THE LAST INFIRMITY: A STUDY OF THE HISTORICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL JUSTIFICATION FOR GOTHIC LITERATURE

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by

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Dedication

To my wife

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Dedication

To my wife

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	THE ELEMENTS OF GOTHIC ROMANTICISM	1
II.	IMMEDIATE INFLUENCES: THE ELEMENTS OF GOTHIC ROMANTICISM	41
III.	ENLIGHTENMENT AND GOTHICISM	64
IV.	GOTHICISM AND THE INFINITE	74
APPENDIX A	. . . .	109
BIBLIOGRAPHY	. . . .	111

PREFACE

An interest in the contrasting literary styles which developed during the course of the eighteenth century led to this investigation of the Gothic writers and their methods. The writers of the early eighteenth century, in general, confined themselves to literature in which everything was both possible and plausible. During the course of the century, however, writers tended to move toward the impossible and altogether unbelievable in their literary and dramatic works. The reserved style which had been a mark of the Age of Reason gradually became flamboyant and excessively decorative. The basic causes for these changes and the reasons for their acceptance by society form the basis of this study.

The most excessive of the late eighteenth-century literary productions--the Gothic--is usually regarded as containing nothing but absurdities and hyperbole. However, it seemed that this literature might possibly contain a deeper meaning than is readily apparent; that, perhaps, beneath its sensationalism the Gothic might be a moral literature. The ultimate intent of this paper is to suggest this theme in the Gothic as well as its purpose.

Four sources have been of the utmost value in

forming a basis for this study. They are The Gothic Quest by Montague Summers; The Gothic Revival by Kenneth Clark; The Gothic Flame by Devendra P. Varma; and Gothic Drama from Walpole to Shelley by Bertrand Evans.

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to Dr. Charles E. Walton whose encouragement made this study possible. His advice and assistance have been invaluable. I wish to thank, too, Dr. Theodore C. Owen, Head of the Department of English, for his editorial suggestions.

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CHAPTER I

THE ELEMENTS OF GOTHIC ROMANTICISM

To define Gothic properly is to tell the story of the animating spirit of the century in which it became a critical literary term. During the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the word was given sociological and psychological significance and became symbolical of a change from the neo-classic to the romantic, or from realistic possibility to romantic impossibility. Widespread intellectual and social changes during the eighteenth century led to a change in attitude toward the Middle Ages, a change which may be traced through three major connotations within the etymology of Gothic.

During the renaissance, the term Gothic implied a contempt by the educated for anything medieval. Gothic, at this time, was synonymous with such expressions as archaic, uncouth, ugly, and barbarous, especially when applied to manners or to art, in general.[1] Anything old-fashioned or wanting in finesse or social grace was ridiculed as Gothic. That the word continued to be used in this connotation into the eighteenth century is supported by

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[1]Alfred E. Longueil, "The Word 'Gothic' in XVIIIth Century Criticism," MLN, XXXVIII (December, 1923), pp. 453-60.

Millamant, who denounces Sir Wilfull as "Ah, Rustick, ruder than Gothic," in William Congreve's The Way of the World (1700). Gradually, this connotation was superseded by one more favorable. In 1762, for example, Richard Hurd in his Letters on Chivalry and Romance, posed the following rhetorical question:

> What, for instance, is more remarkable than the Gothic chivalry? or than the spirit of romance, which took its rise from that singular institution?[2]

On the suitability of medieval times and customs as the basis of poetry, Hurd was adamant. Medieval legends were, in his opinion, possessed of a charm which the world could still recognize, yet too lightly regarded:

> The greatest geniuses of our own and foreign countries, such as Ariosto and Tasso in Italy, and Spenser and Milton in England, were seduced by these barbarities of their forefathers, were even charmed by the Gothic romances. Was this caprice and absurdity in them? Or may there not be something in the Gothic romance peculiarly to the views of a genius, and to the ends of poetry? And may not the philosophic moderns have gone too far in their perpetual ridicule and contempt of it?[3]

Here, one sees Gothic used in its second major connotation of medieval. In this passage, Hurd suggests that Gothic, or medieval, manners may have been superior to those of his own enlightened eighteenth century. According to him, the Gothic

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[2]Enlightened England, p. 584.

[3]Loc. cit.

spirit, as it emerges in literary form, re-creates the chivalric mood and enchanted fairylands of such authentic epics as Beowulf, of such romances as Chaucer's Knight's Tale, Malory's Morte d'Arthur, and even the Oriental splendor of The Arabian Nights.[4] His remarks are, furthermore, indicative of a continuing aesthetic interest in the barbaric past. It was through Hurd that Gothic became closely associated with the chivalric code and poetry of the Middle Ages. In this continuing aesthetic sense, then, Gothic as medieval was next associated with the melancholy mood, a part of the romantic connotation which Hurd had accredited to the Middle Ages. Contrasted with eighteenth-century literature of reason, common sense, and satirical wit, the Gothic contains gross exaggerations and flights of melancholy fancy, because it is partially an imitation of medieval romance. Indeed, Walpole himself said that his intent was to blend the ancient and modern romances.[5] It is simple to see that this concept of melancholy is a continuing characteristic of English literature, and, therefore, a reflection of literary aesthetics. Perhaps, it was determined by the Puritan divine, William Perkins, in 1597, when he carefully

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[4]Cf. W. J. Courthope, A History of English Poetry, V, p. 8: "Little pleasure can, indeed, be derived from a poem that does not contain those marvels, which have such power to excite the minds not only of the ignorant, but even of the judicious; I mean magic rings, enchanted shields, flying horses, ships changed into nymphs, phantoms which pass to and fro. . ." The author is quoting Tasso.

[5]Montague Summers, The Gothic Quest, p. 24.

distinguished between "sorrow for sin" and "melancholic passion" by showing that "sorrow for sin" may be found where health, reason, senses, and memory are unimpaired; but "melancholic passion," only when the body is unsound and reason, senses, and memory are dulled and troubled; second, "sorrow for sin" can be relieved only through an appeal to the Saviour; but "melancholic passions" may be removed by such remedies as medicine, diet, music, and vicarious suffering; third, "sorrow for sin" is caused by God's manifesting himself through man's conscience; but "melancholic passion" arises solely out of ". . . mere imagination strongly conceived in the brain."[6] Finally, "sorrow for sin" usually strikes suddenly, but "melancholic passions" are gradually aroused over long periods of time. According to Perkins, these qualities may exist simultaneously in a man. Gothic mood is deeply indebted, also, to the traditions analyzed in Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, and, it will be seen, to the particular religious melancholy brought in by a re-evaluation of the works of Spenser and Milton.

Next, the melancholy quest presented Gothic in its third major connotation, terror. In this final, simplified definition, the term Gothic assumed its particular significance. Gothic novels are terror novels, and here the

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[6]Sidney Thomas, "The Elizabethan Idea of Melancholy," MLN, LVI (April, 1941), p. 262.

connotations of the word are especially important. In the eighteenth century, Gothic was used to describe the first Gothic novel partly because of the peculiar mental associations which the word produced, and partly because it was a subtle denunciation of the neo-classical limitations in literary subject matter. In addition, Gothic had further aesthetic values in that it suggested other characteristics which the eighteenth-century mind had been conditioned to attach to it. For example, through its meaning of terror, it connoted violent episode, mystery, sadism, horror, and ghastly spectacle. Furthermore, it involved satanism, antiquarian interests, persecution, manners and morals, and miraculous adventure. At the same time, one may propose that the word's primary import in its connotation of terror lies in the thrill it may evoke. A cursory glance at the titles of well-known Gothic works indicates that authors, perhaps, were keenly aware of aesthetic effects. For example, The Italian Monk, The Castle Spectre, The Mysteries of Udolpho, and The Mysterious Marriage typify the extent to which titles were chosen for their particular appeal. Sir Walter Scott was aware of this and inquired, with regard to the title to his own Waverley novels:

> Had I, for example, announced in my frontspiece, Waverly, A Tale of Other Days, must not every reader have anticipated a castle scarce less than that of Udolpho? . . . Would not the owl have

> shrieked and the cricket cried in my very title page?[7]

Through the terror which the term suggested, the Gothic became allied with ethics.

The Gothic involves ethics in that it embraces all the elements of fear and uncertainty that connect man with the infinite and Absolute. Gothic authors knew that the unseen and incomprehensible were frightening in literary adventure as well as in actuality, and they fully exploited this basic human characteristic through their delineation of elemental facets of human behavior. The strange nature of the pleasure which mankind receives in either inflicting or suffering mental or physical pain, delight in abnormal sexual passions, a tendency toward self-abuse, veneration for antiquity, and self-identification with fictional characters become a part of the aesthetics of Gothic, especially in its machinery of terror. The intrinsic qualities of terror in the Gothic theme gave way to an expression of anti-Deistic feeling so characteristic of the rebellious spirit of the period. The Deistic system had offered no challenge to faith, but rather had depended upon the exercise of pure reason to maintain emotional stability. As a spiritual doctrine, Deism had, in effect, denied to man the ancient fears and terrors produced by emotional suggestion which had always made death

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[7]Sir Walter Scott, Waverley; or 'Tis Sixty Years Since, p. 2. See also, S. M. Ellis, "Ann Radcliffe and Her Literary Influence," Contemporary Review, CXXIII (January, 1923), pp. 188-97.

and man's ultimate destiny fascinating subjects for contemplation. The Gothic re-emphasized in literature that terrifying quality which had earlier caused the graveyard poets to meditate among the tombs and which had led Hamlet to muse over the grisly possibility that

> Imperious Caesar, dead and turn'd to clay,
> Might stop a hole to keep the wind away.
> (V.i)

In spite of its veneer of civilization and culture, then, the eighteenth century yearned for a fear of the infinite and longed to stand in awe before the majesty of God. Donne, earlier, had alluded to such an experience: "Those are my best dayes, when I shake with feare."[8] Gothic terror abundantly satisfied this desire and, at the same time, offered the philosophy of predestination as an antithesis to the Deistic doctrine of free-will. Predestined man was not a creature of free-will but one driven to destruction by an unknown force. Natural calamity and personal doom, therefore, were unavoidable in the Gothic scheme, and nature was the great leveler, because not only man, but man's works, perished in the inexplicable system of the universe. The Gothic, therefore, made its appeal through the medium of the spiritual world. Gothic authors employed terror to dramatize the fatalistic idea that the universe was governed by inexorable forces and

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[8]John Donne, The Divine Poems, p. 16.

irrevocable laws; to illustrate the psychological truth that mankind seemed to enjoy suffering; and to deplore a change in the sociological order in which the individual accounted for less and less as society became more collective and anonymous. The Gothic, so considered, was an adventure into the mysteries of the infinite. It offered a new source of literary pleasure with the accompanying challenge of psychological experimentation, and it furnished a means of escape into a world which had never really existed. By 1790, the Gothic had come to imply a method of literary probing for the nature of truth concerning man's existence--a search which pitted the subjectivity of illusions against the objectivity of reality. By this time, it had made an appeal through mankind's fear of the incomprehensible and his pre-occupation with thoughts of death. Essentially, stripped of all its decorative motifs, the Gothic was simply a looking fearfully backward, or forward, in amazement at man's failure to withstand the challenge of oblivion.

Regardless of these three major connotations of the word <u>Gothic</u>, however, its literary use must be restricted, in the last analysis, to a function synonymous with <u>terror</u> or <u>supernatural</u>. The Gothic genre, precisely because of this aesthetic association of literary elements, has been characterized as ". . . the first terror-stricken meeting of the

England of Elizabeth with the Italy of the Renaissance."[9] This is an obvious justification, both historically and psychologically, for the Gothic. It grew naturally out of far-reaching influences in literary history and developed, primarily, out of a mid-eighteenth-century dissatisfaction with realism. It was given impetus by a revival of interest in medieval romances and in the works of Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton.

One must observe the significant historical influences upon the Gothic, which indicate that it was the manifestation of a continuing aesthetic trend and a restatement of philosophical concept which were responsible for the Gothic attempts to telescope medieval emotion and eighteenth-century sensibility. Secondary factors in the Gothic were those basic forces at work in reducing the rationalistic philosophy of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to the sentimental and anti-intellectual philosophy reflected in the trend. An investigation of these influences will enable one to determine how Gothic authors came to select the emotional rather than the rational and to substitute barbaric instinct for natural law as the motivating agent in human behavior. Furthermore, the Gothic was compounded from Senecan elements (mainly reflected in the Elizabethan--Jacobean melodrama and revenge play), sentimental comedy, and literature of the

[9]Wm. C. Holbrook, "The Adjective Gothique in the XVIIIth Century," MLN, LVI (November, 1941), p. 503.

sentimental school.

There is precedent in literary history for every characteristic of the Gothic. The Gothic is antedated by the hero-villain, melancholy mood, supernatural episodes, crimes of passion, Gothic motif, picturesqueness, piety, sentimentalism, and morbid pre-occupation with death. Since the Gothic, therefore, is truly a "Renaissance of Wonder," one must trace the early growth of the aesthetics which the eighteenth century approved in the Gothic. In addition, he should concern himself with the secondary influences of Restoration comedy, metaphysical poetry, Oriental art, the change in philosophical concept, and similar trends.

One must attempt to answer a fundamental question. Why were the English classical dramatists inclined to use Seneca, a Roman, as their model rather than Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, or Aristotle, the true fathers of Greek classical tragedy? This answer is not far to seek. During the English renaissance, Latin scholarship was in vogue. Much more was known of early Roman civilization than of the Greek.[10] This influence of Latin through ecclesiastical

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[10]John Matthews Manly, "The Influence of the Tragedies of Seneca upon Early English Drama," The Tragedies of Seneca, pp. 6-7.

scholarship, the university curriculum, and dramatic productions at the Inns of Court established Seneca as the model. The tragedies of Seneca and the precepts of Horace became the literary guides most admired and most imitated in renaissance England.[11] The choice of Seneca as a model led, of necessity, to an English version of an imperfect imitation of the Greek masterpieces. The tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles contained a religious element based upon a mythological system modifying the character and tone of themes which might, otherwise, have been regarded as repulsive or unnecessarily painful. Seneca, as had Euripides earlier, removed this religious element from the Greek themes, and the result was melodrama.[12] Renaissance authors, subscribing to the classical tradition that tragedians were ". . . the wisest men in the world," were content to follow Senecan precepts.[13] Seneca's minimizing of the mythological element in his melodramatic villain is obvious in a comparison of his work with original Greek models. The prologues to the Troades of Euripides and of Seneca will serve to illustrate the point. Seneca dispenses with the mythological element; but in Euripides' version, mythology is used to create a

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[11] Ibid., p. 6.

[12] Ibid., p. 9.

[13] Ibid., p. 4.

doubt. In Euripides, one sees a supernatural force, Minerva, represented as being responsible for a catastrophe for which a mortal, Helen, is blamed. Therefore, the question of the extent of individual responsibility arises. In order to emphasize this question, the Gothic writers later depicted their villains as driven by some force beyond their control. The use of a prophecy in Seneca's prologue is also a forerunner of Gothic convention. The prophecy eventually becomes a device by which the Gothic writers sustain suspense and create an atmosphere of mystery. An account of Seneca's dramatic conventions is found in Dryden's criticism of the ancient tragedian:

> . . . their tragic poets dealt not with that soft passion, but with lust, cruelty, revenge, ambition, and those bloody actions they produced; which were more capable of raising horror than compassion in an audience: leaving love untouched, whose gentleness would have tempered them; which is the most frequent of all passions, and which, being the private concernment of every person, is soothed by viewing its own image in a public entertainment.[14]

Dryden has particular reference to a passage in the Troades in which the events described are extremely barbarous. Involving ancient sacrificial rites and terrifying episodes, these incidents in Seneca bear a close resemblance to similar elements in tragi-comedy and in later Gothic machinery.[15]

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[14]John Dryden, The Works, I, p. 23.

