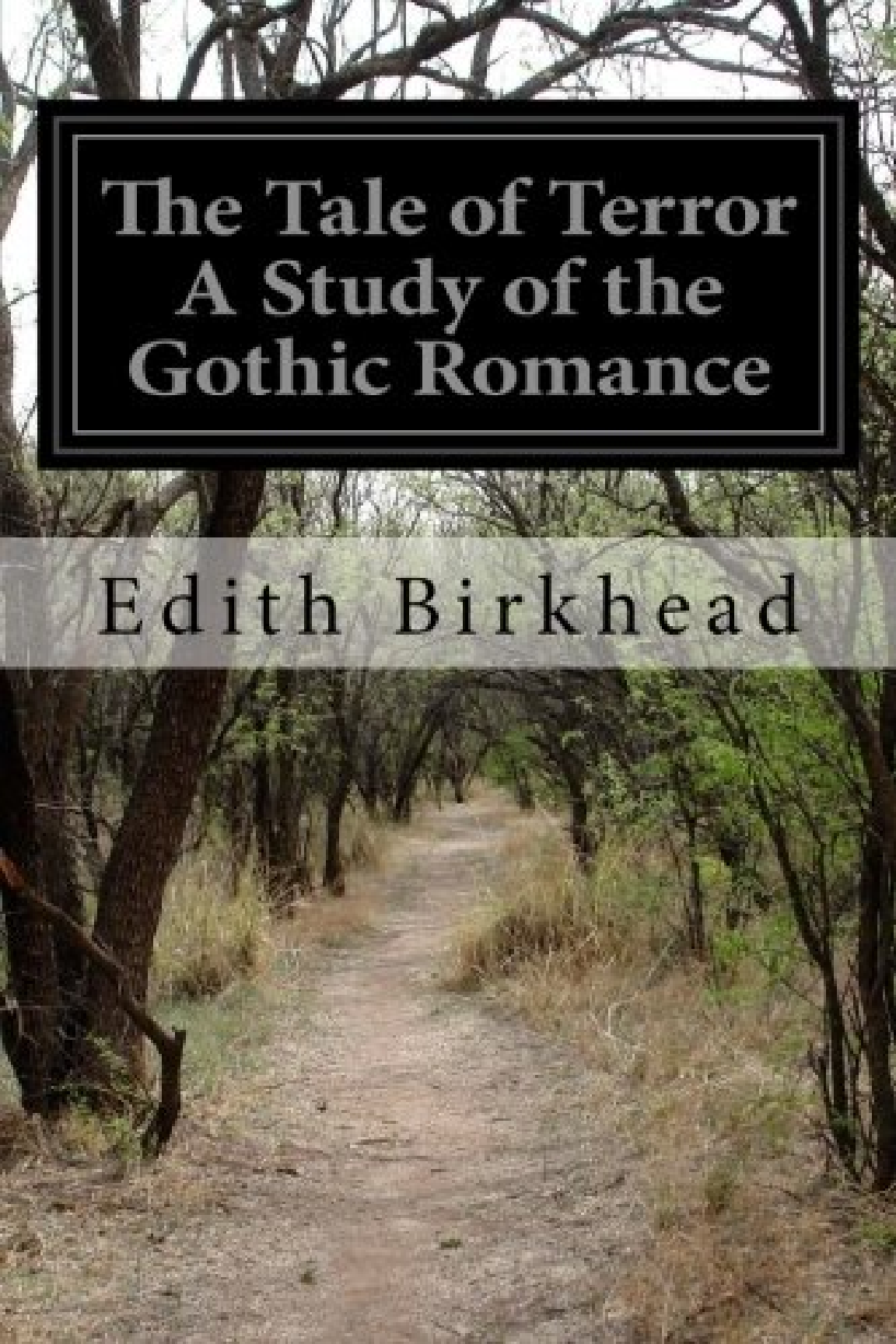

The Tale of Terror
A Study of the
Gothic Romance
Edith Birkhead

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE TALE OF TERROR: A STUDY OF THE GOTHIC ROMANCE ***

THE TALE OF TERROR

A Study of the Gothic Romance

by

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London
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PREFACE

The aim of this book is to give some account of the growth of supernatural fiction in English literature, beginning with the vogue of the Gothic Romance and Tale of Terror towards the close of the eighteenth century. The origin and development of the Gothic Romance are set forth in detail from the appearance of Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* in 1764 to the publication of Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* in 1820; and the survey of this phase of the novel is continued, in the later chapters, to modern times. One of these is devoted to the Tale of Terror in America, where in the hands of Hawthorne and Poe its treatment became a fine art. In the chapters dealing with the more recent forms of the tale of terror and wonder, the scope of the subject becomes so wide that it is impossible to attempt an exhaustive survey.

The present work is the outcome of studies begun during my tenure of the William Noble Fellowship in the University of Liverpool, 1916-18. It is a pleasure to express here my thanks to Professor R.H. Case and to Dr. John Sampson for valuable help and criticism at various stages of the work. Parts of the MS. have also been read by Professor C.H. Herford of the University of Manchester and by Professor Oliver Elton of the University of Liverpool. To Messrs. Constable's reader I am also indebted for several

helpful suggestions.—E.B.

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL,

December, 1920.

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CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTORY.

The history of the tale of terror is as old as the history of man. Myths were created in the early days of the race to account for sunrise and sunset, storm-winds and thunder, the origin of the earth and of mankind. The tales men told in the face of these mysteries were naturally inspired by awe and fear. The universal myth of a great flood is perhaps the earliest tale of terror. During the excavation of Nineveh in 1872, a Babylonian version of the story, which forms part of the Gilgamesh epic, was discovered in the library of King Ashurbanipal (668-626 B.C.); and there are records of a much earlier version, belonging to the year 1966 B.C. The story of the Flood, as related on the eleventh tablet of the Gilgamesh epic, abounds in supernatural terror. To seek the gift of immortality from his ancestor, Ut-napishtim, the hero undertakes a weary and perilous journey. He passes the mountain guarded by a scorpion man and woman, where the sun goes down; he traverses a dark and dreadful road, where never man trod, and at last crosses the waters of death. During the deluge, which is predicted by his ancestor, the gods themselves are stricken with fear:

> "No man beheld his fellow, no more could men know each other. In heaven the gods were afraid … They drew back, they climbed up into the heaven of Anu. The gods crouched like dogs, they cowered by the walls."[1]

Another episode in the same epic, when Nergal,

the god of the dead, brings before Gilgamesh an apparition of his friend, Eabani, recalls the impressive scene, when the witch of Endor summons the spirit of Samuel before Saul.

When legends began to grow up round the names of traditional heroes, fierce encounters with giants and monsters were invented to glorify their strength and prowess. David, with a stone from his sling, slew Goliath. The crafty Ulysses put out the eye of Polyphemus. Grettir, according to the Icelandic saga, overcame Glam, the malevolent, death-dealing vampire who "went riding the roofs." Beowulf fearlessly descended into the turbid mere to grapple with Grendel's mother. Folktales and ballads, in which incidents similar to those in myths and heroic legends occur, are often overshadowed by terror. Figures like the Demon Lover, who bears off his mistress in the fatal craft and sinks her in the sea, and the cannibal bridegroom, outwitted at last by the artfulness of one of his brides, appear in the folk-lore of many lands. Through every century there glide uneasy spirits, groaning for vengeance. Andrew Lang[2] mentions the existence of a papyrus fragment, found attached to a wooden statuette, in which an ancient Egyptian scribe addresses a letter to the Khou, or spirit, of his dead wife, beseeching her not to haunt him. One of the ancestors of the savage were-wolf, who figures in Marryat's *Phantom Ship*, may perhaps be discovered in Petronius' *Supper of Trimalchio*. The descent of Bram Stoker's infamous

vampire Dracula may be traced back through centuries of legend. Hobgoblins, demons, and witches mingle grotesquely with the throng of beautiful princesses, queens in glittering raiment, fairies and elves. Without these ugly figures, folk-tales would soon lose their power to charm. All tale tellers know that fear is a potent spell. The curiosity which drove Bluebeard's wife to explore the hidden chamber lures us on to know the worst, and as we listen to horrid stories, we snatch a fearful joy. Human nature desires not only to be amused and entertained, but moved to pity and fear. All can sympathise with the youth, who could not shudder and who would fain acquire the gift.

From English literature we gain no more than brief, tantalising glimpses of the vast treasury of folk-tales and ballads that existed before literature became an art and that lived on side by side with it, vitalising and enriching it continually. Yet here and there we catch sudden gleams like the fragment in *King Lear*:

"Childe Roland to the dark tower came.
His word was still Fie, Foh and Fum,
I smell the blood of a British man."

or Benedick's quotation from the *Robber Bridegroom*:

"It is not so, it was not so, but, indeed, God forbid that it should be so."

which hint at the existence of a hoard as precious and inexhaustible as that of the Nibelungs. The chord of terror is touched in the eerie visit of the three dead sailor sons "in earthly flesh and blood" to the wife of Usher's well, Sweet William's Ghost, the rescue of Tarn Lin on Halloween, when Fairyland pays a tiend to Hell, the return of clerk Saunders to his mistress, True Thomas's ride to Fairyland, when:

"For forty days and forty nights,
He wade through red blood to the knee,
And he saw neither sun nor moon,
But heard the roaring of the sea."

The mediaeval romances of chivalry, which embody stories handed down by oral tradition, are set in an atmosphere of supernatural wonder and enchantment. In Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, Sir Lancelot goes by night into the Chapel Perilous, wherein there is only a dim light burning, and steals from the corpse a sword and a piece of silk to heal the wounds of a dying knight. Sir Galahad sees a fiend leap out of a tomb amid a cloud of smoke; Gawaine's ghost, with those of the knights and ladies for whom he has done battle in life, appears to warn the king not to begin the fight against Modred on a certain day. In the romance of *Sir Amadas*, the ghost of a merchant, whose corpse the knight had duteously redeemed from the hands of creditors, succours him at need. The shadow of terror lurks even amid the beauty of Spenser's fairyland. In the windings of its forests we come upon dark caves, mysterious castles and huts,

from which there start fearsome creatures like Despair or the giant Orgoglio, hideous hags like Occasion, wicked witches and enchanters or frightful beings like the ghostly Maleger, who wore as his helmet a dead man's skull and rode upon a tiger swift as the wind. The Elizabethan dramatists were fascinated by the terrors of the invisible world. Marlowe's Dr. Faustus, round whose name are clustered legends centuries old concerning bargains between man and the devil, the apparitions and witches in *Macbeth*, the dead hand, the corpse-like images, the masque of madmen, the tombmaker and the passing-bell in Webster's sombre tragedy, *The Duchess of Malfi*, prove triumphantly the dramatic possibilities of terror. As a foil to his *Masque of Queens* (1609) Ben Jonson introduced twelve loathly witches with Até as their leader, and embellished his description of their profane rites, with details culled from James I.'s treatise on Demonology and from learned ancient authorities.

In *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Despair, who "had as many lives as a cat," his wife Diffidence at Doubting Castle, and Maul and Slaygood are the ogres of popular story, whose acquaintance Bunyan had made in chapbooks during his ungodly youth. Hobgoblins, devils and fiends, "sturdy rogues" like the three brothers Faintheart, Mistrust and Guilt, who set upon Littlefaith in Dead Man's Lane, lend the excitement of terror to Christian's journey to the Celestial City. The widespread belief in witches and spirits to which

Browne and Burton and many others bear witness in the seventeenth century, lived on in the eighteenth century, although the attitude of the "polite" in the age of reason was ostensibly incredulous and superior. A scene in one of the *Spectator* essays illustrates pleasantly the state of popular opinion. Addison, lodging with a good-natured widow in London, returns home one day to find a group of girls sitting by candlelight, telling one another ghost-stories. At his entry they are abashed, but, on the widow's assuring them that it is only the "gentleman," they resume, while Addison, pretending to be absorbed in his book at the far end of the table, covertly listens to their tales of

> "ghosts that, pale as ashes, had stood at the feet of the bed or walked over a churchyard by moonlight; and others, who had been conjured into the Red Sea for disturbing people's rest."[3]

In another essay Addison shows that he is strongly inclined to believe in the existence of spirits, though he repudiates the ridiculous superstitions which prevailed in his day;[4] and Sir Roger de Coverley frankly confesses his belief in witches. Defoe, in the preface to his *Essay on the History and Reality of Apparitions* (1727) states uncompromisingly:

> "I must tell you, good people, he that is not able to see the devil, in whatever shape he is pleased to appear in, he is not really qualified

> to live in this world, no, not in the quality of a common inhabitant."

Epworth Rectory, the home of John Wesley's father, was haunted in 1716-17 by a persevering ghost called Old Jeffrey, whose exploits are recorded with a gravity and circumstantial exactitude that remind us of Defoe's narrative concerning the ghostly Mrs. Veal in her "scoured" silk. John Wesley declares stoutly that he is convinced of the literal truth of the story of one Elizabeth Hobson, who professed to have been visited on several occasions by supernatural beings. He upholds too the authenticity of the notorious Drummer of Tedworth, whose escapades are described in chapbooks and in Glanvill's *Sadducismus Triumphatus* (1666), a book in which he was keenly interested. In his journal (May 25th, 1768) he remarks:

> "It is true that the English in general, and indeed most of the men of learning in Europe, have given up all accounts of witches and apparitions, as mere old wives' fables. I am sorry for it; and I willingly take this opportunity of entering my solemn protest against this violent compliment which so many that believe the Bible pay to those who do not believe it."

The Cock Lane ghost gained very general credit, and was considered by Mrs. Nickleby a personage of some importance, when she boasted to Miss La

Creevy that her great-grandfather went to school with him—or her grandmother with the Thirsty Woman of Tutbury. The appearance of Lord Lyttleton's ghost in 1779 was described by Dr. Johnson, who was also disposed to believe in the Cock Lane ghost, as the most extraordinary thing that had happened in his day.[5] There is abundant evidence that the people of the eighteenth century were extremely credulous, yet, in literature, there is a tendency to look askance at the supernatural as at something wild and barbaric. Such ghosts as presume to steal into poetry are amazingly tame, and even elegant, in their speech and deportment. In Mallet's *William and Margaret* (1759). which was founded on a scrap of an old ballad out of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, Margaret's wraith rebukes her false lover in a long and dignified oration. But spirits were shy of appearing in an age when they were more likely to be received with banter than with dread. Dr. Johnson expresses the attitude of his age when, in referring to Gray's poem, *The Bard*, he remarks:

> "To select a singular event and swell it to a giant's bulk by fabulous appendages of spectres and predictions has little difficulty, for he that forsakes the probable may always find the marvellous. And it has little use; we are affected only as we believe; we are improved only as we find something to be imitated or declined." (1780.)

The dictum that we are affected only as we believe

is open to grave doubt. We are often thrown into a state of trepidation simply through the power of the imagination. We are wise after the event, like Partridge at the play:

> "No, no, sir; ghosts don't appear in such dresses as that neither… And if it was really a ghost, it could do one no harm at such a distance, and in so much company; and yet, if I was frightened, I am not the only person."[6]

The supernatural which persisted always in legends handed down from one generation to another on the lips of living people, had not lost its power to thrill and alarm, and gradually worked its way back into literature. Although Gray and Collins do not venture far beyond the bounds of the natural, they were in sympathy with the popular feelings of superstitious terror, and realised how effective they would be in poetry.

Collins, in his *Ode on the Superstitions of the Scottish Highlands*, adjures Home, the author of *Douglas*, to sing:

> "how, framing hideous spells,
> In Sky's lone isle, the gifted wizard-seer
> Lodged in the wintry cave with Fate's fell spear
> Or in the depths of Uist's dark forests dwells,
> How they whose sight such dreary dreams engross
> With their own vision oft astonished droop
> When o'er the wintry strath or quaggy moss

They see the gliding ghosts unbodied troop."

Burns, in the foreword to *Halloween* (1785), writes in the "enlightened" spirit of the eighteenth century, but in the poem itself throws himself whole-heartedly into the hopes and fears that agitate the lovers. He owed much to an old woman who lived in his home in infancy:

"She had … the largest collection in the country of tales and songs concerning devils, ghosts, fairies, brownies, witches, warlocks, spunkies, kelpies, elf-candles, dead-lights, wraiths, apparitions, cantraips, giants, enchanted towers, dragons and other trumpery. This cultivated the latent seeds of poetry, but had so strong an effect on my imagination, that to this hour, in my nocturnal rambles, I sometimes keep a sharp look-out in suspicious places; it often takes an effort of philosophy to shake off these idle terrors."[7]

Tam o' Shanter, written for Captain Grose, was perhaps based on a Scottish legend, learnt at the inglenook in childhood, from this old wife, or perhaps

"By some auld houlet-haunted biggin
Or kirk deserted by its riggin,"

from Captain Grose himself, who made to quake:

"Ilk ghaist that haunts auld ha' or chamer,
Ye gipsy-gang that deal in glamor,

And you, deep-read in hell's black grammar,
Warlocks and witches."

In it Burns reveals with lively reality the terrors that assail the reveller on his homeward way through the storm:

"Past the birks and meikle stane
Where drunken Charlie brak's neck-bane;
And through the whins, and by the cairn
Where hunters fand the murdered bairn
And near the thorn, aboon the well
Where Mungo's mither hanged hersell."

For sheer terror the wild, fantastic witch-dance, seen through a Gothic window in the ruins of Kirk-Alloway, with the light of humour strangely glinting through, has hardly been surpassed. The Ballad-collections, beginning with Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1705), brought poets back to the original sources of terror in popular tradition, and helped to revive the latent feelings of awe, wonder and fear. In Coleridge's *Ancient Manner* the skeleton-ship with its ghastly crew—the spectre-woman and her deathmate—the sensations of the mariner, alone on a wide, wide sea, seize on our imagination with irresistible power. The very substance of the poem is woven of the supernatural. The dream imagery is thrown into relief by occasional touches of reality—the lighthouse, the church on the cliff, the glimpses of the wedding, the quiet song of the hidden brook in the leafy month of June. We, like the mariner, after

loneliness so awful that

"God himself
Scarce seemèd there to be,"

welcome the firm earth beneath our feet, and the homely sound of the vesper bell. In *Christabel* we float dreamily through scenes as unearthly and ephemeral as the misty moonlight, and the words in which Coleridge conjures up his vision fall into music of magic beauty. The opening of the poem creates a sense of foreboding, and the horror of the serpent-maiden is subtly suggested through her effect on Christabel. Coleridge hints at the terrible with artistic reticence. In *Kubla Khan* the chasm is:

"A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover."

The poetry of Keats is often mysterious and suggestive of terror.
The description of the Gothic hall in *The Eve of St. Agnes*:

"In all the house was heard no human sound;
A chain-drooped lamp was flickering by each door;
The arras, rich with horseman, hawk and hound,
Fluttered in the besieging wind's uproar;
And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor;"

the serpent-maiden, Lamia, who

"Seemed at once some penanced lady elf,
Some demon's mistress, or the demon's self;"

the grim story in *Isabella* of Lorenzo's ghost, who

"Moaned a ghostly undersong
Like hoarse night-gusts sepulchral briers along."

all lead us over the borderland. In a rejected stanza of the *Ode on Melancholy*, he abandons the horrible:

"Though you should build a bark of dead men's bones
And rear a phantom gibbet for a mast,
Stitch shrouds together for a sail, with groans
To fill it out, blood-stained and aghast;
Although your rudder be a dragon's tail
Long severed, yet still hard with agony,
Your cordage, large uprootings from the skull
Of bald Medusa, certes you would fail
To find the Melancholy—"

Keats's melancholy is not to be found amid images of horror:

"She dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die,
And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
Bidding adieu."

In *La Belle Dame sans Merci* he conveys with delicate touch the memory of the vision which haunts the knight, alone and palely loitering. We see

it through his eyes:

"I saw pale kings and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all:
They cried—'La Belle Dame sans Merci
Hath thee in thrall!'

"I saw their starv'd lips in the gloam
With horrid warning gaped wide,
And I awoke and found me here,
On the cold hill's side."

From effects so exquisitely wrought as these it seems almost profane to turn to the crude attempts of such poets as "Monk" Lewis or Southey to sound the note of terror. Yet they too, in their fashion, played a part in the "Renascence of Wonder." Coleridge, fascinated by the spirit of "gramarye" in Bürger's *Lenore*, etherealised and refined it. Scott and Lewis gloried in the gruesome details and spirited rhythm of the ballad, and in their supernatural poems wish to startle and terrify, not to awe, their readers. Those who revel in phosphorescent lights and in the rattle of the skeleton are apt to o'erleap themselves; and Scott's *Glenfinlas*, Lewis's *Alonzo the Brave and the Fair Imogene* and Southey's *Old Woman of Berkeley* fall into the category of the grotesque. Hogg intentionally mingles the comic and the terrible in his poem, *The Witch of Fife*, but his prose-stories reveal his power of creating an atmosphere of *diablerie*, undisturbed by intrusive mockery. In the poem *Kilmeny*, he handles an uncanny theme with

dreamy beauty.

From the earliest times to the present day, writers of fiction have realised the force of supernatural terror. In the *Babylonica* of Iamblichus, the lovers evade their pursuers by passing as spectres; the scene of the romance is laid in tombs, caverns, and robbers' dens, a setting remarkably like that of Gothic story. Into the English novel of the first half of the eighteenth century, however, the ghost dares not venture. The innate desire for the marvellous was met at this period not by the novel, but by oral tradition and by such works as Galland's translation of *The Arabian Nights*, the Countess D'Aulnoy's collection of fairy tales, Perrault's *Contes de ma Mère Oie*. Chapbooks setting forth mediaeval legends of "The Wandering Jew," the "Demon Frigate," or "Dr. Faustus," and interspersed with anecdotes of freaks, monsters and murderers, satisfied the craving for excitement among humbler readers.[8] Smollett, who, in his *Adventures of Ferdinand, Count Fathom* (1753), seems to have been experimenting with new devices for keeping alive the interest of a *picaresque* novel, anticipates the methods of Mrs. Radcliffe. Although he sedulously avoids introducing the supernatural, he hovers perilously on the threshold. The publication of *The Castle of Otranto* in 1764 was not so wild an adventure as Walpole would have his readers believe. The age was ripe for the reception of the marvellous.

The supernatural had, as we have seen, begun to

find its way back into poetry, in the work of Gray and Collins. In Macpherson's *Ossian*, which was received with acclamation in 1760-3, the mountains, heaths and lakes are haunted by shadowy, superstitious fears. Dim-seen ghosts wail over the wastes. There is abundant evidence that "authentic" stories of ghostly appearances were heard with respect. Those who eagerly explored Walpole's Gothic castle and who took pleasure in Miss Reeve's well-trained ghost, had previously enjoyed the thrill of chimney corner legends. The idea of the gigantic apparition was derived, no doubt, from the old legend of the figure seen by Wallace on the field of battle. The limbs, strewn carelessly about the staircase and the gallery of the castle, belong to a giant, very like those who are worsted by the heroes of popular story. Godwin, in an unusual flight of fancy, amused himself by tracing a certain similitude between *Caleb Williams* and *Bluebeard*, between *Cloudesley* and *The Babes in the Wood*,[9] and planned a story, on the analogy of the Sleeping Beauty, in which the hero was to have the faculty of unexpectedly falling asleep for twenty, thirty, or a hundred years.[10]

Mrs. Radcliffe, who, so far as we may judge, did not draw her characters from the creatures of flesh and blood around her, seems to have adopted some of the familiar figures of old story. Emily's guardian, Montoni, in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, like the unscrupulous uncle in Godwin's *Cloudesley*, may well

have been descended from the wicked uncle of the folk tale. The cruel stepmother is disguised as a haughty, scheming marchioness in *The Sicilian Romance*. The ogre drops his club, assumes a veneer of polite refinement and relies on the more gentlemanlike method of the dagger and stiletto for gaining his ends. The banditti and robbers who infest the countryside in Gothic fiction are time honoured figures. Travellers in Thessaly in Apuleius' *Golden Ass*, like the fugitives in Shelley's *Zastrozzi* and *St. Irvyne*, find themselves in robbers' caves. The Gothic castle, suddenly encountered in a dark forest, is boldly transported from fairyland and set down in Italy, Sicily or Spain. The chamber of horrors, with its alarming array of scalps or skeletons, is civilised beyond recognition and becomes the deserted wing of an abbey, concealing nothing worse than one discarded wife, emaciated and dispirited, but still alive. The ghost-story, which Ludovico reads in the haunted chamber of Udolpho, is described by Mrs. Radcliffe as a Provençal tale, but is in reality common to the folklore of all countries. The restless ghost, who yearns for the burial of his corpse, is as ubiquitous as the Wandering Jew. In the *Iliad* he appears as the shade of Patroclus, pleading with Achilles for his funeral rites. According to a letter of the younger Pliny,[11] he haunts a house in Athens, clanking his chains. He is found in every land, in every age. His feminine counterpart presented herself to Dickens' nurse requiring her bones, which were under a glass-case, to be "interred with every

undertaking solemnity up to twenty-four pound ten, in another particular place."[12] Melmoth the Wanderer, when he becomes the wooer of Immalee, seems almost like a reincarnation of the Demon Lover. The wandering ball of fire that illuminates the dusky recesses of so many Gothic abbeys is but another manifestation of the Fate-Moon, which shines, foreboding death, after Thorgunna's funeral, in the Icelandic saga. The witchcraft and demonology that attracted Scott and "Monk" Lewis, may be traced far beyond Sinclair's *Satan's Invisible World Discovered* (1685), Bovet's *Pandemonium or the Devil's Cloyster Opened* (1683), or Reginald Scot's *Discovery of Witchcraft* (1584) to Ulysses' invocation of the spirits of the dead,[13] to the idylls of Theocritus and to the Hebrew narrative of Saul's visit to the Cave of Endor. There are incidents in *The Golden Ass* as "horrid" as any of those devised by the writers of Gothic romance. It would, indeed, be no easy task to fashion scenes more terrifying than the mutilation of Socrates in *The Golden Ass*, by the witch, who tears out his heart and stops the wound with a sponge which falls out when he stoops to drink at a river, or than the strange apparition of a ragged, old woman who vanishes after leading the way to the room, where the baker's corpse hangs behind the door. Though the title assumes a special literary significance at the close of the eighteenth century, the tale of terror appeals to deeply rooted instincts, and belongs, therefore, to every age and clime.

CHAPTER II - THE BEGINNINGS OF GOTHIC ROMANCE.

To Horace Walpole, whose *Castle of Otranto* was published on Christmas Eve, 1764, must be assigned the honour of having introduced the Gothic romance and of having made it fashionable. Diffident as to the success of so "wild" a story in an age devoted to good sense and reason, he sent forth his mediaeval tale disguised as a translation from the Italian of "Onuphrio Muralto," by William Marshall. It was only after it had been received with enthusiasm that he confessed the authorship. As he explained frankly in a letter to his friend Mason: "It is not everybody that may in this country play the fool with impunity."[14] That Walpole regarded his story merely as a fanciful, amusing trifle is clear from the letter he wrote to Miss Hannah More reproving her for putting so frantic a thing into the hands of a Bristol milkwoman who wrote poetry in her leisure hours.[15] *The Castle of Otranto* was but another manifestation of that admiration for the Gothic which had found expression fourteen years earlier in his miniature castle at Strawberry Hill, with its old armour and "lean windows fattened with rich saints."[16] The word "Gothic" in the early eighteenth century was used as a term of reproach. To Addison, Siena Cathedral was but a "barbarous" building, which might have been a miracle of architecture, had our

forefathers "only been instructed in the right way."[17] Pope in his *Preface to Shakespeare* admits the strength and majesty of the Gothic, but deplores its irregularity. In *Letters on Chivalry and Romance*, published two years before *The Castle of Otranto*, Hurd pleads that Spenser's *Faerie Queene* should be read and criticised as a Gothic, not a classical, poem. He clearly recognises the right of the Gothic to be judged by laws of its own. When the nineteenth century is reached the epithet has lost all tinge of blame, and has become entirely one of praise. From the time when he began to build his castle, in 1750, Walpole's letters abound in references to the Gothic, and he confesses once: "In the heretical corner of my heart I adore the Gothic building."[18] At Strawberry Hill the hall and staircase were his special delight and they probably formed the background of that dream in which he saw a gigantic hand in armour on the staircase of an ancient castle. When Dr. Burney visited Walpole's home in 1786 he remarked on the striking recollections of *The Castle of Otranto*, brought to mind by "the deep shade in which some of his antique portraits were placed and the lone sort of look of the unusually shaped apartments in which they were hung."[19] We know how in idle moments Walpole loved to brood on the picturesque past, and we can imagine his falling asleep, after the arrival of a piece of armour for his collection, with his head full of plans for the adornment of his cherished castle. His story is but an expansion of this dilettante's nightmare. His interest in things

mediaeval was not that of an antiquary, but rather that of an artist who loves things old because of their age and beauty. In a delightfully gay letter to his friend, George Montagu, referring flippantly to his appointment as Deputy Ranger of Rockingham Forest, he writes, after drawing a vivid picture of a "Robin Hood reformé":

> "Visions, you know, have always been my pasture; and so far from growing old enough to quarrel with their emptiness, I almost think there is no wisdom comparable to that of exchanging what is called the realities of life for dreams. Old castles, old pictures, old histories and the babble of old people make one live back into centuries that cannot disappoint one. One holds fast and surely what is past. The dead have exhausted their power of deceiving—one can trust Catherine of Medicis now. In short, you have opened a new landscape to my fancy; and my lady Beaulieu will oblige me as much as you, if she puts the long bow into your hands. I don't know, but the idea may produce some other *Castle of Otranto*."[20]

So Walpole came near to anticipating the greenwood scenes of *Ivanhoe*. The decking and trappings of chivalry filled him with boyish delight, and he found in the glitter and colour of the middle ages a refuge from the prosaic dullness of the eighteenth century. A visit from "a Luxembourg, a

Lusignan and a Montfort" awoke in his whimsical fancy a mental image of himself in the guise of a mediaeval baron: "I never felt myself so much in *The Castle of Otranto*. It sounded as if a company of noble crusaders were come to sojourn with me before they embarked for the Holy Land";[21] and when he heard of the marvellous adventures of a large wolf who had caused a panic in Lower Languedoc, he was reminded of the enchanted monster of old romance and declared that, had he known of the creature earlier, it should have appeared in *The Castle of Otranto*.[22] "I have taken to astronomy," he declares on another occasion,

> "now that the scale is enlarged enough to satisfy my taste, who love gigantic ideas—do not be afraid; I am not going to write a second part to *The Castle of Otranto*, nor another account of the Patagonians who inhabit the new Brobdingnag planet."[23]

These unstudied utterances reveal, perhaps more clearly than Walpole's deliberate confessions about his book, the mood of irresponsible, light-hearted gaiety in which he started on his enterprise. If we may rely on Walpole's account of its composition, *The Castle of Otranto* was fashioned rapidly in a white heat of excitement, but the creation of the story probably cost him more effort than he would have us believe. The result, at least, lacks spontaneity. We never feel for a moment that we are living invisible amidst the characters, but we sit aloof like Puck,

thinking: "Lord, what fools these mortals be!" His supernatural machinery is as undignified as the pantomime properties of Jack the Giant-killer. The huge body scattered piecemeal about the castle, the unwieldy sabre borne by a hundred men, the helmet "tempestuously agitated," and even the "skeleton in a hermit's cowl" are not only unalarming but mildly ridiculous. Yet to the readers of his day the story was captivating and entrancing. It satisfied a real craving for the romantic and marvellous. The first edition of five hundred copies was sold out in two months, and others followed rapidly. The story was dramatised by Robert Jephson and produced at Covent Garden Theatre under the title of *The Count of Narbonne*, with an epilogue by Malone. It was staged again later in Dublin, Kemble playing the title rôle. It was translated into French, German and Italian. In England its success was immediate, though several years elapsed before it was imitated. Gray, to whom the story was first attributed, wrote of it in March, 1765: "It engages our attention here (at Cambridge), makes some of us cry a little, and all in general afraid to go to bed o' nights." Mason praised it, and Walpole's letters refer repeatedly to the vogue it enjoyed. This widespread popularity is an indication of the eagerness with which readers of 1765 desired to escape from the present and to revel for a time in strange, bygone centuries. Although Walpole regarded the composition of his Gothic story as a whim, his love of the past was shared by others of his generation. Of this Macpherson's *Ossian* (1760-3),

Kurd's *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762), and Percy's *Reliques* (1765), are, each in its fashion, a sufficient proof. The half-century from 1760 to 1810 showed remarkably definite signs of a renewed interest in things written between 1100 and 1650, which had been neglected for a century or more. *The Castle of Otranto*, which was "an attempt to blend the marvellous of old story with the natural of modern novels" is an early symptom of this revulsion to the past; and it exercised a charm on Scott as well as on Mrs. Radcliffe and her school. *The Castle of Otranto* is significant, not because of its intrinsic merit, but because of its power in shaping the destiny of the novel.

The outline of the plot is worth recording for the sake of tracing ancestral likenesses when we reach the later romances. The only son of Manfred—the villain of the piece—is discovered on his wedding morning dashed to pieces beneath an enormous helmet. Determined that his line shall not become extinct, Manfred decides to divorce Hippolyta and marry Isabella, his son's bride. To escape from her pursuer, Isabella takes flight down a "subterraneous passage," where she is succoured by a "peasant" Theodore, who bears a curious resemblance to a portrait of the "good Alfonso" in the gallery of the castle. The servants of the castle are alarmed at intervals by the sudden appearance of massive pieces of armour in different parts of the building. A clap of thunder, which shakes the castle to its foundations,

heralds the culmination of the story. A hundred men bear in a huge sabre; and an apparition of the illustrious Alfonso—whose portrait in the gallery once walks straight out of its frame[24]—appears, "dilated to an immense magnitude,"[25] and demands that Manfred shall surrender Otranto to the rightful heir, Theodore, who has been duly identified by the mark of a "bloody arrow." Alfonso, thus pacified, ascends into heaven, where he is received into glory by St. Nicholas. As Matilda, who was beloved of Theodore, has incidentally been slain by her father, Theodore consoles himself with Isabella. Manfred and his wife meekly retire to neighbouring convents. With this anti-climax the story closes. To present the "dry bones" of a romantic story is often misleading, but the method is perhaps justifiable in the case of *The Castle of Otranto*, because Walpole himself scorned embellishments and declared in his grandiloquent fashion:

> "If this air of the miraculous is excused, the reader will find nothing else unworthy of his perusal. There is no bombast, no similes, flowers, digressions or unnecessary descriptions. Everything tends directly to the catastrophe."[26]

But with all its faults *The Castle of Otranto* did not fall fruitless on the earth. The characters are mere puppets, yet we meet the same types again and again in later Gothic romances. Though Clara Reeve renounced such "obvious improbabilities" as a ghost

in a hermit's cowl and a walking picture, she was an acknowledged disciple of Walpole, and, like him, made an "interesting peasant" the hero of her story, *The Old English Baron*. Jerome is the prototype of many a count disguised as father confessor, Bianca the pattern of many a chattering servant. The imprisoned wife reappears in countless romances, including Mrs. Radcliffe's *Sicilian Romance* (1790), and Mrs. Roche's *Children of the Abbey* (1798). The tyrannical father—no new creation, however—became so inevitable a figure in fiction that Jane Austen had to assure her readers that Mr. Morland "was not in the least addicted to locking up his daughters," and Miss Martha Buskbody, the mantua-maker of Gandercleugh, whom Jedediah Cleishbotham ingeniously called to his aid in writing the conclusion of *Old Mortality*, assured him, as the fruit of her experience in reading through the stock of three circulating libraries that, in a novel, young people may fall in love without the countenance of their parents, "because it is essential to the necessary intricacy of the story." But apart from his characters, who are so colourless that they hardly hold our attention, Walpole bequeathed to his successors a remarkable collection of useful "properties." The background of his story is a Gothic castle, singularly unenchanted it is true, but capable of being invested by Mrs. Radcliffe with mysterious grandeur. Otranto contains underground vaults, ill-fitting doors with rusty hinges, easily extinguished lamps and a trap-door—objects trivial and insignificant in Walpole's

hands, but fraught with terrible possibilities. Otranto would have fulfilled admirably the requirements of Barrett's Cherubina, who, when looking for lodgings demanded—to the indignation of a maidservant, who came to the door—old pictures, tapestry, a spectre and creaking hinges. Scott, writing in 1821, remarks:

> "The apparition of the skeleton-hermit to the prince of Vicenza was long accounted a masterpiece of the horrible; but of late the valley of Jehosaphat could hardly supply the dry bones necessary for the exhibition of similar spectres."

But Cherubina, whose palate was jaded by a surfeit of the pungent horrors of Walpole's successors, would probably have found *The Castle of Otranto* an insipid romance and would have lamented that he did not make more effective use of his supernatural machinery. His story offered hints and suggestions to those whose greater gifts turned the materials he had marshalled to better account, and he is to be honoured rather for what he instigated others to perform than for what he actually accomplished himself. *The Castle of Otranto* was not intended as a serious contribution to literature, but will always survive in literary history as the ancestor of a thriving race of romances.

More than ten years before the publication of *The Castle of Otranto*, Smollett, in his *Adventures of Ferdinand, Count Fathom*, had chanced upon the

devices employed later in the tale of terror. The tremors of fear to which his rascally hero is subjected lend the spice of alarm to what might have been but a monotonous record of villainy. Smollett depicts skilfully the imaginary terrors created by darkness and solitude. As the Count travels through the forest:

> "The darkness of the night, the silence and solitude of the place, the indistinct images of the trees that appeared on every side, stretching their extravagant arms athwart the gloom, conspired, with the dejection of spirits occasioned by his loss, to disturb his fancy and raise strange phantoms in his imagination. Although he was not naturally superstitious, his mind began to be invaded with an awful horror that gradually prevailed over all the consolations of reason and philosophy; nor was his heart free from the terrors of assassination. In order to dissipate these agreeable reveries, he had recourse to the conversation of his guide, by whom he was entertained with the history of divers travellers who had been robbed and murdered by ruffians, whose retreat was in the recesses of that very wood."[27]

The sighing of the trees, thunder and sudden flashes of lightning add to the horror of a journey, which resembles Mrs. Radcliffe's description of Emily's approach to Udolpho. When Count Fathom takes refuge in a robber's hut, he discovers in his

room, which has no bolt on the inside of the door, the body of a recently murdered man, concealed beneath some bundles of straw. Effecting his escape by placing the corpse in his own bed to deceive the robbers, the count is mistaken for a phantom by the old woman who waits upon him. In carrying out his designs upon Celinda, the count aggravates her natural timidity by relating dismal stories of omens and apparitions, and then groans piteously outside her door and causes the mysterious music of an Æolian harp to sound upon the midnight air. Celinda sleeps, too, like the ill-starred heroine of the novel of terror, "at the end of a long gallery, scarce within hearing of any other inhabited part of the house."[28] The scene in *Count Fathom*, in which Renaldo, at midnight, visits, as he thinks, the tomb of Monimia, is surrounded with circumstances of gloom and mystery:

> "The uncommon darkness of the night, the solemn silence and lonely situation of the place, conspired with the occasion of his coming and the dismal images of his fancy, to produce a real rapture of gloomy expectation… The clock struck twelve, the owl screeched from the ruined battlement, the door was opened by the sexton, who, by the light of a glimmering taper, conducted the despairing lover to a dreary aisle."

As he watches again on a second night:

> "His ear was suddenly invaded with the sound of some few, solemn notes, issuing from the organ which seemed to feel the impulse of an invisible hand … reason shrunk before the thronging ideas of his fancy, which represented this music as the prelude to something strange and supernatural."[29]

The figure of a woman, arrayed in a flowing robe and veil, approaches—and proves to be Monimia in the flesh. Although Smollett precedes Walpole, in point of time, he is, in these scenes, nearer in spirit to Udolpho than Otranto. His use of terror, however, is merely incidental; he strays inadvertently into the history of Gothic romance. The suspicions and forebodings, with which Smollett plays occasionally upon the nerves of his readers, become part of the ordinary routine in the tale of terror.

Clara Reeve's Gothic story, first issued under the title of *The Champion of Virtue*, but later as *The Old English Baron*, was published in 1777—twelve years after Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*, of which, as she herself asserted, it was the "literary offspring." By eliminating all supernatural incidents save one ghost, she sought to bring her story "within the utmost verge of probability." Walpole, perhaps displeased by the slighting references in the preface to some of the more extraordinary incidents in his novel, received *The Old English Baron* with disdain, describing it as "totally void of imagination and interest."[30] His strictures are unjust. There are certainly no wild

flights of fancy in Clara Reeve's story, but an even level of interest is maintained throughout. Her style is simple and refreshingly free from affectation. The plot is neither rapid nor exhilarating, but it never actually stagnates. Like Walpole's Gothic story, *The Old English Baron* is supposed to be a transcript from an ancient manuscript. The period, we are assured, is that of the minority of Henry VI., but despite an elaborately described tournament, we never really leave eighteenth century England. Edmund Twyford, the reputed son of a cottager, is befriended by a benevolent baron Fitzowen, but, through his good fortune and estimable qualities, excites the envy of Fitzowen's nephews and his eldest son. To prove the courage of Edmund, who has been basely slandered by his enemies, the baron asks him to spend three nights in the haunted apartment of the castle. Up to this point, there has been nothing to differentiate the story from an uneventful domestic novel. The ghost is of the mechanical variety and does not inspire awe when he actually appears, but Miss Reeve tries to prepare our minds for the shock, before she introduces him. The rusty locks and the sudden extinction of the lamp are a heritage from Walpole, but the "hollow, rustling noise" and the glimmering light, naturally explained later by the approach of a servant with a faggot, anticipate Mrs. Radcliffe. Like Adeline later, in *The Romance of the Forest*, Edmund is haunted by prophetic dreams. The second night the ghost violently clashes his armour, but still remains concealed. The third night dismal groans are

heard. The ghost does not deign to appear in person until the baron's nephews watch, and then:

> "All the doors flew open, a pale glimmering light appeared at the door from the staircase, and a man in complete armour entered the room: he stood with one hand extended pointing to the outward door."

It is to vindicate the rights of this departed spirit that Sir Ralph Harclay challenges Sir Walter Lovel to a "mediaeval" tournament. Before the story closes, Edmund is identified as the owner of Castle Lovel, and is married to Lady Emma, Fitzowen's daughter. The narration of the unusual circumstances connected with his birth takes some time, as the foster parents suffer from what is described by writers on psychology as "total recall," and are unable to select the salient details. The characters are rather dim and indistinct, the shadowiest of all being Emma, who has no personality at all, and is a mere complement to the immaculate Edmund's happiness. The good and bad are sharply distinguished. There are no "doubtful cases," and consequently there is no difficulty in distributing appropriate rewards and punishments at the close of the story—the whole "furnishing a striking lesson to posterity of the overruling hand of providence and the certainty of retribution." Clara Reeve was fifty-two years of age when she published her Gothic story, and she writes in the spirit of a maiden aunt striving to edify as well as to entertain the younger generation. When

Edmund takes Fitzowen to view the fatal closet and the bones of his murdered father, he considers the scene "too solemn for a lady to be present at"; and his love-making is as frigid as the supernatural scenes. The hero is young in years, but has no youthful ardour. The very ghost is manipulated in a half-hearted fashion and fails to produce the slightest thrill. The natural inclination of the authoress was probably towards domestic fiction with a didactic intention, and she attempted a "mediaeval" setting as a *tour de force*, in emulation of Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*. The hero, whose birth is enshrouded in mystery, the restless ghost groaning for the vindication of rights, the historical background, the archaic spelling of the challenge, are all ineffective fumblings towards the romantic. *The Old English Baron* is an unambitious work, but it has a certain hold upon our attention because of its limpidity of style. It can be read without discomfort and even with a mild degree of interest simply as a story, while *The Castle of Otranto* is only tolerable as a literary curiosity. A tragedy, *Edmond, Orphan of the Castle* (1799), was founded upon the story, which was translated into French in 1800. Miss Reeve informs the public in a preface to a late edition of *The Old English Baron* that, in compliance with the suggestion of a friend, she had composed *Castle Connor, an Irish Story*, in which apparitions were introduced. The manuscript of this tale was unfortunately lost. Not even a mouldering fragment has been rescued from an ebony cabinet in the

deserted chamber of an ancient abbey, and we are left wondering whether the ghosts spoke with a brogue.

