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The Gothic Villain and His Context

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A Thesis
in
The Department
of
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Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts at Concordia University Montréal, Québec, Canada,

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ABSTRACT

The Gothic Villain and His Context

Nadia Skiredj

This paper shows continuity and connection in the Gothic villain. The Gothic villains are a prime example of their creator's instinctive feeling for psychologically interesting characters who yet merge with the pervading theme of the supernatural. We can distinguish three types of Gothic villain. These three main types are fluid concepts which continually interact, though not annihilating distinction, for the Gothic villain remains to the last not a bundle of characteristics, but a set of characters. For the most part he is all melodrama and extravagant emotion, designed to excite the last possible twinge of sensation. His gradual development illustrates increasing skill in the art of romance. In him we see also the emergence of the "Romantic" character—an alien soul solacing itself in occult experiments with forbidden sciences or unscrupulous deeds.
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INTRODUCTION

The word "Gothic" originally referred to the Northern tribes that invaded Europe during the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries. The term was later applied by Renaissance critics to the style of architecture that flourished in the thirteenth century, because these critics thought that the style had originated with the Goths. This architecture was held in low esteem during the Renaissance, and the word "Gothic" therefore developed pejorative connotations suggesting the uncouth, ugly, barbaric, or archaic. It implied the vast and the gloomy, and subsequently denoted anything medieval. Later the word indicated any period in history before the middle or even the end of the seventeenth century. "Gothic" loosely referred to anything old-fashioned or out of date. The ruins of Gothic cathedrals and castles were naturally termed "Gothic", and soon any ruins—the process of decay itself—became associated with the Gothic as did wild landscapes and other phenomena which inspired sublimity and terror.

The Gothic movement in literature began in England
during the second quarter of the eighteenth century, and because it encompassed a general interest in the past, in archaeology, antiques, and ruins, particularly those of the Middle Ages, the label "Gothic" seemed appropriate. This Gothic revival was a reaction against earlier eighteenth-century order and formality, and it got its inspiration from medieval Romantic literature. A changing attitude toward nature and feeling evolved; wilderness and boldness came into vogue. The Romantic qualities of yearning, aspiration, mystery and wonder nourished the roots of the Gothic movement.

Horace Walpole, Ann Radcliffe, Matthew Lewis, and Charles Maturin, as well as hundreds of lesser known Gothic writers, established the conventions of the Gothic novel, which were later drawn upon by Mary Shelley, Jane Austen, Bram Stoker, William Beckford, Edgar Allan Poë, and William Godwin, to name a few. The works of these authors differ significantly; nonetheless, a basic orientation to reality is apparent in all Gothic works. The standard Gothic paraphernalia are only the trappings that may or may not be present. More substantial characteristics reappear from work to work, such as recurrent character types, plot patterns, and themes, as well as common psychological attitudes, similar treatments of fear, pain,
compulsion and disgust, and comparable views of religion. Although the standard conventions for the Gothic novel were developed during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Gothicism itself is not restricted to a single time and culture or even to a single style of writing. The origins of the Gothic sensibility predate the eighteenth century, and works that are essentially Gothic are being produced today. New devices were of course added, but the older conventions remained basically unchanged because the need to materialize these concepts in fiction did not change. In tracing the use of convention, we will seek to show how the connections between one work and another add to meaning.

The purpose of this paper is to show continuity and connection in the Gothic tradition with particular attention to the Gothic villain. We will first discuss the conditions, literary and philosophical, that gave rise to the earliest Gothic tales. Then we will describe the characterization and structure, which, with gradual growth, have continued in use to this day. We will then focus on the Gothic villain in several works: Lewis' The Monk, Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho, Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, Beckford's Vathek and Walpole's The Castle of Otranto.
CHAPTER ONE

AN INTRODUCTION TO GOTHIC LITERATURE

Gothic literature was a new literary form in the late eighteenth century. At that time, the purpose of Gothic fiction, like that of the Sentimental novel, to which it was closely allied, was to educate the reader's feelings through his identification with the feelings of the characters; to arouse his "sympathy," as the aesthetics of Sensibility demanded, by evoking pity and fear; and to explore the mind of man and the causes of evil in it. The earliest Gothic romances are literary fantasies embodying ideas about man's psychology that were the culmination of a century of philosophical speculation on the subject. In them, good and evil were distinguished absolutes, but as succeeding works delved deeper into the idea of evil as psychological, evil quickly began to be seen as relative and, soon, its pleasures were being explored. All these works were based on accepted views about the human mind. Later authors, employing the same literary devices as in the early works, introduced changes that both reflected and
developed modifications of these views. As the tales of the weird and horrid persisted through the nineteenth century, using the same characters and settings again and again, they gradually pieced together among them a picture of evil as a form of psychological monstrosity.

The highly conventionalized nature of the settings and characters, structures, and imagery of Gothic fiction has always been recognized. However, these features have been dubbed "Gothic machinery" because, like other forms of popular literature, Gothic fiction has been seen as fare for a sensation-seeking audience and not, therefore, worth literary analysis.¹ As a result, the course of the convention has not been traced. Instead, Gothic fiction has been called escape literature intended to inspire terror for terror's sake. Such descriptions have concealed the important ideas these tales contain. To say that early Gothic romances are just a form of escape does not explain why they appeared when they did or why their attraction was so strong and immediate. Recent attempts to treat Gothic literature as an aspect of Romanticism also failed to see its significance as a convention.² When we see that Gothic novels have continued to appear for two hundred years, and that the convention has been put to use by major writers, all
different from one another, it is evident that something more is involved than just a continuing taste for an evil kind of bedside reading, and that these works are not confined to a single period of literature.

From Walpole's maddened and murderous princeling in *The Castle of Otranto* to the self-tormented scientist in Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, the same conventional features keep reappearing because ideas of the same kind lie behind these works. That is, these and other Gothic writers chose the Gothic tale as a vehicle for ideas about psychological evil—evil not as a force exterior to man, but as a distortion, a warping of the mind. Walpole's slight romance yields such an interpretation, so does Stevenson's novel, and so do the Gothic tales that appeared in the long stretch of time between them.

This is not to say that both Walpole and Stevenson held the same view of evil or of man's psychology in general. On the contrary, their ideas on the subject form a sharp contrast. The interest in tracing this convention lies in the changes that take place within it, which correspond to the changes in thought on the subject that occurred after Löckele, who was to the eighteenth century what Freud has been to the twentieth, first set forth
his theory of the workings of the mind in the eighteenth century. His work dealt primarily with problems of perception and human knowledge; it is generally regarded as strictly empirical. His empiricism instigated a reorientation of thought in science, politics, religion, education and morality. Following Locke, however, eighteenth-century thinkers had devoted a great deal of their energies to the study of the mind, the nature of perception, the means to knowledge, expanding, adapting and modifying Locke's ideas. It was the first era in which the mind was studied inductively, and the changes in world view, especially in ideas about the moral nature of man, that such thinking reflected and also helped bring about were given literary expression in a number of different genres, but most directly in the Sentimental fiction of the time, of which Gothic literature is a part. It is within this general literary development that Gothic fiction first made its appearance when Horace Walpole awakened from a dream of which he could only remember a small part and under its influence wrote The Castle of Otranto. With his novel, he had given fictional treatment to some of the major preoccupations of his time that were also his own concerns and, after a while, others began to copy his work. Walpole's successors each took his devices and used them a little differently. Clara Reeve declared The Castle of Otranto too extravagant and confined herself wherever possible to the
"Natural"; William Beckford introduced the grotesque into the
genre; and Matthew Lewis added the tormented monk, who was
immediately picked up by Ann Radcliffe, whose villains had
influenced Lewis in the first place. This process of making
use of and modifying one another's devices continued through-
out the nineteenth century. Thus, Mary Shelley, Edgar Allan
Poe, and Nathaniel Hawthorne added twisted scientists to the
mad monk of Lewis and Radcliffe. Among distorted human
shapes inherited from the eighteenth century, monsters
and demonic animals appeared in the nineteenth. The ghosts
and devils of Walpole, Lewis and Radcliffe reappeared consi-
derably modified in Maturin, Brontë and James, and to them
and Beckford's Giouar were added vampires and witches.
Settings were changed from medieval to contemporary, a man's
house turned out to be still his Gothic castle, and his soul,
already reflected in paintings and statues, began to look
back at him from mirrors and, worse still, from his double,
a living copy of himself.

