir Walter Scott considers her skillful use of a haunted apartment in The Mysteries of Udolpho to be one of the most successful features of the book.[9] In fact, the haunted apartment became such a stock feature of the genre that Jane Austen includes a mysterious forbidden room in her famous spoof on the Gothic novel, Northanger Abbey.

After The Old English Baron, other Gothic novels with genuine historical settings soon appeared. One of the most popular and most influential of these was The Recess (1785) by Sophia Lee. The plot concerns the trials of twin sisters supposedly born to Mary, Queen of Scots in the "Recess" of an ancient abbey. Although the daughters were an invention by Miss Lee, she does use the names of many authentic characters from that period, including Sir Philip Sidney and Lord Burleigh, and authentic places, such as Kenilworth Castle and Windsor. Lee was indebted to both Walpole and Miss Reeve for certain features of her story;

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[9] Lives of Eminent Novelists and Dramatists (London, n.d.), p. 570.

but Montague Summers declares that her novel ". . . had great influence upon the Gothic romance" and even offered some suggestions to Sir Walter Scott.[10]

Scholars attach a variety of labels to another popular form of the Gothic novel, but the term which seems best to suggest the principal characteristics of it is "Radcliffian." Mrs. Ann Radcliffe contributed a total of six novels to the genre. Although her first novel, The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne (1789), relies heavily on her English predecessors, Walpole, Reeve, and Lee, and the French novelist, Prevost,[11] Mrs. Radcliffe eventually developed a style so distinctive and so frequently imitated that the term "Radcliffian" seems unavoidable. Her next two novels,

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[10]The Gothic Quest: A History of the Gothic Novel (New York, 1964), pp. 168-169. Concerning The Gothic Quest, Devendra P. Varma says, "This publication is as imposing as its bulk, a monument to its author's scholarship and indefatigable zest for his subject" (p. 9). Certainly it is the most ambitious work on the Gothic novel. The author devoted forty years to his subject and read almost every Gothic novel extant. Nevertheless, as Varma and others point out, The Gothic Quest has some serious faults, the most annoying of which is its too frequent concern with trivial detail. More serious problems arise from the book's lack of objectivity and its lack of balance in the presentation of material. For example, it devotes 107 pages to Lewis but makes only infrequent references to Maturin, despite the fact that Summers recognizes the genius of Maturin (p. 87) and considers Melmoth the Wanderer to be a work of uncommon merit (p. 397). Nevertheless, The Gothic Quest is, without question, the most important work on the subject of the Gothic novel.

[11]James R. Foster, "The Abbé Prevost and the English Novel," PMLA, XLII (June 1927), 462.

A Sicilian Romance (1790) and The Romance of the Forest (1792), reveal the developing trends in her style: greater length, an abundance of scenic description, and an increasing skill in the handling of materials to create suspense and fear.

The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794), Mrs. Radcliffe's fourth novel, is frequently called her masterpiece because it best exploits the elements of style comprehended by the term "Radcliffian." The novel concerns the fears and travails of Emily St. Aubert. It begins on a tranquil note with idyllic descriptions of the life and surroundings of Emily, her father, St. Aubert, and her romantic lover, Valancourt. Troubles begin, however, when St. Aubert dies, and Emily is left in the care of a foolish aunt who marries the story's villain, Montoni. Montoni is a bandit who is intent on gaining the properties of both his wife and her ward. To this end, he carries them off to Udolpho, his castle hidden in the Apennines mountains. The aunt finally dies because of his cruelties, and Emily is forced to sign her property over to Montoni. Eventually, however, the authorities apprehend the villain, and Emily regains both her property and her lover.

Despite the tremendous popularity of The Mysteries of Udolpho, Mrs. Radcliffe wrote only two other novels, and only The Italian (1797) was published in her lifetime. This novel is still memorable (some critics consider it her

best) because of the characterization of its villain, a monk named Schedoni, and because of its climactic scene in which Schedoni is about to kill the heroine, Ellena, when he sees a portrait that convinces him that his intended victim is his own daughter.

Radcliffe wrote her last novel, Gaston de Blondeville, in 1802, but it was not published until 1826, three years after her death. Although most critics agree that the work is inferior to her earlier novels, it does include the only ghost which appears in all the pages of Ann Radcliffe's novels.

Although J. M. S. Tompkins does not use the term "Radcliffian" in her criticism, she does effectively summarize the main features of Radcliffe's style when she says:

> In all of them [Radcliffe's novels] a beautiful and solitary girl is persecuted in picturesque surroundings, and, after many fluctuations of fortune . . . is restored to her friends and marries the man of her choice. In all of them this simple theme is complicated by mystery and involved at some point in terrible, often supernatural suggestions. It would be possible to classify all the ingredients of Mrs. Radcliffe's romances under the two headings of Beauty and Terror, . . .[12]

One of Mrs. Radcliffe's methods of evoking terror is also the most controversial feature of her style. In all her Gothic novels, except the last one, she gives natural explanations for all apparent supernatural incidents.

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[12] The Popular Novel in England: 1770-1800 (London, 1932), pp. 251-252.

In The Mysteries of Udolpho, for example, Ludovico disappears from apartments in a castle which are reputed to be haunted. It is learned later, however, that bandits carried him off with them because he had discovered their secret hiding place. Some critics defend the technique as reasonable and no less effective than the use of real ghosts. Others are convinced that it reduces her powers to create an atmosphere of terror. Cazamian, for example, says:

> To explain away the supernatural is an unpardonable error, if the feeling of dread which the artist wishes to evoke demands a belief in the supernatural. When once the reader has been undeceived . . . it is a more difficult and even impossible task to again create in the course of a novel, or series of novels, the atmosphere of illusion.[13]

In any case, whether one likes the Radcliffian style or not, Radcliffe is frequently considered to be the best of the Gothic novelists. Without doubt, her work inspired more imitators than that of any other novelist working in this genre.[14]

Another form of the Gothic novel may, by analogy with "Radcliffian," be called "Lewisian." Like Radcliffe, Matthew Gregory Lewis had such a distinctive style that he created a new type of Gothic novel, and he did it with one work, The Monk (1796). In sharp contrast to Radcliffe's

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[13] Modern Times, p. 227.

[14] Gothic Quest, p. 232.

novels of sentimentality, scenic description, and various suggestions of the existence of the supernatural, The Monk includes elements of genuine horror, such as actual ghosts, real blood, rape, murder, decaying bodies, and even the Devil himself. Perhaps Varma best summarizes this contrast in styles when he says:

> The contrast between the work and personalities of Mrs. Radcliffe and 'Monk' Lewis serves to illustrate the two distinct streams of the Gothic novel: the former representing the Craft of Terror, the latter and his followers comprising the Chambers of Horror. . . . The difference between Terror and Horror is the difference between awful apprehension and sickening realization: between the smell of death and stumbling against a corpse.[15]

The Monk has two nearly unrelated plots. The main plot details the disintegration of Ambrosio, the young abbot of a monastery in Madrid. Famous for his piety, Ambrosio is, nevertheless, a man of great pride and latent sexual passion. He falls when an agent of the Devil, Matilda, disguises herself as a young man and enters the monastery. She seduces Ambrosio and goads him into the horrible crimes of sorcery, incest, and matricide. Eventually he is caught and imprisoned, but to escape the punishment of the Inquisition, he sells his soul to the Devil. The Devil betrays him, however, by lifting him high into the air and then dropping him to his death.

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[15] Gothic Flame, pp. 129-130.

The sub-plot concerns the tragic love affair of two youths named Don Raymond and Agnes. While visiting the Baroness Lindenberg in Germany, Raymond falls in love with her niece, Agnes, who is to enter a convent to fulfill a vow made by her parents. When the jealous Baroness discovers the affair, she sends Raymond away and insists that Agnes keep the vow. But the legend of "The Bleeding Nun" offers Agnes hope of escape. According to the legend, one night every five years a ghost in a blood-splattered habit walks out of Lindenberg castle to the cavern where she was murdered. Agnes secretly meets Raymond, tells him of the legend, and instructs him to wait for her on a certain night outside the castle gate, and she will fly to him dressed as the Bleeding Nun. Their timing is poor, however, for the actual ghost gets into Raymond's carriage. After a wild ride ending in a crash which injures Raymond, the young man finds himself being terrified nightly by visits from the Bleeding Nun. Eventually the Wandering Jew appears and casts a spell which causes the nun to reveal what may be done to put her spirit to rest. Meanwhile, Agnes begins her life in a convent in Madrid. The two plots merge for a time when, after Raymond has found Agnes again, a note between the two lovers is discovered and Ambrosio sentences Agnes to a dungeon, separating the lovers apparently for ever. Agnes is eventually rescued, however.

Lewis published The Monk in March of 1796. A second issue appeared in April, and a second edition was needed before the year's end. New editions were also published in 1797, 1798, and 1800. As the many editions indicate, Lewis and his novel become fantastically popular. Summers says, "To exaggerate the success and scandal of The Monk were impossible. Lewis at once became famous, and a celebrity he remained."[16]

Lewis received his inspiration from English, French, and German literature. Of the three sources, German literature had by far the greatest effect. In 1792 he went to Weimar where he met Goethe, Schiller, and others.[17] He learned the language and read widely, especially being attracted, according to Ernest A. Baker, by authors who were ". . . dealers in the uncanny, the grotesque, the horrific, the maudlin sentimental."[18]

His exact sources for many of the episodes in The Monk have, in fact, been the subject of a controversy almost as old as the novel itself. As early as the August, 1797, in an issue of The Monthly Review, a review of The Monk discussed Lewis' sources and suggested that he might

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[16] Gothic Quest, p. 212.

[17] Gothic Flame, pp. 149-150.

[18] The History of the English Novel, Vol. V: The Novel of Sentiment and the Gothic Romance (New York, 1967), 206.

be charged with plagiarism.[19] In an effort to answer these charges, Lewis wrote an explanation in which he allegedly revealed his sources; but Summers, among others, doubts the accuracy of Lewis' explanation, and he supplies a suggested list of sources of his own.[20] Railo also devotes several pages to this topic.[21]

As the need for several early editions of the novel indicates, The Monk was a tremendous popular success. Naturally, other writers were quick to capitalize on Lewis' achievement, and soon his influence eclipsed that of Radcliffe. Baker says: "[A]lthough feeble imitations of the Radcliffian novel continued to appear [after 1796], the only examples of English Gothic that counted now followed the fashion set by Lewis."[22]

Both the Radcliffian and the Lewisian versions of the Gothic novel contributed to a work considered by many critics to be the climactic achievement in the genre, Melmoth the Wanderer (1820), by Charles Robert Maturin. Concerning the role of the principal predecessors of Maturin in the development of his style, Varma says,

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[19]Review of The Monk in The Monthly Review, 2nd Series, XXIII (August 1797), 451.

[20]Gothic Quest, pp. 223-224.

[21]Haunted Castle, pp. 91-92.

[22]The Novel of Sentiment, p. 211.

> His [Maturin's] acute insight into character, vivid descriptive faculty, and sensitive style of writing, are in the tradition of Mrs. Radcliffe; but by his unabashed free use of the supernatural he treads in the footsteps of Lewis.[23]

Of the two, Radcliffe perhaps makes the most significant contribution; for from her, Maturin learned the art of creating an atmosphere of terror primarily through the power of suggestion. Varma says:

> His eerie atmosphere is evoked not by crude whiffs from the churchyard; rather he insinuates horror by the adroit Radcliffian device of reticence and suggestion. Maturin was intimately acquainted with the dim and dusky corners of Radcliffe's Gothic abbeys; he had viewed with trepidation their blood-stained staircases, their skeletons and corpses; his vigilent eye had noticed each rusty lock and creaking hinge; and he had carefully calculated the effect of these properties.[24]

As for the novel itself, in a Preface to the work, Maturin, who was a clergyman, claimed that the inspiration for it came from a passage in one of his own sermons, which said:

> "At this moment is there one of us present, however we may have departed from the Lord, disobeyed His will, and disregarded His word--is there one of us who would, at this moment, accept all that man could bestow, or earth afford, to resign the hope of his salvation? No, there is not one--not such a foot on earth, were the enemy of mankind to traverse it with the offer!"[25]

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[23] Gothic Flame, p. 160.

[24] Ibid., pp. 160-161.

[25] [Charles Robert Maturin], Preface to Melmoth the Wanderer: a Tale (4 vols.; 2d ed.; Edinburgh, 1821), I, ix-x.

The quotation obliquely hints at the plot of Melmoth the Wanderer. The novel tells the story of a man who, in his desire for knowledge, makes a compact with the Devil. According to their agreement, Melmoth has extraordinary powers to aid him in his search for knowledge, including a period of 150 years in which to conduct his search. At the end of that time, however, the Devil will claim his soul. If Melmoth desires to get out of his agreement, he may do so only if he can find someone who will exchange destinies with him. Eventually Melmoth's sole passion is to be relieved of this awful pact. Throughout the novel, therefore, he seeks out those who are suffering horribly and offers them his bargain.

As the story begins, young John Melmoth comes to the house of an elderly uncle who has seen something too dreadful for human eyes, and he is dying of fright. In the house are two mysterious items, an ancient manuscript and a portrait dated 1646 of a J. Melmoth. According to John's uncle, the man in the portrait is still alive although the time is now about 1800. After the old man dies, John reads the manuscript, which tells about the first of a series of encounters that various people had over a period of many years with the man of the portrait, J. Melmoth.

The strange and partially illegible manuscript was written by an Englishman named Stanton. While a prisoner in a madhouse, Stanton had a visit from Melmoth, who offered

to change places with him providing he accept the terms of Melmoth's pact with the Devil. After rejecting the offer, Stanton eventually got out of the madhouse and spent the rest of his life trying to find Melmoth. Although he was unsuccessful, he found Melmoth's old home, and he left his manuscript there.

The rest of the novel concerns a series of episodes told to John Melmoth by a Spaniard named Alonzo de Monçada. Monçada's experience with Melmoth began when he was a prisoner of the Inquisition. While in the very depths of despair, Monçada had a visit from Melmoth, but he resisted the Wanderer's usual proposal. Monçada then escaped from prison and found safety in the house of an old Jew. Coincidentally, he happened to find other stories about Melmoth in his host's house. Included among them was the fantastic courtship between Melmoth and a young maiden named Immalee, who was stranded on an Indian island. Years later, after her rescue, she assumed her rightful name and position as Donna Isadora. Melmoth again appeared to her, and they were married during a strange service conducted by the ghost of a dead monk.

Finally, Monçada's stories about Melmoth are interrupted by Melmoth himself. His allotted years have expired, and the Devil will soon come for him. He locks himself up in a room with orders that no one is to disturb him. The next morning he has disappeared, and all that John and

Monçada can find is his scarf hanging on a crag below the edge of a cliff overlooking the sea.

Such a brief summary hardly reveals even the main outline of the book. Perhaps it does, however, indicate some of the difficulties resulting from the novel's confused structure, a feature which most critics consider to be its principal weakness. For example, Lovecraft says: "The framework of the story [Melmoth the Wanderer] is very clumsy; involving tedious length, digressive episodes, narratives within narratives, and labored dovetailing and coincidence."[26]

But despite its annoying difficulties, critics frequently think of Melmoth the Wanderer as the climactic achievement in the genre because Maturin took the basic trappings and motifs of the Gothic novel and fashioned them into an original and powerful work of art. Birkhead notes, for example, that Maturin relies heavily on both the Faustian and the Wandering Jew motifs, and then she says: "But, when all these debts are acknowledged they do but serve to enhance the success of Maturin, who out of these varied strands could weave so original a romance."[27] Regardless of Maturin's achievement, however, one might still wish that it had been accomplished through a more economical and simpler narrative method.

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[26] Supernatural Horror, p. 32.

[27] Tale of Terror, p. 92.

If Maturin had chosen a more conventional narrative method, his book might have achieved the lasting fame that went to Frankenstein, which was written by Mary Shelley. Published in 1818, Frankenstein, like Melmoth the Wanderer, came at the end of the period, but it differs widely from Melmoth the Wanderer and almost all other Gothic novels. Instead of relying heavily on traditional folklore, such as ghosts, witchcraft, and popular legends, to create fear and terror, Frankenstein details a pseudo-scientific experiment and its horrifying results. The plot concerns a scientist named Frankenstein who robs graves in order to collect the human parts needed to build a monster. When the monster comes to life, however, the prospects are too terrifying, and Frankenstein refuses to create a mate for him. Because he is left alone and unloved, the monster seeks revenge by killing Frankenstein's fiancée. The scientist, in turn, follows the monster far to the north in order to kill him, but he dies and the monster disappears in the darkness, floating on an ice-raft. The story seems ridiculous, but the novel reads surprisingly well; for Mary Shelley had a talent for creating an atmosphere of terror and horror.

Of the hundreds of Gothic novels written between 1764 and 1820, Frankenstein is probably the only title still popularly known. But in its own day, the Gothic novel held the public imagination in England in a feverish grip. In an article entitled "How long was Gothic fiction in vogue?"

Robert Mayo attempts to trace the popularity of the genre by noting the number of pages in Lady's Magazine devoted to Gothic tales during the years of their greatest interest. Writing about the 1790's and the early 1800's, he says:

> [F]or two decades, tales of crime, mystery, and terror became a regular ingredient of the Lady's Magazine, every volume of which until 1813 was to feed in some form or other the general taste for imaginative horrors.[28]

The "high-water year" was 1805 when three out of four serials printed in Lady's Magazine were "tales of terror."[29] Regardless of the dubious nature of Mayo's method for determining a "high-water year," the immense popularity of the Gothic novel suggested by his figures is beyond question. The genre provided the leading escape literature of England for almost two decades.

Naturally, only a very few works from this tremendous outpouring of Gothic story deserve serious consideration. Most of the important works in the genre have been at least mentioned in this brief survey. Of those discussed here, five have been selected for analysis: The Castle of Otranto, The Old English Baron, The Mysteries of Udolpho, The Monk, and Melmoth the Wanderer. These novels were selected for several important reasons. Generally speaking, they represent the most important forms taken by the Gothic

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[28] MLN, LVIII (January 1943), 60.

[29] Ibid., p. 61.

novel. Therefore, they are also the novels most frequently discussed by the scholarship on the subject. More specifically, since The Castle of Otranto was the first Gothic novel, it logically must be included. Clara Reeve contributed the first Historical-Gothic novel, and, in addition, The Old English Baron presents an interesting contrast to Walpole's use of folklore. The Mysteries of Udolpho is generally considered the best representative of the "Radcliffian" style, and The Monk is the "Lewisian" novel. For several reasons, Melmoth the Wanderer is a logical and necessary choice. It is the last of the important Gothic novels, and many consider it to be the best one ever written. Also, the use of folk elements in Melmoth the Wanderer is especially striking and effective. Finally, and most importantly, these five novels adequately illustrate the wide variety of folk materials used by the Gothic novelists and the various ways in which these materials function in Gothic novels.

PART II

AN ANALYSIS OF SELECTED GOTHIC NOVELS

CHAPTER IV

INTRODUCTION

The many aspects of folklore which appear in Gothic novels may be categorized under a single heading: superstition. Concerning the first Gothic novelist, Horace Walpole, Kenneth Clark says: "He was . . . hampered by the universal belief that Gothic was the product of a dark and superstitious age."[1] When one realizes that Walpole and his successors thought of their medieval ancestors as having been ruled largely by their superstitions, he understands the reason for the reliance of Gothic novelists on superstition as a central feature of their art.

At this point it would be well to define the word "superstition." In an article entitled "Superstitions and Survivals," E. O. James discusses the loose way in which the word is currently used, and then he says:

> . . . the Latin Superstitio signifies a 'standing over' or 'survival', describing an irrational or a credulous attitude towards magico-religious beliefs and practices in a modern civilized community long after these primitive ideas and customs have been abandoned by the more sophisticated section of society. In the interval that has elapsed the superstitions as isolated relics have ceased to have any specific meaning and purpose in the existing social structure and its machinery, and for the most part taken over the character of unedifying excrescences.[2]

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[1] Gothic Revival, p. 45.

[2] Folklore, LXXII (March 1961), 289.