When Walpole wrote disparagingly of Clara Reeve's imitation of his Gothic story, he singled out for praise a fragment which he attributes to Mrs. Barbauld. The story to which he alludes is evidently the unfinished *Sir Bertrand*, which is contained in one of the volumes entitled *Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose*, published jointly by J. and A.L. Aikin in 1773, and preceded by an essay *On the Pleasure Derived from Objects of Terror*. Leigh Hunt, who reprinted *Sir Bertrand*, which had impressed him very strongly in his boyhood, in his *Book for a Corner* (1849) ascribes the authorship of the tale to Dr. Aikin, commenting on the fact that he was "a writer from whom this effusion was hardly to have been looked for." It is probably safe to assume that Walpole, who was a contemporary of the Aikins and who took a lively interest in the literary gossip of the day, was right in assigning *Sir Bertrand* to Miss Aikin,[31] afterwards Mrs. Barbauld, though the story is not included in *The Works of Anne Letitia Barbauld*, edited by Miss Lucy Aikin in 1825. That the minds of the Aikins were exercised about the sources of pleasure in romance, especially when connected with horror and distress, is clear not only from this essay and the illustrative fragment but also from other essays and stories in the same collection—*On Romances, an Imitation*, and *An Enquiry into those Kinds of Distress*

which Excite Agreeable Sensations. In the preliminary essay to *Sir Bertrand* an attempt is made to explain why terrible scenes excite pleasurable emotions and to distinguish between two different types of horror, as illustrated by *The Castle of Otranto*, which unites the marvellous and the terrible, and by a scene of mere natural horror in Smollett's *Count Fathom*. The story *Sir Bertrand* is an attempt to combine the two kinds of horror in one composition. A knight, wandering in darkness on a desolate and dreary moor, hears the tolling of a bell, and, guided by a glimmering light, finds "an antique mansion" with turrets at the corners. As he approaches the porch, the light glides away. All is dark and still. The light reappears and the bell tolls. As Sir Bertrand enters the castle, the door closes behind him. A bluish flame leads him up a staircase till he comes to a wide gallery and a second staircase, where the light vanishes. He grasps a dead-cold hand which he severs from the wrist with his sword. The blue flame now leads him to a vault, where he sees the owner of the hand "completely armed, thrusting forwards the bloody stump of an arm, with a terrible frown and menacing gesture and brandishing a sword in the remaining hand." When attacked, the figure vanishes, leaving behind a massive, iron key which unlocks a door leading to an apartment containing a coffin, and statues of black marble, attired in Moorish costume, holding enormous sabres in their right hands. As the knight enters, each of them rears an arm and advances a leg and at the same moment the

lid of the coffin opens and the bell tolls. Sir Bertrand, guided by the flames, approaches the coffin from which a lady in a shroud and a black veil arises. When he kisses her, the whole building falls asunder with a crash. Sir Bertrand is thrown into a trance and awakes in a gorgeous room, where he sees a beautiful lady who thanks him as her deliverer. At a banquet, nymphs place a laurel wreath on his head, but as the lady is about to address him the fragment breaks off.

The architecture of the castle, with its gallery, staircase and subterranean vaults, closely resembles that of Walpole's Gothic structure. The "enormous sabres" too are familiar to readers of *The Castle of Otranto*. The gliding light, disquieting at the outset of the story but before the close familiar grown, is doomed to be the guide of many a distressed wanderer through the Gothic labyrinths of later romances. Mrs. Barbauld chose her properties with admirable discretion, but lacked the art to use them cunningly. A tolling bell, heard in the silence and darkness of a lonely moor, will quicken the beatings of the heart, but employed as a prompter's signal to herald the advance of a group of black statues is only absurd. After the grimly suggestive opening, the story gradually loses in power as it proceeds and the happy ending, which wings our thoughts back to the Sleeping Beauty of childhood, is wholly incongruous. If the fragment had ended abruptly at the moment when the lady arises in her shroud from the coffin,

Sir Bertrand would have been a more effective tale of terror. From the historical point of view Mrs. Barbauld's curious patchwork is full of interest. She seems to be reaching out wistfully towards the mysterious and the unknown. Genuinely anxious to awaken a thrill of excitement in the breast of her reader, she is hesitating and uncertain as to the best way of winning her effect. She is but a pioneer in the art of freezing the blood and it were idle to expect that she should rush boldly into a forest of horrors. Naturally she prefers to follow the tracks trodden by Walpole and Smollett; but with intuitive foresight she seems to have realised the limitations of Walpole's marvellous machinery, and to have attempted to explore the regions of the fearful unknown. Her opening scene works on that instinctive terror of the dark and the unseen, upon which Mrs. Radcliffe bases many of her most moving incidents.

Among the *Poetical Sketches* of Blake, written between 1768 and 1777, and published in 1783, there appears an extraordinary poem written in blank verse, but divided into quatrains, and entitled *Fair Elenor*. This juvenile production seems to indicate that Blake was familiar with Walpole's Gothic story.[32] The heroine, wandering disconsolately by night in the castle vaults—a place of refuge first rendered fashionable by Isabella in *The Castle of Otranto*—faints with horror, thinking that she beholds her husband's ghost, but soon:

"Fancy returns, and now she thinks of bones
And grinning skulls and corruptible death
Wrapped in his shroud; and now fancies she hears
Deep sighs and sees pale, sickly ghosts gliding."

A reality more horrible than her imaginings awaits her. A bleeding head is abruptly thrust into her arms by an assassin in the employ of a villainous and anonymous "duke." Fair Elenor retires to her bed and gives utterance to an outburst of similes in praise of her dead lord. Thus encouraged, the bloody head of her murdered husband describes its lurid past, and warns Elenor to beware of the duke's dark designs. Elenor wisely avoids the machinations of the villain, and brings an end to the poem, by breathing her last. Blake's story is faintly reminiscent of the popular legend of Anne Boleyn, who, with her bleeding head in her lap, is said to ride down the avenue of Blickling Park once a year in a hearse drawn by horsemen and accompanied by attendants, all headless out of respect to their mistress.

Blake's youthful excursion into the murky gloom of Gothic vaults resulted in a poem so crude that even "Monk" Lewis, who was no connoisseur, would have declined it regretfully as a contribution to his *Tales of Terror*, but *Fair Elenor* is worthy of remembrance as an early indication of Walpole's influence, which was to become so potent on the history of Gothic romance.

The Gothic experiments of Dr. Nathan Drake,

published in his *Literary Hours* (1798), are extremely instructive as indicating the critical standpoint of the time. Drake, like Mrs. Barbauld and her brother, was deeply interested in the sources of the pleasure derived from tales of terror, and wrote his Gothic stories to confirm and illustrate the theories propounded in his essays. He discusses gravely and learnedly the kinds of fictitious horror that excite agreeable sensations, and then proceeds to arrange carefully calculated effects, designed to alarm his readers, but not to outrage their sense of decorum. He has none of the reckless daring of "Monk" Lewis, who flung restraint to the winds and raced in mad career through an orgy of horrors. In his enchanted castles we are disturbed by an uneasy suspicion that the inhabitants are merely allegorical characters, and that the spectre of a moral lurks in some dim recess ready to spring out upon us suddenly. Dr. Drake's mind was as a house divided against itself: he was a moralist, emulating the "sage and serious Spenser" in his desire to exalt virtue and abase vice, he was a critic working out, with calm detachment, practical illustrations of the theories he had formulated, and he was a romantic enthusiast, imbued with a vague but genuine admiration for the wild superstitions of a bygone age. His stories exhibit painful evidence of the conflict which waged between the three sides of his nature. In the essay prefixed to *Henry Fitzowen, a Gothic Tale*, he distinguishes between the two species of Gothic superstition, the gloomy and the sportive, and addresses an ode to the two goddesses of

Superstition—one the offspring of Fear and Midnight, the other of Hesper and the Moon. In his story the spectres of darkness are put to flight by a troop of aerial spirits. Dr. Drake knew the Gothic stories of Walpole, Mrs. Barbauld, Clara Reeve and Mrs. Radcliffe; and traces of the influence of each may be found in his work. Henry Fitzowen loves Adeline de Montfort, but has a powerful and diabolical rival—Walleran—whose character combines the most dangerous qualities of Mrs. Radcliffe's villains with the magical gifts of a wizard. Fitzowen, not long before the day fixed for his wedding, is led astray, while hunting, by an elusive stag, a spectral monk and a "wandering fire," and arrives home in a thunderstorm to find his castle enveloped in total darkness and two of his servants stretched dead at his feet. He learns from his mother and sister, who are shut in a distant room, that Adeline has been carried off by armed ruffians. Believing Walleran to be responsible for this outrage, Fitzowen sets out the next day in search of him. After weary wanderings he is beguiled into a Gothic castle by a foul witch, who resembles one of Spenser's loathly hags, and on his entrance hears peals of diabolical laughter. He sees spectres, blue lights, and the corpse of Horror herself. When he slays Walleran the enchantments disappear. At the end of a winding passage he finds a cavern illuminated by a globe of light, and discovers Adeline asleep on a couch. He awakes her with a kiss. Thunder shakes the earth, a raging whirlwind tears the castle from its

foundations, and the lovers awake from their trance in a beautiful, moonlit vale where they hear enchanting music and see knights, nymphs and spirits. A beauteous queen tells them that the spirits of the blest have freed them from Horror's dread agents. The music dies away, the spirits flee and the lovers find themselves in a country road. A story of the same type is told by De La Motte Fouqué in *The Field of Terror*.[33] Before the steadfast courage of the labourer who strives to till the field, diabolical enchantments disappear. It is an ancient legend turned into moral allegory.

In the essay on *Objects of Terror*, which precedes *Montmorenci, a Fragment*, Drake discusses that type of terror, which is "excited by the interference of a simple, material causation," and which "requires no small degree of skill and arrangement to prevent its operating more pain than pleasure." He condemns Walpole's *Mysterious Mother* on the ground that the catastrophe is only productive of horror and aversion, and regards the old ballad, *Edward*, as intolerable to any person of sensibility, but praises Dante and Shakespeare for keeping within the "bounds of salutary and grateful pleasure." The scene in *The Italian*, where Schedoni, about to plunge a dagger into Ellena's bosom, recoils, in the belief that he has discovered her to be his own daughter, is commended as "appalling yet delighting the reader." In the productions of Mrs. Radcliffe, "the Shakespeare of Romance Writers, who to the wild

landscape of Salvator Rosa has added the softer graces of a Claude," he declares,

> "may be found many scenes truly terrific in their conception, yet so softened down, and the mind so much relieved, by the intermixture of beautiful description, or pathetic incident, that the impression of the whole never becomes too strong, never degenerates into horror, but pleasurable emotion is ever the predominating result."

The famous scene in *Ferdinand, Count Fathom*, the description of Danger in Collins' *Ode to Fear*, the Scottish ballad of *Hardyknute* are mentioned as admirable examples of the fear excited by natural causes. In the fragment called *Montmorenci*, Drake aims at combining "picturesque description with some of those objects of terror which are independent of supernatural agency." As the curfew tolls sullenly, Henry de Montmorenci and his two attendants rush from a castle into the darkness of a stormy night. They hurry through a savage glen, in which a swollen torrent falls over a precipice. After hearing the crash of falling armour, they suddenly come upon a dying knight on whose pale features every mark of horror is depicted. Led by frightful screams of distress, Montmorenci and his men find a maiden, who has been captured by banditti. Montmorenci slays the leader, but is seized by the rest of the banditti and bound to a tree overlooking a stupendous chasm into which he is to be hurled. By

almost superhuman struggles he effects his escape, when suddenly—there at this terror-fraught moment, the fragment wisely ends.

In *The Abbey of Clunedale* Drake experiments feebly and ineffectively with the "explained supernatural" in which Mrs. Radcliffe was an adept. The ruined abbey, deemed to be haunted, is visited at night as an act of penance by a man named Clifford who, in a fit of unfounded jealousy, has slain his wife's brother. Clifford, accompanied by his sister, and bearing a light, kneels at his wife's tomb, and is mistaken for a spectral being.

The Gothic tale entitled *Sir Egbert* is based on an ancient legend associated with one of the turrets of Rochester Castle. Sir Egbert, searching for his friend, Conrad, who had disappeared in suspicious circumstances, hears from the Knights Templars, that the wicked Constable is believed to hold two lovers in a profound and deathlike sleep. He resolves to make an attempt to draw from its sheath the sword which separates them and so restore them to life and liberty. Undismayed by the fate of those who have fallen in the quest, Sir Egbert enters the castle, where he is entertained at a gorgeous feast. When the festivities are at their height, and Sir Egbert has momentarily forgotten his enterprise, a terrible shriek is heard. The revellers vanish, and Sir Egbert is left alone to face a spectral corpse, which beckons him onward to a vault, where in flaming characters are inscribed the words: "Death to him who violates

the mysteries of Gundulph's Tower." Nothing daunted, Sir Egbert amid execrations of fiends, encounters delusive horrors and at last unsheathes the sword. The lovers awake, and the whole apparatus of enchantment vanishes. Conrad tells how he and Bertha, six years before, had been lured by a wandering fire to a luxurious cavern, where they drank a magic potion. The story closes with the marriage of Conrad and Bertha, and of Egbert and Matilda, a sister of one of the other victims of the same enchanter.

In Dr. Drake's stories are patiently collected all the heirlooms necessary for the full equipment of a Gothic castle. Massive doors, which sway ponderously on their hinges or are forcibly burst open and which invariably close with a resounding crash, dark, eerie galleries, broken staircases, decayed apartments, mouldering floors, tolling bells, skeletons, corpses, howling spectres—all are there; but the possessor, overwhelmed by the very profusion which surrounds him, is at a loss how to make use of them. He does not realise the true significance of a half-stifled groan or an unearthly yell heard in the darkness. Each new horror indeed seems but to put new life into the heart of the redoubtable Sir Egbert, who, like Spenser's gallant knights, advances from triumph to triumph vanquishing evil at every step. It is impossible to become absorbed in his personages, who have less body than his spectres, and whose adventures take

the form of a walk through an exhibition of horrors, mechanically set in motion to prove their prowess. Dr. Drake seems happier when the hideous beings are put to rout, and the transformation-scene, which places fairyland before us, suddenly descends on the stage. Yet the bungling attempts of Dr. Drake are interesting as showing that grave and critical minds were prepared to consider the tale of terror as a legitimate form of literature, obeying certain definite rules of its own and aiming at the excitement of a pleasurable fear. The seed of Gothic story, sown at random by Horace Walpole, had by 1798 taken firm root in the soil. Drake's enthusiasm for Gothic story was associated with his love for older English poetry and with his interest in Scandinavian mythology. He was a genuine admirer of Spenser and attempted imitations, in modern diction, of old ballads. It is for his bent towards the romantic, rather than for his actual accomplishments, that Drake is worthy of remembrance.

CHAPTER III - "THE NOVEL OF SUSPENSE." MRS. RADCLIFFE.

The enthusiasm which greeted Walpole's enchanted

castle and Miss Reeve's carefully manipulated ghost, indicated an eager desire for a new type of fiction in which the known and familiar were superseded by the strange and supernatural. To meet this end Mrs. Radcliffe suddenly came forward with her attractive store of mysteries, and it was probably her timely appearance that saved the Gothic tale from an early death. The vogue of the novel of terror, though undoubtedly stimulated by German influence, was mainly due to her popularity and success. The writers of the first half of the nineteenth century abound in references to her works,[34] and she thus still enjoys a shadowy, ghost-like celebrity. Many who have never had the curiosity to explore the labyrinths of the underground passages, with which her castles are invariably honeycombed, or who have never shuddered with apprehension before the "black veil," know of their existence through *Northanger Abbey*, and have probably also read how Thackeray at school amused himself and his friends by drawing illustrations of Mrs. Radcliffe's novels.

Of Mrs. Radcliffe's life few facts are known, and Christina Rossetti, one of her many admirers, was obliged, in 1883, to relinquish the plan of writing her biography, because the materials were so scanty. [35] From the memoir prefixed to the posthumous volumes, published in 1826, containing *Gaston de Blondeville*, and various poems, we learn that she was born in 1764, the very year in which Walpole issued *The Castle of Otranto*, and that her maiden name was

Ann Ward. In 1787 she married William Radcliffe, an Oxford graduate and a student of law, who became editor of a weekly newspaper, *The English Chronicle*. Her life was so secluded that biographers did not hesitate to invent what they could not discover. The legend that she was driven frantic by the horrors that she had conjured up was refuted after her death.

It may have been the publication of *The Recess* by Sophia Lee in 1785 that inspired Mrs. Radcliffe to try her fortune with a historical novel. *The Recess* is a story of languid interest, circling round the adventures of the twin daughters of Mary Queen of Scots and the Duke of Norfolk. Yet as we meander gently through its mazes we come across an abbey "of Gothic elegance and magnificence," a swooning heroine who plays the lute, thunderstorms, banditti and even an escape in a coffin—items which may well have attracted the notice of Mrs. Radcliffe, whose first novel, *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*, [36] appeared in 1789. Considered historically, this immature work is full of interest, for, with the notable exception of the supernatural, it contains in embryo nearly all the elements of Mrs. Radcliffe's future novels.

The scene is laid in Scotland, and the period, we are assured, is that of the "dark ages"; but almost at the outset we are startled rudely from our dreams of the mediaeval by the statement that

> "the wrongfully imprisoned earl, when the

> sweet tranquillity of evening threw an air of tender melancholy over his mind … composed the following sonnet, which, having committed it to paper, he, the next evening dropped upon the terrace."

The sonnet consists of four heroic quatrains somewhat curiously resembling the manner of Gray. From this episode it may be gathered that Mrs. Radcliffe did not aim at, or certainly did not achieve, historical accuracy, but evolved most of her descriptions, not from original sources in ancient documents, but from her own inner consciousness. It was only in her last novel—*Gaston de Blondeville*—that she made use of old chronicles. Within the Scottish castle we meet a heroine with an "expression of pensive melancholy" and a "smile softly clouded with sorrow," a noble lord deprived of his rights by a villain "whose life is marked with vice and whose death with the bitterness of remorse." But these grey and ghostly shadows, who flit faintly through our imagination, are less prophetic of coming events than the properties with which the castle is endowed, a secret but accidently discovered panel, a trap-door, subterranean vaults, an unburied corpse, a suddenly extinguished lamp and a soft-toned lute—a goodly heritage from *The Castle of Otranto*. The situations which a villain of Baron Malcolm's type will inevitably create are dimly shadowed forth and involve, ere the close, the hairbreadth rescue of a distressed maiden, the reinstatement of the lord in

his rights, and the identification of the long-lost heir by the convenient and time-honoured "strawberry mark." These promising materials are handled in a childish fashion. The faintly pencilled outlines, the characterless figures, the nerveless structure, give little presage of the boldly effective scenery, the strong delineations and the dexterously managed plots of the later novels. The gradual, steady advance in skill and power is one of the most interesting features of Mrs. Radcliffe's work. Few could have guessed from the slight sketch of Baron Malcolm, a merely slavish copy of the traditional villain, that he was to be the ancestor of such picturesque and romantic creatures as Montoni and Schedoni.

This tentative beginning was quickly followed by the more ambitious *Sicilian Romance* (1790), in which we are transported to the palace of Ferdinand, fifth Marquis of Mazzini, on the north coast of Sicily. This time the date is fixed officially at 1580. The Marquis has one son and two daughters, the children of his first wife, who has been supplanted by a beautiful but unscrupulous successor. The first wife is reputed dead, but is, in reality, artfully and maliciously concealed in an uninhabited wing of the abbey. It is her presence which leads to disquieting rumours of the supernatural. Ferdinand, the son, vainly tries to solve the enigma of certain lights, which wander elusively about the deserted wing, and finds himself perilously suspended, like David Balfour in *Kidnapped*, on a decayed staircase, of

which the lower half has broken away. In this hazardous situation, Ferdinand accidentally drops his lamp and is left in total darkness. An hour later he is rescued by the ladies of the castle, who, alarmed by his long absence, boldly come in search of him with a light. During another tour of exploration he hears a hollow groan, which, he is told, proceeds from a murdered spirit underground, but which is eventually traced to the unhappy marchioness. These two incidents plainly reveal that Mrs. Radcliffe has now discovered the peculiar vein of mystery towards which she was groping in *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*. From the very first she explained away her marvels by natural means. If we scan her romances with a coldly critical eye—an almost criminal proceeding—obvious improbabilities start into view. For instance, the oppressed marchioness, who has not seen her daughter Julia since the age of two, recognises her without a moment's hesitation at the age of seventeen, and faints in a transport of joy. It is no small tribute to Mrs. Radcliffe's gifts that we often accept such incidents as these without demur. So unnerved are we by the lurking shadows, the flickering lights, the fluttering tapestry and the unaccountable groans with which she lowers our vitality, that we tremble and start at the wagging of a straw, and have not the spirit, once we are absorbed into the atmosphere of her romance, to dispute anything she would have us believe. The interest of the *Sicilian Romance*, which is far greater than that of her first novel, arises entirely out of the

situations. There is no gradual unfolding of character and motive. The high-handed marquis, the jealous marchioness, the imprisoned wife, the vapid hero, the two virtuous sisters, the leader of the banditti, the respectable, prosy governess, are a set of dolls fitted ingeniously into the framework of the plot. They have more substance than the tenuous shadows that glide through the pages of Mrs. Radcliffe's first story, but they move only as she deftly pulls the strings that set them in motion.

In her third novel, *The Romance of the Forest*, published in 1792, Mrs. Radcliffe makes more attempt to discuss motive and to trace the effect of circumstances on temperament. The opening chapter is so alluring that callous indeed would be the reader who felt no yearning to pluck out the heart of the mystery. La Motte, a needy adventurer fleeing from justice, takes refuge on a stormy night in a lonely, sinister-looking house. With startling suddenness, a door bursts open, and a ruffian, putting a pistol to La Motte's breast with one hand, and, with the other, dragging along a beautiful girl, exclaims ferociously,

> "You are wholly in our power, no assistance can reach you; if you wish to save your life, swear that you will convey this girl where I may never see her more… If you return within an hour you will die."

The elucidation of this remarkable occurrence is long deferred, for Mrs. Radcliffe appreciates fully the

value of suspense in luring on her readers, but our attention is distracted in the meantime by a series of new events. Treasuring the unfinished adventure in the recesses of our memory, we follow the course of the story. When La Motte decides impulsively to reside in a deserted abbey, "not," as he once remarks, "in all respects strictly Gothic," but containing a trap-door and a human skeleton in a chest, we willingly take up our abode there and wait patiently to see what will happen. Our interest is inclined to flag when life at the abbey seems uneventful, but we are ere long rewarded by a visit from a stranger, whose approach flings La Motte into so violent a state of alarm that he vanishes with remarkable abruptness beneath a trapdoor. It proves, however, that the intruder is merely La Motte's son, and the timid marquis is able to emerge. Meanwhile, La Motte's wife, suspicious of her husband's morose habits and his secret visits to a Gothic sepulchre, becomes jealous of Adeline, the girl they have befriended. It later transpires that La Motte has turned highwayman and stores his booty in this secluded spot. The visits are so closely shrouded in obscurity, and we have so exhausted our imagination in picturing dark possibilities, that the simple solution falls disappointingly short of our expectations. The next thrill is produced by the arrival of two strangers, the wicked marquis and the noble hero, without whom the tale of characters in a novel of terror would scarcely be complete. The emotion La Motte betrays at the sight of the marquis is due, we

are told eventually, to the fact that Montalt was the victim of his first robbery. Adeline, meanwhile, in a dream sees a beckoning figure in a dark cloak, a dying man imprisoned in a darkened chamber, a coffin and a bleeding corpse, and hears a voice from the coffin. The disjointed episodes and bewildering incoherence of a nightmare are suggested with admirable skill, and effectually prepare our minds for Adeline's discoveries a few nights later. Passing through a door, concealed by the arras of her bedroom, into a chamber like that she had seen in her sleep, she stumbles over a rusty dagger and finds a roll of mouldering manuscripts. This incident is robbed of its effect for readers of *Northanger Abbey* by insistent reminiscences of Catherine Morland's discovery of the washing bills. But Adeline, by the uncertain light of a candle, reads, with the utmost horror and consternation, the harrowing life-story of her father, who has been foully done to death by his brother, already known to us as the unprincipled Marquis Montalt. La Motte weakly aids and abets Montalt's designs against Adeline, and she is soon compelled to take refuge in flight. She is captured and borne away to an elegant villa, whence she escapes, only to be overtaken again. Finally, Theodore arrives, as heroes will, in the nick of time, and wounds his rival. Adeline finds a peaceful home in the chateau of M. La Luc, who proves to be Theodore's father. Here the reader awaits impatiently the final solution of the plot. Once we have been inmates of a Gothic abbey, life in a Swiss chateau,

however idyllic, is apt to seem monotonous. In time Mrs. Radcliffe administers justice. The marquis takes poison; La Motte is banished but reforms; and Adeline, after dutifully burying her father's skeleton in the family vault, becomes mistress of the abbey, but prefers to reside in a *châlet* on the banks of Lake Geneva.

Although the *Romance of the Forest* is considerably shorter than the later novels, the plot, which is full of ingenious complications, is unfolded in the most leisurely fashion. Mrs. Radcliffe's tantalising delays quicken our curiosity as effectively as the deliberate calm of a *raconteur*, who, with a view to heightening his artistic effect, pauses to light a pipe at the very climax of his story. Suspense is the key-note of the romance. The characters are still subordinate to incident, but La Motte and his wife claim our interest because they are exhibited in varying moods. La Motte has his struggles and, like Macbeth, is haunted by compunctious visitings of nature. Unlike the thorough-paced villain, who glories in his misdeeds, he is worried and harassed, and takes no pleasure in his crimes. Madame La Motte is not a jealous woman from beginning to end like the marchioness in the *Sicilian Romance*. Her character is moulded to some extent by environment. She changes distinctly in her attitude to Adeline after she has reason to suspect her husband. Mrs. Radcliffe's psychology is neither subtle nor profound, but the fact that psychology is there in the most rudimentary form is a sign of her

progress in the art of fiction. Theodore is as insipid as the rest of Mrs. Radcliffe's heroes, who are distinguishable from one another only by their names, and Adeline is perhaps a shade more emotional and passionless than Emily and Ellena in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Italian*. The lachrymose maiden in *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*, who can assume at need "an air of offended dignity," is a preliminary sketch of Julia, Emily and Ellena in the later novels. Mrs. Radcliffe's heroines resemble nothing more than a composite photograph in which all distinctive traits are merged into an expressionless "type." They owe something no doubt to Richardson's *Clarissa Harlowe*, but their feelings are not so minutely analysed. Their lady-like accomplishments vary slightly. In reflective mood one may lightly throw off a sonnet to the sunset or to the nocturnal gale, while another may seek refuge in her water-colours or her lute. They are all dignified and resolute in the most distressing situations, yet they weep and faint with wearisome frequency. Their health and spirits are as precarious as their easily extinguished candles. Yet these exquisitely sensitive, well-bred heroines alienate our sympathy by their impregnable self-esteem, a disconcerting trait which would certainly have exasperated heroes less perfect and more human than Mrs. Radcliffe's Theodores and Valancourts. Their sorrows never rise to tragic heights, because they are only passive sufferers, and the sympathy they would win as pathetic figures is obliterated by their unfailing consciousness of their

own rectitude. In describing Adeline, Mrs. Radcliffe attempts an unusually acute analysis:

> "For many hours she busied herself upon a piece of work which she had undertaken for Madame La Motte, but this she did without the least intention of conciliating her favour, but because she felt there was something in thus repaying unkindness, which was suited to her own temper, her sentiments and her pride. Self-love may be the centre around which human affections move, for whatever motive conduces to self-gratification may be resolved into self-love, yet, some of these affections are in their nature so refined that, though we cannot deny their origin, they almost deserve the name of virtue: of this species was that of Adeline."

It is characteristic of Mrs. Radcliffe's tendency to overlook the obvious in searching for the subtle, that the girl who feels these recondite emotions expresses slight embarrassment when unceremoniously flung on the protection of strangers. Emily, in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, possesses the same protective armour as Adeline. When she is abused by Montoni, "Her heart swelled with the consciousness of having deserved praise instead of censure, and was proudly silent"; or again, in *The Italian*,

> "Ellena was the more satisfied with herself because she had never for an instant forgotten

> her dignity so far as to degenerate into the vehemence of passion or to falter with the weakness of fear."

Her father, M. St. Aubert, on his deathbed, bids Emily beware of "priding herself on the gracefulness of sensibility."

Fortunately the heroine is merely a figurehead in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). The change of title is significant. The two previous works have been romances, but it is now Mrs. Radcliffe's intention to let herself go further in the direction of wonder and suspense than she had hitherto ventured. She is like Scythrop in *Nightmare Abbey*, of whom it was said:

> "He had a strong tendency to love of mystery for its own sake; that is to say, he would employ mystery to serve a purpose, but would first choose his purpose by its capability of mystery."

Yet Mrs. Radcliffe, at the opening of her story, is sparing in her use of supernatural elements. We live by faith, and are drawn forward by the hope of future mystifications. In the first volume we saunter through idyllic scenes of domestic happiness in the Chateau le Vert and wander with Emily and her dying father through the Apennines, with only faint suggestions of excitement to come. The second volume plunges us *in medias res*. The aunt, to whose care Emily is entrusted, has imprudently married a

tempestuous tyrant, Montoni, who, to further his own ends, hurries his wife and niece from the gaiety of Venice to the gloom of Udolpho. After a journey fraught with terror, amid rugged, lowering mountains and through dusky woods, we reach the castle of Udolpho at nightfall. The sombre exterior and the shadow haunted hall are so ominous that we are prepared for the worst when we enter its portals. The anticipation is half pleasurable, half fearful, as we shudder at the thought of what may befall us within its walls. At every turn something uncanny shakes our overwrought nerves; the sighing of the wind, the echo of distant footsteps, lurking shadows, gliding forms, inexplicable groans, mysterious music torture the sensitive imagination of Emily, who is mercilessly doomed to sleep in a deserted apartment with a door, which, as so often in the novel of terror, bolts only on the outside. More nerve wracking than the unburied corpse or even than the ineffable horror concealed behind the black veil are the imaginary, impalpable terrors that seize on Emily's tender fancy as she crosses the hall on her way to solve the riddle of her aunt's disappearance:

> "Emily, deceived by the long shadows of the pillars and by the catching lights between, often stopped, imagining that she saw some person moving in the distant obscurity…and as she passed these pillars she feared to turn her eyes towards them, almost expecting to see a figure start from behind their broad shaft."

Torn from the context, this passage no longer congeals us with terror, but in its setting it conveys in a wonderfully vivid manner the tricks of a feverish imagination. So exhaustive—and exhausting—are the mysteries of Udolpho that it was a mistake to introduce another haunted castle, le Blanc, as an appendix.

Mrs. Radcliffe's long deferred explanations of what is apparently supernatural have often been adversely criticised. Her method varies considerably. Sometimes we are enlightened almost immediately. When the garrulous servant, Annette, is relating to Emily what she knows of the story of Laurentina, who had once lived in the castle, both mistress and servant are wrought up to a state of nervous tension:

> "Emily, whom now Annette had infected with her own terrors, listened attentively, but everything was still, and Annette proceeded… 'There again,' cried Annette, suddenly, 'I heard it again.' 'Hush!' said Emily, trembling. They listened and continued to sit quite still. Emily heard a slow knocking against the wall. It came repeatedly. Annette then screamed loudly, and the chamber door slowly opened— It was Caterina, come to tell Annette that her lady wanted her."

It is seldom that the rude awakening comes thus swiftly. More often we are left wondering uneasily and fearfully for a prolonged stretch of time. The

extreme limit of human endurance is reached in the episode of the Black Veil. Early in the second volume, Emily, for whom the concealed picture had a fatal fascination, determined to gaze upon it.

> "Emily passed on with faltering steps and, having paused a moment at the door before she attempted to open it, she then hastily entered the chamber and went towards the picture, which appeared to be enclosed in a frame of uncommon size, that hung in a dark part of the room. She paused again and then, with a timid hand, lifted the veil, but instantly let it fall—perceiving that, what it had concealed was no picture and, before she could leave the chamber, she dropped senseless on the floor."

In time Emily recovers, but the horror of the Black Veil preys on her mind until, near the close of the third volume, Mrs. Radcliffe mercifully consents to tell us not only what Emily thought that she beheld, but what was actually there.

> "There appeared, instead of the picture she had expected, within the recess of the wall, a human figure of ghastly paleness, stretched at its length, and dressed in the habiliments of the grave. What added to the horror of the spectacle was that the face appeared partly decayed and disfigured by worms, which were visible on the features and hands… Had she

> dared to look again, her delusion and her fears would have vanished together, and she would have perceived that the figure before her was not human, but formed of wax… A member of the house of Udolpho, having committed some offence against the prerogative of the church, had been condemned to the penance of contemplating, during certain hours of the day, a waxen image made to resemble a human body in the state to which it is reduced after death … he had made it a condition in his will that his descendants should preserve the image."

Mrs. Radcliffe, realising that the secret she had so jealously guarded is of rather an amazing character, asserts that it is "not without example in the records of the fierce severity which monkish superstition has sometimes inflicted on mankind." But the explanation falls so ludicrously short of our expectations and is so improbable a possibility, that Mrs. Radcliffe would have been wise not to defraud Catherine Morland and other readers of the pleasure of guessing aright. Few enjoy being baffled and thwarted in so unexpected a fashion. The skeleton of Signora Laurentina was the least that could be expected as a reward for suspense so patiently endured. But long ere this disclosure, we have learnt by bitter experience to distrust Mrs. Radcliffe's secrets and to look for ultimate disillusionment. The uncanny voice that ominously echoes Montoni's

words is not the cry of a bodiless visitant striving to awaken "that blushing, shamefaced spirit that mutinies in a man's bosom," but belongs to an ordinary human being, the prisoner Du Pont, who has discovered one of Mrs. Radcliffe's innumerable concealed passages. The bed with the black velvet pall in the haunted chamber contains, not the frightful apparition that flashed upon the inward eye of Emily and of Annette, but a stalwart pirate who shrinks from discovery. The gliding forms which steal furtively along the ramparts and disappear at the end of dark passages become eventually, like the nun in Charlotte Bronte's *Villette*, sensible to feeling as to sight. The unearthly music which is heard in the woods at midnight proceeds, not from the inhabitants of another sphere, but from a conscience stricken nun with a lurid past. The corpse, which Emily believed to be that of her aunt, foully done to death by a pitiless husband, is the body of a man killed in a bandit's affray. Here Mrs. Radcliffe seems eager to show that she was not afraid of a corpse, but is careful that it shall not be the corpse which the reader anticipates. She deliberately excites trembling apprehensions in order that she may show how absurd they are. We are befooled that she may enjoy a quietly malicious triumph. The result is that we become wary and cautious. The genuine ghost story, read by Ludovico to revive his fainting spirits when he is keeping vigil in the "haunted" chamber, is robbed of its effect because we half expect to be disillusioned ere the close. It is far more impressive if

read as a separate story apart from its setting. The idea of explaining away what is apparently supernatural may have occurred to Mrs. Radcliffe after reading Schiller's popular romance, *Der Geisterseher* (1789), in which the elaborately contrived marvels of the Armenian, who was modelled on Cagliostro, are but the feats of a juggler and have a physical cause. But more probably Mrs. Radcliffe's imagination was held in check by a sensitive conscience, which would not allow her to trade on the credulity of simple-minded readers.

It is noteworthy that Mrs. Radcliffe's last work—*The Italian*, published in 1797—is more skilfully constructed, and possesses far greater unity and concentration than *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. The Inquisition scenes towards the end of the book are unduly prolonged, but the story is coherent and free from digressions. The theme is less fanciful and far fetched than those of *The Romance of the Forest* and *Udolpho*. It seldom strays far beyond the bounds of the probable, nor overstrains our capacity for belief. The motive of the story is the Marchesa di Vivaldi's opposition to her son's marriage on account of Ellena's obscure birth. The Marchesa's far reaching designs are forwarded by the ambitious monk, Schedoni, who, for his own ends, undertakes to murder Ellena. *The Italian* abounds in dramatic, haunting scenes. The strangely effective overture, which describes the Confessional of the Black Penitents, the midnight watch of Vivaldi and his

lively, impulsive servant, Paulo, amid the ruins of Paluzzi, the melodramatic interruption of the wedding ceremony, the meeting of Ellena and Schedoni on the lonely shore, the trial in the halls of the Inquisition, are all remarkably vivid. The climax of the story when Schedoni, about to slay Ellena, is arrested in the very act by her beauty and innocence, and then by the glimpse of the portrait which leads him to believe she is his daughter, is finely conceived and finely executed. Afterwards, Ellena proves only to be his niece, but we have had our thrill and nothing can rob us of it. *The Italian* depends for its effect on natural terror, rather than on supernatural suggestions. The monk, who haunts the ruins of Paluzzi, and who reappears in the prison of the Inquisition, speaks and acts like a being from the world of spectres, but in the fulness of time Mrs. Radcliffe ruthlessly exposes his methods and kills him by slow poison. She never completely explains his behaviour in the halls of the Inquisition nor accounts satisfactorily for the ferocity of his hatred of Schedoni. We are unintentionally led on false trails.

The character of Schedoni is undeniably Mrs. Radcliffe's masterpiece. No one would claim that his character is subtle study, but in his interviews with the Marchesa, Mrs. Radcliffe reveals unexpected gifts tor probing into human motives. He is an imposing figure, theatrical sometimes, but wrought of flesh and blood. In fiction, as in life, the villain has always

existed, but it was Mrs. Radcliffe who first created the romantic villain, stained with the darkest crimes, yet dignified and impressive withal. Zeluco in Dr. John Moore's novel of that name (1789) is a powerful conception, but he has no redeeming features to temper our repulsion with pity. The sinister figures of Mrs. Radcliffe, with passion-lined faces and gleaming eyes, stalk—or, if occasion demand it, glide—through all her romances, and as she grows more familiar with the type, her delineations show increased power and vigour. When the villain enters, or shortly afterwards, a descriptive catalogue is displayed, setting forth, in a manner not unlike that of the popular *feuilleton* of to-day, the qualities to be expected, and with this he is let loose into the story to play his part and act up to his reputation. In the *Sicilian Romance* there is the tyrannical marquis who would force an unwelcome marriage on his daughter and who immures his wife in a remote corner of the castle, visiting her once a week with a scanty pittance of coarse food. In *The Romance of the Forest* we find a conventional but thorough villain in Montalt and a half-hearted, poor-spirited villain in La Motte, whose "virtue was such that it could not stand the pressure of occasion." Montoni, the desperate leader of the condottieri in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, is endued with so vigorous a vitality that we always rejoice inwardly at his return to the forefront of the story. His abundant energy is refreshing after a long sojourn with his garrulous wife and tearful niece.

> "He delighted in the energies of the passions, the difficulties and tempests of life which wreck the happiness of others roused and strengthened all the powers of his mind, and afforded him the highest enjoyment… The fire and keenness of his eye, its proud exaltation, its bold fierceness, its sudden watchfulness as occasion and even slight occasion had called forth the latent soul, she had often observed with emotion, while from the usual expression of his countenance she had always shrunk."

Schedoni is undoubtedly allied to this desperado, but his methods are quieter and more subtle:

> "There was something terrible in his air, something almost superhuman. The cowl, too, as it threw a shade over the livid paleness of his face increased its severe character and gave an effect to his large, melancholy eye which approached to horror … his physiognomy … bore the traces of many passions which seemed to have fixed the features they no longer animated. An habitual gloom and severity prevailed over the deep lines of his countenance, and his eyes were so piercing that they seemed to penetrate at a single glance into the hearts of men, and to read their most secret thoughts—few persons could endure their scrutiny or even endure to meet them twice … he could adapt himself to the tempers and passions of persons, whom he

wished to conciliate, with astonishing facility."

The type undoubtedly owes something to Milton's Satan. Like Lucifer, he is proud and ambitious, and like him he retains traces of his original grandeur. Hints from Shakespeare helped to fashion him. Like Cassius, seldom he smiles, and smiles in such a sort

"As if he mock'd himself and scorn'd his spirit
That could be moved to smile at anything."

Like King John,

"The image of a wicked heinous fault
Lives in his eye: that close aspect of his
Does show the mood of a much-troubled breast."

By the enormity of his crimes he inspires horror and repulsion, but by his loneliness he appeals, for a moment, like the consummate villain Richard III., to our pity:

"There is no creature loves me
And if I die, no soul will pity me.
Nay, wherefore should they, since that I myself
Find in myself no pity to myself?"

Karl von Moor, the famous hero of Schiller's *Die Räuber* (1781), is allied to this desperado. He is thus described in the advertisement of the 1795 edition:

"The picture of a great, misguided soul, endowed with every gift of excellence, yet lost

> in spite of all its gifts. Unbridled passions and bad companionship corrupt his heart, urge him on from crime to crime, until at last he stands at the head of a band of murderers, heaps horror upon horror, and plunges from precipice to precipice in the lowest depths of despair. Great and majestic in misfortune, by misfortune reclaimed and led back to the paths of virtue. Such a man shall you pity and hate, abhor yet love in the robber Moor."

Among the direct progeny of these grandiose villains are to be included those of Lewis and Maturin, and the heroes of Scott and Byron. We know them by their world-weariness, as well as by their piercing eyes and passion-marked faces, their "verra wrinkles Gothic." In *The Giaour* we are told:

"Dark and unearthly is the scowl
That glares beneath his dusky cowl:

"The flash of that dilating eye
Reveals too much of times gone by.
Though varying, indistinct its hue
Oft will his glance the gazer rue."

Of the Corsair, it is said:

"There breathe but few whose aspect might defy
The full encounter of his searching eye."

Lara is drawn from the same model:

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

The feminine counterpart of these bold impersonations of evil is the tyrannical abbess who plays a part in *The Romance of the Forest* and in *The Italian*, and who was adopted and exaggerated by Lewis, but her crimes are petty and malicious, not daring and ambitious, like the schemes of Montoni and Schedoni.