Gradually, if we follow the course of the convention
as it goes through the nineteenth century, we can trace
changes in ideas about the place of evil in the mind.
Soon Edgar Allan Poe is playing with ideas of evil and
madness, and Henry James is placing evil in the eye of the
moral arbiter.
Thus, within this literary convention, as in any other, changes and developments have occurred while it has retained its basically stable and recognizable outlines. Individual works within the convention embody the particulars of the author's thought in the devices common to the whole convention and, in that way, reveal both the ideas of the particular moment and the overall purpose of the convention itself. That common purpose, which ties these works together, emerges from the peculiar form of symbolism found in Gothic tales. In this literature, the entire tale is symbolic. In analyzing it, one has to speak of storms that 'stand for' the villain's anger or heroines that represent more a concept of virtue than 'flesh-and-blood' women. However, unlike the artfully buried symbols customary to a realistic work, the symbolism of a Gothic tale is almost, though not quite, allegorical. This literature is not allegory because its references are deliberately hazy. The surface fiction is full of vague and unexplained horrors designed, not to render a precise meaning, but to evoke the emotion of "terror." Yet, these effects of "terror" in Gothic tales refer to something beyond the fictional devices that produce them. The quasi-allegorical effect derives from what lies behind the terror-inspiring fictional devices. These tales make use of the realization that monsters in fiction frighten because they are already the inventions of dreaming imagination.
They are the shapes into which our fears are projected and so can be used in literature to explore the mind. Terror is evoked when the ghost, the double, or the assassin corresponds to something that is actually feared, known or unknown. The fictional beings of Gothic fiction, whether they be human or animal, symbolize real but vague fears that the reader recognizes as his own and all men's. Beneath the surface fiction there is a probing of humanity's basic psychological forces, an exploration of the subconscious, and the symbols correspond to psychological phenomena that yield to literary analysis. Yet it is probably this quasi-allegorical nature of Gothic symbolism, with its meaning lying almost entirely outside the fictional surface, that has caused this convention to be read only for its surface fiction, about which, it is true, little more can be said than that it evokes fear for fear's sake.

The authors of Gothic fiction, in writing their symbolic fantasies, necessarily chose a deliberately artificial form, for which they took their materials from earlier literature. The Castle of Otranto has several immediate antecedents, works that show an early use of historical setting, a ghost here and there, occasional sinister and supernatural happenings, and it
has remote ancestors in Shakespeare and medieval romance. These and other predecessors have, of course, been traced. Thorough studies have been made of the relationship of Gothic fiction to the "graveyard" poets, to Shakespeare and Spenser, and to the combination of antiquarianism and the movement of Sentimentalism that swept the eighteenth century. But all this is not important unless it shows how Gothic fiction does something new. Since Gothic fiction was, as has been generally recognized, a new genre, it follows that it was doing something different with the materials of its predecessors. To discover what that is, it is necessary to uncover the ideas and principles that gave rise to these works by analyzing them as symbolic constructs and to trace the convention with all its accretions through time and space. When this is done, the heritage on which Gothic authors drew throws further light on the meaning and purposes of their works.

The source and fountainhead of the entire Gothic tradition, Walpole's The Castle of Otranto, appeared in 1764, twelve years before its first important successor, Clara Reeve's The Old English Baron (1771), twenty-two years before William Beckford's Vathek (1786), and nearly thirty before the first works of Ann Radcliffe. It is a rather trifling little romance, so crammed with events
and relationships that it reads like a plot summary of itself. Otranto is peopled with two-dimensional characters embodying virtue and vice; its setting constitutes a representation of the villain's character (the central device in the novel became the most famous of all Gothic devices: the identity of the castle or house with its owner); it is an indirect narration, a story mediated through two voices before it reaches the reader; and its imagery and supernatural events lead to an interpretation of its meaning as an eighteenth-century psychological tale. All these features reappear in later works.

Although Walpole and his contemporaries cannot have known his work would establish a literary convention, they were aware of the nature of the work itself. We can already see in the preface to the second edition of The Castle of Otranto what Walpole saw himself as having achieved in the novel. He states explicitly that when he blended "the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern," the ancient, which was fantasy, freed his imagination, while the modern, reflecting the real world, lent reality to his characters. The characters are not very convincingly real, of course, but they are recognizable eighteenth-century figures embodying current ideas about the human mind. By placing them in the world of dreams
and fairy tales, Walpole was able to present his age's concept of human evil--pride, hatred, violence, cruelty, incest--as part of man's psychology. The one kind of romance enabled him to delve into his own subconscious; the other helped him to relate what he found there to the human condition in general.

In reawakening the imaginative world within himself by setting his tale in the dark, irrational past, Walpole started an enduring tradition. The inevitable doubts that arise about applying a complex psychological interpretation to his work seem far less bothersome when recognized in others. For example, Poe's tales, which have received an abundance of symbolic analysis, have much in common with Walpole's novel. Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" shows remarkable resemblances to The Castle of Otranto in both theme and device, which seem not to be either mere coincidence or simple imitation on Poe's part.

The Castle of Otranto is just the first of many a fictional plunge into the subconscious mind. Some later Gothic novels owe their origins, as it does, to actual dreams. Others result from their authors' conscious dredging up of dream symbols from their own minds. The
later authors added new devices to fit their particular needs, but all these works are set up as revelations of horror. They present as psychological evil a sexual obsession, overwhelming guilt, or pride that defies the limits God has set for man, and they seek to arouse fear and sickening horror in the reader. These tales may see evil as an aberration in man or as an inherent part of his nature, they may question the value judgments placed on the phenomena they are symbolizing, but they all show the world its own dreams, drawing the reader into their closed worlds, playing on his emotions and preventing him from denying that what he experiences in the novel may also be within himself.

It seems almost paradoxical that this depiction of man's nightmares should have grown out of the gentle tenets of Benevolism and the Sentimentalist movement. Yet the works of the first Gothic authors are based on the Benevolist view of man. The central belief of that view is that man, though fallen indeed, still has the potential for Good. An infinitely benevolent Creator has not abandoned his creature to inevitable depravity; man is born, not inherently evil, but with a nature that, if he is properly nurtured, enables him to live the virtuous life and so be happy. These ideas, held by the Sentimentalists, have been traced back
to a group of theologians at Cambridge University in the late seventeenth century. Their followers, the Latitudinarians, were active in both Church and State during and after the Restoration period, preaching religious tolerance and an active charity, and were highly influential. With help from the deists, they were primarily responsible for the widespread acceptance of Benevolism, as Louis Bredvold, among others, has shown. The Platonists, as Bredvold notes, were explicit about man's natural goodness. He quotes Henry More as saying, "Virtue is the health of the soul, its natural state of well-being," and Benjamin Whichcote as writing: "Nothing is more certainly true than that all Vice is unnatural and contrary to the nature of Man. A depraved and vicious Mind is as really the Sickness and Deformity thereof, as any foul and loathsome disease is to the body ... The good Man is an Instrument in Tune." 8

The Sentimental movement was a system of thought that makes "virtue" manifest in "good feelings," in pleasurable, inward sensations. The protagonists of the Sentimental novels, the man and woman of feeling, are repositories of such virtuous feelings and the inner content that goes with them. Demonstrating, through the emotions they express and through their occasional actions, a natural benevolence uncorrupted by a faulty upbringing, they are oversimplified
as characters. Objections were made, in the eighteenth century, as they are today, to the self-indulgent effusions and apparent smugness of these characters. Even those who admired Sentimental literature did so for the "fine feelings" to which it gave expression. It was the didactic duty of literature to direct the passions toward the good ends for which God implanted them in man by drawing models of refined sensibility. The Sentimental novel educates the reader's emotions by embodying in these characters correctly cultivated feeling, which the reader shares as he reads.

Evil, in this system of thought, is that which mars the harmony of the universe. It is the twisting and distortion of the potentially good feelings into destructive impulses that render the individual unhappy by setting him at war with God's harmony within and outside himself. Both good and evil are inner states of man's mind and, since beauty lies in God's order, the good and the beautiful are one, and evil is monstrous. These equations of goodness with beauty and wrongdoing with ugliness were put to use by the authors of Sentimental and Gothic literature. They made their good characters physically lovely and gave the evil ones twisted bodies and ugly faces. The Gothic novel, in making monstrosity the outward show of the terrible inner distortion of man's innate good nature into evil, is thus an expression
of the other side of the benevolist ideas reflected in the
Sentimental novel. It forms a variant of the Sentimental
genre, with related structures, forms, and devices. Sentimen-
tal novels reflect an ideal that, coming from God, is
possibly realizable; the Gothic represents the distortion
of that ideal.

Sentimental and Gothic literature is, as a result,
highly paradigmatic. The characters are more nearly represen-
tations of the general human state than depictions of indivi-
dual human beings. They are not personifications of good
and evil nor yet either type characters or highly individualized
portrayals. Occupying the hazy no-man's land between the
abstraction of allegory and the "reality" of social and
comic novels, they are manifestations of the semi-abstract,
semi-real area occupied by concepts of the place of good and
evil in the human mind. The characters are strictly limited
portrayals, and their reference beyond themselves to the
ideas they embody makes their outlines fuzzy. Plot, setting
and structure in this literature are also determined by such
outside reference to Sentimentalist concepts, lending an
insubstantiality to the whole work that is desirable because
it is conductive to evocation of the sublime, and so a
prime means for catching the reader up in the work. These
characteristics bring about the special kind of symbolism found
in Gothic tales, which, directed to the reader's feelings, put him in touch with known aspects of his own nature.

Sentimental and Gothic tales have their own rules and methods. They share common methods of characterization, structural and narrative systems, devices and images, and a common aesthetic because they share underlying ideas and pursue a common purpose—to present representations of the human mind in a fiction directed at its reader's feelings. The aesthetic principles on which they are written developed parallel to the development in thought expressed in Sentimental and Gothic fiction. The Sentimental and Gothic novels are very au courant in putting into practice the theories of their day and accord with the new ideas both in subject matter and form. If they are effusive, it is part of the new emotionalism; if they are melodramatic, melodrama was the coming thing. They put the sublime and the picturesque to special uses, and these were very much the modes of the time.

