

# Aspects of the Gothic Romance

by Jesse Raymond Derby

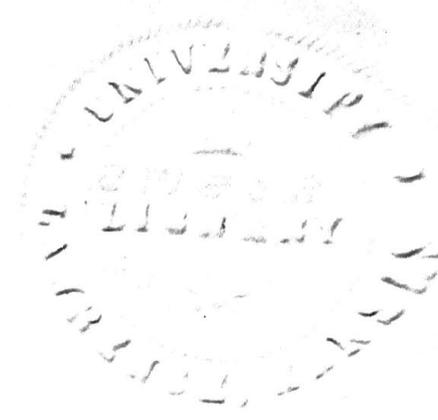
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Derby

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JESSE RAYMOND DERBY, A. B. (1911)

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## P R E F A T O R Y   N O T E

The following thesis is based upon a study of fourteen typical Gothic romances published between 1764 and 1818, together with an examination of Smollett's "Ferdinand Count Fathom", in which appear the first traces of Gothicism in the Novel. Since the total amount of obtainable criticism upon this type of fiction is almost nil, it has been necessary to depend entirely upon original investigation for the material contained herein.

J. R. D.

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## B I B L I O G R A P H Y

Tobias Smollett: "Ferdinand Count Fathom", 1753

Horace Walpole: "The Castle of Otranto", 1764

Miss Clara Reeve: "The Old English Baron", 1777

William Beckford: "Vathek", 1786

Mrs. Ann Radcliffe: "The Castles of Athlin and  
Dunbayne"

"A Sicilian Romance"

"Romance of the Forest"

"The Mysteries of Udolpho"

"The Italian"<sup>1</sup>

William Godwin: "Caleb Williams", 1794

Matthew Gregory Lewis: "The Monk", 1795

"The Bravo of Venice", 1804

Percy Bysshe Shelley: "Zastrozzi", 1810

"St. Irvyne", 1811

Mrs. Mary Shelley: "Frankenstein", 1818

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<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Radcliffe's five romances were written in  
1789-97.

PART ONE

Introductory

## I. THE TERM G O T H I C

1. ORIGIN.--Though not so varied in its application, the word Gothic, as a critical term, has probably undergone a more complicated development than has that most indefinite term, Romantic. As may readily be surmised, Gothic was originally only a racial name, being applied to an ancient Teutonic family that inhabited the region between the Elbe and the Vistula in the early part of the Christian era. Since these people were barbarous in every respect, the word Gothic soon became equivalent to rude, uncivilized, unrefined, barbarian,—in short, it took on a thoroughly derogatory meaning.

2. APPLICATION TO ART.--In the later Renaissance, its use was extended to a new style of building which was introduced into Western Europe, and which entirely broke away from the grace and beauty of the Romanesque style of architecture. Since the new type continued in disrepute with the cultured classes, Gothic retained its unfavorable architectural denotation,

so that the latter assumed a place alongside the two earlier meanings of the word. Even as late as Evelyn's time, Gothic architecture was still looked upon with disdain, as is shown by his contemptuous characterization of it as "a certain fantastical and licentious manner of building: congestions of heavy, dark, melancholy, monkish piles, without any just proportion, use, or beauty."<sup>1</sup>

Though the subsequent development of Gothic is largely a matter of surmise, it is probable that the term, as applied to architecture, had lost part of its odium by the middle of the Eighteenth Century; and that it had already begun to assume a new meaning, namely, mediaeval, or characteristic of that period (1200-1475 A. D.) in which Gothic architecture flourished. It appears, also, to have acquired by association, a connotation, if not a denotation, of gloom, since that was a striking characteristic of Gothic architecture. However, it is supposed that even in this sense of mediaeval and gloomy the term shared whatever contempt was still attached to its architectural use.

<sup>1</sup>-----  
Quoted in "Catholic Encyclopedia", article on "Gothic".

3. APPLICATION TO ROMANCE.--Such was probably the status of the word in 1764, when it was first applied to fiction. In that year Horace Walpole published his famous work, "The Castle of Otranto", which had for its subtitle "A Gothic Story", and which resulted in a new school of romance. It is interesting to observe in passing, that Gothic architecture was the indirect cause of Walpole's work, and hence furnished part of the inspiration for the first novel of the type which bears its name. Having become an ardent admirer and thorough student of Gothic architecture, Walpole had extended his study to the life of the period; and from this investigation sprang his famed "Castle of Otranto", which revels in Gothic architecture and presents a fairly clear picture of mediaeval life (including a villain), except that it introduces much of the supernatural in order to harmonize with the mediaeval superstition and thirst for the marvelous which is embodied in its characters.

While it is supposed, as already stated, that the term Gothic still had an unfavorable connotation at the time Walpole pub-

lished his romance, still it is only reasonable to infer that it was already beginning to have a better reputation, else why did he incorporate it in the sub-title of his work? At any rate, the immediate popularity of "The Castle of Otranto" did much to remove any possible odium that might still have attached to it as a critical term; and so it is safe to believe that its accepted use as such dates from Walpole's time.

This assumption is borne out by subsequent evidence. In 1777 Miss Clara Reeve published "The Old English Baron" with the same sub-title that Walpole had used, stating in the preface that she had selected this because the novel itself is "a picture of Gothic times and manners". Mrs. Radcliffe, writing more than ten years later, frequently applies the word, with no indication of contempt, to the architecture which appears in the settings of her novels, and several like instances are found in Shelley's "Zastrozzi"(1810). Subsequent usage, however, has employed it as a critical term in the sense in which Walpole and Miss Reeve used it.

4. DEFINITION OF GOTHICISM IN ROMANCE.--Since this paper deals only with aspects, or peculiarities of the Gothic Romance, it is obviously unnecessary here to trace its evolution in full. Nevertheless, for the sake of clearness, it is appropriate and relevant to undertake a definition. From the majority of Gothic romances written in England between 1764 and 1818, it appears that Gothicism in the novel consists in a dominating spirit of morbidness, with or without a greater or a lesser infusion of either sentimentalism or didacticism, or both. Morbidness is shown by the fondness for the supernatural, for the monstrous, and for the melancholy. It is highly significant that the supernatural is never employed without the monstrous and the melancholy, while the monstrous is used in some romances (e.g. Godwin's "Caleb Williams" and "Monk" Lewis's "The Bravo of Venice") without the supernatural but with the melancholy, the latter being in either case a subordinate element. Capital examples of all three combined to produce morbidness are "The Mysteries of Udolpho" and "The Italian" by Mrs. Radcliffe, "The Monk" by Lewis, and "St. Irvyne" by Percy Bysshe Shelley.

## II. EVOLUTION OF GOTHIC ROMANCE

Before the detailed examination of the peculiarities of the Gothic Romance, a brief survey of its literary forebears and its later history will be illuminating. It is probable that this type is an outgrowth of the earlier metrical romances, in which supernatural elements are found in the form of fairyland and enchantment, and in which the monstrous occasionally occurs in the guise of a villain. However, these early romances are very deficient in that deep melancholy which pervades the Gothic Romance.

Although, as stated before, "The Castle of Otranto" was the first genuine Gothic romance, it had been antedated eleven years by Smollett's "Ferdinand Count Fathom" (1753), which, though really a picaresque novel, contains several touches<sup>1</sup> of apparent supernaturalism<sup>2</sup> which in their quality equal Mrs. Radcliffe's best work. Miss Reeve's "The Old English Baron" (1777) is a distinct advance over "The Castle of Otranto", in that most of

<sup>1</sup>See, for instance, grave-visiting scene, Ch. LXIII.

<sup>2</sup>For meaning, see p.62, infra.

its supernaturalism can be explained by natural, and therefore possible, processes. "Vathek" (1786), by William Beckford, returns to the style of "The Castle of Otranto", but is so <sup>much</sup> ~~far~~ more extravagant than that tale that it is frankly a burlesque on the Gothic. His immediate successor, Mrs. Ann Radcliffe, who wrote her five romances between 1789 and 1797, fulfils Miss Reeve's ideal, for she never introduces action that she cannot later explain without resorting to the impossible. Moreover, Mrs. Radcliffe advances beyond all her predecessors in her use of the pictorial landscape, which had not yet been employed in the Gothic story, and which forms one of the distinguishing features of the entire Romantic School. William Godwin's "Caleb Williams" (1794) is Gothic only in its use of the monstrous<sup>1</sup> with a melancholy background, but has also a large proportion of didacticism,--in fact, more than is found in any other Gothic romance. In this respect it is anticipatory of the Novel of Purpose, particularly of Dickens's "Little Dorrit"<sup>2</sup>; it is

<sup>1</sup>-----  
<sup>1</sup>As shown especially in the character of Mr. Falkland, who is a human monster.

