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Goticism in Matthew G. Lewis's The Monk & Related Works

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1968
GOTHICISM IN MATTHEW G. LEWIS'S
THE MONK AND RELATED WORKS

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Master of Arts

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Larry W. Harrel
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GOTHICISM IN MATTHEW G. LEWIS'S
THE MONK AND RELATED WORKS

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CHAPTER I

THE GOTHIC SCHOOL

In looking for the background on which the Gothic School stands, the elements from which it is created, one must ostensibly look far afield: architecture, folklore, aesthetics, romances, personalities, taste, algolagnia, literacy statistics—all must be considered before the Gothic novel can be understood. The Gothic novel itself must be defined before Matthew Gregory Lewis's *The Monk* can be understood. Obviously, a logical place to begin is with definition. Before a clear conception of what a Gothic novel is can be determined, however, a mystery as complex as romanticism in the eighteenth century will have to be resolved. Therefore, to show the literary background of the Gothic novel and the philosophical, aesthetic, artistic, social, and political conditions which shaped it is the plan of this chapter, and to define the Gothic novel is its goal.

The Literary Background

Tracing the literary background of any genre or style can lead one as far back in time as he has the desire, or the imagination, or the energy, to go—certainly to the beginnings of written languages, and even into the boundless reservoir of oral tradition. Such has been the case with
critical works of Gothic literature, as can be seen, for example, in Edith Birkhead's influential _The Tale of Terror_ in which she traces the history of Gothicism back to an early version of the Gilgamesh epic (1966 B.C.) which "abounds in supernatural terror."\(^1\) Even though one can trace the role of the Gothic castle in the Gothic romance to all the complicated changes of ideas and taste through the eighteenth century, yet, as Miss Birkhead shows, even in the ancient _Babylonica_ of Iamblichus "the lovers evade their pursuers by passing as spectres; the scene of the romance is laid in tombs, caverns, and robbers' dens, a setting remarkably like that of Gothic story."\(^2\) It is thus important to notice that the Gothic novel did not spring completely unheralded into the world in the eighteenth century.

The Anglo-Saxon elegiac poems had, in their flavor and concern for ruins, a close similarity with the Gothic novel\(^3\) and many motifs of the Gothic novels can be traced


to the European metrical romances. Many writers trace the Gothic characters, especially the villain, to the Elizabethan playwrights and even find "an expression of the life and spirit of the Renaissance as Elizabethan England had interpreted the Renaissance." 

Shakespeare, who was considered to be the "godfather of the Gothic romance," was found by one writer to have provided more than one fourth of the chapter heading inscriptions in nineteen late eighteenth-century novels, which is a direct attestation of his popularity.

Pope's preface to his edition of Shakespeare (1725) in which he compares Shakespeare to a Gothic building has been frequently cited as an example of the rise, early in

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4 William W. Watt points out particularly the use of the miniature as a property and plot device in his Shilling Shockers of the Gothic School (New York: Russell and Russell, 1932), p. 28. Hereinafter referred to as Shilling Shockers. On p. 30, however, he gives an amusing example of a bizarre use of the strawberry mark which is familiar in the medieval romance, but which takes the form of "a mark of grapes at his back" in one of the "shilling shockers" of the late eighteenth century.

5 See, for example, Clara F. McIntyre, "The Later Career of the Elizabethan Villain-hero," PMLA, XL (1925), 874-78.

6 Clara F. McIntyre, "Were the Gothic Novels Gothic?" PMLA, XXXVI (1921), 646.


the eighteenth century, of Gothicism and of the neo-classic influence on the Gothic novel and on romanticism in general.\(^9\)

Too often, in their concern for isolating the elements of Gothicism, writers have overlooked or de-emphasized the importance played by the major novelists of the eighteenth century, Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne. Defoe's primary influence on the Gothic novel is the same as his influence on the English novel in general: tone, point-of-view, and stylistic elements. Fielding, representing the height of the realistic novel in the eighteenth century, is probably farther removed from the Gothic novel than any of these named, but Walter Scott found the influence of effect in Fielding's work: if Smollett "is surpassed by Fielding in moving pity, the northern novelist soars far above him in his powers of exciting terror."\(^{10}\) Many writers find Smollett's *Ferdinand, Count Fathom* (1753) to be an early important precursor of the Gothic novel;\(^{11}\) however, as Miss Birkhead suggests, too much should not be made of Smollett


as "he strays inadvertently into the history of Gothic
romance." Fielding and Sterne show influence primarily
through their relationships to the novels of sentiment and
sensibility.

The History of Rasselas: Prince of Abyssinia (1759)
by Samuel Johnson is an excellent example of the difficulties
in categorizing the prose fiction of the eighteenth century,
for in it one can find practically whole chapters devoted
to disseminating neo-classical ideals; yet its setting and
its episodic plot identify it as an Oriental tale, and its
theme--what might be called the problem of pleasure, i.e.,
why is pleasure not always pleasurable or what constitutes
pleasure--is related to the psychology of pain-pleasure
found so frequently in the later Gothic novels.