The word "superstition" has such powerful and unlimited connotations that frequently the major Gothic authors rely on the mere word itself to achieve their purpose. Radcliffe is especially fond of this technique. For example, in The Mysteries of Udolpho, Emily's imagination "was inflamed" by several terrifying nights at Udolpho, and ". . . the terrors of superstition again pervaded her mind."[3] No particular superstition is mentioned; rather, a vague dread of something unknown but ominous provides the terror. Unquestionably the vagueness of the passage is itself the key to the effectiveness of Radcliffe's style; for it allows the reader to supply his own most terrifying thoughts and to equate them with the fears of Emily.

Lewis also relies on vague superstitions to create an atmosphere of dread, but he narrows the ground somewhat by using the word with reference to religious beliefs that he wishes to disparage. In the opening paragraph of The Monk, he writes: "In a city where superstition reigns with such despotic sway as in Madrid, to seek for true devotion would be a fruitless attempt."[4] Later in the novel, Lewis gives the reader some insight into the specific superstitions

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[3]Ann Radcliffe, The Mysteries of Udolpho, Introduction by R. Austin Freeman (2 vols.; London, 1949), II, 40. Subsequent references to this work are included in the body of the text.

[4]M. G. Lewis, The Monk, a Romance, ed. by E. A. Baker (London, 1929), p. 1. Subsequent references to this work are indicated in the body of the text.

which he thinks rule the minds of the people when he reveals the thoughts of Lorenzo as he stands in a crowd of worshippers in Madrid. Lewis writes:

> He [Lorenzo] had long observed with disapprobation and contempt the superstition which governed Madrid's inhabitants. His good sense had pointed out to him the artifices of the monks, and the gross absurdity of their miracles, wonders, and suppositious reliques (p. 276).

The reference to superstition in this context is clearly an anti-Catholic device.

For the purposes of order and convenience, the other specific superstitions which appear in the Gothic novels included in this study are analyzed under four chapter headings. The superstitions discussed in these chapters, along with the identifying numbers assigned to them in Stith Thompson's Motif-Index of Folk-Literature, are as follows: V, Incest (T410.), Omens (D1812.5.), and Other Minor Elements; VI, Ghosts (E200--E599.); VII, Witchcraft (witches: G200-G299.); VIII, Legends, The Wandering Jew (Q502.1.) and Faust (M211.).[5]

As its title indicates, Chapter V is a miscellaneous chapter which discusses several superstitions which are unrelated to each other except for the fact that they do not relate directly to the three major categories: Ghosts, Witchcraft, and Legends. For example, superstitions

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[5]When specific motifs within these categories are discussed, their numbers are cited in the body of the text.

regarding omens could not be placed in the chapter on legends because they are beliefs which are not associated with a particular character type, such as the Wandering Jew. In addition, these superstitions are included in the same chapter because none of them is employed with enough frequency to justify devoting a separate chapter to it.

However, the organization of the various superstitions according to these four chapter headings does result in a certain amount of overlapping of materials. For example, the superstitions regarding exorcism could be included in both the chapter on ghosts and the chapter on witchcraft because exorcism is an aspect of both topics. Also, since the appearance of a ghost may be regarded as an omen of death (E574.), this motif could be discussed in Chapter V. But, because superstitions about ghosts appear with great frequency in the novels, a separate chapter on ghosts seems to be a better place for discussing the ghost as a death omen. Despite the problem of overlapping elements, therefore, the arrangement of materials according to specific categories provides a convenient and workable method of dealing with the wide variety of superstitions which appear in the major Gothic novels.

CHAPTER V

THE FUNCTIONS OF INCEST, OMENS, AND OTHER MINOR ELEMENTS

Lord Raglan defines incest as ". . . marriage or sexual intercourse which is prohibited on the ground that there is some connexion between the parties."[1] The origin of the incest taboo is unknown. Lord Raglan lists more than a dozen theories,[2] none of which he accepts. Perhaps the most widely accepted theory is that of Sir James Frazer, who suggests that the incest taboo may have its origin in magic and superstition. His theory is that from ancient times people made a magical and superstitious connection between incest and poor crops: "[T]he blight was at first supposed to be a direct consequence of the act itself."[3] He concludes:

> If this was so, it is possible that something of the horror which incest has excited among most . . . races of men, sprang from this ancient superstition and has been transmitted as an instinct in many nations long after the imaginary ground of it had been forgotten.[4]

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[1] Jocasta's Crime, An Anthropological Study (New York, n.d.), p. 102.

[2] Ibid., pp. 85-86.

[3] The Golden Bough, A Study in Magic and Religion, Part I, Vol. II: The Magic Art and the Evolution of Kings, 3d ed. (New York, 1955), 116.

[4] Ibid., pp. 116-117.

Frazer partly supports his theory by citing the drama Oedipus the King by Sophocles, in which Oedipus unknowingly kills his father and marries his mother. As a result, the city of Thebes suffers from a terrible blight. Apollo warns that the one polluting the land, Oedipus, must be driven out of the city. Although the murder of Laius is partly responsible for the blight, Frazer argues that the citizens of Thebes ". . . can hardly have failed to lay much also of the evil at the door of his [Oedipus's] incest with his mother."[5]

Although the problem of the origin of the incest taboo has no direct bearing on this study, the reference by Frazer to Oedipus the King demonstrates the fact that incest is an ancient and significant theme in Greek literature. The theme of incest also appears in ancient Hebrew and Roman literature. In English literature, there are traces of the theme in both the medieval and Renaissance periods. In Hamlet, Prince Hamlet accuses Claudius of incest because he married the wife of his dead brother, King Hamlet.

About ten years after Hamlet was written, a play by Cyril Tourneur entitled The Atheist's Tragedie includes the theme of incest in a more significant role. The work

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[5]The Magic Art, p. 115.

is worth noting briefly, not only because of the theme of incest in the plot, but also because several of the details in the play are similar to the plot elements which lead to the introduction of the theme of incest into The Castle of Otranto. The villain of The Atheist's Tragedie, D'Amville, murders his brother and usurps his wealth and authority. In order to perpetuate his name, D'Amville forces a marriage between his sickly and impotent son, Rousard, to Castabella. When it becomes apparent to him that Rousard is incapable of giving him an heir, D'Amville attempts to seduce Castabella. But she refuses her father-in-law's advances, and she expresses a sense of horror in the following speech:

> Now Heau'n defend me! May my memorie
> Be vtterly extinguish'd; and the heire
> Of him that was my Fathers enemie,
> Raise his eternall monument vpon
> Our ruines; ere the greatest pleasure or
> The greatest profit, euer tempt me to
> Continue it by incest.[6]

When seduction fails, D'Amville attempts to rape the girl, but the hero of the play, Charlemont, arrives in time to rescue her.

One critic gives John Ford credit for being the first English author to approach the theme of incest "in a forthright manner" in his drama 'Tis Pity She's a Whore (1625).[7] As the play begins, Giovanni is arguing with Friar

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[6]Cyril Tourneur, The Atheist's Tragedie, in The Works of Cyril Tourneur, ed. by Allardyce Nicoll (New York, 1963), IV.iii.132-138.

[7]Donald Webster Cory [pseud.] and R. E. L. Masters, Introduction to Violation of Taboo: Incest in the Great

Bonaventura concerning his love for his sister, Annabella. But no argument can dissuade Giovanni from declaring his love, and Annabella confesses to her brother that she returns his love. When Annabella becomes pregnant, she marries Soranzo in order to preserve her honor. Her husband discovers the truth, however, and he plots to kill Giovanni. The play ends in tragedy, as the incest theme appears to require. Giovanni kills his sister and Soranzo shortly before he himself is slain by hired assassins. The sense of horror and guilt traditionally associated with incest is best expressed by Annabella in a brief soliloquy at the beginning of the last act. She says:

> Pleasures, farewell, and all ye thriftless minutes
> Wherein false joys have spun a weary life!
> To these my fortunes now I take my leave.
> Thou, precious Time, that swiftly rid'st in post
> Over the world, to finish up the race
> Of my last fate, here stay thy restless course,
> And bear to ages that are yet unborn
> A wretched, woeful woman's tragedy!
> My conscience now stands up against my lust,
> With depositions character'd in guilt,
> And tells me I am lost.[8]

Eino Railo explains the naturalness with which such a powerful theme as incest would make its way into Gothic fiction. He says:

Literature of the Past and Present, ed. by Donald W. Cory and R. E. L. Masters (New York, 1963), p. 12.

[8]John Ford, 'Tis Pity She's a Whore, in The Dramatic Works of John Ford, with notes by W. Gifford, Vol. I (London, 1827), V.i.1-11.

> Incest is the kind of motive that an author with a cool and passionless conception of beauty would avoid as violent and unnatural, whereas a mind fired by romantic defiance of the limits of art and bent upon evoking horror would be secretly drawn to it. When Walpole began to create a 'Gothic' literature, it was only natural that in pondering over the most suitable characters with which to people his haunted castle he should chance upon the idea of incestuous relations between them. As the motive offers good opportunities of evoking that terror and suspense-filled atmosphere of mystery which is one of the chief aims of the terror-romanticist, it is to be expected that wherever literature turns into romantic channels, the subject of incest will sooner or later emerge.[9]

But despite the suitability of the subject to the chief aims of Gothic fiction, the major novelists made only limited use of it. The Castle of Otranto includes only the threat of incest; Clara Reeve and Mrs. Radcliffe "scarce dared approach it";[10] Lewis adds incest to the catalogue of crimes committed by Ambrosio; and Maturin includes the theme in only one of the tales of Melmoth the Wanderer. However, even in its limited role, the theme of incest makes an important contribution to two of the novels in which it appears.

Walpole uses the theme for two purposes: to darken the atmosphere of terror, and to enlarge on the evil characterization of Manfred by depicting him as one who is capable of resorting to the most horrifying of sins if it

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[9] Haunted Castle, p. 271.

[10] Ibid., p. 272.

will aid him in the satisfaction of his lust for property and power.

After Conrad dies and Manfred is left with no male heir, Manfred knows that he will lose Otranto unless he can find a way to produce an heir. He therefore schemes to divorce his wife and marry Isabella, the girl originally contracted to his son. But when Isabella hears Manfred's plan, she is horrified by such a prospect, and she says to Manfred, "Heavens! . . . what do I hear? You, my lord! You! My father in law! the father of Conrad!" (p. 23). Later, during a conversation with Hippolita, Isabella enlarges on the horror with which she views a marriage with Manfred by calling it "an impious deed," and "a cursed act . . . [which] divine and human laws forbid" (pp. 87-88). Although Isabella never uses the word "incest," or any form of it, it is clear that incest is the source of her horror from what the friar says to Manfred: "[B]y me thou art warned not to pursue the incestuous design on thy contracted daughter" (p. 48).

Ironically, Manfred's pretext for divorcing his wife, if it is a pretext, is the prohibition of the church against incest. After the friar warns him against his "incestuous design," Manfred argues that his present marriage may be incestuous; he says: "[I]t is some time that I have had scruples on the legality of our union: Hippolita is related to me in the fourth degree" (p. 49). And in his

explanation to the three knights, who have come to Otranto in the name of the Marquis of Vicenza, he says:

> I have long been troubled in mind on my union with the princess Hippolita. . . . She shares my scruples, and with her consent I have brought this matter before the church, for we are related within the forbidden degree (p. 66).

Although it appears that Manfred is desperately seeking an excuse for divorcing his wife, he may have some basis for his claim that his marriage to Hippolita is incestuous if Cory is correct when he writes: "Under the domination of the Roman Catholic Church, Christianity extended its definition of incestuous relationships to preposterous lengths. At some periods in Europe, even sixth cousins were forbidden to marry."[11] Furthermore, the conclusion of the story becomes more logical if Manfred is voicing a long-standing personal fear. In his discussion of the theme of incest in 'Tis Pity She's a Whore, Cory gives Ford credit for capturing the conflicts and ". . . guilt that haunt those who violate so strong a norm, and the sense of fatalistic doom that is all-pervasive, as in a Greek tragedy, and that must follow the perpetrators of the incestuous act."[12] Perhaps Manfred is expressing a genuine fear when he tells the friar that he senses the judgment of heaven in the death of his son: "[T]o this state of unlawful wedlock

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[11] Introduction to Violation of Taboo, p. 5.

[12] Ibid., p. 13.

I impute the visitation that has fallen on me in the death of Conrad" (p. 49). If the death of Conrad is a "visitation," the senseless death of Matilda at the end of the story might also be interpreted in the same way. And certainly the fear of incest offers some logical reason--beyond the demands of romanticism--for the separation of Manfred and Hippolita at the end of the story.

Admittedly, this interpretation credits Manfred with more integrity than many of the other details of the plot would seem to warrant. Nevertheless, the possibilities raised by such an interpretation certainly enrich the characterization of Manfred by adding an enigmatic quality to it.

Lewis was the next major novelist to use the theme of incest. At the beginning of The Monk, one learns that the parentage of Ambrosio is a mystery (p. 9).[13] But after the monk has killed Elvira and raped and murdered Antonia, Lucifer says to him:

> "Hark, Ambrosio! while I unveil your crimes! You have shed the blood of two innocents; Antonia and Elvira perished by your hand. That Antonia whom you violated, was your sister! that Elvira--whom you murdered gave you birth! Tremble, abandoned hypocrite! inhuman parricide! incestuous ravisher! tremble at the extent of your offences!" (p. 354).

The effect of incest unwittingly committed (N361.) is blunted in The Monk because it is anticlimactic. By the

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[13]The monks claim that Ambrosio was given to them by the Virgin (p. 9).

time the reader learns that Ambrosio has committed incest, he has already watched him commit the most terrifying sin of all by selling his soul to the Devil.

Maturin's subtle handling of the theme of incest in "The Lovers' Tale" contrasts sharply with the coarse descriptions of The Monk. Especially striking is the fact that, although the overt act of incest occurs in The Monk, the horror associated with it does not influence any of the characters or the development of the narrative; but in "The Lovers' Tale," although the act of incest does not occur, the horror associated with it does influence the actions of the characters, so that incest is an important element in the development of the plot of the story.

The lovers are Elinor Mortimer and her cousin, John Sandal. Elinor is the daughter of the apostate son of Sir Roger Mortimer. John is the son of Sir Roger's only daughter, who had angered her father by marrying an Independent preacher named Sandal. But Sir Roger is proud of his oldest son because he was killed fighting for the King. This son had a daughter named Margaret, who is highly favored by Sir Roger because of her father.

Young John Sandal gains a qualified acceptance by his grandfather by distinguishing himself in the navy. After John returns home, he and Elinor plan to marry. But on the day of their wedding, John rides by the church, gives a look of horror, and disappears in the distance. Then

John marries Margaret, and Elinor becomes a spinster who pines over her lost love.

Eventually the reason behind John's strange behavior toward Elinor is disclosed. His mother had learned that, according to the terms of Sir Roger's will, he would receive only a small inheritance if he were to marry Elinor, but that, since Margaret would receive the bulk of the old man's estate, John would be wealthy if he were to marry Margaret. To prevent John from an unprofitable marriage to Elinor, and to make it possible for him to marry Margaret, Mrs. Sandal had lied to him about his birth by telling him that he was actually the son of her husband and the mother of Elinor, a relationship which would make Elinor his half-sister. A fearful dread of committing incest, therefore, lay behind his sudden rejection of Elinor.

After Margaret, John's wife, dies during childbirth, Mrs. Sandal confesses to John that she had lied about his birth. This shocking revelation, along with other factors resulting from the death of his wife, causes John to lose his mind. Elinor attempts to nurse him back to health, but after all her efforts fail, she plunges to the depths of despair. It is at this point in the story that Melmoth appears to tempt Elinor. But with the help of a local clergyman, who had previously known Melmoth, Elinor resists the temptation which Melmoth presents to her.

Because incest provides the motivation for the rejection of Elinor by John at the beginning of the story, the incest motif lies at the heart of "The Lovers' Tale," All other significant details of the plot find their source in this act of rejection, including the despair and deterioration of Elinor and the death of John. But despite the horrors associated with the theme of incest, discreet handling of the material by Maturin allows "The Lovers' Tale" to be one of the most appealing features in Melmoth the Wanderer.

To create the sensation of horror, nevertheless, is the primary function of the theme of incest in Gothic novels. That Maturin achieves this purpose without sensationalism or coarseness is surely an important fact which speaks eloquently for his skill as a Gothic novelist.

Another superstition which appears in the major Gothic novels is a belief in omens. This fact is hardly surprising when one considers the following observation from John Brand's Popular Antiquities:

> A superstitious regard to omens seems anciently to have made very considerable additions to the common load of human infelicity. . . . Omens appear to have been so numerous that we must despair of ever being able to recover them all: and to evince that in all ages men have been self-tormentors, the bad omens fill a catalogue infinitely more extensive than that of the good.[14]

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[14] Observations on the Popular Antiquities of Great Britain: Chiefly Illustrating the Origin of Our Vulgar

Indeed, practically all omens in Gothic novels are bad omens because their primary function is to contribute to the atmosphere of terror.

In order for an omen to create a sense of dread and terror, the reader must recognize it. The novelists therefore chose omens that are commonly known, even today, with at least one notable exception, which appears in The Castle of Otranto. During the course of Manfred's argument with the friar over his intention to divorce his wife and marry Isabella, Manfred tells the friar that Frederic has agreed to the marriage; then the narrative continues as follows:

> As he spoke those words three drops of blood fell from the nose of Alfonso's statue. Manfred turned pale, and the princess sunk on her knees. Behold! said the friar: mark this miraculous indication that the blood of Alfonso will never mix with that of Manfred! My gracious lord, said Hippolita, let us submit ourselves to heaven (p. 93).

The three drops of blood are clearly understood by the characters, including Manfred himself, to be a bad omen (Cf. D1812.5.1.1.1.). But critics who were not familiar with this particular omen, were scornful of the passage until William Lyon Phelps verified it in one of John Dryden's plays entitled Amboyna (1673).[15] The passage is as follows:

> Something within me does forbode me ill;
> I stumbled when I enter'd first this Wood:

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and Provincial Customs, Ceremonies, and Superstitions, revised by Sir Henry Ellis (3 vols.; London, 1855), III, 110-111.

[15] English Romantic Movement, p. 108, fn.

> My Nostrills bled three drops; Then stopp'd the Blood,
> And not one more wou'd follow.[16]

Railo credits Phelps with being the first to prove that the three drops of blood were a bad omen, and he also adds several other references to the evidence.[17] Nathan Drake quotes an unidentified source which includes "'blood dropping thrice from the nose'" in a list of bad omens.[18]

Among the omens of a more traditional nature which are used in Gothic novels are birds, strange music, strange lights, and the moon. Some examples will illustrate how these omens function as devices for adding to the aura of terror and for foreshadowing future horrors in the novels.

In her article "Some Fabulous Birds," Constance Sherman says:

> But of all birds, the owl enjoyed the worst reputation. Since primitive man was afraid of the dark, he feared the creatures that were abroad in the shadows, and the owl with its flapping wings, great staring eyes, and horrible screech became associated with witchcraft and death.[19]

The association between the screech-owl and death (Cf. D1812. 5.1.27.1.) becomes an effective Gothic device in The Monk during the scene in which Ambrosio pauses in the cemetery of St. Clare before entering the vaults and proceeding to

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[16]Dryden, The Dramatic Works, ed. by Montague Summers, III (London, 1932), IV.i.

[17]Haunted Castle, p. 340.

[18]Shakespeare and His Times (Paris, 1838); (New York, 1969), p. 171.

[19]NYFQ, XVI (1960), 40.

the helpless body of Antonia. Lewis says, "Here he paused: he looked round him with suspicion, conscious that his business was unfit for any other eye. As he stood in hesitation, he heard the melancholy shriek of the screech-owl" (p. 303). The shriek of the owl adds to the terror of the moment; but it seems also to foreshadow the terrible events that are to follow: the rape and murder of Antonia and the exposure and ruin of Ambrosio himself.

Music is another ill omen used in Gothic novels (Cf. D1812.5.1.13.). The authenticity of this omen is substantiated by a passage in a work by Joseph Glanvill entitled Saducismus Triumphatus in which the author discusses certain

> . . . prognostick Signs before the Death of some Men . . . which are made . . . Sometimes by Musick, as I heard credibly reported of a whole Family that died one after another in a little time; and ever some while before any of the House fell sick; there was music heard to go from the House (though nothing seen) playing all along.[20]

In The Mysteries of Udolpho, this superstition is voiced by La Voisin during a conversation with Emily and St. Aubert, who is ill. St. Aubert believes he hears music, but he asks if it could be an echo:

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[20] Saducismus Triumphatus: or, Full and Plain Evidence Concerning Witches and Apparitions. In Two Parts. The First treating of their Possibility; The Second of their Real Existence (3d ed.; London, 1689); Introduction by Coleman O. Parsons (Gainesville, Florida, 1966), p. 488.