<sup>2</sup>Both of these emphasize prison conditions, as they existed in England at the time of writing.

also important as the first detective story in English literature. Matthew Gregory Lewis's "The Monk"(1795) is a direct descendant of "The Castle of Otranto": it narrates much that is impossible, resorting even to the use of magic, and, moreover, has a villain for its principal character. Lewis's second work, "The Bravo of Venice"(1804), is similar to "Caleb Williams", except that it contains very little didacticism and its hero-villain turns out to be a good man in disguise. In 1810 Percy Bysshe Shelley published his "Zastrozzi", which in its pictorial nature resembles Mrs. Radcliffe's works, while in its villainous hero it reminds one of "The Monk". Shelley's second tale, "St. Irvyne"(1811), is similar to "Zastrozzi" in its nature-element, at the same time showing the marked influence of "Caleb Williams" in its leading character. After a lapse of several years Mrs. Shelley wrote "Frankenstein"(1818), which marked the close of the Gothic Period of the Novel. This tale supplants the villain with a superhuman monster; it is permeated likewise with the customary Gothic gloom, besides containing not infrequent use of didacticism.

Though the last work of the Gothic School was published in 1818, its influence has scarcely yet waned. Irving's "Legend of Sleepy Hollow", many of Hawthorne's tales, Poe's narratives of "mystery and horror", Stevenson's "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde", and Kipling's "Phantom 'Rickshaw" are all literary descendants of the Gothic Romance, though they are far more refined in their conceptions and exhibit vastly more skill in technic. Surely such a galaxy of fiction as this justified special study of those romances that prepared the way for it.

PART TWO

Characteristics of Structure

## I. I N T R O D U C T O R Y

In the subsequent discussion of the Gothic Romance, attention will be directed to three general topics; namely, characteristics of structure, peculiarities of mood, and what is commonly called Gothic Machinery.

## II. P R O S E A N D V E R S E

The Gothic Romance has few structural characteristics not found in other novels of the same period. Each work of this type is written entirely in prose, although Mrs. Radcliffe's romances (with the exception of "The Italian") and Shelley's "St. Irvyne" contain interpolated snatches of verse which do not share in the narrative, but every one of which is thoroughly in accord with the spirit of the novel in which it occurs.

## III. C O M P A R A T I V E L E N G T H

Most of the Gothic romances, also, are comparatively short. Out of fifteen examined, nine were found to contain less than 80,000 words, which one authority<sup>1</sup> sets as the average length

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<sup>1</sup>Prof. S. L. Whitcomb.

of the modern popular novel. Of the remaining six, "Frankenstein" was estimated at 80,000 words, four others at various lengths ranging from 140,000 to 190,000, and only one, "The Mysteries of Udolpho", above 200,000, its length being slightly less than 300,000. The shortest was found to be the first, "The Castle of Otranto", which contains approximately 32,000 words; and the average for the fifteen, 90,000, or only 10,000 more than the length of the average novel of to-day. <sup>1</sup>

#### IV. DOCUMENTARY FORM

The use of documentary form was evidently a favorite device with the writers of the Gothic Romance, for we find this literary trick employed from the very beginning. Horace Walpole first published his novel as a

<sup>1</sup>The estimates were as follows:

- "The Castle of Otranto", 32,000.
- "St. Irvyne", 36,000.
- "Zastrozzi", 43,000.
- "Vathek", 43,000.
- "The Bravo of Venice", 43,000.
- "The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne", 44,000.
- "The Old English Baron", 64,000.
- "A Sicilian Romance", 72,000.
- "Romance of the Forest", 76,000.
- "Frankenstein", 80,000.
- "The Monk", 138,000.
- "Caleb Williams", 158,000.
- "Ferdinand Count Fathom", 170,000.
- "The Italian", 186,000.
- "The Mysteries of Udolpho", 300,000.

translation of a rare Italian black-letter book dated 1529, although he claimed it as his own in the preface to the second edition. "The Old English Baron" is printed as if from a manuscript, there being occasional hiatuses filled in with asterisks and italicised explanations<sup>1</sup>. Mrs. Radcliffe uses the device in three of her novels. In the introduction to "A Sicilian Romance", she asserts that she has secured the material for it from an old manuscript preserved in a Sicilian convent and from conversation with the Superior. "The Italian" contains an induction in which one of a group of characters is shown an ancient manuscript and then reads "as follows", the novel itself being appended without further ado. In the "Romance of the Forest", Mrs. Radcliffe resorts to a semi-decayed manuscript to explain a mystery. This is the only case in which she employs the device with a convincing effect. "Frankenstein" combines the epistolary and the documentary form, opening and closing with a series of letters, while the major part<sup>2</sup> is offered as a manuscript

<sup>1</sup>Nor is it divided into chapters. All references to it in this thesis are to page-numbers in subscription edition of it and "The Castle of Otranto", J. C. Nimmo & Bain, London, 1883.

<sup>2</sup>That dealing with Frankenstein's past history.

that the author of the letters had prepared from the occasional oral narrations of Frankenstein himself. In none of these cases, except in that of the "Romance of the Forest", does the device appear natural; it seems entirely uncalled for and artificial, and is by no means convincing.

#### V. R E V E R T I N G N A R R A T I V E

While the Gothic Romance seldom makes use of the intercalated narrative<sup>1</sup>, it employs the reverting narrative often. Instances of it are found in "The Old English Baron"<sup>2</sup>, "Romance of the Forest"<sup>3</sup>, "The Italian"<sup>4</sup>, "A Sicilian Romance"<sup>5</sup>, "The Mysteries of Udolpho"<sup>6</sup>, "Caleb Williams"<sup>7</sup>, "The Monk"<sup>8</sup>, and "Frankenstein"<sup>9</sup>. The commonest device for presenting this form of narrative is that of a character telling his own history or that of another or relating some legend connected with the plot. Strictly the entire major part of "Frankenstein" is a

<sup>1</sup>The intercalated narrative is one which has no connection with the plot of the novel, usually being represented as narrated by one character for the entertainment of one or more companions. See "A Provençal Tale", in "The Mysteries of Udolpho", Ch. XLIV. The reverting narrative has connection with the plot, usually being part of the history of one or more characters and being narrated by a character or the author.

<sup>2</sup>pp. 85-90. <sup>3</sup>IX-X. <sup>4</sup>XXXII. <sup>5</sup>XIV. <sup>6</sup>LVI.  
<sup>7</sup>Vol. I, Ch. II-XII. <sup>8</sup>III-IV, X, XI. <sup>9</sup>X-XV.

reverting narrative, for it is represented as a personal history told to a character appearing in a series of events almost entirely distinct. In "The Mysteries of Udolpho", we find the author in one case telling in her own language a reverting narrative supposed to have been related originally by one of the characters, and in another instance explaining from the omniscient viewpoint past action the knowledge of which is essential to the reader for the solution of a mystery. In "The Monk" is found the phenomenon of a reverting narrative within a reverting narrative. A similar instance is found in "Frankenstein" also, if we consider the major part of that tale a reverting narrative in itself.

## V I. D I A L O G I C A L F O R M

Most Gothic romances are sadly defective in dialogical form. Many of them, particularly Mrs. Radcliffe's works, consist almost entirely of non-dramatic language, or discourse that comes directly from the author without the medium of words theoretically spoken by the characters. The soliloquy<sup>1</sup> and the monologue<sup>2</sup> are

<sup>1</sup>Spoken by one character without hearers.

<sup>2</sup>Spoken by one character in the hearing of at least one other.

exceedingly rare, most of the dialogical form consisting of duologue<sup>1</sup> and group conversation<sup>2</sup>. The former is common in "The Castle of Otranto", "The Old English Baron", "Vathek", "Caleb Williams", and "The Monk". The group conversation is less common than the duologue. "The Castle of Otranto", "The Old English Baron", and "The Monk" afford the best and most frequent illustrations of this.

In all the dramatic form of the Gothic Romance, the lack of reality, vividness, and naturalness, is very conspicuous. All the characters of the same sex and rank speak alike; and in the case of those who have been educated, the reader feels that they are in reality nothing more than automatons speaking the language of the author. In the conversations, also, little or no skill is exhibited in the arrangement of the various speeches; as a rule, an almost Puritanic simplicity is observed, two characters doing most of the talking while a third occasionally interjects. Scarcely an illustration of more than three persons talking in the same novelistic scene is to be found.

<sup>1</sup>Verbal intercourse between two characters.

<sup>2</sup>Verbal intercourse among more than two characters.

## V I I. C H A R A C T E R I Z A T I O N

The lack of reality in the dialogic form weakens the characterization. In not a single Gothic romance is there a character that is drawn vividly. Every one is either impossible or else un-individual. However, this flaw should not be attributed to the inferiority of dialogue; its cause lies far deeper. Had the authors been intent upon depicting real characters, they would doubtless have made the conversations more closely resemble those in real life; but their prime interest was in the plot. The result was that they lost sight of the characters except as figures upon a stage, employed very little dialogic<sup>al</sup> form, and allowed their own personalities to overshadow any possible individuality in the characters. Consequently, the latter are only types, and are insipid, to say the least. The virtuous, as well as the villainous, are ideal; their equals do not exist outside Heaven or the Satanic abode,--while the intermediate characters are too limp to stand except when propped by the author's accommodating penholder.