One of Mrs. Radcliffe's contemporaries is said to have suggested that if she wished to transcend the horror of the Inquisition scenes in *The Italian* she would have to visit hell itself. Like her own heroines, Mrs. Radcliffe had too elegant and refined an imagination and too fearful a heart to undertake so desperate a journey. She would have recoiled with horror from the impious suggestion. In *Gaston de Blondeville*, written in 1802, but published posthumously with a memoir by Noon Talfourd, she ventures to make one or two startling innovations. Her hero is no longer a pale, romantic young man of gentle birth, but a stolid, worthy merchant. Here, at last, she indulges in a substantial spectre, who cannot be explained away as the figment of a disordered imagination, since he seriously alarms, not a solitary heroine or a scared lady's-maid, but

Henry III. himself and his assembled barons. Yet apart from this daring escapade, it is timidity rather than the spirit of valorous enterprise that is urging Mrs. Radcliffe into new and untried paths. Her happy, courageous disregard for historical accuracy in describing far-off scenes and bygone ages has deserted her. She searches painfully in ancient records, instead of in her imagination, for mediaeval atmosphere. Her story is grievously overburdened with elaborate descriptions of customs and ceremonies, and she adds laborious notes, citing passages from learned authorities, such as Leland's *Collectanea*, Pegge's dissertation on the obsolete office of Esquire of the King's Body, Sir George Bulke's account of the coronation of Richard III., Mador's *History of the Exchequer*, etc. We are transported from the eighteenth century, not actually to mediaeval England, but to a carefully arranged pageant displaying mediaeval costumes, tournaments and banquets. The actors speak in antique language to accord with the picturesque background against which they stand. *Gaston de Blondeville*, which is noteworthy as an early attempt to shadow forth the days of chivalry, has far more colour than Leland's *Longsword* (1752), Miss Reeve's *Old English Baron* (1777), or Miss Sophia Lee's *Recess* (1785), from which rather than from Mrs. Radcliffe's earlier romances its descent may be traced. The attempt to avoid glaring anachronisms and to reproduce an accurate picture of a former age points forward to Scott. Strutt's *Queenhoo Hall*, which Scott completed,

was a revolt against the unscrupulous inventions of romance-writers, and was crammed full of archaeological lore. The story of *Gaston de Blondeville* is tedious, the characters are shadowy and unreal, and we become, as the Ettric Shepherd remarked, in *Noctes Ambrosianae*, "somewhat too hand and glove with his ghostship"; yet, regarded simply as a spectacular effect, it is not without indications of skill and power. Miss Mitford based a drama on it, but it never attained the popularity of Mrs. Radcliffe's other novels. It was published when her reputation was on the wane.

Of the materials on which Mrs. Radcliffe drew in fashioning her romances it is impossible to speak with any certainty. Doubtless she had studied certain old chronicles, and she was deeply read in Shakespeare, especially in the tragedies. Much of her leisure, we are told, was spent in reading the literary productions of the day, especially poetry and novels. At the head of her chapters she often quotes Milton as well as the poets of her own century—Mason, Gray, Collins, and once "Ossian"—choosing almost inevitably passages which deal with the terrible or the ghostly. She must have known *The Castle of Otranto*, and in *The Italian* she quotes several passages from Walpole's melodrama *The Mysterious Mother*. But often she may have been dependent on the oral legends clustering round ancient abbeys for the background of her stories. Ghostly legends would always appeal to her, and she probably amassed a

hoard of traditions when she visited English castles during her tours with her husband. The background of *Gaston de Blondeville* is Kenilworth Castle. That ancient ruins stirred her imagination profoundly is clear from passages in her notes on the journeys. In Furness Abbey she sees in her mind's eye "a midnight procession of monks," and at Brougham Castle:

> "One almost saw the surly keeper descending through this door-case and heard him rattle the keys of the chamber above, listening with indifference to the clank of chains and to the echo of that groan below which seemed to rend the heart it burst from,"

or again:

> "Slender saplings of ash waved over the deserted door cases, where at the transforming hour of twilight, the superstitious eye might mistake them for spectres of some early possessor of the castle, restless from guilt, or of some sufferer persevering for vengeance."

Mrs. Radcliffe's style compares favourably with that of many of her contemporaries, with that of Mrs. Roche, for instance, who wrote *The Children of the Abbey* and an array of other forgotten romances, but she is too fond of long, imperfectly balanced sentences, with as many awkward twists and turns as the winding stairways of her ancient turrets. Nobody in the novels, except the talkative, comic servant,

who is meant to be vulgar and ridiculous, ever condescends to use colloquial speech. Even in moments of extreme peril the heroines are very choice in their diction. Dialogue in Mrs. Radcliffe's world is as stilted and unnatural as that of prim, old-fashioned school books. In her earliest novel she uses very little conversation, clearly finding the indirect form of narrative easier. Sometimes, in the more highly wrought passages of description, she slips unawares into a more daring phrase, *e.g.* in *Udolpho*, the track of blood "glared" upon the stairs, where the word suggests not the actual appearance of the bloodstain, but rather its effect on Emily's inflamed and disordered imagination. Dickens might have chosen the word deliberately in this connection, but he would have used it, not once, but several times to ensure his result and to emphasise the impression. This is not Mrs. Radcliffe's way. Her attention to style is mainly subconscious, her chief interest being in situation. Her descriptions of scenery have often been praised. Crabb Robinson declared in his diary that he preferred them to those of *Waverley*. When Byron visited Venice he found no better words to describe its beauty than those of Mrs. Radcliffe, who had never seen it:

"I saw from out the wave her structures rise
As from the stroke of an enchanted wand."

In 1794 Mrs. Radcliffe and her husband made a journey through Holland and West Germany, of which she wrote an account, including with it

observations made during a tour of the English Lakes. All her novels, except *The Italian* and *Gaston de Blondeville*, had been written before she went abroad, and in describing foreign scenery she relied on her imagination, aided perhaps by pictures and descriptions as well as by her recollections of English mountains and lakes. The attempt to blend into a single picture a landscape actually seen and a landscape only known at second-hand may perhaps account for the lack of distinctness in her pictures. Her descriptions of scenery are elaborate, and often prolix, but it is often difficult to form a clear image of the scene. In her novels she cares for landscape only as an effective background, and paints with the broad, careless sweep of the theatrical scene-painter. In the *Journeys*, where she depicts scenery for its own sake, her delineation is more definite and distinct. She reveals an unusual feeling for colour and for the lights and tones of a changing sea or sky:

> "It is most interesting to watch the progress of evening and its effect on the waters; streaks of light scattered among the dark, western clouds after the sun had set, and gleaming in long reflection on the sea, while a grey obscurity was drawing over the east, as the vapours rose gradually from the ocean. The air was breathless, the tall sails of the vessel were without motion, and her course upon the deep scarcely perceptible; while above the planet burned with steady dignity and threw a

> tremulous line of light upon the sea, whose surface flowed in smooth, waveless expanse. Then other planets appeared and countless stars spangled the dark waters. Twilight now pervaded air and ocean, but the west was still luminous where one solemn gleam of dusky red edged the horizon from under heavy vapours."[37]

Sometimes her scenes are disappointingly vague. She describes Ingleborough as "rising from elegantly swelling ground," and attempts to convey a stretch of country by enumerating a list of its features in generalised terms:

> "Gentle swelling slopes, rich in verdure, thick enclosures, woods, bowery hop-grounds, sheltered mansions announcing the wealth, and substantial farms with neat villages, the comfort of the country."

Yet she notices tiny mosses whose hues were "pea green and primrose," and sometimes reveals flashes of imaginative insight into natural beauty like "the dark sides of mountains marked only by the blue smoke of weeds driven in circles near the ground." These personal, intimate touches of detail are very different from the highly coloured sunrises and sunsets that awaken the raptures of her heroines.

With all her limitations, Mrs. Radcliffe is a figure whom it is impossible to ignore in the history of the

novel. Her influence was potent on Lewis and on Maturin as well as on a host of forgotten writers. Scott admired her works and probably owed something in his craftsmanship to his early study of them. She appeals most strongly in youth. The Ettrick Shepherd, who was by nature and education "just excessive superstitious," declares:

> "Had I read *Udolpho* and her other romances in my boyish days my hair would have stood on end like that o' other folk … but afore her volumes fell into my hauns, my soul had been frichtened by a' kinds of traditionary terrors, and many hunder times hae I maist swarfed wi' fear in lonesome spots in muir and woods at midnight when no a leevin thing was movin but mysel' and the great moon."[38]

There are dull stretches in all her works, but, as Hazlitt justly claims, "in harrowing up the soul with imaginary horrors, and making the flesh creep and the nerves thrill with fond hopes and fears, she is unrivalled among her countrymen."[39]

CHAPTER IV - THE NOVEL OF TERROR. LEWIS AND MATURIN.

To pass from the work of Mrs. Radcliffe to that of Matthew Gregory Lewis is to leave "the novel of suspense," which depends for part of its effect on the human instinct of curiosity, for "the novel of terror," which works almost entirely on the even stronger and more primitive instinct of fear. Those who find Mrs. Radcliffe's unruffled pace leisurely beyond endurance, or who dislike her coldly reasonable methods of accounting for what is only apparently supernatural, or who sometimes feel stifled by the oppressive air of gentility that broods over her romantic world, will find ample reparation in the melodramatic pages of "Monk" Lewis. Here, indeed, may those who will and dare sup full with horrors. Lewis, in reckless abandonment, throws to the winds all restraint, both moral and artistic, that had bound his predecessor. The incidents, which follow one another in kaleidoscopic variety, are like the disjointed phases of a delirium or nightmare, from which there is no escape. We are conscious that his story is unreal or even ludicrous, yet Lewis has a certain dogged power of driving us unrelentingly through it, regardless of our own will. Literary historians have tended to over-emphasise the connection between Mrs. Radcliffe and Lewis. Their purposes and achievement are so different that it is hardly accurate to speak of them as belonging to the same school. It is true that in one of his letters Lewis asserts that he was induced to go on with his romance, *The Monk*, by reading *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, "one of the most interesting books that has

(sic) ever been written," and that he was struck by the resemblance of his own character to that of Montoni;[40] but his literary debt to Mrs. Radcliffe is comparatively insignificant. His depredations on German literature are much more serious and extensive. Lewis, indeed, is one of the Dick Turpins of fiction and seizes his booty where he will in a high-handed and somewhat unscrupulous fashion, but for many of Mrs. Radcliffe's treasures he could find no use. Her picturesque backgrounds, her ingenious explanations of the uncanny, her uneventful interludes and long deferred but happy endings were outside his province. The moments in her novels which Lewis admired and strove to emulate were those during which the reader with quickened pulse breathlessly awaits some startling development. Of these moments, there are, it must be frankly owned, few in Mrs. Radcliffe's novels. Lewis's mistake lay in trying to induce a more rapid palpitation, and to prolong it almost uninterruptedly throughout his novel. By attempting a physical and mental impossibility he courts disaster. Mrs. Radcliffe's skeletons are decently concealed in the family cupboard, Lewis's stalk abroad in shameless publicity. In Mrs. Radcliffe's stories, the shadow fades and disappears just when we think we are close upon the substance; for, after we have long been groping in the twilight of fearful imaginings, she suddenly jerks back the shutter to admit the clear light of reason. In Lewis's wonder-world there are no elusive shadows; he hurls us without preparation or

initiation into a daylight orgy of horrors.

Lewis was educated at Westminster and Christ Church, but a year spent in Weimar (1792-3), where he zealously studied German, and incidentally, met Goethe, seems to have left more obvious marks on his literary career. To Lewis, Goethe is pre-eminently the author of *The Sorrows of Werther*; and Schiller, he remarks casually, "has, written several other plays besides *The Robbers."*[41] He probably read Heinse's *Ardinghello*(1787), Tieck's *Abdallah* (1792-3), and *William Lovell* (1794-6), many of the innumerable dramas of Kotzebue, the romances of Weit Weber, and other specimens of what Carlyle describes as "the bowl and dagger department," where

> "Black Forests and Lubberland, sensuality and horror, the spectre nun and the charmed moonshine, shall not be wanting. Boisterous outlaws also, with huge whiskers, and the most cat o' mountain aspect; tear-stained sentimentalists, the grimmest man-eaters, ghosts and the like suspicious characters will be found in abundance."[42]

Throughout his life he seems to have made a hobby of the literature that arouses violent emotion and mental excitement, or lacerates the nerves, or shocks and startles. The lifelike and the natural are not powerful enough for his taste, though some of his *Romantic Tales*(1808), such as *My Uncle's Garret Window*, are uncommonly tame. Like the painter of a

hoarding who must at all costs arrest attention, he magnifies, exaggerates and distorts. Once when rebuked for introducing black guards into a country where they did not exist, he is said to have declared that he would have made them sky-blue if he thought they would produce any more effect.[43] Referring to *The Monk*, he confesses: "Unluckily, in working it up, I thought that the stronger my colours, the more effect would my picture produce."[44]

One of his early attempts at fiction was a romance which he later converted into his popular drama, *The Castle Spectre*. This play was staged in 1798, and was reconverted by Miss Sarah Wilkinson in 1820 into a romance. Lewis spreads his banquet with a lavish hand, and crudities and absurdities abound, but he has a knack of choosing situations well adapted for stage effect. The play, aptly described by Coleridge as a "peccant thing of Noise, Froth and Impermanence,"[45] would offer a happy hunting ground to those who delight in the pursuit of "parallel passages." At the age of twenty, during his residence at the Hague as *attaché* to the British embassy, in the summer of 1794, he composed in ten weeks, his notorious romance, *The Monk*. On its publication in 1795 it was attacked on the grounds of profanity and indecency.

The Monk, despite its cleverness, is essentially immature, yet it is not a childish work. It is much less youthful, for instance, than Shelley's *Zastrozzi*

and *St. Irvyne*. The inflamed imagination, the violent exaggeration of emotion and of character, the jeering cynicism and lack of tolerance, the incoherent formlessness, are all indications of adolescence. In *The Monk* there are two distinct stories, loosely related. The story of Raymond and Agnes, into which the legends of the bleeding nun and Wandering Jew are woven with considerable skill, was published more than once as a detached and separate work. It is concerned with the fate of two unhappy lovers, who are parted by the tyranny of their parents and of the church, and who endure manifold agonies. The physical torture of Agnes is described in revolting detail, for Lewis has no scruple in carrying the ugly far beyond the limits within which it is artistic. The happy ending of their harrowing story is incredible. By making Ambrosio, on the verge of his hideous crimes, harshly condemn Agnes for a sin of the same nature as that which he is about to commit, Lewis forges a link between the two stories. But the connection is superficial, and the novel suffers through the distraction of our interest. In the story of Ambrosio, Antonia plays no part in her own downfall. She is as helpless as a plaster statue demolished by an earthquake. The figure of Matilda has more vitality, though Lewis changes his mind about her character during the course of the book, and fails to make her early history consistent with the ending of his story. She is certainly not in league with the devil, when, in a passionate soliloquy, she cries to Ambrosio, whom she believes to be asleep:

"The time will come when you will be convinced that my passion is pure and disinterested. Then you will pity me and feel the whole weight of my sorrows." But when the devil appears, he declares to Ambrosio:

> "I saw that you were virtuous from vanity, not principle, and I seized the fit moment for your seduction. I observed your blind idolatry of the Madonna's picture. I bade a subordinate but crafty spirit assume a similar form, and you eagerly yielded to the blandishments of Matilda."

The discrepancy is obvious, but this blemish is immaterial, for the whole story is unnatural. The deterioration in Ambrosio's character—though Lewis uses all his energy in striving to make it appear probable by discussing the effect of environment—is too swift.

Lewis is at his best when he lets his youthful, high spirits have full play. His boyish exaggeration makes Leonella, Antonia's aunt, seem like a pantomime character, who has inadvertently stepped into a melodrama, but the caricature is amusing by its very crudity. She writes in red ink to express "the blushes of her cheek," when she sends a message of encouragement to the Conde d'Ossori. This and other puerile jests are more tolerable than Lewis's attempts to depict passion or describe character. Bold, flaunting splashes of colour, strongly marked, passionate faces, exaggerated gestures start from

every page, and his style is as extravagant as his imagery. Sometimes he uses a short, staccato sentence to enforce his point, but more often we are engulfed in a swirling welter of words. He delights in the declamatory language of the stage, and all his characters speak as if they were behind the footlights, shouting to the gallery.

A cold-blooded reviewer, in whom the detective instinct was strong, indicated the sources of *The Monk* so mercilessly, that Lewis appears in his critique[46] rather as the perpetrator of a series of ingenious thefts than as the creator of a novel:

> "The outline of the Monk Ambrosio's story was suggested by that of the Santon Barissa [Barsisa] in the *Guardian*:[47] the form of temptation is borrowed from *The Devil in Love* of Canzotte [Cazotte], and the catastrophe is taken from *The Sorcerer*. The adventures of Raymond and Agnes are less obviously imitations, yet the forest scene near Strasburg brings to mind an incident in Smollett's *Count Fathom*; the bleeding nun is described by the author as a popular tale of the Germans,[48] and the convent prison resembles the inflictions of Mrs. Radcliffe."

The industrious reviewer overlooks the legend of the Wandering Jew, which might have been added to the list of Lewis's "borrowings." It must be admitted that Lewis transforms, or at least remodels, what he

borrows. Addison's story relates how a sage of reputed sanctity seduces and slays a maiden brought to him for cure, and later sells his soul. Lewis abandons the Oriental setting, converts the santon into a monk and embroiders the story according to his fancy. Scott alludes to a Scottish version of what is evidently a widespread legend.[49] The resemblance of the catastrophe—presumably the appearance of Satan in the form of Lucifer—to the scene in Mickle's *Sorcerer*, which was published among Lewis's *Tales of Wonder* (1801), is vague enough to be accidental. There are blue flames and sorcery, and an apparition in both, but that is all the two scenes have in common. The tyrannical abbess may be a heritage from *The Romance of the Forest*, but, if so she is exaggerated almost beyond recognition.

In fashioning as the villain of her latest novel, *The Italian*, a monk, whose birth is wrapt in obscurity, Mrs. Radcliffe may have been influenced by Lewis's *Monk* which had appeared two years before. Both Schedoni and Ambrosio are reputed saints, both are plunged into the blackest guilt, and both are victims of the Inquisition. Mrs. Radcliffe, it is true, recoils from introducing the enemy of mankind, but, before the secrets are finally revealed, we almost suspect Schedoni of having dabbled in the Black Arts, and his actual crime falls short of our expectations. The "explained supernatural" plays a less prominent part in *The Italian* than in the previous novels, and Mrs.

Radcliffe relies for her effect rather on sheer terror. The dramatic scene where Schedoni stealthily approaches the sleeping Ellena at midnight recalls the more highly coloured, but less impressive scene in Antonia's bedchamber. The fate of Bianchi, Ellena's aunt, is strangely reminiscent of that of Elvira, Antonia's mother. The convent scenes and the overbearing abbess had been introduced into Mrs. Radcliffe's earlier novels; but in *The Italian*, the anti-Roman feeling is more strongly emphasised than usual. This may or may not have been due to the influence of Lewis. There is no direct evidence that Mrs. Radcliffe had read *The Monk*, but the book was so notorious that a fellow novelist would be almost certain to explore its pages. Hoffmann's romance, *Elixir des Teufels* (1816), is manifestly written under its inspiration. Coincidence could not account for the remarkable resemblances to incidents in the story of Ambrosio.

The far-famed collection of *Tales of Terror* appeared in 1799, *The Tales of Wonder* in 1801. The rest of Lewis's work consists mainly of translations and adaptations from the German. He revelled in the horrific school of melodrama. He delighted in the kind of German romance parodied by Meredith in *Farina*, where Aunt Lisbeth tells Margarita of spectres, smelling of murder and the charnel-breath of midnight, who "uttered noises that wintered the blood and revealed sights that stiffened hair three feet long; ay, and kept it stiff." *The Bravo of Venice*

(1805) is a translation of Zschokke's *Abellino, der Grosse Bandit*, but Lewis invented a superfluous character, Monaldeschi, Rosabella's destined bridegroom, apparently with the object that Abellino might slay him early in the story—and added a concluding chapter. At the outset of the story, Rosalvo, a man after Lewis's own heart, declares:

"To astonish is my destiny: Rosalvo knows no medium: Rosalvo can never act like common men," and thereupon proceeds to prove by his extraordinary actions that this is no idle vaunt. He lives a double life: in the guise of Abellino, he joins the banditti, and by inexplicable methods rids Venice of her enemies; in the guise of a noble Florentine, Flodoardo, he woos the Doge's daughter, Rosabella. The climax of the story is reached when Flodoardo, under oath to deliver up the bandit Abellino, appears before the Doge at the appointed hour and reveals his double identity. He is hailed as the saviour of Hungary, and wins Rosabella as his bride. In the second edition of *The Bravo of Venice*, a romance in four volumes by M. G. Lewis, *Legends of the Nunnery*, is announced as in the press. There seems to be no record of it elsewhere. *Feudal Tyrants* (1806), a long romance from the German, connected with the story of William Tell, consists of a series of memoirs loosely strung together, in which the most alarming episode is the apparition of the pale spectre of an aged monk. In *Blanche and Osbright, or Mistrust* (1808),[50] which is not avowedly a translation,

Lewis depicts an even more revolting portrait than that of Abellino in his bravo's disguise. He adds detail after detail without considering the final effect on the eye:

> "Every muscle in his gigantic form seemed convulsed by some horrible sensation; the deepest gloom darkened every feature; the wind from the unclosed window agitated his raven locks, and every hair appeared to writhe itself. His eyeballs glared, his teeth chattered, his lips trembled; and yet a smile of satisfied vengeance played horribly around them. His complexion seemed suddenly to be changed to the dark tincture of an African; the expression of his countenance was dreadful, was diabolical. Magdalena, as she gazed upon his face, thought that she gazed upon a demon."

Here, to quote the Lady Hysterica Belamour, we have surely the "horrid, horrible, horridest horror." But in *Königsmark the Robber, or The Terror of Bohemia* (1818), Lewis's caste includes an enormous yellow-eyed spider, a wolf who changes into a peasant and disappears amid a cloud of sulphur, and a ghost who sheds three ominous drops of boiling blood. It was probably such stories as this that Peacock had in mind when he declared, through Mr. Flosky, that the devil had become "too base and popular" for the surfeited appetite of readers of fiction. Yet, as Carlyle once exclaimed of the German terror-drama, as exemplified in Kotzebue, Grillparzer

and Klingemann, whose stock-in-trade is similar to that of Lewis: "If any man wish to amuse himself irrationally, here is the ware for his money."[51] Byron, who had himself attempted in *Oscar and Alva* (*Hours of Idleness*, 1807) a ballad in the manner of Lewis, describes with irony the triumphs of terror:

"Oh! wonderworking Lewis! Monk or Bard,
Who fain would make Parnassus a churchyard!
Lo! wreaths of yew, not laurel, bind thy brow,
Thy muse a sprite, Apollo's sexton thou;
Whether on ancient tombs thou tak'st thy stand,
By gibbering spectres hailed, thy kindred band;
Or tracest chaste descriptions on thy page
To please the females of our modest age;
All hail, M.P., from whose infernal brain
Thin-sheeted phantoms glide, a grisly train;
At whose command 'grim women' throng in crowds
And kings of fire, of water, and of clouds
With small grey men—wild yagers and what not,
To crown with honour thee and Walter Scott;
Again, all hail! if tales like thine may please,
St. Luke alone can vanquish the disease.
Even Satan's self with thee might dread to dwell,
And in thy skull discern a deeper hell!"[52]

Scott's delightfully discursive review of *The Fatal Revenge or The Family of Montorio* (1810), not only forms a fitting introduction to the romances of Maturin, but presents a lively sketch of the fashionable reading of the day. It has been insinuated that the *Quarterly Review* was too heavy

and serious, that it contained, to quote Scott's own words, "none of those light and airy articles which a young lady might read while her hair was papering." To redeem the reputation of the journal, Scott gallantly undertook to review some of the "flitting and evanescent productions of the times." After a laborious inspection of the contents of a hamper full of novels, he arrived at the painful conclusion that "spirits and patience may be as completely exhausted in perusing trifles as in following algebraical calculations." He condemns the authors of the Gothic romance, not for their extravagance, a venial offence, but for their monotony, a deadly sin.

> "We strolled through a variety of castles, each of which was regularly called Il Castello; met with as many captains of condottieri, heard various ejaculations of Santa Maria and Diabolo; read by a decaying lamp and in a tapestried chamber dozens of legends as stupid as the main history; examined such suites of deserted apartments as might set up a reasonable barrack, and saw as many glimmering lights as would make a respectable illumination." It was no easy task to bore Sir Walter Scott, and an excursion into the byeways of early nineteenth century fiction proves abundantly the justice of his satire. Such novelists as Miss Sarah Wilkinson or Mrs. Eliza Parsons, whose works were greedily devoured by circulating library readers a

> hundred years ago, deliberately concocted an unappetising gallimaufry of earlier stories and practised the harmless deception of serving their insipid dishes under new and imposing names. A writer in the *Annual Review*, so early as 1802, complains in criticising *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry*:
>
> "It is not one of the least objections against these fashionable fictions that the imagery of them is essentially monstrous. Hollow winds, clay-cold hands, clanking chains and clicking clocks, with a few similar etcetera are continually tormenting us."

Tales of terror were often issued in the form of sixpenny chapbooks, enlivened by woodcuts daubed in yellow, blue, red and green. Embellished with these aids to the imagination, they were sold in thousands. To the readers of a century ago, a "blue book" meant, as Medwin explains in his life of Shelley, not a pamphlet filled with statistics, but "a sixpenny shocker."[53] The notorious Minerva Press catered for wealthier patrons, and, it is said, sold two thousand copies of Mrs. Bennett's *Beggar Girl and her Benefactors* on the day of publication, at thirty-six shillings for the seven volumes. Samuel Rogers recalled Lane, the head of the firm, riding in a carriage and pair with two footmen, wearing gold cockades.[54] Scott was careful not to disclose the names of the novelists he derided, but his hamper probably contained a selection of Mrs. Parsons' sixty

works, and perhaps two of Miss Wilkinson's, with their alluring titles, *The Priory of St. Clair, or The Spectre of the Murdered Nun*; *The Convent of the Grey Penitents, or The Apostate Nun*. Perchance, he found there Mrs. Henrietta Rouvière's romance, (published in the same year as *Montorio*,) *A Peep at our Ancestors* (1807), describing the reign of King Stephen. Mrs. Rouvière, in her preface,

> "flatters herself that, aided by records and documents, she may have succeeded in a correct though faint sketch of the times she treats, and in affording, if through a dim yet not distorted nor discoloured glass, A Peep at our Ancestors";

but her story is entirely devoid of the colour with which Mrs. Radcliffe, her model, contrived to decorate the past. It is, moreover, written in a style so opaque that it obscures her images from view as effectually as a piece of ground glass. To describe the approach of twilight—an hour beloved by writers of romance—she attempts a turgid paraphrase of Gray's Elegy:

> "The grey shades of an autumnal evening gradually stole over the horizon, progressively throwing a duskier hue on the surrounding objects till glimmering confusion encompassing the earth shut from the accustomed eye the well-known view, leaving conjecture to mark its boundaries."

The adventures of Adelaide and her lover, Walter of Gloucester, are so insufferably tedious that Scott doubtless decided to "leave to conjecture" their interminable vicissitudes. The names of other novels, whose pages he may impatiently have scanned, may be garnered by those who will, from such works as *Living Authors* (1817), or from the four volumes of Watts' elaborate compilation, the *Bibliotheca Britannica* (1824). The titles are, indeed, lighter and more entertaining reading than the books themselves. Anyone might reasonably expect to read *Midnight Horrors, or The Bandit's Daughter*, as Henry Tilney vows he read *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, with "hair on end all the time"; but the actual story, notwithstanding a wandering ball of fire, that acts as guide through the labyrinths of a Gothic castle, is conducive of sleep rather than shudders. The notoriety of Lewis's monk may be estimated by the procession of monks who followed in his train. There were, to select a few names at random, *The New Monk*, by one R.S., Esq.; *The Monk of Madrid*, by George Moore (1802); *The Bloody Monk of Udolpho*, by T.J. Horsley Curties; *Manfroni, the One-handed Monk*, whose history was borrowed, together with those of Abellino, the terrific bravo, and Rinaldo Rinaldini,[55] by "J.J." from Miss Flinders' library; [56] and lastly, as a counter-picture, a monk without a scowl, *The Benevolent Monk*, by Theodore Melville (1807). The nuns, including "Rosa Matilda's" *Nun of St. Omer's*, Miss Sophia Francis's *Nun of Misericordia* (1807) and Miss Wilkinson's *Apostate Nun*, would

have sufficed to people a convent. Perhaps *The Convent of the Grey Penitents* would have been a suitable abode for them; but most of them were, to quote Crabbe, "girls no nunnery can tame." Lewis's Venetian bravo was boldly transported to other climes. We find him in Scotland in *The Mysterious Bravo*, or *The Shrine of St. Alstice, A Caledonian Legend*, and in Austria in *The Bravo of Bohemia or The Black Forest*. No country is safe from the raids of banditti. *The Caledonian Banditti* or *The Banditti of the Forest*, or *The Bandit of Florence*—all very much alike in their manners and morals—make the heroine's journey a perilous enterprise. The romances of Mrs. Radcliffe were rifled unscrupulously by the snappers-up of unconsidered trifles, and many of the titles are variations on hers. In emulation of *The Romance of the Forest* we find George Walker's *Romance of the Cavern* (1792) and Miss Eleanor Sleath's *Mysteries of the Forest*. Novelists appreciated the magnetic charm of the word "mystery" on a title-page, and after *The Mysteries of Udolpho* we find such seductive names as *Mysterious Warnings* and *Mysterious Visits*, by Mrs. Parsons; *Horrid Mysteries*, translated from the German of the Marquis von Grosse, by R. Will (1796); *The Mystery of the Black Tower* and *The Mystic Sepulchre*, by John Palmer, a schoolmaster of Bath; *The Mysterious Wanderer* (1807), by Miss Sophia Reeve; *The Mysterious Hand or Subterranean Horrors* (1811), by A.J. Randolph; and *The Mysterious Freebooter* (1805), by Francis Lathom. Castles and abbeys were so persistently haunted that Mrs. Rachel

Hunter, a severely moral writer, advertises one of her stories as *Letitia: A Castle Without a Spectre*. Mystery slips, almost unawares, into the domestic story. There are, for instance, vague hints of it in Charlotte Smith's *Old Manor House* (1793). The author of *The Ghost* and of *More Ghosts* adopts the pleasing pseudonym of Felix Phantom. The gloom of night broods over many of the stories, for we know:

> "affairs that walk,
> As they say spirits do, at midnight, have
> In them a wilder nature than the business
> That seeks despatch by day,"

and we are confronted with titles like *Midnight Weddings*, by Mrs. Meeke, one of Macaulay's favourite "bad-novel writers," *The Midnight Bell*, awakening memories of Duncan's murder, by George Walker, or *The Nocturnal Minstrel* (1809), by Miss Sleath. These "dismal treatises" abound in reminiscences of Mrs. Radcliffe and of "Monk" Lewis, and many of them hark back as far as *The Castle of Otranto* for some of their situations. The novels of Miss Wilkinson may perhaps serve as well as those of any of her contemporaries to show that Scott was not unduly harsh in his condemnation of the romances fashionable in the first decade of the nineteenth century, when "tales of terror jostle on the road."[57] The sleeping potion, a boon to those who weave the intricate pattern of a Gothic romance, is one of Miss Wilkinson's favourite devices, and is employed in at least three of her stories. In *The Chateau de Montville*

(1803) it is administered to the amiable Louisa to aid Augustine in his sinister designs, but she ultimately escapes, and is wedded by Octavius, who has previously been borne off by a party of pirates. He "finds the past unfortunate vicissitudes of his life amply recompensed by her love." In *The Convent of the Grey Penitents*, Rosalthe happily avoids the opiate, as she overhears the plans of her unscrupulous husband, who, it seems, has "an unquenchable thirst of avarice," and desires to win a wealthier bride. She flees to a "cottage ornée" on Finchley Common, the home, it may be remembered, of Thackeray's Washerwoman; and the thrills we expect from a novel of terror are reserved for the second volume, and arise out of the adventures of the next generation. After Rosalthe's death, spectres, blue flames, corpses, thunderstorms and hairbreadth escapes are set forth in generous profusion.

In *The Priory of St. Clair* (1811), Julietta, who has been forced into a convent against her will, like so many other heroines, is drugged and conveyed as a corpse to the Count de Valvé's Gothic castle. She comes to life only to be slain before the high altar, and revenges herself after death by haunting the count regularly every night. *The Fugitive Countess or Convent of St. Ursula* (1807) contains three spicy ingredients—a mock burial, a concealed wife and a mouldering manuscript. The social status of Miss Wilkinson's characters is invariably lofty, for no self-respecting ghost ever troubles the middle classes;

and her manner is as ambitious as her matter. Her personages, in *Lopez and Aranthe*, behave and talk thus:

"Heavenly powers!" exclaimed Aranthe, "it is Dorimont, or else my eyes deceive me!" Overpowered with surprise and almost breathless, she sunk on the carpet. Lopez stood aghast, his countenance was of a deadly pale, a glass of wine he had in his hand he let fall to the floor, while he articulated: "What an alteration in that once beauteous countenance!"

Miss Wilkinson's sentences stagger and lurch uncertainly, but she delights in similes and other ornaments of style:

> "Adeline Barnett was fair as a lily, tall as the pine, her fine dark eyes sparkling as diamonds, and she moved with the majestic air of a goddess, but pride and ambition appeared on the brow of this famed maiden, and destroying the effect of her charms."

She is, in fact, more addicted to "gramarye" than to "grammar"—the fault with which Byron, in a note to *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, charged the hero and heroine of Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel*. Her heroes do not merely love, they are "enamoured to a romantic degree." Her arbours are "composed of jasmine, white rose, and other odoriferous sweets of Flora." She sprinkles French phrases with an airy nonchalance worthy of the Lady Hysterica Belamour,

whose memoirs are included in Barrett's *Heroine*. Her duchesses "figure away with *éclat*"—"a party *quarrie* assemble at their *dejeune*." It is noteworthy that by 1820 even Miss Wilkinson had learnt to despise the spectres in whom she had gloried during her amazing career. In *The Spectre of Lanmere Abbey* (1820) the ghost is ignominiously exposed, and proved to be "a tall figure dressed in white, and a long, transparent veil flowing over her whole figure," while the heroine Amelia speaks almost in the accents of Catherine Morland:

> "My governess has been affirming that there are Gothic buildings without spectres or legends of a ghostly nature attached to them; now, what is a castle or abbey worth without such appendage?; do tell me candidly, are none of the turrets of your old family mansion in Monmouth rendered thus terrific by some unquiet, wandering spirit?, dare the peasantry pass it after twilight, or if they are forced into that temerity, do not their teeth chatter, their hair stand erect and their poor knees knock together?"

That Miss Wilkinson, who, for twenty years, had conscientiously striven to chill her readers' blood, should be compelled at last to turn round and gibe at her own spectres, reveals into what a piteous plight the novel of terror had fallen. When even the enchantress disavowed her belief in them, the ghosts must surely have fled shrieking and affrighted and

thought never more to raise their diminished heads.

From a medley of novels, similar to those of Miss Wilkinson, Scott singled out for commendation *The Fatal Revenge or The Family of Montorio*, by "Jasper Denis Murphy," or the Rev. Charles Robert Maturin. Amid the chaos of horror into which Maturin hurls his readers, Scott shrewdly discerned the spirit and animation which, though often misdirected, pervade his whole work. The story is but a grotesque distortion of life, yet Scott found himself "insensibly involved in the perusal and at times impressed with no common degree of respect for the powers of the author." His generous estimate of Maturin's gifts and his prediction of future success is the more impressive, because *The Fatal Revenge* undeniably belongs to the very class of novels he was ridiculing.

Maturin was an eccentric Irish clergyman, who diverted himself by weaving romances and constructing tragedies. He loved to mingle with the gay and frivolous; he affected foppish attire, and prided himself on his exceptional skill in dancing. His indulgence in literary work was probably but another expression of his longing to escape from the strait and narrow way prescribed for a Protestant clergyman. Wild anecdotes are told of his idiosyncrasies.[58] He preferred to compose his stories in a room full of people, and he found a noisy argument especially invigorating. To prevent himself from taking part in the conversation, he used to cover his mouth with paste composed of flour and

water. Sometimes, we are told, he would wear a red wafer upon his brow, as a signal that he was enduring the throes of literary composition and expected forbearance and consideration. It is said that he once missed preferment in the church because he absentmindedly interviewed his prospective vicar with his head bristling with quills like a porcupine. He is said to have insisted on his wife's using rouge though she had naturally a high colour, and to have gone fishing in a resplendent blue coat and silk stockings. Such was the flamboyant personality of the man whose first novel attracted the kindly attention of Scott. His oddities, which would have rejoiced the heart of Dickens, are not without significance in a study of his literary work, for his love of emphasis and exaggeration are reflected in both the substance and style of his novels.

Maturin's writings fall into three periods. Of his three early novels, *The Fatal Revenge or The Family of Montorio* (1807), *The Wild Irish Boy* (1808) and *The Milesian Chief* (1812), the first only is a tale of horror. *The Wild Irish Boy* is a domestic story, and forms a suitable companion for Lady Morgan's *Wild Irish Girl*. *The Milesian Chief* is a historical novel, and is now chiefly remembered on account of the likeness of the opening chapters to Scott's *Bride of Lammermoor* (1819). After the publication of these novels, Maturin turned his attention to the stage. His first tragedy, *Bertram* (1816), received the

encouragement of Scott and Byron. The character of Bertram is modelled on that of Schiller's robber-chief, Karl von Moor, who captivated the imagination of Coleridge himself, and who is reflected in *Osorio* and perhaps in Mrs. Radcliffe's villains. The action of the melodrama moves swiftly, and abounds in the "moving situations" Maturin loved to handle. *Bertram* was succeeded in 1817 by *Manuel*, and in 1819 by *Fredolfo*. Meanwhile Maturin had returned to novel-writing. *Women, or Pour et Contre*, with its lifelike sketches of Puritanical society and clever characterisation, appeared in 1818, and was favourably reviewed by Scott.[59] *Melmoth the Wanderer*, Maturin's masterpiece, was published in 1820, and was succeeded in 1824 by his last work, *The Albigenses*, a historical romance, following Scott's design rather than that of Mrs. Radcliffe.

In reviewing *The Family of Montorio*, Scott prudently attempted only a brief survey of the plot, and forsook Maturin's sequence of events. In his sketch the outline of the story is comparatively clear. In the novel itself we wander, bewildered, baffled and distracted through labyrinthine mazes. No Ariadne awaits on the threshold with the magic ball of twine to guide us through the complicated windings. We stumble along blind alleys desperately retracing our weary steps, and, after stumbling alone and unaided to the very end, reach the darkly concealed clue when it has ceased to be either of use or of interest to us. Many an adventurer must have

lain down, dispirited and exhausted, without ever reaching his distant and elusive goal. Disentangled and simplified almost beyond recognition, the story runs thus: In 1670, Count Orazio and his younger brother are the sole representatives of the family of Montorio. Orazio has married Erminia di Vivaldi, whom he loves devotedly. She does not return his love. The younger brother determines to take advantage of this circumstance to gain the title and estates for himself, and succeeds in arousing Orazio's jealousy against a young officer, Verdoni, to whom Erminia had formerly been deeply attached. In a violent passion Orazio slays Verdoni before the eyes of Erminia, who falls dead at his feet. This part of his design accomplished, the younger brother plots to murder Orazio himself, who, however, discovers the innocence of his wife and the hideous perfidy of his brother. Temporarily bereft of reason, Orazio sojourns alone on a desert island. When his senses are restored, he resolves to devote the rest of his life to vengeance. For fifteen years he buries himself in occult studies, and when his diabolical schemes have matured, returns, disguised as the monk Schemoli, to the scene of the murder. He becomes confessor to his brother, who has assumed the title and estates. It is his intention to compel the Count's sons, Annibal and Ippolito, to murder their father. Death at the hands of parricides seems to him the only appropriate catastrophe for the Count's career of infamy. To reconcile the two victims—Annibal and Ippolito—to their task, he "relies mainly on the doctrine of

fatalism." The most complex and ingenious "machinery" is used to work upon their superstitious feelings. No device is too tortuous if it aid his purpose. Even the pressure of the Inquisition is brought to bear on one of the brothers. Each, after protracted agony, submits to his destiny, and the swords of the two brothers meet in the Count's body. When the murder is safely accomplished, it is proved that Annibal and Ippolito are the sons, not of the Count, but of Schemoli and Erminia. By the irony of fate the knowledge comes too late for Schemoli to save his children from the crime. At the close of a lengthy trial the two brothers are released, but deprived of their lands. Ultimately they die fighting in the siege of Barcelona. Schemoli perishes, in the approved Gothic manner, by self-administered poison. Intertwined with the main theme of Schemoli's fatal revenge are the love-stories of the two brothers. Rosolia, a nun, who seems to have been acquainted with Shakespeare's comedies, disguises herself as a page, and devotes her life to the service of Ippolito and to the composition of sentimental verses. She only reveals her sex just before her death, though we have guessed it from her first appearance. Ildefonsa, who is beloved of Annibal, has been forced into a convent against her will—a fate almost inevitable in the realm of Gothic romance. When letters are received authorising her release from the vows, a pitiless mother-superior reports that she is dead. She is immured, but an earthquake sets her free, for Maturin will move

heaven and earth to effect his purposes. The ill-fated maiden dies shortly afterwards. Ere the close it proves that Ildefonsa was the daughter of Erminia, who had been secretly married to Verdoni before her union with Orazio. Such is the skeleton of Maturin's story, when its scattered members have been patiently collected and fitted together. The impressive figure of Schemoli, with his unholy power of fascinating his reluctant accomplices, lends to the book the only sort of unity it possesses. But even he fails to arouse a sense of fear strong enough to fix our attention to so wandering a story. Like the doomed brothers, we drift dejectedly through inexplicable terrors, and we re-echo with fervour Annibal's dolorous cry:

> "Why should I be shut up in this house of horrors to deal with spirits and damned things and the secrets of the infernal world while there are so many paths open to pleasure, the varieties of human intercourse and the enjoyment of life?"

Maturin, a disciple of Mrs. Radcliffe, feels it his duty to explain away the apparently miraculous incidents in his story, but he lacks the persevering ingenuity that partly compensates for her frauds. On a single page he calmly discloses secrets which have harassed us for four volumes, and his long-deferred explanations are paltry and incredible. The bleeding figures that wrought so painfully on the sensitive nerves of Ippolito are merely waxen images that

spout blood automatically. Disappearances and reappearances, which seemed supernatural, are simply effected by private exits and entrances. Other startling phenomena are accounted for in the same trivial fashion.

Maturin seems to have crowded into his story nearly every character and incident that had been employed in earlier Gothic romances. Schemoli is a remarkably faithful portrait of Mrs. Radcliffe's Schedoni. From beneath his cowl flash the piercing eyes, whose very glance will daunt the bravest heart; his sallow visage is furrowed with the traces of bygone passions; he shuns society, and is dreaded by his associates. The oppressed maiden, driven into a nunnery, drugged and immured, the ambitious countess, the devoted, loquacious servant, the inhuman abbess—all play their accustomed parts. The background shifts from the robber's den to the ruined chapel, from the castle vault to the dungeon of the Inquisition, each scene being admirably suited to the situation contrived, or the emotion displayed. Maturin had accurately inspected the passages and trap-doors of Otranto. No item, not a rusty lock, not a creaking hinge, had escaped his vigilant eye. He knew intimately every nook and cranny of Mrs. Radcliffe's Gothic abbeys. He had viewed with trepidation their blood-stained floors, their skeletons and corpses, and had carefully calculated the psychological effect of these properties. He had gazed with starting eye on the lurid horrors of

"Monk" Lewis, and had carried away impressions so distinct that he, perhaps unwittingly, transferred them to the pages of his own story. But Maturin's reading was not strictly confined to the school of terror. He had studied Shakespeare's tragedies, and these may have suggested to him the idea of enhancing the interest of his story by dissecting human motive and describing passionate feeling. In depicting the remorse of the count and his wife Zenobia, who had committed a murder to gratify their ambition, and who are tormented by ugly dreams, Maturin inevitably draws from *Macbeth*. Zenobia, the stronger character, reviles her husband for indulging in sickly fancies and strives to embolden him:

"Like a child you run from a mask you have yourself painted."