Possibly more important than eighteenth-century
prose background to understanding the rise of the Gothic
novel and the position of The Monk in that genre is that of
the diverse forms of pre-romantic poetry immediately preceding
them. Some of its more direct influences on the Gothic novel
will be pointed out. Even the titles of many of these poems
are illuminating: Anne, Countess of Winchilsea's "A Nocturnal
Reverie" (1713), which lauds death and introduces supernatural
and charnel-house gloom; Allan Ramsay's "Sweet William's
Ghost" (1724), in which the heroine, after spending the

12Birkhead, Tale of Terror, p. 25.
night with her lover's ghost, unsuccessfully attempts to climb into his casket with his corpse; David Mallet's "William and Margaret" (1724), in which Margaret lures William to her grave; John Dyer's "Grongar Hill" (1726), with its description of ruins; James Thomson's "The Seasons" (1725-30), which contains dungeons, as well as the worship of nature; Edward Young's "Night Thoughts" (1742), with its "Death is Victory" (l. 495); Robert Blair's "The Grave" (1743) which elects to "paint the gloomy horrors of the tomb" (l. 5) and which contains Gothic supernaturalism, slamming doors, and screeching owls; and Collins's "Ode to Fear" which influenced the idea of the beauty of terror.

Thomas Gray's opening atmosphere of gloom in "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" is well known, but his interest in folklore and the past is better revealed in the translation he made of an eleventh-century Icelandic poem which he entitled "The Fatal Sisters," and which not only reveals again the use of supernaturalism, but approaches the extreme of Lewis and the German novelists in its description:

See the griesly [sic] texture grow
('Tis of human entrails made,)
And the weights, that play below,
Each a gasping Warrior's head.

All these poems may be found anthologized in George Benjamin Woods, ed., English Poetry and Prose of the Romantic Movement (revised ed.; Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1950)

Fraz, The Romantic Agony, p. 27.

The influences on the Gothic coming from James Macpherson, Thomas Percy, and Thomas Chatterton were not direct, but arose from the same source, antiquarianism, that was to inspire Horace Walpole to write the first Gothic novel, The Castle of Otranto, in 1765.

Occasionally said to have been composed tongue-in-cheek, the novel is best considered as having grown out of Walpole's growing interest in Gothic architecture and, as he stated in the preface to the second edition—the preface to the first stated that the work had been translated from Italian by William Marshall—the "attempt to blend the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern" or "in short, to make them [the characters] think, speak, and act, as it might be supposed mere men and women would do in extraordinary positions." E. A. Baker's argument that Otranto, a "pseudo-history" similar to Longsword, although "widely read, no doubt . . . was received indulgently as a curious freak of fancy from one not much given to such eccentricities" and "did not start a new line of ghost stories, arouse a keener interest in the Middle Ages, or bring any rival historical romances into the field," has

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18 Baker, Sentiment and the Gothic, p. 172.
been firmly and finally discounted by K. K. Mehrotra, who points out that even though Otranto was popular immediately, the great popularity, by both readers and critics, of the realistic fiction of the time, prevented its influencing more than three books before 1777.\textsuperscript{19} He shows, further, that Otranto had a revival in popularity in 1786.\textsuperscript{20} That it influenced Matthew Lewis is undeniable, for in a letter to his mother, March 25, 1792, Lewis wrote, "I have begun something which I hope and am indeed certain will hereafter produce you a little money. . . . It is a "Romance in the style of the Castle of Otranto. . . ."\textsuperscript{21} However, "the Castle of Otranto is significant, not because of its intrinsic merit, but because of its power in shaping the destiny of the novel."\textsuperscript{22} Its influence was wide too; not only did its subtitle, A Gothic Story, lend respectability to the word "Gothic" and thus name the subgenre of the novel, but its brazen use of supernaturalism, its atmosphere of mystery and gloom, its quickly moving, episodic, yet complex


\textsuperscript{20}Ibid., pp. 55-56.


\textsuperscript{22}Birkhead, Tale of Terror, p. 20.
plot, and its initiation of the Gothic castle as an important frame for the plot were to become second nature to Gothic writers for over half a century.

Mrs. Ann Radcliffe's novels are generally considered to be the high points of the Gothic novel; however, there were many novels between hers and The Castle of Otranto which bear mention. "Walpole's theme of an invasion of human life by the dead, to succour and punish was taken up" by William Hutchinson in his The Heritage: A British Story (1772), and the following year saw the publication of Mackensie's The Man of the World which has a ruined chapel, and Mrs. Barbauld's "Sir Bertrand" in Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose which "seems to have realised the limitations of Walpole's marvellous machinery, and to have attempted to explore the regions of the fearful unknown." However, more important an influence than any of these was Clara Reeve's Old English Baron: A Gothic Story (1777) which she called the "literary offspring of Otranto," although Walpole "described it as 'totally void of imagination and interest,'" but which also was influenced by Longsword "and became the master pattern for the novel of terror--or as Clara Reeve called it, since it usually told a story of Gothic times

24 Birkhead, Tale of Terror, pp. 30-31.
25 Ibid., p. 25.
[and since Walpole had so called it], the Gothic novel."26

An interesting subject in its own right, the relationship of the Oriental tale to the Gothic novel and Lewis's *The Monk* is a complex study.27 Many of the conditions and events (they will be discussed later in this chapter) which affected the rise of the Gothic novel also affected the Oriental tale—the interest in the East is the most obvious. Charles Johnstone's *The History of Arsaces, Prince of Betlis* (London: 1784), published two years before *Vathek* and like it an Oriental tale, has the theme of the imprisoned innocent (though a young man) and the frame story which "is a stock device in the Oriental tale,"28 and which was used by Mary Shelley in *Frankenstein*. Except for William Beckford's *Vathek* (1786), "Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World* and Johnson's *Rasselas* are the only members of the form that survive at all."29 Its primary contribution being the


27One might simplify it by deriding and disregarding it as Mehrotra does in Walpole and the English Novel, p. 75: "Passing by *Vathek*, that orgy of fantastic humour and 'artificial terror,' which has no claim to a place in this survey," he discusses some dead book, Elizabeth Helme's *Louisa*; or the Cottage on the Moor.