Another peculiarity of characterization in the Gothic Romance is the exceedingly circumscribed social range. Nearly all the figures appearing upon its stage belong to the wealthier classes; and the leading action in the plot is almost invariably assigned to them. An examination of fifteen representative Gothic novels shows scarcely a half-dozen peasants engaging in the action, and then in minor parts; and these illustrations are found in the works of only two authors, Miss Reeve and Mrs. Radcliffe. Servants are seldom recognized by the Gothicists except in "The Castle of Otranto", "The Old English Baron", "Romance of the Forest", "The Mysteries of Udolpho", "The Italian", and "The Monk". In each of the latter five, one servant is made to accompany one of the leading characters and to do him valuable service occasionally. Mrs. Radcliffe, Godwin, and Lewis<sup>1</sup> introduce banditti and bravos upon the scene, apparently for variety rather than for effect upon the plot. With these exceptions, the lower classes are practically ignored by the Gothic Romance. Hence it is seen that this type of novel does not exhibit either an accurate or

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<sup>1</sup>In "The Bravo of Venice".

a comprehensive picture of life, as far as its depiction of human beings is involved; and it will be observed later that its mediaevalism is often so distorted with supernaturalism as to ruin the effect of good characterization, even were the latter present.

PART THREE

P e c u l i a r i t i e s o f M o o d

## I. I N T R O D U C T O R Y

The Gothic Romance is distinctly characterized by certain moods which can escape the observation of no reader. The essentially Gothic mood is the spirit of morbidness which, in one or more of its various forms, pervades every novel of this type. Others are didacticism and sentimentalism, which are found in many, though not all, of the Gothic romances, and which resulted from influence of other novel-types.

### II. D I D A C T I C I S M

Of these two less important moods, didacticism is the less conspicuous. It is found only at great intervals, except in "Caleb Williams", where it is identical with the purpose of the book, and where it is carried to a greater extent than elsewhere in Gothic fiction.

1. PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS.--Though didacticism, as stated before, is an infusion rather than a prime trait, yet it is an element distinct enough to permit examination. It appears in three forms,--psychological analysis, im-

plied instruction, and direct instruction. "The Castle of Otranto" and "The Monk" contain a few instances of it, while Mrs. Radcliffe's romances and Shelley's two novels afford more frequent illustration. In "Caleb Williams" and "Frankenstein", the use of the "autobiographical first person" makes frequent use of psychological analysis possible but at the same time less conspicuous and more natural than it would be if seemingly presented from the author's own standpoint. The commonest form that this peculiarity takes in the Gothic Romance is the analysis of a character's state of mind, as is exemplified by this passage from "St. Irvyne"<sup>1</sup>:

"This idea banished every other feeling from his heart; and, smothering the stings of conscience, a decided resolve of murder took possession of him—the determining, within himself, to destroy the very man who had given him an asylum, when driven to madness by the horrors of neglect and poverty.....He longed again to try his fortune; he longed to re-enter that world which he had never tried but once, and that indeed for a short time; sufficiently long, however, to blast his blooming hopes, and to graft on the stock, which otherwise might have produced virtue, the fatal seeds of vice."

2. IMPLIED INSTRUCTION.--Again, a distinct lesson is implied in the action of most Gothic

<sup>1</sup>Ch. I. <sup>2</sup>Sic.

tales. This is usually found in the ultimate triumph of the virtuous characters over the forces of evil. In "Ferdinand Count Fathom" and in each of Mrs. Radcliffe's romances, the good is represented by the heroine and her favored lover, who are at last united after long separation and after undergoing various trials at the hands of villainous enemies. In "The Old English Baron" the hero succeeds in spite of the plots and machinations of intriguing opponents, at last winning a fair maid and rising to prosperity and rank.

3. DIRECT INSTRUCTION.--In some of the romances, however, the authors fear to trust the reader to see the point of the action, and, accordingly, show the moral at the end. Mrs. Radcliffe employs this means in all her works of fiction, as do also Miss Reeve in "The Old English Baron" and Shelley in "Zastrozzi" and "St. Irvyne". The following sentences from "A Sicilian Romance"<sup>1</sup> are typical:

"In reviewing this story, we perceive a singular and striking instance of moral retribution. We learn, also, that those who do only THAT WHICH IS RIGHT, endure nothing in misfortune but a trial of their virtue, and from trials well endured, derive the surest claim to the protection of Heaven."

"The Monk" departs from the customary in trying, at the conclusion, to justify a character whose conduct has not been entirely blameless. Like "Zastrozzi" and "Frankenstein", it contains also a few scattered moral statements which verge upon the epigrammatic. The following from "Frankenstein"<sup>1</sup> well illustrates this peculiarity: "Life is obstinate, and clings closest where it is most hated".

Direct instruction is offered also through the medium of learned discourse of a character<sup>2</sup>, or through the author's own observations. The latter process is used extensively in "Caleb Williams", which, as already stated<sup>3</sup>, contains more didacticism than any other Gothic romance, and in which Godwin, using Caleb as a speaking puppet, describes "things as they are"<sup>4</sup>, in England. A clear example of an author's expressing his ideas through a character occurs in "Frankenstein"<sup>5</sup>:

"Nothing is more painful to the human mind, than, after the feelings have been worked up by a quick succession of events, the dead calmness of inaction and certainty which follows, and deprives the soul both of hope and fear."

1XXII. <sup>2</sup>Discourse on astronomy, "Romance of the Forest", XVIII. <sup>3</sup>See p. 7 supra. <sup>4</sup>Sub-title of "Caleb Williams". <sup>5</sup>VIII.

## I I I. S E N T I M E N T A L I S M

Like didacticism, sentimentalism in the Gothic Romance resulted from exterior influence, not from a typically Gothic conception such as may be logically assigned as the cause of the morbid spirit and tone. In short, the sentimentalism in the Gothic novel is practically the same as that in the novel of sentiment, although it is not so exaggerated in the former as in the latter. Yet Miss Reeve occasionally vies with Frances Burney and Sterne in her abandonment to the God of Exaggerated Emotion<sup>1</sup>, and is closely followed by Mrs. Radcliffe.

1. RHAPSODY OVER NATURE.--A noticeable method of sentimentalizing was introduced by Mrs. Radcliffe in her rhapsodical descriptions of nature. Though she has a remarkable power of visualizing wild and beautiful, as well as impressive, scenery, nevertheless sentimentality is implied in the manner and frequency of such descriptive passages. "Zastrozzi" and "Frankenstein" sometimes imitate Mrs. Radcliffe's works in this respect, but the latter without challenge remain superlative in the field.

<sup>1</sup>See quotation on p. 26 infra.

A characteristic passage is the following from

"The Mysteries of Udolpho"<sup>1</sup>:

"As they advanced, the valley opened; its savage features gradually softened, and, towards evening, they were among heathy mountains, stretched in far perspective, along which the solitary sheep-bell was heard, and the voice of the shepherd calling his wandering flocks to the nightly fold. His cabin, partly shadowed by the cork-tree and ilex,.....was all the human habitation that yet appeared. Along the bottom of this valley the most vivid verdure was spread; and in the little hollow recesses of the mountains, under the shade of the oak and chesnut, herds of cattle were grazing. Groups of them, too, were often seen reposing on the banks of the rivulet, or laving their sides in the cool stream, and sipping its wave."

2. FRIENDSHIP AND LOVE.--Again, sentimentalism is displayed in gratitude, affection, and love in the respective natures of certain characters. Thus, in "The Old English Baron"<sup>2</sup>, we find the former two emotions illustrated in this wise:

"The Baron and Sir Philip entered the hall hand in hand; Edmund threw himself at their feet, and embraced their knees, but could not utter a word. They raised him between them, and strove to encourage him, but he threw himself into the arms of Sir Philip Harclay, deprived of strength, and almost of life. They supported him to a seat, where he recovered by degrees, but had no power to speak his feelings; he looked up to his benefactors in the most affecting manner; he laid his hand upon his bosom, but was still silent."

<sup>1</sup> III. <sup>2</sup> p. 199.

It is needless to point out the similarity between this passage and that in Mackenzie's "Man of Feeling" in which Harley dies from the shock when a Scotch maid acknowledges her love for him. However, it should be observed that Miss Reeve, who really intended to be sane in her novel-writing, is here in her sentimentalism as much milder than the bona fide sentimentalists, as she is more reasonable than Walpole in her Gothic machinery in other parts of her book.

Love, whether between kin or sweethearts, ever appeals to the sentimental side of the Gothicism. The reciprocal affection of Emily and her father in "The Mysteries of Udolpho", and the courtships in "The Castle of Otranto", "The Old English Baron", "The Monk", and "St. Irvyne" are treated alike with sickening effect. It is significant that even in the first Gothic romance we find a passage as strongly sentimental as the following<sup>1</sup>:

"Theodore flung himself at her feet, and seizing her lily hand, which with struggles she suffered him to kiss, he vowed on the earliest opportunity to get himself knighted, and fervently en-

<sup>1</sup>"The Castle of Otranto", Ch. III.

treated her permission to swear himself eternally her knight. Ere the princess could reply, a clap of thunder was suddenly heard, that shook the battlements. Theodore, regardless of the tempest, would have urged his suit; but the princess, dismayed, retreated hastily into the castle, and commanded the youth to begone, with an air that would not be disobeyed. He sighed and retired, but with eyes fixed on the gate, until Matilda closing it, put an end to an interview, in which the hearts of both had drunk so deeply of a passion, which both now tasted for the first time."