He replies in a free paraphrase of *Hamlet*:

"It is this cursed domestic sensibility of guilt that makes
cowards
of us all."

Maturin is distinguished from the incompetent horde of romance-writers, whom Scott condemned, by the powerful eloquence of his style and by his ability to analyse emotion, to write as if he himself were swayed by the feeling he describes. His insane extravagances have at least the virtue that they come

flaming hot from an excited imagination. The passage quoted by Scott—Orazio's attempt to depict his state of mind after he had heard of his brother's perfidy—may serve to illustrate the force and vigour of his language:

> "Oh! that midnight darkness of the soul in which it seeks for something whose loss has carried away every sense but one of utter and desolate deprivation; in which it traverses leagues in motion and worlds in thought without consciousness of relief, yet with a dread of pausing. I had nothing to seek, nothing to recover; the whole world could not restore me an atom, could not show me again a glimpse of what I had been or lost, yet I rushed on as if the next step would reach shelter and peace."

Melmoth the Wanderer has found many admirers. It fascinated Rossetti,[60] Thackeray[61] and Miss Mitford.[62] It was praised by Balzac, who wrote a satirical sequel—*Melmoth Reconcilié à L'Eglise* (1835), and by Baudelaire, and exercised a considerable influence on French literature.[63] It consists of a series of tales, strung together in a complicated fashion. In each tale the Wanderer, who has bartered his soul in return for prolonged life, may, if he can, persuade someone to take the bargain off his hands.[64] He visits those who are plunged in despair. His approach is heralded by strange music, and his eyes have a preternatural lustre that terrifies his victims.

No one will agree to his "incommunicable condition."

The bird's-eye view of an Edinburgh Reviewer who described *Melmoth* as "the sacrifice of Genius in the Temple of False Taste," will give some idea of the bewildering variety of its contents:

> "His hero is a modern Faustus, who has bartered his soul with the powers of darkness for protracted life and unlimited worldly enjoyment; his heroine, a species of insular goddess, a virgin Calypso of the Indian Ocean, who, amid flowers and foliage, lives upon figs and tamarinds, associates with peacocks and monkeys, is worshipped by the occasional visitants of her island, finds her way into Spain where she is married to the aforesaid hero by the hand of a dead hermit, the ghost of a murdered domestic being the witness of her nuptials; and finally dies in a dungeon of the Inquisition at Madrid. To complete this phantasmagoric exhibition, we are presented with sybils and misers, parricides, maniacs in abundance, monks with scourges pursuing a naked youth streaming with blood; subterranean Jews surrounded by the skeletons of their wives and children; lovers blasted by lightning, Irish hags, Spanish grandees, shipwrecks, caverns, Donna Claras and Donna Isidoras—all exposed to each other in violent and glaring contrast and all their adventures narrated with the same

> undeviating display of turgid, vehement, and painfully elaborated language."[65]

This breathless sentence gives some conception of the delirious imagery of Maturin's romance, but the book is worthy of a more respectful, unhurried survey. *Melmoth* shows a distinct advance on *Montorio* in constructive power. Each separate story is perfectly clear and easy to follow, in spite of the elaborate interlacing. The romance opens with the death of a miser in a desolate Irish farmstead, with harpies clustering at his bedside. His nephew and heir, John Melmoth, is adjured to destroy a certain manuscript and a portrait of an ancestor with eyes "such as one feels they wish they had never seen and feels they can never forget." Alone at midnight, John Melmoth reads the manuscript, which is reputed to have been written by Stanton, an English traveller in Spain, about 1676. The document relates a startling story of a mysterious Englishman who appears at a Spanish wedding with disastrous consequences, and reappears before Stanton in a madhouse offering release on dreadful conditions. After reading it, John Melmoth decides to burn the family portrait. He is visited by a sinister form, who proves that he is no figment of the imagination by leaving black and blue marks on his relative's wrist. The next night a ship is wrecked in a storm. The Wanderer appears, and mocks the victims with fiendish mirth. The sole survivor, Don Alonzo Monçada, unfolds his story to John Melmoth. The son of a great duke, he has been

forced to become a monk to save his mother's honour. He dwells with the excruciating detail in which Maturin is inclined to revel, on the horrors of Spanish monasteries. Escaping through a subterranean passage, he is guided by a parricide, who incidentally tells him a loathsome story of two immured lovers. His plan of flight is foiled, and he is borne off to the dungeons of the Inquisition. Here the Wanderer, who has a miraculous power to enter where he will, offers, on the ineffable condition, to procure his freedom. Monçada repudiates the temptation, effects his own escape during a great fire, and catches sight of the stranger on the summit of a burning building. He takes refuge with a Jew, but, to evade the vigilance of the Inquisitors, disappears suddenly down an underground passage, where he finds Adonijah, another Jew, who obligingly employs him as an amanuensis, and sets him to copy a manuscript. This gives Maturin the opportunity, for which he has been waiting, to introduce his "Tale of the Indian." The story of Immalee, who is visited on her desert island by the Wanderer in the guise of a lover as well as a tempter, forms the most memorable part of *Melmoth*. In the other stories the stranger has been a taciturn creature, relying on the lustre of his eyes rather than on his powers of eloquence to win over his victims. To Immalee he pours forth floods of rhetoric on the sins and follies of mankind. Had she not been one of Rousseau's children of nature, and so innocent alike of a knowledge of Shakespeare and of the fault of

impatience, she would surely have exclaimed: "If thou hast news, I prithee deliver them like a man of this world." When Immalee is transported to Spain and reassumes her baptismal name of Isidora, Melmoth follows her and their conversations are continued at dead of night through the lattice. Here they discourse on the real nature of love. At length the gloomy lover persuades Isidora to marry him. Their midnight nuptials take place against a weird background. By a narrow, precipitous path they approach the ruined chapel, and are united by a hand "as cold as that of death." Meanwhile, Don Francisco, Isidora's father, on his way home, spends the night at an inn, where a stranger insists on telling him "The Tale of Guzman." In this tale the tempter visits a father whose family is starving, but who resists the lure of wealth. Maturin portrays with extraordinary power the deterioration in the character of an old man Walberg, through the effects of poverty. At the close of the narration Don Francisco falls into a deep slumber, but is sternly awakened by a stranger with an awful eye, who insists on becoming his fellow traveller, and on telling, in defiance of protests, yet another story. The prologue to the Lover's Tale is almost Chaucerian in its humour:

> "It was with the utmost effort of his mixed politeness and fear that he prepared himself to listen to the tale, which the stranger had frequently amid their miscellaneous

> conversation, alluded to, and showed an evident anxiety to relate. These allusions were attended with unpleasant reminiscences to the hearer—but he saw that it was to be, and armed himself as best he might with courage to hear. 'I would not intrude on you, Senhor,' says the stranger, 'with a narrative in which you can feel but little interest, were I not conscious that its narration may operate as a warning, the most awful, salutary and efficacious to yourself.'"

At this veiled hint Don Francisco discharges a volley of oaths, but he is silenced completely by the smile of the stranger—"that spoke bitterer and darker things than the fiercest frown that ever wrinkled the features of man." After this he cannot choose but hear, and the stranger seizes his opportunity to begin an uncommonly dull story, connected with a Shropshire family and intermingled with historical events. In this tale the Wanderer appears to a girl whose lover has lost his reason, and offers to restore him if she will accept his conditions. Once more the tempter is foiled. The story meanders so sluggishly that our sympathies are with Don Francisco, and we cannot help wishing that he had adopted more drastic measures to quieten the insistent stranger. At the conclusion Francisco mutters indignantly:

> "It is inconceivable to me how this person forces himself on my company, harasses me with tales that have no more application to me

> than the legend of the Cid, and may be as apocryphal as the ballad of Roncesvalles—"

but yet the stranger has not finished. He proceeds to tell him a tale in which he will feel a peculiar interest, that of Isidora, his own daughter, and finally urges him to hasten to her rescue. Don Francisco wanders by easy stages to Madrid, and, on his arrival, marries Isidora against her will to Montilla. Melmoth, according to promise, appears at the wedding. The bridegroom is slain. Isidora, with Melmoth's child, ends her days in the dungeons of the Inquisition, murmuring: "Paradise! will he be there?" So far as one may judge from the close of the story, it seems not.

Monçada and John Melmoth, whom we left, at the beginning of the romance, in Ireland, are revisited by the Wanderer, whose time on earth has at last run out. He confesses his failure: "I have traversed the world in the search, and no one to gain that world, would lose his own soul." His words remind us of the text of the sermon which suggested to Maturin the idea of the romance. Like the companions of Dr. Faustus, Melmoth and Monçada hear terrible sounds from the room of the Wanderer in the last throes of agony. The next morning the room is empty; but, following a track to the sea-cliffs, they see, on a crag beneath, the kerchief the Wanderer had worn about his neck. "Melmoth and Monçada exchanged looks of silent and unutterable horror, and returned slowly home."

This extraordinary romance, like *Montorio*, clearly owes much to the novels of Mrs. Radcliffe, and "Monk" Lewis. Immalee, as her name implies, is but a glorified Emily with a loxia on her shoulder instead of a lute in her hand. The monastic horrors are obviously a heritage from *The Monk*. The Rosicrucian legend, as handled in *St. Leon*, may have offered hints to Maturin, whose treatment is, however, far more imaginative and impressive than that of Godwin. The resemblance to the legend of the Wandering Jew need not be laboured. Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* and the first part of Goethe's *Faust* left their impression on the story. The closing scenes inevitably remind us of the last act of Marlowe's tragedy. 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. *Melmoth* is not an ingenious patchwork of previous stories. It is the outpouring of a morbid imagination that has long brooded on the fearful and the terrific. Imbued with the grandeur and solemnity of his theme, Maturin endeavours to write in dignified, stately language. There are frequent lapses into bombast, but occasionally his rhetoric is splendidly effective:

> "It was now the latter end of autumn; heavy clouds had all day been passing laggingly and gloomily along the atmosphere, as the hours pass over the human mind and life. Not a drop of rain fell; the clouds went portentously off,

> like ships of war reconnoitring a strong fort, to return with added strength and fury."

He takes pleasure in coining unusual, striking phrases, such as: "All colours disappear in the night, and despair has no diary," or "Minutes are hours in the *noctuary* of terror," or "The secret of silence is the only secret. Words are a blasphemy against that taciturn and invisible God whose presence enshrouds us in our last extremity."

Maturin chooses his similes with discrimination, to heighten the effect he aims at producing:

"The locks were so bad and the keys so rusty that it was like the cry of the dead in the house when the keys were turned," or:

> "With all my care, however, the lamp declined, quivered, flashed a pale light, like the smile of despair, on me, and was extinguished … I had watched it like the last beatings of an expiring heart, like the shiverings of a spirit about to depart for eternity."

There are no quiet scenes or motionless figures in *Melmoth*. Everything is intensified, exaggerated, distorted. The very clouds fly rapidly across the sky, and the moon bursts forth with the "sudden and appalling effulgence of lightning." A shower of rain is perhaps "the most violent that was ever precipitated

on the earth." When Melmoth stamps his foot "the reverberation of his steps on the hollow and loosened stones almost contended with the thunder." Maturin's use of words like "callosity," "induration," "defecated," "evanition," and his fondness for italics are other indications of his desire to force an impression by fair means or foul.

The gift of psychological insight that distinguishes *Montorio* reappears in a more highly developed form in *Melmoth the Wanderer*. "Emotions," Maturin declares, "are my events," and he excels in depicting mental as well as physical torture. The monotony of a "timeless day" is suggested with dreary reality in the scene where Monçada and his guide await the approach of night to effect their escape from the monastery. The gradual surrender of resolution before slight, reiterated assaults is cunningly described in the analysis of Isidora's state of mind, when a hateful marriage is forced upon her. Occasionally Maturin astonishes us by the subtlety of his thought:

"While people think it worth while to torment us we are never without some dignity, though painful and imaginary."

It is his faculty for describing intense, passionate feeling, his power of painting wild pictures of horror, his gifts for conveying his thoughts in rolling, rhythmical periods of eloquence, that make *Melmoth* a memory-haunting book. With all his faults Maturin

was the greatest as well as the last of the Goths.

CHAPTER V - THE ORIENTAL TALE OF TERROR. BECKFORD.

Beckford's *History of the Caliph Vathek*, which was written in French, was translated by the Rev. Samuel Henley, who had the temerity to publish the English version—described as a translation from the Arabic—in 1786, before the original had appeared. The French version was published in Lausanne and in Paris in 1787. An interest in Oriental literature had been awakened early in the eighteenth century by Galland's epoch-making versions of *The Arabian Nights* (1704-1717), *The Turkish Tales* (1708) and *The Persian Tales* (1714), which were all translated into English during the reign of Queen Anne. Many of the pseudo-translations of French authors, such as Gueulette, who compiled *The Chinese Tales*, *Mogul Tales*, *Tartarian Tales*, and *Peruvian Tales*, and Jean-Paul Bignon, who presented *The Adventures of Abdallah*, were quickly turned into English; and the Oriental story became so fashionable a form that didactic writers eagerly seized upon it as a disguise for moral or philosophical reflection. The Eastern

background soon lost its glittering splendour and colour, and became a faded, tarnished tapestry, across which shadowy figures with outlandish names and English manners and morals flit to and fro. Addison's *Vision of Mirza* (1711), Johnson's *Rasselas* (1759), and various essays in *The Rambler*, Dr. Hawkesworth's *Almoran and Hamet* (1761), Langhorne's *Solyman and Almena* (1762), Ridley's *Tales of the Genii* (1764), and Mrs. Sheridan's *History of Nourjahad* (1767) were among the best and most popular of the Anglo-Oriental stories that strove to inculcate moral truths. In their oppressive air of gravity, Beckford, with his implacable hatred of bores, could hardly have breathed. One of the most amazing facts about his wild fantasy is that it was the creation of an English brain. The idea of *Vathek* was probably suggested to Beckford by the witty Oriental tales of Count Antony Hamilton and of Voltaire. The character of the caliph, who desired to know everything, even the sciences which did not exist, is sketched in the spirit of the French satirists, who turned Oriental extravagance into delightful mockery. Awed into reverence ere the close by the sombre grandeur of his own conception of the halls of Eblis, Beckford cast off the flippant mood in which he had set out and rose to an exalted solemnity.

Beckford's mind was so richly stored with the jewels of Eastern legend that it was inevitable he should shower from his treasury things new and old, but everything which passes through the alembic of

his imagination is transmuted almost beyond recognition. The episode of the sinners with the flaming hearts has been traced[66] to a scene in the *Mogul Tales*, where Aboul Assam saw three men standing mute in postures of sorrow before a book on which were inscribed the words: "Let no man touch this divine treatise who is not perfectly pure." When Aboul Assam enquired of their fate they unbuttoned their waistcoats, and through their skin, which appeared like crystal, he saw their hearts encompassed with fire. In Beckford's story this grotesque scene assumes an awful and moving dignity. From *The Adventure of Abdallah, Son of Hanif*, Beckford derived the conception of a visit to the regions of Eblis, whom, however, by a wave of his wand, he transforms from a revolting ogre to a stately prince.[67]

To read *Vathek* is like falling asleep in a huge Oriental palace after wandering alone through great, echoing halls resplendent with a gorgeous arras, on which are displayed the adventures of the caliph who built the palaces of the five senses. In our dream the caliph and his courtiers come to life, and we awake dazzled with the memory of a myriad wonders. There throng into our mind a crowd of unearthly forms—aged astrologers, hideous Giaours, gibbering negresses, graceful boys and maidens, restless, pacing figures with their hands on their hearts, and a formidable prince—whose adventures are woven into a fantastic but distinct and definite

pattern around the three central personages, the caliph Vathek, his exquisitely wicked mother Carathis, and the bewitching Nouronihar. The fatal palace of Eblis, with its lofty columns and gloomy towers of an architecture unknown in the annals of the earth, looms darkly in our imagination. Beckford alludes, with satisfaction, to *Vathek* as a "story so horrid that I tremble while relating it, and have not a nerve in my frame but vibrates like an aspen,"[68] and in the *Episodes* leads us with an unhallowed pleasure into other abodes of horror—a temple adorned with pyramids of skulls festooned with human hair, a cave inhabited by reptiles with human faces, and an apartment whose walls were hung with carpets of a thousand kinds and a thousand hues, which moved slowly to and fro as if stirred by human creatures stifling beneath their weight. But Beckford passes swiftly from one mood to another, and was only momentarily fascinated by terror. So infinite is the variety of *Vathek* in scenery and in temper that it seems like its wealthy, eccentric, author secluded in Fonthill Abbey, to dwell apart in defiant, splendid isolation.

It is impossible to understand or appreciate *Vathek* apart from Beckford's life and character, which contain elements almost as grotesque and fantastic as those of his romance. He was no visionary dreamer, content to build his pleasure-domes in air. He revelled in the golden glories of good Haroun-Alraschid,[69] but he craved too for solid treasures

he could touch and handle, for precious jewels, for rare, beautiful volumes, for curious, costly furniture. The scenes of splendour portrayed in *Vathek* were based on tangible reality.[70] Beckford's schemes in later life—his purchase of Gibbon's entire library, his twice-built tower on Lansdown Hill, were as grandiose and ambitious as those of an Eastern caliph. The whimsical, Puckish humour, which helped to counteract the strain of gloomy bitterness in his nature, was early revealed in his *Biographical Memoirs of Extraordinary Painters* and in his burlesques of the sentimental novels of the day, which were accepted by the compiler of *Living Authors* (1817) as a serious contribution to fiction by one Miss Jacquetta Agneta Mariana Jenks. Moore,[71] in his *Journal*, October 1818, remarks:

> "The two mock novels, *Azemia* and *The Elegant Enthusiast*, were written to ridicule the novels written by his sister, Mrs. Harvey (I think), who read these parodies on herself quite innocently."

Even in the gloomy regions of Eblis, Beckford will not wholly repress his sense of the ridiculous. Carathis, unawed by the effulgence of his infernal majesty, behaves like a buffoon, shouting at the Dives and actually attempting to thrust a Soliman from his throne, before she is finally whirled away with her heart aflame. The calm politeness with which the dastardly Barkiaroukh consents to a blood-curdling murder, the sardonic dialogue between

Vathek on the edge of the precipice and the Giaour concealed in the abyss, the buoyantly high-spirited description of the plump Indian kicked and pursued like "an invulnerable football," the oppressive horror of the subterranean recesses, the mischievous pleasantry of the Gulchenrouz idyll reveal different facets of Beckford's ever-varying temper. In *Vathek*, Beckford found expression not only for his devotion to the Eastern outlook on life, but also for his own strangely coloured, vehement personality. The interpreter walks ever at our elbow whispering into our ear his human commentary on Vathek's astounding adventures.

Beckford's pictures are remarkable for definite precision of outline. There are no vague hints and suggestions, no lurking shadows concealing untold horrors. The quaint dwarfs perched on Vathek's shoulders, the children chasing blue butterflies, Nouronihar and her maidens on tiptoe, with their hair floating in the breeze, stand out in clear relief, as if painted on a fresco. The imagery is so lucid that we are able to follow with effortless pleasure the intricate windings of a plot which at Beckford's whim twists and turns through scenes of wonderful variety. Amid his wild, erratic excursions he never loses sight of the end in view; the story, with all its vagaries, is perfectly coherent. This we should expect from one who "loved to bark a tough understanding."[72] It is the intellectual strength and exuberant vitality behind Beckford's Oriental scenes that lend them

distinction and power.

The History of the Caliph Vathek did not set a fashion. It is true that the Orient sometimes formed the setting of nineteenth century novels, as in Disraeli's *Alvoy* (1833), where for a brief moment, when the hero's torch is extinguished by bats on his entry into subterranean portals, we find ourselves in the abode of wonder and terror; but not till Meredith's *Shaving of Shagpal* (1856) do we meet again Beckford's kinship with the East, and his gift for fantastic burlesque.

CHAPTER VI - GODWIN AND THE ROSICRUCIAN NOVEL.

When Miss Austen was asked to write a historical romance "illustrative of the house of Coburg," she airily dismissed the suggestion, pleading mirthfully:

> "I could not sit down seriously to write a serious romance under any other motive than to save my life, and if it were indispensable for me to keep it up and never relax into laughing at myself or at other people I am sure I should

be hung before I had finished the first chapter."[73]

If Godwin had been confronted with the same offer, he would have settled himself promptly to plot out a scheme, and within a few months a historical romance on the house of Coburg, accompanied perchance by a preface setting forth the evils of monarchy, would have been in the hands of the publisher. Unlike Miss Austen, Godwin had neither a sense of humour nor a fastidious artistic conscience to save him from undertaking incongruous tasks. He seems never even to have suspected the humour of life, and would have perceived nothing ludicrous in the spectacle of the author of *Political Justice* embarking on such a piece of work. Those disquieting flashes of self-revelation that more imaginative men catch in the mirror of their own minds and that awaken sometimes laughter and sometimes tears, never disturbed Godwin's serenity. He brooded earnestly over his speculations, quietly ignoring inconvenient facts and never shrinking from absurd conclusions. In theory he aimed at disorganising the whole of human society, yet in actual life he was content to live unobtrusively, publishing harmless books for children; and though he abhorred the principle of aristocracy, he did not scruple to accept a sinecure from government through Lord Grey. Notwithstanding his stolid inconsistency and his deficiency in humour, Godwin is a figure whom it is impossible to ignore or to

despise. He was not a frothy orator who made his appeal to the masses, but the leader of the trained thinkers of the revolutionary party, a political rebel who, instead of fulminating wildly and impotently after the manner of his kind, expressed his theories in clear, reasonable and logical form. It is easy, but unprofitable, to sneer at the futility of some of Godwin's conclusions or to complain of the aridity of his style. His *Political Justice* remains, nevertheless, a lucidly written, well-ordered piece of intellectual reasoning. Shelley spoke of Godwin's *Mandeville* in the same breath with Plato's *Symposium*[74] and the ideas expressed in *Political Justice* inspired him to write not merely *Queen Mab* but the *Revolt of Islam* and *Prometheus Unbound*. Godwin's plea for the freedom of the individual and his belief in the perfectibility of man through reason had a far-reaching effect that cannot be readily estimated, but, as his theories only concern us here in so far as they affect two of his novels, it is unnecessary to pursue the trail of his influence further.

That the readers of fiction in the last decade of the eighteenth century eagerly desired the mysterious and the terrible, Mrs. Radcliffe's widespread popularity proved unmistakably. To satisfy this craving, Godwin, who was ever on the alert to discover a subject which promised swift and adequate financial return, turned to novel-writing, and supplied a tale of mystery, *The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794), and a supernatural, historical

romance, *St. Leon* (1799). As he was a political philosopher by nature and a novelist only by profession, he artfully inveigled into his romances the theories he wished to promote. The second title of *Caleb Williams* is significant. *Things As They Are* to Godwin's mind was synonymous with "things as they ought not to be." He frankly asserts: "*Caleb Williams* was the offspring of that temper of mind in which the composition of my *Political Justice* left me"[75]—a guileless confession that may well have deterred many readers who recoil shuddering from political treatises decked out in the guise of fiction. But alarm is needless; for, although *Caleb Williams* attempts to reveal the oppressions that a poor man may endure under existing conditions, and the perversion of the character of an aristocrat through the "poison of chivalry," the story may be enjoyed for its own sake. We can read it, if we so desire, purely for the excitement of the plot, and quietly ignore the underlying theories, just as it is possible to enjoy Spenser's sensuous imagery without troubling about his allegorical meaning. The secret of Godwin's power seems to be that he himself was so completely fascinated by the intricate structure of his story that he succeeds in absorbing the attention of his readers. He bestowed infinite pains on the composition of *Caleb Williams*, and conceived the lofty hope that it "would constitute an epoch in the mind of every reader."[76] A friend to whom he submitted two-thirds of his manuscript advised him to throw it into the fire and so safeguard his reputation. The result of

this criticism on a character less determined or less phlegmatic than Godwin's would have been a violent reaction from hope to despair. But Godwin, who seems to have been independent of external stimulus, was not easily startled from his projects, and plodded steadily forward until his story was complete. He would have scorned not to execute what his mind had conceived. Godwin's businesslike method of planning the story backwards has been adopted by Conan Doyle and other writers of the detective story. The deliberate, careful analysis of his mode of procedure, so characteristic of his mind and temper, is full of interest:

> "I bent myself to the conception of a series of adventures of flight and pursuit: the fugitive in perpetual apprehension of being overwhelmed with the worst calamities and the pursuer by his ingenuity and resources keeping the victim in a state of the most fearful alarm. This was the project of my third volume. I was next called upon to conceive a dramatic and impressive situation adequate to account for the impulse that the pursuer should feel incessantly to alarm and harass his victim, with an inextinguishable resolution never to allow him the least interval of peace and security. This I apprehended could best be effected by a secret murder, to the investigation of which the innocent victim should be impelled by an unconquerable spirit

> of curiosity. The murderer would thus have a sufficient motive to persecute the unhappy discoverer that he might deprive him of peace, character and credit, and have him for ever in his power. This constituted the outline of my second volume… To account for the fearful events of the third it was necessary that the pursuer should be invested with every advantage of fortune, with a resolution that nothing could defeat or baffle and with extraordinary resources of intellect. Nor could my purpose of giving an overpowering interest to my tale be answered without his appearing to have been originally endowed with a mighty store of amiable dispositions and virtues, so that his being driven to the first act of murder should be judged worthy of the deepest regret, and should be seen in some measure to have arisen out of his virtues themselves. It was necessary to make him … the tenant of an atmosphere of romance, so that every reader should feel prompted almost to worship him for his high qualities. Here were ample materials for a first volume."[77]

Godwin hoped that an "entire unity of plot" would be the infallible result of this ingenious method of constructing his story, and only wrote in a high state of excitement when the "afflatus" was upon him. So far as we may judge from his description, he seems to have realised his story first as a complex

psychological situation, not as a series of disconnected pictures. He thought in abstractions not in visual images, and he had next to make his abstractions concrete by inventing figures whose actions should be the result of the mental and moral conflict he had conceived. Godwin's attitude to his art forms a striking contrast to that of Mrs. Radcliffe. She has her set of marionettes, appropriately adorned, ready to move hither and thither across her picturesque background as soon as she has deftly manipulated the machinery which is to set them in motion. Godwin, on the other hand, first constructs his machinery, and afterwards, with laborious effort, carves the figures who are to be attached to the wires. He cares little for costume or setting, but much for the complicated mechanism that controls the destiny of his characters. The effect of this difference in method is that we soon forget the details of Mrs. Radcliffe's plots, but remember isolated pictures. After reading *Caleb Williams* we recollect the outline of the story in so far as it relates to the psychology of Falkland and his secretary; but of the actual scenes and people only vague images drift through our memory. Godwin's point of view was not that of an artist but of a scientist, who, after patiently investigating and analysing mental and emotional phenomena, chose to embody his results in the form of a novel. He spared no pains to make his narrative arresting and convincing. The story is told by Caleb Williams himself, who, in describing his adventures, revives the passions and emotions

that had stirred him in the past. By this device Godwin trusted to lend energy and vitality to his story.

Caleb Williams, a raw country youth, becomes secretary to Falkland, a benevolent country gentleman, who has come to settle in England after spending some years in Italy. Collins, the steward, tells Williams his patron's history. Falkland has always been renowned for the nobility of his character. In Italy, where he inspired the love and devotion of an Italian lady, he avoided, by "magnanimity," a duel with her lover. On Falkland's return to England, Tyrrel, a brutal squire who was jealous of his popularity, conceived a violent hatred against him. When Miss Melville, Tyrrel's ill-used ward, fell in love with Falkland, who had rescued her from a fire, her guardian sought to marry her to a boorish, brutal farm-labourer. Though Falkland's timely intervention saved her in this crisis, the girl eventually died as the result of Tyrrel's cruelty. As she was the victim of tyranny, Falkland felt it his duty at a public assembly to denounce Tyrrel as her murderer. The squire retaliated by making a personal assault on his antagonist. As Falkland "had perceived the nullity of all expostulation with Mr. Tyrrel," and as duelling according to the Godwinian principles was "the vilest of all egotism," he was deprived of the natural satisfaction of meeting his assailant in physical or even mental combat. Yet "he was too deeply pervaded with the idle and groundless

romances of chivalry ever to forget the situation"—as Godwin seems to think a "man of reason" might have done in these circumstances. Tyrrel was stabbed in the dark, and Falkland, on whom suspicion naturally fell, was tried, but eventually acquitted without a stain on his character. Two men—a father and son called Hawkins—whom Falkland had befriended against the overbearing Tyrrel, were condemned and executed for the crime. This is the state of affairs when Caleb Williams enters Falkland's service and takes up the thread of the narrative. On hearing the story of the murder, Williams, who has been perplexed by the gloomy moods of his master, allows his suspicions to rest on Falkland, and to gratify his overmastering passion of curiosity determines to spy incessantly until he has solved the problem. One day, after having heard a groan of anguish, Williams peers through the half-open door of a closet, and catches sight of Falkland in the act of opening the lid of a chest. This incident fans his smouldering curiosity into flame, and he is soon after detected by his master in an attempt to break open the chest in the "Bluebeard's chamber." Not without cause, Falkland is furiously angry, but for some inexplicable reason confesses to the murder, at the same time expressing his passionate determination at all costs to preserve his reputation. He is tortured, not by remorse for his crime, but by the fear of being found out, and seeks to terrorise Williams into silence by declaring:

> "To gratify a foolishly inquisitive humour you have sold yourself. You shall continue in my service, but can never share my affection. If ever an unguarded word escape from your lips, if ever you excite my jealousy or suspicion, expect to pay for it by your death or worse."

From this moment Williams is helpless. Turn where he will, the toils of Falkland encompass him. Forester, Falkland's half-brother, tries to persuade Williams to enter his service. Williams endeavours to flee from his master, who prevents his escape by accusing him, in the presence of Forester, of stealing some jewellery and bank-notes which have disappeared in the confusion arising from an alarm of fire. The plunder has been placed in Williams' boxes, and the evidence against him is overwhelming. He is imprisoned, and the sordid horror of his life in the cells gives Godwin an opportunity of showing "how man becomes the destroyer of man." He escapes, and is sheltered by a gang of thieves, whose leader, Raymond, a Godwinian theorist, listens with eager sympathy to his tale, which he regards as "only one fresh instance of the tyranny and perfidiousness exercised by the powerful members of the community against those who are less privileged than themselves." When a reward is offered for the capture of Williams, the thieves are persuaded that they must not deliver the lamb to the wolf. After an old hag, whose animosity

he has aroused, has made a bloodthirsty attack on him with a hatchet, Williams feels obliged to leave their habitation "abruptly without leave-taking." He then assumes beggar's attire and an Irish brogue, but is soon compelled to seek a fresh disguise. In Wales as in London, he comes across someone who has known Falkland, and is reviled for his treachery to so noble a master, and cast forth with ignominy. He discovers that Falkland has hired an unscrupulous villain, Gines, to follow him from place to place, blackening his reputation. Finally desperation drives him to accuse Falkland openly, though, after doing so, he praises the murderer, and loathes himself for his betrayal:

"Mr. Falkland is of a noble nature … a man worthy of affection and kindness … I am myself the basest and most odious of mankind."

The inexorable persecutor in return cries at last:

> "Williams, you have conquered! I see too late the greatness and elevation of your mind. I confess that it is to my fault and not yours that I owe my ruin … I am the most execrable of all villains… As reputation was the blood that warmed my heart, so I feel that death and infamy must seize me together."

Three days later Falkland dies, but instead of experiencing relief at the death of his persecutor, Williams becomes the victim of remorse, regarding

himself as the murderer of a noble spirit, who had been inevitably ruined by the corruption of human society:

"Thou imbibedst the poison of chivalry with thy earliest youth, and the base and low-minded envy that met thee on thy return to thy native seats, operated with this poison to hurry thee into madness."

At the conclusion of the story, Godwin has not succeeded in making his moral very clear. The "wicked aristocrat" who figures in the preface as "carrying into private life the execrable principles of kings and ministers" emerges at last almost as a saintly figure, who through a false notion of honour has unfortunately become the victim of a brutal squire. But, if the story does not "rouse men to a sense of the evils of slavery," or "constitute an epoch in the mind of every reader," it has compensating merits and may be read with unfailing interest either as a study of morbid psychology or as a spirited detective story. Godwin's originality in his dissection of human motive has hardly yet been sufficiently emphasised, perhaps because he is so scrupulous in acknowledging literary debts.[78] From Mrs. Radcliffe, whose *Romance of the Forest* was published the year before *Caleb Williams*, he borrowed the mysterious chest, the nature of whose contents is hinted at but never actually disclosed; but Godwin was no wizard, and had neither the gift nor the inclination to conjure with Gothic properties. In

leaving imperfectly explained the incident of the discovery of the heart in *The Monastery*, Scott shielded himself behind Godwin's Iron Chest, which gave its name to Colman's drama.[79] Godwin's peculiar interest was in criminal psychology, and he concentrates on the dramatic conflict between the murderer and the detective. An unusual turn is given to the story by the fact that the criminal is the pursuer instead of the pursued. Godwin intended later in life to write a romance based on the story of Eugene Aram, the philosophical murderer; and his careful notes on the scheme are said to have been utilised by his friend, Bulwer Lytton, in his novel of that name.[80] *Caleb Williams* helped to popularise the criminal in fiction, and *Paul Clifford*, the story of the chivalrous highwayman, is one of its literary descendants.

Godwin was a pioneer breaking new ground in fiction; and, as he was a man of talent rather than of genius, it is idle to expect perfection of workmanship. The story is full of improbabilities, but they are described in so matter-of-fact a style that we "soberly acquiesce." After an hour of Godwin's grave society an effervescent sense of humour subsides. A mind open to suggestion is soon infected by his imperturbable seriousness, which effectually stills "obstinate questionings." Even the brigands who live with their philanthropic leader are accepted without demur. After all, Raymond is only Robin Hood turned political philosopher. The ingenious resources

of *Caleb Williams* when he strives to elude his pursuer are part of the legitimate stock-in-trade of the hero of a novel of adventure. He is not as other men are, and comes through perilous escapades with miraculous success. It is at first difficult to see why Falkland does not realise that his plan of ceaselessly harassing his victim is likely to force Williams to accuse him publicly, but gradually we begin to regard his mental obliquity as one of the decrees of fate. Falkland's obtuseness is of the same nature as that of the sleeper who undertakes a voyage to Australia to deliver a letter which anywhere but in a dream would have been dropped in the nearest pillar-box. The obvious solution that would occur to a waking mind is persistently evasive. The plot of *Caleb Williams* hinges on an improbability, but so does that of *King Lear*; and if it had not been for Falkland's stupidity, the story would have ended with the first volume. Godwin excels in the analysis of mental conditions, but fails when he attempts to transmute passionate feeling into words. We are conscious that he is a cold-blooded spectator *ab extra* striving to describe what he has never felt for himself. It is not even "emotion recollected in tranquillity." Men of this world, who are carried away by scorn and anger, utter their feelings simply and directly. Godwin's characters pause to cull their words from dictionaries. Forester's invective, when he believes that Williams has basely robbed his master is astonishingly elegant: "Vile calumniator! You are the abhorrence of nature, the opprobrium of the human

species and the earth can only be freed from an insupportable burthen by your being exterminated."[81] The diction is so elaborately dignified that the contempt which was meant almost to annihilate Caleb Williams, lies effectually concealed behind a blinding veil of rhetoric. When he has leisure to adorn, he translates the simplest, most obvious reflections into the "jargon" of political philosophy, but, driven impetuously forward by the excitement of his theme, he throws off jerky, spasmodic sentences containing but a single clause. His style is a curious mixture of these two manners.

The aim of *St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century*, is to show that "boundless wealth, freedom from disease, weakness and death are as nothing in the scale against domestic affection and the charities of private life."[82] For four years Godwin had desired to modify what he had said on the subject of private affections in *Political Justice*, while he asserted his conviction of the general truth of his system. Godwin had argued that private affections resulted in partiality, and therefore injustice.[83] If a house were on fire, reason would urge a man to save Fénelon in preference to his valet; but if the rescuer chanced to be the brother or father of the valet, private feeling would intervene, unreasonably urging him to save his relative and abandon Fénelon. Lest he should be regarded as a wrecker of homes, Godwin wished to show that domestic happiness should not be despised by the man of reason. Instead

of expressing his views on this subject in a succinct pamphlet, Godwin, elated by the success of *Caleb Williams*, decided to embody them in the form of a novel. He at first despaired of finding a theme so rich in interest as that of his first novel, but ultimately decided that "by mixing human feelings and passions with incredible situations he might conciliate the patience even of the severest judges."[84] The phrase, "mixing human feelings," betrays in a flash Godwin's mechanical method of constructing a story. He makes no pretence that *St. Leon* grew naturally as a work of art. He imposed upon himself an unsuitable task, and, though he doggedly accomplished it, the result is dull and laboured.

The plot of *St. Leon* was suggested by Dr. John Campbell's *Hermippus Redivivus*,[85] and centres round the theories of the Rosicrucians. The first volume describes the early life of the knight St. Leon, his soldiering, his dissipations, and his happy marriage to Marguerite, whose character is said to have been modelled on that of Mary Wollstonecraft. In Paris he is tempted into extravagance and into playing for high stakes, with the result that he retires to Switzerland the "prey of poverty and remorse." Misfortunes pursue him for some time, but he at last enjoys six peaceful years, at the end of which he is visited by a mysterious old man, whom he conceals in a summer-house, and whom he refuses to betray to the Inquisitors in search of him. In return the old man reveals to him the secret of the elixir vitæ, and

of the philosopher's stone. Marguerite becomes suspicious of the source of her husband's wealth: "For a soldier you present me with a projector and a chemist, a cold-blooded mortal raking in the ashes of a crucible for a selfish and solitary advantage." His son, Charles, unable to endure the aspersions cast upon his father's honour during their travels together in Germany, deserts him. St. Leon is imprisoned because he cannot account for the death of the stranger and for his own sudden acquisition of wealth, but contrives his escape by bribing the jailor. He travels to Italy, but is unable to escape from misfortune. Suspected of black magic, he becomes an object of hatred to the inhabitants of the town where he lives. His house is burnt down, his servant and his favourite dog are killed, and he soon hears of the death of his unhappy wife. He is imprisoned in the dungeons of the Inquisition, but escapes, and takes refuge with a Jew, whom he compels to shelter him, until another dose of the elixir restores his youthful appearance, and he sets forth again, this time disguised as a wealthy Spanish cavalier. He visits his own daughters, representing himself as the executor under their father's will. He decides to devote himself to the service of others, and is revered as the saviour of Hungary, until disaffection, caused by a shortage of food, renders him unpopular. He makes a friend of Bethlem Gabor, whose wife and children have been savagely murdered by a band of marauders. St. Leon, we are told, "found an inexhaustible and indescribable pleasure in examining the sublime

desolation of a mighty soul." But Gabor soon conceives a bitter hatred against him, and entraps him in a subterranean vault, where he languishes for many months, refusing to yield up his secret. At length the castle is besieged, and Gabor before his death gives St. Leon his liberty. The leader of the expedition proves to be St. Leon's long-lost son, Charles, who has assumed the name of De Damville. St. Leon, without at first revealing his identity, cultivates the friendship of his son, but Charles, on learning of his dealings with the supernatural, repudiates his father. Finally the marriage of his son to Pandora proves to St. Leon that despite his misfortunes "there is something in this world worth living for."

The Inquisition scenes of *St. Leon* were undoubtedly coloured faintly by those of Lewis's *Monk* (1794) and Mrs. Radcliffe's *Italian* (1798); but it is characteristic of Godwin that instead of trying to portray the terror of the shadowy hall, he chooses rather to present the argumentative speeches of St. Leon and the Inquisitor. The aged stranger, who bestows on St. Leon the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life, has the piercing eye so familiar to readers of the novel of terror: "You wished to escape from its penetrating power, but you had not the strength to move. I began to feel as if it were some mysterious and superior being in human form;"[86] but apart from this trait he is not an impressive figure. The only character who would have felt

perfectly at home in the realm of Mrs. Radcliffe and "Monk" Lewis is Bethlem Gabor, who appears for the first time in the fourth volume of *St. Leon*. He is akin to Schedoni and his compeers in his love of solitude, his independence of companionship, and his superhuman aspect, but he is a figure who inspires awe and pity as well as terror. Beside this personage the other characters pale into insignificance:

> "He was more than six feet in stature … and he was built as if it had been a colossus, destined to sustain the weight of the starry heavens. His voice was like thunder … his head and chin were clothed with a thick and shaggy hair, in colour a dead-black. He had suffered considerable mutilation in the services through which he had passed … Bethlem Gabor, though universally respected for the honour and magnanimity of a soldier, was not less remarkable for habits of reserve and taciturnity… Seldom did he allow himself to open his thoughts but when he did, Great God! what supernatural eloquence seemed to inspire and enshroud him… Bethlem Gabor's was a soul that soared to a sightless distance above the sphere of pity."[87]

The superstitions of bygone ages, which had fired the imagination of so many writers of romance, left Godwin cold. He was mildly interested in the supernatural as affording insight into the "credulity of the human mind," and even compiled a treatise on

The Lives of the Necromancers (1834).[88] But the hints and suggestions, the gloom, the weird lights and shades which help to create that romantic atmosphere amid which the alchemist's dream seems possible of realisation are entirely lacking in Godwin's story. He displays everything in a high light. The transference of the gifts takes place not in the darkness of a subterranean vault, but in the calm light of a summer evening. No unearthly groans, no phosphorescent lights enhance the horror and mystery of the scene. Godwin is coolly indifferent to historical accuracy, and fails to transport us back far beyond the end of the eighteenth century. Rousseau's theories were apparently disseminated widely in 1525. *St. Leon* is remembered now rather for its position in the history of the novel than for any intrinsic charm. Godwin was the first to embody in a romance the ideas of the Rosicrucians which inspired Bulwer Lytton's *Zicci*, *Zanoni* and *A Strange Story*.

St. Leon was travestied, the year after it appeared, in a work called *St. Godwin: A Tale of the 16th, 17th and 18th Century*, by "Count Reginald de St. Leon," which gives a scathing survey of the plot, with all its improbabilities exposed. The bombastic style of *St. Leon* is imitated and only slightly exaggerated, and the author finally satirises Godwin bitterly:

> "Thinking from my political writings that I was a good hand at fiction, I turned my thoughts to novel-writing. These I wrote in the same pompous, inflated style as I had used in

> my other publications, hoping that my fine high-sounding periods would assist to make the unsuspecting reader swallow all the insidious reasoning, absurdity and nonsense I could invent."[89]

The parodist takes Godwin almost as seriously as he took himself, and his attack is needlessly savage. Godwin's political opinions may account for the brutality of his assailant who doubtless belonged to the other camp. When Godwin attempts the supernatural in his other novels, he always fails to create an atmosphere of mystery. The apparition in *Cloudesley* appears, fades, and reappears in a manner so undignified as to remind us of the Cheshire Cat in *Alice in Wonderland*:

> "I suddenly saw my brother's face looking out from among the trees as I passed. I saw the features as distinctly as if the meridian sun had beamed upon them… It was by degrees that the features showed themselves thus out of what had been a formless shadow. I gazed upon it intently. Presently it faded away by as insensible degrees as those by which it had become agonisingly clear. After a short time it returned."