"recreation of the Gothicism of Islam," "Vathek is almost universally recognized as a minor work of genius and as the best Oriental tale in English." The Oriental tale has even more significance to a study of Lewis's work than to the Gothic novel in general, for three of the five short stories in his Romantic Tales (1808) are Oriental tales, and Lewis's major source of The Monk was an Oriental tale.

As one draws closer to the publication date of The Monk, March, 1796, one moves toward the culmination of the restrained Gothic novel, as epitomized by Mrs. Radcliffe, and toward the genesis of the more extravagant brand, as in The Monk. Some of this later movement may be seen in Clara Reeve and Sophia Lee who "had the greatest part in the formation of the English novel of terror--or better, the sentimental adventure novel." Lewis pointed out one of the new breed to

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30 Ibid., pp. xxviii-xxix.


32 Ibid., p. 27; see Chapter III.

33 See Peck, A Life, p. 23, for a history of the controversy on dating The Monk. As there are no copies from 1795 extant, 1796 will be the date used herein.

his mother in 1794: "As you are a novel-reader, you ought to read 'Caleb Williams;' It is a new style, and well written."\[35\]

In 1789 appeared The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne by Mrs. Ann Ward Radcliffe which ushered in a career that many critics have felt to be the apex of the Gothic novel. Except for the explained supernaturalism for which she is famous, this novel contains "nearly all the elements of Mrs. Radcliffe's future novels."\[36\] A Sicilian Romance, published the following year, 1790, introduces the explained supernatural—"a hollow groan" is eventually found to emanate from the wife concealed in the deserted wing of the castle.\[37\] Although occasionally praised for her restraint, Baker sums up the usual feeling of the modern reader who "cannot help being annoyed when she [Mrs. Radcliffe] gives him an unreasonable view of the sham background and the conjurer's bag of tricks, and the world of gramarye is abruptly exchanged for that of common sense and commonplace."\[38\] It is in Romance of the Forest (1792) that Mrs. Radcliffe's abilities come

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\[35\] [Mrs. Cornwall Baron-Wilson], The Life and Correspondence of M. G. Lewis, Author of "The Monk," "Castle Spectre," &c. with many Pieces in Prose and Verse, never before Published (2 vols.; London: Henry Colburn, Publisher, 1839), I, 134. Hereinafter referred to as Life and Correspondence.

\[36\] Birkhead, Tale of Terror, p. 39.

\[37\] Ibid., p. 41.

\[38\] Baker, Sentiment and the Gothic, p. 200.
clearly to light, for it is superior to her earlier works in both characterization—La Motte is complex—and psychology, which "is neither subtle nor profound, but the fact that it 'exists' is a sign of progress in the art of fiction."  

The Romance of the Forest also reveals dramatically the often acclaimed ability of Mrs. Radcliffe to give landscape description a place in the novel. Even though she had been anticipated by Smollett and Mackenzie and was obviously "familiar with the 'nature poets from Thomson down, often quoting them in her chapter headings," nonetheless, "her mastery of descriptive effect is one of her significant contributions to the fictions of another century."  

"Mrs. Radcliffe's finest work, The Mysteries of Udolpho, appeared in 1794. This novel enjoyed a wide fame and was followed by scores of imitations." Lewis wrote his mother from the Hague four months before he completed The Monk that he had begun to work on his novel again and that he "was induced to go with it by reading the 'Mysteries of Udolpho,' which is . . . one of the most interesting  

39 Birkhead, Tale of Terror, p. 45.  
books that has ever been published." The Udolfo opens with the long descriptive passages for which Mrs. Radcliffe is famous, but after Emily St. Aubert's father dies, the setting changes to the gloomy Gothic castle, Udolpho, and her mental tortures begin. Lewis's warning to his mother, therefore, is not surprising: "I would advise you to read it by all means; but I must warn you, that it is not very entertaining till St. Aubyn's [sic] death." The Italian (1797) is sometimes considered to be Mrs. Radcliffe's best. It "abounds in dramatic, haunting scenes" and is most important to this study for its debt to Lewis, "for her crime-stained monk Schedoni is manifestly conceived in rivalry to his Ambrosio." Mrs. Radcliffe's last book, Gaston de Blondelville (1826), was not published until after her death, but the fact that it contained the supernatural discounts the idea that she had become "outraged" by the vulgar mishandling of her effects and anxious to disassociate herself from the mob, dropped her pen. Certainly, for Ann Radcliffe, "the Shakespeare of Romance" as Dr. Nathan Drake called her, "it would have been exactly as easy" for her "to go in for the horror,

42 [Baron-Wilson], Life and Correspondence, I, 124.
43 Ibid.
44 Birkhead, Tale of Terror, p. 52.
45 Baker, Sentiment and the Gothic, p. 200.
47 Mehrotra, Walpole and the English Novel, p. 137.
carnality, sadism, Satanism, and fiendish cruelty of 'Monk' Lewis and the Germans, as for her to exchange her high-plumed hat, enormous tête, stays and hoop skirts for the fillets, bangs à la Titus, diaphanous dress and pink skin-tights of the brazen Parisian daughters of Nature called the merveilleuses.48 But on a deeper level, Mrs. Radcliffe differs from the Monkian Gothic in her "prevailing emotion" which "is not so much terror as a sort of superstitious dread or fear, what Scott called 'a latent sense of supernatural awe.'"49

Finally, travel books which have often exerted influence on English letters, were at a high point in popularity in the eighteenth century, and from 1775 to 1825 travel books on the Near East were especially prevalent.50 These books added to the interest in the Oriental tale, and exerted influence on scholarship--in 1784 Sir William Jones researched Oriental languages and in 1785 Sir Charles Wilkins translated The Mahabharata.51

To sum up, the literary background of The Monk includes

48 Foster, The Pre-Romantic Novel, p. 269.
primarily the realistic novels of the major novelists, the
Castle of Otranto, all the novels of sentiment and the
historical novels, the "graveyard" and "nature" poets, The
Mysteries of Udolpho, French and German literature, and the
travel books and Oriental tales. There are some disagree-
ments; many writers might want to place emphasis on one or
another of the elements—as, for example, Clark feels that
Thomas Gray has unjustly been given secondary importance to
Walpole.52 However, since the background of the Gothic
novel corresponds so closely to the rise of the English
romantic movement in all its complexity, the issues will very
likely have to be resolved anew with every generation.