[15]Seneca, Troades, ll. 408-812.

In essence, the episode to which Dryden refers clarifies his point concerning the horror and the subsequent lack of conscience typical of the Senecan villain. Seneca's modification of the classical Greek dramatists contains the elements which arouse fear and horror, the precedents for bombast and sentiment, and characterizations which foreshadowed the melodramatic villain. Summers has pointed out that ". . . there are essential qualities which link the heroic tragedies with the romances of Ann Radcliffe."[16] The Gothic is replete with ghosts, supernatural visitations, and dream sequences. In Seneca, these same conventions, in less debased form, are abundantly distributed. These elements are less debased because in Seneca they had not been adapted to the requirements of Christianity. They had not yet been subjected to the changing states of mind which the human spirit was to experience during the seventeen hundred years between Seneca and Walpole.

The influence of Seneca is apparent in other dramatic conventions prominent in Elizabethan literature. Manly notes a Senecan technique which was appropriated by the major Elizabethan dramatists. Greene, Peele, Kyd, Marlowe, and Shakespeare all used ghosts and infernal spirits, not only as commentators but, in some cases, as the subtle directors

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[16] John Dryden, The Works, II, p. vi.

of the action.[17] For example, the ghost in Hamlet, by his original incitement of the action and by his later intervention to renew and direct it, recalls the Senecan ghosts of Tantalus, Thyestes, Laius, and Agrippina, and the spirits of Andrea and Revenge in Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy (1586). That the literary device of the ghostly directors was transferred, bodily, to Gothicism, is beyond question. The penchant of Gothic authors for fine language, redundancy, and prolix conversation is due, in part, to these same characteristics in the renaissance drama. These, too, may be traced to Seneca who, it is noted, ". . . never loses an opportunity for a long passage of description or introspection or reflection or mere declamation."[18] Manly has said that Seneca's majesty seems bombast to modern critics, that his tragic quality consists in the accumulation of horrors and a consistently unfortunate ending, and that his perfection of form is no more than formal schematism.[19] If one substitutes the idea of retributive justice for "unfortunate ending," he can see that Manly has listed the principal qualities of the Gothic.

The list of Senecan conventions manifested later in the Gothic may be extended. The recourse to necromancy by

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[17]Manly, op. cit., p. 8.

[18]Ibid., p. 9.

[19]Ibid., p. 7.

Tiresias in the Oedipus, and the sorcery and terrible revenge exacted in the Medea foreshadow Gothic terror. In the Hercules Furens, Seneca's vivid natural descriptions are similar to those which distinguish many Gothic novels. Unnatural passions and incest in the Hippolytus are also evident in many Gothic works whose authors have been accused of pornography. Thyeste's ghost reciting the Motif of the play and the adulterous conduct of Clytemnestra in the Agamemnon, are devices tied closely to the Gothic. Furthermore, the frenzied behavior of many Senecan characters is re-echoed centuries later in the abnormal behavior of their Gothic counterparts. Rapine, pillage, self-torture, incest, murder, and suicide in Seneca possess the fear and horror which the Gothic writers so eagerly expounded. It is the particularly repulsive nature of such crimes which forms the basic ingredients in Gothic horror.

One should mention a final Senecan device--the introduction of a character of lowly rank, usually a nurse, to act as a foil. Such characters serve to heighten terror, to further subdue an already tender scene, or to transfer information. With one notable exception in their employment--when they provided comic relief--these types became the Nemesis of renaissance drama and were continued into the Gothic period. These are the characteristics of Senecan tragedy which, when fused with those of native English Medieval drama, resulted in great renaissance tragedies.

It was the influence of Seneca which gave to Elizabethan tragedy its thoroughly dramatic character. Clark has said that one can, if he chooses, call the horrors and monstrosities of Elizabethan drama _Gothic_.[20] But in the term _Gothic_ as it was understood by the late eighteenth-century reader, the implication is toward a mood consciously produced for the specific terror it might engender; therefore, Elizabethan drama is Gothic in neither purpose nor form. In Elizabethan days tragedy was simply a story presented in successive scenes upon the stage. It did not observe the classical unities in form; and, inasmuch as the emphasis was upon plot rather than character, the devices of horror, rant, and extravagance could be freely employed.[21] While one might cite numerous examples to support this contention, the works of four authors, Kyd, Peele, Shakespeare, and Tourneur, should provide a sufficient range and variety.

During the Elizabethan period, the Senecan elements were not confined to melodrama alone. The Old Testament doctrine of an "eye for an eye" was pursued, especially in the revenge tragedy. In the last-mentioned form, the scene is generally set by the murder of a lesser person, and the remainder of the drama is given over to revenge and counter-revenge. It does not utilize the melodramatic concept of the

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[20]Kenneth Clark, _The Gothic Revival_, p. 25.

[21]_Essays in Dramatic Literature_, p. 103.

villain as one driven by ambition to commit some monstrous crime, who then compounds this offense by repeated felonies until he is brought to some wretched end. In Thomas Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy (1586), the Senecan influence may be seen in the use of the chorus, the extensive mythology, laments for the dead, and the tendency to describe, rather than enact, bloody deeds. The facts that most of the victims are young persons and that unrequited love is involved, also indicate a Senecan origin. Kyd's plot, which is slow and ponderous by Gothic standards, involves, as does the Gothic, persons of high position. The ghostly chorus, composed of the murdered Andrea's shade and the spirit of Revenge, is used both as a foreshadowing device and to provide flashbacks. In the play, Horatio is stabbed and hanged, in the best Gothic tradition, because his true-love, Bel-imperia, will not yield herself to the villain, Balthazar. A particularly Gothic tone is given to the hanging episode because it occurs at night as an interruption to a tender love scene and in the presence of the terrified heroine. Such incidents as the vow of Horatio's father, Hieronimo, not to bury his son's body until he has slain the perpetrators of the deed, and the old man's discovery of the letter, written in blood, in which the slayers are named, are typical of Gothic escapist literature. In the denouement, Hieronimo reveals the mutilated body of his son to the assembled royalty and guests. In rapid succession,

by murder or suicide, Balthazar, Lorenzo, Bel-imperia, and Hieronimo die. There is considerable consternation after these events, but wailing and lamenting alone do not produce real dramatic fear and horror. These crimes are shocking to behold, but they lack the horror and suspense of truly satanic crimes.

On the other hand, the melodramatic concept of the hero-villain comes nearer to the Gothic portrayl of the villain than does the revenge play. Melodramatic villains are driven, apparently, by some passion beyond their control. Gothic novels and melodramas, alike, trace the progress and consequence of some indulged passion. George Peele was the first author of such melodrama to achieve success. His tragedy, The Battle of Alcazar (1594), has been called ". . . tiresome, windy, bombastical stuff."[22] But, like the Gothic of two hundred years later, it held the stage. Again, like the Gothic, Peele gave his work a flowery title and credited it to an anonymous source. The action is sudden in this play. In the first twenty-five lines three murders are committed. Only the presenter speaks during this time. The villain is a Moor, ". . . black in his look, and bloody in his deeds."[23] This tyrant, who has gained a crown by murder,

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[22]George Peele, The Works, I, p. xxxvii.

[23]Ibid., p. 228.

forces his uncle to watch while he and two aides smother his infant brothers in their sleep. The killers then strangle the uncle in his chair. Essentially, this plot is the basis for several Gothic novels and plays--the power-mad usurper who will stop at nothing. In addition, ghosts of murdered persons commonly appear in the dramas of this period to encourage their avengers. In Peele's drama, the ghosts of the last three victims appear, crying, "Vindicta!", during the presenter's opening speech (II). This convention, along with references to "Pluto's cave below," is an early version of the Gothic use of ghosts and caves to compound the mood of terror.

Next, the underlying cause of tragedy in many sensational Elizabethan and Gothic literary works is frequently that of misdirected ambition. In Peele's drama, for example, Captain Stukeley is so motivated, with tragic consequences:

> King of a mole-hill had I rather be,
> Than the richest subject of a monarchy.
> (ll. 81-2)

Peele employs other conventions worth noting. To illustrate, while the presenter (V) is stating the prologue, his remarks are properly stressed by thunder and lightning, by streaking comets, and by Fame, who arrives like an angel and hangs crowns upon a tree. This is the type of pyrotechnics which the Gothic was later to use in profusion to cause ghosts to vanish in sheets of flame and thunderbolts to strike down

moldy old Gothic towers. At the same time, Peele's motley characters seem never to encounter any linguistic difficulties. The Bishop of Ireland, the Governor of Lisbon, the Governor of Tangier, Italian mercenaries, Turkish Janizaries, and assorted Moors converse without difficulty. This failure to recognize a language barrier was later offered as a criticism of such Gothic works as Thomas Morton's Zorinski and Columbus and of Richard Brinsley Sheridan's production of Kotzebue's Pizarro.[24] One last device of Peele's may be noted. In a final speech, Stukeley clears up the mystery of certain aspects of his life. Ann Radcliffe, later, uses this technique when a nun's dying story unravels a mystery two decades old.

Lockert has pointed out that a distinction can be made between Elizabethan plays which, although they overstep the bounds of sober taste, do aim, in part, at a worthy artistic goal, and those which aim solely at producing the tension, horror, and shock of melodrama. Two examples, which he terms ". . . a gorgeous welter of gore," are Titus Andronicus (1594), and The Revenger's Tragedy (1607).[25] In his introduction to Titus Andronicus, Craig says that ". . . it beats even the writers of the tragedy of blood and revenge at their own game."[26] Lockert concurs. He states

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[24]Mrs. Margaret O. Oliphant, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, p. 163.

[25]Essays in Dramatic Literature, p. 103.

[26]William Shakespeare, The Works, p. 367.

that in the development of the revenge type play these melodramas are a connecting link between Marston and Webster, but that ". . . neither ever pictured so fearsomely depraved a world, or achieved such breathless, continuous tension, or crammed so much melodramatic incident into five acts."[27] Two theories are advanced by Craig and Lockert to account for the inferiority of *Titus Andronicus*. The former notes that it is labored probably because Shakespeare was writing formally in the Senecan manner and at the same time imitating Marlowe.[28] Lockert is not so generous; he suggests that Shakespeare, shrewd businessman that he was, was probably keenly aware of the commercial possibilities of melodrama.[29] The implication is that *Titus Andronicus* was written hurriedly for financial gain. Lockert's theory is interesting in that Gothic writers, such as Matthew Lewis and Charles Maturin, have been similarly accused.

The Gothic is foreshadowed in several elements in the first act of *Titus Andronicus*: the rivalry between Saturninus and Bassianus for the throne, the rivalry for the hand of Lavinia out of which comes Saturninus' desire for vengeance, the murder of his own son by Titus, the sacrifice

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[27] *Essays in Dramatic Literature*, p. 105.

[28] Shakespeare, *op. cit.*, p. 367.

[29] *Essays in Dramatic Literature*, *loc. cit.*

of Tamora's son at the tomb of Titus' dead sons, and the concept of bloody revenge. These rapidly developed incidents offer the idea of tragic error and horrible revenge which dominate works in this category. By this opening full of ferocious contentions the stage is now set for a human sacrifice in the Senecan manner, and the murder of a son by a father who has already lost twenty-one sons in war with the Goths. (Incidentally, it may be that Shakespeare's portrayl of the barbarous Goths had some influence upon the connotations of the word Gothic.) Titus is made to suffer terribly before he can exact vengeance. His three remaining sons are falsely accused and executed, his daughter is ravished and mutilated, and he himself is tricked into cutting off his own hand in a futile sacrifice. But before his death, Titus revenges himself upon his enemies. He cuts the throats of Tamora's two sons, and uses their blood and bones as a paste in which to bake their heads. Their mother becomes an involuntary cannibal when she eats from this dish at a banquet. In the traditional mode of revenge, Titus tells Tamora what he has done just before he kills her. He is, in turn, promptly slain by Saturninus, who falls victim to Lucius. These are the ghastly episodes from Seneca which became the appalling scenes in the Gothic. There is one final device, a standard Gothic technique, that is used

in this play. It is the introduction of the misanthropic Aaron:

> Aar. I am no baby, I, that with base prayers
> I should repent the evils I have done:
> Ten thousand worse than ever yet I did
> Would I perform, if I might have my will:
> If one good deed in all my life I did,
> I do repent it from my very soul.
> (Titus Andronicus, V.iii.180)

This hatred suggests the Gothic use of misanthropic characters to heighten terror.

In the Elizabethan drama, too, one finds a precedent for the Gothic technique of blending color with personality to strengthen dramatic tension. In Titus Andronicus, as well as in others of Shakespeare's plays, one notes the author's concern with the sentimentality of ruins:

> Renowned Lucius, from our troops I stray'd,
> To gaze upon a ruinous monastery;
> And as I earnestly did fix mine eye
> Upon the wasted building. . .
> (Titus Andronicus, V.i.20)

In Shakespeare, ruins are emblematical of melancholy. They reflect his interest in the mortality of man and serve as symbols of the destiny of mankind. Fairchild has pointed out that, of all the aspects of architecture in Shakespeare, ". . . ruins carry the strongest emotional quality."[30] Shakespeare, in his descriptions of ruins and of natural setting, blends scene with feeling in what later became the

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[30]Arthur H. R. Fairchild, Shakespeare and the Arts of Design, p. 32.

Gothic manner.

Before looking briefly at The Revenger's Tragedy, one should examine T. S. Eliot's comment on Elizabethan mental conditioning since the events of this play will appear to bear out his observations:

> Even the philosophical basis, the general attitude toward life of the Elizabethans, is one of anarchism, of dissolution, of decay. It is in fact exactly parallel and indeed one and the same thing with their artistic greediness, their desire for every sort of effect together, their unwillingness to accept any limitation and abide by it.[31]

This same argument was advanced two hundred years after the period to which Eliot refers as a criticism of the Gothic.

Lockert calls Tourneur's The Revenger's Tragedy ". . . the supreme melodrama of Elizabethan times."[32] Lockert, paraphrasing A. W. Ward, notes that the plot, in its ". . . sewer-like windings, is one of the blackest and most polluting devised by the perverted imagination of an age prone to feed on the worst scandals of the Italian decadence."[33] Lockert points out that ". . . the reader is led through the black and foul abysses of vice."[34] At the same time, special attention should be given to the association in Lockert's words of Italian decadence with horror and vice. It will be seen that many of the best

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[31]Essays in Dramatic Literature, p. 537.

[32]Ibid., p. 104.

[33]Ibid., p. 105.

[34]Loc. cit.

examples of the Gothic featured this same decadence. By giving their novels an Italian setting, Gothic authors could place passions and characters in new dimensions by exploiting monastic life, the Crusades, the Inquisition, and continental brigandage. In the melodrama under discussion, the plot is crowded. Horror is heaped upon horror with utter abandon. A skull serves as a grim reminder of a heroine who sacrificed her life for her chastity; a young wife cuckolds her ancient husband with his own bastard son; a young woman is raped and murdered; and beneath it all lies an ambitious plan for the usurpation of a dukedom. It takes the execution of a young boy, as well as several particularly gruesome murders, to settle all the accounts of the guilty. The following scene is typical of later Gothic works. As assignation has been arranged for a lecherous old nobleman. What awaits him in the darkness, however, is not a woman, but a female effigy, the head of which is the skull of one of the nobleman's earlier victims. Its "lips" have been smeared with a corrosive poison. In the darkness, the duke kisses them and falls, dying. As he dies, he is kicked, taunted, and forced to watch his son make love to his wife. One should point out that the skull was a favorite device of the Elizabethans as well as of the graveyard and Gothic authors, serving as a constant reminder of the inevitability of death.