> 'It is an echo, monsieur, I fancy. That guitar is often heard at night, when all is still, but nobody knows who touches it; and it is sometimes accompanied by a voice so sweet and so sad, that one would almost think the woods were haunted.'
> 'They certainly are haunted,' said St. Aubert with a smile; 'but I believe it is by mortals.'
> 'I have sometimes heard it at midnight, when I could not sleep,' rejoined La Voisin, . . . 'They say it often comes to warn people of their death; but I have heard it these many years, and outlived the warning.'
> Emily, though she smiled at the mention of this ridiculous superstition, could not, in the present tone of her spirits, wholly resist its contagion (I, 69-70).

St. Aubert dies shortly after this discussion. Thereafter strange music, which causes the reader to fear that something terrible is about to happen to Emily, is frequently heard in the novel.[21]

Strange music is also an omen of death in Melmoth the Wanderer. On one occasion some gentlemen in Madrid discuss the rumor that strange music accompanies the Wanderer wherever he goes. One of them says: "'I have heard . . . that a delicious music precedes the approach of this person when his destined victim,--the being whom he is permitted to tempt or to torture,--is about to appear or to approach him.'"[22] Apparently Melmoth's victims

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[21]Like all other apparent supernatural incidents in The Mysteries of Udolpho, strange music has a natural explanation (II, 333).

[22]Charles Robert Maturin, Melmoth the Wanderer, with an Introduction by William F. Axton (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1966), p. 250. Subsequent references to this work are included in the body of the text.

are the only ones who hear the music. At the wedding party described in Stanton's old manuscript, the bride and groom heard "delicious sounds floating round them" (p. 25); but later that night, the guests at the party

> . . . were roused by cries of horror and agony from the bridal-chamber, where the young pair had retired.
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> They hurried to the door, but the father was first. They burst it open, and found the bride a corse in the arms of her husband (p. 27).[23]

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[23]It might be noted that music in the form of ballads, which frequently include superstitions in their lyrics, makes an interesting contribution to The Monk. Several ballads are sung or read in the novel. One or two of them are translations (see The Haunted Castle, pp. 106-107 and the "Advertisement" to The Monk); at least one of them, "Alonzo the Brave and Fair Imogine," is a composition by Lewis himself. Traditionally, ballads are anonymous (Introducing Folklore, p. 63); but because of an interesting development in the history of "Alonzo the Brave," one feels justified in considering it a genuine ballad. In an article entitled "'Monk' Lewis in Nebraska," Louise Pound includes the words and music of a ballad, which in Nebraska is called "The Lady and the Knight," but which is actually "Alonzo the Brave" under a different title (SFQ, IX (June 1945), 107). By passing from the written tradition into the oral tradition, "Alonzo the Brave" reverses the process normally followed by folk materials, but its experience is not unique.

Ballads in The Monk add to the romantic atmosphere of the novel, but they also function in the logical development of the narrative. Among the devices which hint at the latent passions of Ambrosio is a scene fairly early in the novel in which Matilda sings a ballad entitled "Durandarte and Belerma." As she sings and plays her harp, Ambrosio sees her exposed elbow, and her cowl no longer covers her face: "[T]wo coral lips were visible, ripe, fresh, and melting, and a chin, in whose dimples seemed to lurk a thousand Cupids" (p. 58). The sight of her features is almost too much for Ambrosio: "He struggled with desire, and shuddered when he beheld how deep was the precipice before him" (p. 58). His eventual abandonment of all restraints is strongly foreshadowed by this scene. Much later in the novel, after the death of Elvira, a

Another ill omen substantiated in Saducismus Triumphatus is the appearance of strange lights: "Sometimes the Appearance of Lights presages the Death of some of a Family, and the number according to the number of Lights."[24] The use of this superstition by Radcliffe is especially effective. While Emily is at Udolpho, she sees a strange

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ghostly ballad prepares Antonia for the appearance of the ghost of her mother. Because of her melancholy mood following the death of her mother, Antonia opens a volume of old Spanish ballads and reads one which is entitled "Alonzo the Brave and Fair Imogine." In the narrative, Imogine promises Alonzo that she will not forget him while he is fighting in a distant land. But if she were to forget, she says, your ghost "'May tax me with perjury, claim me as bride, / And bear me away to the grave'" (p. 251). While Alonzo is away, however, Imogine marries a rich baron. After the wedding, a stranger comes to her side; he is the ghost of Alonzo, and he takes Imogine to her grave. In a rich understatement, Lewis says: "The perusal of this story was ill calculated to dispel Antonia's melancholy" (p. 252). And when Antonia sees the ghost of her mother a few moments later, she falls "lifeless on the floor" (p. 254). Another ballad contributes briefly to an important episode of the sub-plot. After Raymond fails to rescue Agnes from the convent of St. Clare, Lorenzo, her brother, attempts a rescue of his own, but he is told that she is dead. Even though Raymond can not believe that his lover is dead, he is too disturbed by the thought of it to act. But his servant, Theodore, disguises himself as a begger and goes to the convent. To the nuns he sings a ballad which Agnes had taught him, hoping that she will hear the song and respond to it. Although Agnes does not hear the ballad, one of the nuns gives Theodore a note that has information about Agnes which subsequently leads to her rescue and to the exposure of the villainies of Ambrosio in the vaults of St. Clare.

Although the ballads have only a minor role in The Monk, they nevertheless contribute to the narrative in specific and logical ways, rather than imposing on the reader an annoying and unnecessary pause in the narrative, as the lyrics of Radcliffe frequently do in The Mysteries of Udolpho. In this respect, at least, Lewis is the better artist.

[24]Saducismus Triumphatus, p. 488.

light on the rampart. When she learns that the light appears to be carried by one of Montoni's soldiers, she asks him about it. He answers that the light is on the point of his lance, but he does not understand how it got there. One of his friends, he says, considers the light to be an omen which "'bodes no good'" (II, 43). Later that same night, Emily's aunt, Madame Montoni, dies.

The juxtaposition of the strange light and the death of Madame Montoni makes a strong impression on the mind of the young heroine. A short time later, Udolpho is attacked by the enemies of Montoni, and two soldiers, Ugo and Bertrand, lead Emily away from the castle. As they steal through the groves of cypress and sycamore trees, Emily is suddenly startled

> . . . by a thin tapering flame that appeared, by fits, at the point of the pike which Bertrand carried, resembling what she had observed on the lance of the sentinel the night Madame Montoni died, and which he had said was an omen. The event immediately following, it appeared to justify the assertion, and a superstitious impression had remained on Emily's mind, which the present appearance confirmed. She thought it was an omen of her own fate, and watched it successively vanish and return, in gloomy silence (II, 78).

The subtle artistry of Radcliffe forces the reader to draw the same conclusion which Emily draws about the light. The result is terror.

In contrast to the bad omens discussed thus far, the moon may be interpreted as a good omen as well as a

bad omen (D1812.5.1.5.), as may be seen from the following discussion taken from Popular Antiquities:

> [I]ts [the moon's] appearances as predictive of evil and good, and its power over the weather and over many of the minor concerns of life . . . were almost universally confided in as matters of useful and necessary belief in the sixteenth century.[25]

Among its powers for good, the moon was thought to be able to aid young women in learning about their future husbands. T. F. Thiselton-Dyer says: "People [used to] address invocations to the moon, . . . Thus, in many places it is customary for young women to appeal to the moon to tell them their future prospects in matrimony."[26] In Melmoth the Wanderer, Immalee appears to see the moon as a good omen recommending Melmoth to her for a husband. Maturin writes:

> The young Indian caught from this object [the moon] an omen alike auspicious to her imagination and her heart. She burst from him [Melmoth]--she rushed into the light of nature, whose glory seemed like the promise of redemption, gleaming amid the darkness of the fall. She pointed to the moon, that sun of the eastern nights, whose broad and brilliant light fell like a mantle of glory over rock and ruin, over tree and flower.
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> "Wed me by this light," cried Immalee, "and I will be yours for ever!" (p. 248).

The naïveté of Immalee and the ambiguity associated with the moon combine to make the passage especially rich in Gothic suggestion.

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[25] Popular Antiquities, III, 143.

[26] Folk-Lore in Shakespeare (New York, 1884), p. 70.

Another superstition frequently employed in Gothic novels is the belief in the power of dreams to reveal terrible deeds that have been committed or to foretell the future (D1812.3.3.). Numerous accounts of prophetic dreams appear in both the Old and the New Testaments. In secular literature, the superstition contributes to such famous works as The Aeneid and The Canterbury Tales, and to dozens of others. In The Aeneid Dido learns about the murder of her husband when his wraith appears to her in her sleep and shows her the death wounds in his breast. In The Nun's Priest's Tale, Chanticleer argues that many great authorities

> . . . han wel founden by experience
> That dremes been significaciouns
> As wel of joye as of tribulaciouns
> That folk enduren in this lif present.[27]

Two dreams contribute to the narrative of The Castle of Otranto. One dream occurs many years prior to the action of the story itself, although it is not revealed until the end of the novel. After Ricardo, who is the grandfather of Manfred and chamberlain to Alfonso, poisons Alfonso, he is haunted by guilt. He repents, and St. Nicholas appears to him in a dream and promises him that his ". . . posterity should reign in Otranto until the rightful owner should be grown too large to inhabit the castle, and as

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[27] The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. by F. N. Robinson (2d ed.; Boston, 1961), 2978-2981.

long as issue-male from Ricardo's loins should remain to enjoy it" (p. 109). The dream foretells the appearance of the giant ghost of Alfonso that bursts the walls of the castle as a sign of the end of the reign of the posterity of Ricardo at Otranto. More importantly, so far as the plot of the novel is concerned, it is Manfred's knowledge of this dream that drives him to seek a divorce and force his attentions on Isabella.

Frederic, the father of Isabella, has the other dream in the story. While he is a prisoner in the Holy Land, a dream warns him that his daughter is being held captive in a castle (Cf. D1813.1.6.). After his own release, Frederic follows the instructions given to him in the dream for learning more about his daughter. As a result, he and his knights eventually arrive at Otranto, and Frederic figures prominently in the plot of the novel from that point.

In The Old English Baron, a prophetic dream hints at horrible crimes committed antecedent to the action of the novel, and it foreshadows important events soon to follow in the narrative. As the novel begins, Sir Philip comes to the vicinity of the castle of Lord Lovel. He asks a peasant if his old friend still lives in the ancestral castle, but the peasant tells him that Lord Lovel has been dead for fifteen years. That night Sir Philip has a dream, and in his dream he goes to the castle where Lord

Lovel welcomes him and says: "[T]he hopes of my house rest upon you?" (p. 13). As the dream continues, Lord Lovel leads Sir Philip through the rooms of his castle

> . . . till he came into a dark and frightful cave, where he disappeared, and in his stead he beheld a complete suit of armor stained with blood, which belonged to his friend, and he thought he heard dismal groans from beneath (p. 14).

An important second part of the dream is as follows:

> Presently after, he [Sir Philip] thought he was hurried away by an invisible hand, and led into a wild heath, where the people were inclosing the ground, and making preparations for two combatants; the trumpet sounded, and a voice called out still louder Forbear! it is not permitted to be revealed till the time is ripe for the event (p. 14).

This part of the dream foreshadows a duel which is held between Sir Philip and Sir Walter Lovel, who is the murderer of Lord Lovel. The purpose of the duel is to force Sir Walter to confess to his crimes. The interruption of the dream is an obvious device for raising the curiosity of the reader.

Another dream in the novel disturbs the sleep of Edmund Twyford during his first night in the haunted apartment. Edmund dreams that a warrior in armor leads a beautiful young woman to his bed and asks her if Edmund is their child. The woman answers: "It is; and the hour approaches that he shall be known for such" (p. 70). The two dreams foreshadow almost all of the basic facts of the plot: that a restless ghost haunts the castle; that some foul crime has been committed; and that Edmund is "somebody of consequence" (p. 71).

A dream also foreshadows the principal facts of the main plot in The Monk. After meeting Antonia, Lorenzo dreams of a wedding scene in which Antonia claims him as her bridegroom. But before they can be married, a gigantic monster rushes between them. Written on his forehead are the words "'Pride! Lust! Inhumanity!'" The monster takes Antonia in his arms and tortures her with "odious caresses" as she tries to escape. Then, suddenly the monster plunges into a fiery abyss, and Antonia soars up to heaven (pp. 17-18).

Clearly the monster is a devil figure ("his mouth breathed out volumes of fire"), which represents Ambrosio; the lettering on his forehead reveals his true nature. The caresses foreshadow the lust of Ambrosio for Antonia and her rape, and the plunge of the monster into the abyss foreshadows Ambrosio's destruction. Finally, the flight of Antonia into the heavens on wings "of brilliant splendour" indicates her death following an innocent but short life.

A brief section near the close of Melmoth the Wanderer is entitled "THE WANDERER'S DREAM." During his last night on earth, Melmoth dreams that he stands on the brink of hell. Suddenly he is flung down the precipice, but his fall is arrested by a crag which juts out from the wall of the abyss. He stands, "tottering on a crag," and watches a dial-plate while a mysterious hand approaches a

point on the plate marked 150 years. Melmoth tries desperately to prevent the hand from reaching the fateful mark, but he loses his balance and plunges once again toward the ocean of fire. The dream concludes as follows:

> Suddenly a groupe of figures appeared, ascending as he fell. He grasped at them successively; --first Stanton--then Walberg--Elinor Mortimer --Isidora--Monçada--all passed him,--to each he seemed in his slumber to cling in order to break his fall--all ascended the precipice. He caught at each in his downward flight, but all forsook him and ascended.
>
> His last despairing reverted glance was fixed on the clock of eternity--the upraised black arm seemed to push forward the hand--it arrived at its period--he fell--he sunk--he blazed--he shrieked! The burning waves boomed over his sinking head, and the clock of eternity rung out its awful chime--'Room for the soul of the Wanderer!'--and the waves of the burning ocean answered, as they lashed the adamantine rock--'There is room for more!'--The Wanderer awake (p. 410).

The dream is both a review and a prophecy. It reviews in rapid succession the fruitless efforts of the Wanderer to find a victim with whom to exchange destinies, and it pictures in graphic terms the terrible consequences which Melmoth must face as a result of his having made a deal with the Devil.

Another category of superstitions which appear in Gothic novels pertains to the burial of the dead. Popular Antiquities states both the substance and origin of one body of superstitions as follows:

> "Some ghosts of murdered persons, whose bodies have been secretly buried, cannot be at ease till their bones have been taken up, and deposited in

> consecrated ground, with all the rites of Christian burial [E412.3. and E413.]. This idea is the remains of a very old piece of heathen superstition: the ancients believed that Charon was not permitted to ferry over the ghosts of unburied persons, but that they wandered up and down the banks of the river Styx for an hundred years, after which they were admitted to a passage."[28]

A passage from The Aeneid provides an excellent illustration of this ancient belief. Aeneas ventures into the underworld with the Cumaean Sibyl as his guide. They come to a river where the souls of the dead are making a great commotion. A discussion between Aeneas and the Sibyl concerning the dead is as follows:

> 'Tell me, why this gathering at the river?
> What do the souls want? Why do some fall back
> from shore, while others cross the lead-gray stream?'
> Briefly the aged priestess spoke to him:
> 'Son of Anchises, prince of blood divine,
> you see dark, deep Cocytus and swampy Styx,
> names not even the gods dare take in vain.
> The boatman: Charon; his passengers: the entombed.
> Those others are all unburied, a hapless host;
> they may not pass the shore, the hoarse, wild waters,
> until their bones have found a home and rest.
> A hundred years they flutter round this beach;
> then finally they may approach the longed-for stream.'[29]

Naturally the superstitions regarding the misery of the soul of the unburied dead resulted in various practices pertaining to the treatment of the dead body. One practice pointed out by Effie Bendann was that of forbidding the

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[28] Popular Antiquities, III, 67-68.

[29] Publius Vergilius Maro, The Aeneid, trans. by Frank O. Copley, Introduction by Brooks Otis (Indianapolis, 1965), VI.318-330.

burial of the body of anyone who had committed terrible crimes.[30] In Antigone, for example, Creon decrees that the body of Polyneices shall not be buried because he had attempted to overthrow the rule of King Creon at Thebes. Bendann also points out that certain rites had to be performed at the burial of the dead. She says:

> We learn that one of the most sacred duties of the Greeks and Romans was to give the body burial rites. . . . Plautus gives us a very interesting story of a ghost whose soul was compelled to wander because due burial rites had not been accorded to it. (Plautus, Mostellaria.) Because the body of Caligula was not buried with appropriate ceremony, 'the soul was not at rest, but continued to appear to the living.' As a result, the corpse was disinterred and reburied according to prescribed form (Suetonius, Caligula, 59).[31]

This superstition requiring certain rites to be performed over the dead eventually became a part of Christian burial ritual. One recalls the use of this superstition for dramatic purposes in Hamlet. At the funeral of Ophelia, Laertes and a priest argue violently about the abbreviated rites performed over her body.

These superstitions regarding the burial of the dead and the practices which derive from them make an important contribution to the Gothic novel. In The Monk, during the exorcism of the Bleeding Nun, the Great Mogul

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[30] Death Customs, An Analytical Study of Burial Rites (New York, 1930), p. 49, fn.

[31] Ibid.

asks her: "'What disturbs thy sleep? Why dost thou afflict and torture this youth [Raymond]? How can rest be restored to thy unquiet spirit?'" (p. 135). She responds with a demand that her bones be buried (D1812.3.3.); she says:

> '[M]y bones lie still unburied; they rot in the obscurity of Lindenberg Hole. None but this youth has the right of consigning them to the grave. His own lips have made over to me his body and his soul; never will I give back his promise, never shall he know a night devoid of terror, unless he engages to collect my mouldering bones, and deposit them in the family vault of his Andalusian castle. Then let thirty masses be said for the repose of my spirit; and I trouble this world no more' (p. 136).

Then the Bleeding Nun melts into the air, and the Great Mogul explains her story to Raymond.

At an early age, a girl named Beatrice entered a convent. But after she became a woman, her passions were stronger than her vows, and she ran away to Germany with a lover, the baron of Lindenberg. Soon Otto, the baron's younger brother, attracted her, and for his sake she murdered the baron. Then Otto murdered her in a cavern named Lindenberg-hole, and he left her unburied body there. Otto was terrified nightly thereafter by the ghost of the nun until he finally died of fright. However, the death of Otto did not put the ghost to rest, as the Great Mogul explains to Raymond:

> "[T]ill your coming her ghost was doomed to wander about the castle and lament the crime which she had there committed. . . .
> "She was doomed to suffer during the space of a century" (p. 139).

It is apparent that Lewis has adroitly incorporated several superstitions regarding the burial of the dead in this episode of Raymond's encounter with the Bleeding Nun: the ghost of the murdered nun is restless; the ghost will find no rest until her bones are buried; the burial must be accompanied by the proper rites; the period of suffering is for a hundred years; and her suffering is necessary because of her own terrible crime.

The insistence of the ghost that her bones be buried at Raymond's ancestral home in Spain before she will grant him peace has a logical function in the development of the romantic plot. The two lovers, Raymond and Agnes, are separated when the Bleeding Nun thwarts the attempt by Raymond to rescue Agnes from Lindenberg castle. Raymond remains in Germany, and Agnes enters the convent of St. Clare in Madrid; each is ignorant of what has happened to the other. But when Raymond goes to Spain with the bones of the nun, he makes a move which coincidentally makes it possible for him to discover the whereabouts of Agnes. Subsequently, the two lovers are reunited and continue their romance until other circumstances separate them once more.

Superstition regarding the burial of the dead also appears in The Old English Baron. But unlike Lewis, who apparently used an eclectic approach in the selection of his materials, Reeve followed a single body of traditional

beliefs. In fact, the details she uses correspond exactly to the details of the superstition which are recorded in Popular Antiquities: Lord Lovel was murdered; his body was secretly buried; his restless ghost haunts the apartment where he was buried; and young Edmund keenly desires to bury the bones of his parents in consecrated ground (Cf. E754.4.).