The sublime was an important aesthetic concept throughout the eighteenth century, as Samuel Monk shows in his study of the subject. He quotes critics of the time who list certain physical phenomena or human actions that are the means of creating a sublime effect—
tall cliffs; vast seas; noble deeds. Sights and sounds of great magnitude fill the mind with wonder and amazement. If an idea of danger is involved, the result will be a terror that is pleasing because the viewer knows he is himself safe.  

The sublime character presented an even greater problem than the distractions of Sentiment. In one of his essays, James Beattie, the poet, declares that ideal characters as well as villains can be sublime. He remarks that "sympathy as the means of conveying certain feelings from one breast to another, might be made a powerful instrument of moral discipline, if poets, and other writers of fable, were careful to call forth our sensibility towards those emotions only that favor virtue, and invigorate the human mind." These virtuous emotions respond to the sublime, and the reader's mind is elevated. Thus, Beattie says in another essay: "Our taste for the sublime, cherished into a habit, and directed to proper objects, may, by preserving us from vice, which is the vilest of all things, and by recommending virtue for its intrinsic dignity, be useful in promoting our moral improvement."
The features of the Gothic villain, which, to the eighteenth century, made him a sublime character, result in the compounding of good and evil in him, the creation of a mixed character, and a frightening vision of a world of relative moral values.

Just because the Gothic villain is 'sublimely' wicked, the terror he arouses fills the reader with "pleasurable astonishment" and causes him to feel with the villains. Consequently, the reader cannot condemn him entirely. The sublime in Gothic novels "calls forth our sensibility" toward emotions that do not "favor virtue," as Beattie warned it would. In attempting to set forth the nature of human good and evil, the Gothic novelists are like Victor Frankenstein in Mary Shelley's novel. They create monsters, which force an unwilling recognition of the dread blend of good and bad to be found in themselves and the rest of mankind. The reader, sharing the characters' feelings, partially suspends his moral judgments of the villain and, thereby, an understanding of the evil in him is opened up. Authors and readers alike are faced with the fact that they have accepted imaginatively an unexpected moral relativity, an unlooked-for consequence of the adage that "to understand is to forgive."
That is, having imaginatively inhabited the tortured mind of the evil character, they see the potential for such evil in all minds, and experiencing compassion for it through an understanding of its psychological causes, they can no longer look on good and evil as absolute or as forces outside the human psyche.
FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1 Even major studies have hampered themselves by this characterization. J. M. S. Tompkins, in The Popular Novel in England (Lincoln: University Press, 1961), seems to equate popular and bad; Devendra Varma and Montague Summers in their studies of Gothic literature try to supply plot summaries of novels which their readers would not themselves read. It is a small wonder that these chroniclers of the genre should as a result indulge in a good deal of pained sarcasm at the expense of their own subject.

2 A collection of essays specifically discussing Gothic literature as Romantic art is G. R. Thompson, ed., The Gothic Imagination (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1974). Northrop Frye also treats Gothic literature as part of Romanticism in A Study of English Romanticism (New York: Random Gouse, 1968), as well as alluding to it in The Secular Scripture (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976). That it has important links with Romanticism is undeniable, and the above works are useful explorations of them. Although related to Romanticism, Gothic works differ from those of the Romantic mainstream in their concern with human psychology in this world, as opposed to Romanticism's primary interest in a transcendental, mystic view of Nature and mankind's yearning for things not of this world.

3 Lowry Nelson, "Night Thoughts on the Gothic Novel" (Yale Review (1963), 52:236-57), and Robert D. Hume, "Gothic versus Romantic" (PMLA (March 1969), 84:282-90), discuss the need to see Gothic literature as a "kind" of its own. Hume's statement that, unlike Romanticism, Gothicism is not transcendental, is, despite Robert Platzner's denial of it, an important one (see Note 5).


14 Hume discusses the moral relativity of the Gothic in "Gothic versus Romantic."
CHAPTER TWO

THE REFLECTED SELF

Between the 1760's and the 1890's, the characters in Gothic fiction underwent some major changes. Principally, some new types, such as doubles and monsters, were added. The heroes and heroïnes did not change much, however. Instead, they tended to fade gradually away. When good and evil became more and more closely intertwined and the moral outlook of Gothic fiction became increasingly relative, there was less place for the beautiful characters representing the Good. They, nevertheless, did not vanish entirely. As late as Bram Stoker's Dracula, a heroine appears whose only function is to be beautiful and passively innocent.

Lucy, in Dracula, and her predecessors appear at first to be rather silly embodiments of an inhibited, puritanical notion of female virtue, and the heroes seem no better. They, in fact, play a fairly complex role in Sentimental
and Gothic fiction. As bearers of ideas, moral, psychological, and mythic, they are necessarily simplified figures of humanity. They are sensitive, passive, and interestingly pale. They are frequently defeated in the course of the plot to demonstrate that virtue is its own reward. Thus far, they are characters who bid fair to irritate the readers and, because they talk a lot and act very little, to bore him too. In other respects, however, they are fairy-tale, mythic figures. They have a child-like quality and often stand in a quasi-incestuous relationship to one another. The heroines, in particular, are also frequently equated with Nature as earth-mother. figures, and they embody a dilemma which is important in Gothic fiction: the question of what true innocence is and how it can be guarded.

As early as Lewis' The Monk, these characters become highly ambiguous. The Sentimental hero and the Gothic villain begin to merge into one character torn by terrible conflict, while the gentle earth-mother figure may reappear as a wicked witch. These changes barely increase their mimetic qualities but, because they are ambiguous, mixed figures, they are more acceptable as characters. A myth-bearing figure need not, indeed must not, display great individual complexity, for the
more nearly a character is made to represent an individual human being such as we meet in everyday life, the less it will, in fact, appear mythic.

Sentimental novels tend to confine themselves and their "teachings" to inner states. They are more concerned with psychology than society. They draw ideal figures, virtuous characters with some slight weaknesses to make them believable. These characters are designed to appeal to the reader's moral sense and to refine it. They portray the inner self as in a mirror through which the reader may recognize and develop his own best feelings. It is perhaps this psychologizing impulse that leads the Sentimental novelists into the realm of myth, where their most interesting themes are found.

The reflection of the virtuous self in the equally virtuous beloved has the same sort of symbolic function as other features, such as setting in these novels. Because the virtuous love virtue positively, they also love the virtuous. But they are each also made to see their own virtue reflected in the other because to look at the mind in general—as opposed to examining the peculiarities of a particular, individual mind—one must look in upon oneself. Just as Theodore in The Castle of
Otranto is truly and exactly reflected in the statue of Alfonso, so the mutual reflection of Sentimental characters is also a true image.

When the mutually reflecting Sentimental characters appear in a remote and idyllic setting, they are true children of Nature. It is here that they appear in a quasi-incestuous relationship. They are children who have grown up together like brother and sister, although they are not related by blood. Then, when they reach a suitable age, their feeling for each other develops into sexual love—naturally, it is said—and they wish to marry. This pattern is to be found in Mackenzie's Julia de Rubigné (1777) and in Bernadin de St. Pierre's Paul and Virginia (1787).

The brother-sister relationships strangely transformed into adult sexual love indicate an at least intuitive understanding of basic patterns of development that authors transpose into their fictions, putting them to the service of their particular ideas. The childhood companionship that turns into adult love is a means of showing these kindred delicate souls as uncorrupted figures in a harsh and wicked world. It emphasizes the delicacy of their feelings by first showing their
childhood love as a pure emotion unclouded by adult passion. Thus, when evil is introduced into the picture, the sense of it as the corruption of human nature—and therefore unnatural—is increased. This quasi-incest is only peripherally connected with real incest and, in expressing the idea of evil as unnatural, it takes on a mythic quality related to what Northrop Frye describes as "the Romantic redemption myth." In both Sentimental and Gothic literature the relationship of the hero and heroine brings this myth down to earth to convey psychological concepts. In Sentimental novels, the relationship is combined with the equation of the protagonists with Nature and their oneness with the natural setting to which they belong. This adds up to a vision of man's natural state as an inner one which, ideally, is harmonious within the individual and makes him a part of Nature's harmony as well. The Gothic uses the same theme to express its concern with aberration and the absence of harmony.

The failure of the Sentimental characters to achieve complete spiritual union with one like themselves is as inherently a part of the novels of sensibility as their initial attempt to achieve such a union. Mackenzie's Harley goes into a "decline" and dies. His
Julia de Rubigné is poisoned. Virginia is drowned. Such chronic failure, however, does not detract from the ideal itself. These novels affirm the Sentimental concept of virtue by showing that to know oneself virtuous, to develop one's sensibility to the full, is more important than worldly "success" and even than life itself. As the figure of the heroine demonstrates that perfect virtue is a delicate flower, so the disastrous endings of these novels reflect its evanescence and vulnerability. As R. F. Brissenden has pointed out the term "sensibility" often reflected "the fear that . . . to be endowed with a delicate sensibility was to be cast inevitably into the role of victim." Such a natural tendency to be victims makes the delicate characters of Sentimentalism suitable to be transported bodily into the world of Gothic fiction.