In the revenge play and the melodrama, then, one finds the sensuality, violence, unnaturalness, and moral disintegration which form the basic ingredients of the Gothic plots and distinguish the genre. But the fear produced is not consciously sought by the dramatist of the Elizabethan period. The Gothic involves much more than lurid and bloody episodes--it is a particular mood. Gothic mood is poetic, and it owes its being to the late eighteenth-century love for the macabre, the sensational, the grotesque, and the remote.

Before proceeding with the examination of literary influences which contributed to the Gothic mood, one should mention the *Wonderful Strange Newes from Germany* as a source of the macabre and sensational. These publications are rich in material for the grotesque, the ghastly, the portents and the prodigies, and the stories of impending doom which provide much of the Gothic imagery. In that they are reflections of the variety and individuality which literature sacrificed to classical conformity, they are representative of that "genius" of the Middle Ages in which Hurd saw great romantic possibilities. Hundreds of these leaflets containing accounts of horrible, sensational, and marvelous incidents were translated and sold in England during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. One such leaflet, dated 1564, is called

". . . a true discourse of a murderer who had kylled 960 and odd persons"; another, dated 1590, is said to be ". . . a true discourse of one Stubb Peter, a most wicked sorcerer who in likeness of wolf committed many murders"; while yet another, dated 1607, recounts ". . . a bloody tragedy acted by 5 Jesuits on 16 young German frows."[35] The Wonderful Newes contained accounts of massacres, earthquakes, storms, apparitions, monstrous births, and bodies raised from the dead. There were tales about "damnable sorcerers," strange signs in the air, and glimpses of the Wandering Jew. It is interesting to note that similar incidents were later boldly excerpted from Gothic novels and sold to the thrill-seeking public. This is a further indication that Gothic imagery was but a continuing aesthetic trend. The "catch-penny" titles of the Wonderful Newes became the "shilling-shockers" of the Gothic period. Literature on this level was, however, castigated by eighteenth-century critics. In the light of these facts, it is not surprising that the human mind eventually came to demand an increasingly elaborate display of the fanciful. This enlargement of the fanciful was accompanied by a noticeable change in the psychological attitude. One must examine the influence of the metaphysical

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[35]Charles H. Herford, Studies in the Literary Relations of England and Germany, pp. 173-74.

and sentimental schools upon the changing psychological attitude which led, later, to an appreciation of the Oriental in art, the "noble savage" concept in behavior, and the Gothic in literature.

What seems to be the actual extent of the metaphysical influence may be briefly told. Clark has said that some critics have applied the term Gothic to the ". . . convolutions of the metaphysical school."[36] This judgment seems to be sound only in that metaphysical poetry was a radical departure from the accepted neo-classical principles. The metaphysical poets are accused of abandoning propriety for the sake of novelty. They were regarded as mystics in that they were concerned, primarily, with God and their relation to Him. Thoughts of death were pre-eminent in their works. At the same time, Donne's medieval pattern in his "La Corona" sonnets was contrary to neo-classic principles even though in them he dealt but briefly with the pictorial and dramatic possibilities. These sonnets do not have the build-up of emotional suggestion which is characteristic of both the pure Gothic and of medieval religious verse. The chief characteristic of the metaphysical movement, typified by such authors as Donne and Cowley, was, according to T. S. Eliot, ". . . the elaboration of a figure of speech to the

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[36]Clark, op. cit., p. 25.

farthest stage to which ingenuity can carry it."[37] After the metaphysical movement had subsided, Samuel Johnson described the aims and ideals of the metaphysicians as follows:

> The most hetrogeneous [sic] ideas are yoked by violence together; nature and art are ransacked for illustrations, comparisons, and illusions; . . . What they wanted however of the sublime, they endeavoured to supply by hyperbole; their amplifications had no limits; they left not only reason byt fancy behind them; and produced combinations of confused magnificence, that not only could not be credited, but could not be imagined.[38]

Allowing for the difference in subject matter and precise literary devices, Johnson's criticism has equal validity when applied to Gothic literature. Gothic incidents, too, were quite alien to anything anyone had ever actually experienced. Nevertheless, the Gothic offers a challenge in its own right in that occasionally, ". . . in the mass of materials which ingenious absurdity has thrown together, genuine wit and useful knowledge may be sometimes found buried perhaps in grossness of expression, but useful to those who know their value."[39] The trend toward the unbelievable continued, but on a different level, in the sentimental comedy.

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[37] Criticism: the Major Texts, p. 530.

[38] Samuel Johnson, Johnson Prose and Poetry, p. 798.

[39] Ibid., p. 800.

The metaphysicians and the sentimentalists both exaggerate and distort human nature and emotions out of all proportion, and both present a view of life wholly inconsistent with reality. Their purposes, however, and their devices, differ radically.

Sentimental dramas, generally, were concerned with people who were "insipidly perfect," and possessed of "mighty good hearts," involved in scenes which were pathetic in their appeal to the emotions, with a liberal ". . . sprinkling of tender melancholy conversation through the whole."[40] The villains of this genre are not thoroughly depraved monsters, but essentially good persons who have fallen into waywardness not of their own volition, but because of evil counsel or gross ignorance. They are not driven to destruction by satanic forces; they are guided gently and tearfully back to the paths of righteousness. Sentimental comedy was one of the principal literary trends during the Age of Reason. It embodied all that the advocates of the perfectability of man held dear. At its best, the language is pure; the moral is commendable and obvious from the beginning; and the hero always repents and becomes a valuable member of society. Benevolence becomes the most admirable of human traits, and the reform of some degenerate becomes a laudable undertaking.

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[40]Arthur Sherbo, English Sentimental Drama, p. 6.

Love, once associated with deeds of daring and tender romance, is relegated to a rather prosaic position. The sentimentalists cared nothing for gallantry and courtship; the lover simply presented himself before his intended spouse, declared that of all his lady acquaintances he would rather marry her, and was accepted with one reservation--that he would do nothing to curtail her freedom.

Plots were stereotyped affairs. The following generalization by Krutch is sufficient to demonstrate their uncomplicated nature:

> The typical plot runs somewhat after this fashion: A virtuous person comes in contact with a vicious one. The sympathy of the audience goes out to the virtuous one. Through some series of circumstances, the vicious person is convinced of his error and everyone is made happy, the audience sharing in the joy of the characters and rejoicing that another member has been added to its party--i. e., the believers in virtue.[41]

Historically, the first of the sentimental comedies of the Restoration was Colly Cibber's Love's Last Shift (1696). The play concerns a libertine who had abandoned his wife so many years earlier that he had forgotten her completely. The virtuous and ever-loving wife, discovering that her husband no longer recognizes her, becomes his mistress. From this advantageous position she wins back his love, and awakens in him a profound respect for the sanctity of marriage. This

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[41]Joseph Wood Krutch, Comedy and Conscience after the Restoration, p. 194.

forerunner of sentimentality retained some of the lewdness and hypocrisy of early Restoration comedies, which were notorious for their vulgarity. In spite of the fact that Cibber's play was dramatically imperfect, it was popular with London audiences. Evidently the author's judgment that its success was due to the ". . . mere moral delight received from its fable" was correct.[42] After the lewdness, bawdry, lasciviousness, obscenity, and assorted filth of the Restoration stage, the public, it seems, was ready for a change. Krutch, however, notes that Cibber was so doubtful of his new play that he prepared a comic and indecent prologue in which he made fun of the whole thing just in case it miscarried.[43]

Sentimental dramatists carried their points by essentially the same basic techniques used by propagandists today. A writer took any one of many stock themes, such as the unfaithful wife returned to her husband, the question of the justice of forced marriage, the forlorn orphan girl who defends her chastity against all temptations, or the sorrows endured by an abused wife, and, by prolonging the episode and constantly repeating the moral, succeeded in arousing the requisite pity for distressed virtue and admiration of human kindness. Writers allowed no alien emotions to creep

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[42]*Ibid.*, p. 203.

[43]*Ibid.*, p. 204.

in to detract from their carefully planned goal. Humor and distracting sexual references were avoided. The idea was to emphasize and re-emphasize the moral through the first four acts by exploiting every sentimental possibility to its utmost; and in the fifth act a properly contrite ex-sinner and rake asked for, and was granted, forgiveness by everyone he had offended,however remotely. Plot development at the expense of every potentiallly striking scene and display of humor in order to reinforce a false or exaggerated emotion condemns any work to charges of artificiality, improbability, and illogicality. Gothic writers, in their conscious efforts to produce fear, wrote plays to which these same charges may be brought.

Sherbo has shown the chief elements in sentimental drama to be these:

> 1. The presence of a moral element, variously designated as a "moral problem," "moral treatment," or "moral purpose."
> 2. An element of the artificial, illogical, exaggerated, or improbable (very often in the treatment of emotion).
> 3. Good or perfectible human beings as characters.
> 4. An appeal to the emotions rather than to the intellect.
> 5. An emphasis on pity, with tears for the good who suffer, and admiration for the virtuous.[44]

Sentimental comedy, then, was a manifestation of the rationalistic philosophy of the eighteenth century. Progress

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[44]Sherbo, op. cit., p. 21.

and luxury were regarded as indications that man was proceeding along a course toward true enlightenment. The trend was toward an aesthetic and moral exclusiveness in which delicate taste became a prized possession. This philosophy held that whatever was perfect and beautiful in nature would gradually bring the human soul to an exalted and unblemished state. From this ideal came the late eighteenth-century doctrine of sensibility, which was superimposed upon the philosophy of predestination by the Gothic writers. Whitney has said that few heroines of eighteenth-century dramas and literature are without sensibility. In fictional characters, "sensibility" means a capacity for powerful emotional reaction, an alternation of exhilaration and depression, a tendency toward weeping and fainting at the slightest provocation whether from happiness or sorrow, and, by the time of the Gothic triumphs, to die because of some mental distress.[45] Gothic heroines, supposedly encountering the terrors of the Middle Ages, thus have a refined taste and an emotional instability incompatible with reality. In addition, there are secondary characteristics which are important. Sentimental comedies typically employ an exaggerated love for natural scenery, nearly always utilize a native English setting, generally depict characters from

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[45] Lois Whitney, <u>Primitivism and the Idea of Progress</u>, p. 102.

the more ordinary walks of life, and banish humor and the sexually comic. Anything which is in the least indelicate or tasteless is carefully avoided in the better works of this genre.

The factor of motivation is particularly important because the Gothic was, to a considerable extent, a protest against the consistent moral harangues of sentimentalism. The early Restoration comedies involved essentially the same kinds of intrigue, and were brought to satisfactory conclusions by the repentance oaths of the culprits; but the conversion was accomplished by chance or prudence rather than by the constant repetition of moral preachments. In the early comedies, interest is in the intrigue; later, the sentimentalists seek it in the denouement. The Gothic writers reverse the problem--a villain remains a villain until he is finally destroyed, or evil is allowed to triumph over moral scruples when the temptation is sufficient. Gothic writers destroy the evil; they do not convert it. They did not object to the moral, but to the vehicle in which it rode. Gothic authors replaced orgies of redemption and reconciliation with orgies of superstition and annihilation. The Gothic rebellion was, in part, aimed at refuting the idea that kindness would cure the ills of the world. Gothic writers wearied of the same old domestic themes, which were unimaginative and too limiting. It seems plausible that most

audiences in the eighteenth century were well aware that a rake did not become a model citizen, miraculously, through contact with decency; and that to reward a person for possessing some conventional virtue such as family loyalty, honesty, chastity, or filial devotion was a little far-fetched. But the Gothic writers, along with the sentimentalists, were equally guilty of exaggerating some fundamental aspect of human behavior out of all relationship to probability. After the harsh criticism of such men as Oliver Goldsmith, William Cooke, and Charles Dibdin, it became the fashionable thing to ridicule sentimental comedy. By 1790, the horrors of the Gothic were competing with the benevolence of sentimentalism in the London theatres. Thus, two opposing philosophical systems were competing for attention. The sentimentalist believed that man was moving toward a state of perfection; the Gothic writers thought that progress brought additional degeneration from an original perfect state. One should reflect for a moment upon the multiple causes of this complex eighteenth-century attitude which produced the pre-occupation with death, decay, and disillusionment.

The causes are numerous and sometimes vague. An Englishman, however, during the latter quarter of the eighteenth century sought pleasure in sorrow and melancholy. These were the elements he most preferred in drama and in literature. The picturesque, the sublime, and the antique

often provided the stimulus which produced the melancholic state which the English knew as the vapors, the spleen, or hyp.[46] The nature of this emotional upheaval was varied. It might be the result of dietary deficiency, the confinement imposed by industrialization, climatic conditions, religious doubt, conflicting ideologies, or sentimentality. One may suggest that skepticism was the key to eighteenth-century melancholy, since the traditional religious, political, and social structures were challenged at every turn. Englishmen were confronted by so many conflicting ideas that they found it difficult to grasp and hold to any one.

In the meantime, personal experience began to contradict the philosophy that there was a universal order in all things. Man, now, was not everywhere the same; he was everywhere different. This observation led to an inquiry into and an interest in the remote and far away parts of the earth. From this inquiry came the important shift in philosophical thought basic in the Gothic. Whereas thinkers once had been concerned with what man was, they now began to think in terms of how he came to be what he was. Philosophers who worked upon this latter problem concluded that man was born without free-will and that his actions were pre-destined.

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[46]These terms are obviously closely associated, in that the spleen was the traditional seat of the emotions or passions, and hypochondria referred to the morbid depression of mind and spirit created by emotional upset.

Following this line of thought, some men saw, then, that behavior was a matter of environment and that man was corrupt only because his social institutions were faulty. This, then, in turn, led to the conclusion that man could be made perfect, simply by removing the imperfections of society. On the other hand, a primitive society, having fewer corrupting social influences, was nearer to God's original design. Thus, the noble savage concept and the doctrine of primitivism came to play a dominant role in English melancholy.[47] This reasoning challenged both the Deistic concept, "Whatever is, is right," and the doctrine of pre-destination and perfection through suffering advanced by religious zealots. It will be seen, however, that the Gothic authors were strongly inclined toward the pre-destined, long-suffering philosophy.

At the same time, the English were subjected to a new political ideology which declared that all men are created equal. It was all but impossible to reconcile either primitivism, Deism, or revealed religion to this theory. The Deity, too, lost importance under the sway of this new ideology which held that kings did not rule by divine right but by consent of the people. Nevertheless, equality seemed to point the way toward a society in which human perfectibility

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47Cf. Hoxie Neale Fairchild, The Romantic Quest. This work contains sections discussing this point at length.

would be possible. First, the American and then the French revolutions appeared to offer the opportunity to accomplish those social changes which would produce a corruption-free state. This newly acquired equality entailed new responsibilities for the individual. An acute awareness of his own shortcomings and personal limitations undoubtedly accounted for some of the Englishman's gloom.