The only factor missing in the description of the superstition in Popular Antiquities (see pages 75-76) is an explanation of the superstition regarding consecrated ground. Bertram S. Puckle explains the origin and purpose of consecrated ground as follows:

> In the year 752, Saint Cuthbert obtained leave of the Pope to have churchyards added to the church, as places suitable for the burial of the dead.
>
> Consecration necessitated a definite boundary being fixed for the enclosure of the graves, . . .
>
> At the consecration of a burial ground, the bishop walks in solemn procession round its boundaries, expelling by special prayers, all evil influences which might disturb the dead.[32]

In The Old English Baron, the concern of Edmund over the Christian burial of the bones of his parents contributes to the sentimental tone of the work. After the bones of his father are found, Edmund says: "I trust to find the bones of my other parent, and to inter them all together in consecrated ground. Unfortunate pair! you shall at

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[32] Funeral Customs, Their Origin and Development (London, 1926); (Detroit, 1968), pp. 140-141.

last rest together! your son shall pay the last duties to your ashes!" (p. 226). And then Reeve writes: "He stopped to shed tears, and none present but paid this tribute to their misfortunes" (p. 226).

One other body of superstitions remains to be discussed in this chapter. Popular Antiquities has a section entitled "Popular Notions Concerning the Apparition of the Devil," which consists largely of materials quoted from other sources.[33] Of the superstitions collected there, the following are included in The Monk: the Devil appears in a variety of shapes (G303.3.) (as a young man, p. 220, and as an ugly man (G303.3.1.4.), p. 348); the smell of brimstone (sulphor, p. 348) accompanies him (G303.4.8.1.); he has claws (G303.4.4.) (talons, p. 348); and fire comes from his mouth (p. 18). Although Lewis probably used these superstitions with the serious purpose of impressing the reader with the terrors of the Devil, the effect is frequently more humorous than terrifying.

Surprisingly, Lewis does not use the superstitions about the Devil that describe him as having a cloven foot (G303.4.5.3.1.) horns (G303.4.1.6.), and a tail (G303.4.6.). But Maturin includes these superstitions in a brief scene in the ancient manuscript which John Melmoth reads. Stanton, an Englishman travelling in Spain, asks for lodging

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[33] Popular Antiquities, III, 517-519.

at the house of an old woman one stormy night. But she refuses him, saying, "'no heretic--no English--Mother of God protect us--avaunt Satan!'" (p. 23). However, the woman eventually lets Stanton into the house, and after a close look at him, she begins to overcome her fears. Maturin writes:

> The old woman having now satisfied herself, by ocular demonstration, that her English guest, even if he was the devil, had neither horn, hoof, or tail, that he could bear the sign of the cross without changing his form, and that, when he spoke, not a puff of sulphur came out of his mouth, began to take courage (p. 24).

This passage is atypical of the way in which Gothic novelists generally use superstitions, because Maturin appears to intend the comic effect which the passage achieves. A much more common function of the superstitions discussed in this chapter is to use them as a means of developing an atmosphere of terror, either through the introduction of the word "superstition" itself into the narrative, or by using such traditional superstitions as those regarding incest and such bad omens as birds and strange music. In addition, dreams are used to reveal horrible crimes committed antecedent to the action of a novel and to foreshadow future developments in a plot. Finally, superstitions regarding the burial of the dead and the appearance of the Devil have significant roles in The Monk, the former in the development of the sub-plot, and the latter in the development of a traditional characterization of the Devil.

CHAPTER VI

THE FUNCTIONS OF GHOSTS

In his essay on ghosts, Joseph Addison tells about a "walk of aged elms" among the ruins of an ancient abbey, which is not far from the house of Sir Roger. According to popular belief, the ruins are haunted, and Addison has been advised by his butler not to go there after sunset. He ignores the advice of his butler, however, and takes the walk among the ruins. Although he discovers no ghost there, Addison admits that he ". . . could not but fancy it one of the most proper scenes in the world for a ghost to appear in."[1]

Although Addison may be smiling at his superstitious butler, it is unlikely that he doubts the sincerity of the man; for the English have always believed in ghosts. Concerning the universality of this belief, the Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend says:

> Nearly every civilization contains evidence that at some time or other there have been current beliefs that the dead return in either a visible or sensory form. In the Western world, belief in revenants has been on the wane since the 18th century, but ghost lore is still a vigorous element in any area where folklore thrives. It is to be collected not only among the illiterate but also among sophisticated groups in communities where those groups have long lived, especially in England where so many of the country

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[1] The Spectator, pp. 136-137.

> families have ghost stories which they not only keep alive but tend to accept.[2]

Since ghosts are a part of the folklore of England, it is not surprising that ghosts should have a vital place in the literature of England. For example, in the play Hamlet, it is the ghost of King Hamlet which initiates the action of the plot. And since horror, such as the horror which racks the body of Horatio at the sight of the ghost ("How now, Horatio! you tremble and look pale"),[3] is the typical human response associated with such a phenomenon, neither is it surprising that Gothic novelists should use ghosts in their stories.

One may wonder about the specific superstitions which might cause a person to react with horror to the appearance of a ghost. In addition to a large group of miscellaneous types, there are two broad categories of ghosts: the malevolent ghost and the friendly ghost. The malevolent ghost generally desires revenge (E200.), and the friendly ghost may be merely seeking a favor (Cf. E300-E399.). Accordingly, Francis Douce says that people used to believe that ghosts

> . . . had some particular motive for quitting the mansions of the dead, 'such as a desire that their bodies, if unburied, should receive Christian rites

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[2] Standard Dictionary of Folklore, II, 933.

[3] William Shakespeare, Hamlet in The Complete Works of Shakespeare, ed. Hardin Craig (Chicago, 1961), I.i.53.

> of sepulture; [or] that a murderer might be brought to due punishment.'[4]

The Motif-Index of Folk-Literature identifies scores of malevolent types. Among them are the following: "E232.1. Return from dead to slay own murderer"; "E232.4. Ghost returns to slay enemies"; "E261. Wandering ghost makes attack. Unprovoked and usually unmotivated"; "E265. Meeting ghost causes misfortune"; "E265.3. Meeting ghost causes death." If these possible reasons for a ghost's return from the dead are not enough to terrify someone who sees a ghost, he might also remember that a ghost could be a bad omen: "E574. Appearance of ghost serves as death omen"; "E575. Ghost as omen of calamity or ill fortune."

An important fact about the folklore of ghosts found in Gothic novels is that much of it is genuine. As a result, scenes in which ghosts appear may have an aura of authenticity which makes them surprisingly effective. This authenticity includes the kinds of ghosts which appear. Gothic novels include both traditional types: the avenging ghost and the friendly ghost that is seeking a favor.

Another feature of ghostly lore found in Gothic novels and substantiated by T. F. Thiselton-Dyer concerns the way that ghosts look and dress. He says: "[A]ccording to a popular notion, ghosts are generally supposed to

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[4] Illustrations of Shakespeare (New York, 1968), p. 450.

assume the exact appearance by which they were usually known when in the material state, even to the smallest detail of their dress."[5] This "notion" contributes to the authenticity of important scenes in both The Monk and The Old English Baron. In Reeve's novel, the ghost of the haunted apartment is identified as the ghost of Lord Lovel because it wears his armor: "Tis my lord's armour, said Joseph; I know it well" (p. 86). Because ". . . the inside of the breast-plate was stained with blood" (p. 86), suspicion of murder arises, a suspicion that encourages Edmund to resolve to uncover the mystery and avenge the dead.

In The Monk, according to the tradition of the Bleeding Nun, the ghost wears the same habit worn by the nun in life, except that now it is stained with blood. Lewis writes that a sketch of the nun found by Raymond

> ". . . represented a female of more than human stature, clothed in the habit of some religious order. Her face was veiled; on her arm hung a chaplet of beads; her dress was in several places stained with blood which trickled from a wound upon her bosom. In one hand she held a lamp, in the other a large knife, and she seemed advancing towards the iron gates of the hall" (p. 108).

Because a nun wears a traditional habit, Agnes knows that she can imitate the appearance of the Bleeding Nun, and, because the household of the castle believe in the ghost, she knows she can walk unmolested through the gates to freedom.

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[5] Folk-Lore of Shakespeare, p. 44.

Other scenes which include descriptions of the dress or the paraphernalia of ghosts may be less significant in the development of the narrative than the examples cited here, but the inclusion of traditional beliefs adds to the ghostly atmosphere even in those scenes. Two examples are worth noting. John Brand says that ghosts are generally thought to wear white[6] (E422.4.3.); the ghost of Elvira in The Monk appears in white (p. 254). Brand also says that ghosts, other than English ghosts, sometimes appear dragging chains[7] (E402.1.4.); the arms of the ghost of Elvira, Lewis says, "'. . . were loaded with heavy chains, which it rattled piteously'" (p. 259). The same tradition is also briefly mentioned in Melmoth the Wanderer (p. 292).

Another folk belief is that loud noises may announce the arrival of a ghost (Cf. E402.). A close parallel may be seen in this regard between a scene in The Old English Baron and a quotation in Popular Antiquities which says: "'The coming of a spirit is announced some time before its appearance by a variety of loud and dreadful noises. . . . At length the door flies open, and the spectre stalks slowly up to the bed's foot.'"[8] In the novel the sinister clique

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[6]Popular Antiquities, III, 69.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Popular Antiquities, III, 70. The only identification given the quotation is "Grose," who was probably Francis Grose (1731?-1791). Francis Grose was an "antiquary and draughtsman" who published several works, such as Antiquities of England and Wales (1773-1787) in 4 vols. (Dictionary of National Biography, VIII, 715).

of brothers and kinsmen is spending the night in the haunted apartment quarreling among themselves:

> [O]n a sudden they were alarmed with a dismal groan from the room underneath. They stood like statues, petrified by fear, yet listening with trembling expectation. . . . They staggered to a seat and sunk down upon it, ready to faint; presently, all the doors flew open, a pale shimmering light appeared at the door, from the staircase, and a man in complete armour entered the room (p. 131).

A similar situation is described in The Monk on the occasion in which the Bleeding Nun first visits the bed of Raymond (pp. 125-126).

Loud noises and awful groans provide a simple means of creating an atmosphere of terror. Another simple device employed with great effect by Mrs. Radcliffe is based on the belief which says that a flame turns blue when a spirit is present.[9] The tradition is the kind which especially harmonizes with her style because such a phenomenon requires no ghost but simply an overactive imagination on the part of one of her characters. In a memorable scene in The Mysteries of Udolpho, just after Emily arrives at the castle, her maid, Annette, comes to her room, and, sitting close to the fire, tells Emily a mysterious story about Signora Laurentini, who one day walked into the woods near the castle and never returned. Soon Annette is frightened by her own story ("'Holy Virgin! what noise is that?'"); finally her imagination gets the best of her, and she says,

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[9]Popular Antiquities, III, 181.

"'Holy St. Peter! ma'amselle, look at that lamp, see how blue it burns!'" (I, 241). Emily tries to calm her, but Annette keeps her eyes on the lamp. The scene illustrates the ability which Radcliffe has to create an atmosphere of terror through the use of two simple devices, noise and the blue flame, to suggest a supernatural presence.

Another tradition in the folklore of ghosts found in Gothic novels is the practice of exorcism. A quotation from Grose in Popular Antiquities explains how exorcism is accomplished:

> "For this purpose [exorcism] there must be two or three clergymen, and the ceremony must be performed in Latin; a language that strikes the most audacious ghost with terror. A ghost may be laid from any term less than an hundred years, and in any place or body, full or empty. . . . But of all places the most common, and what a ghost least likes, is the Red Sea"[10] (Cf. E437.2).

Exorcism functions in a variety of ways in Gothic novels, from a mere humorous remark about the laying of spirits in the Red Sea in The Mysteries of Udolpho, to a significant role in the development of the plot in The Monk. In Melmoth the Wanderer, a reference to exorcism is used as an effective device to help develop the terrible character of Melmoth. A Spanish priest named Father Olavida has an uncommon reputation "far and wide" for his ability to exorcise evil spirits: "The devil never fell into worse

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[10] Popular Antiquities, III, 72. The quotation is from Grose.

hands than Father Olavida's" (p. 25). But when the formidable Father Olavida meets Melmoth, the tremendous power of Melmoth's eyes easily overpowers the priest and turns him into an object of pity; Maturin describes the scene as follows:

> 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 . . . [he] exclaimed, 'Who is among us?--Who?--I cannot utter a blessing while he is here. I cannot feel one. Where he treads, the earth is parched!--Where he breathes, the air is fire!--Where he feeds, the food is poison!--Where he turns, his glance is lightning!' (p. 26).

Moments later, Father Olavida "dropped dead," and one is terrified by what the scene suggests about the awful power possessed by Melmoth.[11]

One belief about ghosts which seems to lend itself to a humorous treatment in Gothic novels is the belief concerning the nature of their being. In Popular Antiquities one reads that ghosts "'. . . are supposed to be mere aerial beings, without substance, and . . . to pass through walls and other solid bodies at pleasure.'"[12] Both Lewis and Radcliffe saw the potential for humor in such capabilities. In her explanation of the legend of the Bleeding Nun, Agnes says to Raymond:

> "Then out walks the ghostly nun with her lamp and dagger; she descends the staircase of the eastern

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[11]Melmoth apparently possesses the "evil eye," which is discussed in Chapter VII. The "evil eye" has the power to kill (D2071.2.).

[12]Popular Antiquities, III, 68. The quotation is from Grose.

> tower, and crosses the great hall. On that night the porter always leaves the gates of the castle open, out of respect to the apparition; not that this is thought by any means necessary, since she could easily whip through the key-hole if she chose it; but merely out of politeness, and to prevent her from making her exit in a way so derogatory to the dignity of her ghostship" (The Monk, p. 110).

The humor in the passage is primarily in the diction, but a genuinely comic scene occurs later in the novel when Dame Jacintha, the landlady who rents an apartment to Elvira and Antonia, explains her consternation to Ambrosio concerning the sudden appearance of the ghost of Elvira:

> "Forsooth, it well becomes her to go racketing about my house at midnight, popping into her daughter's room through the keyhole, and frightening the poor child out of her wits! Though she be a ghost, she might be more civil than to bolt into a person's house who likes her company so little" (p. 257).

In The Mysteries of Udolpho, Radcliffe achieves a mildly humorous effect with similar material. The north apartments of the Chateau of Count de Villefort are said to be haunted, and recent reports of an apparition have upset the household. Ludovico volunteers to spend the night in the haunted rooms, but before he enters the apartments, he has the following exchange with Count de Villefort:

> 'I wish to have arms, that I may be equal to my enemy, if he should appear.'
> 'Your sword cannot defend you against a ghost,' replied the count, throwing a glance of irony upon the other servants: 'neither can bars nor bolts; for a spirit, you know, can glide through a key-hole as easily as through a door.'
> 'Give me a sword, my lord count,' said Ludovico, 'and I will lay all the spirits that shall attack me in the Red Sea' (II, 214-215).

These examples of the use of authentic lore about ghosts in Gothic novels suggest that the novelists considered authenticity significant to the success of their art. In addition, these examples illustrate some of the ways in which the lore functions in the development of the narrative, such as by producing a momentary modulation in tone through a brief comic episode, or by offering insight into character.

Besides these secondary functions, critics generally recognize two major purposes for ghosts in Gothic stories: to create an atmosphere of terror and to establish a theme. One such critic is Railo, who says that romanticists used ghosts ". . . to create a general atmosphere, and . . . to achieve a moral purpose unattainable without such deus ex machina."[13] To these two purposes, a third one should be added--to influence the development of the plot.

The first of these three purposes--to create an atmosphere of terror--is the most important purpose for which Gothic novelists use ghosts, and it is unquestionably the most difficult purpose to achieve. Only Radcliffe and Maturin demonstrate a consummate skill in this regard. Walpole, Reeve, and Lewis are much less convincing in their handling of the ghost as a device intended to create terror in the reader.

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[13] Haunted Castle, p. 244.

Walpole fails for several reasons, some of which are pointed out by Sir Walter Scott. He says:

> The supernatural occurrences of 'The Castle of Otranto' are brought forward into too strong daylight, and marked by an over degree of distinctness and accuracy of outline. A mysterious obscurity seems congenial at least, if not essential, to our ideas of disembodied spirits; and the gigantic limbs of the ghost of Alphonso (sic), as described by the terrified domestics, are somewhat too distinct and corporeal to produce the feelings which their appearance is intended to excite.[14]

Another feature of the descriptions of the ghosts, which may account for the ineffectiveness of the ghostly scenes is suggested by Walter Raleigh. He says:

> Walpole was no poet, and the gaiety and inconsequence of his excursions into the supernatural can hardly avoid the suspicion of latent humour. Huge hands and legs clad in armour obtrude themselves at odd moments on the attention of alarmed domestics, whose account of their experiences furnishes the comedy of the book.[15]

The point which Raleigh makes is illustrated by an exchange between Manfred and two of his servants who have just seen the ghost of Alfonso in the "great chamber." One is amused both by the frustration of Manfred and by the lack of coherence on the part of the servants. A portion of the passage is as follows:

> --Jaquez, said Manfred in a solemn tone of voice, tell me, I adjure thee by the souls of my ancestors,

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[14] Lives, p. 542.

[15] The English Novel, Being a Short Sketch of Its History from the Earliest Times to the Appearance of Waverley (London, 1894), p. 224.

> what it was thou sawest; what it was thou heardest? It was Diego saw it, my lord, it was not I, replied Jaquez; I only heard the noise. Diego had no sooner opened the door, than he cried out and ran back--I ran back too, and said, Is it the ghost? The ghost! No, no said Diego, and his hair stood on end--it is a giant, I believe; he is all clad in armour, for I saw his foot and part of his leg, and they are as large as the helmet below in the court. . . . Before we could get to the end of the gallery, we heard the door of the great chamber clap behind us, but we did not dare turn back to see if the giant was following us--Yet now I think on it, we must have heard him if he had pursued us--But for heaven's sake, good my lord, send for the chaplain and have the castle exorcised, for, for certain, it is enchanted. Ay, pray do my lord, cried all the servants at once, or we must leave your highness's service.--Peace, dotards! said Manfred, and follow me; I will know what all this means. We! my lord! cried they with one voice; we would not go up to the gallery for your highness's revenue (pp. 32-33).

The scene is genuinely comic, and similar scenes appear elsewhere in the novel. The result is that the ghost of Alfonso is more frequently a source of humor than of terror.

The Old English Baron also fails to achieve a sustained atmosphere of terror despite the fairly effective "haunted apartment" device (E281.3.). Edmund, the hero, is too perfect to be in any real danger during his confinement in the chamber of the ghost, and his enemies' confrontation with the ghost is comic rather than terrifying. When the ghost of Lord Lovel appears to them, it points to the "outward door";

> [T]hey took the hint, and crawled away as fast as fear would let them; they staggered along the gallery, and from thence to the Baron's apartment,

> where Wenlock sunk down in a swoon, and Markham had just strength enough to knock at the door (pp. 131-132).

These lines produce amusement and a sense of satisfaction in the reader rather than tension, because the villains suffer a just retribution for their ignoble treatment of Edmund and for their having joked previously about the existence of the ghost.

The effectiveness with which Lewis describes the appearance of ghosts varies considerably. In the scene in which the Bleeding Nun comes to Raymond's sick room, the effect is chilling. Raymond describes the scene as follows:

> "As I listened to the mournful hollow sound [of a clock], and heard it die away in the wind, I felt a sudden chillness spread itself over my body. I shuddered without knowing wherefore; cold dews poured down my forehead, and my hair stood bristling with alarm. Suddenly I heard slow and heavy steps ascending the staircase. By an involuntary movement I started up in my bed, and drew back the curtain. A single rush-light, which glimmered upon the hearth, shed a faint gleam through the apartment. . . . 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 Almight!--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 eye-balls, fixed stedfastly upon me, were lustreless and hollow" (pp. 125-126).

The passage continues for another page, which makes it too long to sustain the terror of these lines; but this opening

description is more effective than anything found in either The Castle of Otranto or The Old English Baron.