The Non-literary Background

Why was it that, towards the end of the eighteenth
century, people came to consider landscape with
different eyes? Why did they look for a "je ne
sais quoi" which they had not looked for before?
Why, at about the same time, did the beauty of the
"horrid" become a source, no longer of conceits, as
in the seventeenth century, but of sensations? To
such questions adequate answers are not to be found
in the history of the religious, philosophical,
moral, and practical development of the period.53

Mario Praz finds the answer in the "mysterious bond between
pleasure and suffering" which "became the common inheritance
of Romantic and Decadent sensibility through a particular
chain of literary influences."54 But Praz notwithstanding,

54 Ibid.
since these literary influences have been noted, a look will be taken at some of the non-literary causes of the eighteenth-century phenomenon called the "Gothic novel" and its most striking example The Monk.

Following Professor Lovejoy's statement that the aesthetic change in the eighteenth century was led by the enjoyment of such non-literary arts as "the landscape painting of Claude Lorrain, Foussin, and Salvator Rosa; . . . 'natural' gardening; . . . the Gothic revival begun by Battie Langley and Sanderson Miller in the 1740's . . . and admiration for the Chinese garden . . . architecture, and other artistic achievements of the Chinese," and adding the religious, social, political, and aesthetic climate, will provide a prospectus for the following few pages.

Richard Hurd, in his Letters on Chivalry and Romance (1762), compares literature to gardening in his example of "the Gothic method of design in gardening," which is the art of arrangement so "that the careless observer, though he be taken with the symmetry of the whole, discovers no art in the combination. . . ." As the wild-garden fad grew through the eighteenth century one complete farm was converted


into "an artificial wilderness with vistas and a 'ruinated priory,' a temple of Pan made of rough, unhewn stone," etc.

From the Augustan's distaste for a Gothic ruin and enjoyment of a classical one developed a whole new occupation for those like Sanderson Miller who, from 1744 to 1760, made "sham ruins and Gothical garden pieces and even a church." Summers's quote from The Clandestine Marriage (1766) catches the mania of the times for ruins: one character is showing the other his remodeled grounds---"Ay, ruins, my lord! and they are reckoned very fine ones too. You would think them ready to tumble on your head. It has just cost me a hundred and fifty pounds to put my ruins in thorough repair."

Following and running concurrently with the sham-ruin craze was the more serious scientific interest in the ancient, so-called "Gothic" architecture by such scholars as Thomas Gray and his less scholarly friend Horace Walpole. It was Walpole, however, who popularized Gothic architecture by


59 Addison, Romanticism and the Gothic Revival, p. 35.

60 Montague Summers, "The Illustration of the Gothick [sic] Novels," The Connoisseur, XC VIII (July-December, 1936), 266.
remodeling (in the Gothic mode) Strawberry Hill, which he bought in 1747 and gradually enlarged and festooned between 1753 and 1776.61 The relationship of Gothic architecture to Gothic literature is multi-faceted but primarily, as in Walpole's case, the Gothic castle was a real, solid symbol of the mysterious Middle Ages and it provided a perfect setting both in time and in mood, for a novel which attempted to inspire the sublime (which will be discussed below). "The Castle of Otranto was not a conscious reaction against realistic fiction," argues Mehrotra; "it was the product of a side-track of romanticism—the Gothic building of Walpole."62

There are various interesting correlations of the rise of Gothic architecture and the Gothic novel to religious views. For example, paradoxical fascination for Roman Catholicism and Protestant anti-sacerdotalism exists in all the Gothic novels.63 There may have been a vacuum created by the deism and scepticism of the age.

Once God had been secularized out of the graveyard and the terrifying manifestations of nature, what remained was the primeval horror of demonic violence and bodily decay. When the ancient gods took on human or animal form they generally did no more

61Addison, Romanticism and the Gothic Revival, p. 40.
than rape. At most they punished for some palpable reason. They were not a nameless and unpredictable terror to the general populace: indeed, they were far more ingeniously malicious toward each other. It might seem that once the totemic animal loses its godhead it can become an unpropitiable terror and that degeneration of the fabric of mythology and religion is conducive to gothic terrors. . . .

Or phrased differently, "God floated out of the Churches and ghosts floated into the home." This void of religion and myth also explains the heavy reliance on folklore and myth in The Monk. In a more positive vein, however, James Usher in his Clio: or a Discourse on Taste (1769) broke "sharply with Hume, Burke, and the psychological school, preferring to base the sublime upon an intuitive and mystical recognition of the reality of the soul."

Before going into a more detailed description of the aesthetic theory of the times, however, there are social, political and historical backgrounds of The Monk to be considered. As Virginia Woolf wryly commented

For some reason, obscurely hidden in the psychology of the human race, the middle years of that eighteenth century which seems now a haven of bright calm and serene civilization, affected some who actually lived


in it with a longing to escape—from its politics, from its wars, from its follies, from its drabness and its dulness, to the superior charms of the Middle Ages.  