The Englishman of the late eighteenth century was in a quandary. Science, which had appeared to hold the key to all truth, failed to produce the expected results. Furthermore, one now had to resolve his own problems, which had once been decided by ecclesiastical or civil authority. One had to resolve paradoxical situations as best he could. Most important of all was the problem of what followed after death. Thus, the entire course of the eighteenth century reflects the growth of the emotional at the expense of the rational. The appeal of the picturesque, of landscape art and poetry, of topographical literature, of vivid word pictures, especially in the novels, and of spectacular staging devices all bear out the growing importance of the emotions. It well may be that the Englishman meditated among the ruins, in gloomy gardens, and in graveyards upon the question of whether the emotions or the reason was the true basis of behavior. If the emotions were the governing agent, then one could look outside

the realm of actual experience in search of truth. It will be shown that the Gothic is an attempt to explain, through lurid devices, the non-corporeal aspects of man's existence. The metaphysicians had been the first to make inquiry along these lines, and the Gothic writers simply presented an old idea in an appealing attire. If this be true, it is necessary to consider those aspects of the eighteenth century which had diverted man from Pope's "Whatever is, is right" to the idea that whatever pleases man is right.

CHAPTER II

IMMEDIATE INFLUENCES: THE ELEMENTS OF GOTHIC ROMANTICISM

The immediate historical and psychological justification for the Gothic received impetus from four motivating forces: (1) Addison's attempts to revive interest in Spenser and Milton; (2) Walpole's scholarly investigations into antiquity; (3) the developing taste for the picturesque; and (4) Macpherson's re-awakening of poetic interest in the Middle Ages through his Ossianic poems. While these four agents, initially, were distinctly unrelated, it was their combined influence which gave rise to the Gothic theme. This Gothic theme, in turn, reflects the social, political, and economic temperament of the late eighteenth century.

Joseph Addison was but one among many responsible for the so-called revival of interest in Spenser and Milton. Especially by means of his "Milton Series" of Saturday papers from No. 267 on, Addison encouraged this revival, and recommended the subject to his reading public. Certainly, Milton's vast popularity and influence upon eighteenth-century thought and expression have never been exceeded by those of any other writer in one given literary era.[48] He was the most quoted author in the popular periodicals of the day;

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[48]Raymond Dexter Havens, The Influence of Milton on English Poetry, p. 8.

he was the most often read by all classes of people; and he was the most often imitated in the period. Havens has shown that Milton's life and works furnished the eighteenth century with reading matter and topics for discussion that were ". . . as inexhaustible and as inescapable as the weather."[49] For example, Milton's Comus was a standard piece in the repertoires of some theatrical companies. His poems served as the bases for countless oratorios. His Paradise Lost and religious verses frequently were quoted in the churches. In general, he was the subject of literary discussion during the entire century. His influence even extended to such matters as architecture and landscaping, with alcoves dedicated to "Il Penseroso" dotting the English countryside.[50] It is obvious, therefore, that ". . . writers like Addison did not create the fame of Milton; they found him already in the field, holding his place against all comers."[51] One should point out here that Milton's theology was used against the Deistic movement. Both Milton and the Deists agreed upon a personal God as the creator of the world and the final judge of mankind. They differed, however, upon whether or not God intervened in human affairs. In Milton's

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[49] Ibid., p. 69.

[50] Loc. cit.

[51] Milton Criticism, p. 148.

interpretation, God was an active part of human experience; in the Deistic, He remained aloof. Addison's critque is devoted, primarily, to five aspects of Milton's work: the author's pure morality, the divine nature of his imagination, the sublimity of his subjects, the majesty of his style, and a tendency to stress emotional and human elements in Paradise Lost. Addison's emphasis of these five aspects gave support to a new interpretation of Milton's moral and spiritual messages. The followers of Milton came to regard him as a seer or mystic, and his imagination became the instrument by which poets could pass ". . . the flaming bounds of time and space."[52] According to Addison, the debt of the eighteenth century to Spenser and Milton was not for the decorative motif, alone. This debt was partly reflected in the high-flown language of eighteenth-century authors. Havens has said that English poetry during the years between Pope and Keats shows an increasing tendency to use words for their connotative, imaginative, and poetic values because of the influence of Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton.[53]

During the first six decades of the eighteenth century, however, the influence of Spenser was, primarily, at second hand through Milton. Milton was an admirer of the Spenserian

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[52] Ibid., p. 154.

[53] Havens, op. cit., p. 66.

technique.[54] Addison's standards of literary taste were most evident in Milton's tendency to suggest rather than describe, and to appeal to the imagination rather than credulity. The relative insignificance of Spenser's influence is revealed in the number of editions of The Faerie Queene and Paradise Lost between 1705 and 1800--the former,seven; the latter, over one hundred.[55] Spenser's tangible influence is reflected in imitations of the Spenserian stanzas, in a fondness for psuedo-allegorical figures, and in occasional borrowings in vocabulary and subject matter.[56] Poets most directly under Spenser's influence found, perhaps, that The Faerie Queene contained little which could be adapted to their verse.[57] It was Hurd, toward the end of the neo-classic period, who focused attention upon Spenser. He had seen in the medieval period a valuable source for imaginative literature and was primarily responsible for popularizing the term Gothic. In his discussion of The Faerie Queene, he placed Gothic and classic in an interesting juxtaposition:

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[54] W. Macneile Dixon, English Epic and Heroic Poetry, p. 223.

[55] Havens, op. cit., p. 385.

[56] Leslie Stephens, Hours in a Library, III, p. 30.

[57] A list of the major Spenserian imitations of the period is included in the bibliographical section of this paper.

the bizarre devices of Spenser, but his works reflect a vigorous imagination. The panoramic scenes of Heaven and Hell, the concept of Satan and the hopelessness of his cause, and the sense of reality imparted to the supernatural were Gothic qualities which later authors imitated. One concludes that Milton's influence was, perhaps, less obvious than Spenser's because of the source of inspiration. Spenser's fundamental ideas were based upon chivalric code and Christianity, and for their medium of expression he reverted to a psuedo-ancient form of English. Again, since chivalry was a decaying force and because pagan mythology could not be harmonized with Christianity, The Faerie Queene is obviously artificial. Milton did not have this particular difficulty to face in Paradise Lost, an epic which follows the Aeneid in form. One should note, however, that Milton's original choice of epic subject--the legends of King Arthur--was Gothic.

In the Spenser-Milton revival, one sees the elements displayed which were to be so grossly exaggerated in the Gothic novels and dramas of the late eighteenth century. Writing under the influence of these authors, poets early in the century had opened the way to the development of Gothicism as a genre. The stimulation of the passions by artificial device became a conscious aim of the poet. Poetry

in the metaphysical manner, had involved an attitude toward religion, primarily, but its replacement sought expression through phraseology and mood through suggestive devices. One must next look at the revival of interest in antiquarianism, led by Horace Walpole, for a partial explanation of the Gothic preference for devices to induce mood by suggestion.

Clark has said that ". . . scholarly interest in archaeology, followed by the sentimental delight in decay, is the true source of the Gothic Revival."[59] Before Walpole, Gray, and the Wartons, the poets and antiquarians had made their separate ways into the field. Interest in medieval legends, old ballads, and Gothic architecture, while sometimes languishing, never died out. In rural England, where the classic influence was never exceptionally strong, architects continued to design public buildings, churches, barns, and houses in the Gothic tradition. It is significant that, in the metropolitan areas and in such centers of neo-classicism as Oxford, the preference for Gothic style was retained.[60] At Oxford, traditional Gothic designs were used for St. Johns in 1631, for University College in 1634, and the roof of Hall stairs at Christ Church in 1640.[61]

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[59]Clark, _op_. _cit_., p 2.

[60]_Ibid_., p. 17.

[61]_Ibid_., p. 15.

The Society of Antiquaries, which had been abolished by James I, was refounded in 1718.[62] It was through this society, and antiquarians operating independently during the suppression, that Gothic sentiment was transmitted. As early as 1656, when Sir William Dugdale published his History of Warwickshire, there had been a demand for county histories and accounts of local antiquities. The Gentleman's Magazine for these years before Walpole contains numerous articles of this nature.[63] But in Walpole, antiquarianism receives its most important statement. Although something of a dilettante, his great influence and genuine interest popularized the ancient and remote throughout England. He possessed the qualities necessary to champion the cause--wit, curiosity, literary style, and social position. Eighteenth-century society had a high regard for Walpole's opinions. His interest in antiquity amounted almost to an obsession. He made his estate, Strawberry Hill, resemble what he believed other country places had been like during the Middle Ages. This pseudo-Gothic villa with its ornamental absurdities was the chief example of the ultra-fashionable urge to revive old Gothic forms. In his attempts to revive antique forms, Walpole was supported by three prominent poets, the brothers Joseph and

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[62] Ibid., p. 20.

[63] Gentleman's Magazine, XXII (April, 1752), p. 155. "As your magazine is the vehicle by which a great many ancient curiosities are made [known to the] public . . ."

Thomas Warton, and Thomas Gray, antiquarians of note themselves, who rank with Walpole as the founders of the Gothic revival. These three, because of their scholarly interests in archaeology, their subjections to the influence of Chaucer, Spenser, and Milton, and their devotion to what became known as Gothic sublimity, gave to Gothic poetry the melancholy mood which set it apart from the poetry of statement. This mood is the essential difference in aesthetic taste between the conventional and the Gothic. For example, Joseph Warton loved to sit among the ruins and meditate upon death and religion:

> Low, lonely cottages, and ruin'd tops
> Of Gothic battlements appear. . .[64]

Even the eerie music of the Gothic writers, which often seems to be unaccountable, has its place in Joseph Warton's melancholy:

> . . . (still the sheper's [sic] show
> The sacred place, whence with religious awe
> They hear, returning from the field at eve,
> Strange whisp'rings of sweet music through the air). . .[65]

Thomas Warton, an antiquarian and a prominent archaeologist, has been called the ". . . fighting champion of the Gothic revival."[66] He spent thirty years in his archaeological

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[64]Enlightened England, p. 499.

[65]Ibid., p. 502.

[66]Clark, op. cit., p. 40.

pursuits, and because of his gregarious nature, his influence with the public was much greater than that of any of his contemporaries. Like others among the graveyard poets, he praised Spenser and Milton, admitted that he had been ". . . For long, enamour'd of a barbarous age,/A faithless truant to the classic page. . ."[67] Thomas Warton's writings did much to develop a new aesthetic experience for his countrymen, manifested in the thrill of beholding an imposing Gothic structure. In 1762, he published his Observations on The Faery Queen, which contained an outline of the origin and development of Gothic architecture. In it, Gothic was placed in opposition to Grecian architecture in the same way that neo-classic poetry was opposed to the Gothic. Warton attempted to demonstrate the idea that the Grecian made its appeal through educated taste, while the Gothic made its appeal through spontaneously aroused passions. Under the influence of the graveyard school, the exploitation of the passions was beginning to supersede reason in poetry. Thomas Gray was the most scholarly and the most versatile of the graveyard poets. His years of active interest in antiquities made him a recognized authority on Gothic architecture. No less an antiquarian than Walpole deferred to

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[67] Enlightened England, p. 520.

Gray's vast knowledge; in his Anecdotes of Painting, he credited the accuracy of the section on the Gothic to its having been corrected by Gray.[68] Gray's devotion to the Deistic tenet that God exists everywhere in nature was partly responsible for the tone of his major poetical works. This, in turn, became a part of the pantheistic search for the true connection between the finite and the infinite which Gothic writers carried to such extremes. When one superimposes this pantheistic ideal upon the medieval philosophy which contended that, in general, a genuine acquaintance with the real world could be gained only through a variety of sensations, the intent of both the graveyard poets and the Gothic authors becomes apparent.[69] Each resorted to conventional stimuli to produce sensations through which the non-corporeal aspects of existence might be examined. The long and arduous search for symbolical devices and paraphernalia to stimulate emotions was the most important contributing force in both the emergence and the destruction of Gothicism as a genre. Poets of the time frequently personified their symbols and devices. This practice seems to be reflected by the Gothic writers who endowed their castles, ruins, and landscapes with what

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[68]William Powell Jones, Thomas Gray, Scholar, p. 6.

[69]R. G. Collingwood, The Principles of Art, p. 175.

amounted to a "personality." It was, however, this love of wild scenery, for the remote, and for the medieval which was symptomatic of a change in literary taste. The preference for the conventional and the contemporary was beginning to fade.

One should re-emphasize, at this point, that towards the middle of the eighteenth century the sight of a Gothic ruin tended to provoke an emotional thrill, occasioned by a recognition of the perishable quality of both man and his works. The recognition of this experience reveals, perhaps, the sub-conscious longing for death so apparent in metaphysical and graveyard poetry. One can see at this juncture a continuation of the metaphysical other-worldliness present in graveyard poetry, and the interlocking of this other-worldliness with the emotional response created by the suggestive nature of ruins and antiquity. It will be seen that conventional stimuli to excite the passions became the special contribution of the graveyard school to Gothicism.

Beginning with Edward Young, one may also see two other important Gothic qualities begin to assert themselves--the conscious arousing of fear and the emphatic rejection of ambition. Young, the most influential of the early graveyard poets, is chiefly remembered for his long didactic poem, Night Thoughts. This work was most important to the

Gothic movement because it was a powerful contradiction of the Deistic philosophy, and, as such, anticipated the Gothic portrayl of a God of retribution. Permeated by the gloom of death, Night Thoughts was a bombastic argument against Deism and atheism. Young's theological system was based upon the idea of immortality. It was due, in part, to this pre-occupation with things of a remote, supernatural world that eighteenth-century thinking turned away from contemporary subjects. This concern for a supernatural world was later integrated with the Gothic aura of remoteness. Young taught that the earthly world was nothing; that what lies ahead, beyond the grave, was the primary concern. He suggested that atheism, which later characterized so many Gothic villains, could be achieved only by sacrificing one's common sense. The rewards for disbelief were repentance and infamy. Man, in Young's poetic pictures, was an admixture of brute and angel. The "brute portion" was fully developed and had to be shocked into moderation by the constant spectre of the deathbed and by the grim reminders suggested by skulls, worms, and epitaphs. The "angel portion" lagged far behind; it was only rudimentary. Young, too, condemned ambition, the driving force behind Gothic villainy: "The selfish heart deserves the pain it feels (Night Thoughts, l. 299)." In his prolific use of images and melodramatic

language, he also resembled the Gothic. In 1759, Young's Conjectures on Original Composition ". . . helped to destroy the neo-classic principles of imitation and restraint."[70] Young felt that rhyme imposed an unnecessary burden upon poets. To him, rhyme was ". . . that Gothic demon which, modern poetry tasting, became mortal."[71] Young's efforts to remove neo-classic restraint is one part of the literary rebellion culminating in the Gothic. Thus, Young represents another stage in the growing alliance between terror and ethics. More importantly, however, he demonstrated the trend toward the Gothic use of the spiritual rather than the real world as the background for displaying mankind's irrational behavior.

Robert Blair sustained the gloomy association of darkness, dread of death, and silence in "The Grave"; he termed this poem his self-appointed task ". . . to paint the gloomy horrors of the tomb."[72] Like others in the graveyard tradition, it was full of platitudes and didactic epigrams to which were appended the complete regalia of symbolic devices. This poem approached the horror and sensationalism of pure Gothic. Blair always exploited the sensational and

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[70]George Eliot, Essays and Leaves from a Notebook, p. 11.

[71]Loc. cit.