A less effective description in The Monk is the one in which the ghost of Elvira appears to Antonia; Antonia sees

> . . . a tall thin figure, wrapped in a white shroud which covered it from head to foot.
>
> This vision arrested her feet; she remained as if petrified in the middle of the apartment. The stranger with measured and solemn steps drew near the table. The dying taper darted a blue and melancholy flame, as the figure advanced towards it. Over the table was fixed a small clock: the hand of it was upon the stroke of three. The figure stopped opposite to the clock; it raised its right arm, and pointed to the hour, at the same time looking earnestly upon Antonia, who waited for the conclusion of this scene, motionless and silent.
>
> The figure remained in this posture for some moments. The clock struck. When the sound had ceased, the stranger advanced yet a few steps nearer Antonia.
>
> 'Yet three days,' said a voice faint, hollow, and sepulchral; 'yet three days, and we meet again!'
>
> Antonia shuddered at the words. 'We meet again?' she pronounced at length with difficulty. 'Where shall we meet? Whom shall I meet?'
>
> The figure pointed to the ground with one hand, and with the other raised the linen which covered its face.
>
> 'Almighty God!--my mother!'
>
> Antonia shrieked and fell lifeless upon the floor (p. 254).

Primarily because of the dull, stilted diction of this passage, nothing about the ghost and nothing in Antonia's response to it inspires the reader with a sensation of terror. It is as if Lewis himself were bored by the appearance of the ghost.

A more skilled artist is obviously at work in the terrifying descriptions of the shadowy figures which appear

in Melmoth the Wanderer. In two chilling sentences, Maturin sets a scene in which Isidora sits alone in a graveyard:

> Isidora, sinking on a grave for rest, wrapt her veil around her, as if its folds could exclude even thought. In a few moments, gasping for air, she withdrew it; but as her eye encountered only tomb-stones and crosses, and that dark and sepulchral vegetation that loves to shoot its roots, and trail its unlovely verdure amid the joints of grave-stones, she closed it again, and sat shuddering and alone (p. 301).

Then the ghost appears:

> Suddenly a faint sound, like the murmur of a breeze, reached her,--she looked up, but the wind had sunk, and the night was perfectly calm. The same sound recurring, as of a breeze sweeping past, made her turn her eyes in the direction from which it came, and, at some distance from her, she thought she beheld a human figure moving slowly along on the verge of the inclosure of the burial-ground. Though it did not seem approaching her, (but rather moving in a slow circuit on the verge of her view), conceiving it must be Melmoth, she rose in expectation of his advancing to her, and, at this moment, the figure, turning and half-pausing, seemed to extend its arm toward her, and wave it once or twice, but whether with a motion or purpose of warning or repelling her, it was impossible to discover,--it then renewed its dim and silent progress, and the next moment the ruins hid it from her view (p. 301).

The subtle understatement of the language and the disquieting uncertainty about what Isidora has seen make the passage a masterpiece of Gothic terror. And it is immediately followed by a scene only slightly less effective.

Standing in darkness with Melmoth, Isidora supposes she is about to be married to her lover by a "holy man" from a mysterious hermitage. Instead, a scene of terror ensues:

> The place, the hour, the objects, all were hid in darkness. She heard a faint rustling as of the approach of another person,--she attempted also to speak, but she knew not what she said. All was mist and darkness with her,--she knew not what was muttered,--she felt not that the hand of Melmoth grasped hers,--but she felt that the hand that united them, and clasped their palms within his own, was as cold as that of death (p. 302).

As in the first scene, suspense is created by an obscurity of language, and a sensation of terror is realized.

Consideration of The Mysteries of Udolpho has been placed last in this discussion since no actual ghosts appear in the novel. Nevertheless, Mrs. Radcliffe capitalizes on the power of suggestion in order to create an atmosphere of terror. In a frequently quoted passage,[16] Emily is sitting alone in the library thinking melancholy thoughts about her dead father:

> As she mused, she saw the door slowly open; and a rustling sound in a remote part of the room startled her. Through the dusk she thought she perceived something move. The subject she had been considering, and the present state of her spirits, which made her imagination respond to every impression of her senses, gave her a sudden terror of something supernatural. She sat for a moment motionless; and then her dissipated reason returning, 'What should I fear?' said she; 'if the spirits of those we love ever return again to us, it is in kindness.'
>
> The silence which again reigned made her ashamed of her late fears, and she believed that her imagination had deluded her, or that she had heard one

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[16]The passage is an excellent illustration of Radcliffe's style because it demonstrates her skill in creating a ghostly atmosphere and also because it shows her technique of explaining away her supernatural suggestions by giving them natural causes.

> of those unaccountable noises which sometimes occur in old houses. The same sound, however, returned; and, distinguishing something moving towards her, and in the next instant press beside her into the chair, she shrieked; but her fleeting senses were instantly recalled, on perceiving that it was Manchon who sat by her, and who now licked her hand affectionately (I, 99).

Some critics are annoyed by the Radcliffian technique of making natural explanations for supernatural suggestions. Nevertheless, the ability of Mrs. Radcliffe to create an atmosphere of terror through the power of suggestion is generally acknowledged by students of the Gothic novel.

Another important function of ghosts in Gothic novels is their contribution to plot. E. M. Forster explains the meaning of the word "plot" with the following illustration: "'The king died, and then the queen died of grief.'"[17] The point which Forster is making is that there must be a cause and effect relationship in the construction of a plot. In another place, Forster also emphasizes the importance of mystery in a plot.[18] Gothic ghosts function in both of these essential aspects of plot.

One might suppose that The Castle of Otranto would have ended on page three had there not been the sudden intervention of the ghost of Alfonso. According to an ancient prophecy, Manfred needed a male heir in order to continue his lordship over Otranto. His position seems

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[17] Aspects of the Novel (New York, 1954), p. 130.

[18] Ibid., p. 132.

secure by virtue of a marriage which he has arranged between his son, Conrad, and Isabella, daughter of Frederic, the Marquis of Vicenza and supposed rightful heir to Otranto. But shortly before their vows are to be read, a mysterious giant helmet, which is the helmet of Alfonso's ghost, crushes Conrad to death. The death of Conrad forces Manfred to change his plans and results in a sudden change of direction in the action of the plot. From this point, the novel details the efforts of Manfred to have his heir through Isabella and the efforts of the two ghosts in the story to stop him.

As the story develops, it is apparent that the mysterious actions of the giant ghost of Alfonso are not going to prevent Manfred from succeeding in his evil scheme. When he reveals to Isabella his intention of divorcing his wife, Hippolita, so that he can marry her, the ghost attempts to intervene. The scene is as follows:

> [H]e [Manfred] seized the cold hand of Isabella, who was half-dead with fright and horror. She shrieked, and started from him. Manfred rose to pursue her; when the moon, which was now up, and gleamed in at the opposite casement, presented to his sight the plumes of the fatal helmet, which rose to the height of the windows, waving backwards and forwards in a tempestuous manner, and accompanied with a hollow and rustling sound (p. 23).

Isabella believes that the phenomenon is a declaration of heaven against Manfred, but he says, "Heaven nor hell shall impede my designs" (p. 23).

Toward the close of the novel, Manfred appears to be about to succeed; but to assure himself of a new bride, he offers his own daughter, Matilda, to Frederic if he will consent to his marriage to Isabella. Frederic is infatuated with Matilda, and he accepts the offer. To do what he can to make the agreement between Manfred and himself possible, Frederic makes his way to the apartment of Hippolita ". . . to encourage her acquiescence to the divorce" (p. 102). But the intervention of a second ghost reverses the direction of the plot. The second ghost is the ghost of the hermit of Joppa whom Frederic had met before his return to Italy from the Holy Land. Frederic enters the apartment of Hippolita and finds a figure dressed like a priest; he says:

> Reverend father, I sought the lady Hippolita.--Hippolita! replied a hollow voice: camest thou to this castle to seek Hippolita?--And then the figure, turning slowly round, discovered to Frederic the fleshless jaws and empty sockets of a skeleton, wrapt in a hermit's cowl. Angels of grace, protect me! cried Frederic recoiling. Deserve their protection, said the spectre. Frederic, falling on his knees, adjured the phantom to take pity on him. Dost thou not remember me? said the apparition. Remember the wood of Joppa! Art thou that holy hermit? cried Frederic trembling--can I do aught for thy eternal peace? . . . But say, blest spirit, what is thy errand to me? what remains to be done? To forget Matilda! said the apparition--and vanished (p. 102).

The frightened Marquis returns to his own apartment, where he meets Manfred. Manfred wants to secure their friendship with a night of "music and reveling"; but Frederic,

". . . offended at an invitation so dissonant from the mood of his soul, pushed him rudely aside, and, entering his chamber, flung the door intemperately against Manfred, and bolted it inward" (p. 103). Frederic's actions enrage Manfred and put him ". . . in a frame of mind capable of the most fatal excesses" (p. 103).

Then Manfred learns that a lady has come from the castle and joined Theodore, his rival, in St. Nicholas' church. Since he is already enraged by his humiliating encounter with Frederic, Manfred now loses all control and goes to the church where he stabs the lady, who he supposes is Isabella. When he sees that he has killed his own daughter, Manfred realizes the enormity of his sin, and he repents. His scheme to marry Isabella and thereby continue his illegal hold on Otranto, therefore, is thwarted by events resulting primarily from the appearance before Frederic of the ghost of the hermit of Joppa.

A ghost also figures prominently in the causality and mystery of the plot in The Old English Baron. Two mysteries form the hub about which the action of the plot turns: the mystery of the haunted wing of the castle of Lovel and the mystery of the identity of Edmund Twyford. The ghost of Lord Lovel is the key to both of these mysteries.

The gifted Edmund, a peasant boy taken in by Baron Fitz-Owen, the owner of Lovel castle, has several jealous

enemies in the sons and young kinsmen of the Baron. These enemies overhear Friar Oswald telling Edmund about the haunted apartment, and they report to the Baron a distorted version of what they heard, a ploy by which they hope to have Edmund banished from the castle. Instead, the wise Baron sentences Edmund to spend three nights in the vacant apartment to see if it is, indeed, haunted. On the first night, in a dream, Edmund sees two ghosts, a man in armor and his lady, who stand by his bed and reveal the fact that he is their son. On the second night, Edmund is joined by an old family servant, Joseph, and by the Friar. As they are talking, they hear a violent noise in the rooms below them. An investigation uncovers a complete suit of armor in which ". . . the inside of the breast-plate was stained with blood" (p. 86). Joseph recognizes that the armor belongs to his former master, Lord Lovel. They also discover Lord Lovel's ring, and Edmund is inspired to say "I will know who was my father before I am a day older" (p. 87). Suddenly they hear groans (Cf. E402.1.1.2.), and Edmund ". . . vowed solemnly to devote himself to the discovery of this secret [the identity of the ghost], and the (sic) avenging the death of the person there buried" (p. 87). The last two-thirds of the novel is primarily devoted to the working out of these problems which Edmund faces as a result of his finding a ghost in the East wing of the castle.

Finally, a ghost makes an important causal contribution to the plot of The Monk. Jacintha asks Ambrosio to come to her house ". . . to lay Elvira's ghost in the Red Sea" (p. 256). The request meets the evil purpose of Ambrosio perfectly since it gives him ". . . an opportunity . . . of gaining access to Antonia" (pp. 259-260). He hesitates for a moment, but ". . . his eagerness to see Antonia obtained the victory . . . [and] he resolved to profit by the opportunity which chance had presented to him" (p. 260). The plot of the novel may be said to turn on this decision, which is made possible by the appearance of the ghost; for it gives Ambrosio the opportunity to exercise his lust, which, in turn, leads to his own destruction.

The third major function of ghosts in Gothic novels concerns the theme, or "moral purpose," that is common to many Gothic stories, which is to show that evil men must pay for their crimes. Always the revenge of the ghost is equivalent to the judgment of heaven.

In The Castle of Otranto, the ghost of Alfonso wants to avenge the death of Alfonso the Good at the hands of Ricardo, the grandfather of the Manfred, the Prince of Otranto. Its purpose is realized when Manfred loses his bid to retain his lordship of Otranto. After Manfred mistakenly slays his own daughter, and the form of St. Nicholas is seen "receiving Alfonso's shade," Hippolita declares

the meaning of these events:

> [B]ehold the vanity of human greatness! Conrad is gone! Matilda is no more! In Theodore we view the true Prince of Otranto. By what miracle he is so, I know not--suffice it to us, our doom is pronounced! (p. 108).

And the penitent Manfred concurs by saying, "To heap shame on my head is all the satisfaction I have left to offer to offended Heaven. My story has drawn down these judgments" (p. 109).

The ghost in The Old English Baron seeks revenge against Sir Walter Lovel, the man who murdered Lord Lovel. Through its appearance to Edmund and its terrible groans, the ghost inspires the young hero to find the murderer and bring him to justice. Eventually, Edmund is convinced that Sir Walter committed the murder, and, with the assistance of his friend, Sir Philip, he forces Sir Walter to confess his guilt. Then Sir Walter asks how they knew that he had murdered Lord Lovel, and Sir Philip replies,

> . . . it was not merely by human means this fact was discovered. There is a certain apartment in the castle of Lovel, that has been shut up these one-and-twenty years, but has lately been opened and examined into.
>
> Oh Heaven! exclaimed he, then Geoffry must have betrayed me!--No, Sir, he has not, it was revealed in a very extraordinary manner to that youth whom it most concerns.--How can he be the heir of Lovel?--By being the son of that unfortunate woman, whom you cruelly obliged to leave her own house, to avoid being compelled to wed the murderer of her husband. . . .--The judgments of heaven are fallen upon me! said Lord Lovel. I am childless, and one is arisen from the grave to claim my inheritance (pp. 176-177).

Near the end of the novel, after the bones of Lord Lovel are discovered in a secret compartment in the haunted apartment, a priest summarizes the meaning of these events when he says, "Let this awful spectacle be a lesson to all present, that though wickedness may triumph for a season, a day of retribution will come" (pp. 225-226).

Clearly superstitions about ghosts have made an important contribution to the Gothic novel. Walpole and many of his successors in the genre knew the authentic lore of their ancestors, and they used it freely to achieve a variety of effects in their art. Perhaps no other single category of folklore is more important to the Gothic style.

CHAPTER VII

THE FUNCTIONS OF WITCHCRAFT

In his remarkable little book entitled Daemonologie, which he wrote before he became King of England, King James declares that ". . . witchcraft, and witches haue bene, and are, the former part is clearelie proved by the Scriptures, and the last by dailie experience and confessions."[1] As the King suggests, both the Old and the New Testaments include numerous references to various aspects of witchcraft. The most famous example is King Saul's encounter with the witch of Endor in I Samuel. King Saul fears the outcome of an impending battle with the Philistines, and since God no longer speaks to him, he calls on a woman at Endor "that hath a familiar spirit" (I Samuel 28:7). At Saul's request, she conjures the dead prophet Samuel from his grave, and he prophesies a defeat for Saul and his army.

The belief of King James that witchcraft and witches "are" was perhaps shared by most of his contemporaries in England. George Lyman Kittredge says:

> Now the mere creed--the belief that witches exist and that they can work supernaturally to the injury

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[1]King James the First, Daemonologie (1597) Newes from Scotland, declaring the Damnable Life and death of Doctor Fian, a notable Sorcerer who was burned at Edenbrough in January last (1591), in Elizabeth & Jacobean Quartos, ed. G. B. Harrison, reproduced from the series Bodley Head Quartos (New York, 1966), p. 2.

> and even to the destruction of their enemies--is the heritage of the human race. . . . He [the Englishman] inherited it in an unbroken line from his primeval ancestors.[2]

Therefore it is not surprising that, as in the case of the superstitions about ghosts, Lewis and Maturin realized that the common superstitions about witches and witchcraft would provide a powerful source for mystery, terror, and even humor in their novels. Lewis was the first major Gothic novelist to include a witch in his story and to capitalize on such facets of witchcraft as spells and charms. Later, Maturin included in Melmoth the Wanderer a pseudo-witch and the "evil eye" to achieve both humorous and horrifying effects.

The first incident in The Monk which is inspired by witchcraft occurs early in the novel when Antonia has her fortune told by a gipsy (M303.). (It might be argued that the incident is not related to witchcraft since gipsies are not witches, but they have long had a reputation for "'skill in the black art.'"[3] Furthermore, as Kittredge points out, prophecy is "closely allied" to witchcraft.[4]) The importance of the scene lies in the fact that the gipsy's song foreshadows in close detail the terrible fate

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[2]Witchcraft in Old and New England (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1929), p. 5.

[3]Popular Antiquities, III, 95.

[4]Witchcraft in Old and New England, p. 226.

of Antonia. The gipsy sings that Antonia's palm shows that she is "Chaste, and gentle, young and fair," but the rest of the song is full of dark foreboding:

> But, alas, this line discovers
> That destruction o'er you hovers;
> Lustful man and crafty devil
> Will combine to work your evil;
> And from earth by sorrows driven,
> Soon your soul must speed to heaven.
> Yet your sufferings to delay,
> Well remember what I say.
> When you one more virtuous see
> Than belongs to man to be;
> One, whose self no crimes assailing,
> Pities not his neighbour's failing;
> Call the gipsy's words to mind:
> Though he seem so good and kind,
> Fair exteriors oft will hide
> Hearts that swell with lust and pride.
> (p. 26)

The song of the gipsy not only foreshadows the death of Antonia (M341.); it also clearly delineates the character of Ambrosio as a man whose heart is swollen "with lust and pride."

Turning briefly to the sub-plot, one sees that witchcraft is at the heart of an important episode--the exorcism of the ghost of the bleeding nun (E443.). The Great Mogul's knowledge of when and how to free Raymond from the ghost's attachment to him lends to the passage an undeniable fascination.

The Great Mogul says to Raymond "'"I have the power of releasing you from your nightly visitor; but this cannot be done before Sunday. On the hour when the sabbath morning breaks spirits of darkness have least influence

over mortals"'" (p. 133). He might have obtained such knowledge from a book of magic, which would indicate the best hour for performing an act of exorcism.[5]

Raymond describes the preparations of the Great Mogul for the exorcism as follows:

> 'He entered my room upon the turn of midnight. A small chest was in his hand, which he placed near the stove. He saluted me without speaking; I returned the compliment, observing an equal silence. He then opened his chest.
>
> 'The first thing which he produced was a small wooden crucifix; he sunk upon his knees, gazed upon it mournfully, and cast his eyes towards heaven. He seemed to be praying devoutly. At length he bowed his head respectfully, kissed the crucifix thrice, and quitted his kneeling posture. He next drew from the chest a covered goblet; with the liquor which it contained, and which appeared to be blood, he sprinkled the floor; and then dipping in it one end of the crucifix, he described a circle in the middle of the room. Round about this he placed various reliques, sculls, thighbones, etc. I observed then he disposed them all in the forms of crosses. Lastly, he took out a large Bible, and beckoned me to follow him into the circle' (pp. 134-135).

The free way in which Lewis occasionally treats traditional folk materials is no better illustrated in the novel than by this passage. Perhaps he borrowed the "sculls" and "thighbones" from the art of necromancy.[6] He may have borrowed the idea of a circle from the art of conjuration.[7]

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[5]K. M. Briggs, "Some Seventeenth-Century Books of Magic," Folk-Lore, LXIV (December 1953), 450.

[6]Standard Dictionary of Folklore, II, 787.

[7]Briggs, p. 450.

And from the art of exorcism itself he includes the magic often associated with the number "three,"[8] and the use of a crucifix and crosses, prayers,[9] a Bible, and the goblet and "blood" of the Eucharist.[10]

It is apparent from the diverse nature of the materials in the passage that the most important element in it is Lewis' own imagination. But the result is a scene of great fascination. Furthermore, the scene contributes to the progress of the sub-plot, since the Great Mogul is successful in learning from the ghost the reason for its nightly visits to Raymond and what Raymond must do to lay it to rest.

But the most extensive and significant use of witchcraft in The Monk appears in the main plot; for in the main plot, the witchcraft of Matilda is a basic narrative device. Matilda uses witchcraft to inflame Ambrosio's passion for Antonia; she uses witchcraft to provide Ambrosio with easy access to Antonia's room; and she uses her art as a means of leading her victim to his death and to the loss of his soul.

Although Matilda is apparently a witch, her characterization has created problems for some critics and

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[8]Popular Antiquities, III, 70.

[9]Rossell Hope Robbins, The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Demonology (New York, 1969), p. 186.