3. IDEALITY OF VIRTUOUS CHARACTERS.--In connection with the sentimentality of affection and love, ideality of the virtuous character is thoroughly emphasized. As observed in the discussion of characterization<sup>1</sup>, the result is a deplorable insipidity and lack of vividness.

4. GLOOM.--Finally, sentimentality crops out again in certain aspects of the gloomy spirit<sup>2</sup> of the Gothic Romance. The grave-visiting scenes in "Ferdinand Count Fathom" and "The Mysteries of Udolpho",--scenes which are doubtless reflections from the grave-visiting mania of the Eighteenth Century,--and the continual melancholy<sup>3</sup>, are both indications of the sadder phase of this tear-loosing phenomenon. The grief of the heroine and the hero

<sup>1</sup>See p. 17, supra.   <sup>2</sup>See p.30ff, infra.

<sup>3</sup>See p.30, infra.

over their separation, and the mourning over deceased relatives, also are methods commonly used to produce this effect, the former being a favorite device of Mrs. Radcliffe while the latter occurs in "The Castle of Otranto", "The Mysteries of Udolpho", "The Monk", and "Frankenstein".

#### I V. M O R B I D N E S S

Having thus briefly disposed of these infused elements of extraneous origin, let us now examine that quality which alone is essentially characteristic of the Gothic mood,--namely, morbidness<sup>1</sup>. As the term is here employed, it has a very wide range of meaning, including fondness for the supernatural, for the melancholy, and for the monstrous.

1. SUPERNATURALISM.--Supernaturalism is the most important of these subdivisions, but, on account of the complicated machinery involved therein, a full analysis is reserved till later.<sup>2</sup> However, it should be noted that a craving after the supernatural as represented in phenomena that suggest it, as well as in the narration of previously unimagined and eternally impossible marvels which curdle the blood and raise

<sup>1</sup> See p. 5, supra. <sup>2</sup>p. 51ff; infra.

the hair of the sacrificing Gothicism who wishes to be given a thrill,--to repeat, it should be clearly observed that such a craving is absolutely abnormal and unquestionably indicative of a morbid mental state in the author and his public.

2. MELANCHOLY.--The pervading melancholy of the Gothic Romance probably stands next to the supernatural element in importance. It has almost a death-grip on humor, so that even hints of that amiable quality of style must, as a rule, be searched for. The scarcity of it justifies mention of each instance.

a. Rarity of Humor.--Peculiarly enough, it is in "The Castle of Otranto" that we find the first suggestion of humor as well as the first illustration of sentimentalism in the Gothic Romance. In this novel it is possible to detect a humorous intent in the fright of the ignorant servants over the absurd phenomena which Walpole lugs in. However, the reader, we dare say, feels more inclined to smile at Walpole than at his simple puppets. Peter, the gullible servant who discloses the whereabouts of LaMotte in the "Romance of the Forest", is

depicted with greater skill,--and hence vividness,--than perhaps any other character in all of Ann Radcliffe's works; and consequently the humorous side of his gullibility is at least made apparent. However, Mrs. Radcliffe lapses into the ordinary in "The Mysteries of Udolpho" in portraying Emily's servant Annette, who tries to convince her mistress of a superstition by repeatedly pointing out to her the very place where the supposed mysterious event occurred. Fairly successful humor is found again in "The Monk", where a hag falls in love with a handsome young nobleman and for a time imagines that her affection is actually returned.

By far the best humor in Gothic fiction lies in the burlesque of "Vathek" and "The Bravo of Venice". The former is fairly bristling with burlesque, nearly all of which may at least provoke a smile, while much of it is really funny. The choicest bit from this fabula splendida et mirabilis is the celebrated kicking-episode<sup>1</sup> in which Vathek kicks the hideous Giaour<sup>2</sup> down the palace steps, whereupon all his subjects, except the grand viziers them-

<sup>1</sup>Pp. 36-9. Since "Vathek" is not divided into chapters, all references to it in this thesis will be by page-number to edition of it and "Raselas", J. C. Nimmo & Bain, London, 1883.  
<sup>2</sup>Name applied by Beckford to a hideous deformed human being from India, whom he represents as having monstrous attributes and impossible powers. Cf. p. 43, *infra*.

selves, become bewitched, and kick him about the streets and far into the plain. Having rolled himself into a ball, the Giaour makes rapid progress till he comes to an abyss, into which he promptly falls and from the depths of which he subsequently demands the blood of fifty sons-of-viziers to quench his thirst.

Other examples of humor in "Vathek" are the hideous camel Alboufaki, who suddenly stops and stamps his foot upon approaching a cemetery; and the one-eyed negresses of Carathis who are so abnormally fond of putrid odors that the pleasant smell of a luxurious banquet causes them to be attacked with the colic.

In short, "Vathek" fairly bristles with such instances; and, indeed, since it is a burlesque upon both the Eastern tale (such as the type included in "Arabian Nights") and the Gothic Romance, the whole work may be considered humorous in purpose.

The only similar illustrations outside of "Vathek" are in "The Bravo of Venice". Here the grotesquely hideous appearance of Abellino<sup>1</sup> and his easy conquest of the bravos<sup>2</sup>,

<sup>1</sup>III. <sup>2</sup>Ibid.

whom he knocks about like toys, are truly humorous in the exaggeration, if in nothing else.

Except in the instances cited, the Gothic Romance is devoid of humor; indeed, it is scarcely an exaggeration to assert that melancholy pervades every novel of this type except "Vathek", and that it occasionally creeps into this. Therefore, it is obviously important to make a thorough study of those devices which produce this melancholy atmosphere or mood.

b. Foreboding. One of the most noticeable of these is the foreboding of evil, the technic of which will be discussed later.<sup>1</sup> At this point and in this connection, it is relevant only to observe that this foreboding is indicative of a generally pessimistic attitude.

c. Nature. The Gothic portrayal of nature likewise contributes its share toward the dismal spirit. Its somber and gloomily majestic elements, such as the deep forest, darkness, the storm, an earthquake; the ivy;

<sup>1</sup> P. 47ff, infra.

and bats, owls, rooks, vultures,--these are what the Gothicism delights to look upon in nature<sup>1</sup>.

d. Art<sup>2</sup> In art he sees that which suggests antiquity and decay. The buildings which best suit his fancy are "ancient fabrics" of Gothic type, preferably in ruins. An old castle, church, or monastery looming up in the moonlight; a ray of this silvery sheen through a Gothic window of stained glass; the prison, the dungeon, the subterranean passage,--it is in these that his hypochondriac soul revels. He hangs the haunted apartment with musty arras, and may conceal ancient armor in a hidden closet. This excerpt from "The Old English Baron"<sup>3</sup> almost perfectly illustrates the gloomy Gothic interior:

"He then took a survey of his chamber; the furniture, by long neglect, was decayed and dropping to pieces; the bed was devoured by the moths, and occupied by the rats, who had built their nests there with impunity for many generations. The bedding was very damp, for the rain had forced its way through the ceiling."

e. Sounds. The Gothicism delights also in pensive, sad, or solemn sensations produced by distant sounds. Thus he lingers over

<sup>1</sup>Cf. p.59ff., infra. <sup>2</sup>Cf. p.56ff., infra.

<sup>3</sup>p. 63.

the tolling of a distant bell at midnight, or the errant strains of the requiem borne "on the midnight air"<sup>1</sup>.

f. Unfortunate Situation.--Perhaps the commonest, though not the most effective, device for producing melancholy is to thrust the virtuous characters into unfortunate situations from which they may or may not be rescued before the conclusion, the depth of the melancholy varying between these two solutions of plot. The unfortunate situation is apparent in every Gothic romance from "The Castle of Otranto" to "Frankenstein", in which the authors do not fail to sacrifice to the God of Gloom the characters with whom the reader's sympathies rest. In "The Castle of Otranto", Hippolita, Theodore, Matilda, Isabella are victimized; in "The Mysteries of Udolpho", Emily and Valancourt pay the heaviest penalty for their goodness; in "Frankenstein", the immediate relatives of the monster's creator innocently suffer. The afflicted are allowed to triumph in "The Castle of Otranto" and "The Mysteries of Udolpho"; in "The Monk" and "Frank-

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<sup>1</sup> See p.54ff, infra.

enstein" they are not rendered poetic justice.

g. Catholicism.--As depicted by the Gothacist, Catholicism contributes materially to the melancholy atmosphere. The various ceremonies of the church, including midnight prayers, the administering of extreme unction, and the singing of the requiem, afford their quota of gloom. In "The Monk" we are shown a nun being compelled to take the veil. The monastery is ever portrayed as a dismal place, particularly in "The Italian" and "The Monk", where also the Inquisition and its horrors are pictured with gloomy effect.

h. Sickness and Disease.--As might readily be surmised, sickness and disease find their places in the Gothic Romance. The reader is shown LaLuc as he lies ill in the "Romance of the Forest"; St. Aubert during his declining days, in "The Mysteries of Udolpho"; Agnes, the erring nun in "The Monk", emaciated from confinement in the dark vaults. Insanity, too, is not ignored by the ingenuity of the Gothacist, who shows us a mad nun in "The Mysteries of Udolpho", the apparent mental aberration of Falkland in "Caleb Williams", Verezzi's raving

in "Zastrozzi", and Frankenstein's apparent approach to insanity, as well as his long illness brought on by mental torture.

i. Death and Burial.--Consistently, too, the Gothic Romance from "The Castle of Otranto" to "Frankenstein" employs death for purposes of melancholy. The natural death is seldom used, for how can it compare in Gothic qualities with the violent end, as by murder<sup>1</sup> or suicide? The burial service also is pictured in "The Mysteries of Udolpho", "The Italian", and "St. Irvyne".