Many of the plot motifs and general characteristics of the Gothic novels were founded in contemporary fears of factual and imagined injustices. The imprisoned heroine, one of the most popular themes in the Gothic novel and utilized fully by Lewis in *The Monk*, had its counterpart in the magazine stories of the day—especially in *Gentleman’s Magazine* whose readers were inundated with "revolting details of foreign judicial procedure." The fear of secret societies and the Inquisition which was symptomatic of the general unrest also had some basis in fact, for the Jesuits, suspended by the Pope in 1773, had gone underground in Prussia and in 1778 the Spanish Inquisition had been re-established. There were several books, even, which argued that the French Revolution was a sophisticated plot against all religions and governments of Europe. The French Revolution in itself was probably a partial cause of the horrific school of Gothic, for sensationalism in the eighteenth-century English novel did not include violence "until the excitement of the French Revolution had taught the nerves of polite readers to thrill

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half-pleasurably to this violent stimulus." 70

The ridiculousness of the Gothic heroine to the twentieth-century reader who is tempted to laugh when she is so frightened of the perils to which she is subjected is somewhat abated by the knowledge of the extremely precarious position of the eighteenth-century girl who was orphaned or who, regardless of her rank, found herself unmarried and poor. 71 In the first part of the century "a fifth of the population of London lived in some degree upon the proceeds of forced crime, and a tenth of its women were prostitutes either professionally or as necessary." 72 The unjust disparity in the wealth of the classes was a constant threat to the security of the times. "A well-placed man of wealth might afford to lose thirty thousand pounds in a night's gambling, yet the clergyman who held a rural living from him might be expected to support a family on thirty pounds a year." 73

However, coupled with the class inequity was the rise of the middle class throughout the eighteenth century. As the middle class rose they educated themselves and one

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70 Ibid., p. 62.
73 Ibid.
It is conjectural to assume that in The Monk Lewis was attempting to appeal to this new-found, novel-reading public, but certainly it is fact that the public existed. As might be expected, there was a proportionate rise in the number of novels published; "in 1796 the Monthly [Review] noticed twice as many as in the previous year."75

Turning from events to ideas, "beauty, sublimity, taste, imagination and the picturesque are the most important" of the major aesthetic ideas of the eighteenth century, and "the complete history of any one of them should throw light upon the progress of taste, the change of values, and the gradual growth of critical and aesthetic theories in the period that lies between the flourishing of neo-classicism and the triumph of romanticism."76 The sublime, because of its close relationship to the Gothic novel, will be outlined in the following paragraphs--with a brief mention of the picturesque--before the Gothic novel is more closely defined.

Eighteenth-century English aesthetics offers several curious anomalies: first, Shaftesbury, the leading English

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74 Q. D. Leavis exemplifies this growth by revealing the fact "that the average daily sale of newspapers practically doubled between 1753 and 1775 in a nearly stationary population" in Fiction and the Reading Public (London: Chatto and Windus, 1932), p. 130.

75 Ibid., p. 145.

aesthetician of the seventeenth century, had very little influence, although he was important in German aesthetics; secondly, the aestheticians developed a "psychology of the aesthetic rather than a philosophy of art." 77

Shaftesbury was influenced, like the eighteenth century aestheticians, by Longinus's *On the Sublime*, which, though translated into English in 1652 by John Hall, did not make its impact until translated into French by the arch-neo-classicist, Boileau. 78

Probably the first major influence in England came from Addison who in his "Essays on the Pleasures of the Imagination," *The Spectator*, numbers 411-421 (June 21 through July 3, 1712), differentiated between the great, or sublime, and the beautiful. 79 Addison, however, as a representative of the sublime seen from the neo-classical point of view "was insensitive to the sublimity of [the] Gothic" because he did not value "the peculiar effects of height, or the influence of the terrific, or the element of wonder, or the


impressions made by dim light, or indeed anything which might contribute to an appreciation of the greatness of Gothic." Even his enjoyment of the Gothic cathedral was centered in Siena Cathedral which, with "its touch of gay, Southern vulgarity, is at the opposite pole to the mysterious moss-grown ruins which delighted the Gothic poets." But, as Professor Monk explains, this "opposite pole" is one of a dual polar system:

It seems to me preferable not to regard the cult of the sublime as a revolutionary movement outside of and against neo-classical standards of taste (though eventually it certainly helped to overthrow those standards), but rather as the other, the constantly present but before the 1740's not always eagerly visited, pole on which the world of eighteenth-century art turned.

An early issue among those concerned with sublimity as an artistic principle was its reference to terror: in 1742 Baillie had denied vigorously that terror could be sublime, although the two feelings could co-exist or oscillate in the mind when stimulated by the same object, while in 1756, "Gerard simultaneously with Burke" urged "the agreeableness of the terrific."