Godwin describes a ghost as deliberately and exactly as he would describe a house, and his delineation causes not the faintest tremor. Having little imagination himself, he leaves nothing to the

imagination of the reader. In his *Lives of the Necromancers*, he shows that he is interested in discovering the origin of a belief in natural magic; but the life stories of the magicians suggest no romantic pictures to his imagination. In dealing with the mysterious and the uncanny, Godwin was attempting something alien to his mind and temper.

In Godwin's *St. Leon* the elixir of life is quietly bestowed on the hero in a summer-house in his own garden. The poet, Thomas Moore, in his romance, *The Epicurean* (1827), sends forth a Greek adventurer to seek it in the secret depths of the catacombs beneath the pyramids of Egypt. He originally intended to tell his story in verse, but after writing a fragment, *Alciphron*, abandoned this design and decided to begin again in prose. His story purports to be a translation of a recently discovered manuscript buried in the time of Diocletian. Inspired by a dream, in which an ancient and venerable man bids him seek the Nile if he wishes to discover the secret of eternal life, Alciphron, a young Epicurean philosopher of the second century, journeys to Egypt. At Memphis he falls in love with a beautiful priestess, Alethe, whom he follows into the catacombs. Bearing a glimmering lamp, he passes through a gallery, where the eyes of a row of corpses, buried upright, glare upon him, into a chasm peopled by pale, phantom-like forms. He braves the terrors of a blazing grove and of a dark stream haunted by shrieking spectres, and finds

himself whirled round in chaos like a stone shot in a sling. Having at length passed safely through the initiation of Fire, Water and Air, he is welcomed into a valley of "unearthly sadness," with a bleak, dreary lake lit by a "ghostly glimmer of sunshine." He gazes with awe on the image of the god Osiris, who presides over the silent kingdom of the dead. Watching within the temple of Isis, he suddenly sees before him the priestess, Alethe, who guides him back to the realms of day. At the close of the story, after Alethe has been martyred for the Christian faith, Alciphron himself becomes a Christian.

In *The Epicurean*, Moore shows a remarkable power of describing scenes of gloomy terror, which he throws into relief by occasional glimpses of light and splendour. The journey of Alciphron inevitably challenges comparison with that of *Vathek*, but the spirit of mockery that animates Beckford's story is wholly absent. Moore paints a theatrical panorama of effective scenes, but his figures are mere shadows.

The miseries of an existence, prolonged far beyond the allotted span, are depicted not only in stories of the elixir of life, but in the legends centring round the Wandering Jew. Croly's *Salathiel* (1829), like Eugene Sue's lengthy romance, *Le Juif Errant*, won fame in its own day, but is now forgotten. Some of Croly's descriptions, such as that of the burning trireme, have a certain dazzling magnificence, but the colouring is often crude and startling. The figure of the deathless Jew is apt to be lost amid the mazes

of the author's rhetoric. The conception of a man doomed to wander eternally in expiation of a curse is in itself an arresting theme likely to attract a romantic writer, but the record of his adventures may easily become monotonous.

The "novel of terror" has found few more ardent admirers than the youthful Shelley, who saw in it a way of escape from the harsh realities and dull routine of ordinary existence. From his childhood the world of ideas seems to have been at least as real and familiar to him as the material world. The fabulous beings of whom he talked to his young sisters—the Great Tortoise in Warnham Pond, the snake three hundred years old in the garden at Field Place, the grey-bearded alchemist in his garret[90]—had probably for him as much meaning and interest as the living people around him. Urged by a restless desire to evade the natural and encounter the supernatural, he wandered by night under the "perilous moonshine," haunted graveyards in the hope of "high talk with the departed dead," dabbled in chemical experiments and pored over ancient books of magic. It was to be expected that an imagination reaching out so eagerly towards the unknown should find refuge from the uncongenial life of Sion House School in the soul-stirring region of romance. Transported by sixpenny "blue books" and the many volumed novels in the Brentford circulating library, Shelley's imagination fled joyously to that land of unlikelihood, where the

earth yawns with bandits' caverns inhabited by desperadoes with bloody daggers, where the air continually resounds with the shrieks and groans of melancholy spectres, and where the pale moon ever gleams on dark and dreadful deeds. He had reached that stage of human development when fairies, elves, witches and dragons begin to lose their charm, when the gentle quiver of fear excited by an ogre, who is inevitably doomed to be slain at the last, no longer suffices. At the approach of adolescence with its surging emotions and quickening intellectual life, there awakens a demand for more thrilling incidents, for wilder passions and more desperate crimes, and it is at this period that the "novel of terror" is likely to make its strongest appeal. Youth, with its inexperience, is seldom tempted to bring fiction to the test of reality, or to scorn it on the ground of its improbability, and we may be sure that Shelley and his cousin, Medwin, as they hung spellbound over such treasures as *The Midnight Groan, The Mysterious Freebooter*, or *Subterranean Horrors* did not pause to consider whether the characters and adventures were true to life. They desired, indeed, not to criticise but to create, and in the winter of 1809-1810 united to produce a terrific romance, with the title *Nightmare*, in which a gigantic and hideous witch played a prominent part. After reading Schubert's *Der Ewige Jude*, they began a narrative poem dealing with the legend of the Wandering Jew,[91] who lingered in Shelley's imagination in after years, and whom he introduced into *Queen Mab, Prometheus Unbound*, and

Hellas. The grim and ghastly legends included in "Monk" Lewis's *Tales of Terror* (1799) and *Tales of Wonder* (1801) fascinated Shelley;[92] and the suggestive titles *Revenge*;[93] *Ghasta, or the Avenging Demon*;[94] *St. Edmund's Eve*;[95] *The Triumph of Conscience* from the *Poems by Victor and Cazire* (1810), and *The Spectral Horseman* from *The Posthumous Poems of Margaret Nicholson* (1810), all prove his preoccupation with the supernatural. That Shelley's enthusiasm for the gruesome and uncanny was not merely morbid and hysterical, the mad, schoolboyish letter, written while he was in the throes of composing *St. Irvyne*, is sufficient indication. In a mood of grotesque fantasy and wild exhilaration, Shelley invites his friend Graham to Field Place. The postscript is in his handwriting, but is signed by his sister Elizabeth:

> "The avenue is composed of vegetable substances moulded in the form of trees called by the multitude Elm trees. Stalk along the road towards them and mind and keep yourself concealed as my mother brings a blood-stained stiletto which she purposes to make you bathe in the lifeblood of your enemy. Never mind the Death-demons and skeletons dripping with the putrefaction of the grave, that occasionally may blast your straining eyeballs. Persevere even though Hell and destruction should yawn beneath your feet.
>
> "Think of all this at the frightful hour of midnight, when the Hell-demon leans over your sleeping form, and inspires those thoughts which eventually will lead you to the gates of destruction… The fiend of the Sussex solitudes shrieked in the wilderness at midnight—he thirsts for thy detestable gore, impious Fergus. But the day of retribution will arrive. H + D = Hell Devil."[96]

That Shelley could jest thus lightly in the mock-terrific vein shows that his mind was fundamentally sane and well-balanced, and that he only regarded "fiendmongering" as a pleasantly thrilling diversion. His *Zastrozzi* (1810) and *St. Irvyne* (1811) were probably written with the same zest and spirit as his harrowing letter to "impious Fergus." They are the

outcome of a boyish ambition to practise the art of freezing the blood, and their composition was a source of pride and delight to their author. A letter to Peacock (Nov. 9, 1818) from Italy re-echoes the note of child-like enjoyment in weaving romances:

"We went to see heaven knows how many more palaces—Ranuzzi, Marriscalchi, Aldobrandi. If you want Italian names for any purpose, here they are; I should be glad of them if I was writing a novel."

Zastrozzi was published in April, 1810, while Shelley was still at Eton, and with the £40 paid for the romance, he is said to have given a banquet to eight of his friends. Though the story is little more than a *réchauffé* of previous tales of terror, it evidently attained some measure of popularity. It was reprinted in *The Romancist and Novelist's Library* in 1839. Like Godwin, Shelley contrived to smuggle a little contraband theory into his novels, but his stock-in-trade is mainly that of the terrormongers. The book to which Shelley was chiefly indebted was *Zofloya or the Moor* (1806), by the notorious Charlotte Dacre or "Rosa Matilda," but there are many reminiscences of Mrs. Radcliffe and of "Monk" Lewis. The sources of *Zastrozzi* and *St. Irvyne* have been investigated in the *Modern Language Review* (Jan. 1912), by Mr. A. M. D. Hughes, who gives a complete analysis of the plot of *Zofloya*, and indicates many parallels with Shelley's novels. The heroine of *Zofloya* is clearly a lineal descendant of Lewis's Matilda, though Victoria di Loredani, with all

her vices, never actually degenerates into a fiend. Victoria, it need hardly be stated, is nobly born, but she has been brought up amid frivolous society by a worthless mother, and: "The wildest passions predominated in her bosom; to gratify them she possessed an unshrinking, relentless soul that would not startle at the darkest crime."

Zofloya, who spurs her on, is the Devil himself. The plot is highly melodramatic, and contains a headlong flight, an earthquake and several violent deaths. In *Zastrozzi*, Shelley draws upon the characters and incidents of this story very freely. His lack of originality is so obvious as to need no comment. The very names he chooses are borrowed. Julia is the name of the pensive heroine in Mrs. Radcliffe's *Sicilian Romance*. Matilda carries with it ugly memories of the lady in Lewis's *Monk*; Verezzi occurs in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*; Zastrozzi is formed by prefixing an extra syllable to the name Strozzi from *Zofloya*. The incidents are those which happen every day in the realm of terror. The villain, the hero, the melancholy heroine, and her artful rival, develop no new traits, but act strictly in accordance with tradition. They never infringe the rigid code of manners and morals laid down for them by previous generations. The scenery is invariably appropriate as a setting to the incidents, and even the weather may be relied on to act in a thoroughly conventional manner. The characters are remarkable for their violent emotions and their marvellously

expressive eyes. When Verezzi's senses are "chilled with the frigorific torpidity of despair," his eyes "roll horribly in their sockets." When "direst revenge swallows up every other feeling" in the soul of Matilda, her eyes "scintillate with a fiend-like expression." Incidents follow one another with a wild and stupefying rapidity. Every moment is a crisis. The style is startlingly abrupt, and the short, disconnected paragraphs are fired off like so many pistol shots. The sequence of events is mystifying—Zastrozzi's motive for persecuting Verezzi is darkly concealed until the end of the story, for reasons known only to writers of the novel of terror. Shelley's romance, in short, is no better and perhaps even worse than that of the other disciples of Mrs. Radcliffe and "Monk" Lewis.

St. Irvyne: or the Rosicrucian (1811), though it was written by a "Gentleman of the University of Oxford" and not by a schoolboy, shows slight advance on *Zastrozzi* either in matter or manner. The plot indeed is more bewildering and baffling than that of *Zastrozzi*. The action of the story is double and alternate, the scene shifts from place to place, and the characters appear and disappear in an unaccountable and disconcerting fashion. This time Godwin's *St. Leon* has to be added to the list of Shelley's sources. Ginotti, whose name is stolen from a brigand in *Zofloya*, is not the devil but one of his sworn henchmen, who has discovered and tasted the elixir vitae. Like Zofloya, he is surrounded by an

atmosphere of mystery. So that he may himself die, Ginotti, like the old stranger in *St. Leon*, is anxious to impart his secret to another. He chooses as his victim, Wolfstein, a young noble who, like Leonardo in *Zofloya*, has allied himself with a band of brigands. The bandit, Ginotti, aids Wolfstein to escape with a beautiful captive maiden, for whom Shelley adopts the name Megalena from *Zofloya*. While the lovers are in Genoa, Megalena, discovering Wolfstein with a lady named Olympia, whose "character has been ruined by a false system of education," makes him promise to murder her rival. In Olympia's bedchamber Wolfstein's hand is stayed for a moment by the sight of her beauty—a picture which recalls the powerful scene in Mrs. Radcliffe's *Italian*, when Schedoni bends over the sleeping Ellena. After Olympia's suicide, Megalena and Wolfstein flee together from Genoa. In the tale of terror, as in the modern film-play, a flight of some kind is almost indispensable. Ginotti, whose habit of disappearing and reappearing reminds us of the ghostly monk in the ruins of Paluzzi, tells his history to Wolfstein, and, at the destined hour, bestows the prescription for the elixir, and appoints a meeting in St. Irvyne's abbey, where Wolfstein stumbles over the corpse of Megalena. Wolfstein refuses to deny God. Both Ginotti and his victim are blasted by lightning, amid which the "frightful prince of terror, borne on the pinions of hell's sulphurous whirlwind," stands before them.

> "On a sudden Ginotti's frame, mouldered to a gigantic skeleton, yet two pale and ghastly flames glared in his eyeless sockets. Blackened in terrible convulsions, Wolfstein expired; over him had the power of hell no influence. Yes, endless existence is thine, Ginotti—a dateless and hopeless eternity of horror."

Interspersed with this somewhat inconsequent story are the adventures of Eloise, who is first introduced on her return home, disconsolate, to a ruined abbey. We are given to understand that the story is to unfold the misfortunes which have led to her downfall, but she is happily married ere the close. She accompanies her dying mother on a journey, as Emily in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* accompanied her father, and meets a mysterious stranger, Nempère, at a lonely house, where they take refuge. Nempère proves to be a less estimable character than Valancourt, who fell to Emily's lot in similar circumstances. He sells her to an English noble, Mountfort, at whose house she meets Fitzeustace, who, like Vivaldi in *The Italian*, overhears her confession of love for himself. Nempère is killed in a duel by Mountfort. At the close, Shelley states abruptly that Nempère is Ginotti, and Eloise is Wolfstein's sister. In springing a secret upon us suddenly on the last page, Shelley was probably emulating Lewis's *Bravo of Venice*; but the conclusion, which is intended to forge a connecting link between the tales, is unsatisfying. It is not

surprising that the publisher, Stockdale, demanded some further elucidation of the mystery. Ginotti, apparently, dies twice, and Shelley's letters fail to solve the problem. He wrote to Stockdale: "Ginotti, as you will see, did *not* die by Wolfstein's hand, but by the influence of that natural magic, which, when the secret was imparted to the latter, destroyed him."[97] A few days later he wrote again, evidently in reply to further questions: "On a re-examination you will perceive that Mountfort physically did kill Ginotti, which must appear from the latter's paleness." The truth seems to be that Shelley was weary of his puppets, and had no desire to extricate them from the tangle in which they were involved, though he was impatient to see *St. Irvyne* in print, and spoke hopefully of its "selling mechanically to the circulating libraries."

Shelley took advantage of the privilege of writers of romance to palm off on the public some of his earliest efforts at versification. These poems, distributed impartially among the various characters, are introduced with the same laborious artlessness as the songs in a musical comedy. Megalena, though suffering from excruciating mental agony, finds leisure to scratch several verses on the walls of her cell. It would indeed be a poor-spirited heroine who could not deftly turn a sonnet to night or to the moon, however profound her woes. Superhuman strength and courage is an endowment necessary to all who would dwell in the realms of terror and

survive the fierce struggle for existence. Peacock, in *Nightmare Abbey*, paints the Shelley of 1812 in Scythrop, who devours tragedies and German romances, and is troubled with a "passion for reforming the world." "He slept with *Horrid Mysteries* under his pillow, and dreamed of venerable eleutherarchs and ghastly confederates holding midnight conventions in subterranean caves… He had a certain portion of mechanical genius which his romantic projects tended to develop. He constructed models of cells and recesses, sliding panels and secret passages, that would have baffled the skill of the Parisian police." His bearing was that of a romantic villain: "He stalked about like the grand Inquisitor, and the servants flitted past him like familiars."

Although Shelley outgrew his youthful taste for horrors, his early reading left traces on the imagery and diction of his poetry. There is an unusual profusion in his vocabulary of such words as ghosts, shades, charnel, tomb, torture, agony, etc., and supernatural similes occur readily to his mind. In *Alastor* he compares himself to

"an inspired and desperate alchymist Staking his very life on some dark hope,"

and cries:

"O that the dream
Of dark magician in his visioned cave
Raking the cinders of a crucible

For life and power, even when his feeble hand
Shakes in its last decay, were the true law
Of this so lonely world."

In the *Ode to the West Wind* his memories of an older and finer kind of romance suggested the fantastic comparison of the dead leaves to

"ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,"

and in *Prometheus Unbound* Panthea sees

"unimaginable shapes Such as ghosts dream dwell in the lampless deeps."

The poem *Ginevra*, which describes an enforced wedding and the death of the bride at the sight of her real lover, may well have been inspired by reading the romances of terror, where such events are an everyday occurrence. The gruesome descriptions in *The Revolt of Islam*, the decay of the garden in *The Sensitive Plant*, the tortures of Prometheus, all show how Shelley strove to work on the instinctive emotion of fear. In *The Cenci* he touches the profoundest depths of human passion, and shows his power of finding words, terrible in their simple grandeur, for a soul in agony. In the tragedies of Shakespeare and of his followers—Ford, Webster and Tourneur—Shelley had heard the true language of anguish and despair. The futile, frenzied shrieking of Matilda and her kind is forgotten in the passionate nobility or fearful calm of the speeches of

Beatrice Cenci.

CHAPTER VII - SATIRES ON THE NOVEL OF TERROR.

A conflict between "sense and sensibility" was naturally to be expected; and, the year after Mrs. Radcliffe published *The Italian*, Jane Austen had completed her *Northanger Abbey*, ridiculing the "horrid" school of fiction. It is noteworthy that for the *Mysteries of Udolpho* Mrs. Radcliffe received £500, and for *The Italian* £800; while for the manuscript of *Northanger Abbey*, the bookseller paid Jane Austen the ungenerous sum of £10, selling it again later to Henry Austen for the same amount. The contrast in market value is significant. The publisher, who, it may be added, was not necessarily a literary critic, probably realised that if the mock romance were successful, its tendency would be to endanger the popularity of the prevailing mode in fiction. Hence for many years it was concealed as effectively as if it had lain in the haunted apartment of one of Mrs. Radcliffe's Gothic abbeys. Among Jane Austen's early unpublished writings were "burlesques ridiculing the improbable events and exaggerated

sentiments which she had met with in sundry silly romances"; but her spirited defence of the novelist's art in *Northanger Abbey* is clear evidence that her raillery is directed not against fiction in general, but rather against such "horrid" stories as those included in the list supplied to Isabella Thorpe by "a Miss Andrews, one of the sweetest creatures in the world."

It has sometimes been supposed that the more fantastic titles in this catalogue were figments of Jane Austen's imagination, but the identity of each of the seven stories may be established beyond question. Two of the stories—*The Necromancer of the Black Forest*, a translation from the German, and *The Castle of Wolfenbach*, by Mrs. Eliza Parsons (who was also responsible for *Mysterious Warnings*)—may still be read in *The Romancist and Novelist's Library* (1839-1841), a treasure-hoard of forgotten fiction. *Clermont* (1798) was published by Mrs. Regina Maria Roche, the authoress of *The Children of the Abbey* (1798), a story almost as famous in its day as *Udolpho*. The author of *The Midnight Bell* was one George Walker of Bath, whose record, like that of Miss Eleanor Sleath, who wrote the moving history of *The Orphan of the Rhine* (1798) in four volumes, may be found in Watts' *Bibliotheca Britannica*. *Horrid Mysteries*, perhaps the least credible of the titles, was a translation from the German of the Marquis von Grosse by R. Will. Jane Austen's attack has no tinge of bitterness or malice. John Thorpe, who declared all novels, except *Tom Jones* and *The Monk*, "the

stupidest things in creation," admitted, when pressed by Catherine, that Mrs. Radcliffe's were "amusing enough" and "had some fun and nature in them"; and Henry Tilney, a better judge, owned frankly that he had "read all her works, and most of them with great pleasure." From this we may assume that Miss Austen herself was perhaps conscious of their charm as well as their absurdity.

Sheridan's Lydia Languish (1775) and Colman's Polly Honeycombe (1777) were both demoralised by the follies of sentimental fiction, as Biddy Tipkin, in Steele's *Tender Husband* (1705), had been by romances. It was Miss Austen's purpose in creating Catherine Morland to present a maiden bemused by Gothic romance:

"No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy would have supposed her born to be a heroine." In almost every detail she is a refreshing contrast to the traditional type. Two long-lived conventions—the fragile mother, who dies at the heroine's birth, and the tyrannical father—are repudiated at the very outset; and Catherine is one of a family of seven. We cannot conceive that Mrs. Radcliffe's heroines even at the age of ten would "love nothing so well in the world as rolling down the green slope at the back of the house." Her accomplishments lack the brilliance and distinction of those of Adela and Julia, but,

"Though she could not write sonnets she

> brought herself to read them; and though there seemed no chance of her throwing a whole party into raptures by a prelude on the pianoforte, she could listen to other people's performances with very little fatigue. Her greatest deficiency was in the pencil—she had no notion of drawing, not enough even to attempt a sketch of her lover's profile, that she might be detected in the design. There she fell miserably short of the true heroic height…Not one started with rapturous wonder on beholding her…nor was she once called a divinity by anybody."

She had no lover at the age of seventeen,

> "because there was not a lord in the neighbourhood—not even a baronet. There was not one family among their acquaintance who had reared and supported a boy accidentally found at their door—not one whose origin was unknown."

Nor is Catherine aided in her career by those "improbable events," so dear to romance, that serve to introduce a hero—a robber's attack, a tempest, or a carriage accident. With a sly glance at such dangerous characters as Lady Greystock in *The Children of the Abbey* (1798), Miss Austen creates the inert, but good-natured Mrs. Alien as Catherine's chaperone in Bath:

> "It is now expedient to give some description of Mrs. Alien that the reader may be able to judge in what manner her actions will hereafter tend to promote the general distress of the work and how she will probably contribute to reduce poor Catherine to all the desperate wretchedness of which a last volume is capable, whether by her imprudence, vulgarity or jealousy—whether by intercepting her letters, ruining her character or turning her out of doors."

Amid all the diversions of the gay and beautiful city of Bath, Miss Austen does not lose sight entirely of her satirical aim, though she turns aside for a time. Catherine's confusion of mind is suggested with exquisite art in a single sentence. As she drives with John Thorpe she "meditates by turns on broken promises and broken arches, phaetons and false hangings, Tilneys and trapdoors." This prepares us for the delightful scene in which Tilney, on the way to the abbey, foretells what Catherine may expect on her arrival. The hall dimly lighted by the expiring embers of a wood fire, the deserted bedchamber "never used since some cousin or kin had died in it about twenty years before," the single lamp, the tapestry, the funereal bed, the broken lute, the ponderous chest, the secret door, the vaulted room, the rusty dagger, the cabinet of ebony and gold with its roll of manuscripts, prove his intimacy with *The Romance of the Forest*, as well as with *The Mysteries of*

Udolpho. The black chest and the cabinet are there in startling fulfilment of his prophecies, and when, just as with beating heart Catherine is about to decipher the roll of paper she has discovered in the cabinet drawer, she accidentally extinguishes her candle:

> "A lamp could not have expired with more awful effect… Darkness impenetrable and immovable filled the room. A violent gust of wind, rising with sudden fury, added fresh horror to the moment… Human nature could support no more … groping her way to the bed she jumped hastily in, and sought some suspension of agony by creeping far beneath the clothes… The storm still raged… Hour after hour passed away, and the wearied Catherine had heard three proclaimed by all the clocks in the house before the tempest subsided, and she, unknowingly, fell fast asleep. She was awakened the next morning at eight o'clock by the housemaid's opening her window-shutter. She flew to the mysterious manuscript, If the evidence of sight might be trusted she held a washing bill in her hands … she felt humbled to the dust."

Even this bitter humiliation does not sweep away the cobwebs of romance from Catherine's imaginative mind, but the dark suspicions she harbours about General Tilney are not altogether inexplicable. He is so much less natural and so much more stagey than the other characters that he might

reasonably be expected to dabble in the sinister. This time Catherine is misled by memories of the *Sicilian Romance* into weaving a mystery around the fate of Mrs. Tilney, whom she pictures receiving from the hands of her husband a nightly supply of coarse food. She watches in vain for "glimmering lights," like those in the palace of Mazzini, and determines to search for "a fragmented journal continued to the last gasp," like that of Adeline's father in *The Romance of the Forest*. In this search she encounters Tilney, who has returned unexpectedly from Woodston. He dissipates once and for all her nervous fancies, and Catherine decides: "Among the Alps and Pyrenees, perhaps, there were no mixed characters. There, such as were not spotless as an angel, might have the dispositions of a fiend. But in England it was not so."

Miss Austen's novel is something more than a mock-romance, and Catherine is not a mere negative of the traditional heroine, but a human and attractive girl, whose fortunes we follow with the deepest interest. At the close, after Catherine's ignominious journey home, we are back again in the cool world of reality. The abbey is abandoned, after it has served its purpose in disciplining the heroine, in favour of the unromantic country parsonage.

In *Northanger Abbey*, Jane Austen had deftly turned the novels of Mrs. Radcliffe to comedy; but, even if her parody had been published in 1798, when we are assured that it was completed, her satirical treatment was too quiet and subtle, too delicately mischievous,

to have disturbed seriously the popularity of the novel of terror. We can imagine the Isabella Thorpes and Lydia Bennets of the day dismissing *Northanger Abbey* with a yawn as "an amazing dull book," and returning with renewed zest to more stimulating and "horrid" stories. Maria Edgeworth too had aimed her shaft at the sentimental heroine in one of her *Moral Tales—Angelina or L'Amie Inconnue* (1801). Miss Sarah Green, in *Romance Readers and Romance Writers* (1810) had displayed the extravagant folly of a clergyman's daughter whose head was turned by romances. Ridicule of a more blatant and boisterous kind was needed, and this was supplied by Eaton Stannard Barrett, who, in 1813—five years before *Northanger Abbey* appeared—published *The Heroine or The Adventures of Cherubina*. In this farcical romance it is clearly Barrett's intention to make so vigorous an onslaught that "the Selinas, Evelinas, and Malvinas who faint and blush and weep through four half-bound octavos" shall be, like Catherine Morland, "humbled to the dust." Sometimes, indeed, his farce verges on brutality. To expose the follies of Cherubina it was hardly necessary to thrust her good-humoured father into a madhouse, and this grim incident sounds an incongruous, jarring note in a rollicking high-spirited farce. The plights into which Cherubina is plunged are so needlessly cruel, that, while only intending to make her ridiculous, Barrett succeeds rather in making her pitiable. But many of her adventures are only a shade more absurd than those in the romances at which he tilts.

Regina Maria Roche's *Children of the Abbey* (1798) would take the wind from the sails of any parodist. In protracting *The Heroine* almost to wearisome length, Barrett probably acted deliberately in mimicry of this and a horde of other tedious romances. Certainly the unfortunate Stuart waits no longer for the fulfilment of his hopes than Lord Mortimer, the long-suffering hero of *The Children of the Abbey*, who early in the first volume demands of Amanda Fitzalan, what he calls an "éclaircissement," but does not win it until the close of the fourth. Barrett does not scruple to mention the titles of the books he derides. The following catalogue will show how widely he casts his net: *Mysteries of Udolpho, Romance of the Forest, Children of the Abbey, Sir Charles Grandison, Pamela, Clarissa Harlowe, Evelina, Camilla, Cecilia, La Nouvelle Heloïse, Rasselas, The Delicate Distress, Caroline of Lichfield*,[98] *The Knights of the Swan*,[99] *The Beggar Girl, The Romance of the Highlands*.[100] Besides these novels, which he actually names, Barrett alludes indirectly to several others, among them *Tristram Shandy* and *Amelia*. From this enumeration it is evident that Barrett was satirising the heroine, not merely of the "novel of terror," but of the "sentimental novel" from which she traced her descent. He organises a masquerade, mindful that it is always the scene of the heroine's "best adventure," with Fielding's *Amelia* and Miss Burney's *Cecilia* and probably other novels in view. The precipitate flight of Cherubina, "dressed in a long-skirted red coat stiff with tarnished lace, a satin

petticoat, satin shoes and no stockings," and with hair streaming like a meteor, described in Letter XX, is clearly a cruel mockery of Cecilia's distressful plight in Miss Burney's novel. Even Scott is not immune from Barrett's barbed arrows, and Byron is glanced at in the bogus antique language of "Eftsoones." Barrett, indeed, jeers at the mediaeval revival in its various manifestations and even at "Romanticism" generally, not merely at the new school of fiction represented by Mrs. Radcliffe, her followers and rivals. Not content with reaching his aim, as he does again and again in *The Heroine*, Barrett, like many another parodist, sometimes over-reaches it, and sneers at what is not in itself ridiculous.

Nominally Cherubina is the butt of Barrett's satire, but the permanent interest of the book lies in the skilful stage-managing of her lively adventures. There is hardly an attempt at characterisation. The people are mere masqueraders, who amuse us by their costume and mannerisms, but reveal no individuality. The plot is a wild extravaganza, crammed with high-flown, mock-romantic episodes. Cherry Wilkinson, as the result of a surfeit of romances, perhaps including *The Misanthropic Parent or The Guarded Secret* (1807), by Miss Smith, deserts her real father—a worthy farmer—to look for more aristocratic parents. As he is not picturesque enough for a villain, she repudiates him with scorn: "Have you the gaunt ferocity of famine in your

countenance? Can you darken the midnight with a scowl? Have you the quivering lip and the Schedoniac contour? In a word, are you a picturesque villain full of plot and horror and magnificent wickedness? Ah! no, sir, you are only a sleek, good-humoured, chuckle-headed, old gentleman." In the course of her search she meets with amazing adventures, which she describes in a series of letters to her governess. She changes her name to Cherubina de Willoughby, and journeys to London, where, mistaking Covent Garden Theatre for an ancient castle, she throws herself on the protection of a third-rate actor, Grundy. He readily falls in with her humour, assuming the name of Montmorenci, and a suit of tin armour and a plumed helmet for her delight. Later, Cherubina is entertained by Lady Gwyn, who, for the amusement of her guests, heartlessly indulges her propensity for the romantic, and poses as her aunt. She is introduced in a gruesome scene, which recalls the fate of Agnes in Lewis's *Monk*, to her supposed mother, Lady Hysterica Belamour, whose memoirs, under the title *Il Castello di Grimgothico*, are inserted, after the manner of Mrs. Radcliffe and M.G. Lewis, who love an inset tale, into the midst of the heroine's adventures. Cherubina determines to live in an abandoned castle, and gathers a band of vassals. These include Jerry, the lively retainer, inherited from a long line of comic servants, of whom Sancho Panza is a famous example, and Higginson, a struggling poet, who in virtue of his office of

minstrel, addresses the mob, beginning his harangue with the time-honoured apology: "Unaccustomed as I am to public speaking." The story ends with the return of Cherubina to real life, where she is eventually restored to her father and to Stuart. The incidents, which follow one another in rapid succession, are foolish and extravagant, but the reminiscences they awaken lend them piquancy. The trappings and furniture of a dozen Gothic castles are here accumulated in generous profusion. Mouldering manuscripts, antique beds of decayed damask, a four-horsed barouche, and fluttering tapestry rejoice the heart of Cherubina, for each item in this curious medley revives moving associations in a mind nourished on the Radcliffe school. When Cherubina visits a shop she buys a diamond cross, which at once turns our thoughts to *The Sicilian Romance*. In Westminster Abbey she is disappointed to find "no cowled monks with scapulars"—a phrase which flashes across our memory the sinister figure of Schedoni in *The Italian*. At the masquerade she plans to wear a Tuscan dress from *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, and, when furnishing Monkton Castle she bids Jerry, the Irish comic servant, bring "flags stained with the best old blood—feudal, if possible, an old lute, lyre or harp, black hangings, curtains, and a velvet pall." Even the banditti and condottieri, who enliven so many novels of terror, cannot be ignored, and are represented by a troop of Irish ruffians. Barrett lets nothing escape him. Rousseau's theories are irreverently travestied. The thunder rolls "in an awful

and Ossianly manner"; the sun, "that well-known gilder of eastern turrets," rises in empurpled splendour; the hero utters tremendous imprecations, ejaculates superlatives or frames elaborately poised, Johnsonian periods; the heroine excels in cheap but glittering repartee, wears "spangled muslin," and has "practised tripping, gliding, flitting, and tottering, with great success." Shreds and patches torn with a ruthless, masculine hand from the flimsy tapestry of romance, fitted together in a new and amusing pattern, are exhibited for our derision. The caricature is entertaining in itself, and would probably be enjoyed by those who are unfamiliar with the romances ridiculed; but the interest of identifying the booty, which Barrett rifles unceremoniously from his victims, is a fascinating pastime.

Miss Austen, with her swift stiletto, and Barrett, with his brutal bludgeon—to use a metaphor of "terror"—had each delivered an attack; and in 1818, if we may judge by Peacock's *Nightmare Abbey*, there is a change of fashion in fiction. How far this change is due to the satirists it is impossible to determine. Mr. Flosky, "who has seen too many ghosts himself to believe in their external appearance," through whose lips Peacock reviles "that part of the reading public which shuns the solid food of reason," probably gives the true cause for the waning popularity of the novel of terror:

> "It lived upon ghosts, goblins and skeletons till even the devil himself … became too base,

> common and popular for its surfeited appetite. The ghosts have therefore been laid, and the devil has been cast into outer darkness."

The novel of terror has been destroyed not by its enemies but by its too ardent devotees. The horrid banquet, devoured with avidity for so many years, has become so highly seasoned that the jaded palate at last cries out for something different, and, according to Peacock, finds what it desires in "the vices and blackest passions of our nature tricked out in a masquerade dress of heroism and disappointed benevolence"—an uncomplimentary description of the Byronic hero. Yet sensational fiction has lingered on side by side with other forms of fiction all through the nineteenth century, because it supplies a human and natural craving for excitement. It may not be the dominant type, but it will always exist, and will produce its thrill by ever-varying devices. Those who scoff may be taken unawares, like the company in *Nightmare Abbey*. The conversation turned on the subject of ghosts, and Mr. Larynx related his delightfully compact ghost story:

> "I once saw a ghost myself in my study, which is the last place any one but a ghost would look for me. I had not been in it for three months and was going to consult Tillotson, when, on opening the door, I saw a venerable figure in a flannel dressing-gown, sitting in my armchair, reading my Jeremy Taylor. It vanished in a moment, and so did I,

> and what it was and what it wanted, I have never been able to ascertain"

—a quieter, more inoffensive ghost than that described by Defoe in his *Essay on the History and Reality of Apparitions*: "A grave, ancient man, with a full-bottomed wig and a rich brocaded gown, who changed into the most horrible monster that ever was seen, with eyes like two fiery daggers red-hot." Mr. Flosky and Mr. Hilary have hardly declared their disbelief in ghosts when:

> "The door silently opened, and a ghastly figure, shrouded in white drapery with the semblance of a bloody turban on its head, entered and stalked slowly up the apartment. Mr. Flosky was not prepared for this apparition, and made the best of his way out at the opposite door. Mr. Hilary and Marionetta followed screaming. The honourable Mr. Listless, by two turns of his body, first rolled off the sofa and then under it. Rev. Mr. Larynx leaped up and fled with so much precipitation that he overturned the table on the foot of Mr. Glowry. Mr. Glowry roared with pain in the ears of Mr. Toobad. Mr. Toobad's alarm so bewildered his senses that missing the door he threw up one of the windows, jumped out in his panic, and plunged over head and ears in the moat. Mr. Asterias and his son, who were on the watch for their mermaid, were attracted by the

> splashing, threw a net over him, and dragged him to land."

In Melincourt Castle a very spacious wing was left free to the settlement of a colony of ghosts, and the Rev. Mr. Portpipe often passed the night in one of the dreaded apartments over a blazing fire, with the same invariable exorcising apparatus of a large venison pasty, a little prayer-book, and three bottles of Madeira. Yet despite this excellent mockery, Peacock in *Gryll Grange* devotes a chapter to tales of terror and wonder, singling out the works of Charles Brockden Brown for praise, especially his *Wieland*, "one of the few tales in which the final explanation of the apparently supernatural does not destroy or diminish the original effect."

The title *Nightmare Abbey* in a catalogue would undoubtedly have caught the eye of Isabella Thorp or her friend Miss Andrews, searching eagerly for "horrid mysteries," but they would perhaps have detected the note of mockery in the name. They would, however, have been completely deceived by the title, *The Mystery of the Abbey*, published in Liverpool in 1819 by T.B. Johnson, and we can imagine their consternation and disgust on the arrival of the book from the circulating library. The abbey is "haunted" by the proprietors of a distillery; and the spectre, described in horrible detail, proves to be a harmless idiot, with a red handkerchief round her neck. Apart from these gibes, there is not a hint of the supernatural in the whole book. It is a

picaresque novel, written by a sportsman. The title is merely a hoax.

Belinda Waters, the heroine of one of Crabbe's tales, who was "by nature negatively good," is a portrait after Miss Austen's own heart. Languidly reclining on her sofa with "half a shelf of circulating books" on a table at her elbow, Belinda tosses wearily aside a half-read volume of *Clarissa*, commended by her maid, "who had *Clarissa* for her heart's dear friend."

"Give me," she said, "for I would laugh or cry,
'Scenes from the Life,' and 'Sensibility,'
'Winters at Bath': I would that I had one!
'The Constant Lover,' 'The Discarded Son,'[101]

"'The Rose of Raby,'[102] 'Delmore,' or 'The Nun'[103]—
These promise something, and may please, perhaps,
Like 'Ethelinda'[104] and the dear 'Relapse.'[105]
To these her heart the gentle maid resigned
And such the food that fed the gentle mind."

But even the "delicate distress" of heroines, like Niobe, all tears, palls at last, and Belinda, having wept her fill, craves now for "sterner stuff."

"Yet tales of terror are her dear delight,
All in the wintry storm to read at night."

In *The Preceptor Husband*,[106] the pretty wife, whose notions of botany are delightfully vague, and

who, in English history, light-heartedly confuses the Reformation and the Revolution, has tastes similar to those of Belinda. Pursued by an instructive husband, she turns at bay, and tells her priggish preceptor what kind of books she really enjoys:

"Well, if I must, I will my studies name,
Blame if you please—I know you love to blame—
When all our childish books were set apart,
The first I read was 'Wanderings of the Heart.'[107]
It was a story where was done a deed
So dreadful that alone I feared to read.
The next was 'The Confessions of a Nun'—
'Twas quite a shame such evils should be done.
Nun of—no matter for the creature's name,
For there are girls no nunnery can tame.
Then was the story of the Haunted Hall,
When the huge picture nodded from the wall,

"When the old lord looked up with trembling dread,
And I grew pale and shuddered as I read.
Then came the tales of Winters, Summers, Springs
At Bath and Brighton—they were pretty things!
No ghosts or spectres there were heard or seen,
But all was love and flight to Gretna-green.
Perhaps your greater learning may despise
What others like—and there your wisdom lies."

To this attractive catalogue the preceptor husband, no doubt, listened with the expression of Crabbe's *Old Bachelor*:

"that kind of cool, contemptuous smile
Of witty persons overcharged with bile,"

but she at least succeeds in interrupting his flow of information for the time being. He retires routed. Crabbe's close acquaintance with "the flowery pages of sublime distress," with "vengeful monks who play unpriestly tricks," with banditti

"who, in forest wide Or cavern vast,
indignant virgins hide,"

was, as he confesses, a relic of those unregenerate days, when

"To the heroine's soul-distracting fears
I early gave my sixpences and tears."[108]

He could have groped his way through a Gothic castle without the aid of a talkative housekeeper:

"I've watched a wintry night on castle-walls,
I've stalked by moonlight through deserted halls,
And when the weary world was sunk to rest
I've had such sights—as may not be expressed.
Lo! that chateau, the western tower decayed,
The peasants shun it—they are all afraid;
For there was done a deed—could walls reveal
Or timbers tell it, how the heart would feel!

"Most horrid was it—for, behold, the floor
Has stain of blood—and will be clean no more.
Hark to the winds! which through the wide saloon

And the long passage send a dismal tune,
Music that ghosts delight in—and now heed
Yon beauteous nymph, who must unmask the deed.
See! with majestic sweep she swims alone
Through rooms, all dreary, guided by a groan,
Though windows rattle and though tap'stries shake
And the feet falter every step they take.
Mid groans and gibing sprites she silent goes
To find a something which will soon expose
The villainies and wiles of her determined foes,
And having thus adventured, thus endured,
Fame, wealth, and lover, are for life secured."[109]

Crabbe's Ellen Orford in *The Borough* (1810) is drawn from life, and in grim and bitter irony is intended as a contrast to these timorous and triumphant creatures

> "borrowed and again conveyed,
> From book to book, the shadows of a shade."

Ellen's adventures are sordid and gloomy, without a hint of the picturesque, her distresses horrible actualities, not the "air-drawn" fancies that torture the sensitive Angelinas of Gothic fiction:

"But not like them has she been laid
In ruined castle sore dismayed,
Where naughty man and ghostly sprite
Fill'd her pure mind with awe and dread,
Stalked round the room, put out the light

And shook the curtains round the bed.
No cruel uncle kept her land,
No tyrant father forced her hand;
She had no vixen virgin aunt
Without whose aid she could not eat
And yet who poisoned all her meat
With gibe and sneer and taunt."

Though Crabbe showed scant sympathy with the delicate sensibilities of girls who hung enraptured over the high-pitched heroics and miraculous escapes of Clementina and her kindred, he found pleasure in a robuster school of romance—the adventures of mighty Hickathrift, Jack the Giant-killer, and Robin Hood, as set forth and embellished in the chapbooks which cottagers treasured "on the deal shelf beside the cuckoo-clock."[110] And in his poem, *Sir Eustace Grey*, he presents with subtle art a mind tormented by terror.

CHAPTER VIII - SCOTT AND THE NOVEL OF TERROR.

In 1775 we find Miss Lydia Languish's maid ransacking the circulating libraries of Bath, and

concealing under her cloak novels of sensibility and of fashionable scandal. Some twenty years later, in the self-same city, Catherine Morland is "lost from all worldly concerns of dressing or dinner over the pages of *Udolpho*," and Isabella Thorpe is collecting in her pocket-book the "horrid" titles of romances from the German. In 1814, apparently, the vogue of the sentimental, the scandalous, the mysterious, and the horrid still persisted. Scott, in the introductory chapter to *Waverley*, disrespectfully passes in review the modish novels, which, as it proved, were doomed to be supplanted by the series of romances he was then beginning:

"Had I announced in my frontispiece, 'Waverley, A Tale of Other Days,' must not every novel reader have anticipated a castle scarce less than that of Udolpho, of which the eastern wing has been long uninhabited, and the keys either lost or consigned to the care of some aged butler or housekeeper, whose trembling steps about the middle of the second volume were doomed to guide the hero or heroine to the ruinous precincts? Would not the owl have shrieked and the cricket cried in my very title page? and could it have been possible to me with a moderate attention to decorum to introduce any scene more lively than might be produced by the jocularity of a clownish but faithful valet or the garrulous narrative of the heroine's *fille-de-chambre*, when rehearsing the stories of blood and horror which she had heard in the servant's hall? Again, had

my title borne 'Waverley, a Romance from the German,' what head so obtuse as not to image forth a profligate abbot, an oppressive duke, a secret and mysterious association of Rosycrucians and Illuminati, with all their properties of black cowls, caverns, daggers, electrical machines, trap-doors and dark lanterns? Or, if I had rather chosen to call my work, 'A Sentimental Tale,' would it not have been a sufficient presage of a heroine with a profusion of auburn hair, and a harp, the soft solace of her solitary hours, which she fortunately always finds means of transporting from castle to cottage, though she herself be sometimes obliged to jump out of a two-pair-of-stairs window and is more than once bewildered on her journey, alone and on foot, without any guide but a blowsy peasant girl, whose jargon she can scarcely understand? Or again, if my *Waverley* had been entitled 'A Tale of the Times,' wouldst thou not, gentle reader, have demanded from me a dashing sketch of the fashionable world, a few anecdotes of private scandal … a heroine from Grosvenor Square, and a hero from the Barouche Club or the Four in Hand, with a set of subordinate characters from the elegantes of Queen Anne Street, East, or the dashing heroes of the Bow Street Office?"