There is an interesting difference between those works that use the brother-sister relationship and those that do not. In Beckford's *Vathek*, Lewis' *The Monk*, and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, we find variations of the theme. In *The Castle of Otranto* and Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Italian*, it does appear.

In *The Castle of Otranto* the relationships are
all of parents and children—the dire effect on the children when parents are evil and the beneficial effects when they are good. The threat of real incest is the precipitating force for the action. The twin heroines are both models of virtue as a result of their Sentimental upbringing. Matilda, having grown up in the shelter of her mother, Hippolyta (also a model), is perfection itself. She is also, however, a victim of her father's evil. Isabella and Matilda presage a long period of paired female figures in the Victorian novel. There, they are usually contrasted, one dark, lively, willing to risk action, the other a blonde descendant of the Sentimental heroine, very passive and very good.

In Walpole's novel both are Sentimental heroines, and there is only the slightest shade of difference between them. Isabella is more worldly than Matilda but only to the extent that she wishes to live in the world and to marry. She represents the strength Manfred hopes to infuse into his line. Matilda is a saint, not of this world. In her relationship to Theodore, she is a clear example of the self-reflecting virtue embodied in these characters. She first sets eyes on Theodore as Manfred is condemning him to death, and she instantly recognizes in him the living image of Alfonso, before
whose statue she habitually offers her most fervent prayers. She falls in love at first sight with this image of the figure of goodness before which she has always prayed, and he with her. When the evil in her own father, whom she loves, threatens to overwhelm this goodness, she cries out and faints. In later releasing Theodore from his prison she is freeing the goodness that is no longer a representation, the statue, but a living, moving force in the world. She frees it to do its work. When finally she is immolated at the foot of Alfonso's statue, it is this evil act that brings about the final restoration of justice and the triumph of virtue. Matilda dies, but virtue and order are restored.

When, in the final sentence of the novel, Walpole's chronicler avers that Isabella will marry Theodore and share with him the sorrowful memory of Matilda, his dead love and her companion, we may see Matilda as a feminine ideal, the spirit of virtue itself, which raises love to a higher plane. She then becomes an idealization of love that could not live in this world but that ennobles Theodore and Isabella, who are virtuous but human.

A childhood attachment in *The Castle of Otranto* would not have suited the presentation of its characters.
An early love between Theodore and either Isabella or Matilda would have diminished Isabella's role as a figure of strength brought in to fulfill first a false role through the projected marriages to Conrad and Manfred, then a true one in marrying a true heir.

When the quasi-incestuous relationship does reappear in Gothic fiction the results are strange and wonderful. It introduces a major theme: the quality of innocence that is based on ignorance of the world and the involvement of virtuous characters in the causes of evil. In William Beckford's Vathek, the little princess and her cousin, Nouronihar and Gulchenrouz, are another Paul and Virginia except that they are actually children and are related by blood. The identity between them is almost complete:

The two brothers had mutually engaged their children to each other; and Nouronihar loved her cousin more than—her own beautiful eyes. Both had the same tastes and amusements; the same long, languishing looks; the same tresses; the same fair complexions; and when Gulchenrouz appeared in the dress of his cousin, he seemed to be more feminine than even herself.

The description of Gulchenrouz here as a mirrored reflection of Nouronihar points up her narcissism. This in turn
explains her desertion of her cousin. It is her childhood self she is leaving. Here, Sentimental narcissism takes on a darker tone, just as there is a hint of real incest. For Nouronihar does not mature. She simply turns to evil.

The girl, again, is the stronger of the two Sentimental figures. Gulchenrouz follows her lead in everything as they play and nestle together in a childhood idyll that is interrupted by the arrival of the caliph Vathek. A sensualist, Vathek is enchanted by the innocent naturalness of Nouronihar. And she is fascinated by him. Gulchenrouz is abandoned and Nouronihar joins Vathek. But it is not love that has caused her to desert her cousin. She sees Vathek as the way to forbidden knowledge. Urged on by his mother, the witch Carathis, he is on a journey in search of the halls of Eblis. To his mother's disgust, sensuality has diverted Vathek from this quest, and he is content to dally with Nouronihar in the beautiful valley. It is Nouronihar who persuades him to take up the journey again. She is thus, beneath her Sentimental heroine's exterior, a little witch figure seducing the Caliph into the abyss. Her interest is identical with Carathis', although in everything else they appear to be contrasted. Eventually
all three attain their goal and find themselves among
the damned, whose hearts burn in their chests.

Gulchenrpez, on the other hand, remains an eternal
child, living in a roc's nest, "remote from the inquietudes
of the world, the impertinence of harms, the brutality
of eunuchs, and the inconstancy of women." He is
cared for by a "genius". This unearthly childhood is
contrasted with the equally unearthly torments of Hell
where "unrestrained passions and atrocious deeds" are
punished:

Such shall be the chastisement
of that blind curiosity, which
would transgress those bounds
the wisdom of the Creator has
prescribed to human knowledge;
and such the dreadful
disappointment of that
restless ambition, which,
aiming at discoveries
reserved for beings of a
supernatural order, perceives
not through its infatuated pride,
that the condition of man upon
earth is to be--humble and ignorant.

Thus, Beckford's Eastern tale introduces a second
major theme that appears again and again in nineteenth-
century Gothic novels—the pursuit of forbidden
knowledge. The novel introduces the recurring exploration,
in Gothic fiction, of the dilemma of innocence that
relies on ignorance and also establishes the use of such startlingly symbolic imagery as the burning hearts of the damned. Vathek suggests the innocence of man's natural state, the vanity and danger of his pursuit of knowledge, and the corruptions of civilization—the sexual transgressions and worldly crimes of ambition and the misuse of power, which bring men to a Hell that is a spiritual state.

Although Vathek is the central figure, these themes are first manifested in the Sentimental relationship of Nouronihar and Gulchenrouz and her later desertion of it. Matthew Lewis in The Monk joins the ignorance/innocence theme to that of real incest between brother and sister, integrating the figures of the Sentimental hero and heroine, the Gothic villain, and the witch. His novel has two self-reflecting Sentimental pairs—Lorenzo and Antonia, and Raymond and Agnes. In both cases love occurs at first sight; the men are all goodness and nobility, the women sweetness and virtue. Agnes, it is true, transgresses sexual propriety, but Antonia is a carefully guarded innocent who knows nothing of the world. Both couples undergo extravagant Gothic horrors. The interesting development that Lewis adds, however, is another pair. Ambrosio, the
monk of the title, is Antonia's brother and their likeness to each other is emphatic. Like his sister, he has started out innocent, but he has been betrayed by pride into extending the human limits of virtue. In setting himself up as a chaste adherent of all Christian virtues, he first behaves with a lack of compassion when faced with human weakness and then succumbs to a lust as fierce as his chastity was severe. Matilda is a witch figure who turns out to be an agent of the devil. Once she has seduced him from his strait and narrow path, his instantaneous passion for Antonia is an evil desire for self-gratification that knows no bounds, stops at nothing, and entirely lacks that delicate feeling for the beloved that makes the Sentimental hero incapable of doing her the smallest harm.

By making Ambrosio and Antonia brother and sister and making them alike in their innocence, Lewis presents their total ignorance of the world as a trap. She remains pure to the last, but she is victimized and destroyed. He becomes a torrent of evil desires and actions that are worse in proportion to the stringent virtuousness from which they arise.

Ambrosio and his crimes are as glaring and strident as everything else in Lewis' novel, but Victor Frankenstein in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein is a more ordinary human figure. Here, the quasi-incestuous
childhood relationship appears again. 8

Elizabeth, like others of her kind, has been brought up in seclusion by Frankenstein's benevolent and gentle parents. The marriage of the parents themselves is based on virtue. "There was a sense of justice in my father's upright mind," Frankenstein recalls, "which rendered it necessary that he should approve highly to love strongly." 9 Here, we find virtue loving virtue.

When the parents first set eyes on Elizabeth, they recognize her at once as an angel-child of a quality quite different from the little peasants with whom she lives.

Elizabeth is described in extravagant terms and allowed very little action in the novel because action would make her too "real" and detract from her function. She is Frankenstein's "more than sister— the beautiful and adored companion of all my occupations and my pleasures." She is, in life and death, the same sort of inspiration as Walpole's Matilda is in death. Frankenstein says of her:

The saintly soul of Elizabeth shone like a shrine-dedicated lamp in our peaceful home. Her sympathy was ours; her smile, her soft voice, the sweet glance of her celestial eyes, were ever
there to bless and animate us. She was the living spirit of love to soften and attract; I might have become sullen in my study, rough through the ardour of my nature, but that she was there to subdue me to a semblance of Her own gentleness. And Clerval—could aught ill entrench on the noble spirit of Clerval? Yet he might not have been so perfectly humane, so thoughtful in his generosity, so full of kindness and tenderness amidst his passion for adventurous exploit, had she not unfolded to him the real loveliness of beneficence and made the doing good the end and aim of soaring ambition.10

The novel thus presents the ideas of nature and nurture that the Sentimental novels posit and that are the center of "education" novels. Elizabeth remains angelic and herself enhances the good effects of such a childhood in Henry and Victor, for Victor, too, grows up with "bright visions of extensive usefulness". It is true that both boys seem to have an innate personality that is not all virtue and goodness. Both, however, under Elizabeth's influence, wish to dedicate their lives to the good of mankind. Victor's degeneration from this state is carefully accounted for and is reflected in his monster. Our sense of the cause and nature of his evil is conveyed by the initial establishment of his character as one of Sentimentalist virtue in a setting
far removed from "civilization."