3. THE MONSTROUS.--Almost as characteristic as the melancholy spirit is the predilection for the monstrous which is evident throughout the Gothic Romance. Like the melancholy, this is shown by various agencies, the least important of which will now be discussed.

a. Bizarre, Grotesque, Burlesque.--Like sentimentalism and intended humor, the Gothic fondness for the bizarre, the grotesque, the burlesque is first illustrated in "The Castle of Otranto" in the gigantic helmet, the immense sword, and the giant Alfonso. Beckford's Gi-

<sup>1</sup> See p. 42, infra.

acour,--"a man so hideous that the very guards who arrested him were forced to shut their eyes as they led him along"; and the kicking-episode, the negresses, and the camel Alboufaki, which have been previously referred to<sup>1</sup>,--all these are capital instances of the bizarre. Another illuminating example is Carathis's statement that "there is nothing so delicious in his [the Giaour's] estimation as the heart of a delicate boy, palpitating with the first tumults of love."<sup>2</sup> A far more grotesque conception,--in fact, at once ludicrously and disgustingly grotesque,--occurs in this passage from "Vathek"<sup>3</sup>:

"Vathek was.....with Nouronihar [a concubine] in the bath, hearing tales, and laughing at Bababalouk, who related them; but no sooner did the outcry of his guards reach him, than he flounced from the water like a carp, and as soon threw himself back at the sight of Carathis, who, advancing with her negresses upon Alboufaki, broke through the muslin awnings and veils of the pavilion".

There is a strongly burlesque-grotesque coloring in the hideous features of Abellino in "The Bravo of Venice", as well as in the account of the bravos' weapons and poisons<sup>4</sup>. The abnormality of the villains in "Zastrozzi" and "St. Irvyne" suggests the bizarre, as does also the monster created by Frankenstein.

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 31-2, supra. <sup>2</sup> p. 123. <sup>3</sup> p. 121, ibid.

<sup>4</sup> IV.

The Gothicists sometimes distort or otherwise exaggerate nature to produce similar effects. Thus in "The Monk"<sup>1</sup>, Agnes, the nun who has been confined in the vaults below St. Clare's convent, describes a few of her sufferings:

"My slumbers were constantly interrupted by some obnoxious insect crawling over me. Sometimes I felt the bloated toad, hideous and pampered with the poisonous vapours of the dungeon, dragging his loathsome length along my bosom: sometimes the quick and cold lizard roused me, leaving his slimy track upon my face, and entangling itself<sup>2</sup> in the tresses of my wild and matted hair. Often have I at waking found my fingers ringed with the long worms which bred in the corrupted flesh of my infant. At such times, I shrieked with terror and disgust; and while I shook off the reptile, trembled with all a woman's weakness."

In "St. Irvyne"<sup>3</sup>, Shelley likewise distorts a storm to produce the same grotesque and bizarre effect:

"Red thunder-clouds, borne on the wings of the midnight whirlwind, floated, at fits, athwart the crimson-coloured orbit of the moon."

b. Decayed Bodies.--The Gothic fondness for the monstrous, the hideous, is again indicated in the frequent mention of corpses, especially those in a putrid state. In "The Old English Baron", for instance, we are told

1XI. <sup>2</sup>Sic. <sup>3</sup>I.

of a body that was tied "neck and heels", put into a chest, and buried beneath a closet floor. In "The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne", Alieyn grasps the hand of a corpse in a dark subterranean passage. Several characters in "A Sicilian Romance" are imprisoned in a vault strewn with bodies of banditti<sup>a</sup> victims. "The Italian" pictures a corpse laid out on a bier. In "The Monk"<sup>1</sup>the nun Agnes tells of an experience in the vaults:

"As I raised myself,.....my hand rested upon something soft: I grasped it, and advanced towards the light. Almighty God! what was my disgust--my consternation! In spite of its putridity, and the worms which preyed upon it, I perceived a human head, and recognized the features of a nun who had died some months before".

The following excerpt from "St. Irvyne"<sup>2</sup> presents almost as horrid a picture:

"He paced the vaults in eager desire for the arrival of midnight. How inexpressible was his horror when he fell on a body which appeared motionless and without life! He raised it in his arms, and, taking it to the light, beheld, pallid in death, the features of Megalena. The laugh of anguish which had convulsed her expiring frame, still played around her mouth, as a smile of horror and despair; her hair was loose and wild, seemingly gathered in knots by the convulsive grasp of dissolution."

c. Human Monster: Criminality.--Another clear indication of the Gothic love for

<sup>1</sup>XI. <sup>2</sup>Conclusion.

the monstrous, is its introduction of the human monster and his criminality,--a device which, by the way, is the connecting link between the picaresque novel and the Gothic Romance, but which in the latter has been modified by Gothic influence. Some of these romances, such as "Vathek" and "Caleb Williams", employ the human villain as one of the main Gothic elements. This stream runs through "The Monk", in which Ambrosio through pride and hypocrisy falls from a respected monastic position to the plane of ravisher and murderer. Manfred in "The Castle of Otranto"; Vathek, the caliph in the tale which bears his name; the Marquis of Mazzini in "A Sicilian Romance"; LaMotte and the Marquis in the "Romance of the Forest"; Montoni in "The Mysteries of Udolpho"; Schedoni in "The Italian"; Falkland and Gines in "Caleb Williams"; and Ginotti in "St. Irvyne",--these and numerous minor characters make up the villainous element in the Gothic Romance.

The human monsters are represented as not stopping at any crime. In "The Monk" sexual outrages are a part of the criminal record, but the voluptuousness is so horrible as to repel even the weakest willed; while in

"Vathek" the voluptuous strain appears disgusting, being characterized by frivolity rather than horror.

However, murder is the most common Gothic crime. An example is found in "The Castle of Otranto", where Manfred stabs to death his own daughter by mistake. The reader witnesses a wholesale slaughter in the Banquet-hall in "The Mysteries of Udolpho". In "The Monk" are illustrations of murder by strangulation, by mob-violence, and by stabbing. Suicide is incorporated into the action of both "Zastrozzi" and "St. Irvyne".

The following horrific passage from "The Italian"<sup>1</sup> shows the psychologic effect of a revengeful spirit culminating in success, as well as the terrors of death by poisoning:

"But.....the features [of Schedoni] suddenly became agitated; in the next instant his whole frame was convulsed, and heavy groans laboured from his breast.....Schedoni's struggles now began to abate, and in a short time he lay motionless. When he unclosed his eyes, death was in them. He was yet nearly insensible.....[He revives and looks upon Nicola] .....His eyes, as they settled on Nicola, seemed to recollect all their wonted fire, and the malignant triumph, lately so prevalent in his physiognomy,

<sup>1</sup>XXXII. Schedoni has just poisoned himself and his inveterate enemy, Nicola.

again appeared, as in the next moment he pointed to him. His glance seemed suddenly impowered with the destructive fascination attributed to that of the basilisk; while it now met Nicola's, that monk seemed as if transfixed to the spot, and unable to withdraw his eyes from the glare of Schedoni's; in their expression he read the dreadful sentence of his fate, the triumph of revenge and cunning..... [Overcome, Nicola sinks into waiting arms..... At the instant of his fall, Schedoni uttered a sound so strange and horrible, so convulsed, yet so loud, so exulting, yet so unlike any human voice, that every person in the chamber, except those who were assisting Nicola, struck with irresistible terror, endeavored to make their way out of it."

d. The impossible monster is rarely introduced, though such an element makes for the monstrous wherever employed. The Giacur and Alboufaki, the absurd creatures of Beckford's imagination, have already been described.<sup>1</sup> The monster created by Frankenstein belongs in the same class.

e. Inquisition.--"The Italian", "The Monk", and "Zastrozzi" picture the terrors of the Inquisition, in order to increase the total of the monstrous. The description of the grimly suggestive chambers, the awful tribunal, the groans of the tortured, and the instruments of torture are in the main employed.<sup>2</sup>

From the foregoing detailed study of

<sup>1</sup> See p. 32 supra.  
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"The Monk", XII.

<sup>2</sup> See "The Italian", XXVI; "The

the melancholy and the monstrous elements in the Gothic Romance, it is apparent that morbidity is the dominating part of the Gothic mood. Surely it was an abnormal age that could enjoy the contemplation of such gloomy and shocking conceptions as these!