[72]Enlightened England, p. 471.

supernatural in characteristic graveyard fashion:

> . . . --Roused from their slumbers,
> In grim array the grisly spectres rise,
> Grin horrible, and obstinately sullen
> Pass and repass, hush'd as the foot of night.
> Again the screech-owl shrieks; ungracious sound!
> I'll hear no more; it makes one's blood run chill.[73]

These sights and sounds from graveyard poetry were used to intensify the atmosphere of gloom and terror in Gothicism. When interwoven with climatic conditions and natural environment, these devices helped produce the violent mental and emotional states of Gothic characters. Blair was also concerned with the monuments of antiquity and the relative impermanence of all that man had built:

> . . . Oh, lamentable sight!
> The labour of whole ages lumbers down,
> A hideous and misshapen length of ruins.
> Sepulchral columns wrestle but in vain
> With all-subduing Time. . .[74]

In these lines, Blair reflects the rising interest in medieval decay which was eventually to direct the attention of the century toward the Middle Ages in search of inspiration. Blair's use of alternate "savage" and "soothing" scenes was also indicative of later developments. His misshapen trees, "Long lash'd by the rude winds," and his "pure limpid stream" illustrate the trend toward alternating the

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[73] *Ibid.*, p. 472.

[74] *Ibid.*, p. 475.

harsh with the bland to heighten effect. Landscape later became of utmost importance to many Gothic writers as a psychological device.

Nature, as it was interpreted in the later decades of the eighteenth century, provided a means of escape from reality similar to that furnished by the Gothic. Transferred to the arts, nature love was reflected in the trend toward making them highly visual and descriptive. It will be shown later that the emphasis on picturesqueness was taken over as a Gothic emotional device. Under the new interpretation of nature, the English taste in gardening experienced a complete change. Gardening broke away from the traditional classic style with its formal arrangements of walks, hedges, and pools in geometric precision. Garden designers turned to nature, antiquity, and the Orient for new ideas. The English penchant for melancholy was, however, carried even into this area. William Shenstone, for example, advanced the opinion that art and nature are incompatible in a garden:

> Art should never be allowed to set foot in the province of nature otherwise than clandestinely and by night. Whenever she is allowed to appear here, and men begin to compromise the difference--night, Gothicism, confusion, and absolute chaos are come again.[75]

One should note Shenstone's association of Gothicism with night, confusion, and chaos because it illustrates perfectly

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[75] Ibid., pp. 545-46.

the prevailing eighteenth-century attitude toward the Middle Ages. Shenstone, however, thought that a ruin could be properly included in a garden because of the atmosphere it lent to the natural scene. A ruin afforded a pleasing melancholy created by one's reflecting upon decayed magnificence.[76] Gardens which were properly designed and appointed were expected to excite personal gloom. Again, one sees another step toward the Gothic pre-occupation with man's ultimate destiny.

The idea of intentional irregularity in gardening received considerable support from Oriental innovations. Chinese sharawadgi became the term used to identify a particular aesthetic experience sanctioning extreme irregularity of design.[77] Applied first to gardens, then to buildings, sharawadgi actually meant an object of beauty lacking the formal design and symmetry of Grecian art. Chinese gardens had no readily distinguishable pattern, but were built upon the aesthetic principle of irregularity. This novel alliance of beauty and irregularity gave a new interpretation to Gothic architecture. The excessive ornamentation and functionless parts once thought hideous were now regarded as beautiful. The significance, here, is that the century was beginning to understand the value of contrast as a means

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[76] Loc. cit.

[77] Cf. A. O. Lovejoy, "The First Gothic Revival and the Return to Nature," MLN, XLVII (November, 1932), p. 419. See also, Y. Z. Chang, "A Note on Sharawadgi," MLN, LXV (April, 1930), pp. 221-24.

of sharpening the perception. Gothic architecture, so closely allied in the English mind with the medieval period, came to represent an end toward which the century worked. The Gothic was at once a method of excessive ornamentation, a retraction of the principles admired in a prevailing style, and the embodiment of specific abnormal and grotesque aspects of life.

This development of a taste for landscape and the picturesque is inseparable from antiquarian sentiment revived and strengthened by Walpole, the Wartons, and Gray. The Deistic doctrine, which held that nature and God were essentially one and the same, was combined with poetic sensibility to establish the landscape poem as the standard of imitation of the century.[78] This poetic sensibility, or refinement of taste, is primarily due to the landscapes of such artists as Claude Lorrain and Salvator Rosa, who were among the first to use nature, rather than history or mythology, as the subject for painting. The eighteenth century's love for the remote and extravagant Italian scenes of these artists is another manifestation of the detachment from reality which the Gothic writers sought. Gothic setting, furthermore, described imaginary landscapes, not natural

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[78]Cf. Collingwood, op. cit., p. 88. "A considerable literature exists devoted to sentimental topography: books about the charm of Sussex, the magic of Oxford, picturesque Tyrol, or the glamor of old Spain. Are these intended merely to recall the emotion of returned travelers and to make others feel as if they had travelled, or are they meant as an invocation--I had almost said to call fools into a circle?"

scenery; and in tales of terror in a continental setting, Gothic scenes were often taken from the landscape painters. If, however, the locale were the British Isles, the scenery was likely to be taken from Ossian or the Welsh tales.[79] Rosa's paintings were filled with Gothic savageness--banditti, caves, cliffs, and cascades, precipices and chasms, giant fallen trees, shattered ruins, and gloomy vistas. On the other hand, Lorrain's classic themes were illustrative of the sentimental side of Gothicism. He chose sunsets, panoramic views, castles and ruins perched on cliffs overlooking the sea, and pastoral scenes. Gothic writers simply combined Rosa's savageness with Lorrain's sentimentality to produce highly artificial settings. One may see this love of the picturesque carried over into eighteenth-century landscape gardening and the vogue for travel literature. Perhaps the developing eighteenth-century attitude toward scenery can be shown through the medium of the Claude-glass. Possession of one of these instruments, named in honor of Claude Lorrain, was an indication of refinement and gentility. Manwaring quotes a note from William Mason (1775) describing Gray's glass as ". . . a plano-convex mirror, of about four inches diameter, on a black foil, and bound up like a

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[79]Ibid., p. 214.

pocketbook."[80] Scenery reflected in this glass resembled a painting. The convex mirror gave an appearance of composition, while the dark background gave an artistic contrast to light and shadow. Manwaring has said that this tendency to reduce a scene so that it might be regarded as a composite image is characteristic of both Gray and the age in which he lived.[81] The eighteenth-century man-of-feeling sought the sublime, then, in total effect, not in singular detail. Therefore, a ruin was not beautiful apart from its surroundings, nor a waterfall apart from its chasm, nor an episode apart from the total literary effort. Sublimity, it appears, is a frame of mind induced by the total effect of the object in question, rather than a series of sensations aroused by its individual parts.

This growing appeal of the picturesque may be further illustrated by the extraordinary demand for travel books during this period. Here, again, Gray's influence was evident. Through his encouragement of the Rev. William Gilpin, he gave impetus to the writing and publication of travel books. Gilpin made a distinction between the picturesque and the beautiful paralleling that of Edmund Burke.[82] Both men regarded the

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[80]Elizabeth Wheeler Manwaring, Italian Landscape in the Eighteenth Century, p. 182.

[81]Loc. cit.

[82]Manwaring, op. cit., p. 186.

picturesque as vast and rough; the beautiful, as small and polished. Only the picturesque, because of its dimensions and coarse texture, could excite astonishment, admiration, reverence, or respect--the qualities of the sublime so diligently sought.

Topographical poets, such as John Dyer and James Thomson, and landscape enthusiasts, such as William Shenstone and Joseph Heeley, had already made the century acutely aware of this new approach to nature, in which nature actually became a means of escape such as Gothicism later became. Transferred to poetry, this love of nature was reflected in the trend toward highly visual and descriptive works. Here, one sees the beginnings of a literary picturesqueness which was taken over by the Gothic writers. In Thomson's poetry, for example, scene after scene is either <u>soft</u>, <u>savage</u>, or <u>learned</u>, depending upon the impression he wants to create. Thus, the literary principle of <u>reductio ad absurdum</u> was displayed long before the Gothic writers employed it to induce mood psychologically. With regard to the interaction of influences affecting poetry, painting, and gardening, Chase has said that during ". . . the pre-romantic period of the last half of the eighteenth century changes took place now in one art, now in the other; new developments in

each field affected developments in the other two."[83] After 1760, the influence of the landscape artists upon poetry was reinforced by Ossian, wherein the natural descriptions are not detailed or minute, but indistinct and scanty.[84] Descriptions are, however, frequently repeated, and moss-covered rocks, twisted trees, gloomy forests, pleasant hills, and wild mountains influence mood by being brought constantly to the reader's attention. One should note, too, that the controversy over the authenticity of these poems turned the attention of every person of literary consequence in Europe toward the romantic, antique days. The poems were accepted by many as true translations from the semi-historic bard, Ossian; they were denounced as utter forgeries by as many others. Ossian, nevertheless, prompted the man of the eighteenth century to contrast his existence with that of his forefathers. The result, Summers has said, ". . . created an ineffaceable impression upon the age."[85] The eighteenth century, bored with the routine of civilization, admired the rebellious spirit and ambitious drive of Ossianic heroes. By analogy, the eighteenth century came to believe that society had forced artificial restraints upon man's ambition.

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[83]Isabel W. U. Chase, Horace Walpole, Gardenist, p. 85.

[84]Manwaring, op. cit., p. 176.

[85]Montague Summers, The Gothic Quest, p. 47.

At the same time, it appeared that literature, too, was more "natural" before its subjection to rules and criticism. The poems of Ossian, which sing the praises of the Celtic hero, Fingal, seemed to indicate that degeneracy was primarily a product of civilization. In these poems, the flights of imagination, accounts of horrible episode, revelations of the chivalric code, and imaginative appeals to the passions, together with the historical research and interest in barbarity which they engendered, made an important contribution to the development of the Gothic. Ossian turned public attention away from contemporary subjects as had nothing else in this period.

From the revival of interest in Spenser and Milton, the growth of antiquarian interest, the development of a taste for the picturesque, and the medieval interest created by Ossian, the Gothic writers formulated a background against which the tenets of sensibility could be displayed. By depicting their characters as doomed or saved by a capricious God, Gothic writers sought to shed some light upon the riddle of being.

CHAPTER III

ENLIGHTENMENT AND GOTHICISM

The preceding chapters are, essentially, the story of the Gothic triumph over neo-classic traditions. Gothicism, in that it was romantic both in form and subject matter, clearly illustrates the forces at work upon art, eventually to culminate in the romantic movement. These forces, considered separately or in aggregate, reflect the temper of the period in which they flourished. Therefore, what has preceded in this work deals with the Gothic as it is historically and immediately concerned with redirecting English taste in literary and visual art. It has been shown how traditional devices, such as bloodthirsty and supernatural incident were acted upon by the grotesque, the chivalric, and the antique of Spenser; by the thoughtful melancholy and religious pre-occupation of Milton; by the savage and bland of the picturesque; by the excessive morality of the sentimentalists; by the medieval nobility of Ossian; and by the extravagance of chinoiserie. The Gothic reflects the revival of interest in the life and thought of the Middle Ages, in the expression of sentimental melancholy, and in the conscious revelation of the author's own vague longings. Furthermore, the genre is subjective,

picturesque, and reactionary.[86] For example, the subjectivity is easily seen in the indistinct longing of the writer; the picturesque is manifest in the liking for wild mountain scenery, moss-covered ruins, and ghosts cavorting in grave-yards; finally, the genre is reactionary in that it dis-avows the clear reasoning and concise literary forms of the neo-classicists. The adoption of these romantic concepts indicates that certain fundamental forces were at work in changing and modifying the English society which, eventually, was to support this new vogue in writing. This chapter, then, is devoted to an evaluation of those contemporary eighteenth-century bases for acceptance of this change in taste. Since Gothicism had to appeal to society in order to succeed, one must next examine that society.

After the Glorious Revolution of 1688, England moved into an era of enlightenment. A new spirit of tolerance began to assert itself, and the "common man" began to assume a position in society comparable to his position today. In politics, for example, the trend was toward a two-party system with the Tories, generally, drawing membership favorable to the landed gentry, the Crown, and the Church. The Whigs, representing the powerful mercantile interests in general, supplied the opposition. In democratic ideology, people

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[86] William L. Phelps, _The Beginnings of the English Romantic Movement_, pp. 4-5.

were beginning to think in terms of social equality.

An era of complacency began in the islands after the Hanoverian George I came to the throne in 1714.[87] The English saw much to admire in their prime minister's slogan, "Let sleeping dogs lie." Under George I, much of what royal power remained was transferred to the prime minister, the cabinet and the House of Commons. Gone were the old days of court intrigue, religious persecutions, and royal pomp which had helped make life interesting to an Englishman.

England's military and naval strength grew tremendously during the century. By 1706, the Duke of Marlborough had established the supremacy of British arms over French--a feat which another general, the Duke of Wellington, was forced to repeat at Waterloo in 1815.[88] This was the period of wide colonial expansion in Asia, Africa, and America. Empire meant industrialization and this meant payrolls and leisure time. It is to this element, leisure time, that the Gothic owes much of its existence. The "common man" now had an opportunity to learn to read, the money with which to buy or borrow books, and a voice to express his desires. The enormous contributions made by advances in printing, and by the circulating library system are a story in themselves.

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[87]Enlightened England, p. 1205.

[88]Loc. cit.

England had arrived at that point where the pressure of civilization demanded relief through recreation. Reading became the popular pastime, and great numbers of these readers did not care for stories which gave them only more of the mundane world from which they sought escape.

That story-telling should involve terrifying and pathetic qualities is not surprising, considering other forms of English "entertainment," and the frightening prospects of everyday living during the generations preceding the Gothic. For a small fee one could watch the antics of the insane at Bedlam, or take part in the festivities at the public hangings at Tyburn. Progress notwithstanding, England was an unpleasant place in which to live in those days. The streets of London were unsafe and filthy; cities were filled with prostitutes and criminals; and the Royal Navy and merchant marine filled its muster rolls with impressed seamen. For the genteel Londoner, there were the new literary-political clubs such as the Kit-cat, the October Club, and the Scriblerus Club.[89] There were many other clubs extant, however, whose purposes were not so commendable. Besides the Hell Fire Club, whose members dressed as monks while they performed the Black Mass with every lewd ritual its members could devise, there were organizations devoted to violence

[89] Enlightened England, p. 1209.

such as the Mohock Club. All these peculiarities of human behavior helped focus attention upon man's real connection with the Infinite. It became increasingly difficult for many to reconcile the idea of a benevolent, guiding Providence with reality.

By the time Gothic mood reached its heyday in the last years of the eighteenth century, English society had become altogether peaceful by contrast. The countryside was relatively safe, and violence was largely confined to small districts of cities which the initiated could avoid. England had become an industrial land--a "nation of small shopkeepers." Its citizens had leisure time and money to spend to escape the monotonous and orderly routine of existence. The influences so long at work had wrought a mental conditioning among the English which made the horror, sentimentality, supernatural, and melancholy of the Gothic the favorite diet of the escapist.