As the Gothic novels explore the nature of evil, their villains follow a line of development. At first they are isolated and tormented "giants" at war with themselves. But then they are combined with the Sentimental characters and become men of more ordinary, less villainous stature. As the human in them is stressed, their inner conflicts split them in two. Then, in the doubles figures, two separate characters appear, an ordinary but basically good man who is confronted with his own evil self. With this development the characters of the Gothic grow more complicated, but they are hardly more realistically portrayed. The changes in characterization reflect a deepening confusion over moral absolutes in their application in human nature and a growing awareness of the depth and complexities of the human psyche.
FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER TWO


6 Ibid., p. 235.

7 Ibid., p. 254.

8 Leonard Wolf notes in The Annotated Frankenstein (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1977), p. vi, that in the original edition of 1818 Elizabeth was Victor's cousin. This was changed in the 1831 edition "to avoid the slightest suggestion of incest."


10 Ibid., pp. 293 and 297.
CHAPTER THREE

THE GOTHIC VILLAIN

The Gothic villain is a mythic, symbolic figure. He is presented through techniques that show not frail humans but the nature of human frailty. These villains are symbolically, not literally, diabolical, and they appear along with ghosts and monsters to reproduce evil, madness, and torment located in the human mind. The vices are presented as distortions of human nature and as essentially unnatural. Their monstrosity lies in their being embodiments of spiritually deformed, misshapen humanity with the unfulfilled potential to have shared natural grace and beauty. Their sense of this lack in themselves and the struggle between their good nature and evil tendencies is what awakens echoes of real nightmare in the reader, however extravagantly the manifestation of evil is portrayed.

Villains fall into three principal types. Villains/heroes, whose madness and evil derive from the conflict within them, have a close affinity with the Sentimental
hero, and give rise to the "double," or "doppelganger". Manfred, Ambrosio and Frankenstein belong to this type. Manfred is a reluctant villain, Ambrosio is a contrasting villain, and Frankenstein so much the hero that his villainy appears in a separate character. In contrast, a second type has little of the Sentimental hero about him because it is his function to be the "darkness" opposing light. Ann Radcliffe's Montoni in The Mysteries of Udolpho figures among these. Finally, the villain as a figure of grotesque is demonic, confronting the reader with evil. Such is Vathek. These categories overlap, of course. Manfred, as an ancestor of them all, shows only a little of Ambrosio's torment. Frankenstein is portrayed sympathetically, but the evil he causes is as horrible as the corruptions of Manfred and Ambrosio. And his monster is a grotesque as well as a double figure. Montoni, by his very impenetrability, veers toward the grotesque at the same time that the Sentimental premises of Ann Radcliffe's novels contradict this view of them. These premises imply that her villains must really have started out good at heart and assert that the diabolical features are unreal. Vathek, because he is weak and less intent upon evil than his mother, is not entirely a grotesque. Thus, the three types are variants giving different emphasis to the common idea they portray.
They are packed with characteristics that symbolize the varied implications of Sentimentalism regarding evil. And their obscure personalities often express the confusing dilemmas of moral relativism. The Gothic villains have twisted natures and are full of unnatural lusts and passions. They suffer the torments of the damned while committing their wicked deeds because they must fight with themselves to commit them and must often also repress their own feelings. Yet, we, the readers, are invited to feel with and for them in the conflicts from which they suffer.

The attempt to arouse our sympathy is adopted from the Sentimental novels. Since these works seek to show that no amount of suffering through lacerated sensibility is as intolerable as the spiritual emptiness of worldly vanity, they invite us to have compassion for misguided worldly characters. Unfeeling and incapable of the deep joys of virtuous conduct, the worldly characters gain nothing in opposing the hero and heroine, and they destroy their own happiness. The Gothic villain, too, is ultimately more to be pitied than his victims.

At first sight, he seems to be a more substantial figure than they, just as the worldly characters of the Sentimental
novel are more mimetic (make-believe) than the hero and heroine, because they are less idealized. The Gothic villain is a complex "battleground" where evil fights against Nature. He is consequently less passive than the hero and heroine. Necessarily, he is the aggressor, the Oppressor of his innocent victims, and can be involved in action without detracting from the structure of the novel as a reflection of the mind.

As a consequence of this kind of complexity, Gothic novels occupy a "middle-ground" where concepts of general human psychology can be portrayed. Their characters fall between the abstract and the concrete, between the everyday and the supernatural, and even between the mimetic and the allegorical or symbolical. As Walpole puts it, they "think, speak, and act as it might be supposed men and women would do in extraordinary positions."

It is known that characters yield their full meaning only when they are analyzed in relation to the special narrative structures set up for them. Their place in their own settings, however, is explained by an analysis of the characters themselves. The characterization of the Gothic villain has clear boundaries and separations. The actions he takes are the expression of the violent emotions
that move through him and he must be kept clear of minor, everyday doings. He must not, for example, be caught shaving or doing the dishes, for his effect will be lost.

In *The Castle of Otranto*, Manfred is presented as not intrinsically wicked but as ruled by passions aroused by his obsession with the prophecy that his line will not retain its unlawful rule over the principedom. He was, we are told, naturally humane; "when his passion did not obscure his reason," but it does, in fact, obscure his reason throughout the novel. Like the classical Oedipus, he tries to prevent the prophecy from coming true, and his own evil deeds and his downfall are the result of his desperate effort to maintain the position he holds through his grandfather's crimes. The awareness that his deeds are wrong and the sense that he is forced farther and farther down the path of evil madden him and are actually the cause of his crimes. He has more substance than the other characters, because he is a figure torn by the conflict of good and evil within himself, but he is still a villain.

When Manfred's son, Conrad, is crushed by the helmet—the first sign that Manfred's unlawful claim is to be wrested from him—Manfred becomes more frantic than ever and so more villainous, showing how he continues to spin the web of evil
out of himself. Because this leaves him without a heir he sets in train dire events of the novel, all of which ultimately add strokes to the central portrait of Manfred himself. Other features of the tale also serve to characterize him. Theodore, the hero, for instance, embodies not merely nobility in the abstract but that noble sense of honor that Manfred has had to repress in himself to commit his evil deeds. It makes sense, consequently, that the villain should try to imprison the hero under the same giant helmet; that is, the threat of retribution makes Manfred aware of the unlawfulness of his position. This, in turn, awakens his sense of honor, which he immediately tries to repress. Theodore escapes temporarily through the hole the helmet has made in the paving of the courtyard, bringing him into the subterranean passages. In other words, as Manfred's honor, he is confined in the dark recesses of the castle or Manfred's mind. And here he helps Isabella, the heroine, to escape from Manfred's lustful and incestuous pursuit. Manfred's sense of honor being, indeed, the only impulse that might lead him to spare her. The evil in Manfred, however, is more powerful than his honor, as we see when he angrily imprisons Theodore again, or in other words, again shuts up, represses, his sense of honor.

The rest of the novel also lends itself to this sort of interpretation. In summary, the characters of Otranto, moving
through improbable supernatural events, tell us that Manfred, a good character at heart, has been driven and twisted into evil in his attempt to maintain his inheritance.

Manfred finally realizes the extent of his own evil, but with that realization, the evil is stripped from him. He has been broken under its weight, but he does not go any further and destroy himself. Now that he is no longer at war with himself, he can retire to the monastic life. His former exasperation came from inner conflict, driving him to commit misdeeds. He is not only a usurper, but he is cruel to his wife. He tries to make an incestuous marriage and finally commits murder in killing his own daughter. Nevertheless, to do these things he constantly fights against his own nature, and the more he feels guilty, the worse he behaves. We are told that

ashamed . . . of his unhuman treatment of a princess (Hippolyta), who returned every injury with new marks of tenderness . . . but not less ashamed of feeling remorse towards one, against whom he was inwardly meditating a yet more bitter outrage, he curbed the yearnings of his heart, and did not dare to lean even towards pity. The next transition of his soul was to exquisite villainy.

Therefore, we can say that the first characteristic of such a villain is his isolation. He cuts himself off from virtue.
and this divides him from his fellow man. The evil in him causes him to suffer a continual psychomachia.

At the end of the novel the realization of what has happened to him and his family brings collapse of the castle and the movement of the giant figure of Alfonso to Heaven. Retribution is therefore completed not by the destruction of Manfred, but of the wicked manifestation of Manfred's evil mind—the castle. Manfred, purged of evil, retires to a pious life in the convent.

In contrast, Lewis' The Monk ends in total disaster for Ambrosio. He has been imprisoned all his life in the monastery and finally finds himself in the prison of the Inquisition. These buildings will not collapse like Manfred's castle because they represent the prison of the self. Ambrosio has spent his life locked up and, to the end, is unable to free himself. The life of lust and crime he leads is even more enslaving than the life of piety. Even his pact with Lucifer does not release him as he thought it would. Lucifer effects his escape from the prison only to destroy him. In The Castle of Otranto, the spirit of Alfonso soars up into Heaven. In The Monk, Ambrosio is carried up into the sky alive to be punished pitilessly. To a greater extent than Manfred he
is exasperated into greater evil by his knowledge that he has betrayed and brought to nothing his high standard of purity. In his plunge into crime, Ambrosio loses control over himself. He watches his own descent into evil.