Yet Scott himself had once trodden in these well-worn paths of romance. In the general preface to the collected edition of 1829, wherein he seeks to "ravel out his weaved-up follies," he refers to "a tale of chivalry planned thirty years earlier in the style of

The Castle of Otranto, with plenty of Border characters and supernatural incident." His outline of the plot and a fragment of the story, which was to be entitled *Thomas the Rhymer*, are printed as an appendix to the preface. Scott intended to base his story on an ancient legend, found in Reginald Scot's *Discovery of Witchcraft*, concerning the horn and sword of Thomas of Hercildoune. Cannobie Dick, a jolly horse-cowper, was led by a mysterious stranger through an opening in a hillside into a long range of stables. In every stall stood a coal-black horse, and by every horse lay a knight in coal-black armour, with a drawn sword in his hand. All were as still and silent as if hewn out of marble. At the far end of a gloomy hall, illuminated, like the halls of Eblis, only by torches, there lay, upon an ancient table, a horn and a sword. A voice bade Dick try his courage, warning him that much depended upon his first choosing either the horn or the sword. Dick, whose stout heart quailed before the supernatural terrors of the hall, attempted to blow the horn before unsheathing the sword. At the first feeble blast the warriors and their steeds started to life, the knights fiercely brandishing their weapons and clashing their armour. Dick made a fruitless attempt to snatch the sword. After a mysterious voice had pronounced his doom he was hurled out of the hall by a whirlwind of irresistible fury. He told his story to the shepherds, who found him dying on the cold hill side.

Regarding this legend as "an unhappy foundation

for a prose story," Scott did not complete his fragment, which in style and treatment is not unlike the Gothic experiments of Mrs. Barbauld and Dr. Nathan Drake. Such a story as that of the magic horn and sword might have been told in the simple words that occur naturally to a shepherd, "warmed to courage over his third tumbler," like the old peasant to whom Stevenson entrusts the terrible tale of *Thrawn Janet*, or to Wandering Willie, who declared:

> "I whiles mak a tale serve the turn among the country bodies, and I have some fearsome anes, that mak the auld carlines shake on the settle, and bits o' bairns skirl on their minnies out frae their beds."

The personality of the narrator, swayed by the terror of his tale, would have cast the spell that Scott's carefully framed sentences fail to create. Another of Scott's *disjecta membra*, composed at the end of the eighteenth century, is the opening of a story called *The Lord of Ennerdale*, in which the family of Ratcliffe settle down before the fire to listen to a story "savouring not a little of the marvellous." As Lady Ratcliffe and her daughters

> "had heard every groan and lifted every trapdoor in company with the noted heroine of Udolpho, had valorously mounted *en croupe* behind the horseman of Prague through all his seven translators, had followed the footsteps of Moor through the forests of Bohemia,"

and were even suspected of an acquaintance with Lewis's *Monk*, Scott was setting himself no easy task when he undertook to thrill these seasoned adventurers. After this prologue, which leads one to expect a banquet of horrors, only a very brief fragment of the story is forthcoming. Though he gently derides Lady Ratcliffe's literary tastes, Scott, too, was an admirer of Mrs. Radcliffe's novels, and had been so entranced by Burger's *Lenore* that he attempted an English version.[111] It was after hearing Taylor's translation of this ballad read aloud that he uttered his dismal ejaculation: "I wish to heaven I could get a skull and two crossbones"—a whim that was speedily gratified. He, too, like Lady Ratcliffe, had read *Die Räuber*; and he translated Goethe's *Gëtz von Berlichingen*. He delighted in Lewis's *Tales of Wonder* (1801) where the verse gallops through horrors so fearful that the "lights in the chamber burn blue," and himself contributed to the collection. He wrote "goblin dramas"[112] as terrific in intention, but not in performance, as Lewis's *Castle Spectre* and Maturin's *Bertram*. His Latin call-thesis dealt with the kind of subject "Monk" Lewis or Harrison Ainsworth or Poe might have chosen—the disposal of the dead bodies of persons legally executed. Scott continually added to his store of quaint and grisly learning both from popular tradition and from a library of such works as Bovet's *Pandemonium, or the Devil's Cloyster Opened*, Sinclair's *Satan's Invisible World Discovered*, whence he borrowed the name of the jackanapes in *Wandering*

Willie's Tale, and the horse-shoe frown for the brow of the Redgauntlets, Heywood's *Hierarchy of the Blessed Angels*, Joseph Taylor's *History of Apparitions*, from which he quotes in *Woodstock*. He was familiar with all the niceties of ghostly etiquette; he could distinguish at a glance the various ranks and orders of demons and spirits; he was versed in charms and spells; he knew exactly how a wizard ought to be dressed. This lore not only stood him in good stead when he compiled his *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft* (1830), but served to adorn his poems and novels. There was nothing unhealthy in his attitude towards the spectral world. At an inn he slept soundly in one bed of a double room, while a dead man occupied the other. Twice in his life he confessed to having felt "eerie"—once at Glamis Castle, which was said to be haunted by a Presence in a Secret Chamber, and once when he believed that he saw an apparition on his way home in the twilight; but he usually jests cheerfully when he speaks of the supernatural. He was interested in tracing the sources of terror and in studying the mechanism of ghost stories.

The axioms which he lays down are sound and suggestive:

> "Ghosts should not appear too often or become too chatty. The magician shall evoke no spirits, whom he is not capable of endowing with manners and language corresponding to their supernatural character.

> Perhaps, to be circumstantial and abundant in minute detail and in one word … to be somewhat prosy, is the secret mode of securing a certain necessary degree of credulity from the hearers of a ghost story… The chord which vibrates and sounds at a touch remains in silent tension under continued pressure."[113]

Scott's ghost story, *The Tapestried Chamber, or the Lady in the Sacque*[114] which he heard from Miss Anna Seward, who had an unexpected gift for recounting such things at country house parties, gives the impression of being carefully planned according to rule. As a human being the Lady in the Sacque had a black record, but, considered dispassionately as a ghost, her manners and deportment are irreproachable. The ghost-seer's independence of character are so firmly insisted upon that it seems impertinent to doubt the veracity of his story. *My Aunt Margaret's Mirror* was told to Scott in childhood by an ancient spinster, whose pleasing fancy it was to read alone in her chamber by the light of a taper fixed in a candlestick which she had formed out of a human skull, and who was learned in superstitious lore. She describes accurately the mood, when "the female imagination is in due temperature to enjoy a ghost story":

> "All that is indispensable for the enjoyment of the milder feeling of supernatural awe is that you should be susceptible of the slight

> shuddering which creeps over you when you hear a tale of terror—that well-vouched tale which the narrator, having first expressed his general disbelief of all such legendary lore, selects and produces, as having something in it which he has been always obliged to give up as inexplicable. Another symptom is a momentary hesitation to look round you, when the interest of the narrative is at the highest; and the third, a desire to avoid looking into a mirror, when you are alone, in your chamber, for the evening."[115]

In her story "Aunt Margaret" describes how, in a magic mirror belonging to Dr. Baptista Damiotti, Lady Bothwell and her sister Lady Forester see the wedding ceremony of Sir Philip Forester and a young girl in a foreign city interrupted by Lady Forester's brother, who is slain in the duel that ensues. Scott regarded these two stories as trifles designed to while away a leisure hour. On *Wandering Willie's Tale*—a masterpiece of supernatural terror—he bestowed unusual care. The ill fa'urd, fearsome couple—Sir Robert with his face "gash and ghastly as Satan's," and "Major Weir," the jackanape, in his red-laced coat and wig—Steenie's eerie encounter with the "stranger" on horseback, the ribald crew of feasters in the hall are described so faithfully and in such vivid phrases that it is no wonder Willie should remark at one point of the story: "I almost think I was there mysell, though I couldna be born at the same time."

The power of the tale, which fascinates us from beginning to end and which can be read again and again with renewed pleasure, depends partly on Wandering Willie's gifts as a narrator, partly on the emotions that stir him as he talks. With unconscious art, he always uses the right word in his descriptions, and chooses those details that help us to fix the rapidly changing imagery of his scenes; and he reproduces exactly the natural dialogue of the speakers. He begins in a tone of calm, unhurried narration, with only a hint of fear in his voice, but, at the death of Sir Robert, grows breathless with horror and excitement. The uncanny incident of the silver whistle that sounds from the dead man's chamber is skilfully followed by a matter-of-fact account of Steenie's dealings with the new laird. The emotion culminates in the terror of the hall of ghastly revellers, whose wild shrieks "made Willie's gudesire's very nails grow blue and chilled the marrow in his banes." So lifelike is the scene, so full of colour and movement, that Steenie's descendants might well believe that their gudesire, like Dante, had seen Hell.

The notes, introductions and appendices to Scott's works are stored with material for novels of terror. The notes to *Marmion*, for instance, contain references to a necromantic priest whose story "much resembles that of Ambrosio in the *Monk*," to an "Elfin" warrior and to a chest of treasure jealously guarded for a century by the Devil in the likeness of

a huntsman. In *The Lady of the Lake* there is a note on the ancient legend of the Phantom Sire, in *Rokeby* there is an allusion to the Demon Frigate wandering under a curse from harbour to harbour. To Scott "bogle-wark" was merely a diversion. He did not choose to make it the mainspring either of his poems or his romances. In *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* he had, indeed, intended to make the Goblin Page play a leading part, but the imp, as Scott remarked to Miss Seward, "by the natural baseness of his propensities contrived to slink downstairs into the kitchen." The White Lady of Avenel, who appears in *The Monastery* (1830)—a boisterous creature who rides on horseback, splashes through streams and digs a grave—was wisely withdrawn in the sequel, *The Abbot*. In the Introduction Scott states:

> "The White Lady is scarcely supposed to have possessed either the power or the inclination to do more than inflict terror or create embarrassment, and is always subjected by those mortals who … could assert superiority over her."

The only apology Scott could offer to the critics who derided his wraith was that the readers "ought to allow for the capriccios of what is after all but a better sort of goblin." She was suggested by the Undine of De La Motte Fouqué. In his next novel, *The Fortunes of Nigel*, Scott formally renounced the mystic and the magical: "Not a Cock Lane scratch—not one bounce on the drum of Tedworth—not so much as

the poor tick of a solitary death-watch in the wainscot." But Scott cannot banish spectres so lightly from his imagination. Apparitions—such as the Bodach Glas who warns Fergus M'Ivor of his approaching death in *Waverley*, or the wraith of a Highlander in a white cockade who is seen on the battlefield in *The Legend of Montrose*—had appeared in his earlier novels, and others appear again and again later. In *The Bride of Lammermoor*—the only one of Scott's novels which might fitly be called a "tale of terror"—the atmosphere of horror and the sense of overhanging calamity effectually prepare our minds for the supernatural, and the wraith of old Alice who appears to the master of Ravenswood is strangely solemn and impressive. But even more terrible is the description of the three hags laying out her corpse. The appearance of Vanda with the Bloody Finger in the haunted chamber of the Saxon manor in *The Betrothed* is skilfully arranged, and Eveline's terror is described with convincing reality. In *Woodstock*, Scott adopted the method of explaining away the apparently supernatural, although in his *Lives of the Novelists* he expressly disapproves of what he calls the "precaution of Snug the joiner." Charged by Ballantyne with imitating Mrs. Radcliffe, Scott defended himself by asserting:

> "My object is not to excite fear of supernatural things in my reader, but to show the effect of such fear upon the agents of the story—one a man in sense and firmness, one a

> man unhinged by remorse, one a stupid, unenquiring clown, one a learned and worthy but superstitious divine."[116]

As Scott in his introduction quotes the passage from a treatise entitled *The Secret History of the Good Devil of Woodstock*, which reveals that the mysteries were performed by one Joseph Collins with the aid of two friends, a concealed trap-door and a pound of gunpowder, he cannot justly be accused of deceiving his readers. There are suggestions of Mrs. Radcliffe's method in others of his novels. In *The Antiquary*, before Lovel retires to the Green Room at Monkbar, he is warned by Miss Griselda Oldbuck of a "well-fa'urd auld gentleman in a queer old-fashioned dress with whiskers turned upward on his upper lip as long as baudrons," who is wont to appear at one's bedside. He falls into an uneasy slumber, and in the middle of the night is startled to see a green huntsman leave the tapestry and turn into the "well-fa'urd auld gentleman" before his very eyes. In *Old Mortality*, Edith Bellenden mistakes her lover for his apparition, just as one of Mrs. Radcliffe's heroines might have done. In *Peveril of the Peak*, Fenella's communications with the hero in his prison, when he mistakes her voice for that of a spirit, have an air of Gothic mystery. The awe-inspiring villain, who appears in *Marmion* and *Rokeby*, may be distinguished by his scowl, his passion-lined face and gleaming eye. Rashleigh, in *Rob Roy*, who, understanding Greek, Latin and Hebrew, "need not care for ghaist or

barghaist, devil or dobbie," and whose sequestered apartment the servants durst not approach at nightfall for "fear of bogles and brownies and lang-nebbit things frae the neist world," is of the same lineage. Sir Robert Redgauntlet, too, might have stepped out of one of Mrs. Radcliffe's romances. His niece is not unlike one of her heroines. She speaks in the very accents of Emily when she says:

> "Now I have still so much of our family spirit as enables me to be as composed in danger as most of my sex, and upon two occasions in the course of our journey—a threatened attack by banditti, and the overturn of our carriage—I had the fortune so to conduct myself as to convey to my uncle a very favourable idea of my intrepidity."

Jeanie Deans, the most admirable and the most skilfully drawn of Scott's women, is a daring contrast to the traditional heroine of romance. The "delicate distresses" of persecuted Emilies shrink into insignificance amid the tragedy and comedy of actual life portrayed in The Waverley Novels. The tyrannical marquises, vindictive stepmothers, dark-browed villains, scheming monks, chattering domestics and fierce banditti are thrust aside by a motley crowd of living beings—soldiers, lawyers, smugglers, gypsies, shepherds, outlaws and beggars. The wax-work figures, guaranteed to thrill with nervous suspense or overflow with sensibility at the appropriate moments, are replaced by real folk like

"Old Mortality," Andrew Fairservice, Dugald Dalgetty and Peter Peebles, whose humour and pathos are those of our own world. The historical background, faint, misty and unreal in Mrs. Radcliffe's novels, becomes, in those of Scott, arresting and substantial. The grave, artificial dialogue in which Mrs. Radcliffe's characters habitually discourse descends to some of Scott's personages, but is often exchanged for the natural idiom of simple people. The Gothic abbey, dropped down in an uncertain, haphazard fashion, in some foreign land, is deserted for huts, barns inns, cottages and castles, solidly built on Scottish soil. We leave the mouldy air of the subterranean vault for the keen winds of the moorland. The terrors of the invisible world only fill the stray corners of his huge scene. He creates romance out of the stuff of real life.

CHAPTER IX - LATER DEVELOPMENTS OF THE TALE OF TERROR.

As the novel of terror passes from the hands of Mrs. Radcliffe to those of "Monk" Lewis, Maturin and their imitators, there is a crashing crescendo of emotion.

The villain's sardonic smile is replaced by wild outbursts of diabolical laughter, his scowl grows darker and darker, and as his designs become more bloody and more dangerous, his victims no longer sigh plaintively, but give utterance to piercing shrieks and despairing yells; tearful Amandas are unceremoniously thrust into the background by vindictive Matildas, whose passions rage in all their primitive savagery; the fearful ghost "fresh courage takes," and stands forth audaciously in the light of day; the very devil stalks shamelessly abroad in manifold disguises. We are caught up from first to last in the very tempest, torrent and whirlwind of passion. When the novel of terror thus throws restraint to the winds, outrageously o'ersteps the modesty of nature and indulges in a farrago of frightfulness, it begins to defeat its own purposes and to fail in its object of freezing the blood. The limit of human endurance has been reached—and passed. Emphasis and exaggeration have done their worst. Battle, murder, and sudden death—even spectres and fiends—can appal no more. If the old thrill is to be evoked again, the application of more ingenious methods is needed.

Such novels as Maturin's *Family of Montorio*, though "full of sound and fury," fail piteously to vibrate the chords of terror, which had trembled beneath Mrs. Radcliffe's gentle fingers. The instrument, smitten forcibly, repeatedly, desperately, resounds not with the answering note expected, but

with an ugly, metallic jangle. *Melmoth the Wanderer*, Maturin's extraordinary masterpiece, was to prove—as late as 1820—that there were chords in the orchestra of horror as yet unsounded; but in 1816, when Mary Shelley and her companions set themselves to compose supernatural stories, it was wise to dispense with the shrieking chorus of malevolent abbesses, diabolical monks, intriguing marquises, Wandering Jews or bleeding spectres, who had been so grievously overworked in previous performances. Dr. Polidori's skull-headed lady, Byron's vampire-gentleman, Mrs. Shelley's man-created monster—a grotesque and gruesome trio—had at least the attraction of novelty. It is indeed remarkable that so young and inexperienced a writer as Mary Shelley, who was only nineteen when she wrote *Frankenstein*, should betray so slight a dependence on her predecessors. It is evident from the records of her reading that the novel of terror in all its guises was familiar to her. She had beheld the majestic horror of the halls of Eblis; she had threaded her way through Mrs. Radcliffe's artfully constructed Gothic castles; she had braved the terrors of the German Ritter-, Räuber- und Schauer-Romane; she had assisted, fearful, at Lewis's midnight diablerie; she had patiently unravelled the "mystery" novels of Godwin and of Charles Brockden Brown. [117] Yet, despite this intimate knowledge of the terrible and supernatural in fiction, Mrs. Shelley's theme and her way of handling it are completely her own. In an "acute mental vision," as real as the

visions of Blake and of Shelley, she beheld her monster and the "pale student of unhallowed arts" who had created him, and then set herself to reproduce the thrill of horror inspired by her waking dream. *Frankenstein* has, indeed, been compared to Godwin's *St. Leon*, but the resemblance is so vague and superficial, and *Frankenstein* so immeasurably superior, that Mrs. Shelley's debt to her father is negligible. St. Leon accepts the gift of immortality, Frankenstein creates a new life, and in both novels the main interest lies in tracing the effect of the experiment on the soul of the man, who has pursued scientific inquiry beyond legitimate limits. But apart from this, there is little resemblance. Godwin chose the supernatural, because it chanced to be popular, and laboriously built up a cumbrous edifice, completing it by a sheer effort of will-power. His daughter, with an imagination naturally more attuned to the gruesome and fantastic, writes, when once she has wound her way into the heart of the story, in a mood of breathless excitement that drives the reader forward with feverish apprehension.

The name of Mrs. Shelley's *Frankenstein* is far-famed; but the book itself, overshadowed perhaps by its literary associations, seems to have withdrawn into the vast library of famous works that are more often mentioned than read. The very fact that the name is often bestowed on the monster instead of his creator seems to suggest that many are content to accept Mrs. Shelley's "hideous phantom" on hearsay

evidence rather than encounter for themselves the terrors of his presence. The story deserves a happier fate, for, if it be read in the spirit of willing surrender that a theme so impossible demands, it has still power momentarily "to make the reader dread to look round, to curdle the blood and to quicken the beatings of the heart." The record of the composition of *Frankenstein* has been so often reiterated that it is probably better known than the tale itself. In the summer of 1816—when the Shelleys were the neighbours of Byron near Lake Geneva—Byron, Shelley, Mary Shelley and Dr. Polidori, after reading some volumes of ghost stories[118] and discussing the supernatural and its manifestations, each agreed to write a ghost story. It has been asserted that an interest in spectres was stimulated by a visit from "Monk" Lewis, but we have evidence that Mrs. Shelley was already writing her story in June,[119] and that Lewis did not arrive at the Villa Diodati till August 14th.[120] The conversation with him about ghosts took place four days later. Shelley's story, based on the experiences of his early youth, was never completed. Byron's fragment formed the basis of Dr. Polidori's *Vampyre*. Dr. Polidori states that his supernatural novel, *Ernestus Berchtold*, was begun at this time; but the skull-headed lady, alluded to by Mary Shelley as figuring in Polidori's story, is disappointingly absent. It was an argument between Byron and Shelley about Erasmus Darwin's theories that brought before Mary Shelley's sleepless eyes the vision of the monster miraculously infused by its

creator with the spark of life. *Frankenstein* was begun immediately, completed in May, 1817, and published in 1818.

Mrs. Shelley has been censured for setting her tale in a clumsy framework, but she tells us in her preface that she began with the words: "It was on a dreary night of November." This sentence now stands at the opening of Chapter IV., where the plot begins to grip our imagination; and it seems not unfair to assume that the introductory letters and the first four chapters, which contain a tedious and largely unnecessary account of Frankenstein's early life, were written in deference to Shelley's plea that the idea should be developed at greater length, and did not form part of her original plan. The uninteresting student, Robert Walton, to whom Frankenstein, discovered dying among icebergs, tells his story, is obviously an afterthought. If Mrs. Shelley had abandoned the awkward contrivance of putting the narrative into the form of a dying man's confession, reported verbatim in a series of letters, and had opened her story, as she apparently intended, at the point where Frankenstein, after weary years of research, succeeds in creating a living being, her novel would have gained in force and intensity. From that moment it holds us fascinated. It is true that the tension relaxes from time to time, that the monster's strange education and the Godwinian precepts that fall so incongruously from his lips tend to excite our mirth, but, though we are mildly amused, we are no

longer merely bored. Even the protracted descriptions of domestic life assume a new and deeper meaning, for the shadow of the monster broods over them. One by one those whom Frankenstein loves fall victims to the malice of the being he has endowed with life. Unceasingly and unrelentingly the loathsome creature dogs our imagination, more awful when he lurks unseen than when he stands actually before us. With hideous malignity he slays Frankenstein's young brother, and by a fiendish device causes Justine, an innocent girl, to be executed for the crime. Yet ere long our sympathy, which has hitherto been entirely with Frankenstein, is unexpectedly diverted to the monster who, it would seem, is wicked only because he is eternally divorced from human society. Amid the magnificent scenery of the Valley of Chamounix he appears before his creator, and tells the story of his wretched life, pleading: "Everywhere I see bliss from which I alone am irrevocably excluded. I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous."

He describes how his physical ugliness repels human beings, who fail to realise his benevolent intentions. A father snatches from his arms the child he has rescued from death; the virtuous family, whom he admires and would fain serve, flee affrighted from his presence. To educate the monster, so that his thoughts and emotions may become articulate, and, incidentally, to accentuate his

isolation from society, Mrs. Shelley inserts a complicated story about an Arabian girl, Sofie, whose lover teaches her to read from Plutarch's *Lives*, Volney's *Ruins of Empire, The Sorrows of Werther*, and *Paradise Lost*. The monster overhears the lessons, and ponders on this unique library, but, as he pleads his own cause the more eloquently because he knows Satan's passionate outbursts of defiance and self-pity, who would cavil at the method by which he is made to acquire his knowledge? "The cold stars shone in mockery, and the bare trees waved their branches above me; now and then the sweet voice of a bird burst forth amidst the universal stillness. All save I were at rest or in enjoyment. I, like the arch fiend, bore a hell within me." And later, near the close of the book: "The fallen angel becomes a malignant devil. Yet even that enemy of God and man had friends and associates in his desolation; I am alone," His fate reminds us of that of *Alastor, the Spirit of Solitude*, who:

"Over the world wanders for ever
Lone as incarnate death."

After the long and moving recital of his woes, even the obdurate Frankenstein cannot resist the justice of his demand for a partner like himself. Yet when the student recoils with horror from his half-accomplished task and sees the creature maliciously peering through the window, our hatred leaps to life once more and burns fiercely as the monster adds to his crimes the murder of Clerval, Frankenstein's

dearest friend, and of Elizabeth on her wedding night. We follow with shuddering anticipation the long pursuit of the monster, expectant of a last, fearful encounter which shall decide the fate of the demon and his maker. Amid the region of eternal ice, Frankenstein catches sight of him; but fails to reach him. At last, beside the body of his last victim—Frankenstein himself—the creature is filled with remorse at the "frightful catalogue" of his sins, and makes a final bid for our sympathy in the farewell speech to Walton, before climbing on an ice-raft to be "borne away by the waves and lost in darkness and distance."

Like *Alastor*, *Frankenstein* was a plea for human sympathy, and was, according to Shelley's preface, intended "to exhibit the amiableness of domestic affection and the excellence of universal virtue." The monster has the perception and desire of goodness, but, by the circumstances of his abnormal existence, is delivered over to evil. It is this dual nature that prevents him from being a mere automaton. The monster indeed is far more real than the shadowy beings whom he pursues. Frankenstein is less an individual than a type, and only interests us through the emotions which his conflict with the monster arouses. Clerval, Elizabeth and Frankenstein's relatives are passive sufferers whose psychology does not concern us. Mrs. Shelley rightly lavishes her skill on the central figure of the book, and succeeds, as effectually as Frankenstein himself, in infusing into

him the spark of life. Mrs. Shelley's aim is to "awaken thrilling horror," and, incidentally, to "exhibit the excellence of domestic virtue," and for her purpose the demon is of paramount importance. The involved, complex plot of a novel seemed to pass beyond Mrs. Shelley's control. A short tale she could handle successfully, and Shelley was unwise in inciting her to expand *Frankenstein* into a long narrative. So long as she is completely carried away by her subject Mrs. Shelley writes clearly, but when she pauses to regard the progress of her story dispassionately, she seems to be overwhelmed by the wealth of her resources and to have no power of selecting the relevant details. The laborious introductory letters, the meticulous record of Frankenstein's education, the story of Felix and Sofie, the description of the tour through England before the creation of the second monster is attempted, are all connected with the main theme by very frail links and serve to distract our attention in an irritating fashion from what really interests us. In the novel of mystery a tantalising delay may be singularly effective. In a novel which depends chiefly for its effect on sheer horror, delays are merely dangerous. By resting her terrors on a pseudo-scientific basis and by placing her story in a definite locality, Mrs. Shelley waives her right to an entire suspension of disbelief. If it be reduced to its lowest terms, the plot of Frankenstein, with its bewildering confusion of the prosaic and the fantastic, sounds as crude, disjointed and inconsequent as that of a nightmare. Mrs.

Shelley's timid hesitation between imagination and reality, her attempt to reconcile incompatible things and to place a creature who belongs to no earthly land in familiar surroundings, prevents *Frankenstein* from being a wholly satisfactory and alarming novel of terror. She loves the fantastic, but she also fears it. She is weighted down by commonsense, and so flutters instead of soaring, unwilling to trust herself far from the material world. But the fact that she was able to vivify her grotesque skeleton of a plot with some degree of success is no mean tribute to her gifts. The energy and vigour of her style, her complete and serious absorption in her subject, carry us safely over many an absurdity. It is only in the duller stretches of the narrative, when her heart is not in her work, that her language becomes vague, indeterminate and blurred, and that she muffles her thoughts in words like "ascertain," "commencement," "peruse," "diffuse," instead of using their simpler Saxon equivalents. Stirred by the excitement of the events she describes, she can write forcibly in simple, direct language. She often frames short, hurried sentences such as a man would naturally utter when breathless with terror or with recollections of terror. The final impression that *Frankenstein* leaves with us is not easy to define, because the book is so uneven in quality. It is obviously the shapeless work of an immature writer who has had no experience in evolving a plot. Sometimes it is genuinely moving and impressive, but it continually falls abruptly and ludicrously short of its aim. Yet when all its faults

have been laid bare, the fact remains that few readers would abandon the story half-way through. Mrs. Shelley is so thoroughly engrossed in her theme that she impels her readers onward, even though they may think but meanly of her story as a work of art.

Mrs. Shelley's second novel, *Valperga, or the Life and Adventures of Castruccio, Prince of Lucca*, published in 1823, was a work on which she bestowed much care and labour, but the result proves that she writes best when the urgency of her imagination leaves her no leisure either to display her learning or adorn her style. She herself calls *Valperga* a "child of mighty slow growth," and Shelley adds that it was "raked out of fifty old books." Mrs. Shelley, always an industrious student, made a conscientious survey of original sources before fashioning her story of mediaeval Italy, and she is hampered by the exuberance of her knowledge. The novel is not a romance of terror; but Castruccio, though his character is sketched from authentic documents, seems towards the end of the story to resemble the picturesque villain who numbered among his ancestry Milton's Satan. He has "a majestic figure and a countenance beautiful but sad, and tarnished by the expression of pride that animated it." Beatrice, the gifted prophetess who falls deep in love with Castruccio, ends her days in the dungeons of the Inquisition. Mrs. Shelley's aim, however, is not to arouse fear, but to trace the gradual deterioration

of Castruccio's character from an open-hearted youth to a crafty tyrant. The blunt remarks of Godwin, who revised the manuscript, are not unjust, but fall with an ill grace from the pen of the author of *St. Leon*: "It appears in reading, that the first rule you prescribed was: 'I will let it be long.' It contains the quantity of four volumes of *Waverley*. No hard blow was ever hit with a woodsaw."[121]

In *The Last Man*, which appeared in 1825, Mrs. Shelley attempted a stupendous theme, no less then a picture of the devastation of the human race by plague and pestilence. She casts her imagination forward into the twenty-first century, when the last king of England has abdicated the throne and a republic is established. Very wisely, she narrows the interest by concentrating on the pathetic fate of a group of friends who are among the last survivors, and the story becomes an idealised record of her own sufferings. The description of the loneliness of the bereft has a personal note, and reminds us of her journal, where she expresses the sorrow of being herself the last survivor, and of feeling like a "cloud from which the light of sunset has passed."[122] Raymond, who dies in an attempt to place the standard of Greece in Stamboul, is a portrait of Byron; and Adrian, the late king's son, who finally becomes Protector, is clearly modelled on Shelley. Yet in spite of these personal reminiscences, their characters lack distinctness. Idris, Clara and Perdita are faintly etched, but Evadne, the Greek artist, who

cherishes a passion for Raymond, and dies fighting against the Turks, has more colour and body than the other women, though she is somewhat theatrical. Mrs. Shelley conveys emotion more faithfully than character, and the overwrought sensibilities and dark forebodings of the diminished party of survivors who leave England to distract their minds by foreign travel are artfully suggested. The leaping, gesticulating figure, whom their jaded nerves and morbid fancy transform into a phantom, is a delirious ballet-dancer; and the Black Spectre, mistaken for Death Incarnate, proves only to be a plague-stricken noble, who lurks near the party for the sake of human society. These "reasonable" solutions of the apparently supernatural remind us of Mrs. Radcliffe's method, and Mrs. Shelley shows keen psychological insight in her delineation of the state of mind which readily conjures up imaginary terrors. When Lionel Verney is left alone in the universe, her power seems to flag, and instead of the final crescendo of horror, which we expect at the end of the book, we are left with an ineffective picture of the last man in Rome in 2005 deciding to explore the countries he has not yet viewed. As he wanders amid the ruins he recalls not only "the buried Cæsars," but also the monk in *The Italian*, of whom he had read in childhood—a striking proof of Mrs. Shelley's faith in the permanence of Mrs. Radcliffe's fame.

Though the style of *The Last Man* is often tediously prolix and is disfigured by patches of florid rhetoric

and by inappropriate similes scattered broadcast, occasional passages of wonderful beauty recall Shelley's imagery; and, in conveying the pathos of loneliness, personal feeling lends nobility and eloquence to her style. With so ambitious a subject, it was natural that she should only partially succeed in carrying her readers with her. Though there are oases, the story is a somewhat tedious and dreary stretch of narrative that can only be traversed with considerable effort.

Mrs. Shelley's later works—*Perkin Warbeck* (1830), a historical novel; *Lodore* (1835), which describes the early life of Shelley and Harriet; *Falkner* (1837), which was influenced by *Caleb Williams*—do not belong to the history of the novel of terror; but some of her short tales, contributed to periodicals and collected in 1891, have gruesome and supernatural themes. *A Tale of the Passions, or the Death of Despina*[123] a story based on the struggles of the Guelphs and the Ghibellines, contains a perfect specimen of the traditional villain of the novel of terror:

> "Every feature of his countenance spoke of the struggle of passions and the terrible egotism of one who would sacrifice himself to the establishment of his will: his black eyebrows were scattered, his grey eyes deep-set and scowling, his look at once stern and haggard. A smile seemed never to have disturbed the settled scorn which his lips

> expressed; his high forehead was marked by a thousand contradictory lines."

This terrific personage spends the last years of his life in orthodox fashion as an austere saint in a monastery.

The Mortal Immortal, a variation on the theme of *St. Leon*, is the record of a pupil of Cornelius Agrippa, who drank half of the elixir his master had compounded in the belief that it was a potion to destroy love. It is written on his three hundred and twenty-third birthday. *Transformation*, like *Frankenstein*, dwells on the pathos of ugliness and deformity, but the subject is treated rather in the spirit of an eastern fairy tale than in that of a novel of terror. The dwarf, in return for a chest of treasure, borrows a beautiful body, and, thus disguised, wins the love of Juliet, and all ends happily. Mrs. Shelley's short stories[124] reveal a stronger sense of proportion than her novels, and are written in a more graceful, fluent style than the books on which she expended great labour.

The literary history of Byron's fragmentary novel and of Polidori's short story, *The Vampyre*, is somewhat tangled, but the solution is to be found in the diary of Dr. John William Polidori, edited and elucidated by William Michael Rossetti. The day after that on which Polidori states that all the competitors, except himself, had begun their stories, he records the simple fact: "Began my ghost-story

after tea." He gives no hint as to the subject of his tale, but Mrs. Shelley tells us that Polidori had some idea of a "skull-headed lady, who was so punished for looking through a key-hole, and who was finally buried in the tomb of the Capulets." In the introduction to *Ernestus Berchtold, or the Modern OEdipus*, he states definitely:

> "The tale here presented to the public is one I began at Coligny, when *Frankenstein* was planned, and when a noble author, having determined to descend from his lofty range, gave up a few hours to a tale of terror, and wrote the fragment published at the end of Mazeppa."

As no skull-headed lady appears in *Ernestus Berchtold*, it is probable that her career was only suggested to the rest of the party as an entrancing possibility, and never actually took shape. This theme would certainly have proved more frightful and possibly more interesting than the one which Polidori eventually adopted in *Ernestus Berchtold*, a rambling, leisurely account of the adventures of a Swiss soldier, whose wife afterwards proves to be his own sister. Their father has accepted from a malignant spirit the gift of wealth, but each time that the gift is bestowed some great affliction follows. This secret is not divulged until we are quite near the close of the story, and have waited so long that our interest has begun to wane. *Ernestus Berchtold* is, as a matter of fact, not a novel of terror at all. The

supernatural agency, which should have been interlaced with the domestic story from beginning to end, is only dragged in because it was one of the conditions of the competition, as indeed Polidori frankly confesses in his introduction:

> "Many readers will think that the same moral and the same colouring might have been given to characters acting under the ordinary agencies of life. I believe it, but I agreed to write a supernatural tale, and that does not allow of a completely everyday narrative."

The candour of this admission forestalls criticism. Strangely enough, Polidori adds that he has thrown the "superior agency" into the background, because "a tale that rests upon improbabilities must generally disgust a rational mind." With so decided a preference for the reasonable and probable, it is remarkable that Polidori should treat the vampire legend successfully. It has frequently been stated that Byron's story was completed by Polidori; but this assertion is not precisely accurate. Polidori made no use of the actual fragment, but based his story upon the groundwork on which the fragment was to have been continued. Byron's story describes the arrival of two friends amid the ruins of Ephesus. One of them, Darvell, who, like most of Byron's heroes, is enshrouded in mystery, and is a prey to some cureless disquiet, falls ill and dies. Before his death he demands that his companion shall on a certain

day throw a ring into the salt springs that run into the bay of Eleusis. If we may trust Polidori's account, Byron intended that the survivor, on his return to England, should be startled to behold his companion moving in society, and making love to his sister. On this foundation Polidori constructed *The Vampyre*. The story opens with the description of a nobleman, Lord Ruthven, whose appearance and character excite great interest in London society. His face is remarkable for its deadly pallor, and he has a "dead, grey eye, which, fixing upon the object's face, did not seem to penetrate and at one glance to pierce through to the inward workings of the heart, but fell upon the cheek with a leaden ray that laid (*sic*) upon the skin it could not pass." A young man named Aubrey, who arrives in London about the same time, becomes deeply interested in the study of Ruthven's character. When he joins him on a tour abroad he discovers that his companion takes a fiendish delight in ruining the innocent at the gaming-table; and, after receiving a warning of Ruthven's reputation, decides to leave him, but to continue to watch him closely. He succeeds in foiling his designs against a young Italian girl in Rome. Aubrey next travels to Greece, where he falls in love with Ianthe. One day, in spite of warnings that the place he purposes to visit is frequented by vampires, Aubrey sets off on an excursion. Benighted in a lonely forest, he hears the terror-stricken cries of a woman in a hovel, and, on attempting to rescue her, finds himself in the grasp of a being of superhuman strength, who cries: "Again

baffled!" When light dawns, Aubrey makes the terrible discovery that Ianthe has become the prey of a vampire. He carries away from the spot a blood-stained dagger. In the delirious fever, which ensues on his discovery of Ianthe's fate, Aubrey is nursed by Lord Ruthven. While they are travelling in Greece, Ruthven is shot in the shoulder by a robber, and, before dying, exacts from Aubrey a solemn oath that he will not reveal for a year and a day what he knows of his crimes or death. In accordance with a promise made to Ruthven, his body is conveyed to a mountain to be exposed to the rays of the moon. The corpse disappears. Among Ruthven's possessions Aubrey finds a sheath, into which the dagger he has found in the hovel fits exactly. On passing through Rome he learns that the girl he had once saved from Ruthven has vanished. When he returns to London, Aubrey is horrified to behold the figure of Lord Ruthven almost on the very spot where he had first seen him. He dare not break his oath, and soon becomes almost demented. The news of his sister's marriage seems to rouse him momentarily from his lethargy, and when he discovers that Ruthven is to be the bridegroom he urges her to delay the marriage. His warnings are disregarded, and the ceremony takes place. Aubrey relates to his sister's guardians all that he knows of Ruthven, but it is too late. Ruthven has disappeared, and she has "glutted the thirst of a vampyre."

Polidori's manner of telling the story is curiously

matter of fact and restrained. He relates the incidents as they occur, and leaves the reader to form his own conclusions. If Lewis had been handling the theme he would have wallowed in gory details, and would have expatiated on the agonies of his victims. Polidori wisely keeps his story in a quiet key, depending for his effect on the terror of the bare facts. He realises that he is on the verge of the unspeakable.

Polidori's story set a fashion in vampires, who appear as characters in fiction all through the nineteenth century. A writer in the *Dublin University Magazine* tells of a vampire who plays an admirable game of whist! There is an "explained" vampire in one of George Macdonald's stories, *Adela Cathcart*. The prince of vampires is, however, Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, round whom centres a story of absorbing interest.

De Quincey, who might have selected from the novel of terror many admirable illustrations for his essay on *Murder, Considered as one of the Fine Arts*, and who seems to have been attracted by the German type of horrific story, shows some facility in sensational fiction. In *Klosterheim*, a one-volumed novel published in 1832, the interest circles round the machinations of an elusive, ubiquitous "Masque," eventually revealed to be none other than the son of the late Landgrave, who, like many a man before him in the tale of terror, has been done to death by a usurper. Disappearances through trap-doors, and

escapes down subterranean passages are effected with a dexterity suggestive of Mrs. Radcliffe's methods; and the inexplicable murders, with the exception of that of an aged seneschal accidentally betrayed, are not real. In certain of his moods and habits, the Masque bears a likeness to Lewis's "Bravo," but the setting of De Quincey's story is very different. The adventures of the Masque and of the Lady Pauline are cast in Germany amid the confusion of the Thirty Years' War. In *The Household Wreck*, published in *Blackwood's Magazine*, January 1838, De Quincey shows his power of conveying a sense of foreboding, that anticipation of horror which is often more harrowing than the reality. Another tale of terror, *The Avenger*, published in the same year, describes a series of bloodcurdling murders which baffle the skill of the police, but which eventually prove to have been committed by a son to avenge dishonour done to his Jewish mother. For a collection of *Popular Tales and Romances of the Northern Nations*, published in 1823, De Quincey translated *Der Freischütz* from the German of J.A. Apel, under the title of *The Fatal Marksman*. By means of ill-gotten magic bullets the marksman wins his bride, but by one of those little ironies in which the devil delights to indulge, she is slain on the wedding-day by a bullet, which is aimed straight, but goes askew. In *The Dice*, another short story from the German, De Quincey once again exploits the old theme of a bargain with the devil.

De Quincey's contributions to the tale of terror shrink into unimportance beside the rest of his work, and are not in themselves remarkable. They are of interest as showing the widespread and long-enduring vogue of the species. It is noteworthy how many writers, whose main business lay elsewhere, have found time to make erratic excursions into the realms of the supernatural.

So late as 1834—more than a decade after the appearance of *Melmoth*—Harrison Ainsworth, whose imagination was steeped in terror, sought once more to revive the "feeble and fluttering pulses of old Romance." Among his earliest experiments were tales obviously fashioned in the Gothic manner. His Imperishable One, the hero of a tale first published in the *European Magazine* for 1822, bemoans the burden of immortality in the listless tones of Godwin's St. Leon, and is tempted by the fallen angel in the self-same guise in which he appeared to Lewis's notorious monk. In *The Test of Affection* (*European Magazine*, 1822) a wealthy man avails himself of Mrs. Radcliffe's supernatural trickery to test the loyalty of his friends, whom he succeeds in alarming by noises and a skeleton apparition. In *Arliss's Pocket Magazine* (1822) there appeared *The Spectre Bride*; and in the *European Magazine* (1823) Ainsworth attempted a theme that would have attracted Poe in *The Half Hangit*. *The Boeotian* for 1824 contained *A Tale of Mystery*, and the *Literary Souvenir* for 1825 *The Fortress of Saguntum*, a story in

the style of Lewis. Ainsworth's first novel, *Rookwood* (1834), was inspired by a visit to Cuckfield Place, an old manor house which had reminded Shelley of "bits of Mrs. Radcliffe":

> "Wishing to describe somewhat minutely the trim gardens, the picturesque domains, the rook-haunted groves, the gloomy chambers and gloomier galleries of an ancient hall with which I was acquainted, I resolved to attempt a story in the bygone style of Mrs. Radcliffe, substituting an old English squire, an old manorial residence and an old English highwayman for the Italian marchise, the castle and the brigand of that great mistress of romance… The attempt has succeeded beyond my most sanguine expectation. Romance, if I am not mistaken, is destined shortly to undergo an important change. Modified by the German and French writers—Hoffmann, Tieck, Victor Hugo, Alexander Dumas, Balzac and Paul Lacroix—the structure commenced in our land by Horace Walpole, 'Monk' Lewis, Mrs. Radcliffe and Maturin, but, left imperfect and inharmonious, requires, now that the rubbish which choked up its approach is removed, only the hand of the skilful architect to its entire renovation and perfection."