Extensive natural and civil disasters during the period and the advances made in science forced speculation upon man's true relationship to God, however. In consequence, it seems that the evolution of the Byronic hero from the Gothic villain and of the psychological novel from the Gothic may be rooted in a single question: Is man free to choose between good and evil? The change or diversity

in religious thinking was one of the more important influences upon the Gothic.[90] The old God of wrath and retribution was now thought by many to be a benevolent and remote Being; by others, He was thought to exist not at all. For example, Newton's Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy (1713) developed the theory that the universe was obedient to a system of mechanical laws which could be proved. The Christian doctrine of a universe directed by an all-powerful God now was questioned by many. The effect on religious, philosophical, and moral thought was enormous. A personal God was no longer required if the laws of gravitation, rather than the Deity, ruled supreme. Biblical accounts of miracles, revelations, and redemption began to seem rather whimsical when confronted with scientific fact. Gradually, the ancient doctrine of original sin was superseded, in part, by the theory that man was naturally good. Evil, then, becomes the product of one's environment, and, as such, inevitable in modern society. It follows that man, alone, is not responsible for his actions, and, if he is not, there can be no true tragedy of character. Tragedy must be equated with social institutions rather than man. One can see this attitude illustrated clearly in the sentimental dramas which co-existed with the Gothic. The most heinous crimes may be pardoned in such a philosophical system. The

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[90]Devendra P. Varma, The Gothic Flame, p. 211.

Gothic drama retained something of this attitude for contrast, while Gothic actors interpreted their parts so as to play upon the sympathy of the audience. Since the Gothic villain is driven by uncontrollable forces, tortured by remorse, and never broken in spirit, he is not the victim of society. He cannot be converted and restored to a useful place among his fellow men, either by persuasion or by force. Gothic villainy is a protest against the claims of those who advocated the "perfectability of man" theme. Gothic writers were, in a sense, inquiring whether or not strife, predestination, and terror were essential parts of the human scheme. In this light, the Gothic was something of an experiment in which the sensibility of the eighteenth century was placed in a medieval setting to dramatize the rule of human emotions over the intellect.

In the discussion of the selective novels and plays, one may see the direct course taken by the Gothic inquiry and the devices used to involve the reader's emotions to an unprecedented degree. However, before examining the particular Gothic works, one should trace the development of the English novel through its evolutionary stages. Following the precedents of Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett, the Age of Reason came to accept certain standards for the novel as an art form and to regard any radical deviation as

barbarous. Thus, a story too far at odds with reason could easily be called Gothic. The basic properties of the pre-Gothic novel may be summarized as follows: events tend to become stereotyped affairs; an attempt is made to explain the causes of events; passions are disguised or subdued; characters adopt a uniformity of manners; style is more reserved; and writers, by repeating similar themes, refine and correct one another. These characteristics may be shown by an examination of the major authors.

Before the Gothic, literary taste in the novel was directed toward the realistic which treated life matter-of-factly. Events which anyone could imagine as having happened to himself were the novelists' choice subjects. Defoe, for example, described rather ordinary events and contemporary scenes, embellished, perhaps, with light humor and roguery. It was chiefly Defoe's ability to depict people in action which made his stories popular. In travel books, biography, and psuedo-histories, Defoe tried to make fact look like fiction and fiction look like fact. It was this confinement to probability by such writers as Defoe, Fielding, and Smollett which the Gothics protested. Imagination was confined to producing incidents in everyday life with no digressions into the world of make-believe.

After Defoe, Samuel Richardson introduced a device

which the Gothics later put to extravagant use. As conceived by Richardson, the characters in a novel should illustrate some personal problem. Human emotions were now recognized as elementary in behavior, and he attempted to develop some of the motivations which cause people to react as they do. The forces of good and evil were set against one another in order to supply the reader with a made-to-order moral. Essentially, the same question exists in Richardson as in the Gothic: Can the individual subjected to a given set of emotions, be other than what he is? Furthermore, Richardson resembled later novelists in one other important way--a penalty was extracted for breeches of the moral code. McCullough has said that the Gothic villain and the Byronic hero appear to have their beginnings in Richardson's Clarissa.[91] According to McCullough, Lovelace, who represents vice, by his repeated flouting of the law furnishes the ". . . element of escape from rigid decorum," and, slightly modified, he becomes the ". . . villain in Gothic fiction and will even leave his mark upon the romantic rebel of a later generation."

It remained for Henry Fielding to broaden the scope

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[91]Bruce McCullough, Representative English Novelists: Defoe to Conrad, pp. 29-30.

of the novel to provide a background to display the relationship of his characters to the world about them. This concept gave the writer more control over his characters and situations. Fielding's characterizations contained many which were archetypes--and this was his chief contribution to the Gothic.

The picaresque novels of Tobias George Smollett faintly foreshadowed the Gothic in their adventure and roguery. They were sentimental works, and sometimes severe and even censorious in style. The picaresque hero resembled the Gothic villain in that he was an opportunist whose motives were not too carefully analyzed. Smollett's plots, filled with outrageous coincidences occurring at preposterous times and in ridiculous places, anticipated the Gothic works of Matthew Lewis. Smollett's principal contribution, however, was in character delineation. His rogues were subjected to a single ruling passion, and his characters conformed to distinct moral attitudes.[92] Thus, the precedents were set for stories involving characters caught up by fate and driven forward against the dictates of conscience. Human behavior had become the major area of speculation for prose writers who searched for a key to an age-old riddle--why do men act as they do?

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[92]Cf. Catherine L. Almirall, "Smollett's Gothic: An Illustration," MLN, LXVIII (June, 1953) pp. 409-10.

CHAPTER IV

GOTHICISM AND THE INFINITE

Gothic works represent man as a victim of destiny unable to be other than he is. Each author attempted to show, in some way, the connection between villainy and the infinite. Three definite types of villain emerged--the ambitious tyrant, the outlaw, and the superman. If Gothicism is regarded as a moral literature, these types represent inquiries into the true motivation for human behavior. In the first of the Gothic novels, _The Castle of Otranto_, the villain, Manfred, represents the first archetype--the ambitious tyrant. He is an obvious victim of predestination. Actually, however, he is also fighting back in a vain effort to save himself from a Biblical injunction. In order to trace the progression of Gothic villainy to romantic heroism, one must first examine _Otranto_.

THE CASTLE OF OTRANTO (1764)

Horace Walpole was not individually responsible for the entire Gothic literary movement; however, no one questions the fact that his _Otranto_ was the first of the Gothic novels. Its publication coincided with the coalescence of the aesthetic principles which won it favorable acceptance. If one regards _Otranto_ as a protest against the security sought in

scientific explanation, it will be seen to contain elements of fear and religious dread not evident in other literature of the period. This may be the real explanation for Gothic violence--to produce fear which, in turn, heightened one's perception so that he could more fully interpret the author's presentation of a doctrine of natural calamity and personal doom. Without the conflicting theological principles of the late eighteenth century, the Gothic might not have been possible at all. It is true that the genre was a protest against contemporary literature which dealt with the familiar and the realistic, but the protest was aimed, primarily, at disputing the theory that man was a perfectible being.[93] The Gothic also became the novel of escape, but it did so by involving man with the question of his true relationship to God.[94] The devices of the Gothic are meant to arouse fear and contribute to an atmosphere of religious dread. The Gothic novels thus become an important attempt to apply psychology.

It has been shown how the English public of the eighteenth century developed a taste for gloom, melancholy, excessive sentimentality, ancient legends, and religious doubt. It had grown tired of villains who were easily reformed, because they were contrary to human experience. Observation

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[93] Lovett and Hughes, <u>The History of the Novel in England</u>, p. 104.

[94] Summers, <u>op</u>. <u>cit</u>., p. 12.

indicated that man was not guided by the intellect, as the classicists claimed, but by the emotions.

According to Walpole, The Castle of Otranto grew out of a dream that came to him one night in June of 1764. Surrounded by medieval mementoes in his Gothic villa at Strawberry Hill, Walpole, possibly, should have dreamed of strange events, of pious monks, and of sinister revelations. It is worth noting that "the dream" was to become a part of the Gothic writers' standard equipment. Knowingly or not, Walpole was crediting a submerged layer of experience--the dream world--with a sense beyond that of experience. The novel, itself, is a radical departure from contemporary English literary styles. A curious blend of architecture and sentiment, its plot is developed by outlandish supernatural manifestations and tragic events. It does, however, conform to the traditional moralistic aims of its predecessors. Its moral lesson is stated: that the sins of the fathers are visited on their children to the third and fourth generations.[95] The villain, Manfred, must be regarded as a victim of the Biblical curse. It took Walpole just two months to write Otranto, and apparently it was just an exercise in which he

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[95] Walpole follows such authors as James Macpherson and Thomas Chatterton in crediting his work to an ancient source. The first edition of 1764 was called "A Story. Translated by William Marshal, Gent. From the Original Italian of Onuphrio Muralto." It became a "Gothic story" in the second edition of 1765.

could indulge in his imagination.[96] The story has no real historical perspective, the events described are ridiculous, and the supernatural manifestations are beyond belief. Nevertheless, the eighteenth century would not have accepted Otranto had it not contained something evidently its own author missed--its appeal to those in a state of mental depression. Regardless of why Walpole wrote or what he intended, the fact remains that Otranto was the most popular novel of the day. For nearly fifty years afterward, the words castle and Gothic in a title attracted readers.

All but one of the principal devices of the Gothic are in Otranto. The absent characteristic is length. It is too quickly told. Typically, the Gothic novel is an extended and tedious affair, with mixed plots and pages of digressions. Otranto has the other paraphernalia in abundance. The ancient castle, the monastery, the usurper, heroines, a hero and lawful heir, a mysterious prophecy, incestuous love, and fantastic supernatural events all are used to appeal to the reader's emotions, imagination, and subconscious. It is the way in which Walpole handles the prophecy and the moral which makes the novel unique. The prophecy, which ". . . pronounced that the castle and Lordship of Otranto should pass from the present family whenever

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[96]Cf. Harrison Ross Steeves, Three Eighteenth Century Romances, p. 5.

the real owner shall be grown too large to inhabit it," forms the basis for Manfred's villainy. Furthermore, it furnishes part of the intellectual challenge--there is a mystery to unravel. The additional intellectual exercise is offered by Manfred, whose motivations the reader must try to ferret out for himself. Formerly, villains had been driven by pride and ambition toward an obvious goal. No one in an audience had to be told what Macbeth's intentions were, or why Iago behaved as he did. Gothic audiences, on the other hand, were kept in suspense about these matters.[97] Gothic villains, following the precedent set by Manfred, never repent or become subject to reason. One may see the dramatic possibilities offered by the villain's conduct. For example, Manfred is being punished to fulfill a Biblical curse which is certainly related to the religious quandary of the period. He is not free to chose his own destiny, but is at the mercy of some power beyond his control. Although Manfred represents an ambition-mad tyrant who will permit

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[97] A summary of the plot illustrates this characteristic: Manfred, Prince of Otranto, and the villain of the novel, is guilty of the usurpation of the principality only in that he has inherited it from his grandfather. The real heir is Frederic, Marquis of Vicenza, whose lands adjoin Otranto. While the Marquis is away on one of the Crusades, Manfred has arranged a marriage between his son, Conrad, and the Marquis' daughter, Isabella. If the two families could be joined in marriage, then Manfred's heirs would enjoy Otranto in perpetuity, and the prophecy would be meaningless.

nothing to sway him from his course, Walpole suggests that Manfred's (and Man's) destiny is unavoidable. Mankind is subject to a pre-ordained system of rewards and punishments, instead of to the sentimentalist doctrine of error, repentance, and conversion. Later interpretations of Manfred caused the perpetrators of the worst crimes imaginable to appear as not altogether responsible for their actions. In any event, Manfred contradicted the philosophical tenet that man was free to choose between good and evil. For example, Manfred is genuinely ashamed of the way he has treated his wife and daughter, who know nothing of his passion for Isabella. He is, nevertheless, the calculating villain, for while he feels shame and remorse in his heart ". . . he was inwardly meditating a yet more bitter outrage."[98] Consciously or not, Walpole is pointing out that there are aspects of existence which cannot be reduced to formula.

Gothic pre-occupation with the supernatural indicates an interest in the spiritual world. Later Gothic authors used the supernatural to reinforce mood and terror, but in Otranto the supernatural devices seem far-fetched and out of place. McCullough has said that Walpole's spectral manifestations ". . . are so jarringly out of place that

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[98]Reeves, op. cit., p. 32.

they seem preposterous rather than terrifying."[99] Walpole's apparitions are those of medieval legend:

> . . . And then the figure, turning slowly around, discovered to Frederic the fleshless jaws and empty sockets of a skeleton, wrapt in a hermit's cowl.[100]

Additional events, reflecting Senecan and renaissance precedent, are the murder of Matilda by her father, the "return motif" of the hero, medieval pomp and pageantry, adherence to chivalric code, and the invocation of the supernatural for emphasis.[101] In Otranto, then, one sees every sort of sensational device used to force a plot. Good and evil, in it, cannot be reconciled because God's will must be done. Walpole's God takes an active part in the affairs of the individual, and justice is regarded as timeless. Following Walpole's precedent, later Gothic writers resorted to another type of villain through which they could display essentially the same concern for predestination. This new type is the outlaw, who is best shown by Mrs. Radcliffe's Montoni in The Mysteries of

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[99]McCullough, op. cit., p. 87.

[100]Reeves, op. cit., p. 113.

[101]Criticism of Otranto was limited almost entirely to its lack of plausibility. By the time the historical novel came into vogue, Sir Walter Scott could only note that Walpole placed ". . . excessive demands upon the reader's credulity (McCullough, op. cit., p. 88)."

Udolpho. Montoni, who preys upon a gullible society, represents hypocrisy. In the villainy of Udolpho, one can detect the presence of determinism guiding the doomed to their fates.

THE MYSTERIES OF UDOLPHO (1794)

Mrs. Radcliffe's novel, The Mysteries of Udolpho, is generally regarded as the best of its kind ever written.[102] In it she most nearly achieves a successful harmony between the pleasant and the repulsive. Udolpho was not written with the abandon of either Otranto or the later works such as The Monk; neither does it degenerate into a recounting of impossible events or offensive sexual escapades. A meticulous worker, Mrs. Radcliffe is the author most often identified with the development of the Gothic novel in England.[103] In Udolpho, she appears to have analyzed public taste with an attempt to satisfy it. Mathias, a Cambridge scholar and her contemporary, has remarked:

> Setting aside hyperbole, no feminine writer has exercised such a powerful and lasting influence upon literature as Mrs. Radcliffe.[104]

Her novel contains every device in the Gothic catalogue. There are sensational episodes and long lyrical passages

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[102] McCullough, op. cit., p. 90.

[103] Loc. cit.

[104] S. M. Ellis, "Ann Radcliffe and Her Literary Influences," Contemporary Review, CXXIII (February, 1923), p. 188.

devoted to natural beauty. It has a sentimental heroine, gifted with an acute sensibility, great courage, and an infinite capacity for suffering. It has a poor but handsome hero who never, in any way, offends decorum; and it has a villain in a decaying castle in the Apennines. The novel retains many of the features of the sentimental novel, but it recognizes the changing temper of the century in its romantic adventures, indistinct dangers, picturesque landscapes, and ever-present suspense created by the aura of impending disaster. Udolpho recognizes the two-fold purpose of mystery--that it should appeal to both reason and credulity.

Mrs. Radcliffe's particular ability was to blend setting and action to create a single effect. For example, the heroine becomes involved in situations in which the environment is alarming; in turn, her tensions are heightened and her fears are exaggerated.[105] The author's ability to strengthen mood through colorful description and association of sights and sounds far surpasses that of her contemporaries. To illustrate, she implies that there is something sinister about Count Montoni's Italian revenge, a villain, in whom early glimmerings of the "Byronic hero" may be seen:

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[105] Lovett and Hughes, op. cit., p. 91.