A number of characteristics of the Gothic villain are sketched in Ambrosio. As Hart says,

He is an embodiment of virtue, purity, and sensibility such as makes the perfect Sentimental hero, until pride pushes him to exceed the human limits of his nature, a trait found in the Faustian scientists among his successors. This inability to accept human limitation is an aberration. Eighteen-century optimism saw the bounds set for humans as a happy state. The view that 'Man, when true to his own nature was in harmony with all Nature meant that he could find self-fulfillment along the via media."

In the Gothic tales the characters all pay for their refusal to accept limitation as the price of happiness.

Lewis' portrayal of Ambrosio as sexually repressed, although it seems quite "modern" at first, is typical of the genre. Sexual crimes as caused by a distortion of natural drives are a major Gothic theme. Lewis is quite clear about the repression itself, about the sexual dreams that torment Ambrosio once Matilda has aroused his desires.
Ambrosio is guilty of sexual crimes as a direct consequence of his repression of his natural sexuality. He, therefore, reflects the "Benevolist" view that all man's faculties and feelings, including sexual feelings, are God-given and should neither be denied nor over-indulged. This can be seen in what we are told of Ambrosio's upbringing.

Both he and Antonia have reached adulthood in a state of innocence because they have been brought up ignorant of the world. She grows up isolated from the corruptions of civilization. He is confined to the forbidding imprisonment of the monastery. He is isolated from the world's corruption but also from Nature. As a result, he first denies his own nature and then drives his natural impulses to unnatural extremes. At first himself seduced into abandoning his chastity, he is then swept by lust into attempted seduction and from there into murder, rape, and another murder. This slide into crime has taken him into depths of evil beyond what he knows. By making him unaware that his victims are his mother and his sister, Lewis emphasizes the moral morass which is the paradox of sensibility: Ambrosio's blindness symbolizes the inability of his native "goodness" to recognize evil.

Everything in Lewis' novel is like a distortion of the devices of the Sentimental novel. Ambrosio's
unnatural upbringing travesties the natural upbringing of the Sentimental heroes and heroines. His lust for his sister ending in rape and murder travesties the natural love of Sentimental characters. The beauty of Matilda as the Virgin in the portrait and as the novice, Rosario, instead of reflecting her spiritual state, is a cruel disguise to bring Ambrosio down. Lucifer's appearance as a beautiful young man is also a deception. When he carries Ambrosio away at the end of the novel and literally hurls him into the abyss, he appears in all his ugly ferocity. Even the subplot of Raymond and Agnes is a caricature of the Sentimental. Its heroine's trials and ordeals are exaggerated and its hero's adventures, with dark forests and bandits, for example, pure fairy tale. There is little reason to suppose, though, that the work is parody. Rather, these distortions indicate the belief that evil in the human mind makes a travesty of what the mind should be in its natural beauty.

Ambrosio's fall from virtue is a version of the original Fall in Eden, and his self-abandonment to sin is portrayed as the selling of his soul. Early on in the novel, when Matilda throws off her novice's disguise and reveals herself to be a woman, Lewis uses symbolic foreshadowing to equate the sexual seduction with the Fall. In the
garden scene, when Ambrosio tries to make Matilda leave the monastery, she asks him to pluck her a rose. He does so and is stung by a serpent. The scene suggests the Fall of man through woman, and the beginning of lust in the world. Similarly, to suggest the loss of spiritual peace, the novel is full of real devils. Matilda herself goes from Virgin Mary, to a young man, to woman, to witch, to devil. And there are such incidental figures of the subplot as the bleeding nun, who is a ghost, and the Wandering Jew.

Ambrosio is initially described as the innocent person cut off from reality, especially as he is paralleled by and reflected in the other characters: Antonia, Lorenzo, Raymond and Agnes. As a result he is later seen as in conflict with himself; his natural goodness is poisoned and corrupted. The education he received in the monastery has made the expression of his nature in true love and normal sexuality impossible. Normally, the result would be a struggle with the evil outer force, i.e., the devil bringing to life the evil in every man. When, however, evil is internal, the "devil" is not always necessarily present. It is an alien presence within the self from which the self shrinks in horror. Paradoxically, such a view brings about the characterization of the villain. In The Monk, it is the
deceptive, self-metamorphosing devils (represented by Matilda) who have Ambrosio in their grip.

Matthew Lewis' and Ann Radcliffe's novels are expressions of the respective temperaments of each author, and the differences between them are mostly important as revealing their different purposes. This in turn makes for different villains.

In the 1790's, with the appearance of Ann Radcliffe's novels, the ideas of virtue embodied in Sentimental heroines were employed in the development of the character. The heroine is the central character in The Mysteries of Udolpho. The villain's assault on her is more sustained, and Emily St. Aubert, along with the other heroines, does more moving about, voluntary and involuntary, and takes decisions, right and wrong. The beauty of virtue is still personified in her beauteous forms, and the hero falls instantly in love with her. These heroes are important to the novels, of course, and they fit the Sentimental pattern. As characters, however, they are secondary to the heroines. As in many romances, the hero and heroine are separated by cruel fate, and before they are reunited, the heroine must conduct a struggle with only her virtue to set against a wicked villain. Therefore, we can say that in Ann
Radcliffe's novels, the Sentimental character is a virtuous contrast to villainy, with the added feature of some character development in the heroine as a result of her experience of evil.

In The Mysteries of Udolpho, therefore, we have a novel of development of the heroine. In it, the world of Montoni is contrasted with the world of sensibility in which Emily has grown up. Like many eighteenth-century heroines, she has to learn the prudence by which the virtuous are to live in the real world without being corrupted. She learns it by passing through the "Gothic" world. Even less than Schedoni in The Italian is Montoni a diabolic figure. The possibility of taking him this way is undercut when it is revealed that he is not in reality the embodiment of evil that he has seemed to Emily's eyes. The "monster" that she sees is a mere bandit. He is a wicked bandit but neither as evil as she thinks, nor, once all is revealed, a symbolization of psychological aberration. Montoni is a bad man of this world, well aware of what he is doing. The Mysteries of Udolpho makes its villains part of the characterization of their heroines.

Emily's travels in the novel are symbolic journeys
between different worlds that represent different states of mind she must confront and understand, whether they are in herself or in others. The St. Aubert estate represents naive Sentimentalism. The Pyrenees display benevolent sublimity, drawing the mind out of the self into more spiritual realms. The social milieux of Emily's aunt, first in France, then in Italy, signify worldly vanity. The Alps are a range as sinister in its sublimity as the Pyrenees were benign, and Italy beyond them is a land of contrasts. The happy peasants lead the idyllic life; the worldly Venetians add ferocity to their worldliness. Similarly, the Appenines, which harbor the castle of Udolfo, have sublimity in both its good and evil aspects. It is at Montoni's castle that Emily is to learn what evil is really like, her notions of it being as naive as her understanding of the Sentimental idea. The landscape throughout is thus used symbolically.

The section in which Emily and her aunt are imprisoned in the castle, the aunt dies, and Emily struggles in terror with inexplicable events, recalls the atmosphere of Manfred's castle in The Castle of Otranto. The castle is the character of Montoni presented at his most diabolical, and the two women exist with it. This effect is actually increased by the beginning of Ann Radcliffe's
rational explanations of the supernatural and of the real nature of Montoni's evil. Brought up surrounded by goodness and human nature, Emily makes out of human wickedness, cruelty, greed, and desperation a "nightmare Gothic world" of supernatural evil. This Gothic is hers, not Ann Radcliffe's. Before Emily can escape, she must first recognize that Montoni is not a monster but a bandit. The castle would therefore be a place for brigands in a land torn by political problems.

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein is probably the Gothic novel with the greatest claim to fame because it has become a modern myth. It also has a hero/villain, Victor Frankenstein, and makes use of the doubles figure to establish the relativity of moral values with great complexity. Mary Shelley makes Victor Frankenstein a despairing human being by symbolically projecting the evil in him into the monstrous exterior of his creation. Victor Frankenstein is an ordinary man throughout. His charm, his sensibility, and his intelligence are not presented in images that set him apart. He has no supernatural powers, nor diabolical passions. Unlike so many Gothic figures, he is not identified with a house, castle or any other building that may serve to make a villain threatening. Throughout the terrible story he tells, Victor is an ordinary man in all but the extent of his sufferings. His hold on us is
inescapable because the consequences of his deeds are horrible out of all proportion to his intent in performing them. It is just so that we look on the possibility of evil in ourselves, knowing as we do so many mitigating circumstances, convinced as we are that we are indeed compassionate beings. To the extent that our identification with Frankenstein is close, our fear of the evil that comes from him will be great.

The monster Frankenstein creates is his spiritual mirror image. With its yearning for love and companionship, it is a Sentimental character hidden within its own monstrous form, just as Victor is a Sentimental hero formed with evil of false scientific pride. The "man" made in Frankenstein's image is an ugly monster with a Sentimental "core" as gentle as Frankenstein's own.