PART FOUR

Gothic Machinery

## I. I N T R O D U C T O R Y

The Gothicism's great fondness for the supernatural is, by all odds, the most distinct and most essential element in the Gothic morbidity. Though his delight in portraying and dwelling upon the monstrous, and though his habitual moping over melancholy events and situations, are truly characteristic of his spirit and mental attitude, yet both of these are excelled in frequency of occurrence and elaborateness of support, by his love for what chills the blood,--the supernatural. That which he introduces into the action of his novel to satisfy this fondness,--his ghosts, his terrifying sounds, his mysterious veiled figures,--that, together with the suspense and the foreshadowing that he employs, makes up the Gothic Machinery.

## I I. S U S P E N S E

Though the use of suspense did not originate with the Gothic Romance, yet it is more or less characteristic of that type. Generally it consists either in a mystery which remains unsolved for a greater or a shorter peri-

od, or in a hazardous situation the outcome of which is shown to be uncertain. Thus, in "The Old English Baron", the mystery of Edmund's origin remains unsolved during the greater part of the novel; and in "The Mysteries of Udolpho" the nature of the figure that appears on the ramparts at night and produces "mystic music on the silent air", is shown, after many chapters, to be nothing more terrifying than the hero; and numerous other instances of sustained suspense could be cited. Likewise, there are many cases of brief suspense, as in "The Castle of Otranto" when Isabella for an instant mistakes Theodore for an apparition of her sweetheart, Conrad; and in "The Monk" when it appears for a moment that Antonia may be rescued from Ambrosio's murderous clutches. On the whole, suspense is not used so extensively in "Vathek", "The Monk", and "Frankenstein" as in the other Gothic romances, especially "The Old English Baron", "The Mysteries of Udolpho", "The Italian", and "The Bravo of Venice".

### I I I. F O R E S H A D O W I N G

Closely connected with the use of suspense is that of foreshadowing, which obviously has a fundamental value in promoting

the former. Although there are almost innumerable methods of foreshadowing, yet these may be classified roughly under four divisions.

1. FEAR OF IMPENDING EVIL.--The first of these is the fear of impending evil, which many of the characters are represented as experiencing, and which the author endeavors to instil into the reader. This device is frequent in "The Castle of Otranto" and the romances of Mrs. Radcliffe, but is really the least common, with the possible exception of the omen.

2. OMEN.--This method of foreshadowing is very simple, for it involves only the introduction of portents and the like. The earliest instance is in "The Castle of Otranto", where the plumes of the gigantic helmet are said to wave ominously at a certain crucial moment. In "The Old English Baron", the gates and doors of the castle open miraculously when Edmund, the real heir, returns. Beckford inserts a magic revelation and a portent in the sky for foreshadowing in his "Vathek". Mrs. Radcliffe causes the lightning to descend upon the spear-points of the guards as the latter tread the ramparts of Udolpho and while the unknown hero

stalks abroad in the guise of a ghost. All of these omens, except the first named, seem impossible, but yet have a limited foreboding effect upon the reader.

3. PROPHECY.--Similar to the omen is the prophetic inscription or utterance. An instance of the former is the verse on the great sword mentioned in "The Castle of Otranto", which predicts the evils that subsequently befall. The warnings of the veiled monk in "The Italian" have the same effect, as does also the monster's threat to Frankenstein, "I will be with you on your wedding night". The best illustration of all is that in "The Monk" in which Elvira's ghost appears to Antonia and predicts her death at a certain hour.

4. SUPERSTITION.--Still another means of foreshadowing is the popular superstition or report of mysterious events in the past which suggests a recurrence of these same happenings. Capital examples occur in "The Old English Baron", in a serving-man's account of a superstition about the haunted east apartment; as well as in the servant-girl's ignorant belief in tales about the castle in "The Mysteries of Udolpho".

5. DREAM, IMAGINATION.--Evil, especially that of a supernatural kind, is often hinted at or foretold by a dream or an hallucination of a character. In Mrs. Radcliffe's romances it is common for a character already fearful to imagine that he sees a dim figure or hears a mysterious sound. This device is obviously too artificial to be convincing, and consequently did not gain popularity with Mrs. Radcliffe's successors. The dream finds favor with a wider range of authors, being used by Miss. Reeve, Godwin, Lewis, and Shelley, as well as by Mrs. Radcliffe. The most striking dreams occur in "The Old English Baron", in which a great part of the subsequent action of the novel is foreshadowed,--almost prophesied,--in two dreams.

6. MISCELLANEOUS DEVICES.--In addition to the several methods just treated, there are a great number of special devices which baffle logical classification, but a knowledge of which is essential to a thorough understanding of the Goth-icist's technic. Therefore, a few miscellaneous examples are cited. In "The Castle of O-tranto", some connection between the gigantic helmet and Alphonso is suggested by the similarity between the former and the helmet on the

statue of Alfonso; and again the resemblance of the young Theodore to Alfonso's picture hints at his identity. In "The Italian" Mrs. Radcliffe on one occasion introduces a storm immediately before a marriage ceremony. Lewis leads the reader to expect some kind of relationship between Ambrosio and Antonia, by pointing out in the earlier part of "The Monk", the attraction which he has for the maiden. The murderous guilt of Falkland is suggested repeatedly in "Caleb Williams" by the emphasis laid upon Caleb's suspicions.

Finally, let it be observed that the Gothicists were on the whole very amateurish, not to say crude, in their manipulation of foreshadowing. They seemed not to realize that a mild hint here and there would have prepared one sufficiently, without the use of improbable and unnatural contrivances, like the omen and the dream.

#### IV. USE OF SUPERNATURALISM

Employment of supernaturalism is the supreme characteristic of the Gothic Romance; for, while it does not occur in several novels of this type, yet it is the main element in the

earlier specimens and in the most important of the subsequent works. Fondness for the melancholy and for the monstrous, it has already been implied<sup>1</sup>, are by far the most extensively used; but the supernatural machinery in every novel in which all three elements are found, invariably receives the principal stress, as instanced by "The Castle of Otranto", "The Old English Baron", "The Mysteries of Udolpho", "The Monk", "St. Irvyne", and "Frankenstein", in all of which the chief interest is plainly in the marvelous. In fact, it was a love for this as a part of mediaeval belief<sup>2</sup> that in large measure inspired the first Gothic Romance; a few subsequent writers<sup>3</sup> endeavored to appeal to man's interest in the unusual, the supernatural, but at the same time not to offend against reason, the while introducing, as had Walpole at the start, elements of melancholy and the monstrous as minor touches. Subsequently the supernatural was practically ignored in several novels<sup>4</sup>, but it was retained in the majority and ever emphasized above its kindred, or companion, elements.

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<sup>1</sup> P. 5, supra. <sup>2</sup> Cf. p. 3, supra. <sup>3</sup> Especially Miss Reeve and Mrs. Radcliffe. <sup>4</sup> E. g. "Caleb Williams".

The term supernaturalism, as here used, denotes not only that which is genuinely miraculous, but also that which is only apparently so and that which is only suggestive. Though, to be sure, this appears, on first thought, to be an unwarranted extension of meaning, yet, as a matter of fact, it includes only that which in the popular psychology is conceived of as ~~supernatural~~; for in the effect upon one who would be frightened (such as the Gothicism and his patrons), a human being realistically disguised as a ghost is as good as a genuine apparition. Moreover, in life there is nothing that is in reality supernatural; and yet we commonly apply the term to that which is apparently so.

1. SUGGESTED SUPERNATURALISM.--By far the greater share of the supernatural element in the Gothic Romance is only suggested. An elaborate system of devices is employed for this purpose, one of them being the mystery.

a. The Mystery.--Of this, two forms are found, the explained and the unexplained. To the former class belongs the mystery of the haunted wing of the castle in "A Sicilian Romance", which is cleared up, at last, by show-

ing that the rooms have been occupied by the real mistress of the castle. Again, the identity of Abellino and Flodoardo in "The Bravo of Venice" is accounted for by showing that "they" are the same character, one skilled in disguises. In "The Mysteries of Udolpho", Emily's horror at the veiled picture is explained in the closing part of the book by the statement that behind the veil was a wax image of a corpse. Sometimes magic is summoned to account for a mystery, such as the marvelous cure of Matilda, the poisoned female in "The Monk". However, this course has the same effect as a failure to explain a mystery, as in the case of Mr. Falkland's strange chest in "Caleb Williams" and that of the giant in "The Castle of Otranto". It is obvious that all such mysteries produce in the reader's mind a suspicion of supernatural processes. Therein lies their value to the Gothacist.

b. Sounds.--Far more popular with the Gothacist than is the mystery, is the suggestive power of sounds. Though he does not greatly emphasize a sound in a given instance, yet a fearful noise of some kind is usually mentioned with a hair-raising episode. Insignificant

though it seem, the creaking of rusty hinges or the howling of the wind is sufficient to increase the heroine's terror or the hero's fright when they are attempting to escape through an unlighted subterranean passage; for how do they know but that a ghost is awaiting them beyond the next turn? Other sounds heard in the Gothic Romance are a rustling, the murmuring of a stream or a waterfall in the distance, a door slamming in a remote part of a building at night, footsteps, the rattling of chains, a clashing of armor, and ~~something~~ falling. None of these, however, is so common as certain others which may be classified in two groups, the groan and distant music. Miss Reeve, Mrs. Radcliffe, and Lewis<sup>1</sup> are particularly fond of this device, resorting to a groan, a sigh, a scream, or a "low hollow sound" at many a psychological moment, in order to terrify a character already nervous. Witness the following passage from "The Old English Baron"<sup>2</sup>:

"As they stood with their fists clenched, on a sudden they were alarmed with a dismal groan from the room underneath. They stood like statues, petrified by fear, yet listening with trembling expectation. A second groan in-

<sup>1</sup>In "The Monk". <sup>2</sup>P. 114.

creased their consternation, and, soon after, a third completed it."