> Montoni was become a captain of robbers. His character also, unprincipled, dauntless, cruel, and enterprising, seemed to fit him for the situation. Delighting in the tumult and in the struggles of life, he was equally a stranger to pity and to fear; his very courage was a sort of animal ferocity; not the noble impulse of a principle such as inspirits the mind against the oppressed; but a constitutional hardiness of nerve that cannot feel, and that, therefore, cannot fear.[106]

In general, Montoni lacks only the obscurity surrounding the true nature of his crimes to be the Byronic hero. Like the later romantic heroes, Montoni becomes a villain only when he tries to gain something beyond his limitations. Once convinced that he has been pre-judged, he passes his own misery along to those about him. Mrs. Montoni presents her message without imposing upon the reader's credulity or offending his moral scruples. Her intent seems to be to include just the ". . . suggestion of the Unknown."[107] Further, by so involving the reader, Mrs. Radcliffe is focusing his attention upon theological doctrine. Again, granting that the Gothic is a moral literature, one can distinguish the eighteenth-century doctrine of fatalism carefully woven into the story. The characterizations of Montoni and Madame Cheron draw attention to a basic question in the Gothic: What is the origin of evil? These two villains

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[106] Mrs. Ann Radcliffe, The Mysteries of Udolpho, Part II, p. 15.

[107] Anthony Clyne, "Ann Radcliffe, Romancer," Living Age, CCCXVII, (April, 1923), pp. 50-51.

are doomed, and bound to the fatalistic doctrine that nothing can save them. On the other hand, the resulting misanthropy brings suffering to the innocent. This misanthropy illustrates a concept of theology in which God either saves or damns at His caprice. One sees in this interpretation of Christianity the belief that all men are imperfectly created, and can achieve perfection only through suffering if at all. This point is observable in Emily's behavior. After facing adversities which would challenge the sanity of the strongest, she undergoes a mental transformation the reverse of what is expected. She comes to understand her tormentors and, therefore, herself. She realizes her own superiority, and her fears are reduced accordingly. This psychological refinement is a subtle indication of the principle of perfection gained through suffering.

Mrs. Radcliffe welds the Gothic elements to the romantic tradition. The reader is carried to an area remote in time and place, and moved along through the trials and tribulations of highly placed persons by a current of wonder and fear. In true romantic fashion, rewards and punishments are meted out. The faithful lover, Valancourt, wins Emily's hand; the villainous fortune-hunter and bandit, Montoni, is executed by the state of Venice; the servants are given life pensions; and Emily gains the fortune Montoni

coveted. This is Gothic justice. For no apparent reason, some are predestined to overcome adversity and gain a reward; others pursue some mad goal to oblivion. Perhaps the best illustration of this is presented by the next step in the evolution of Gothic villainy.

In Lewis's novel, The Monk, Ambrosio represents the superman in villainy because of his alliance with the Devil. Ambrosio, furthermore, offers proof that the flesh is more powerful than the will, and that a man predestined to doom cannot find refuge behind monastery walls. In Ambrosio, one may see Lewis's interpretation of the doctrine of original sin, and of a revengeful God exacting his tribute.

THE MONK (1795)

It remained for a twenty-year-old English diplomat on duty at The Hague, Matthew Gregory Lewis, to write the most controversial of the Gothic novels. This book, which earned for its author the life-long sobriquet, "Monk," violated every accepted tenet of reason, and was "attacked, defended, parodied, plundered, dramatized, opera'd, adapted, translated, and imitated."[108] Any work which receives so much attention must be remarkable in some manner. An extremely complicated affair, the novel actually contains

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[108]Matthew G. Lewis, The Monk, p. 20.

three separate and loosely connected plots of diminishing importance. The major plot, reminiscent of Faust, concerns the downfall of the monk, Ambrosio:

> Placed in a Capuchin monastery under strange circumstances during his infancy, Ambrosio has become the very personification of virtue and divine dignity when the story opens. At thirty years of age, he is the most respected church dignitary in Madrid. Lewis traces the progress of this monk from celibacy through every stage of erotic behavior to the rape and murder of his own sister, Antonia.[109]

The subordinate plots involve the love affairs of Raymond and Agnes and of Lorenza and Antonia. These romances encounter all the Gothic machinations the author can evolve.

The element of supernatural visitation is continued throughout the novel; it is one of Lewis's major devices for advancing the plot. His tale of the Bleeding Nun is a stock ingredient in this type of work. Summers has made the following observation, which reflects the attitude of the eighteenth century:

> The Episode of the Bleeding Nun indeed immediately captured the imagination of all perfervid romantics, and as early as 1799 it was extracted and separately printed in chap-book form as The Castle of Lindenburg; or the History of Raymond and Agnes.[110]

Lewis's novel is not an original composition, however. He used Otranto as the master guide for his style of writing,

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[109]Ambrosio also murders his own mother.

[110]Summers, op. cit., p. 211.

and borrowed freely all the devices he employs. The Critical Review notes that the tale is similar to that of Santon Barsisa in The Guardian.[111] Lewis admitted as much. Even the tale of the Bleeding Nun was borrowed directly from the work of Johann Karl Musaeus, a professor at Weimar with whom Lewis had frequently discussed literature.[112] Lewis's characters play out their destinies in a typical Gothic setting. The major plot is laid in Spain during the Inquisition, and is presented in such shocking detail that Coleridge was inclined to condemn the entire genre.[113] This mixture of sensationalism and Gothic romance is an example of the ". . . prodigy of English fiction" which many readers have found sacrilegious and scandalous.[114] Ambrosio is made to suffer terribly because he does not have the strength to withstand the supernatural force exerted to corrupt him. He becomes symbolic of all the vices caused by man's "progress"--jealousy, fraud, affectation, passion, slander, pride, envy, fear, and malice. The monk, however, is not altogether to blame. He is the victim of the fatalistic doctrine of original sin from

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[111] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, The Critical Review, (January, 1797), p. 194.

[112] Summers, op. cit., p. 223.

[113] Coleridge, op. cit., pp. 194-95.

[114] Lewis, op. cit., p. 11.

which a lifetime of religious study and meditation could not save him. If man is destined to evil, monastic walls and clerical robes cannot protect him against temptation and corruption. Regarded in this light, evil is not the evil of circumstance alone, but the wrath of a retributive God.

The Monk set the pattern for many subsequent novels of escape; it was plundered many times.[115] This plundering is revealing of public taste. Primarily, Lewis produced horror by depicting human degeneracy. Ambrosio's crimes and sexual escapades are so horrible that they repel the reader. Surnamed the "Man of Holiness," Ambrosio is tempted by the Devil through the seductress, Matilda. Sexually motivated, he commits rape and murder; and is finally coerced into signing a pact which consigns his soul to Hell forever. Coleridge thought no observations of human character could justify Ambrosio, because the actions were such that no ". . . good man would willingly suffer them to pass, however transiently, through his own mind."[116] The Critical Review maintains that a romance should provide pleasure by ". . . the perception of difficulty surmounted"; and deplores the fact that the deterioration of Ambrosio goes steadily

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[115]A play based on the Raymond and Agnes episode was produced at St. James's Theatre, London, in June, 1859. (Summers, op. cit., p. 230).

[116]Coleridge, op. cit., p. 194.

forward. A romance cannot exemplify a moral truth, according to Coleridge, who points out that ". . . no proud man will be made less proud by being told that Lucifer once seduced a presumptuous monk."[117] This reasoning overlooks one fact of major importance. Ambrosio's fall is not a casual thing. His abnormalities are manifested only after he is subjected to the strongest temptations. Until the very end, he vigorously opposes the machinations of the Devil; he commits all his crimes with mental reservations such as no other Gothic villain ever supported. Ambrosio believes that he can repent and be forgiven at any time. When he realizes the awful truth--that he is predestined to hell--it is too late. Lewis's purpose was not to show man before a benevolent God, but to picture him at the mercy of a God who had intentionally made him imperfect so that he would suffer endless torment. Contrary to what Coleridge thought, the novel does contain an obvious moral--that the road to hell is a long and difficult one.

In spite of the adverse criticism the novel received, the influence of The Monk and of Lewis was tremendous. The large number of plays and stories which followed The Monk opened the way to the destruction of the Gothic as a

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[117]Loc. cit.

genre.[118] Each author tried to exceed the horror of his predecessor until nothing remained except crude sensationalism.[119] Nevertheless, Gothic villains continued to be portrayed as outcasts tormented by conscience. They were destined to a life of sin and some horrible doom. At the same time, the genre left an indelible mark upon literature which can be seen in the work of many novelists who have written since. The transition from villain to hero, however, is more noticeable in the Gothic drama than in the novel. The drama, which was fully developed before the novel, shows the predestined villain in a more favorable light. In the drama, too, one may best illustrate the progression from crime to the ultimate in criminality. Through it, one may readily trace the effects of conscience upon villainy. Evans has said that conscience is the key to the Byronic hero and to his evolution from the Gothic villain.[120] In the discussion of the dramas, one may see how the ranting villain is slowly changed into the brooding hero.

FOUNTAINVILLE FOREST (1794)

This play illustrates the Gothic tendency to

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[118] Cf. Summers, op. cit. This work contains a long list of novels and plays directly influenced by The Monk.

[119] Cf. Allardyce Nicoll, A History of the English Drama, III, p. 107.

[120] Bertrand Evans, Gothic Drama from Walpole to Shelley, p. 30.

dramatize novels in the genre in an attempt to satisfy the constant demand for more "blood and thunder." Furthermore, it represents a transitional stage in the history of the Gothic drama. Those plays which preceded it depended largely upon narration to provide the startling and supernatural effects which the audience found so appealing. With Fountainville Forest, however, the most elaborate and sensational effects imaginable began to be directly presented. The author of this drama, James Boaden, was one of the most adept writers of the period at transforming a successful novel into a satisfactory play.[121] Boaden does not overlook the dual purpose of his play, nor does he fail to recognize the singular purpose of Gothic drama--effect. He has a prefatory note which points out that the stage is the place for effect:

> It was not from a vain tenaciousness that I determined to retain passages expunged in the performance.--The Stage and the Closet are very different mediums for our observance of effects.[122]

In general, Gothic dramatists were given to prologues in

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[121]Other than Fountainville Forest which is based on Ann Radcliffe's novel, The Romance of the Forest (1794), his plays include Aurelio and Miranda (1798); The Italian Monk (1797); and Edmund (1799).

[122]James Boaden, Fountainville Forest, no page number.

which they mention their artistic goal and the moral of the piece. Boaden tells his audience that foreshadowing (in the manner of Seneca) has become passé, that

> The moderns, previous hints like these despise,
> Demand intrigue, and banquet on surprise. . .[123]

Fountainville Forest, he says, has been ". . . caught from the Gothic treasures of Romance."[124] Then, after lamenting the French Revolution and the usurpation of royal authority, Boaden provides the moral:

> One crime but pulls another on our heads,
> And still the last is weightier than the former.[125]

These lines invite one significant question: What is the ultimate crime? Gothic authors made each successive villain more horrible than his predecessor, and yet this same monster eventually became a hero. Not until Byron, whose Gothic villains are actually heroes, is any explanation of the utmost in villainy offered.

Fountainville Forest is unusual in one aspect--not one murder is actually committed during its course. But even so, the play is completely out of touch with any semblance of reality. The characters have no counterparts in this world, and the plot is so transparent that every

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[123]Ibid., no page number.

[124]Ibid., no page number.

[125]Ibid., no page number.

action comes with monotonous regularity. This play does, however, illustrate the Gothic method of adding suspense to the drama. Many problems occupy one's attention simultaneously. For example, why has Lamotte fled Paris? Why is Adeline given to Laval? What will the parchment reveal? Will help arrive in time to save Adeline? Gothic dramas kept the motives of the principals from the audience. The audience, therefore, was free to speculate upon both the cause and the nature of real villainy. No hero is ever permitted to block the villain's diabolical purposes by openly confronting him; rather the villain is destined to follow some consuming passion to his doom. By pursuing this point to its logical conclusion, one may see that in the Gothic the villain was his own worst enemy. Gothic villainy involves the conscience and an attitude toward self-destruction brought on by remorse. These factors are illustrated in the discussion of The Castle Spectre which follows.

THE CASTLE SPECTRE (1797)

The Castle Spectre is the most famous and the most typical specimen of all Gothic melodramas.[126] It is based

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[126] Summers, op. cit., p. 253.

on an unfinished novel patterned after The Castle of Otranto which its author, Matthew Gregory Lewis, attempted to write while a student at Oxford.[127] First presented at the Theatre-Royal on December 14, 1797, it was tremendously successful from the first. Michael Kelly, who wrote the music for the play, said that it had a prodigious run. He records that on the opening night of the play, which had a cast of England's foremost actors, the sinking of the Ghost in a flame of fire and the beauty of the whole scene ". . . had a most sublime effect." Evidently the ghost scenes were staged in pantomime accompanied by suitable music. In the prologue, Lewis explains the general combination of elements which reveals the moral demanded by eighteenth-century audiences and the government censors:

> Next choosing from great Shakespeare's comic school,
> The gossip crone, gross friar, and gibing fool--
> These, with a virgin fair and lover brave,
> To our young author's care the enchantress gave;
> But charged him, ere he bless'd the brave and fair,
> To lay th' exulting villain's bosom bare,
> And by the torment's of his conscience show,
> That prosperous vice is but triumphant woe.[128]

Lewis was among the last of the Gothic writers to provide comic relief for terror. The fact, however, that in the prologue he indicates his intention to show how the conscience influences and punishes is significant. Apparently,

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[127] Ibid., p. 206.

[128] Ibid., pp. 253-54.

Lewis, along with the other Gothic writers, agreed with the medieval philosophy that conscience was an instrument of torture. As th plot unfolds, Lewis uses the standard array of Gothic devices. The setting is in Castle Conway in Wales. The castle is equipped with a haunted Cedar Room just as the original had been in the author's boyhood home. There are subteranean passages and vaults which contribute to the gloom and terror. Among the characters is a priest who knows all the intimate architectural secrets of the castle, and who is enlisted against the villain. There are lowly characters who contribute the humor and are the means of foreshadowing. Lewis's villain is particularly well-drawn. Osmond fits the author's stated formula for an ogre battered by conscience. Like Manfred, Montoni, and Ambrosio, Osmond, too, is driven by forces he is powerless to withstand. He cannot overcome the defects in his character; there is never a moment's suspicion that he may have a change of heart and mend his evil ways:

> . . . he's the very antidote to mirth: He always walks with his arms folded, his brows bent, his eyes louring on you with a gloomy scowl: He never smiles; and to laugh in his presence would be high treason. He looks at no one--speaks to no one.

This description, it will be seen, parallels that of the

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[129] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

Byronic hero.