[10]Witchcraft in Old and New England, pp. 146-148.

especially for Summers. He believes that there is a contradiction in her characterization resulting from the Devil's reference to her at the close of the novel as a "subordinate" who assumed the form of Ambrosio's favorite picture of the Madonna in order to seduce him. Summers says:

> We cannot accept the temptress as a female Mephistopheles. If Matilda was a succubus, many of the preceding incidents are impossible and out of gear. The whole discrepancy, which is serious, could have been obviated by the omission of the one sentence [which includes the word 'subordinate'] . . . and the story would have gained.[11]

One finds his solution to the problem somewhat amusing; he concludes: "I like to think that this vaunt of the demon is a mere oversight, and, in reading, I delete it--at least mentally--from the text."[12]

An especially interesting feature of the characterization of Matilda is her similarity to Lilith, an evil spirit and "Devil's Dam" in Jewish tradition.[13] Matilda seduces Ambrosio; and, according to Maximilian Rudwin, "[I]n Eastern tradition, Lilith, as princess of the succubi, is primarily a seductress of men."[14] In keeping with such a role, both Matilda and Lilith are beautiful women. One knows that Matilda is beautiful because she looks like the

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[11] Gothic Quest, p. 221.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Maximilian Rudwin, The Devil in Legend and Literature (New York, 1970), p. 98.

[14] Ibid., p. 101.

picture of the beautiful Madonna (The Monk, p. 49). Lilith is also ". . . overpowering in physical charms."[15]

There is a striking similarity between the two women in the beauty of their hair. After Matilda becomes a prisoner and her cowl is removed, a ". . . profusion of her golden hair betrayed her sex" (p. 315). Concerning the beauty of Lilith, Rudwin says:

> But the remarkable thing about her person was her hair. Ben Sira states that Lilith was beautiful with long black hair. When Lilith arrived among the Nordics, she realized that gentlemen prefer blondes and so apparently dyed her hair. Rossetti, in his sonnet, 'Lilith,' describes her with golden locks.[16]

Although Matilda's hair is "golden," it appears from her function in The Monk that she is not Lilith or a succubus, but a witch. This is the understanding that Ambrosio has of her. When she reveals her powers to him, she says that as a child she learned ". . . those arts which relate to the world of spirits" (p. 213), including the power to summon a daemon to her aid. Ambrosio is shocked, and he says:

> "Rash Matilda! What have you done? You have doomed yourself to endless perdition; you have bartered for momentary power eternal happiness! If on witchcraft depends the fruition of my desires, I renounce your aid most absolutely!" (p. 213).

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[15] Devil in Legend, p. 103.

[16] Ibid.

Although the idea of a person selling his soul to the Devil brings to mind the Legend of Faust, such an idea is also an element in witchcraft (G224.4.). A definition of witchcraft given in Popular Antiquities is as follows:

> Witchcraft, in modern estimation, is a kind of sorcery (especially in women), in which it is ridiculously supposed that an old woman, by entering into a contract with the Devil, is enabled in many instances to change the course of Nature, to raise winds, perform actions that require more than human strength, and to afflict those that offend her with the sharpest pains.[17]

The famous seventeenth-century collector of supernatural tales, Joseph Glanvill, describes how a confessed witch named Elizabeth Styles entered into a contract with the Devil:

> [T]he Devil . . . appeared to her in the Shape of a handsome Man, and after of a black Dog. That he promised her Money, and that she should live gallantly, and have the Pleasure of the World for twelve years, if she would with her Blood sign his Paper, which was to give her Soul to him.[18]

Matilda, like the witch Elizabeth Styles, has made a compact with the Devil, having "'bartered for momentary power eternal happiness!'"

The witchery of Matilda influences the development of the plot in the last half of The Monk. After Ambrosio grows tired of Matilda, he sees Antonia, who has come to confessional to seek a confessor for her sick mother. Out

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[17] Popular Antiquities, III, 1-2.

[18] Saducismus Triumphatus, p. 351.

of his desire for Antonia, Ambrosio goes to her house in secrecy, ostensibly to minister to Elvira. His visits continue even after Elvira recovers, however, and she becomes suspicious of Ambrosio. When Elvira almost catches the monk molesting her daughter, she asks him to discontinue his visits.

Ambrosio returns to his cell in a confused and angry state of mind. It appears that he has lost his chance to satisfy his passion for Antonia. Then Matilda comes to him with a solution to his problem. At first Ambrosio is horrified by her suggestion of using witchcraft, but in the ensuing argument, Matilda convinces him that, unless he is willing to do things her way, he shall never possess Antonia. Her principal means of inducing Ambrosio to yield is a magic mirror (D1163.). She shows it to him and explains how it works: "'On pronouncing certain words, the person appears in it on whom the observer's thoughts are bent'" (The Monk, p. 216). Ambrosio becomes curious:

> She put the mirror into his hand. Curiosity induced him to take it, and love, to wish that Antonia might appear. Matilda pronounced the magic words. Immediately a thick smoke rose from the characters traced upon the borders, and spread itself over the surface. It dispersed again gradually; a confused mixture of colours and images presented themselves to the friar's eyes, which at length arranging themselves in their proper places, he beheld in miniature Antonia's lovely form (p. 216).

The scene is of Antonia undressing to take a bath, and soon "his desires were worked up to phrenzy" (p. 216). He cries: "'I yield! . . . Matilda, I follow you! Do with me what

you will'" (p. 216). The magic mirror, therefore, softens the resistance of Ambrosio to the devilish schemes of Matilda and aims him down a path toward destruction.

The magic mirror is not something that Lewis invented as a means of rescuing his plot from a difficulty. Rather, it is a traditional feature of witchcraft. Concerning it Kittredge says,

> Mirror-magic or crystal-gazing in its several species (employing variously a mirror, a beryl or other stone) . . . has a long history in England. . . . The object was . . . to detect a thief or to discover the whereabouts of his booty, but then as now it could be applied to any kind of secret.[19]

There is at least one example of the use of a magic mirror in Saducismus Triumphatus (p. 334). Perhaps a more interesting example arises out of a supposed meeting between the Wandering Jew and the famous sixteenth century German physician, Dr. Cornelius Agrippa. Agrippa had a reputation as a scholar of the occult sciences, and he was supposed to possess a magic mirror. In his book on Cartaphilus, David Hoffman tells about their meeting. According to the story, the Wandering Jew wanted to see the magic mirror, and he said to Agrippa:

> "I would have thee tell me of that MARVELLOUS MIRROR, which thy potent art of magic hath enabled thee to make. . . . Tell me, I pray thee, is it indeed true that whosoever looketh into that mirror, with faith, does see therein the far-distant, and the long dead?"[20]

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[19] Witchcraft in Old and New England, p. 185.

[20] Chronicles Selected from the Originals of Cataphilus, the Wandering Jew, ed. by David Hoffman (Series I, 3 vols.; London, 1853), I, xiv.

The Wandering Jew wanted to see his youth again and the love of his youth, Rebecca. Agrippa granted his wish, and his view of Rebecca is reminiscent of the view which Ambrosia had of Antonia in Matilda's magic mirror, except that the vision of Rebecca is not erotic.

Now that Ambrosio is in the power of Matilda, she leads him to the cemetery and down into the caverns below where she leaves him alone for a few moments. Ambrosio thinks he is still safe from the Devil:

> He had read much respecting witchcraft; he understood that, unless a formal act was signed, renouncing his claim to salvation, Satan would have no power over him. He was fully determined not to execute any such act, whatever threats might be used, or advantages held out to him (The Monk, p. 218).

When Matilda returns, she is dressed in a "long sable robe." She leads the monk deeper into the caverns where the conjuring of the Devil is to take place. The rite, which is described in detail, is successful, and Lucifer appears in the form of a youth. He gives Matilda a branch of myrtle, and Matilda says to Ambrosio, "'Receive this constellated myrtle: while you bear this in your hand, every door will fly open to you'" (p. 222). Such a charm is an authentic feature in witchcraft (D1557.). In his famous attempt to discredit witchcraft entitled The Discoverie of Witchcraft, Reginald Scot refers to ". . . hearbes called Aethiopides [which] will open all locks (if

all be true that inchanters saie)."[21]

Armed with the magic myrtle, Ambrosio comes to Antonia's apartment and touches the outside door with the charm. It opens, and he goes to the door of her room. He cannot lift the latch, "but no sooner was it touched by the talisman, than the bolt flew back" (pp. 238-239). However, before he can rape the helpless girl, Elvira attempts to interfere, and Ambrosio kills her and flees from the house.

Ambrosio's murder of Elvira is mistaken for death by natural causes, and he is free to scheme a new attempt on Antonia's virginity when he is called to her house to lay the ghost of Elvira. But Matilda warns him that he must act quickly because she will soon be taken to the palace of a relative and out of his reach for ever. She tells him about "a juice extracted from certain herbs" that would put her to sleep although she would appear to be dead. One recalls the "liquor" which Friar Laurence gives to Juliet in Romeo and Juliet. Like Juliet, Antonia will sleep until after her burial. Then Ambrosio will steal to her vault, and she will be at his mercy.

Ambrosio follows Matilda's instructions, and the plan goes well for a time. Antonia drinks the liquor which he stealthily puts in her medicine, and soon she is thought

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[21] The Discoverie of Witchcraft, with an Introduction by Hugh Ross Williamson (Carbondale, Ill., 1964), p. 212.

to be dead. After her burial, Ambrosio comes to her tomb and rapes her. Unknown to Ambrosio, however, a wild tumult erupts above ground, and archers fill the sepulchre. In the confusion that follows, Ambrosio kills Antonia, and he and Matilda are taken captive by the Inquisition.

Later, Matilda appears to Ambrosio in his prison cell and appeals to him to save himself from torture and death by selling his soul to the Devil. The monk refuses to agree to such a compact, but before she goes, Matilda gives Ambrosio a book and a formula by which he might conjure the Devil; she says:

> "Yet ere the hour of death arrives, should wisdom enlighten you, listen to the means of repairing your present fault. I leave with you this book. Read the four first lines of the seventh page backwards. The spirit, whom you have already once beheld, will immediately appear to you" (p. 346).

After he is condemned to the auto da fé, Ambrosio conjures the Devil and agrees to the devil-compact, the terms of which are his soul in exchange for his release from prison.

From this discussion, it is apparent that witchcraft makes an important contribution to the atmosphere of terror in the novel. The power which the witch possesses, and the evil purposes which that power serves are almost too terrible to contemplate. Furthermore, it is apparent from the summary of the role of witchcraft in the main plot that Lewis relies heavily on Matilda's witchery as a means of giving his narrative logic and coherence. Witches traditionally serve the Devil, and through her art she is able

to inflame the passion of Ambrosio and equip him with the means of satisfying his passion to his own destruction.

Despite the effectiveness which Lewis occasionally achieves in such passages as the exorcism of the ghost of the Bleeding Nun, it must be argued that Maturin's use of witchcraft in Melmoth the Wanderer is even more effective. Maturin uses witchcraft with more restraint and with greater concern for authenticity than Lewis does, so that nothing in Melmoth the Wanderer is embarrassingly incongruous to the author's purpose as is sometimes the case in The Monk. For example, Lewis probably never intended that his descriptions of the conjuration of the Devil should be humorous; but when one thinks about the Devil speaking ". . . in a voice which sulphurous fogs had damped to hoarseness" (The Monk, p. 348), it is difficult to suppress a laugh. On the other hand, passages in Melmoth the Wanderer which include witchcraft, and which are intended to be terrifying, usually fulfill their purpose.

Maturin does use witchcraft for comic purposes, however. One of the most amusing characterizations in a major Gothic novel is that of Biddy Brannigan, the pseudo-witch and "doctress of the neighborhood," who comes to the house of the dying uncle because he is too avaricious to summon a real doctor. The humor is subdued in tone and derives mainly from the author's contemptuous descriptions of her deceptive but surprisingly effective witchcraft.

Biddy is a traditional figure. Her counterpart is depicted in the personal experience of a man named Alex M. McAldowie, who tells about a woman called "Witch Jeffrey." He says:

> Witch Jeffrey lived in a small thatched cottage near the river, and her fame as a witch extended over the whole country-side. People came to her for charms for their sick children or cattle; youths and maidens consulted her about their future.[22]

Like Witch Jeffery, Biddy is a beneficent witch (G202.); she has a talent for healing the sick, and ". . . her skill . . . was sometimes productive of success" (Melmoth the Wanderer, p. 7). She also tells the future to maidens, especially concerning whom they will marry; Maturin writes:

> No one knew so well as she to find where the four streams met, in which, on the same portentous season, the chemise was to be immersed, and then displayed before the fire . . . to be turned by the figure of the destined husband before morning (p. 8).

Several examples of similar methods for divining one's future husband exist in recorded folklore. An account from the Shetland Islands tells the experience of a young girl named May, who has many sweethearts but loves an Unst boy best. The account is as follows:

> One night she [May] and another girl went to the barn, . . . wet their shirt sleeves, hung them to the fire, and went to bed. About midnight there was a great noise . . . and after a while, the

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[22]"Personal Experiences in Witchcraft," Folk-Lore, VII (1896), 310-311.

> appearance of two men came in through the roof, turned the shirt sleeves, and went out again through the roof. The one that turned May's sleeve was T.M. After that May had no more love for her Unst lad; and ultimately she and T. M. were wed.[23]

Another description of Biddy's methods includes a reference to a comb and an apple:

> No one but herself (she said) knew the hand in which the comb was to be held, while the other was employed in conveying the apple to the mouth,--while, during the joint operation, the shadow of the phantom-spouse was to pass across the mirror before which it was performed (Melmoth the Wanderer, p. 8).

The use of a comb in divination appears in a brief description in County Folk-Lore in which the turning of a sieve a certain number of times is the principal device for making the charm work.[24] Folk materials also include numerous references to the use of an apple in divination, but none of the rituals which were found is similar to the one which Biddy appears to use. However, concerning the use of apples for divination, K. M. Briggs says: "Of all fruit trees apples were the most magic. . . . Apple skins were used in divination, and apples themselves were often used in experiments for love and favors."[25]

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[23] Thomas Mathewson, "Turning the Sleeve," County Folk-Lore, Vol. III: Examples of Printed Folk-Lore Concerning the Orkney & Shetland Islands, collected by G. F. Black and ed. by Northcote W. Thomas (London, 1903), 161.

[24] Thomas Mathewson, "Sifting your Siller," County Folk-Lore, III (1903), 160.

[25] Briggs, p. 456.

Like many other witches, Biddy smokes a pipe (p. 17). Nathaniel Hawthorne makes use of this potentially comic feature in his short story entitled "Feathertop." In the opening line, Mother Rigby, the witch, says, "'Dickon, . . . a coal for my pipe.'"[26] In Saducismus Triumphatus there is a discussion of a witch named Julian Cox; the testimony against her includes the following item: "Another Witness swore, That as he passed by Cox her Door, she was taking a Pipe of Tobacco upon the Threshold of her Door, and invited him to come in and take a Pipe, which he did."[27]

Another important feature of Biddy's witchery is her physical appearance. She looks like a hare (G211.2.7.). When John invited her to tell him what she knows about his family, she came into his room and ". . . squatted herself on the hearth-stone like a hare in her form" (p. 18). The idea that a witch can turn herself into a hare is quite common. For example, another witness against Julian Cox testifies that while he was hunting near her house, his hounds chased a hare until it was exhausted, but when he reached down to pick it up, "it proved to be Julian Cox, who had her head groveling on the ground."[28]

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[26] The Complete Novels and Selected Tales of Nathaniel Hawthorne, edited, with an Introduction, by Norman Holmes Pearson (New York, 1937), p. 1092.

[27] Saducismus Triumphatus, p. 388.

[28] Ibid.

But the inclusion of authentic folk beliefs about witchcraft in the description of Biddy and her place in the neighborhood does more than add humor to her characterization. Biddy's reputed skill in witchcraft substantiates her role as the knowledgeable woman who knows something about the history of Melmoth the Wanderer. When John asks her to reveal what she knows about the story in his family, she provides him, and therefore the reader, with both the background necessary for his understanding of the ancient manuscript and the tales of Monçada and the curiosity necessary for him to want to explore the life of Melmoth the Wanderer.

Among her many talents, Biddy possesses a "counter-spell" against ". . . the effects of the 'evil eye'" (Melmoth the Wanderer, p. 7; D2071.1.). One wonders how well her spell might have worked against the eye of Melmoth the Wanderer; for Maturin's characterization of Melmoth was apparently partly inspired by the folk belief called the "evil eye" (D2071.). The motif is introduced into the narrative when John sees a portrait of his ancestor; the portrait is described as follows:

> There was nothing remarkable in the costume, or in the countenance, but the eyes, John felt, were such as one feels they wish they had never seen, and feels they can never forget. Had he been acquainted with the poetry of Southey, he might have often exclaimed in his after-life, 'Only the eyes had life,--They gleamed with demon light.'--Thalaba (p. 13).

According to traditional belief, envy is the source of the evil eye. In his essay entitled "Of Envy," Sir Francis Bacon says that ". . . the scripture calleth envy an evil eye; and the astrologers call the evil influence of the stars evil aspects; so that still there seemeth to be acknowledged, in the act of envy, an ejaculation or irradiation of the eye."[29]

An explanation of how the evil eye functions is given by John Baptista Porta in his book Natural Magick. A portion of that explanation is as follows:

> . . . it is the eyes that work; for they send forth spirits, which are presently conveyed to the heart of the bewitched, and so infect him. . . . With the spirits there is sent out also a certain fiery quality, as red and blear eyes do, who make those that look on them, fall into the same disease . . . for the eye infecteth the air; which being infected, infecteth another: carrying along with itself the vapors of the corrupted blood, by the contagion of which, the eyes of the beholders are overcast with the like redness . . . so this efflux of beams out of the eyes, being the conveyers of spirits, strike through the eyes of those they meet, and flye to the heart, their proper region, from whence they rise; and there being condensed into blood, infect all his inward parts. . . . But that all things may be more distinctly explained, you must know first, that there are two kinds of Fascinations mentioned by Authors: One of Love, the other of Envy or Malice. . . . But if it be a Fascination of Envy or Malice, that hath infected any person, it is very dangerous, and is found most often in women. . . . So when Envy bends her fierce and flaming eyes, and the desire of mischief bursts thereout, a vehement heat proceedeth from them. Wch infecteth those that stand nigh.[30]

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[29] Francis Bacon's Essays, with an Introduction by Oliphant Smeaton (New York, 1962), p. 24.

[30] Natural Magick (London, 1658); in The Collector's Series in Science, ed. Derek J. Price (New York, 1959), pp. 230-231.

There are two key words in this explanation which indicate the relationship between the folk belief called the "evil eye" and the characterization of Melmoth. The first word is "Envy." Just as envy is the source of the evil eye in others, envy is a reasonable source for the evil eye in Melmoth. He is party to a devil-compact, the terms of which are almost unutterable. He wants desperately to escape those terms. The only way he can do so is to exchange destinies with someone. As a result, he looks with envy on all men, even on those who are themselves in terrible circumstances; for he supposes that one of them is the most likely to exchange destinies with him.

The second word is "Fascination," which Porta uses as a synonym for the evil eye. In Melmoth the Wanderer, the word appears in the record of an incident that occurs at a party given by Don Pedro de Cardoza in honor of his daughter. According to Stanton's old manuscript, Father Olavida sat across from Melmoth. Just as he was about to pray,

> he hesitated,--trembled,--desisted; and, putting down the wine, wiped the drops from his forehead with the sleeve of his habit. . . . The guests sat in astonished silence. Father Olavida alone remained standing but at that moment the Englishman rose, and appeared determined to fix Olavida's regards by a gaze like that of fascination (p. 26).

The power of Melmoth's eye, along with the use of the word "fascination" in the description, makes it apparent that Melmoth possesses the evil eye.

Melmoth's eyes are the dominant feature of his appearance. In the "Tale of the Indians," Melmoth is seen by some men as he walks the streets of Madrid; they are instantly struck by something in his appearance which they can not at first identify. Then Melmoth returns, ". . . and they again encountered that singular expression of the feature, (the eyes particularly), which no human glance could meet unappalled" (p. 249). And in the "Tale of Guzman's Family," Walberg tells his wife about seeing a man with "two burning eyes"; he says, "'He fixes them on me sometimes, and I feel as if there was fascination in their glare'" (p. 326).