In *Rookwood*, Ainsworth disdains Mrs. Radcliffe's reasonable elucidations of the supernatural, and introduces spectres whose existence it would be

impossible to deny. Once, however, a supposed ghost becomes substantial, and proves to be none other than a human being called Jack Palmer. The sexton, Luke Bradley, *alias* Alan Rookwood, has inherited two of the Wanderer's traits—the fear-impelling eyes of intolerable lustre, and the habit of indulging in wild, screaming laughter on the most inauspicious occasions.

Gothic properties are scattered with indiscriminate extravagance—skeleton hands, suddenly extinguished candles, sliding panels, sepulchral vaults. The plot of *Rookwood* is too complicated and too overcrowded with incident to keep our attention. The terrors are so unremitting that they fail to strike home. The only part of the book which holds us enthralled is the famous description of Dick Turpin's ride to York. Here we forget Ainsworth's slip-shod style in the excitement of the chase. In his later novels Ainsworth abandoned the manner of Mrs. Radcliffe, but did not fail to make use of the motive of terror and mystery. The scenes of horror which he strove to convey in words were often more admirably depicted in the illustrations of Cruikshank. The sorcerer's sabbath in *Crichton*, the historical scenes of horror in *The Tower of London*, the masque of the Dance of Death in *Old St. Paul's*, the appearance of Herne the Hunter, heralded by phosphoric lights, in *Windsor Castle*, the terrible orgies of *The Lancashire Witches*, are described with more striking effect because of Ainsworth's early

reading in the school of terror. In *Auriol*, which was first published in *Ainsworth's Magazine* (1844-5) under the title *Revelations of London*, was issued in 1845 as a gratuitous supplement to the *New Monthly*, and greeted with derision,[125] Ainsworth handled once again the theme that fascinated Lytton. The Prologue (1599) describes the death of Dr. Lamb, whose elixir is seized by his great-grandson. In 1830 London is haunted by a stranger, who involves Auriol in wildly fantastic and frightful adventures. The book closes in Dr. Lamb's laboratory; the intervening scenes are but dream imagery. Phiz's sketch of the Ruined House is the most lasting memory left by the book.

Captain Marryat, whose mind was well stored with sailors' yarns, retells in *The Phantom Ship* (1839) the old legend of the Flying Dutchman. At one time the doomed vessel is an unsubstantial vision, which can pass clean through the Utrecht; at another she is a real craft, whose deck can be boarded by mortal men. The one-eyed pilot, Schriften, with his malignant hatred of the hero, Philip, is a terrifying figure. The story is embroidered by the invention of a wife of Arab extraction, who is constantly attempting to recall the half-forgotten magical arts which her mother had practised. Marryat makes an opportunity in the history of Krantz, the second mate of the *Vrou Katerina*, to introduce the Scandinavian legend of the werewolf, which is related with grisly detail.

The novel of terror, with all its faults, had seldom been guilty of demanding intellectual strain or of overburdening itself with erudition. It was the dignified task of Lord Lytton to rationalise and elevate the novel of terror, to evolve the "man of reason" from the "child of nature." Although time has tarnished the brilliance of his reputation, George Edward Bulwer was an imposing figure in the history of nineteenth century fiction. Throughout his life, in spite of political and social distractions and of matrimonial disaster, he continued to engage with unwearying industry in literary work. He was not a man of genius in whom the creative impulse found its own expression, but a versatile and accomplished gentleman who could direct his talents into any channel he pleased. Essays, translations, verses, plays, novels flowed from his pen in rapid succession, and he won his meed of applause and fame, as well as his share of execration and derision, in his own lifetime. Quick to discern the popular taste of the hour, and eager to gratify it, Lytton, with the resourceful agility of a lightning impersonator, turns in his novels from Wertherism to dandyism, from criminal psychology to fairy folk-lore, from historical romance to domestic romance, from pseudo-philosophic occultism to pseudo-scientific fantasy. He ranges at will in the past, the present or the future, consorting indifferently with impalpable wraiths, Vrilya or mysterious Sages. It is to his credit that this unusual gift of adaptability does not result in incompetency. Though he attempts a variety of

manners, it must in justice be acknowledged that he does most of them well. He constructs his plots with laborious art, and pays a deliberate, if sometimes misguided, attention to style. When he fails, it is less from lack of effort than from over-elaboration and excess of zeal.

Bulwer Lytton's predilection for the supernatural was neither a theatrical pose nor a passing folly excited by the fashionable craze for psychical research, but a genuine and enduring interest, inherited, it may be, from his ancestor, the learned, eccentric savant, Dr. Bulwer, who studied the Black Art and dabbled in astrology and palmistry. He was a member of the society of Rosicrucians, and, to quote the words of his grandson, "he certainly did not study magic for the sake of writing about it, still less did he write about it, without having studied it, merely for the sake of making his readers' flesh creep." From his early years Lytton seems to have been keenly interested in supernatural manifestations. He was inspired by the deserted rooms at the end of a long gallery in Knebworth House to set down the story of the ghost, Jenny Spinner, who was said to haunt them; and the concealed chamber in *The Haunted and the Haunters* may have been a revived memory of the trap-door down which Lytton as a boy had "peeped with bristling hair into the shadowy abysses of hellhole." In *Glenallan*,[126] an early fragment, we find promising material for a tale of mystery—a villain

with a "strange and sinister expression," a boy who, like the youthful Shelley, steals forth by night to graveyards, hoping to attain to fearful secrets, and an aged servant, a living chronicle of horrors, who relates the doings of an Irish wizard, Morshed Tyrone, of such awful power that the spirits of the earth, air and ocean ministered to him. In *Godolphin* (1833) there is an astrologer with the furrowed brow and awful eye, so common among the people of terror, and a strangely gifted girl, Lucilla, who turns soothsayer. But when Bulwer Lytton attempts a supernatural romance he leaves far behind him the sphere of Gothic terrors and soars into rarefied, exalted regions that inspire awe rather than horror. The Dweller of the Threshold in *Zanoni* is no red-cloaked, demoniacal figure springing from a trap-door with a deafening clap of thunder, but a "Colossal Shadow" brooding over the crater of Vesuvius.

The romance, *Zanoni* (1842), which Lytton considered the greatest of his works and which Carlyle praised with what now seems extravagant fervour, was based on an earlier sketch, *Zicci* (1838), and embodies a complicated theory which he had conceived several years earlier after reading some mediaeval treatises on astrology and the occult sciences. While his mind was occupied with these studies, the character of Mejnour and the main outlines of the story were inspired by a dream, which he related to his son. According to Lytton's theory,

the air is peopled with Intelligences, of whom some are favourable, others hostile to man. The earth contains certain plants, which, rightly used, have power to arrest the decay of the human body, and to enable man, by quickening his physical senses and mental gifts, to perceive the aerial beings and to discover the secrets of nature. This supernatural knowledge is in possession of a brotherhood of whom two only, Mejnour and his pupil Zanoni, are in existence. The initiation involves the surrender of all violent passions and emotions, and the neophyte must be brought into contact with the powerful and malignant being called the Dweller of the Threshold:

"Whose form of giant mould
No mortal eye can fixed behold,"

Mejnour and Zanoni are supposed to have been initiated—the former in old age, the latter in youth—more than five thousand years before the story opens. Thus Mejnour remains for ever a vigorous old man; while Zanoni, his pupil, enjoys perpetual youth. Mejnour is purely intellectual, and spends his life in contemplation; while Zanoni, though he must avoid love and friendship which are unknown to the passionless Intelligences, feels sympathy with human beings.

Zanoni, who spends his life in the pursuit of pleasure, after fifty centuries at last falls in love with Viola, an Italian opera-singer. Like Melmoth the Wanderer, Zanoni is reluctant to bind the woman he

loves to his own fate. He tries to renounce Viola to an Englishman, Glyndon, who eventually chooses to relinquish love for the sake of achieving the unearthly knowledge of Mejnour. Glyndon, however, fails in the trial, and is consequently haunted by the horror of the Dweller of the Threshold. Meanwhile Zanoni is united to Viola; and because he has succumbed to the force of love, his peculiar powers begin to fail. He can no longer see the beautiful, aerial intelligence, Adon-Ai. To save from death Viola and the child who is born to them, Zanoni ere long yields to the Dweller of the Threshold his gift of communion with the inhabitants of heaven. Later Viola, who incidentally typifies Superstition deserting Faith, leaves Zanoni at the call of Glyndon, and in Paris, during the Reign of Terror, is doomed to die. Zanoni invokes the aid of the mysterious Intelligences, and his courage at length brings Adon-Ai again to his side. He wins a day's reprieve for Viola, and is executed in her stead. The death of Robespierre releases the prisoners, but Viola dies the next day.

The compact between Zanoni and the Dweller of the Threshold is a renovation of the time-worn legend of the bargain with an evil spirit, but Lytton transforms it almost beyond recognition. Zanoni is no criminal. He has attained his secrets through will-power, self-conquest, and the subordination of the flesh to the spirit, and he surrenders his gifts willingly for the sake of another. Both Mejnour and

Zanoni disclaim miraculous powers, yet Zanoni is ready to stake his mistress on a cast of the dice, and can cause the death of three sanguinary marauders without stirring from the apartment in which he ordinarily pursues his chemical studies. From such incidents as these it would seem as if Lytton, for the actual craftsmanship of *Zanoni*, may have gleaned stray hints from the novel of terror; but the spirit and intention of the book are entirely different. Though Lytton expressly declares that his *Zanoni* is not an allegory, he confesses that it has symbolical meanings. Zanoni is apt to assume the superior pose of a lecturer elucidating an abstruse subject to an unenlightened audience. The impression of artifice that the book makes upon us is probably due to the fact that Lytton first conceived his theories and then created personages to illustrate them. His characters have no power to act of their own volition or to do unexpected things, but must move along the lines laid down for them.

In *The Haunted and the Haunters, or The House and the Brain*, which appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1859, Bulwer Lytton lays aside the sin of over-elaboration and ornamentation that so easily besets him, and relies for his effect on the impalpable horror of his story. The calm, business-like overture, the accurate description of the position of the house in a street off the north side of Oxford Street, the insistence on the matter-of-fact attitude of the watcher, and on the cool courage of his servant, the

abject fear of the dog, who dies in agony, all tend to create an atmosphere of grave conviction. The eerie child's footfall, the moving of the furniture by unseen hands, the wrinkled fingers that clutch the old letters, the faintly outlined wraiths of the man and woman in old-world garb with ruffles, lace, and buckles, the hideous phantom of the drowned man, the dark figure with malignant serpent eyes, shadow forth the story hinted at in the letters found in an old drawer. Haunted by loathly presences, the watcher experiences a sensation of almost intolerable horror, but saves himself at the worst by opposing his will to that of the haunters. He rightly surmises that the evil influences, which seem in some way to emanate from a small empty room, really proceed from a living being. His interpretation is skilful and subtle enough not to detract from the simple horror of the tale. A miniature, certain volatile essences, a compass, a lodestone and other properties are found in a room below that which appeared to be the source of the horrors. It proves that the man, whose face is portrayed on the miniature has been able through the exertion of will-power to prolong his life for two centuries, and to preserve a curse in a magical vessel. He is actually interviewed by the watcher, to whom he unfolds his remarkable history, and whom he mesmerises into silence on the subject of his experiences in the haunted house for a space of three months.

Lytton realises that it is not only what is told but

what is left unsaid that requires consideration in a ghost story. His reticence and the entire absence of any note of mockery or doubt secure the "willing suspension of disbelief" necessary to the appreciation of the apparently supernatural.

In *A Strange Story*, which, at Dickens's invitation, appeared in *All the Year Round* (1861-2), Bulwer Lytton further elaborates his theories of mesmerism and willpower. He explains his purpose in the Preface:

> "When the reader lays down this strange story, perhaps he will detect, through all the haze of Romance, the outlines of these images suggested to his reason: Firstly, the image of sensuous, soulless Nature, such as the Materialist had conceived it. Secondly, the image of Intellect, obstinately separating all its inquiries from the belief in the spiritual essence and destiny of man, and incurring all kinds of perplexity and resorting to all kinds of visionary speculation before it settles at last into the simple faith which unites the philosopher and the infant. And thirdly, the image of the erring but pure-thoughted Visionary, seeking overmuch on this earth to separate soul from mind, till innocence itself is led astray by a phantom and reason is lost in the space between earth and the stars."

These three conceptions are embodied in

Margrave, who has renewed his life far beyond the limits allotted to man; a young doctor, Fenwick, who represents the intellectual divorced from the spiritual; and Lilian Ashleigh, a clairvoyante girl, who typifies the spiritual divorced from the intellectual. The interest of the story turns on the struggle of Fenwick to gain his bride, and to wrest her from the influence of Margrave. The plot, intricately tangled, is unravelled with patient skill. In spite of the wearisome explanations of Dr. Faber, who is lucid but verbose, there is a fascination about the book which compels us to go forward.

In Lytton's hands the barbarity of the novel of terror has been gracefully smoothed away. It has, indeed, become almost unrecognisably refined and elevated, and something of its native vigour is lost in the process. Amid all the amenities of Vrilya and Intelligences, we miss the vulgar blatancy of an honest, old-fashioned spectre.

CHAPTER X - SHORT TALES OF TERROR.

For the readers of their own day the Gothic romances

of Walpole, Miss Reeve and Mrs. Radcliffe possessed the charm of novelty. Before the close of the century we may trace, in the conversations of Isabella Thorpe and Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey*, symptoms of a longing for more poignant excitement. It was at this time that Mrs. Radcliffe, after the publication of *The Italian* in 1797, retired quietly from the field. From her obscurity she viewed no doubt with some disdain the vulgar achievements of "Monk" Lewis and a tribe of imitators, who compounded a farrago of horrors as thick and slab as the contents of a witch's cauldron. Until the appearance in 1820 of Maturin's *Melmoth*, which was redeemed by its psychological insight and its vigorous style, the Gothic romance maintained a disreputable existence in the hands of those who looked upon fiction as a lucrative trade, not as an art. In the meantime, however, an easy device had been discovered for pandering to the popular craving for excitement. Ingenious authors realised that it was possible to compress into the five pages of a short story as much sensation as was contained in the five volumes of a Gothic romance. For the brevity of the tales, which were issued in chapbooks, readers were compensated by gaudily coloured illustrations and by double-barrelled titles. An anthology called "Wild Roses" (published by Anne Lemoine, Coleman Street, n.d.) included: *Twelve O'Clock or the Three Robbers, The Monks of Cluny, or Castle Acre Monastery, The Tomb of Aurora, or The Mysterious Summons, The Mysterious Spaniard, or The Ruins of St. Luke's Abbey*,

and lastly, as a *bonne bouche, Barbastal, or The Magician of the Forest of the Bloody Ash*.[127] There are many collections of this kind, some of them dating back to 1806, among the chapbooks in the British Museum. It is in these brief, blood-curdling romances that we may find the origin of the short tale of terror, which became so popular a form of literature in the nineteenth century. The taste for these delicious morsels has lingered long. Dante Gabriel Rossetti delighted in *Brigand Tales, Tales of Chivalry, Tales of Wonder, Legends of Terror*; and it was in search of such booty, "a penny plain and twopence coloured" that, more than fifty years later, Robert Louis Stevenson and his companions ransacked the stores of a certain secluded stationer's shop in Edinburgh.

It was probably the success of the chapbook that encouraged the editors of periodicals early in the nineteenth century to enliven their pages with sensational fiction. The literary hack, who, if he had lived a century earlier, would have been glad to turn a Turkish tale for half-a-crown, now cheerfully furnished a "fireside horror" for the Christmas number. In his search after novelty he was often driven to wild and desperate expedients. Leigh Hunt, who showed scant sympathy with Lewis's bleeding nun and scoffed mercilessly at his "little grey men who sit munching hearts," was bound to admit: "A man who does not contribute his quota of grim story, now-a-days, seems hardly to be free of the republic

of letters." Accordingly, so that he too might wear a death's head as part of his *insignia*, he included in *The Indicator* (1819-21) a supernatural story, entitled *A Tale for a Chimney Corner*. Scorning to "measure talents with a leg of veal or a German sausage," he unfortunately dismissed from his imagination the nightmarish hordes of

"Haunting Old Women and Knocking Ghosts, and Solitary
Lean Hands, and Empusas on one leg, and Ladies growing
Longer and Longer, and Horrid Eyes meeting us through
Keyholes; and Plaintive Heads and Shrieking Statues and
Shocking Anomalies of Shape and Things, which, when
seen, drove people mad,"

and in their place he conjured up a placid, ladylike ghost from a legend quoted in Sandys' commentary on Ovid. Leigh Hunt's story has the air of having been written by one who cared for none of these things; but there were others who wrote with more gusto.

Many of the tales in such collections as *The Story-Teller* (1833) or *The Romancist and Novelist's Library* (1839-42) show the persistence of Gothic story. In these periodicals the grave and the gay are intermingled, and when we are weary of dark

intrigues and impenetrable secrets we may turn to lighter reading. Yet it is significant of the taste of our ancestors that we cannot venture far without encountering a spectre of some sort, or a villain with the baleful eye, disguised, it may be, as a Spanish gipsy, a German necromancer or a Russian count. Many of the stories are Gothic novels, reduced in size, but with room for all the old machinery:

"A novel now is nothing more
Than an old castle, and a creaking door,
A distant hovel,
Clanking of chains—a galley—a light—
Old armour, and a phantom all in white,
And there's a novel."

In *The Story-Teller*, a magazine which reprinted many popular tales, we find German legends like *The Three Students of Göttingen*, a "True Story Very Strange and Very Pitiful"; *The Wood Demon; The Wehr-Wolf; The Sexton of Cologne, or Lucifer*, a striking story of an Italian artist who was haunted by a terrible figure he had painted in the church at Arezzo. Yet the first tale in the collection, *The Story-Haunted*, which describes the sad fate of a youth brought up in a solitary library reading romances to his mother, was intended, like *The Spectre-Smitten*, in *Passages from the Diary of a Late Physician*,[128] as a solemn warning against over-indulgence in fictitious terrors. The mother dies in an agony of horror, as her son reads aloud the account of the Gentleman of Florence, who was pursued by a spectre of himself,

which vanished with him finally into the earth, as the priest endeavoured to bless him. The son, left alone, enters the world, and judges the people around him by the standard of books. The story-haunted youth falls in love with the phantom of his own imagination, whom he endows with all the graces of the heroines of romance. He finds her embodied at last, but she dies before they are united. *The Romancist and Novelist's Library*, in ten volumes, contains a comprehensive selection of tales of terror by the "best authors." Walpole, Miss Reeve, Mrs. Radcliffe, "Monk" Lewis, Maturin, Mrs. Shelley, and Charles Brockden Brown are all represented; and there are many translations of tales by French and German authors. We may take our choice of *The Spectre Barber* or *The Spectre Bride*, or, if we are inclined to incredulity, see *The Spectre Unmasked*. The entertainment offered is of bewildering variety. Some of the stories, such as D.F. Hayne's *Romance of the Castle*, seem like familiar, well-tried friends, and conceal no surprises for the readers of Gothic romance. Others, like *The Sleepless Woman*, by W. Jerdan, are more piquant. The hero is warned by his dying uncle to beware of women's bright eyes. In spite of this he marries a lady, whose eyes unite the qualities of the robin and the falcon. After the wedding he makes the awful discovery that she is of too noble a lineage ever to sleep. Turn where he may, her eyes are always upon him. At last, we find him pallid, haggard, and emaciated, wandering alone in an avenue of cedar trees beside a silent lake:

> "At this moment a breath of wind blew a branch aside—a sunbeam fell upon the baron's face; he took it for the eyes of his wife. Alas! his remedy lay temptingly before him, the still, the profound, the shadowy lake. De Launaye took one plunge—it was into eternity."

The writer foolishly ruins the effect of this climax by super-imposing an allegorical interpretation.

Like the *Story-Teller, The Romancist and Novelist's Library* should be read

> "At night when doors are shut,
> And the wood-worm pricks,
> And the death-watch ticks,
> And the bar has a flag of smut,—
> And the cat's in the water-butt—
> And the socket floats and flares,
> And the housebeams groan,
> And a foot unknown
> Is surmised on the garret stairs,
> And the locks slip unawares."

But "tales of terror" lose some of their power when read one after another; they are most effective read singly in periodicals. *Blackwood's Magazine* was especially famous for its tales, the best of which have been collected and published separately. The editor of the *Dublin University Magazine* shows a marked preference for tales of a supernatural or sensational cast. Le Fanu, who claimed that his stories, like those

of Sir Walter Scott, belonged to the "legitimate school of English tragic romance," was one of the best-known contributors. *All the Year Round* and *Household Words*, under the editorship of Dickens, often found room for the occult and the uncanny. Wilkie Collins' fascinating serial, *The Moonstone*, was published in *All the Year Round* in 1868; *The Woman in White* had appeared six years earlier in *Blackwood*. The stories included in these magazines are of various types. The old-fashioned spook gradually declines in popularity. He is ousted in a scientific age by more recondite forms of terror. Before 1875, with a few belated exceptions:

"Ghosts, wandering here and there
Troop home to churchyards, damned spirits all,
That in crossways and floods have burial,
Already to their wormy beds are gone."

The "explained supernatural" is skilfully improved and developed. Le Fanu's *Green Tea* is a story from the diary of a German doctor, concerning a patient who was dogged by a black monkey. The creature, "whose green eyes glow with an expression of unfathomable malignity," is medically explained to be an illusion; but it is so vividly presented that it fastens on our imagination with remarkable tenacity. Wilkie Collins' short story, *The Yellow Mask*, included in the series called *After Dark*, is another experiment in the same kind. A jealous woman appears among the dancers at a ball, wearing a waxen cast of the face of the man's dead wife. The short story, in which

the author deliberately shakes our nerves and then soothes away our fears by accounting naturally for startling phenomena, is an amazingly popular type. It reappears continually in different guises. Occasionally it merges into pleasant buffoonery. *Die Geistertodtenglocke*, for instance, a story in the *Dublin University Magazine* (1862), is a burlesque, in which the mysterious tolling of a bell is explained by the discovery that a cow strolled into the ruin to eat the hay with which the rope was mended. But, judiciously handled, this type of story makes a strong appeal to human beings who like to know how much of the terrible and painful they can endure, and who yet must ultimately be reassured.

Another group of short tales of terror consists of those which purport to be faithful renderings of the beliefs of simple people. To this category belong Allan Cunningham's *Traditional Tales of the English and Scottish Peasantry*, which first appeared, with one exception, in the *London Magazine* (1821-23). Cunningham has the tact to preserve the legends of elves, fairies, ghosts and bogles, as they were passed down from one generation to another on the lips of living beings. Later he attempted, in a novel, *Sir Michael Scott* (1828), a kind of Gothic romance; but there is no trace in the *Traditional Tales* of the influence of the terrormongers with whose works he was familiar. Perhaps the finest story of the collection is *The Haunted Ships*, in which are embodied the traditions associated with two black

and decayed hulls, half immersed in the quicksands of the Solway. Lewis would have dragged us on board ship, and would have shown us the devil in his own person. Cunningham wisely keeps ashore, and repeats the tales that are told concerning the fiendish mirth and revelry to be heard, when, at certain seasons of the year, they arise in their former beauty, with forecastle and deck, with sail and pennon and shroud. James Hogg, the Ettrick shepherd, who was a friend of Cunningham, was steeped in the same folk-lore. *The Mysterious Bride*, printed among his *Tales and Sketches*, tells of a beautiful spirit-lady, dressed in white and green, who appears three times on St. Lawrence's Eve to the Laird of Birkendelly. On the morning, after the night on which she had promised to wed him, he is found, a blackened corpse, on Birky Brow. *Mary Burnet* is the story of a maiden who is drowned when keeping tryst with her lover. She returns to earth, like Kilmeny, and assures her parents of her welfare. A demon woman, whose form resembles that of Mary, haunts her lover, and entices him to evil. Since Hogg can give to his legends a "local habitation and a name," pointing to the very stretch of road on which the elfin lady first appeared, it seems ungracious to doubt his veracity. The Ettrick Shepherd's most memorable achievement, however, is his *Confessions of a Fanatic* (1824), a terribly impressive account of a man afflicted with religious mania, who believes himself urged into crime by a mysterious being. The story abounds in frightful situations and weird scenes, one

of the most striking being the reflection, seen at daybreak on Arthur's Seat, of a human head and shoulders, dilated to twenty times its natural size. Professor Saintsbury has suggested that Lockhart probably had the principal hand in this story. "Christopher North" was another member of the *Noctes* confraternity who came sometimes under the spell of the unearthly.

The supernatural tales of Mrs. Gaskell, whose gift for story-telling made Dickens call her his Scheherazade, were, like those of Cunningham, based directly on tradition. She was always attracted by the subject of witchcraft; and she had collected a store of "creepy" legends of the kind which made the nervous ladies of Cranford bid their sedan-chairmen hasten rapidly down Darkness Lane at nights. The best of Mrs. Gaskell's short tales is perhaps *The Nurse's Story*, which appeared in the Christmas number of *Household Words* in 1852. Mrs. Gaskell has a happy gift for preserving the natural aroma of a tale of bygone days. *The Nurse's Story* has a hint of the old-world grace of Lamb's *Dream Children*. The carefully disposed tableau of ghosts—the unforgiving old man, and the vindictive sister, spurning the lady and her child from the hall—is too definite and distinct, but the conception of the wraith of the dead child outside the manor, pleading piteously to be let in, and luring away the living child, is delicately wrought. The tale is told in the rambling, circumstantial style, suitable to the fireside and the

long leisure of a winter's evening. Dickens tells a very different nurse's story in one of the chapters of *An Uncommercial Traveller*. The tone of Mrs. Gaskell's nurse is kindly and protective; that of Dickens' nurse severe, admonitory and emphatic. She, who told the grim legend of Captain Murderer, meant, clearly, to scare as well as to entertain her hearer. She leads up to the climax of her story, the deadly revenge of the dark twin's poisoned pie, with admirable art. The nurse's name was Mercy, but, as Dickens remarks, she showed none to him. Though Dickens shrank timorously in childhood from her frightful stories, he himself, like the fat boy in *Pickwick*, sometimes "wants to make our flesh creep." It seems, indeed, an odd trait of the humorist that he can at will wholly discard his gaiety, and, like the Pied Piper, pipe to another measure. W.W. Jacobs, besides his humorous sailor yarns, has given us *The Monkey's Paw*; and Barry Pain's gruesome stories, *Told in the Dark*, are as forcible as any of his humours to be read in the daylight. Dickens, in his excursions into the supernatural, does not, however, always cast off his mood of jocularity. His treatment of Marley's ghost lacks dignity and decorum. Clanking its chains in a remote cellar of the silent, empty house, it has the power to disturb us, but we lose our respect for the shade when we gaze upon it eye to eye. Applied to the spirit world, there is much truth in the old adage that familiarity breeds contempt. The account of the thirteenth juryman, in *Dr. Marigold's Prescriptions*, is much more alarming. The story of the signalman,

No. 1 Branch line, in *Mugby Junction*, is indefinably horrible. The signalman's anguish of mind, his exact description of the Appearance, his sense of overhanging calamity, are all strangely disquieting. The coincidence of the manner of his death, with which the story closes, is wisely left to make its own inevitable impression.

Some of the stories in *Blackwood* are the more striking because they depend for their effect on natural, not supernatural, horror. We may feel we are immune from the visits of ghosts, but the accident in *The Man in the Bell* (1821) is one which might happen to anyone. The maddening clangour of sound, the frightful images that crowd into the reeling brain of the man suspended in the belfry, are described with an unflinching realism that reminds us of *The Pit and the Pendulum*. To the same class belongs the skilfully constructed *Iron Shroud* (1830), by William Mudford, an author who, as Scott remarks in his journal, "loves to play at cherry-pit with Satan." The suspense is ingeniously maintained as, one by one, the windows of the iron dungeon disappear, until, at last, the massive walls and ponderous roof contract into the victim's iron shroud. Wilkie Collins' story, *A Terribly Strange Bed*, which describes the stratagem of a gang of cardsharpers for getting rid of those who happen to win money from them, is in the same vein. The canopy slowly descends during the night, and smothers its victim. A similar motive is used, with immeasurably finer

effect, by Joseph Conrad in his story of the disappearance of the sailor at the lonely inn in the mountains of Spain. The experience of Byrne in *The Inn of the Two Witches*[129] is a masterpiece in the psychology of terror. The dense darkness, in which the young naval officer "steers his course only by the feel of the wind," the scene when the door of the inn bursts open and reveals in the candlelight the savage beauty of the gipsy girl with evil, slanting eyes, and the inhuman ugliness of the old hags, are a fitting prelude to the horrors of the chamber, where the corpse of the missing sailor is found in the wardrobe. We pass with Byrne through the different stages of suspicion and dread until, completely baffled in his attempt to account for the manner in which Tom Corbin was done to death, we feel "the hot terror that plays upon the heart like a tongue of flame that touches and withdraws before it turns a thing to ashes."

In the short stories of the latter half of the nineteenth century, it is hard to escape from the terrible. We light upon it suddenly, here, there and everywhere. We find it in Stevenson's *New Arabian Nights*, in his *Merry Men*, and his stories of the South Seas, as indeed we should expect, when we recall the tapping of the blind man's stick in *Treasure Island*, the scene with the candles in the snow after the duel between the two brothers in *The Master of Ballantrae*, or David Balfour's perilous adventure on the broken staircase in *Kidnapped*. Kipling is another expert in

the art of eeriness, and has a wide range. His Indian backgrounds are peculiarly adapted for tales of terror. The loathsome horror of *The Mark of the Beast*, with its intangible suggestion of mystery, the quiet restraint of *The Return of Imray*, in which so much is left unsaid, are two admirable illustrations of his gift.

The tale of terror wins its effect by ever-varying means. Scientific discoveries open up new vistas, and the twentieth century will evolve many fresh devices for torturing the nerves. The telephone set ringing by a ghostly hand, the aeroplane with a phantom pilot, will replace the Gothic machinery of ruined abbeys and wandering lights. The possibilities of terror are manifold, and it is impracticable here to do more than pick up a few threads in the tangled skein. Terror becomes inextricably interwoven with other motives according to the bent of the author. It is allied with psychology in James' sinister *Turn of the Screw*, with scientific phantasy in Wells' *Invisible Man*. It may enhance the excitement of a spy story, add zest to the study of crime, or act as a foil to a romantic love interest.

CHAPTER XI - AMERICAN TALES

OF TERROR.

In 1797 we are told that in America "the dairymaid and hired man no longer weep over the ballad of the cruel stepmother, but amuse themselves into an agreeable terror with the haunted houses and hobgoblins of Mrs. Radcliffe."[130] In *The Asylum, or Alonzo and Melissa*, published in Ploughkeepsie in 1811, the Gothic castle, with its full equipment of "explained ghosts," has been safely conveyed across the Atlantic and set up in South Carolina; and *The Sicilian Pirate or the Pillar of Mystery: a Terrific Romance*, is, if we may trust its title, a hair-raising story, in the style of "Monk" Lewis. Charles Brockden Brown, one of the earliest American novelists, prides himself on "calling forth the passions and engaging the sympathy of the reader by means not hitherto employed by preceding authors," and speaks slightingly of "puerile superstitions and exploded manners, Gothic castles and chimeras."[131] Brown, who, like Shelley, was an enthusiastic admirer of Godwin, sought to embody the theories of *Political Justice* in romances describing American life. The works, which are said by Peacock to have taken deepest root in Shelley's mind and to have had the strongest influence in the formation of his character, are Schiller's *Robbers*, Goethe's *Faust*, and four novels —*Wieland, Ormond, Edgar Huntly*, and *Mervyn*—by C.B. Brown.[132]

Notwithstanding his lofty scorn for "Gothic castles and chimeras," even Brown himself condescended to take over from the despised Mrs. Radcliffe the device of introducing apparently supernatural occurrences which are ultimately traced to natural causes. Like Mrs. Radcliffe he is at the mercy of a conscience which forbids him to thrust upon his readers spectres in which he himself does not believe. He lacks Lewis's reckless mendacity. In *Wieland* mysterious voices are heard at intervals by various members of the family. To the hero, who has inherited a tendency to religious fanaticism, they seem to be of divine origin, and when a voice bids him sacrifice those who are dearest to him, he obeys implicitly. He slays his wife and children, and his sister only escapes death by accident. After this catastrophe it proves that the voices are produced by a skilled ventriloquist, Carwin, who has been admitted as an intimate friend of the family. Realising that this explanation may seem somewhat incredible, Brown seeks to make it appear more plausible by dwelling on Wieland's abnormal state of mind, which would render him peculiarly open to suggestion. Carwin's motive for thus persecuting the Wieland family with his accursed gift is never satisfactorily explained. His attitude is apparently that of an obtuse psychologist, who does not realise how serious the consequence of his experiments may be.

In *Ormond* and *Arthur Mervyn*, Brown describes the ravages of the yellow fever, of which he had personal

experience in New York and Philadelphia. The hero of *Ormond* is a member of a society similar to that of the Illuminati, whose ceremonies and beliefs are set forth in *Horrid Mysteries* (1796). The heroine, Constantia Dudley, who was Shelley's ideal feminine character, is the embodiment of a theory, not a human being. She "walks always in the light of reason," and decides that "to marry in extreme youth would be a proof of pernicious and opprobrious temerity." The most memorable of Brown's novels is *Edgar Huntly*, which bears an obvious resemblance to *Caleb Williams*. Like Godwin, Brown is deeply interested in morbid psychology. He finds pleasure in tracing the workings of the brain in times of emotional stress. The description of a sleepwalker digging a grave—a picture which captivated Shelley's imagination—is the starting-point of the book. Edgar Huntly is impelled by curiosity to track him down. The somnambulist, Clithero, has, in self-defence, killed the twin-brother of his patron, Mrs, Lorimer, to whom he is deeply attached. Obsessed by the idea of the misery his deed will arouse in her mind, he attempts, in a moment of frenzy, to slay her. Believing that Mrs. Lorimer has died after hearing of the murder, Clithero flees to America. When he disappears from his home, Huntly resolves to follow him, and in his search loses himself amid wild and desolate country. He is attacked by Indians, and after frightful adventures at length reaches his home. Clithero, whom he believed dead, has been rescued. Mrs. Lorimer is still alive, and is married to a former

lover. This news, however, fails to restore Clithero, who, in a fit of insanity, flings himself overboard when he is in a ship in charge of Huntly.

Brown's plots, which often open well, are spoilt by hasty, careless conclusions. It was his habit to write two or three novels simultaneously. He was beset by the problem that exercised even Scott's brain: "The devil of a difficulty is that one puzzles the skein in order to excite curiosity, and then cannot disentangle it for the satisfaction of the prying fiend they have raised."

Brown takes very little trouble over his dénouements, but his characters leave so faint an impression on our minds that we are not deeply concerned in their fates. He is interested rather in conveying states of mind than in portraying character. We search the windings of Clithero's tormented conscience without realising him as an individual. The background of rugged scenery, though it is described in vague, turgid language, is more definite and distinct than the human figures. We feel that Brown is struggling through the obscurity of his Latinised diction to depict something he has actually seen. An air of dreadful solemnity hangs heavily over each story. Every being is in deadly earnest. Brown has Godwin's power of hypnotising us by his serious persistence, and of reducing us to a mood of awestruck gravity by the sonority of his pompous periods.

From the oppressive gloom of Brown's "novels with a purpose," it is a relief to turn to the irresponsible gaiety of "Geoffrey Crayon," whose tales of terror, published some twenty years later, are usually fashioned in a jovial spirit, only faintly tinged with awe and dread. In *The Spectre Bridegroom*, included in *The Sketch Book* (1820), the ghostly rider of Bürger's far-famed ballad is set amid new surroundings and pleasantly turned to ridicule. The "supernatural" wooer, who now and again arouses a genuine thrill of fear, is merely playing a practical joke on the princess by impersonating the dead bridegroom, and all ends happily. The story of the Headless Horseman of Sleepy Hollow is set against so picturesque a background that we are almost inclined to quarrel with those who laughed and said that Ichabod Crane was still alive, and that Bram Jones, the lovely Katrina's bridegroom, knew more of the spectre than he chose to tell. The drowsy atmosphere of Sleepy Hollow makes us see visions and dream dreams. The group of "Strange Stories by a Nervous Gentleman" in *Tales of a Traveller* (1824) prove that Washington Irving was well versed in ghostly lore. He, as well as any, can call spirits from the vasty deep, but, when they appear in answer to his summons, he can seldom refrain from receiving them in a jocose, irreverent mood, ill befitting the solemn, dignified spectre of a German legend. Even the highly qualified, irrepressibly loquacious ghost of Lewis Carroll's *Phantasmagoria* would have resented his genial familiarity. The strange stories are told at a

hunting-party in a country-house, a cheerful, comfortable background for ghost stories. A hoary, one-eyed gentleman, "the whole side of whose head was dilapidated and seemed like the wing of a house shut up and haunted," sets the ball rolling with the old story of a spectre who glides into the room, wringing her hands, and is later identified, like Scott's Lady in the Sacque, by her resemblance to an ancestral portrait in the gallery. The "knowing" gentleman tells of a picture that winked in a startling and alarming fashion, and immediately explains away this phenomenon by the presence of a thief who has cut a spy-hole in the canvas. *The Bold Dragoon* is a spirited, riotous nightmare in which the furniture dances to the music of the bellows played by an uncanny musician in a long flannel gown and a nightcap. The *Story of the German Student* is in a different key. Here Irving strikes a note of real horror. The student falls in love with an imaginary lady, woven out of his dreams. He finds her in distress one night in the streets of Paris, takes her home, only to find her a corpse in the morning. A police-officer informs him that the lady was guillotined the day before, and the student discovers the truth of this statement when he unrolls a bandage and her head falls to the floor. The young man loses his reason, and is tormented by the belief that an evil spirit has reanimated a dead body to ensnare him. The morning after the recital of this gruesome story, the host reads aloud to his guests a manuscript entrusted to him, together with a

portrait, by a young Italian. This youth, it chances, learnt painting with a monk, who, as a penance, drew pictures, or modelled waxen images, representing death and corruption, a detail which reminds us of what was concealed by the Black Veil in *Udolpho*. He later falls in love with his model, Bianca, who, during his absence abroad, marries his friend Filippo. In a jealous rage the young Italian slays his rival, and is unceasingly haunted by his phantom. Washington Irving has no desire to endure for long the atmosphere of mystery and horror his story has created, and quickly relieves the tension by a return to ordinary life. The host promises to show the picture, which is said to affect all beholders in an extraordinary fashion, to each of his guests in turn. They all profess themselves remarkably affected by it, until the host confesses that he has too sincere a regard for the feelings of the young Italian to reveal the actual picture to any of them; With this moment of disillusionment the strange stories come to an end. The title, *Tales of a Traveller*, under which Irving placed his tales of terror, indicates the mood in which he fashioned them. He regarded them much as he would regard the wonderful adventures of Baron Munchausen. They were to be taken, like one of Dr. Marigold's prescriptions, with a grain of salt. The idea of blending levity with horror, suggested perhaps by German influence, was very popular in England and France at this period. Balzac's *L'Auberge Rouge* and *L'Elixir de la Longue Vie* are written in a similar mood.

It is not always the boldest and most adventurous beings who elect to dwell amid "calling shapes and beckoning shadows dire." The "virtuous mind," whom supernatural horrors may "startle well but not astound," sometimes finds a melancholy pleasure in beguiling weaker mortals into haunted ruins to watch their firm nerves tremble. Sometimes too, though a man be wholly innocent of the desire to alarm, he is led astray, whether he will or not, among the terrors of the invisible world. Grey ghosts steal into his imagination unawares. It was so that they came to Nathaniel Hawthorne, who speaks sorrowfully of "gaily dressed fantasies turning to ghostly and black-clad images of themselves." He would gladly have written a "sunshiny" book, but was capriciously fated to live ever in the twilight, haunted by spectres and by "dark ideas." He fashions his tales of terror delicately and reluctantly, not riotously and shamelessly like Lewis and Maturin.

An innate reticence and shyness of temper held Hawthorne, as if by a spell, somewhat aloof from life, and no one realised more clearly than he the limitations that his detachment from humanity imposed upon his art.

Of *Twice-Told Tales* he writes regretfully:

> "They have the pale tint of flowers that blossomed in too retired a shade… Instead of passion there is sentiment and even in what purport to be pictures of actual life we have

> allegory, not always so warmly dressed in its habiliments of flesh and blood as to be taken into the reader's mind without a shiver. Whether from lack of power or an inconquerable reserve, the author's touches have often an effect of tameness. The book, if you would see anything in it, requires to be read in the clear, brown twilight atmosphere in which it was written; if opened in the sunshine, it is apt to look exceedingly like a volume of blank pages";

and in his *Notebook* (1840) he confesses:

> "I used to think I could imagine all the passions, all feelings and states of the heart and mind, but how little did I know! Indeed we are but shadows, we are not endowed with real life, and all that seems most real about us is but the thinnest shadow of a dream—till the heart be touched."

Whether he is threading the labyrinths of his imagination or watching the human shadows come and go, Hawthorne lingers longer in the shadow than in the sunshine. He was not a man of morose and gloomy temper, disenchanted with life and driven by distress or thwarted passion to brood in solitude. An irresistible, inexplicable impulse drives him towards the sombre and the gloomy. The delicacy and wistful charm of the words in which Hawthorne criticises his own work and character reveal how impossible it

would have been for him to force his wayward genius. His imagination hovers with curious persistence round eerie, fantastic themes:

"An old looking-glass. Somebody finds out the secret of making all the images reflected in it pass again across its surface"—a hint skilfully introduced into the history of old Esther Dudley in *The Legends of the Province House*, or:

> "A dreadful secret to be communicated to several persons of various character—grave or gay—and they all to become insane, according to their characters, by the influence of the secret"

—an idea modified and adapted in *The Marble Faun*. "An ice-cold hand—which people ever afterwards remember when once they have grasped it"—is bestowed on the Wandering Jew, the owner of the marvellous *Virtuoso's Collection*, whose treasures include the blood-encrusted pen with which Dr. Faustus signed away his salvation, Peter Schlemihl's shadow, the elixir of life, and the philosopher's stone. The form of a vampire, who apparently never took shape on paper, flitted through the twilight of Hawthorne's imagination:

> "Stories to be told of a certain person's appearance in public, of his having been seen in various situations, and his making visits in private circles; but finally on looking for this

person, to come upon his old grave and mossy tombstone."

With so many alluring suggestions floating shadowwise across his mind, it is not wonderful that Hawthorne should have been fascinated by the dream of a human life prolonged far beyond the usual span—a dream, which, if realised, would have enabled him to capture in words more of those "shapes that haunt thought's wildernesses."