Frankenstein's early upbringing is typically that of the sentimental hero, and early in the novel Mary Shelley carefully accounts for his corruption. Victor himself says that "the birth of that passion which afterwards ruled my destiny arose from ignoble and almost forgotten sources." He protests that if his father had explained to him the dangerous falsity of renaissance and medieval occultism, "it is even
possible that the train of my ideas would never have received
the fatal impulse that led to my ruin. The destruction
of a tree by lightning, and his resultant "enlightenment",
lead him to abandon occultism in favor of "mathematics and the
branches of study appertaining to that science", and he sees
this as

the last effort made by the spirit
of preservation to avert the
storm that was even then hanging in
the stars and ready to envelope
me ... It was a strong effort
of the spirit of good to save him
from utter and terrible destruction.

Once the original corruption has set in through the
pursuit of the occult, however, it breeds further evil.
It has turned Victor's passionate desire to use his
science for the benefit of mankind into pride. It makes
him twist every opportunity and fly from everyone. For
instance, Professor Waldman, whom Frankenstein meets at the
university, is a good man, but his words to Victor concerning
the power of "natural philosophy" produce terrible consequences:
"As I went on I felt as if my soul was grappling with a palpable
enemy; one by one the various keys were touched which formed
the mechanism of my being." Here, Mary Shelley's metaphors
represent the progression of Frankenstein's degeneracy:
from a spiritual being, to an instrument played upon, to
a machine that is not its own master but must act on
impulse supplied from outside.

Once embarked upon his experiment, Frankenstein cuts himself off from everyone, acting on a "resistless and almost frantic impulse" and voluntarily putting himself into the isolation characteristic of Gothic villains. Forgetful of home, blind of the beauty of nature, he pursues his end singlemindedly. Later he sees this very ardor as a symptom of evil:

A human being in perfection ought always to preserve a calm and peaceful mind. If the study to which you apply yourself has a tendency to weaken your affections and to destroy your taste for those simple pleasures, ... then that study is certainly unlawful ... not the human mind.10

Frankenstein tells Walton: "Often did my human nature turn with loathing from my occupation."11 As he works on his creation he becomes actually feverish and, he says, "I shunned my fellow creatures as if I had been guilty of a crime."12

Like his predecessors among the Gothic villains, Frankenstein's self-isolation comes from a sense of guilt that finally becomes insupportable. His crude creation is shaped from the rotting remains of the charnel house.
It is a monstrous being created by a "mock"-god. Created full-grown, the monster goes through a foggy period as its senses awaken and its understanding of the outside world increases. It learns language while hidden in the shed attached to the DeLacey's cottage. With language, it also learns the natural state of man. It is only when it is rejected by man and sees that it has been abandoned by his "father," that is, by Frankenstein, that it turns evil. And in this change from good to evil it reflects its creator. Even this creature may arouse some sympathy in the reader, but it is, nevertheless, a purely symbolic figure of fantasy and not a representation of a man. Mary Shelley is trying to make the point that Frankenstein could not create a man and that his attempt was bound to produce only a monster. And, in fact, it is himself that he has made into a monster. The monster is Frankenstein's double, representing not only the evil side of Frankenstein but his whole spiritual state. Lowry Nelson in "Night Thoughts on the Gothic Novel" says that "Frankenstein and his monster have much in common... they are objectified parts of a single sensibility, and represent the intimate good and bad struggle in the human personality." 13

Elizabeth, the heroine of the novel, also reflects Frankenstein. She does so as a separate being. She is
a character in her own right, not a symbolical embodiment of a part of Frankenstein's personality. But she also reflects the good in him, so that in the beginning of the novel, it holds sway over his passionate character, directing it to good ends. She eventually loses her influence, but it is still her spirit that follows him in his final pursuit of the monster.

Here, we have the heroine reflecting only the good part of Frankenstein, while the double reflects both good and bad. Mary Shelley, however, seems more interested in keeping the idea of the basic goodness of human nature, than in portraying the double. Frankenstein, therefore, does not split into good and evil parts. He suffers because he has become a monster. He first refuses to face this fact; that is, he flees the monster. Then, when forced to recognize it, when the monster confronts him and tells its tale, he still cannot bear to deal with the consequences. That is, he cannot make the right decision about creating a mate for the monster. With each refusal to recognize his own monstrosity, a new disaster occurs. It is only when all that he loves has been destroyed that Frankenstein changes from pursued to pursuer and, at last, tries to track down and destroy the monster. That is, he finally attempts to understand himself.
and to do away with the evil within. It is as he comes to the end of this journey of self-discovery that he comes upon Walton. At this point, he tells his story, explaining, in effect, what he has now understood. He dies still unsure in his advice to Walton. But, symbolically, the monster's false "father" or "god" is dead. So we may see Frankenstein, too, as remaining outwardly monstrous because what he has done cannot be undone.

The monster as a symbolic figure tells us several things. It is only outwardly misshapen until its efforts to win human love and friendship are rejected. When it turns to destructive violence it manifests a complicated concept of the origin of human evil. First, because the virtuous DeLaceys reject it, we see symbolically that Frankenstein's plunge over the border of the permissible makes him a monster that goodness and virtue find entirely inimical—for the DeLaceys see only the monster's exterior, a point that is emphasized by the old man's being blind. This rejection is consonant with the general Sentimentalist idea that virtue cannot love vice and that vice is a distortion of the natural being. It, in turn, makes it possible to interpret the monster's ravages as also symbolic. Frankenstein's family is destroyed by the monster he has
created. That creation can be seen to be the monster he has made himself into by pursuing false science and arrogating God's province to himself. Thus, we may say that his pride and self-isolation have cut him off from his own humanity. They have destroyed the fine-tuned relationship of love and sensibility which made his family more than just a group of people related by blood. It is not the descent into crime of an individual that is depicted here. Rather, it is the idea that the human mind that gives way to pride and vanity locks up its finer nature in a monstrous shell. In doing so, it destroys those it loves by cutting itself off from them.

Many themes of Sentimentalism are represented in Frankenstein, who can retain our sympathy throughout the novel since the monster commits all the violent deeds.

In the same period, the gloomy view reflected in the use of the grotesque is represented in Vathek. The grotesque is a way of facing absolute evil. When it is used to characterize a Gothic villain, Man's evil comes to seem inherent and inevitable. As in Vathek, for example, works in the grotesque genre often
incorporate comic features in their characters.

Vathek uses the grotesque to evoke horror and a sense of unexplained, inevitable evil. To establish the grotesque convention, it adopts the forms of the Eastern tale, opening up its weird world through the devices of the Arabian Nights. In Beckford's novel, there are several contrasted worlds. We are first plunged into the witch's world of Vathek's mother Carathis and the wicked city. Then Vathek travels away from it into the idyllic world of Nouronihar and Gulchenrouz, only to take the little princess away from her father, home and shelter, into the caverns of the underworld itself.

Beckford's presentation of his sinister, but also comic, fairy-tale landscape in direct narrative brings us face to face with his grotesque. Optimism vanishes like the little boys Vathek throws into the abyss to feed the Giaour. Unlike them, it does not reappear. It is said that Beckford seems to have drawn an uncomfortable possible conclusion from Sentimentalism. As R. F. Brissenden has suggested in discussing de Sade, "Man may be seen not as endowed with good sentiments which become twisted into bad, but simply as a repository of feelings of all kinds." We can say, therefore,
that sensuality, greed for knowledge, or any feeling driven to its extreme may result in grotesque horror.

Pure Gothic is seen as reaching its culmination in *Frankenstein*. The heroes and heroines of *Sentimentalism* were defeated and destroyed by the worldly characters, but for them the world was lost. Then, in Gothic novels, such villains as Manfred and Ambrosio were presented as evil distortions of their own good potential. When they go down to defeat, evil itself is shown to be self-destructive. In Ann Radcliffe's novels, evil is overcome, and sensibility and good-sense are restored. In Mary Shelley's novels, however, the defeat is almost complete. All the members of *Frankenstein's* family are killed, and he himself dies in his attempt to run down his monster. The only spark of hope lies in the fact that that evil thing, hating itself and still loving its creator, sacrifices itself. This "improbable" ending can suggest that if man turns from his own evil and reaffirms his natural goodness, the evil will burn out and a new generation--in this case Walton--will turn away from vain pursuits. For most of the novel we have lived with a despairing belief in the frailty of goodness and the overwhelming power of evil.
It is difficult to say when the disintegration of pure Gothic began; however, it was the beginning of a new fiction influenced by the pure Gothic novels. The disintegration of the genre provided stones for the extensive building of later "Gothic" romances, detectives and thrillers. The books that flood the market today reveal the same romanticism, the same blend of probability and horror which characterized the Gothic novel. The tradition that once was Horace Walpole, Mary Shelley and Matthew Lewis, to name a few, is now Edgar Allan Poe, Conrad and many others.