It is apparent that Maturin uses the evil eye to intensify the aura of horror which accompanies an appearance by Melmoth. He also uses this folk belief as a means of foreshadowing Melmoth's terrible death. When the Wanderer appeared to John and Monçada toward the close of the novel,

> 'his eye was dim,'--that appalling and supernatural lustre of the visual organ . . . was no longer visible--the form and figure were those of a living man, of the age indicated in the portrait which the young Melmoth had destroyed, but the eyes were as the eyes of the dead (p. 407).

Although Lewis and Maturin effectively use witchcraft in their novels, when one considers the potential for suspense, horror, and even for humor in this fascinating folk tradition, it is disappointing to realize that both Reeve and Radcliffe completely avoid the superstitions

about witches and witchcraft. Neither is there any authentic witchcraft in The Castle of Otranto. Manfred does accuse Theodore of being a "sorcerer" and a "necromancer," but little is added either to the atmosphere of terror or to the development of the narrative by these brief references to witchcraft.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FUNCTIONS OF LEGENDS

Kenneth and Mary Clarke define legends as "narratives about persons, places, or events involving real or pretended belief."[1] Two narratives which made important contributions to the development of the Gothic novel in its latter stages are the Legend of the Wandering Jew and the Legend of Faust. Both legends are concerned with the supernatural, and both legends involve man in an unutterable sin.

When one considers the terrible horror that may arise in a man because of his superstitions concerning the supernatural or his belief in a fiery punishment for someone who commits a great sin, it seems remarkable that the Legend of the Wandering Jew and the Legend of Faust were not used by major Gothic novelists before the publication of The Monk in 1795. Be that as it may, the superstitions connected with these two legendary figures contribute effectively to the atmosphere of horror, to structure and plot, to theme, and especially to characterization in both The Monk and Melmoth the Wanderer. Although Maturin combines several motifs from both legends in his characterization of Melmoth, for purposes of order and clarity, the legends shall be discussed separately.

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[1] Introducing Folklore, p. 24.

In his important study of the Legend of the Wandering Jew, George K. Anderson briefly summarizes the essence of the legend as follows:

> [It] is the tale of a man in Jerusalem who, when Christ was carrying his Cross to Calvary and paused to rest for a moment on this man's doorstep, drove the Saviour away (with or without physical contact, depending on the variants), crying aloud, 'Walk faster!' And Christ replied, 'I go, but you will walk until I come again!'[2]

Two important motifs in this summation, the indignity perpetrated on Christ by the blow and the indefinite period of waiting, form what Anderson calls ". . . the headwaters of the Legend of the Wandering Jew."[3] For centuries, these two motifs existed separately in two different legends. One was called the Legend of Malchus, which derived from two passages in the Bible. When Christ was arrested, Peter cut off the ear of a man named Malchus (John 18:10), and when Christ appeared before the high priest, an unnamed officer struck him (John 18:20-22). By a phenomenon Anderson calls "the law of transposition," these two men, Malchus and the officer, became one man who struck Christ.[4]

The oldest written version of this legend dates from the last half of the sixth century. It appears in the

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[2] The Legend of the Wandering Jew (Providence, R.I., 1965), p. 11.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., p. 12.

Leimonarion, the work of a monk named Johannes Moschos. This account of the legend tells about an Ethiopian monk who can not stop crying because he struck Christ on the cheek.[5]

The second motif, the indefinite period of waiting, is at the heart of the Legend of St. John, which also has its source in two biblical passages. One passage quotes Christ as saying that some people listening to him would not "taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom" (Matthew 16:28). In the second passage, Jesus warns Peter not to worry about what John is going to do; he says: "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" (John 21:22). The legend ignores the "if" in the passage and assumes that John is still alive and waiting patiently for Christ to return, and while he waits, he wanders about Asia Minor and the Orient.[6]

Eventually the Legend of St. John blended with the Legend of Malchus to form one version, which appeared in a Latin chronicle in an entry for the year 1223. Then, in 1228, Roger of Wendover, an English chronicler who lived in the monastery of St. Albans, tells in his Flores Historiarum about an Armenian archbishop who visited the monastery and related a story about a man named Joseph. Joseph

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[5] Wandering Jew, p. 13.

[6] Ibid., p. 14.

was in the service of Pilate at the time of the appearance of Jesus before the Roman prelate. When Jesus left the Hall of Judgment, Joseph (his name was Cartaphilus then) struck Jesus and told him to "'go quicker.'" And Jesus looked back at him and said: "'I am going, and you will wait till I return.'"[7] And from that time, after his baptism by Ananias, Joseph waited on Christ's return. He passed his time in Armenia and other countries visiting with the men of the church. He spoke little, never smiled, and knew the answers to all the questions that were asked him.[8]

Another version of the legend was written by Roger's successor at St. Albans, Matthew Paris. Two hundred years later, Chaucer included the Wandering Jew in the Pardoner's Tale. The three revelers encounter a very old man, who has walked as far as India in search of someone to exchange places with. He seeks death, but he cannot find it. He is also a man of unusual knowledge and wisdom because he can tell the revelers where to find death.

Despite the accounts of Roger of Wendover and Matthew Paris and the use of the legend by Chaucer, the Legend of the Wandering Jew apparently had little popularity in England for several centuries. Instead, interest in the

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[7] Wandering Jew, p. 19.

[8] Ibid.

Wandering Jew shifted to the Mediterranean area, where several versions appeared. These accounts called the Jew "Buttadeus," which meant "to strike God," a meaning which suggests an emphasis on the Malchean version of the legend.[9] The most important of the Mediterranean versions was by Antonio di Francesco di Andrea, who wrote the most complete account of the legend before 1500.[10]

In the sixteenth century, the legend added a dramatic new motif as a result of an intense antiSemitism, which was coupled with a belief among many Protestants in the coming of an antichrist. By associating Buttadeus with the antichrist, the new versions of the legend made the Jew an ally of the Devil and a figure to be feared[11] (Cf. G303. 3.1.15.).

In addition to this new cycle of literature about the Wandering Jew, old versions of the legend were also printed. The Chronica Majora of Matthew Paris was published in London in 1571 and in Zurich in 1582.[12] Shortly thereafter, in 1602, a pamphlet entitled Kurtze Beschreibung was published. Anderson calls this pamphlet

> . . . perhaps the most important single milestone in the progress of the Legend of the Wandering Jew [because] had it not been for this pamphlet, it is altogether likely that the Legend . . . would have trickled out into a sandy desert and have been known only to the antiquarian and the specialist in folklore.[13]

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[9] Wandering Jew, p. 21.

[10] Ibid., p. 24.

[11] Ibid., pp. 39-41.

[12] Ibid., p. 41.

[13] Ibid., p. 42.

Furthermore, in Anderson's judgment, the Kurtze Beschreibung ". . . underlies nearly all the treatments of the Wandering Jew during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries."[14]

After the Kurtze Beschreibung stirred interest anew in the legend, a collection of four pamphlets on Ahasuerus, as the Jew was called in the Kurtze Beschreibung, became known as the German Volksbuch or "Ahasuerus-book."[15] In France, there were several versions of the legend, including translations by Cayet and an account entitled Discours véritable. Finally, the legend returned to England via these German and French versions. Renewed interest in the legend in England was especially evident in ballad form. Percy's Reliques, for example, includes a ballad about the Wandering Jew.[16]

It was not an English but a German source, however, which Matthew Lewis used as a basis for his characterization of the Wandering Jew in The Monk. According to Anderson, Lewis' description of the Great Mogul "virtually paraphrases" a description of him in Christian Schubert's poem "Der dwige Jude," which was written in 1783.[17] But he also adds that he thinks Lewis' description owes much

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[14] Wandering Jew, p. 45.

[15] Ibid., p. 52.

[16] Ibid., pp. 60-61.

[17] Ibid., p. 178.

to his own ". . . lively and febrile Gothic imagination."[18]

It is not certain why Lewis chose to call his Wandering Jew "the Great Mogul." The idea may have come from a book by Miles Wilson entitled The History of Israel Jobson (1757). Israel Jobson travelled all over the world, and during his travels he saw the Great Mogul, the emperor of Hindustan and a man of tremendous resources.[19] Perhaps Lewis reasoned that such a title would add greater mystery and romance to the already mysterious and terrifying character of the Wandering Jew.

The Great Mogul appears in the sub-plot of The Monk. After Raymond disappears on the night of his rendezvous with the Bleeding Nun, Theodore, his servant, goes to Munich, where Raymond is to contact him. But Theodore meets the Great Mogul there instead, and he receives a message from him for Raymond. Later Theodore finds Raymond in the village of Ratisbon, where he is being terrified nightly by secret visits from the Bleeding Nun. The Great Mogul also comes to Ratisbon, and Theodore is reminded by his appearance of the message which was given him in Munich. He therefore tells Raymond what the Great Mogul had said; and since the message implies that the stranger somehow knows about Raymond's secret terror, Raymond has his servant

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[18] Wandering Jew, p. 177.

[19] Ibid., p. 136.

bring the Great Mogul to him.

The Great Mogul does not disappoint Raymond. He knows about the secret visits of the Bleeding Nun, and, furthermore, he knows how to force the ghost to reveal what Raymond must do in order to lay her to rest. After his work is done, Raymond never sees him again, but later Raymond's uncle identifies the Great Mogul as "'The Wandering Jew'" (The Monk, p. 140).

Such an identification appears correct from the many details in the description of the Great Mogul which are traditional in the characterization of the Wandering Jew. According to Theodore's landlord in Munich, the Great Mogul "'. . . seemed to have no acquaintance in the town, spoke very seldom, and never was seen to smile. He had neither servants nor baggage, but his purse seemed well furnished, and he did much good in the town'" (p. 132). Raymond's own first impression of him was as follows:

> "He was a man of majestic presence; his countenance was strongly marked, and his eyes were large, black, and sparkling; yet there was a something in his look which, the moment that I saw him, inspired me with a secret awe, not to say horror. . . . His countenance wore the marks of profound melancholy, his step was slow, and his manner grave, stately, and solemn" (p. 132).

Concerning a conversation he had with the Great Mogul, Raymond says:

> "He named people who had ceased to exist for many centuries and yet with whom he appeared to have been personally acquainted. I could not mention a country, however distant, which he had not visited,

> nor could I sufficiently admire the extent and variety of his information'" (p. 133).

But the Great Mogul's travels have brought him no pleasure in life; for he says:

> '"No one . . . is adequate to comprehending the misery of my lot; Fate obliges me to be constantly in movement; I am not permitted to pass more than a fortnight in the same place. I have no friend in the world, and, from the restlessness of my destiny, I never can acquire one. Fain would I lay down my miserable life, for I envy those who enjoy the quiet of the grave; but death eludes me, and flies from my embrace"' (p. 133).

The man's suffering and frustration are visible in the fury of his eyes. Raymond says, "'There was in his eyes an expression of fury, despair, and malevolence that struck horhor to my very soul. An involuntary convulsion made me shudder'" (p. 134).

As it was mentioned earlier, Anderson believes that Lewis' characterization of the Wandering Jew owes much to his own imagination. In more specific terms, Railo credits Lewis with adding ". . . the Jew's large, black, flashing eyes, whose glance awakened horror, his melancholy and his noble majesty."[20]

Nevertheless, that Lewis relied heavily on traditional material to achieve his purpose is quite obvious. One feature of the description of the Great Mogul is especially reminiscent of the old man in the Pardoner's Tale: his inability to die despite his great desire to do so.

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[20] Haunted Castle, p. 198.

Several other details correspond to the motifs found in such versions as the one recorded by Roger of Wendover and the Kurtze Beschreibung of 1602: his unusual and arresting appearance; his great knowledge; his wandering from one foreign country to another; his taciturnity; his solemn face; and his benevolence.

The Legend of the Wandering Jew makes at least two contributions to the narrative in The Monk. First, it adds to the romantic aura of mystery and terror. The device of withholding the exact identification of the stranger until after the episode in which he appears is concluded indicates the author's intention of capitalizing on the mysterious qualities of his character. And, since Lewis adds a look of malevolence to the traditional characterization of the Wandering Jew and has Raymond refer twice to the horror which that look evokes in him, it is apparent that Lewis saw in this character the opportunity to darken still further the atmosphere of terror.

But perhaps what Lewis saw as the most powerful feature of the legend was simply the fact that the Wanderer was a Jew. As Anderson points out, sixteenth-century European Protestants attempted to associate the Jew with the antichrist mentioned in the New Testament (see page 133). Therefore, Jews have long been thought to be in partnership with the Devil. Rudwin says:

> The man who wished to enter into business relations with the Devil generally applied to a Jew to act

> as intermediary. It was believed that only Jews could enter into communication with the Devil through the arts of magic.[21]

A Jew, standing amidst a variety of reliques, sculls, and thighbones, with a Bible in one hand and a crucifix in the other, might arouse sensations of dread and horror which a more traditional exorcist, such as a priest, would be incapable of arousing.

The second contribution made by the Legend of the Wandering Jew to the narrative in The Monk is its brief role in the development of the sub-plot. The act of exorcism performed by the Wandering Jew results in a revelation by the ghost that her bones lie unburied and that Raymond must give them a proper burial if he is to "'". . . know a night devoid of terror"'" (p. 136). The performance of this act, as it was shown during the discussion of the burial of the dead in Chapter V, results in a shift of scene in the sub-plot.

Unlike The Monk, which explicitly says that the Great Mogul is the Wandering Jew, Melmoth the Wanderer does not identify its villain-hero as a Wandering Jew. Nevertheless, the Legend of the Wandering Jew obviously influences the characterization and role of Melmoth. As Varma says,

> [H]is wanderings and endless persecution of mankind, his tragic, endless migration from one continent to another, undeterred by considerations of time and

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[21]Devil in Legend, p. 174.

> space, and his sudden appearance at fateful moments recall to mind the Wandering Jew.[22]

A variety of literary heroes and villains, in addition to the Wandering Jew, may have influenced his characterization, from the Satan of Paradise Lost to the Byronic hero. Ernest A. Baker summarizes most critical opinion in this regard. He says that Maturin ". . . took the Faust of tradition and of Goethe and cunningly blended him with the mocking spirit of Mephistopheles, and into the same synthesis went the fearful conception of the Wandering Jew."[23]

The motifs which Maturin borrowed from the Legend of the Wandering Jew indicate the functional purposes of the legend in Melmoth the Wanderer. The principal motif suggested by the legend is apparent in the title: Melmoth is a wanderer; like the Jew of the legend, he is "independent of time and place" (p. 34). This aspect of the character of Melmoth provides some coherence for the novel, although most critics believe that the book is nevertheless badly structured.

Melmoth the Wanderer consists of a series of loosely connected tales about men and women whose situations in life grow more and more desperate until they finally reach the depths of despair. At this point, each one is given a chance of relief if he will agree to exchange destinies

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[22] Gothic Flame, p. 166.

[23] The Novel of Sentiment, pp. 220-221.

with Melmoth, who mysteriously appears to him. The stories are set in several different European countries and the Far East, and they cover a period of about 150 years (F1032.1.). In order for Melmoth to make his well-timed appearance in such widely separated settings and over such a long period of time, and thereby give the novel an element of structural coherence, it was necessary for him to have those qualities of longevity, ubiquity, and omniscience which are traditionally featured in the Legend of the Wandering Jew.

Two motifs which contribute to the novel's atmosphere of terror were possibly inspired by the additions which Lewis made to the legend. Like the Great Mogul, Melmoth's appearance suggests a malevolent spirit; for, in the opinion of Biddy Brannigan, his appearance ". . . boded no good either to the living or the dead" (Melmoth, p. 20). And to enhance this malevolent appearance, as it has been shown, Melmoth's eyes have an "ominous lustre," which on numerous occasions evokes a feeling of horror in the beholder. In fact, Melmoth's look can kill, as it does on at least two occasions.

The sudden appearance of Melmoth in a dungeon or a madhouse produces an atmosphere of tension and suspense which may be unmatched by any other Gothic novel of the period. For example, when Stanton is near madness, Melmoth visits him in his cell. The passage begins as follows:

> It was one of those dismal nights, that, as he tossed on his loathsome bed,--more loathsome from

> the impossibility to quit it without feeling more 'unrest,'--he perceived the miserable light that burned in the hearth was obscured by the intervention of some dark object. He turned feebly towards the light, without curiosity, without excitement, but with a wish to diversify the monotony of his misery, by observing the slightest change made even accidentally in the dusky atmosphere of his cell. Between him and the light stood the figure of Melmoth, just as he had seen him from the first; the figure was the same; the expression of the face was the same,--cold, stony, and rigid; the eyes, with their infernal and dazzling lustre, were still the same (p. 41).

A third important function of the legend in the novel is its symbolic meaning, which is inherent in the character of the wanderer himself. Concerning this symbolic meaning, Anderson says:

> In the main, the Wandering Jew continues to stand out as a brave representative of sin, one who may be considered, as a sinner, in either a sympathetic or unsympathetic light. If unsympathetic, we must accept the attitude toward him as a manifestation of moral or religious conservatism.[24]

Although Melmoth shows compassion for Immalee, Melmoth is generally presented in an unsympathetic light: he has a malevolent spirit, and he tempts others to commit their souls to the Devil. As a great sinner who dies a terrible death, Melmoth therefore symbolizes the horrifying consequences of sin. This meaning is implicit in the novel's closing line. After John and Monçada trace the wretched Melmoth to a high cliff overlooking the sea, they find only his handkerchief, which is caught on a crag below. And as

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[24] Wandering Jew, p. 212.

the two men leave the scene, they exchange ". . . looks of silent and unutterable horror" (p. 412).

Although the Legend of the Wandering Jew makes an important contribution to the Gothic art of both The Monk and Melmoth the Wanderer, perhaps an even greater contribution to the art of these novels may be credited to the Legend of Faust. Certainly there is no act of man with more horrifying prospects than for one to enter into an agreement with the Devil (M210.).

Maximilian Rudwin traces the idea of a bargain between a man and Beelzebub from ancient Persian sacred writings, to Jewish tradition, and finally into Christian tradition. The idea was especially fascinating to the men of the Middle Ages.[25] Their belief, Rudwin says, was that

> . . . man could enter with the Devil into a compact by which he obtained from hell whatever he desired for a certain period--later fixed at twenty-four years--at the expiration of which term he was to deliver his soul to the Devil.[26]

Before the Devil could agree to such a bargain with a man, the man had to blaspheme the name of the Lord, a motif perhaps traceable to the advice Job received from his wife: "Curse God and die" (Job 2:9). After the terms of the compact were agreed upon, the man sealed his agreement with the Devil by signing his name to the agreement with

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[25] Devil in Legend, pp. 169-170, 173.

[26] Ibid., p. 174.

his own blood. When the time stipulated in the compact was up, the man died a violent death, usually by having his flesh torn by the Devil's sharp claws and teeth.[27]

Although the Devil always fulfilled his part of the agreement, the medieval man sometimes found a way out of the devil-compact, such as by appealing to the Virgin, who was always anxious for a fight with the Devil (K218.4.). This motif is illustrated by the Legend of St. Theophilus (M211.), which dates from the sixth century, and which first appeared in English in a Homily on the Assumption of the Blessed Mary by Aelfric in about the year 1000.[28] A brief summary of the legend is as follows:

> St. Teofle or Theophilus is robbed by His Bishop, and asks a Jew to get him money from the devil. Theophilus agrees with the devil to give up Christ and His mother Mary, so that he may be rich. St. Theophilus binds himself to the devil by deed, and becomes rich but fears the devil will betray and kill him. St. Theophilus repents, and prays to our lady for 40 days and 40 nights. She has mercy on him, and bids him shriven. The Virgin Mary wins forgiveness from Christ for Theophilus, and gets him back his deed of covenant with the devil. Theophilus confesses his sins to all folk. His Devil's-covenant is burnt. He dies and goes to heaven.[29]

But the Legend of St. Theophilus has significance beyond the consideration of a single motif. Rudwin says

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[27] Devil in Legend, pp. 174-175.

[28] Ibid., pp. 171, 177-178, 184.