"The work which, after Addison's essays, was most influential in directing the course of British aesthetic

82 Monk, The Sublime, p. iii.
84 Ibid., p. 83.
speculation in the eighteenth century, was Edmund Burke's

*A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* [1756]. . . . Everyone after Burke either imitates him or borrows from him or feels it necessary to refute him. Burke's ingredients of the sublime are terror, obscurity, power, privation, "Vacuity, Darkness, Solitude and Silence," vastness, infinity, magnitude of a building, difficulty of construction, magnificence, gloom at day, brilliance at night, sudden, loud or "low, tremulous, intermitting" sounds, the "inarticulate voices of men, or any animal in pain or danger, . . . intolerable stenches" (when read about only), and finally, "bodily pain, in all the modes and degrees of labour, pain, anguish, and torment." Burke notes, too, that not only an actual sound, but the expectation of a sound yields the sublime: "expectation itself causes a tension." He finds sublimity in obscurity: "There is a passage in the book of Job amazingly sublime, and this sublimity is principally due to the terrible uncertainty of the thing described." A cursory look at any Gothic novel will reveal Burke's influence, for he

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85 Ibid., p. 83.
87 Ibid., p. 140.
88 Ibid., p. 63. The passage to which Burke refers is Job 4: 13-17.
is certainly responsible for much of the popularity of terror during the last half of the century. No idea that became attached to the sublime failed to become popular. Terror enjoyed almost one half a century of prominence, thanks to Burke, and out of the conviction that terror is sublime, came some, though not all, of the impulse that brought into existence the tale of terror.\footnote{Monk, \textit{The Sublime}, p. 218.}

A minor aesthetician, Daniel Webb, who produced a great quantity of aesthetic theory in the 1760's, has views particularly applicable to \textit{The Monk} since he argued that the sublime was related "to the choice of great circumstances" and the fast movement of those circumstances.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 108.} \textit{The Monk} is frequently singled out for its rapid pace.

Although it can be argued that he is "not attacking reason, the rules, the kinds, or the doctrine of imitation," and that "far from laying the axe to the neo-classical tree, Hurd is engaged in extending and supporting it,"\footnote{Hoyt Trowbridge, "Bishop Hurd: A Re-interpretation," \textit{PMLA}, LVIII (1943), 464.} nevertheless Bishop Hurd was interpreted by the readers of his time as being revolutionary. He argued in his \textit{Letters on Chivalry and Romance} (1762) that, because superstition was subject to progress like everything else, "the fancies of our modern bards are not only more gallant, but . . . more sublime, more terrible, more alarming, than those of the classic fablers. In a word, you will find that the manners they paint, and
the superstitions they adopt are the more poetical for being Gothic."  

Following Hurd was Hugh Blair who "was of immense importance as a popularizer of aesthetic and critical speculation and who emphasized through the 60's, 70's, and 80's the difference in beauty, which was pleasing, and sublimity, which had grandeur."  

However, Sir Joshua Reynolds, whose influence stretched through the 1790's, did not set the sublime off from the beautiful, but spoke of it as the higher aspect of beauty.  

Moving closer to 1796 and the publication of The Monk, one finds Archibald Alison devoting the second chapter of his Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste (1790) to a catalogue of elements of the sublime including the sounds of storms, earthquakes, waves, organs, and bells, a clock at midnight, an owl at midnight or in a Gothic ruin; and the visually sublime such as trees, rocks, funerals, and "the Gothic castle [which] is still more sublime than all, because besides the desolation of Time, it seems to have withstood the assaults of War."  

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94 Ibid., p. 142.

There was opposition to these ideas throughout the century, of course, but in 1795 several tracts came out attacking Burke's association of terror with the sublime and attempting to belittle Uvedale Price, Burke's major disciple.96

Nonetheless, more representative of the last decade of the eighteenth century was

Nathan Drake's preoccupation with the aesthetics of fear and horror and his habitual association of the emotions with the sublime [which] are equally typical of the period. . . . He offers a convenient summary of the more popular nature of the discussion and provides a convenient link between the sublime and the gothic novel . . . [and] develops ideas which virtually form a theory of the tale of terror.97

Like Hurd, Dr. Nathan Drake in his Literary Hours (1796) argued the superiority of Gothic superstition to the old mythologies, whether Greek, Roman, or Norse; but, unlike Hurd, he based his argument upon the supposition that Gothic superstition "found its imagery upon a metaphysical possibility, upon the appearance of superior or departed beings."98

Drake's sublime fit Mrs. Radcliffe better than Lewis, for he emphasized the enjoyment of wild nature while giving qualified support to horrid terror. "The greatest works of art are those which, 'approaching the brink of horror, have yet . . . been rendered powerful in creating the most delightful

96 Konk, The Sublime, pp. 159-60.
97 Ibid., p. 136.
and fascinating emotions." He meant by "greatest" Dante and Mrs. Radcliffe, "the Shakespeare of Romantic Writers"; however, unlike Mrs. Radcliffe he favored the use of ghosts in writing and made statements such as, "the terrible and the appalling must combine," which is closer to Lewis's style of Gothic than to Mrs. Radcliffe's. Mrs. Radcliffe's views, although they affected the Gothic novels through her fiction rather than through her criticism, should be noted:

Terror and horror are so far opposite, that the first expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life, the other contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them. I apprehend, that neither Shakespeare nor Milton by their fictions, nor Mr. Burke by his reasoning, anywhere looked to positive horror as a source of the sublime, though they all agree that terror is a very high one; and where lies the great difference between terror and horror, but in the uncertainty and obscurity, that accompany the first, respecting the dreaded evil?

This distinction of Mrs. Radcliffe's between terror and horror is the whole basis, the definition in fact, of the two schools of the Gothic novel. Where Mrs. Radcliffe and those of the restrained school attempted to terrify through obscurity, Lewis and the horrific writers attempted to horrify through direct assaults on the senses.

Even though the aestheticians important in the development of the concept of the sublime are considered, for the
most part, minor in the history of aesthetic theory, yet their ideas were finally organized and disseminated by Kant whose influence on romanticism and aesthetics has been monumental. 101

As mentioned before, one other aesthetic concept—the picturesque—developed in the eighteenth century; and because of its close relationship to the sublime and its influence on the Gothic novel, mention of it must be made before a clear definition of the Gothic novel can be determined.