As the Gothic novel encompassed a wider range of human experience, it lost its individuality and merged into other forms; however, the story of "Gothic" disintegration and the obscure underground channels of Gothic romance, is by itself a subject for independent research.
FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER THREE


2 Ibid., p. 67.

3 Ibid., p. 35.


7 Ibid., pp. 297-98.

8 Ibid., pp. 300-1.

9 Ibid., pp. 307-8.

10 Ibid., p. 316.

11 Ibid., p. 315.

12 Ibid., p. 317.

CHAPTER FOUR

TRENDS AND INFLUENCES OF THE GOTHIC IN LATER WORKS

In the Gothic fiction of writers such as James and Stevenson and Poe, we can see a high degree of awareness of psychological phenomena and a deliberate use of Gothic imagery to embody them in literature. This awareness was, of course, the consequence of advances in psychology itself, which, with the writings of Freud, was shortly to become a subject of general knowledge. Born in 1856, Freud belonged to the same generation as James (b. 1843), Stoker (b. 1847), Stevenson (b. 1850), and Wilde (also born in 1850), and his researches and literary works belong to the same cultural era.

The development of the study of the mind into the science of psychology has continued to affect concepts of human nature and their reflection in Gothic literature. The course of the Gothic tradition in the twentieth century merits a study of its own for this reason alone. In addition, there has been a great proliferation of
forms as a result of the upsurge in popular literature, the introduction into our culture of films, television, and comic books, and the appearance of a "youth culture." These together change the nature of the study needed. A glance at the kind of Gothic tales that have appeared in our century and half of the nineteenth reveals, nonetheless, something of the direction the tradition has taken in its expression of man's fears and fancies.

The widespread general knowledge of psychology is reflected in the melding of Gothic fantasy and realistic fiction that can already be seen in the late nineteenth century. The tales and novels of Joseph Conrad, a contemporary of James, Stevenson, Stoker, Wilde, and Poe, are an example of the amalgam. Conrad regularly sets up a closed world, for instance, by isolating his characters on board ship, but because, in real life, a ship forms a small world of its own, he presents it as a miniature of the larger society on land, using realistic techniques. In this way, in The Nigger of the Narcissus, for example, Conrad deals with the relations of man-to-man and man-to-society, encompassing both external social and internal psychological reality. Even his most famous doubles story, The Secret
Sharer, portrays both the captain's mind and the social problems of responsibility and leadership by making the two figures embody the conflict in the captain over his dual role—as captain and as man.

When, on the other hand, Conrad turns to a direct symbolization of the mind in *Heart of Darkness*, he chooses to build his story with the narrative structure that we have found in *Frankenstein*. It is a frame story, one of those told by Marlow, who recounts it to a group of hearers among whom the reader finds himself. Conrad also uses other Gothic devices. His heroine is a typically pale and simplified Sentimental figure, kept out of the action so that she can be an embodiment of ignorance identified as innocence. The tale, like so many of its Gothic predecessors, is one of vague horrors taking place in a closed and impenetrable world—darkest Africa. All is unspecified evil and dread, which becomes an inner dread for the reader as well as the characters. Conrad could touch the innermost springs of fear. His romantic imagination displays a fine command over the possibilities and powers of terror. A note of inexpressible mystery and unknown dread is struck in his novels.

In modern times the marvellous has become more
scientific and for this reason even more frightening.
The fantasy of H. G. Wells, as also of C. S. Lewis, shows us worlds unknown, monstrous and horrible.

Charles Brockden Brown, the first Gothic novelist of America, penned stories of sleep-walkers and ventriloquists, and shows an unmistakable resemblance to Mrs. Radcliffe and her techniques. Brown has a deep interest in morbid psychology, and his novels illustrate the workings of the human brain under great emotional stress. Psychological interest produces a hypnotic effect, and creates in the readers a mood of awestruck horror.

Among other American writers, Hawthorne and Poe are "Gothic" in their treatment of the supernatural and mysterious. These writers show that the walls dividing the seen and the unseen world are often very thin. Hawthorne creates a mysterious atmosphere of foreboding and evokes the terrors of an invisible world, utilizing soul-shaking embodiments of mortal dread. The mystery of Death exerts a strong fascination over his mind, yet on the whole he is melancholic, not morbid. He does not extend his art to the domain of physical horrors. His pictures are neither harsh nor crude, rather they are shadowy and subdued.
Edgar Allen Poe exploited the "gothic" power of suggestion, and cast a hypnotic spell over his readers to comply with his fantastical themes. He made full use of the power of words and tricks of style. In an article published in 1845, James Russell Lowell wrote that in raising images of horror, Poe had a strange success, conveying to us sometimes a dusky hint, some terrible doubt, which is the secret of all horror. He goes on to say that Poe leaves to imagination the task of finishing the picture, a task to which only he is competent.

Poe raised terror to tragic heights, and produced dramatic and powerful effects by a rigid economy of effort without any extravagant or superfluous touches. The successfully diffused atmosphere of creepiness in "The Cask of Amontillado" and "The Masque of Red Death," or the dreary pictorial effects in "The Fall of the House of Usher," were definitely inspired by Mrs. Radcliffe's deserted abbeys. The outline of Poe's tales is distinct, the impressions swift and deep. He added psychology to the old "gothic" raw material, and captured the airy and light filaments of sensations by touching upon obscure feelings of psychic dread.

Gothic techniques also appear in works depicting the
psychological aspects of alienation, the most prevalent of human conditions in an Absurd universe. Carson McCullers, for instance, uses them in "The Ballad of the Sad Café," a tale of the nature of human love and the destructiveness of self-isolation. The closed world of a small town into which we are led by the narrator; the cross-eyed, man-nish female giant, Miss Amelia, and the small and womanish crook-back dwarf, Cousin Lymon--these are Gothic devices; and the café itself, for all its fragile and dilapidated state, is a recognizable Gothic "castle" that becomes the center of warmth and caring when Miss Amelia opens herself out to others, and gray and shuttered when she closes herself off from the world.

McCuller's discussion of her writing could well describe the techniques of Gothic writers ever since Walpole. "Writing," she says, "is a wandering, dreaming occupation. The intellect is submerged beneath the unconscious--the thinking mind is best controlled by the imagination." And speaking of one of her major themes, she explains that "love, and especially love of a person who is incapable of returning or receiving it, is at the heart of my selection of grotesque figures to write about--people whose physical incapacity is a symbol of their spiritual incapacity to love or receive love--their spiritual isolation."¹
This kind of symbolism is the same as that used by earlier authors in portraying Gothic villains as stormy giants or embodying a sense of guilt in the deformed figure of a double. McCullers' "The Ballad of the Sad Café" uses its Gothic devices to explore the nature of human love and the self-isolation which is its opposite.

Twentieth-century explorations of human nature and the nature of human sexuality form a natural extension of the themes of the earlier Gothic tradition. They use Gothic devices to turn our eyes inward in the continued exploration of the self. But the view of the universe as absurd threatens such explorations with meaninglessness. Science fiction, horror stories and films have filled the modern consciousness with monsters, mutants, and creatures from outer space, all designed to represent, not the self, but the alien Other, the altogether different, alien presence. Such figures are in themselves difficult for the human imagination to devise, and their creators draw on the long tradition of the grotesque to delineate them.

Leonard Wolf, who edited The Annotated Frankenstein,
has traveled from research into the real Dracula of medieval Hungary to a search for living vampires in contemporary San Francisco, which brought a case that might be described as "psychological vampirism" to his living room.³

The vampire presented realistically, as one of us, also appears in Anne Rice's novel Interview with the Vampire, a work that again explores the forms of human love and the nature of its relationships, in a first-person, mediated account from the mouth of the vampire himself. The Otherness of this figure, which is beyond human nature in that it does not die and feeds and finds its satisfactions in nonhuman ways, is dissolved in the "reality" of the living, breathing creature, sitting quietly and talking into the tape recorder, recounting a tale of passions that we recognize. But this novel leaves us, as so many earlier Gothic tales do, on the edge of a quicksand of uncertainty. What kind of credence is demanded of a realistic account transmitted by one whom we know to be a creature of the fancy only? Is this vampire, like James's governess in The Turn of the Screw, seeing evil where there is only the natural? Having experienced his story and learned what it is to a vampire, we cannot dismiss him, any more than we could dismiss Frankenstein's monster, as a narrator. Throughout the novel we have given imaginative assent to the vampire's account. We have been
in the position of the boy who has taken his tape recorder and interviewed the very figure of the threatening evil within, but now that boy has himself taken on the nature of a vampire and gone to seek further. Do we wish to follow him? Perhaps he is another Frankenstein, pursuing forbidden knowledge to the destruction of himself and others? Or is no knowledge forbidden? The novel uses the supernatural, as the Gothic tradition has always done, to present new views of human nature ambiguously, so that we are forced to ask questions about it. Because the twentieth century is not yet in a position to answer those questions and others concerning the inner self, Gothic literature will continue to appear.

Gothic fiction symbolizes the unresolvable, shifting, but perpetual paradox of human nature. Until the human condition changes, we will need such fantasies to embody the dilemma of our existence, to face us with it, so that we, too, may face the dark.
FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR


2 Much of the literature concerning this aspect of our culture is itself strange. The attempt to depict Otherness appears in many forms, including elaborate editions, which are part of the "cults" that have grown up around the literature of the strange. Cult literature seems to hover in a realm that is at once intense and non-serious, satirizing and accepting. This strange coexistence of attitudes that have usually tended to squeeze each other out is probably a key to understanding the culture of the 1980's. It may be that, under the threat of meaninglessness, the borderlines between reality and fantasy lose significance, giving fantasy a new dimension.

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