The use of distant music is confined almost entirely to Mrs. Radcliffe, who seemingly takes delight in telling of vocal or instrumental music heard across or through the forest at midnight. Similar to this device also is the bell tolling or the distant clock striking the hours at night. Mrs. Radcliffe thus describes one of Emily's experiences with the mysterious music, in "The Mysteries of Udolpho"<sup>1</sup> :

"She thought she saw her father approaching her with a benign countenance; then, smiling mournfully, and pointing upwards, his lips moved; but, instead of words, she heard sweet music borne on the distant air, and presently saw his features glow with the mild rapture of a superior being. The strain seemed to swell louder, and she awoke. The vision was gone; but music yet came to her ear in strains such as angels might breathe. She doubted, listened, raised herself in the bed, and again listened. It was music, and not an illusion of her imagination. After a solemn steady harmony, it paused--then rose again, in mournful sweetness--and then died in a cadence that seemed to bear away the listening soul to heaven".

c. Art--Art, particularly architecture, also contributes to the suggestion of supernatural events. Mrs. Radcliffe excels all her fellow-writers in this respect; indeed,

<sup>1</sup>VIII.

there are few examples outside of her works. She enjoys describing a castle as it looms up from a forest-covered mountain-side which the travelers are ascending, as in the following from "The Mysteries of Udolpho"<sup>1</sup>:

"Emily gazed with melancholy awe upon the castle, which she understood to be Montoni's; for, though it was now lighted up by the setting sun, the gothic greatness of its features, and its mouldering walls of dark grey stone, rendered it a gloomy and sublime object. As she gazed, the light died away on its walls, leaving a melancholy purple tint, which spread deeper and deeper, as the thin vapour crept up the mountain, while the battlements above were still tipped with splendour. From these, too, the rays soon faded, and the whole edifice was invested with the solemn duskiness of evening. Silent, lonely, and sublime, it seemed to stand the sovereign of the scene, and to frown defiance on all who dared to invade its solitary reign. As the twilight deepened, its features became more awful in obscurity, and Emily continued to gaze, till its clustering towers were alone seen rising over the tops of the woods, beneath whose thick shade the carriages soon after began to ascend."

Another description, just as foreboding, follows close upon that quoted above:

"At length the carriages emerged upon a heathy rock, and soon after reached the castle-gates, where the deep tone<sup>2</sup> of the portal bell, which was struck upon to give notice of their arrival, increased the fearful emotions that had assailed Emily. While they waited till the servant within should come to open the gates, she anxiously surveyed the edifice: but the gloom that

<sup>1</sup> XVIII. <sup>2</sup> A peculiarly typical Gothic touch.

overspread it, allowed her to distinguish little more than a part of its outline, with the massy walls of the ramparts, and to know that it was vast, ancient, and dreary.....The gateway before her, leading into the courts, was of gigantic size, and was defended by two round towers, crowned by overhanging turrets, embattled, where, instead of banners, now waved long grass and wild plants, that had taken root among the mouldering stones, and which seemed to sigh, as the breeze rolled past, over the desolation around them. The towers were united by a curtain, pierced and embattled also, below which appeared the pointed arch of a huge portcullis, surmounting the gates: from these, the walls of the ramparts extended to other towers, overlooking the precipice, whose shattered outline, appearing on a gleam that lingered in the west, told of the ravages of war."

These two passages probably comprise the most vivid and representative of all architectural descriptions in the Gothic Romance. It is scarcely an exaggeration to label Udolpho as here pictured, the ideal Gothic castle. Such a pile was surely a fit place for dire and marvelous events, for such a foreboding exterior could suggest nothing else.

The ruin, also, is treated most effectively by Mrs. Radcliffe, although Godwin, too, makes slight use of it in "Caleb Williams". A peculiarly vivid picture of the ruined abbey in the "Romance of the Forest"<sup>1</sup> is this:

"He approached, and perceived the

<sup>1</sup>  
II.

Gothic remains of an abbey:....The lofty battlements, thickly enwreathed with ivy, were half demolished, and become the residence of birds of prey. Huge fragments of the eastern tower, which was almost demolished, lay scattered amid the high grass, that waved slowly to the breeze. ....A Gothic gate, richly ornamented with fret-work, which opened into the main body of the edifice, but which was now obstructed with brush-wood, remained entire. Above a vast and magnificent portal of this gate arose a window of the same order, whose pointed arches still exhibited fragments of stained glass, once the pride of monkish devotion."

Inside these "Gothic piles" we usually find subterranean passages through which the hero tries to escape with the heroine, as in "The Castle of Otranto" and "The Mysteries of Udolpho"; or damp vaults in which the victims of villainous or Catholic oppression have been imprisoned. In "The Monk" the reader is taken into the vaults in which the dead are interred, while in the "Romance of the Forest" he is shown a chamber the walls of which are "dripping with unwholesome dews". Other devices are, hidden trap-doors and staircases, secret closets, deserted corridors, Gothic windows, and mouldy hangings and furniture.<sup>1</sup>

d. Nature.--Gothic nature is even more

<sup>1</sup> Cf. extract from "The Old English Baron", p. 34, supra.

suggestive of the supernatural than is Gothic art. As in the case of the latter, so in that of the former, Mrs. Radcliffe excels. Owls, ravens, bats, rooks, are referred to; the ivy clinging to the ruined tower receives notice. The dark forest, with its possibilities for the supernatural as well as for crime, is a favorite aspect of nature with Mrs. Radcliffe, Godwin, and Shelley. The Gothic forest and its effects are well shown in "Ferdinand Count Fathom"<sup>1</sup>:

"The darkness of the night, the silence and solitude of the place, the indistinct images of the trees that appeared on every side, 'stretching their extravagant arms athwart the gloom', conspired . . . . .to disturb his fancy and raise strange phantoms in his imagination. Although he was not naturally superstitious, his mind began to be invaded with an awful horror, that gradually prevailed over all the consolation of reason and philosophy."

The cave and the natural cavern are used for settings in "The Castle of Otranto", "The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne", "A Sicilian Romance", "The Italian", but in no case is either cave or cavern described in detail. The caves of Walpole's novel are made unusually uninviting by the report that they are haunted.

Climatic and meteorological phenomena

take their place alongside the natural elements in Gothic settings. The earthquake<sup>1</sup>, darkness, the storm, and moonlight are all included, the latter two being the most widely used. The storm appears to advantage in nearly every Gothic romance from the beginning down to "St. Irvyne". In "Ferdinand Count Fathom"<sup>2</sup> a typical storm is described:

"Accordingly, the heavens contracted a more dreary aspect, the lightning began to gleam, the thunder to roll, and the tempest, raising its voice to a tremendous roar, descended in a torrent of rain."

An ocean storm in "The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne"<sup>3</sup> and the accompanying shrieks from the victims of a wreck, suggest supernatural occurrence. Two men in pursuit of the escaped heroine in "A Sicilian Romance" are driven into a ruin by a storm; and in "The Mysteries of Udolpho" Emily sees the strange figure on the ramparts and hears mystic music while a storm is in progress. In "Zastrozzi"<sup>4</sup> Shelley uses a storm as an appropriate background for a guilty meeting between Zastrozzi and Matilda:

"The moon-beam darting her oblique rays from under volumes of louring vapour, threatened an approaching storm. The lurid sky was tinged with a yellowish lustre--the forest-tops rustled in

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<sup>1</sup>Used in "The Castle of Otranto" and "The Monk".  
<sup>2</sup>xx. <sup>3</sup>ix. <sup>4</sup>iv.

the rising tempest--big drops fell--a flash of lightning, and, instantly after, a peal of bursting thunder, struck with sudden terror the bosom of Matilda."

e. Special Devices.--In addition to the devices already mentioned, the Gothicism uses also many miscellaneous devices for suggesting the supernatural. The narration of popular superstition as in the "Romance of the Forest" and "The Mysteries of Udolpho"; the strange light in "A Sicilian Romance"; a mysterious figure at night as in the "Romance of the Forest" and "A Sicilian Romance"; the bloody birthmark on Theodore's shoulder, in "The Castle of Otranto",--all of these suggest the supernatural. Their varied nature, however, prevents thorough classification.

Thus we see that the supernatural element depends largely for sustenance upon minor elements, many of which might be considered as making up the setting in any given novel. In fact, those elements which suggest the supernatural are really the setting of the Gothic Romance.

2. APPARENT SUPERNATURALISM.--The second type of the supernatural in the Gothic Romance is that which only appears to be miraculous. While

less common than the suggested, it is far more so than the genuine and frankly impossible supernaturalism, very little of which is found outside of "Vathek".