Reverend William Gilpin popularized the word "picturesque" in his publications between 1782 and 1809, and Uvedale Price in An Essay on the Picturesque, as Compared with the Sublime and Beautiful (1794) systematized aesthetics by setting the picturesque off from beauty, in its variety, intricacy, roughness, and irregularity, and from the sublime, in its lack of association with size and closer affinity to order. 102 The distinctions, however, are close, as Phelps's paraphrase of Hussey's definition reveals. The picturesque, he says, is

predilection for "landscape"—that is, for wide prospects, richly filled with the works of nature and man, and revealed by dramatic contrasts of light and shade; the use of "roughness and sudden variety joined to irregularity" to gain striking effects of form and colour; the taste for vast architectural masses, and for the associations of grandeur and

102 Ibid., pp. 157-58.
terror evoked by such objects as palaces, castles, crags, gnarled tree trunks or lonely hovels. 103

**Definition**

Obviously a look at the background and causes of the Gothic novel and Lewis's *The Monk* has frequently presupposed knowledge of the definition of "Gothic" and, it is hoped, has not infrequently contributed to such knowledge; but a more specific examination of the word "Gothic" and the meaning of "Gothic novel" and related terms, such as "tale of terror," is necessary before Lewis and his novel are considered.

The words "Goth" and "Gothic" enjoyed a poor reputation until the second half of the eighteenth century. Chaucer used the noun once, Shakespeare many times and "usually in a disparaging sense." 104

In the early Renaissance . . . the term "gothic" took on a new and colored meaning, a meaning that masked a sneer . . . [But] with the emergence of the democratic-romantic side of the Renaissance . . . [it] became once more an adjective, if not of praise, at least of respectability. 105

Even though Johnson in his Dictionary defined a Goth as "one not civilized, one deficient in general knowledge, a

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105 Ibid.
but no simple list of etymological information will define "Gothic novel." Usually when the term is used extensively in a book length study of the Gothic novel, some attempt is made at a definition. However, these definitions often amount to nothing more than a very random listing of some of the elements that occur to the writer. Therefore, in an attempt to fill this void, the following elements will be taken up in turn: setting, characterization, effect, plot, supernaturalism, sensibility and didacticism, persecution theme, humor, symbolism and allegory, and the experimental aspect.

Setting in the Gothic novel is of primary importance because, as explained earlier, it was out of interest in the past that Walpole set his "Gothic Story" in the middle ages, because it was out of interest in Gothic architecture that the story was set in the Castle of Otranto, and because it was out of interest in the exotic that precipitated the Italian setting of Otranto. The Middle Ages, at least the

106* Ibid., pp. 454-55. Incidentally, "gothique" in France developed from a word of derision into one with more pleasant connotations in the second half of the eighteenth century, but then fell into disrepute after 1830--William C. Holbrook, "The Adjective 'Gothique' in the Eighteenth Century," M.L.N., LVI (1941), 488-503.
remote past, the Gothic castle or the massive imposing monastery or convent (as in The Monk and Maturin's Melmoth the Wanderer), and the foreign locale (although usually Southern European like Mrs. Radcliffe's Sicilian Romance and The Monk in Madrid, the geographical location may be Scotland as in Mrs. Radcliffe's Castle of Athlin and Dunbayne) are the sine qua non of the Gothic novel's setting.

Gothic novels do not provide the modern reader with his expectations of characterization. The characters are flat; yet that does not adequately describe many of the minor characters which are used in a Dickensian manner to caricature human foibles and traits. The heroines are probably the least original, bequeathed to the Gothic novels from the novels of sentiment and sensibility. Of all the characters it is the Gothic villain who is most interesting, to the literary historian, for his evolution into the Eyronic hero, and to the general reader, for his dark ambiguous psychology. From Manfred in Otranto, Zeluco, "the terrible Sicilian" whose "moral disintegration" is described in Dr. John Moore's Zeluco (1786) to Montoni of Udolpho, Ambrosio in The Monk, and Schedoni in The Italian, the Gothic villain was the most carefully drawn of all the characters. The Gothic novelist seemed simply to feel more secure with his villain; Matilda, the villain's accomplice in The Monk, was singled out by

107Foster, The Pre-Romantic Novel, n. 11, p. 269.
Coleridge to be the most impressive character. The Gothic hero is either ineffectual, or there is a misunderstanding—something is invented to keep him out of the picture until the villain has managed to terrorize the heroine thoroughly, then he enters to marry her. Few critics have been able to pass up the observation that the characters are "tricked out in costumes belonging to some past epoch" which ineffectually conceals their enlightened, eighteenth-century minds. Miss Scarborough's classification of the types of ghosts in Gothic novels is interesting; but her statement that "the Ghost is the real hero or heroine of the Gothic novel" is more intriguing than useful.

Effect, or the writer's motivation, of all the Gothic elements mentioned, is probably the most important. When Poe is said to utilize the Gothic, it is meant that his goal, his desired effect, is to terrify. Varma says, "Like Love, Horror is an individual, primal emotion; and it was a revival of pure emotion that these authors essayed within the isolated framework of the frowning castle and smiling meadow, with plots designed solely for emotional effect." Evans insists

that the primary aim of the Gothic writer was to "arouse mystery, gloom, and terror," that the Gothic trappings evolved with this as the goal, and that even sources such as Elizabethan drama and Richardsonian sensibility were picked up by the writers as they searched to add to their effect. When Bishop Hurd argued for the superiority of Gothic superstition, it was because he felt that the Gothic was "more awakening to the imagination" and "fitter to take the credulous mind, and charm it into a willing admiration of the specious miracles which wayward fancy delights in." Miss Thompkins' statement applies to any of the Gothic novels when she points out that the raison-d'être of a Radcliffe novel is not story, character, or morals, but mood, and the mood is communicated through heroines--"organs through which these grim places speak." It is, however, the criterion of effect that separates the Gothic novel into its two major divisions: those who "sought only to conjure up a witching atmosphere of awe and vague apprehension," and those who "employed the most violent shocks of physical anguish and fear." These camps, led by Mrs. Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis respectively,