Osmond's undoing is caused by his infatuation with his niece, Angela. She so resembles her mother (once the secret love of Osmond) that he attempts to force her into an incestuous relationship. In several impassioned scenes, the heroine resists his advances valiantly. In these scenes, Osmond is made to appear shockingly cruel and tormented. Some vestige of psychological realism appears in the villain's self-torture. His own mind becomes his enemy and, thus, becomes an aid to his opponents. This refinement becomes a regular feature in psychological novels a century later. Osmond is typical of all Gothic villains in that he fails to grasp his opportunities to rid himself of his enemies. Throughout the play, Osmond's conscience searches tirelessly for some means to justify his horrible crimes, both of fact and of intent. He convinces himself that his incestuous passion for his niece, for instance, is actually his just reward for the pleasure denied him by his unintentional murder of her mother years earlier. In his concept of villainy, Byron, it will be seen, dispenses with the softening effect of conscience. At the same time, the Gothic writers could not forego completely the habits of sentimentalism. Thus, Reginald, who has seen his wife slain, his daughter, Angela, carried away, his fief usurped, and sixteen years of his

life wasted in solitary confinement, is still of a forgiving nature. His last lines, therefore, are what one would expect of the predestined sufferer:

> Reg. . . . Let me hasten to my expiring brother, and soften with forgiveness the pangs of death![130]

Reginald's behavior is in accord with the prevailing religious attitude. According to the fatalistic doctrine, some men were predestined to suffer, undismayed, every misfortune in life and, through suffering, to reach a state of perfection which would entitle them to enter heaven. Osmond, on the other hand, represents one who is predestined to hell and, upon realization of this, makes a mockery of religion.

The last stage in the evolution of the Byronic hero is demonstrated by Maturin's Bertram. This play, unrelieved by wit or humor, relies upon action and narration for its terror rather than upon spectacular staging devices. From the very opening lines of the play, Bertram suffers agonies of remorse. Strangely enough, he actually suffers before he knows that he has any reason for doing so. In this play, too, the Byronic interpretation is anticipated in that the audience is not told the reason for Bertram's agony until

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[130]Ibid., p. 99.

later in the drama. As an archetype, Bertram is closely related to the Byronic hero--he is the same strong, silent, outlaw type who suffers for the flimsiest of reasons.

BERTRAM: OR THE CASTLE OF ST. ALDOBRAND (1816)

What was probably the zenith of Gothic horror was reached by an Irish preacher, Charles Robert Maturin, whose Bertram terrified audiences at London's Drury Lane Theatre for twenty-two consecutive nights in 1816. Stamped with the approval of Lord Byron, its success was sudden and immense.[131] Among the last of the Gothic melodramas, it is perhaps a fitting conclusion to the genre, in that the play is one long scene of horror. It has been noted that the sensationalist demands that each dose be stronger than its predecessor; hence something in the nature of Bertram was bound to appear.

Bertram, which contains some superior poetry and possesses extraordinary power, is based upon a single Gothic element--blood revenge. Nicoll has pointed out that the play, which ". . . is marked by a keen sense of word-beauty," is faulty because ". . . the excessive sentimentality and pathos introduced into every scene render all those words of minor

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[131]Charles Robert Maturin, Bertram, p. iii.

dramatic importance."[132] Like other Gothic plays, it is notably lacking in subtlety. Bertram's origins are misty and his crime is obscure. At the opening of the play, one man is miraculously washed ashore after a shipwreck. The circumstances surrounding his survival and his attitude toward his rescuers immediately mark him as the villain. He is obviously battered by life and tortured by conscience, sure indications that his role is to be villainous. As usual, the play contains a gentle old prior who attempts to reason with Bertram, even though he is aware of the enormity of his crimes. But Bertram's villainous character is not to be denied. He wants revenge; and he will sell his soul to the Devil if the price is right:

> Stran. [Bertram] I would consort with mine eternal enemy,
> To be revenged on him![133]

The incidents in the play serve to build up mental anguish and terror in Imogine, the heroine. At the same time, there is a corresponding degeneration of Bertram into a complete monster. Imogine's innocence is the essence of one of the more severe criticisms of Gothic literature. Imogine seems unable to act rationally in the face of danger to her family.

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[132]Nicoll, op. cit., p. 307.

[133]Maturin, op. cit., p. 17.

She is utterly lacking in plain common sense. Even though she has time to explain the situation to her husband, she fails to do so. She contemplates suicide instead, and constantly reproaches herself. She clings to the slender possibility that she can dissuade Bertram from his grim purpose. However, she needed only to warn her husband that Bertram and his outlaws were in the neighborhood to save the situation. Her sense of guilt after Bertram kills her husband without warning drives her insane.

This is an example of the "false writing" which brought the Gothic to an end as a genre. One observes that when tested by the theory of predestination, however, such writing is not completely false. Future novelists were to learn many lessons from the fear-provoking, suspenseful, and sensational devices of the Gothic writers. Later writers used essentially the same techniques to produce the Romantic goal--"the willing suspension of disbelief." Furthermore, one need only examine the imitative Gothic works of Lord Byron to point out how the villain became a hero, and what the Gothic period, in Byron's opinion, considered the ultimate in crime.

MANFRED (1817)

It may be that the most important contribution made

by the Gothic writers to romantic literature was the villain.[134] Through the Gothic cycle, the villain is first an object of terror, then an outcast tormented by agony and remorse, and, finally, the pensive, inscrutable hero. The Byronic hero emerges as an aristocratic, moody, self-tortured individual. At some time, this hero has suffered a great disillusionment, committed some atrocity, or adopted some devilish philosophy. For example, Harold has been condemned to aimless wandering; the Giaour, to complete seclusion from the world; Lara, to contemptuous toleration; and Manfred to the study of occult science for reasons not always clear.[135] The Byronic hero traditionally pays too great a price for his transgressions, these transgressions are always obscure, and long years intervene between the suspected deed and ultimate punishment. These characters are outcasts from society, battered unceasingly by a pathological melancholy, who move toward their destiny through wild and gloomy settings. Each of them is, in his way, a metaphysical superman, a misanthrope, and a creature more to be pitied than censured. The progenitor of this strong, silent, and restless

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134Evans, _op. cit._, p. 86.

135Varma, _op. cit._, p. 192.

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villain is most clearly seen in Mrs. Ann Radcliffe's criminal monk, Schedoni, in The Italian. This implacable monster, whose face beneath the cowl ". . . bore the traces of many passions, which seemed to have fixed the features they no longer animated," is found frequently in Byron.[136] For example, this parallel is obvious:

> Dark and unearthly is the scowl
> That glare beneath his dusky cowl;
> The flash of that dilating eye
> Reveals too much of times gone by.
>
> The Giaour

Again, the emphasis falls on facial expression as the mark of one who has struggled long against destiny:

> His features' deepening lines and varying hue
> At times attracted, yet perplex'd the view,
> As if within that murkiness of mind
> Worked feelings fearful, and yet undefined.
>
> The Corsair

Lord Byron's interest in the Gothic is attested not only by his praise of Maturin's Bertram, but in his support of Lewis. Byron's criticism of The Monk is enlightening, in that it touches the very core of the genre's failure.

> The Monk is perhaps the best in any language, not excepting the German. It only wanted one thing, as I told Lewis, to have rendered it perfect. He should have made the demon really in love with Ambrosio: this would have given it a human interest.[137]

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[136] Ellis, op. cit., p. 194.

[137] Summers, op. cit., p. 291.

It is assumed, then, that Byron profited by Lewis's error. Certainly, his characterizations carried a human appeal and an intellectual challenge not found in the traditional Gothic works. In order to contrast Byron's interpretation with that of the original Gothic school, one need only examine Manfred. In this play, one can discern the mental depression created by religious doctrine and, at the same time, point out the reasons why the Gothic villain became a hero.

Manfred is Byron's conception of the penalty exacted by God for crime.[138] The entire play is obviously built up from the stockpile of Gothic elements which had been accumulating since Walpole's first venture into the field. Furthermore, in that Manfred represents one who is continually tormented by remorse, the play represents a continuous line of Gothic development from the first of the Gothic plays, Walpole's The Mysterious Mother (1768).[139] In Manfred, the original evil results only in the accumulation of more evil. This preponderance of evil is followed by a sense of guilt which ultimately destroys the villain.[140] In the

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[138] Stopford Brooke, "Byron's Cain," Hibbert Journal, XVIII (November, 1919), p. 85-86.

[139] Bertrand Evans, "Manfred's Remorse and the Dramatic Tradition," PMLA, LXII (September, 1947) p. 754.

[140] Brooke, op. cit., p. 86.

opening lines of Manfred, Byron suggests a mystery:

> . . . Since that all-nameless hour. I have no dread,
> And feel the curse to have no natural fear. . .
> ll. 24-25.

For Manfred, sleep is but a continuance of thought which he cannot resist--the torturing conscience. The suspense lies in our uncertainty as to the reason why Manfred cannot rest, and the nature of the deed that has killed all sense of dread and fear within him. In some way, he has gained supernatural powers which he uses to summon spirits to ask of them the boon of forgetfulness. Again, the mystery--"Of what--of whom--and why?"[141] Self-oblivion is the one thing the spirits cannot grant him. Here is the single most important element leading to the sympathetic treatment of the villain--the crime is never named, merely suggested. Only fragments are given to sustain the mystery. Thus, the Byronic hero is tormented for some obscure reason, wastes his tremendous powers in remorse, and becomes an object of sympathy. Evans has pointed out three other factors which ultimately caused audiences to regard Byron's characters as deserving of sympathy. First, the nature of the Gothic plot demanded that the villain be the most forceful character on the stage. Second, the prestige enjoyed by actors

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[141]Thomas Moult, "Echoes of Byron," English Review XXXIII (July, 1921), pp. 74-76. This article suggests a possible motive for Manfred's behavior.

in the late eighteenth century caused the most capable players to seek the villain's role since it was the most important part. Third, during the period of Gothicism the stage was under a rigid censorship which demanded an obvious moral in a play. Therefore, really great actors played the parts of villains. In order to retain their prestige with the audience, these actors were forced to interpret their parts so as to win sympathy for their cause. At the same time, they were forced to endure agonies of suffering so that the moral scruples of the censors would not be outraged. In consequence, the audience began to feel sorry for the tormented villain, especially when the reason for his suffering was made obscure as in Bertram or only partially revealed as in Manfred.[142]

Manfred, as do all the Gothic novels and dramas, invites attention to the question of the origin of evil. However, the views advanced appeal solely to the emotions rather than to the intellect because of the excessive use of sensational Gothic devices. This, one may suggest, was the doctrine in which every Gothic production was rooted: That God is an Omnipotent Tyrant, and that original sin is the evil which He has inflicted upon mankind so that He

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[142]Evans, Gothic Drama from Walpole to Shelley, p. 88.

could get men into His power to torment them.[143] Gothic characterizations represent mankind as being subjected to a whimsical Infinite who damns or saves for his own glory. Villains are driven relentlessly to their own destruction. Heroes and heroines suffer outrageously but retain their faith in humanity. In this presentation of retributive justice, villainy is rewarded by misanthropy, goodness by philanthropy. One can readily see that the Gothic concept of predestination gives rise to a number of questions involving man's relationship to the Infinite. For instance, why can't man be content with what he is? Why should he pay for the sin committed in Eden? If man has free-will, why doesn't he have the strength to resist temptation? Why have temptation at all? Since man does not ask to be born, why make him suffer? Religious doctrine, placed in this perspective, produced a mental depression, and a reason for the Gothic villain. If one could not agree with this interpretation of the Divinity, he was forced to become an atheist, or to find a new theology, or to become a rebel against his own belief. Thus, Gothic villains mock God, delve into black magic, and rebel against the very foundations of Christian society. The only instrument by which man could be brought to justice, once he had

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[143]Brooke, op. cit., p. 86.

discovered he was predestined to doom, was his conscience. Thus, remorse eventually destroyed villainy after each of the Gothic writers had done his utmost to depict unsurpassable crimes. Not until Byron is the ultimate in criminality and penalty revealed. Manfred, unable to leap to his death from a precipice on the Jungfrau finally just dies, apparently from remorse. He had, at last, reached the final stage of depravity:

> . . . for I have ceased
> To justify my deeds unto myself--
> The last infirmity of Evil.
> ll. 288-90

Fairchild has suggested that Byron's melancholy was the result of his never having ". . . found the peace of transcendentalism."[144] None of the Gothic writers did, either. The Gothic and Byron's Gothic works, are bound to determinism and the Calvinistic doctrine which allows predestination and denies free-will. Man, under this interpretation, is tied to a doctrine which asserts that his body and mind are subject to laws over which he has no control.[145] Thus Gothic villains and Byronic heroes, alike, were in a quandary--they could not reconcile their ideals with their material environment. This problem was of primary concern in the

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[144] Hoxie N. Fairchild, The Romantic Quest, p. 362.

[145] Ibid., p. 330.

eighteenth century. The conflict between reason and romantic illusion has its basis in theological concept. It was the fundamental cause of the romantic melancholy which combined the mood of "Il Penseroso" with the grotesqueness of The Faerie Queene.[146] Upon Byron, the forces of theological doubt and disillusionment were extremely influential:

> Our life is a false nature--'tis not in
> The harmony of things,--this hard decree,
> This uneradicable taint of sin.
>
> Childe Harold, cxxvi

Thus, in Byron, one finds the moral cause and effect of the Gothic, both stated and mingled into the author's own personality.

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[146] Loc. cit.

APPENDIX A

PRINCIPAL SPENSERIAN IMITATIONS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Prior, Matthew, "An Ode, Humbly Inscribed to the Queen, on the Glorious Success of Her Majesty's Arms. Written in Imitation of Spenser's Style." (1706)

Warton, Thomas, "Philander, an Imitation of Spencer," (ca. 1706).

Phillips, Ambrose, "Pastorals," (1709).

Pope, Alexander, "The Alley," (date unknown).

Croxhall, Samuel, "An Original Canto of Spencer, designed as Part of his Fairy Queen, but never printed, now made public by Nestor Ironside," (1713).

Whitehead, William, "Vision of Solomon," (date unknown).

Thompson, William, "Epithalamium on the Royal Nuptials," (1736). "The Nativity," (1736). "Hymn to May," (ca. 1750).

Cambridge, Richard Owen, "Archimago," (ca. 1750).

Akenside, Mark, "The Virtuoso; in Imitation of Spenser's Style and Stanza," (1737).

West, Gilbert, "On the Abuse of Travelling; A Canto, In Imitation of Spenser," (1739). "Education, A Poem; in Two Cantos. Written in Imitation of the Style and Manner of Spenser's Fairy Queen," (1751).

Boyse, Samuel, "The Olive; an Heroic Ode; In the Stanza of Spenser," (1736-37). "Ode Sacred to the Birth of the Marquis of Pavistock," (1740). "The Vision of Patience," (ca. 1740).

Shenstone, William, "The School-Mistress," (1742).

Blacklock, Thomas, "Hymn to Divine Love; In Imitation of Spenser," (ca. 1746).

Ridley, Gloucester, "Psyche; or the Great Metamorphosis, A Poem, written in imitation of Spenser," (1747).

Upton, John, "A New Canto of Spencer's Fairy Queen. Now first published," (1747).

Bedingfield, Robert, "The Education of Achilles," (1747).

Thomson, James, "The Castle of Indolence," (1748).

Potter, R., "A Farewell Hymne to the country, Attempted in the Manner of Spenser's Epithalamion," (1749).

Mendez, Moses, "The Seasons," (1751). "Squire of Dames," (<u>ca</u>. 1760).

Lloyd, Robert, "Progress of Envy," (1751).

Warton, Thomas, (the Younger), "Morning," (1745). "Elegy on the Death of Frederic, Prince of Wales," (1751). "A Pastoral in the Manner of Spencer," (1753). "Complaint of Cherwell," (1761).

Denton, Thomas, "Immortality," (1754). "The House of Superstition," (1762).

Wilkie, William, "A Dream in the Manner of Spenser," (1759).

Mickle, William Junius, "The Concubine," (1767).

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