[29] Carl Horstman, ed., The Early South-English legendary; or, Lives of Saints (London, 1887), pp. 288-293.

that it was through this legend, which "merged into the Faust-myth" in the sixteenth century, that the tradition of the devil-compact ". . . entered the literatures of all European countries and formed the subject of poem and play, novel and short story, throughout the civilized world for full thousand years."[30]

The most famous and most influential version of the devil-compact is the Legend of Faust. Rudwin briefly summarizes the story of Dr. Faustus as follows:

> Johnnes Faustus, a laborious student, has drained dry the sources of intellectual satisfaction to be found in the various ordinary departments of human knowledge. Wearied and worried, but unsated, the voracious student turns to magic, and finally conjures up the demon Mephistopheles. With this demon Faust enters into a contract, binding Faust to surrender his body and soul to Mephistopheles at the end of twenty-four years and reciprocally binding Mephistopheles to be at Faust's command during that period, providing for him during that quarter-century his fill of miraculous exploits and sensual delights.[31]

Faustus was apparently an historical figure. Numerous references to him appear in letters and chronicles of the sixteenth century. In fact, the reputation of Faustus as a magician and necromancer became so great that the commercial value of his life was recognized, and in 1587 the Historia Von D. Johann Fausten, or the German Faust-book, was published. It was such a success that four new printings

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[30] Devil in Legend, p. 181.

[31] Ibid., p. 188.

and two new editions appeared before the end of the year.[32]

Shortly after the German Faust-book appeared, Christopher Marlowe relied on it as the basis for his drama, Dr. Faustus. In Dr. Faustus, Faust agrees in blood to forfeit his soul to the Devil after a period of twenty-four years. For his part, the Devil agrees that Mephistopheles will serve Faust until the twenty-four year period has ended.

The best version of the Legend of Faust is generally considered to be Faust, Part I (1808), by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Rudwin says: "In his hands, it [the Legend of Faust] has become the most poetical expression of the eternal combat between good and evil in the heart of man."[33] Although Faust, Part I did not appear until several years after The Monk was published, Varma argues that ". . . it is almost certain that Part I of Faust had contributed to the conception of The Monk."[34] In any case, motifs from the Legend of Faust are common toward the close of the novel in the speeches and actions of both Matilda and Ambrosio.

After Ambrosio is exposed and imprisoned by the Inquisition, Matilda comes to him and promises him that he

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[32]William Rose, ed., The History of the Damnable Life and Deserved Death of Doctor John Faustus 1592 Together with The Second Report of Faustus Containing His Appearances and the Deeds of Wagner 1594, modernized and with an Introduction by William Rose (New York, n.d.), pp. 23,25.

[33]Devil in Legend, p. 195.

[34]Gothic Flame, p. 150.

can escape the auto de fé and enjoy a life of bliss by following her lead. She says: "'Be advised by me; purchase, by one moment's courage, the bliss of years; enjoy the present, and forget that a future lags behind'" (The Monk, p. 346). In this role as temptress, she reminds one of Mephistopheles. In Doctor Faustus, Mephistopheles tempts Faustus into the devil-compact by saying:

> But, tell me, Faustus, shall I have thy soul?
> And I will be thy slave, and wait on thee,
> And give thee more than thou hast wit to ask.[35]

Matilda is also a Faustian figure in that she has purchased her liberty "'at a dreadful price,'" for she is "'no longer a candidate for heaven,'" having "'renounced God's service, and . . . enlisted beneath the banners of his foes'" (p. 344). In exchange for her soul, she has purchased "'. . . the power of procuring every bliss which can make . . . life delicious'" (p. 344).

At first, Ambrosio refuses to give up his hope of salvation, but Matilda leaves a magic formula with him by which he may summons Lucifer if he were to change his mind. After reflecting on the horrors of the auto de fé, Ambrosio uses the formula, and, just as Mephistopheles appeared to Dr. Faustus, Lucifer appears to Ambrosio ". . . in all that ugliness which, since his fall from heaven, had been his

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[35]Christopher Marlowe, The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus: From the Quarto of 1604, in The Plays of Christopher Marlowe, with an Introduction by Edward Thomas (New York, 1950), p. 163.

portion" (p. 348). Ambrosio pleads with him to save him from death. In return, the Devil asks: "'Will you be mine, body and soul? Are you prepared to renounce Him who made you, and Him who died for you?'" (p. 349). Ambrosio hesitates, and when Lucifer seeks his signature in blood, the monk sends him away in horror.

But as the hour of his execution approaches, Ambrosio weakens, and he conjures the Devil again. After he takes up the pen filled with his own blood, Ambrosio engages the Devil in the following conversation:

> 'What is the import of this writing?'
> 'It makes your soul over to me for ever, and without reserve.'
> 'What am I to receive in exchange?'
> 'My protection, and release from this dungeon. Sign it, and this instant I bear you away' (p. 351).

When Ambrosio hears the clanging of chains at the door of his cell by the guards who have come to escort him to his death, he signs the agreement. Instantly Lucifer snatches him through the roof of the dungeon, and, as in the Legend of Faust, the rumor spreads that the Devil has carried him away.

Unfortunately for Ambrosio, he settles for too limited an agreement. As soon as the Devil fulfills his promise to take Ambrosio out of the prison, he takes him to the steepest precipice in Sierra Morena. When the frightened monk protests, the Devil replies:

> "Have I not performed my part? What more did I promise than to save you from your prison? . . . Fool that

> you were, to confide yourself to the devil! Why did you not stipulate for life, and power, and pleasure?--then all would have been granted: now, your reflections come too late" (p. 355).

Then the Devil sinks his "talons into the monk's shaven crown" and soars to "a dreadful height" before dropping him down the precipice to a terrible death (p. 355).

The Legend of Faust serves Lewis' purpose in several respects. From a commercial point of view, the legend had been a popular success for over two hundred years. Since no other major Gothic novelist had capitalized on it before him, perhaps it occurred to Lewis to include the legend in his novel in order to enhance its appeal to the public.

As for the legend's function within the novel, it appears to have at least three important roles: to thicken the atmosphere of horror, to bring the plot to a grand climax, and to point up an important theme in the work. First, Lewis details the responses of the monk to the devil-compact as a means of stimulating a sense of horror in the mind of the reader. When Matilda reveals that the price of her liberty is her own soul, Ambrosio shudders at the thought and says to her, "'[H]ow dreadful will be your sufferings'" (p. 345). When Lucifer presents a similar agreement to him to sign, he reflects "on the conditions proposed with horror" (p. 350).

Second, by withholding the devil-compact and its dreadful consequences until the end of the novel, Lewis

succeeds in ending The Monk in spectacular fashion. And finally, it is through this ultimate act--the signing of an agreement with the Devil--that Lewis states his theme in the clearest possible terms; for the Devil himself says to Ambrosio, "'Fool that you were, to confide yourself to a devil'" (p. 355).

During the discussion of the influence of the Legend of the Wandering Jew on the characterization of Melmoth, it was pointed out that the Legend of Faust is also important in that characterization; perhaps it is even more important. Rudwin claims that a devil-compact is "the central episode" of Melmoth the Wanderer.[36]

As the novel begins, the year is 1796. Young John Melmoth comes to the ancestral home in Ireland because his aged uncle is dying. At his Uncle's request, John enters a closet for a bottle of wine, but while he is there, he discovers a portrait, which is identified with the words "Jno. Melmoth, anno 1646" (p. 13). When John returns to his uncle's bedside, the badly frightened man tells him that the man in the portrait "'is still alive'" (p. 13).

Soon the uncle dies, and his will includes a request that the portrait be burned and that an old manuscript also be found and burned. But the will permits John to read the manuscript before he burns it. In the structure of the

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[36] Devil in Legend, p. 210.

novel, the old manuscript is the first story in a series of stories, each of which includes a mysterious appearance by the man of the portrait, Melmoth the Wanderer.

At the end of the novel, the Wanderer himself appears and reveals the secret of his extraordinarily long life. He also explains why he has appeared to the various characters told about in the stories. He says to John and Monçada (who has been telling John the "Tale of the Indians"):

> 'It has been reported of me, that I obtained from the enemy of souls a range of existence beyond the period allotted to mortality--a power to pass over space without disturbance or delay, and visit remote regions with the swiftness of thought--to encounter tempests without the hope of their blasting me, and penetrate into dungeons, whose bolts were as flax and tow at my touch. It has been said that this power was accorded to me, that I might be enabled to tempt wretches in their fearful hour of extremity, with the promise of deliverance and immunity, on condition of their exchanging situations with me. If this be true, it bears attestation to a truth uttered by the lips of one I may not name, and echoed by every human heart in the habitable world.
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> 'No one has ever exchanged destinies with Melmoth the Wanderer. I have traversed the world in the search, and no one, to gain that world, would lose his own soul!' (pp. 408-409).

In the characterization of Melmoth, Maturin combines two motifs from the Legend of Faust. First, like Faust, Melmoth has sold his soul to the Devil for extraordinary powers. Second, like Mephistopheles, Melmoth tempts others to sell their souls to the Devil. But at the end of the novel, Melmoth has failed to find a victim and, like Dr. Faustus, he is taken from the earth by the Devil.

Because Melmoth derives his extraordinary powers from a devil-compact, and because that compact binds him to accept a terrible end, one must conclude that the theme of Melmoth the Wanderer echoes the theme of The Monk; Rudwin says: "The aim of the author . . . in writing a novel so full of horrors, was to show that any man who deals with the Devil is doomed to perdition."[37]

Eino Railo suggests another theme which derives from looking at the narratives from the point of view of the tempted rather than the tempter. He calls the novel a ". . . study of the stubbornness with which mankind clings, even in moments of the greatest misery, to its right to the highest conceivable happiness, eternal bliss."[38] But whether one considers the novel to be a study of the consequences of evil or a study of the capacity of man to withstand evil, the devil-compact remains the central feature of the novel.

One can hardly overstate the value of the contribution of legends to the novels by Lewis and Maturin. In The Monk, the Wandering Jew adds to the romantic aura of mystery and terror in one of the most fascinating episodes in the novel. And the Legend of Faust is central to the developments in the main plot in that the characterizations

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[37]Devil in Legend, p. 211.

[38]Haunted Castle, p. 207.

of both Matilda and Ambrosio, the movement of the plot toward an awesome climax, and the theme of the novel, all derive from Faustian motifs. In Melmoth the Wanderer, the Legend of the Wandering Jew suggests such fundamental features of the characterization of Melmoth as his endless wandering and his long and tragic life. The Legend of Faust provides the novel with its central motif, the devil-compact. Like Faust, Melmoth sells his soul to the Devil in exchange for momentary powers, and the theme of the novel derives from the terrible price that Melmoth pays for his folly.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

During the years between 1790 and 1810, the Gothic novel achieved a level of popular success rarely seen in the history of English literature. The time was right for the appearance of this new kind of novel; for, in the last half of the eighteenth century, a gradual rise in romantic feeling and outlook resulted in the kind of emotional and intellectual climate necessary for the development of the Gothic novel. The preoccupation of the English people with such realities of the human condition as terror and death, and their fascination with Gothicism, with its ancient ruins and terrifying superstitions, would appear to make inevitable the creation of the novel of terror.

From The Castle of Otranto to Melmoth the Wanderer, Gothic novelists were aware of the power of superstition to produce terror in the human breast. Even authors who, like Radcliffe, shied away from the use of the supernatural relied on ancient superstitions about the supernatural as a means of creating the atmosphere of terror necessary for the success of their novels. Without superstition, which is a part of the folklore of the world, the Gothic novel, as it was developed by Walpole and his successors, could not have been written. But at this point, a recapitulation of the specific functions of folklore in the novels analysed

in this study seems in order.

The analysis begins with the minor elements which appear in the novels, and the first of these elements discussed is the theme of incest. Although the major Gothic novelists rarely use this theme, it has significance in both The Castle of Otranto and Melmoth the Wanderer. In Walpole's novel, Manfred's disregard for the horrors associated with incest serves to demonstrate his depravity. In Melmoth the Wanderer, Maturin uses incest as a major element in the plot of "The Lovers' Tale," but his discreet handling of the theme allows this highly romantic story to have an unusual measure of charm for a Gothic tale.

Other minor elements discussed are superstitions regarding omens, prophetic dreams, and the burial of the dead. From Walpole's slightly obscure "three drops of blood," to the appearance of the moon in Melmoth the Wanderer, omens primarily function in the novels as devices for adding to the atmosphere of terror and as a means of foreshadowing subsequent events in the plots. Like omens, prophetic dreams, such as the one experienced by Lorenzo in The Monk, also reveal terrifying events to come. In addition, a Gothic novelist may use a dream as a device for revealing an act, such as a murder, which occurred antecedent to the beginning of the action of the novel. For example, at the beginning of The Old English Baron, the dream of Sir Philip hints that something terrible has

happened to the original owner of the castle, Lord Lovel himself. Finally, superstitions concerning the burial of the dead fill an important role in The Monk. In the episode in which Raymond meets the Bleeding Nun, the restless ghost's insistence that her bones be given a proper burial serves as a natural device for bringing about an important shift in the setting in the sub-plot.

The second chapter of analysis discusses the superstitions concerning ghosts. These superstitions function in three ways. First, they help to create an atmosphere of terror. Maturin and Radcliffe are especially skilled in their use of ghostly elements, but they handle their materials differently. Radcliffe relies entirely on the power of suggestion, rather than the appearance of the ghost itself, as a means of charging her scenes with a sense of dread and terror. Maturin's technique is to allow the ghost to appear but to describe his appearance with such restraint and subtlety that the effect is mysterious and terrifying. Ghosts also make an important contribution to the plots of The Castle of Otranto, The Old English Baron, and The Monk. In Walpole's novel, for example, the ghost of the hermit of Joppa helps change the direction of the plot and bring about the ruin of Manfred by preventing the cooperation of Frederic in Manfred's scheme to marry Isabella, Frederic's daughter. The third function of ghosts is that they serve as a device for accomplishing the moral purpose of Gothic

novels. This purpose is always to show that evil men, like Manfred, must pay for their crimes, as Manfred pays by the death of his daughter and the loss of Otranto.

The next chapter discusses superstitions about witches and witchcraft as they affect the narratives of The Monk and Melmoth the Wanderer. In the novel by Lewis, witchery contributes both to the atmosphere of terror and to the development of the two plots. In the sub-plot, the exorcism of the Bleeding Nun by the Great Mogul is, first, a fascinating passage of undeniable power. But exorcism also forces the ghost to reveal the purpose behind her nightly visits to Raymond's room--that her bones must be properly buried. So far as the main plot is concerned, the witchery of Matilda inflames the latent passions of Ambrosio, while at the same time, through such features of witchcraft as a magic myrtle, her witchery provides the monk with the means of gratifying his lust, and thereby it brings about his destruction.

In Melmoth the Wanderer, Maturin uses superstitions about witches and witchcraft for both humorous and serious purposes. His creation of the comic figure, witch Biddy Brannigan, who smokes a pipe, looks like a hare, and advises young girls about their future husbands, provides most of the humor in the novel. On the serious level, Melmoth possesses the "evil eye," which is his most dominant feature. It is apparent that Maturin has given Melmoth the

"evil eye" as a means of intensifying the horror that his appearance in the novel always produces.

The final chapter of analysis discusses the functions of the Legend of the Wandering Jew and the Legend of Faust in the novels by Lewis and Maturin. Concerning the first of these legends, it may be said that, although the terrible appearance of the ancient and melancholy figure of the Jew adds effectively to the atmosphere of terror in The Monk, its most important contribution to the Gothic novel is in Melmoth the Wanderer. Like the Jew, Melmoth is not bound by the normal limitations of time and place which govern the lives of other men. As a result, he has the ability to appear at the right time and place in the novel to various ones whose lives have reached a point of despair. These appearances, which occur in each of the tales in the novel, provide an important element of structural unity and coherence for the work. In addition, these sudden and mysterious appearances produce an atmosphere of tension and suspense in Melmoth the Wanderer that may be unequalled by the work of any other Gothic novelist.

The Legend of Faust is important to both novels. In The Monk it functions in at least three ways. First, as Ambrosio contemplates entering into a pact with the Devil, the superstitions regarding such a desperate agreement result in a scene of horror. Second, Lewis uses the terrors of the devil-compact as a means of bringing his novel to a

grand climax. And finally, the price which Ambrosio pays for dealing with the Devil helps make clear the primary theme of the novel. The same theme--that he who deals with the Devil is doomed--is also the principal theme of Melmoth the Wanderer. In this novel, the devil-compact is the central fact of the story. Like Faust, Melmoth sells his soul to the Devil in exchange for unusual power; and like Faust's tempter, Mephistopheles, he also tempts others to sell their souls to the Devil. And when his efforts fail, Melmoth, like Ambrosio, pays for his folly by being carried away by the Devil.

From the analysis of the function of folklore in the Gothic novel, it is apparent that the novelists employed folk materials in almost every facet of their art--atmosphere, characterization, theme, plot, structure, and tone. Sometimes novelists relied almost entirely on folklore as a means of developing a particular element in their narratives. Especially is this true with respect to the atmosphere of terror which is essential to the success of a Gothic novel; for the Gothic atmosphere usually derives from the novelist's handling of such folk materials as the superstitions regarding ghosts, omens, and witchcraft. Certainly, one can not imagine the development of the Gothic novel without the fascination of the eighteenth-century Englishman for the superstitions of his ancestors.

But besides the specific functions of folklore in each of the major Gothic novels, folklore also functions, in more general terms, as a means by which one may arrive at critical judgments about the works themselves. And when one evaluates the novels on the basis of how effectively each author uses folklore as a device for creating a work of terror, he must conclude that the most successful novel in this respect is Melmoth the Wanderer.

But when one considers the first novel in the genre, The Castle of Otranto, he finds himself concurring with much of the adverse criticism written about Walpole's use of the supernatural, criticism which began with Clara Reeve's observation that his "machinery . . . destroys the effect it is intended to excite" (p. ix). However, the novel has its merits, including an effective scene of Gothic horror in the episode in which Frederic encounters the ghost of the hermit of Joppa.

Despite her insights into the failures of The Castle of Otranto, Clara Reeve does not write a better Gothic novel herself. In fact, when her novel is compared to Walpole's, The Old English Baron seems rather dull. Although Miss Reeve is the first Gothic novelist to use the haunted apartment device, her ghostly scenes lack the suspense essential to the development of a genuine atmosphere of terror. She does make effective use of folk elements other than the supernatural, however. For example, the sentimental tone

of her novel is enhanced by the superstition concerning the need to bury the dead in consecrated ground. But as a novel of terror, The Old English Baron is not very satisfying.

A better artist is Mrs. Radcliffe, who almost perfected the art of creating an atmosphere of terror through the power of suggestion. By relying on fearful superstitions about such phenomena as mysterious noises, strange lights and music, and a hint of blue in the flame of a candle, she developed a style which made The Mysteries of Udolpho one of the most successful works of Gothic terror in the English language. Nevertheless, Mrs. Radcliffe's technique tends to lose its effect as she explains away each supernatural incident. Eventually the reader realizes that, despite the fears of the heroine, she is in no danger from a supernatural being. Perhaps, therefore, Mrs. Radcliffe's greatest weakness as a novelist is a lack of confidence in her own talent; for in her reluctance to use the supernatural in her story, she seems to reveal some reservation about her ability to use effectively such demanding material.

But if Mrs. Radcliffe is too timid in the selection of her material, Lewis is too bold, for he exercises almost no control over either the selection or the use of the supernatural. As a result, his style is painfully uneven. On occasion his descriptions are remarkably effective, as

in the episode in which the Bleeding Nun makes her first appearance in Raymond's room. But in other passages, Lewis' lack of restraint produces a cloying effect, or, what is worse, a humorous effect, rather than the sensation of horror for which he is aiming. One can only wish that Lewis had shared some of Mrs. Radcliffe's regard for decorum.

Finally, when one considers Melmoth the Wanderer from the point of view of how effectively the author handles the folklore in the novel, one realizes that Maturin's achievement in the Gothic genre is superior to the achievements of his predecessors, including even Mrs. Radcliffe's. It is unfortunate that the length and structure of the novel make reading it a prohibitive task for most modern readers; for Maturin knows how to tell a Gothic tale with the subtlety of language which produces a palpable atmosphere of terror. Furthermore, Maturin exercises the restraint that enables him to handle even the most horrible and delicate materials and themes with taste. Certainly, because Charles Robert Maturin understood the psychology of terror and had the literary genius to exploit effectively this understanding, his Melmoth the Wanderer is a fitting climax and conclusion for the era of the great English Gothic novel.

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