Although among the sketches collected in *Twice-Told Tales* (vol. i. 1837, vol. ii. 1842) some are painted in gay and lively hues, the prevailing tone of the book is sad and mournful. The light-hearted philosophy of the wanderers in *The Seven Vagabonds*, the pretty, brightly coloured vignettes in *Little Annie's Rambles*, the quiet cheerfulness of *Sunday at Home* or *The Rill from the Town Pump*, only serve to throw into darker relief gloomy legends like that of *Ethan Brand*, the man who went in search of the Unpardonable Sin, or dreary stories like that of *Edward Fane's Rosebud*, or the ghostly *White Old Maid*. One of the most carefully wrought sketches in *Twice-Told Tales* is the weird story of *The Hollow of the Three Hills*. By means of a witch's spell, a lady hears the far-away voices of her aged parents—her mother querulous and tearful, her father calmly despondent—and amid the fearful mirth of a madhouse distinguishes the accents and footstep of the husband she has wronged. At last she listens to the death-knell tolled for the child she has left to die. The solemn rhythm

of Hawthorne's skilfully ordered sentences is singularly haunting and impressive:

> "The golden skirts of day were yet lingering upon the hills, but deep shades obscured the hollow and the pool, as if sombre night were rising thence to overspread the world. Again that evil woman began to weave her spell. Long did it proceed unanswered, till the knolling of a bell stole in among the intervals of her words, like a clang that had travelled far over valley and rising ground and was just ready to die in the air… Stronger it grew, and sadder, and deepened into the tone of a death-bell, knolling dolefully from some ivy-mantled tower, and bearing tidings of mortality and woe to the cottage, to the hall and to the solitary wayfarer that all might weep for the doom appointed in turn to them. Then came a measured tread, passing slowly, slowly on as of mourners with a coffin, their garments trailing the ground so that the ear could measure the length of their melancholy array. Before them went the priest reading the burial-service, while the leaves of his book were rustling in the breeze. And though no voice but his was heard to speak aloud, still here were revilings and anathemas whispered, but distinct, from women and from men… The sweeping sound of the funeral train faded away like a thin vapour and the wind that just

> before had seemed to shake the coffin-pall moaned sadly round the verge of the hollow between three hills."

In a later collection of Hawthorne's short stories, *Mosses from an Old Manse*, the grave and the gay, the terrific and the sportive, are once more intermingled. Side by side with a forlorn attempt at humorous allegory, Mrs. *Bullfrog*, we find the serious moral allegories of *The Birthmark* and *The Bosom-Serpent*, the wild, mysterious forest-revels in *Goodman Brown*, and the evil, sinister beauty of *Dr. Rappacini's Daughter*, a modern rehandling of the ancient legend of the poison-maiden, who was perhaps the prototype of Oliver Wendell Holmes' heroine in *Elsie Venner* (1861). The quiet grace and natural ease of Hawthorne's style lend even to his least ambitious tales a distinctive charm. If he chooses a slight and simple theme, his touch is deft and sure. *Dr. Heidegger's Experiment*, in which Hawthorne's delicate, whimsical fancy plays round the idea of the elixir of life, is almost like a series of miniature pictures, distinct and lifelike in form and colour, seen through the medium of an old-fashioned magic-lantern. Yet even in this fantastic trifle we can discern the feeling for words and the sense of proportion that characterise Hawthorne's longer works.

The Scarlet Letter (1850) was originally intended to be one of several short stories, but Hawthorne was persuaded to expand it into a novel. He felt some

misgivings as to the success of the work:

> "Keeping so close to the point as the tale does, and diversified in no otherwise than by turning different sides of the same dark idea to the reader's eye, it will weary very many people and disgust some."

The plot bears a remarkable resemblance to that of Lockhart's striking novel, *Adam Blair*. The "dark idea" that fascinates Hawthorne is the psychological state of Hester Prynne and her lover, Arthur Dimmesdale, in the long years that follow their lawless passion. Their love story hardly concerns him at all. The interest of the novel does not depend on the development of the plot. No attempt is made to complicate the story by concealing the identity of Hester's lover or of her husband. The action takes place within the souls and minds of the characters, not in their outward circumstances. The central chapter of the book is named significantly: "The Interior of a Heart." The moral situation described in *The Scarlet Letter* did not present itself to Hawthorne abstractly, but as a series of pictures. He habitually thought in images, and he brooded so long over his conceptions that his descriptions are almost as definite in outline and as vivid in colour as things actually seen. His pictures do not waver or fade elusively as the mind seeks to realise them. The prison door, studded with pikes, before which Hester Prynne first stands with the letter on her breast, the pillory where Dimmesdale keeps vigil at midnight,

the forest-trees with pale, fitful gleams of sunshine glinting through their leaves, are so distinct that we almost put out our hands to touch them. Hawthorne's dream-imagery has the same convincing reality. The phantasmagoric visions which float through Hester's consciousness—the mirrored reflection of her own face in girlhood, her husband's thin, scholar-like visage, the grey houses of the cathedral city where she had spent her early years—are more real to her and to us than the blurred faces of the Puritans who throng the marketplace to gaze on her ignominy. Although the moral tone of the book is one of almost unrelieved gloom, the actual scenes are full of colour and light. Pearl's scarlet frock with its fantastic embroideries, the magnificent velvet gown and white ruff of the old dame who rides off by night to the witch-revels in the forest, the group of Red Indians in their deer-skin robes and wampum belts of red and yellow ochre, the bronzed faces and gaudy attire of the Spanish pirates, all stand out in bold relief among the sober greys and browns of the Puritans. The tense, emotional atmosphere is heightened by the festive brightness of the outer world.

The light of Hawthorne's imagination is directed mainly on three characters—Hester, Arthur, and the elf-like child Pearl, the living symbol of their union. Further in the background lurks the malignant figure of Roger Chillingworth, contriving his fiendish scheme of vengeance, "violating in cold blood the sanctity of a human heart." The blaze of the Scarlet

Letter compels us by a strange magnetic power to follow Hester Prynne wherever she goes, but her suffering is less acute and her character less intricate than her lover's. She bears the outward badge of shame, but after "wandering without a clue in the dark labyrinth of mind," wins a dull respite from anguish as she glides "like a grey and sober shadow" over the threshold of those who are visited by sorrow. At the last, when Dimmesdale's spirit is "so shattered and subdued that it could hardly hold itself erect," Hester has still energy to plan and to act. His character is more twisted and tortuous than hers, and to understand him we must visit him apart. The sensitive nature that can endure physical pain but shrinks piteously from moral torture, the capacity for deep and passionate feeling, the strange blending of pride and abject self-loathing, of cowardice and resolve, are portrayed with extraordinary skill. The different strands of his character are "intertwined in an inextricable knot." His is a living soul, complicated and varying in its moods, but ever pursued by a sense of sin. By one of Hawthorne's swift, uncanny flashes of insight, as Dimmesdale goes home after the forest-meeting, we hear nothing of the wild beatings of hope and dreary revulsions to despair, but only of foul, grotesque temptations that assail him, just as earlier—on the pillory—it is the grim humour and not the frightful shame of the situation that strikes him, when by an odd trick of his imagination he suddenly pictures a "whole tribe of decorous personages starting into view with the

disorder of a nightmare in their aspects," to look upon their minister.

Hawthorne's delineation of character and motive is as scrupulously accurate and scientific as Godwin's, but there is none of Godwin's inhumanity in his attitude. His complete understanding of human weakness makes pity superfluous and undignified. He pronounces no judgment and offers no plea for mercy. His instinct is to present the story as it appeared through the eyes of those who enacted the drama or who witnessed it. Stern and inexorable as one of his own witch-judging ancestors, Hawthorne foils the lovers' plan of escape across the sea, lets the minister die as soon as he has made the revelation that gives him his one moment of victory, and in the conclusion brings Hester back to take up her long-forsaken symbol of shame. Pearl alone Hawthorne sets free, the spell which bound her human sympathies broken by the kiss she bestows on her guilty father. There are few passionate outbursts of feeling, save when Hester momentarily unlocks her heart in the forest—and even here Hawthorne's language is extraordinarily restrained:

> "'What we did had a consecration of its own. We felt it so! We said so to each other. Hast thou forgotten it?' 'Hush, Hester!' said Arthur Dimmesdale, rising from the ground. 'No; I have not forgotten.'"

Or again, after Dimmesdale has confessed that he

has neither strength nor courage left him to venture into the world: "'Thou shalt not go alone!' answered she, in a deep whisper. Then all was spoken."

In *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), as in *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne again presents his scenes in the light of a single, pervading idea, this time an ancestral curse, symbolised by the portrait of Colonel Pyncheon, who condemned an innocent man for witchcraft.

> "To the thoughtful man there will be no tinge of superstition in what we figuratively express, by affirming that the ghost of a dead progenitor—perhaps as a portion of his own punishment—is often doomed to become the Evil Genius of his family."

Hawthorne wins his effect by presenting the idea to our minds from different points of view, until we are obsessed by the curse that broods heavily over the old house. Even the aristocratic breed of fowls, of "queer, rusty, withered aspect," are an emblem of the decay of the Pyncheon family. The people are apt to be merged into the dense shadows that lurk in the gloomy passages, but when the sun shines on them they stand out with arresting distinctness. The heroic figure of Hepzibah Pyncheon, a little ridiculous and a little forbidding of aspect, but cherishing through weary years a passionate devotion to her brother, is described with a gentle blending of humour and pathos. Clifford Pyncheon—the sybarite made for

happiness and hideously cheated of his destiny—is delineated with curious insight and sympathy. It is Judge Jaffery Pyncheon, with his "sultry" smile of "elaborate benevolence"—unrelenting and crafty as his infamous ancestor—who lends to *The House of Seven Gables* the element of terror. Hour after hour, Hawthorne, with grim and bitter irony, mocks and taunts the dead body of the hypocritical judge until the ghostly pageantry of dead Pyncheons—including at last Judge Jaffery himself with the fatal crimson stain on his neckcloth—fades away with the oncoming of daylight.

Hawthorne's mind was richly stored with "wild chimney-corner legends," many of them no doubt gleaned from an old woman mentioned in one of his *Tales and Sketches*. He takes over the fantastic superstitions in which his ancestors had believed, and uses them as the playthings of his fancy, picturing with malicious mirth the grey shadows of his stern, dark-browed forefathers sadly lamenting his lapse from grace and saying one to the other:

> "A writer of story-books! What kind of a business in life, what manner of glorifying God, or being serviceable to mankind in his day and generation may that be? Why, the degenerate fellow might as well have been a fiddler."

The story of Alice Pyncheon, the maiden under the dreadful power of a wizard, who, to wreak his

revenge, compelled her to surrender her will to his and to do whatsoever he list, the legends of ghosts and spectres in the *Twice-Told Tales*, the allusions to the elixir of life in his *Notebooks*, the introduction of witches into *The Scarlet Letter*, of mesmerism into *The Blithedale Romance*, show how often Hawthorne was pre-occupied with the terrors of magic and of the invisible world. He handles the supernatural in a half-credulous, half-sportive spirit, neither affirming nor denying his belief. One of his artful devices is wilfully to cast doubt upon his fancies, and so to pique us into the desire to be momentarily at least one of the foolish and imaginative.

After writing *The Blithedale Romance*, in which he embodied his experiences at Brook Farm, and his Italian romance, *Transformation, or The Marble Faun*, Hawthorne, when his health was failing, strove to find expression for the theme of immortality, which had always exercised a strange fascination upon him. In August, 1855, during his consulate in Liverpool, he visited Smithell's Hall, near Bolton, and heard the legend of the Bloody Footstep. He thought of uniting this story with that of the elixir of life, but ultimately decided to treat the story of the footstep in *Dr. Grimshawe's Secret*, of which only a fragment was written, and to embody the elixir idea in a separate work, *Septimius Felton*, of which two unfinished versions exist. Septimius Felton, a young man living in Concord at the time of the war of the Revolution, tries to brew the potion of eternity by adding to a

recipe, which his aunt has derived from the Indians, the flowers which spring from the grave of a man whom he has slain. In *Dr. Dolliver's Romance*, Hawthorne, so far as we may judge from the fragment which remains, seems to be working out an idea jotted down in his notebook several years earlier:

> "A man arriving at the extreme point of old age grows young again at the same pace at which he had grown old, returning upon his path throughout the whole of life, and thus taking the reverse view of matters. Methinks it would give rise to some odd concatenations."

The story, which opens with a charming description of Dr. Dolliver and his great-grandchild, Pansie, breaks off so abruptly that it is impossible to forecast the "odd concatenations" that had flashed through Hawthorne's mind.

Although Hawthorne is preoccupied continually with the thought of death, his outlook is melancholy, not morbid. He recoils fastidiously from the fleshly and loses himself in the spiritual. He is concerned with mournful reflections, not frightful events. It is the mystery of death, not its terror, that fascinates him. Sensitive and susceptible himself, he never startles us with physical horrors. He does not search with curious ingenuity for recondite terrors. He was compelled as if by some wizard's strange power, to linger in earth's shadowed places; but the scenes that

throng his memory are reflected in quiet, subdued tones. His pictures are never marred by harsh lines or crude colours.

While Hawthorne in his *Twice-Told Tales* was toying pensively with spectral forms and "dark ideas," Edgar Allan Poe was penetrating intrepidly into trackless regions of terror. Where Hawthorne would have shrunk back, repelled and disgusted, Poe, wildly exhilarated by the anticipation of a new and excruciating thrill, forced his way onwards. He sought untiringly for unusual situations, inordinately gloomy or terrible, and made them the starting point for excursions into abnormal psychology. Just as Hawthorne harps with plaintive insistence on the word "sombre," Poe again and again uses the epithet "novel." His tales are never, as Hawthorne's often are, pathetic. His instinct is always towards the dramatic. Sometimes he rises to tragic heights, sometimes he is merely melodramatic. He rejoices in theatrical effects, like the death-throes of William Wilson, the return of the lady Ligeia, or the entry, awaited with torturing suspense, of the "lofty" and enshrouded figure of the Lady Madeline of Usher. Like Hawthorne, Poe was fascinated by the thought of death, "the hemlock and the cypress overshadowed him night and day," but he describes death accompanied by its direst physical and mental agonies. Hawthorne broods over the idea of sin, but Poe probes curiously into the psychology of crime. The one is detached and remote, the other inhuman

and passionless. The contrast in style between Hawthorne and Poe reflects clearly their difference in temper. Hawthorne writes always with easy, finished perfection, choosing the right word unerringly, Poe experiments with language, painfully acquiring a conscious, studied form of expression which is often remarkably effective, but which almost invariably suggests a sense of artifice. In reading *The Scarlet Letter* we do not think of the style; in reading *The Masque of the Red Death* we are forcibly impressed by the skilful arrangement of words, the alternation of long and short sentences, the device of repetition and the deliberate choice of epithets. Hawthorne uses his own natural form of expression. Poe, with laborious art, fashions an instrument admirably adapted to his purposes.

Poe's earliest published story, *A Manuscript Found in a Bottle*—the prize tale for the *Baltimore Saturday Visitor*, 1833—proves that he soon recognised his peculiar vein of talent. He straightway takes the tale of terror for his own. The experiences of a sailor, shipwrecked in the Simoom and hurled on the crest of a towering billow into a gigantic ship manned by a hoary crew who glide uneasily to and fro "like the ghosts of buried centuries," forecast the more frightful horrors of *A Descent into the Maelstrom* (1841). Poe's method in both stories is to induce belief by beginning with a circumstantial narrative of every-day events, and by proceeding to relate the most startling phenomena in the same calm, matter-

of-fact manner. The whirling abyss of the Maelstrom in which the tiny boat is engulfed, and the sensations of the fishermen—awe, wonder, horror, curiosity, hope, alternating or intermingled—are described with the same quiet precision as the trivial preliminary adventures. The man's dreary expectation of incredulity seals our conviction of the truth of his story. In *The Manuscript Found in a Bottle*, too, we may trace the first suggestion of that idea which finds its most complete and memorable expression in *Ligeia* (1837). The antique ship, with its preternaturally aged crew "doomed to hover continually upon the brink of eternity, without taking a final plunge into the abyss," is an early foreshadowing of the fulfilment of Joseph Glanvill's declaration so strikingly illustrated in the return of Ligeia: "Man doth not yield himself to the angels, nor unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will." In *Ligeia*, Poe concentrates on this idea with singleness of purpose. He had striven to embody it in his earlier sketches, in *Morella*, where the beloved is reincarnated in the form of her own child, in the musical, artificial *Eleonora* and in the gruesome *Berenice*. In *Ligeia*, at last, it finds its appropriate setting in the ebony bridal-chamber, hung with gold tapestries grotesquely embroidered with fearful shapes and constantly wafted to and fro, like those in one of the *Episodes of Vathek*. In *The Fall of the House of Usher* he adapts the theme which he had approached in the sketch entitled *Premature Burial*, and unites with it a subtler conception, the

sentience of the vegetable world. Like the guest of Roderick Usher, as we enter the house we fall immediately beneath the overmastering sway of its irredeemable, insufferable gloom. The melancholy building, Usher's wild musical improvisations, his vague but awful paintings, his mystical reading and his eerie verses with the last haunting stanza:

"And travellers now within that valley
Through the red-litten windows, see
Vast forms that move fantastically
To a discordant melody;
While, like a rapid, ghastly river,
Through the pale door,
A hideous throng rush out forever
And laugh—but smile no more,"

are all in harmony with the fate that broods over the family of Usher. Poe's gift for avoiding all impressions alien to his effect lends to his tales extraordinary unity of tone and colour. He leads up to his crisis with a gradual crescendo of emotion. The climax, hideous and terrifying, relieves the intensity of our feelings, and once it is past Poe rapidly hastens to the only possible conclusion. The dreary house with its vacant, eye-like windows reflected at the outset in the dark, unruffled tarn, disappears for ever beneath its surface.

In *The Masque of the Red Death* the imagery changes from moment to moment, each scene standing out clear in colour and sharp in outline; but

from first to last the perspective of the whole is kept steadily in view. No part is disproportionate or inappropriate. The arresting overture describing the swift and sudden approach of the Red Death, the gay, thoughtless security of Prince Prospero and his guests within the barricaded abbey, the voluptuous masquerade held in a suite of seven rooms of seven hues, the disconcerting chime of the ebony clock that momentarily stills the grotesque figures of the dancers, prepare us for the dramatic climax, the entry of the audacious guest, the Red Death, and his struggle with Prince Prospero. The story closes as it began with the triumph of the Red Death. Poe achieves his powerful effect with rigid economy of effort. He does not add an unnecessary touch.

In *The Cask of Amontillado*—perhaps the most terrible and the most perfectly executed of all Poe's tales—the note of grim irony is sustained throughout. The jingling of the bells and the devilish profanity of the last three words—*Requiescat in pace* —add a final touch of horror to a revenge, devised and carried out with consummate artistry.

Poe, like Hawthorne, loved to peer curiously into the dim recesses of conscience. Hawthorne was concerned with the effect of remorse on character. Poe often exhibits a conscience possessed by the imp of the perverse, and displays no interest in the character of his victim. He chooses no ordinary crimes. He considers, without De Quincey's humour, murder as a fine art. In *The Black Cat* the terrors are

calculated with cold-blooded nicety. Every device is used to deepen the impression and to intensify the agony. In *The Tell-Tale Heart*, so unremitting is the suspense, as the murderer slowly inch by inch projects his head round the door in the darkness, that it is well-nigh intolerable. The close of the story, which errs on the side of the melodramatic, is less cunningly contrived than Poe's endings usually are. In *William Wilson*, Poe handles the subject of conscience in an allegorical form, a theme essayed by Bulwer Lytton in one of his sketches in *The Student, Monos and Daimonos*. He probably influenced Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

In *The Pit and the Pendulum*, Poe seems to start from the very border-line of the most hideous nightmare that the human mind can conceive, yet there is nothing hazy or indefinite in his analysis of the feelings of his victim. He speaks as one who has experienced the sensations himself, not as one who is making a wild surmise. To read is, indeed, to endure in some measure the torture of the prisoner; but our pain is alleviated not only by the realisation that we at least may win respite when we will, but by our appreciation of Poe's subtle technique. He notices the readiness of the mind, when racked unendurably, to concentrate on frivolous trifles—the exact shape and size of the dungeon; or the sound of the scythe cutting through cloth. Mental and physical agonies are interchanged with careful art.

Poe's constructive power fitted him admirably to

write the detective story. In *The Mystery of M. Roget* he adopts a dull plot without sufficient vigour and originality to rivet our attention, but *The Murders of the Rue Morgue* secures our interest from beginning to end. As in the case of Godwin's *Caleb Williams*, the end was conceived first and the plot was carefully woven backwards. No single thread is left loose. Dupin's methods of ratiocination are similar to those of Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes. Poe never shirks a gory detail, but the train of reasoning not the imagery absorbs us in his detective stories. In his treasure story—*The Gold Bug*, which may have suggested Stevenson's *Treasure Island*—he compels our interest by the intricacy and elaboration of his problem.

The works of Mrs. Radcliffe, Lewis, and Maturin were not unknown to Poe, and he refers more than once to the halls of Vathek. From Gothic romance he may perhaps vivid that they make the senses ache. Like Maturin, he even resorts to italics to enforce his effect. He crashes down heavily on a chord which would resound at a touch. He is liable too to descend into vulgarity in his choice of phrases. His tales consequently gain in style in the translations of Baudelaire. But these aberrations occur mainly in his inferior work. In his most highly wrought stories, such as *Amontillado*, *The House of Usher*, or *The Masque of the Red Death*, the execution is flawless. In these, Poe never lost sight of the ideal, which, in his admirable review of Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales*

and *Mosses from an Old Manse*, he set before the writer of short stories:

> "A skilful literary artist has constructed a tale … having conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique or single effect to be wrought out, he then invents such incidents—he then combines such events—as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect. If his very initial sentence tend not to the outbringing of this effect, he has failed in the first step. In the whole composition there should be no word written of which the tendency direct or indirect is not to the one pre-established design."

While he was writing, Poe did not for a moment let his imagination run riot. The outline of the story was so distinctly conceived, its atmosphere so familiar to him, that he had leisure to choose his words accurately, and to dispose his sentences harmoniously, with the final effect ever steadily in view. The impression that he swiftly flashes across our minds is deep and enduring.

CHAPTER XII - CONCLUSION.

This book is an attempt to trace in outline the origin and development of the Gothic romance and the tale of terror. Such a survey is necessarily incomplete. For more than fifty years after the publication of *The Castle of Otranto* the Gothic Romance remained a definitely recognised kind of fiction; but, as the scope of the novel gradually came to include the whole range of human expression, it lost its individuality, and was merged into other forms. To follow every trail of its influence would lead us far afield. The Tale of Terror, if we use the term in its wider sense, may be said to include the magnificent story of the Writing on the Wall at Belshazzar's Feast, the Book of Job, the legends of the Deluge and of the Tower of Babel, and Saul's Visit to the Witch of Endor, which Byron regarded as the best ghost story in the world. In the Hebrew writings fear is used to endow a hero with superhuman powers or to instil a moral truth. The sun stands still in the heavens that Joshua may prevail over his enemies. In modern days the tale of terror is told for its own sake. It has become an end in itself, and is probably appreciated most fully by those who are secure from peril. It satisfies the human desire to experience new emotions and sensations, without actual danger.

There is little doubt that the Gothic Romance primarily made its appeal to women readers, though we know that Mrs. Radcliffe had many men among her admirers, and that Cherubina of *The Heroine* had a companion in folly, The Story-Haunted Youth. It is

remotely allied, as its name implies, to the mediaeval romances, at which Cervantes tilts in *Don Quixote*. It was more closely akin, however, to the heroic romances satirised in Mrs. Charlotte Lennox's *Female Quixote* (1752). When the voluminous works of Le Calprenède and of Mademoiselle de Scudéry were translated into English, they found many imitators and admirers, and their vogue outlasted the seventeenth century. *Artamène ou le Grand Cyrus*, out of which Mrs. Pepys told her husband long stories, "though nothing to the purpose, nor in any good manner," is to be found, with a pin stuck through one of the middle leaves, in the lady's library described by Addison in the *Spectator*, Mrs. Aphra Behn, in *Oroonoko* and *The Fair Jilt*, had made some attempt to bring romance nearer to real life; but it was not until the middle of the eighteenth century, when the novel, with the rise of Richardson, Fielding, Smollett and Sterne, took firm root on English soil, that the popularity of Cassandra, Parthenissa and Aretina was superseded. Then, if we may trust the evidence of Colman's farce, *Polly Honeycombe*, first acted in 1760, Pamela, Clarissa Harlowe and Sophia Western reigned in their stead. For the reader who had patiently followed the eddying, circling course of the heroic romance, with its high-flown language and marvellous adventures, Richardson's novel of sentiment probably held more attraction than Fielding's novel of manners. Fielding, on his broad canvas, paints the life of his day on the highway, in coaches, taverns, sponging-houses or at Vauxhall

masquerades. Every class of society is represented, from the vagabond to the noble lord. Richardson, in describing the shifts and subterfuges of Mr. B—and the elaborate intrigue of Lovelace, moves within a narrow circle, devoting himself, not to the portrayal of character, but to the minute analysis of a woman's heart. The sentiment of Richardson descends to Mrs. Radcliffe. Her heroines are fashioned in the likeness of Clarissa Harlowe; her heroes inherit many of the traits of the immaculate Grandison. She adds zest to her plots by wafting her heroines to distant climes and bygone centuries, and by playing on their nerves with superstitious fears. Since human nature often looks to fiction for a refuge from the world, there is always room for the illusion of romance side by side with the picture of actual life. Fanny Burney's spirited record of Evelina's visit to her vulgar, but human, relatives, the Branghtons, in London, is not enough. We need too the sojourn of Emily, with her thick-coming fancies, in the castle of Udolpho.

The Gothic Romance did not reflect real life, or reveal character, or display humour. Its aim was different. It was full of sentimentality, and it stirred the emotions of pity and fear. The ethereal, sensitive heroine, suffering through no fault of her own, could not fail to win sympathy. The hero was pale, melancholy, and unfortunate enough to be attractive. The villain, bold and desperate in his crimes, was secretly admired as well as feared. Hairbreadth escapes and wicked intrigues in castles built over

beetling precipices were sufficiently outside the reader's own experience to produce a thrill. Ghosts, and rumours of ghosts, touched nearly the eighteenth century reader, who had often listened, with bated breath, to winter's tales of spirits seen on Halloween in the churchyard, or white-robed spectres encountered in dark lanes and lonely ruins. In country houses like those described in Miss Austen's novels, where life was diversified only by paying calls, dining out, taking gentle exercise or playing round games like "commerce" or "word-making and work-taking," the Gothic Romances must have proved a welcome source of pleasurable excitement. Mr. Woodhouse, with his melancholy views on the effects of wedding cake and muffin, would have condemned them, no doubt, as unwholesome; Lady Catherine de Bourgh would have been too impatient to read them; but Lydia Bennet, Elinor Dashwood and Isabella Thorpe must have found in them an inestimable solace. Their fame was soon overshadowed by that of the Waverley Novels, but they had served their turn in providing an entertaining interlude before the arrival of Sir Walter Scott. Even at the very height of his vogue, they probably enjoyed a surreptitious popularity, not merely in the servants' hall, but in the drawing room. Nineteenth century literature abounds in references to the vogue of this school of fiction. There were spasmodic attempts at a revival in an anonymous work called *Forman* (1819), dedicated to Scott, and in Ainsworth's *Rookwood* (1834); and terror has

never ceased to be used as a motive in fiction.

In *Villette*, Lucy Snowe, whose nerves Ginevra describes as "real iron and bend leather," gazes steadily for the space of five minutes at the spectral "nun." This episode indicates a change of fashion; for the lady of Gothic romance could not have submitted to the ordeal for five seconds without fainting. A more robust heroine, who thinks clearly and yet feels strongly, has come into her own. In *Jane Eyre* many of the situations are fraught with terror, but it is the power of human passion, transcending the hideous scenes, that grips our imagination. Terror is used as a means to an end, not as an end in itself. In *Wuthering Heights* the windswept Yorkshire moors are the background for elemental feelings. We no longer "tremble with delicious dread" or "snatch a fearful joy." The gloom never lightens. We live ourselves beneath the shadow of Heathcliff's awe-inspiring personality, and there is no escape from a terror, which passes almost beyond the bounds of speech. The Brontës do not trifle with emotion or use supernatural elements to increase the tension. Theirs are the terrors of actual life.

Other novelists, contemporary with the Brontës, revel in terror for its own sake. Wilkie Collins weaves elaborate plots of hair-raising events. The charm of *The Moonstone* and the *Woman in White* is independent of character or literary finish. It consists in the unravelling of a skilfully woven fabric. Le Fanu, who resented the term "sensational" which was

justly applied to his works, plays pitilessly on our nerves with both real and fictitious horrors. He, like Wilkie Collins, made a cult of terror. Their literary descendants may perhaps be found in such authors as Richard Marsh or Bram Stoker, or Sax Rohmer. In Bram Stoker's *Dracula* the old vampire legend is brought up to date, and we are held from beginning to end in a state of frightful suspense. No one who has read the book will fail to remember the picture of Dracula climbing up the front of the castle in Transylvania, or the scene in the tomb when a stake is driven through the heart of the vampire who has taken possession of Lucy's form. The ineffable horror of the "Un-Dead" would repel us by its painfulness, if it were not made endurable by the love, hope and faith of the living characters, particularly of the old Dutch doctor, Van Helsing. The matter-of-fact style of the narrative, which is compiled of letters, diaries and journals, and the mention of such familiar places as Whitby and Hampstead, help to enhance the illusion.

The motive of terror has often been mingled with other motives in the novel as well as in the short tale. In unwinding the complicated thread of the modern detective story, which follows the design originated by Godwin and perfected by Poe, we are frequently kept to our task by the force of terror as well as of curiosity. In *The Sign of Four* and in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, to choose two entirely different stories, Conan Doyle realises that darkness

and loneliness place us at the mercy of terror, and he works artfully on our fears of the unknown. Phillips Oppenheim and William Le Queux, in romances which have sometimes a background of international politics, maintain our interest by means of mystifications, which screw up our imagination to the utmost pitch, and then let us down gently with a natural but not too obvious explanation. A certain amount of terror is almost essential to heighten the interest of a novel of costume and adventure, like *The Prisoner of Zenda* or *Rupert of Hentzau*, or of the fantastic, exciting romances of Jules Verne. Rider Haggard's African romances, *She* and *King Solomon's Mines*, belong to a large group of supernatural tales with a foreign setting. They combine strangeness, wonder, mystery and horror. The ancient theme of bartering souls is given a new twist in Robert Hichens' novel, *The Flames*. E.F. Benson, in *The Image in the Sand*, experiments with Oriental magic. The investigations of the Society for Psychical Research gave a new impulse to stories of the occult and the uncanny. Algernon Blackwood is one of the most ingenious exponents of this type of story. By means of psychical explanations, he succeeds in revivifying many ancient superstitions. In *Dr. John Silence*, even the werewolf, whom we believed extinct, manifests himself in modern days among a party of cheerful campers on a lonely island, and brings unspeakable terror in his trail. Sometimes terror is used nowadays, as Bulwer Lytton used it, to serve a moral purpose. Oscar Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Gray* is

intended to show that sin must ultimately affect the soul; and the Sorrows of Satan, in Miss Corelli's novel, are caused by the wickedness of the world. But apart from any ulterior motive there is still a desire for the unusual, there is still pleasure to be found in a thrill, and so long as this human instinct endures devices will be found for satisfying it. Of the making of tales of terror there is no end; and almost every novelist of note has, at one time or another, tried his hand at the art. Early in his career Arnold Bennett fashioned a novelette, *Hugo*, which may be read as a modernised version of the Gothic romance. Instead of subterranean vaults in a deserted abbey, we have the strong rooms of an enterprising Sloane Street emporium. The coffin, containing an image of the heroine, is buried not in a mouldering chapel, but in a suburban cemetery. The lovely but harassed heroine has fallen, indeed, from her high estate, for Camilla earns her living as a milliner. There are, it is true, no sonnets and no sunsets, but the excitement of the plot, which is partially unfolded by means of a phonographic record, renders them superfluous. H.G. Wells makes excursions into quasi-scientific, fantastic realms of grotesque horror in his *First Men in the Moon*, and in some of his sketches and short stories. Joseph Conrad has the power of fear ever at the command of his romantic imagination. In *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, in *Typhoon*, and, above all, in *The Shadow-Line*, he shows his supreme mastery over inexpressible mystery and nameless terror. The voyage of the schooner, doomed by the evil influence

of her dead captain, is comparable only in awe and horror to that of *The Ancient Mariner*. Conrad touches unfathomable depths of human feelings, and in his hands the tale of terror becomes a finished work of art. The future of the tale of terror it is impossible to predict; but the experiments of living authors, who continually find new outlets with the advance of science and of psychological enquiry, suffice to prove that its powers are not yet exhausted. Those who make the 'moving accident' their trade will no doubt continue to assail us with the shock of startling and sensational events. Others with more insidious art, will set themselves to devise stories which evoke subtler refinements of fear. The interest has already been transferred from 'bogle-wark' to the effect of the inexplicable, the mysterious and the uncanny on human thought and emotion. It may well be that this track will lead us into unexplored labyrinths of terror.

NOTES:

[1: Frazer, *Folklore of the Old Testament*, I. iv. § 2.]

[2: *Cock Lane and Common Sense*, 1894.]

[3: *Spectator*, No. 12.]

[4: *Spectator*, No. 110.]

[5: Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, June 12th, 1784.]

[6: *Tom Jones*, Bk. xvi. ch. v.]

[7: Letter to Dr. Moore, Aug. 2, 1787.]

[8: Ashton, *Chapbooks of the Eighteenth Century*, 1882.]

[9: Advertisement to *Cloudesley*, 1830.]

[10: Preface to *Mandeville*, Oct. 25, 1817.]

[11: Letters, vii. 27.]

[12: *The Uncommercial Traveller*.]

[13: *Odyssey*, xi.]

[14: April 17, 1765.]

[15: Nov. 13, 1784.]

[16: June 12, 1753.]

[17: *Remarks on Italy*.]

[18: Aug. 4, 1753.]

[19: *Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay*, vol. ii. Appendix ii.: *A Visit to Strawberry Hill in 1786*.]

[20: Jan. 5, 1766.]

[21: July 15, 1783.]

[22: March 26, 1765.]

[23: Nov. 5, 1782.]

[24: It has been pointed out (Scott, *Lives of the Novelists*, note) that in Lope de Vega's *Jerusalem* the picture of Noradine stalks from its panel and addresses Saladine.]

[25: Cf. Wallace, *Blind Harry*.]

[26: *Preface*, 1764.]

[27: Ch. XX.]

[28: Ch. XXXIV.]

[29: Ch. lxii.]

[30: Jan. 27, 1780.]

[31: *Letters*, April 8, 1778, and Jan. 27, 1780.]

[32: *Poetical Works*, ed. Sampson, p. 8.]

[33: Translated *Blackwood's Magazine*, 1820 (Nov.). Cf. Scott, *Bridal of Triermain*.]

[34: *E.g. Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay*, June 18, 1795;
Mathias, *Pursuits of Literature*, 14th ed. 1808, p.

56;
Scott,
Lives of the Novelists; Extracts from the *Diary of a Lover of*
Literature (1810); Byron, *Childe Harold*, iv. xviii.;
Thackeray, *Newcomes*, chs. xi., xxviii.; Brontë, *Shirley*,
ch.
xxvii; Trollope, *Barchester Towers*, ch. xv., etc.]

[35: Family Letters, 1908.]

[36: Reprinted, Romancist and Novelist's Library.]

[37: *Journeys of Mrs. Radcliffe*, 2nd ed., 1795, vol. ii. p. 171.]

[38: *Noctes Ambrosianae*, ed. 1855, vol. i. p. 201.]

[39: Lecture on *The English Novelists*.]

[40: *Life and Correspondence of M. G. Lewis*, 1839, i. 122.]

[41: *Life and Correspondence*, July 22nd, 1794.]

[42: Essay on *The State of German Literature*.]

[43: Southey, Preface to *Madoc*.]

[44: *Life and Correspondence*, Feb. 23, 1798.]

[45: Letter to John Murray, Aug. 23rd, 1814.]

[46: *Monthly Review*, June, 1797.]

[47: No. 148.]

[48: Cf. Musaeus: *Die Entführung*.]

[49: *Marmion*, Canto ii. Intro.]

[50: Reprinted, Romancist and Novelist's Library, vol. i. 1839.]

[51: *Essay on German Playwrights*.]

[52: *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809).]

[53: Many of these were issued by B. Crosby, Stationers' Court.]

[54: *Recollections of the Table-Talk of Samuel Rogers*, 1856, p. 138.]

[55: Trans. from the German of Christian August Vulpius.]

[56: Cf. Thackeray, "Tunbridge Toys" (Roundabout Papers).]

[57: *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*.]

[58: *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1825; and memoir prefixed to the edition of *Melmoth the Wanderer*, published in 1892.]

[59: Prose Works, 1851, vol. xviii.]

[60: *Letters and Memoir*, 1895, vol. i. p. 101.]

[61: *Life* (Melville), 1909, vol. i. p. 79.]

[62: *Letters*, 2nd Series, 1872, vol. i. p. 101.]

[63: Gustave Planche, *Portraits Littéraires*.]

[64: Cf. Stevenson's *Bottle-Imp.*]

[65: *Edinburgh Review*, July 1821.]

[66: Conant, *The Oriental Tale in England*, pp. 36-38.]

[67: Conant, *The Oriental Tale in England*, pp. 36-38.]

[68: Letter to Henley, Jan. 29, 1782.]

[69: *Life and Letters*, Melville, 1910, p. 20.]

[70: *Life and Letters*, 1910, p. 20.]

[71: *Memoirs, Journal and Correspondence of Thomas Moore*, 1853, vol. ii. p. 197.]

[72: Nov. 24, 1777, *Life and Letters*, p. 40.]

[73: Austen Leigh, *Memoir of Jane Austen*.]

[74: Letter to William Godwin, Dec. 7, 1817.]

[75: *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries*. Kegan Paul, 1876, vol. i. p. 78.]

[76: Preface to *Fleetwood*, 1832.]

[77: Preface to *Fleetwood*, 1832.]

[78: Preface to *Fleetwood*, 1832, p. xi: "I read over a little old book entitled *The Adventures of Mme. De St. Phale*, I turned over the pages of a tremendous compilation entitled *God's Revenge against Murder*, where the beam of the eye of omniscience was represented as perpetually pursuing the guilty… I was extremely conversant with *The Newgate Calendar* and *The Lives of the Pirates*. I rather amused myself with tracing a certain similitude between the story of *Caleb Williams* and the tale of *Bluebeard*;" and Preface to *Cloudesley*: "The present publication may in the same sense be denominated a paraphrase of the old ballad of the Children in

the Wood."]

[79: Scott, Introduction to *The Abbot*, 1831.]

[80: *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries*, 1876, vol. ii. p. 304.]

[81: *Caleb Williams*, ch. x.]

[82: *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries*, vol. i. pp. 330-1.]

[83: *Political Justice*, bk. ii, ch. ii.]

[84: *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries*, vol. i. pp. 330-1; Preface to 1st edition, 1799.]

[85: *Hermippus Redivivus*; or *The Sage's Triumph over Old Age*
and
the Grave (translated from the Latin of Cohausen, with
annotations), 1743. Dr. Johnson pronounced the volume "very
entertaining as an account of the hermetic philosophy and as
furnishing a curious history of the extravagancies of the
human
mind," adding "if it were merely imaginary it would be

nothing at
all."]

[86: *St. Leon*, vol. iv. ch, xiii.]

[87: *St. Leon*, Bk. iv, ch. v.]

[88: *Lives of the Necromancers*, 1834, Preface. "The main purpose of this book is to exhibit a fair delineation of the credulity of the human mind. Such an exhibition cannot fail to be productive of the most salutary lessons."]

[89: *St. Godwin: A Tale of the 16th, 17th and 18th Century*, by Count Reginald de St. Leon, 1800, p. 234.]

[90: Dowden, *Life of Shelley*, vol. i. p. 10.]

[91: Dowden, *Life of Shelley*, vol. i. p. 44.]

[92: Hogg, *Life of Shelley*, vol. i. p. 15.]

[93: Cf. Castle of Lindenberg story in *The Monk*, and ballad of Alonzo the Brave.]

[94: A versification of the story of the Wandering Jew, Bleeding Nun and Don Raymond in *The Monk*.]

[95: This poem was borrowed from Lewis's *Tales of Terror*
(without
Shelley's knowledge), where it is entitled *The Black Canon*

of
Elmham, or St. Edmond's Eve.]

[96: Letter to Edward Fergus Graham, Ap. 23, 1810 (*Letters*, ed.
Ingpen, 1909, vol. i, pp. 4-6).]

[97: Letter to John Joseph Stockdale, Nov. 14, 1810.]

[98: Mme. de Montolieu, *Caroline de Lichfield*, translated by Thos. Holcroft, 1786.]

[99: Mme. de Genlis, translated by Rev. Beresford, 1796.]

[100: Peter Middleton Darling, *Romance of the Highlands*, 1810.]

[101: Regina Maria Roche, *The Discarded Son, or The Haunt of the Banditti*, 1806.]

[102: Agnes Musgrave, *Cicely, or The Rose of Raby*.]

[103: Aphra Behn, *The Nun*.]

[104: Charlotte Smith, *Ethelinde, or The Recluse of the Lake*, 1790.]

[105: *The Relapse: a novel*, 1780.]

[106: *Tales of the Hall*.]

[107: Crébillon, *Les Égarements du Coeur et de l'Esprit*.]

[108: *The Borough*, Ellen Orford, Letter xx.]

[109: *The Borough*, xx, ll. 56 *seqq*.]

[110: *Parish Register*.]

[111: *William and Helen*, 1796.]

[112: *House of Aspen*, 1799 (Keepsake, 1830). *Doom of Devorgoil*, 1817 (Keepsake, 1830).]

[113: Scott, *Lives of the Novelists* (on Clara Reeve and Mrs. Radcliffe and Maturin).]

[114: Keepsake, 1828.]

[115: Keepsake, 1828.]

[116: *Journal*, Feb. 23, 1826.]

[117: List of books read 1814-1816.]

[118: *Fantasmagoriana: ou Recueil d'Histoires d'Apparitions, de*
Spectres, de Revenans, trad. d'Allemand par un Amateur.
Paris,
1812.]

[119: *Diary of John William Polidori*, June 17, 1816.]

[120: Byron, *Letters and Journals*, 1899, iii. 446. Mary Shelley, *Life and Letters*, 1889, i. 586. Extract from Mary Shelley's *Diary*, Aug. 14, 1816.]

[121: Nov. 15, 1823, *Life and Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley* (Marshall), ii. 52.]

[122: *Life and Letters*, ii. 88.]

[123: *Romancist and Novelist's Library*.]

[124: Reprinted in *Treasure House of Tales by Great Authors*, ed. Garnett, 1891.]

[125: *Punch*, vol. x. p. 31:

"Says Ainsworth to Colburn
A plan in my pate is
To give my romance, as
A supplement gratis.
Says Colburn to Ainsworth
'Twill do very nicely,
For that will be charging
Its value precisely."]

[126: *Life, Letters and Literary Remains*, 1883, vol. ii. pp. 70 *seqq*.]

[127: *Dublin University Magazine*, 1862. "Forgotten Novels."]

[128: *Blackwood's Magazine*, 1830-1837.]

[129: *Within the Tides*, 1915.]

[130: Preface to *The Algerine Captive* (Walpole, Vermont, 1797) quoted Loshe, *Early American Novel*, N.Y. 1907.]

[131: Preface to *Edgar Huntly*.]

[132: Peacock, *Memoirs of Shelley*.]

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