That part of the supernatural element which is only apparent, is, of course, always explicable by natural means. It occurs in two forms, the inverted and the direct. The former was introduced by Smollett in "Ferdinand Count Fathom"; the latter, by Miss Clara Reeve, who endeavored to write a Gothic romance without anything impossible in the action.

for spectra. Inverted Supernaturalism.--The inverted supernaturalism is that in which the reader as well as the author realizes that only natural processes are being used, while one or more characters in the novel are being victimized, believing that they are actually witnessing supernatural phenomena. Examples of this inverted supernaturalism are found in only three<sup>1</sup> real Gothic romances, and these among the earliest published. Since there are in all only a very few illustrations of it, each of them may be mentioned individually. The first is

<sup>1</sup> "The Old English Baron", "Vathek", "The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne". Examples are found also in "Ferdinand Count Fathom", which, however, is not essentially Gothic.

found in "Ferdinand Count Fathom"<sup>1</sup>, where a hag, believing Fathom has been murdered, mistakes him for an apparition. Later in the novel Fathom terrifies a victim with groans outside her door, and contrives an Aeolian harp the music from which he leads her to believe supernatural. In "The Old English Baron", Fitz-Owen becomes terrified when he finds near his plate at breakfast a key to the haunted east apartment in his castle, and also a letter apparently written by a supernatural agent, both of which have been put there by Father Oswald. "Vathek" embraces a few instances of human beings being mistaken for spectres. One similar example is found in "The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne". Let it be understood that in all these cases the reader has been shown the complete action, so that he knows that nothing marvelous is going on, although the victimized character or characters suppose to the contrary. This device is obviously ineffective.--therefore the rarity of its use.

b. Direct Supernaturalism.--The other type of apparent supernaturalism--the direct--is that which leads the reader to think it genuine, but which is subsequently shown to have

been produced by natural processes alone. This usually employs a human being who is mistaken for an apparition, but it uses various other methods as well. These will be considered first. On several occasions in "The Mysteries of Udolpho", a strange voice is heard to utter a warning, but it is not till much later in the novel that the apparently supernatural phenomenon is explained by ventriloquism. In "The Italian", Vivaldi, while being examined before the Inquisition, is startled by a muffled voice close beside him, which cannot be heard by the Inquisitors, and which Mrs. Radcliffe otherwise so presents as to suggest that it comes from a spirit; yet it is later shown to have belonged to an inquisitor disguised as a familiar and attending Vivaldi. Though analysis discovers inconsistencies in this device, nevertheless its effect is the same upon the reader as if it were a representation of the genuinely supernatural. Lewis in "The Monk" causes groans seemingly to issue from a statue, but investigation by one of the characters shows them to have been caused by a persecuted nun chained in the vaults below. The apparent change of Flodoardo to Abellino, in "The Bravo of Venice",

also is shown to be possible<sup>1</sup>

The mistaking of a human being for a ghost begins with "Ferdinand Count Fathom", in which occurs a scene<sup>2</sup> which, in its kind, is among the best in English literature. Renaldo visits for the second time the grave of his sweetheart, Monimia, whom he believes to be dead; and calls upon her spirit:

"In the midst of these invocations, his ear was suddenly invaded with the sound of some few solemn notes issuing from the organ, which seemed to feel the impulse of an invisible hand.... [The place is suddenly illuminated] ..... In a few minutes appeared the figure of a woman arrayed in white, with a veil that covered her face, and flowed down upon her back and shoulders. The phantom approached him with an easy step, and, lifting up her veil, discovered (believe it, O reader!) the individual countenance of Monimia".

In "The Mysteries of Udolpho"<sup>3</sup>, Emily and Dorothee discover a body beneath the black cloth covering the bed in which the former marchioness of the chateau is supposed to have died, and which is in an abandoned apartment in a remote part of the building. An investigation shows the body to be alive,--not a corpse or apparition, as the reader has been led to suspect,--and to be that of one of a company of banditti who have been making this

<sup>1</sup>See p. 54, supra.   <sup>2</sup>LXIII.   <sup>3</sup>XLIII.

deserted part their headquarters, thereby giving rise to the belief that it is haunted.

Another excellent illustration is afforded by "The Monk" in Father Ambrosio's encounter with a supposed apparition which turns out to be nothing more formidable than a servant girl<sup>1</sup>.

3. GENUINE SUPERNATURALISM.--The genuine supernaturalism,--the third and least common variety,--the author assumes to be possible, although he has no expectation or intention of deceiving the reader. In other words, his sole purpose in this case is to conjure up something that shall be splendidum et mirabile, that shall appeal to the reader's desire for the unusual and the miraculous, and that shall be so vividly presented as to make it seem real, impossible though he and his admirers know it is. This type is not employed extensively outside of "Vathek", the author of which there granted free range to a lively imagination of grotesque conceptions..

a. Giant, Monster.--The rarest exhibition of genuine supernaturalism is in the form of a giant or monster. The mammoth being in the upper part of Otranto is the earliest specimen of this type, although he might be classified

<sup>1</sup>"The Monk", IX.

fied also with the spectres, since he partakes of the qualities of both types<sup>1</sup>. In "Vathek" the same device is represented in the hideous Giacur and the horrific camel Alboufaki; in "The Monk", by Lucifer and his evil spirit Matilda, who first seduces Ambrosio from his priestly virtue, as well as by the Great Mogul, who on behalf of Raymond (as Raymond tells the story) intercedes against the Bleeding Nun, and, by magic power, frees him from her odious attentions.<sup>2</sup>

b. Ghost, Spectre.--As it has already been stated, the majority of ghosts and spectres introduced into the Gothic Machinery are only the kind that are met with in real life; but in a few instances spectres are represented as genuine or at least are not accounted for by natural means. Thus in "The Castle of Otranto"<sup>3</sup> the portrait of Manfred's grandfather becomes animated and steps down from the frame:

"At that instant the portrait of his grandfather.....uttered a deep sigh, and heaved its breast.....Manfred saw it quit its panel, and descend on the floor, with a grave and melancholy air.....The spectre marched sedately, but dejected, to the end of the gallery, and turned into a chamber on the right hand. Manfred accompanied him at a little distance, full of anxiety and hor-

<sup>1</sup>Vide infra, this page. <sup>2</sup>"The Monk", IV. <sup>3</sup>I.

ror, but resolved. As he would have entered the chamber, the door was clapped to with violence by an invisible hand".

The picture of the destruction of Otranto presents a scene which, while no more terrifying than the preceding, had the additional quality of awfulness:

"A clap of thunder at that instant shook the castle to its foundations; the earth rocked, and the clank of more than mortal armour was heard behind.... The moment Theodore appeared, the walls of the castle behind Manfred were thrown down with a mighty force, and the form of Alfonso, dilated to an immense magnitude, appeared in the center of the ruins. 'Behold in Theodore the true heir of Alfonso' said the vision: and having pronounced these words, accompanied by a clap of thunder, it ascended solemnly towards heaven, where the clouds parting asunder, the form of St. Nicholas was seen, and receiving Alfonso's shade, they were soon wrapt from mortal eyes in a blaze of glory."

c. Special Devices.--Magic is a device to which the Gothacist seldom has resorted. The great helm and the mammoth sabre in "The Castle of Otranto" and Montoni's poison-detecting cup which bursts when the envenomed liquor is poured into it<sup>2</sup>,--are all suggestive of magic. Several instances of it are found in "The Monk",<sup>3</sup> where a magic mirror, a charmed branch of myrtle, an incantation scene, and an interview with Lucifer are woven into the narrative. Except for these examples and a few other isolated il-

<sup>1</sup>"The Castle of Otranto", V. <sup>2</sup>In "The Mysteries of Udolpho". <sup>3</sup>VII and XII.

illustrations, the use of magic in the Gothic Romance is practically confined to "Vathek", which bristles as much with this as with burlesque. Since the reader or student will have no difficulty in discovering for himself numerous examples, only one illustration<sup>1</sup> is appended here:

"The tower shook, the dead bodies vanished in the flames, which at once changed from a swarthy crimson to a bright rose color; an ambient vapour emitted the most exquisite fragrance, the marble columns rang with harmonious sounds and the liquefied horns diffused a delicious perfume.....The Caliph both saw and felt, with a degree of pleasure which he could not express, a table covered with the most magnificent repast".

The foregoing brief survey of the genuine supernaturalism is sufficient to show that it is comparatively rare, being less common than even the apparent supernaturalism, which is far exceeded, in frequency of use and elaborateness of detail, by the suggested supernaturalism.

<sup>1</sup>-----  
"Vathek", p. 56.

## C O N C L U S I O N

That the foregoing study of the Gothic Romance has not been justified by the innate merits of that type of fiction, has become apparent, for the Gothic tales are, on the whole, characterized by abnormality and crudeness. However, when the Gothic Romance is considered as a part of the great Romantic Movement, and as the precursor of a certain modern type of literature toward the development of which Irving, Poe, Hawthorne, Stevenson, and others have contributed,--when these facts are considered, it is at once evident that the chief source of interest in the Gothic Romance is an historical one, or that of a literary curiosity. Therein lies the justification of any study of this type of fiction.



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