112 Bertrand Evans, Gothic Drama from Walpole to Shelley (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1947), p. 152.
113 Ibid., p. 12.
114 Supra, p. 31.
115 Letters on Chivalry and Romance, pp. 282-83.
116 The Popular Novel, p. 255.
are significantly different; yet the development of the concept of the sublime explains how their goals to produce an effect on the reader were the same, differing only in their ideas on how to produce the effect. Sir Walter Scott’s comment on the Radcliffean romance sums up the Gothic novel very well:

It does not appeal to the judgment by deep delineations of human feeling, or stir the passions by scenes of deep pathos, or awaken the fancy by tracing out, with spirit and vivacity, the lighter traces of life and manners, or excite mirth by strong representations of the ludicrous or humourous. In other words, it attains its interest neither by the path of tragedy nor of comedy; and yet it has, notwithstanding, a deep, decided, and powerful effect, gained by means independent of both—by an appeal, in one word, to the passion of fear, whether excited by natural dangers, or by the suggestions of superstition.

Scott's following sentence introduces plot:

The force therefore of the production, lies in the delineation of external incident, while the characters of the agents, like the figures in many landscapes, are entirely subordinate to the scenes in which they are placed; and are only distinguished by such outlines as make them seem appropriate to the rocks and trees, which have been the artist's principal objects.

Graphically illustrating the influence of Walpole's Castle of Otranto, the plots of the Gothic novels are rambling, disunified things; but, with the increased concern for the eliciting of suspense and fear in the last decade of the eighteenth century, the plots of the later novels were more

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118 Lives of the Novelists, I, 211.
119 Ibid.
tightly constructed. 120 Considering the heavy influence of the novel of sensibility and its frequent reliance on the epistolary form, it is striking that the Gothic novels did not utilize the technique; but, "Gothic fiction rests upon surprise, quick succession of events, and sudden reverses of fortune," while "epistolary practice is best adopted to the quieter moods and simpler drama of reflection and psychological analysis." 121 Varma has shown, however, that the Gothic novels do share structural similarities "based on a principle of contrast." Walpole, he points out, "had produced his effects by surrealist contrast of light and shade; Mrs. Radcliffe evoked sensations through her artistic use of sound and silence; Lewis's world is a macabre juxtaposition of charnel-house horror and lust." 122 Another major element of structure, the inserted narrative or "little history" will be discussed in Chapter III as it relates closely to the criticism of The Monk.

Critical opinion of the supernaturalism in the Gothic novel has turned 180 degrees since the eighteenth century.


121 Frank Gees Black, The Epistolary Novel in the Late Eighteenth Century (Eugene, Oregon: University of Oregon, 1940), p. 47. Black also goes on to point out that "the effectiveness of the familiar letter depends upon its informality and idiomatic style. These qualities, rather easily obtainable when the letters are supposed to be contemporary, are difficult to secure in representation of a remoter time."

122 The Gothic Flame, p. 146.
Mrs. Radcliffe, who was praised in her era for her explained supernaturalism, now seems, like an ill-begotten mystery novel, to provide fabrication and trickery rather than composition and denouement. The Radcliffean versus the Lewisian, the terror Gothic versus the horror Gothic also divides on the use of supernaturalism—The Monk abounds in potions, divination, enchantment, conjuration, and diablerie. No final statement can be made concerning the use of supernaturalism in the Gothic novel, except that it may appear. Supernaturalism, even in those such as The Monk which abound in it, is not the distinctive element of the Gothic novel, because many of the novels are "controlled by a rationalism." As has been suggested, the novel of sensibility had a great influence on the Gothic novel—Mrs. Radcliffe has been called "the last of the novelists of sensibility." There is even a relationship in the goals of the types; for the novel of sensibility was written to elicit effect like the Gothic novel. Miss Thompkins finds "the elevating power of the terrible . . . suggestion of terror, particularly of supernatural terror . . . roused dormant imaginative energies, quickened sensibility [italics mine] and restored the sense of the mysterious in life." Sensibility was especially

125 Baker, Sentiment and the Gothic, p. 203.
126 The Popular Novel, p. 223.
prevalent in the chap-books and blue-books. However, "in the novels of this period sensibility is often blended with some other motive. The tale of terror, which arouses pity as well as fear, was a formidable rival of the pathetic story." Much of the didacticism of the novel of sensibility also found its way into the Gothic novel, although the horror Gothic played it down.

The theme of persecution, usually of the heroine, but of the protagonist in Caleb Williams, the threat of violence, and the existence of violence are often found in Gothic novels. It was here that Lewis was primarily influenced by the "German Ritter-, Rauber- und Schauerromane" which Miss Thompkins calls grotesque and "hideous." The theme of persecution, usually of the heroine, but of the protagonist in Caleb Williams, the threat of violence, and the existence of violence are often found in Gothic novels. It was here that Lewis was primarily influenced by the "German Ritter-, Rauber- und Schauerromane" which Miss Thompkins calls grotesque and "hideous."

The general consensus is that "humor is largely lacking in the Gothic romance, save as the writers furnish it unintentionally"; however, the second part of this declaration needs to be amended to read, humor is largely lacking in the Gothic romance, although the novelists often consciously attempted to provide contrast with it and thus raise the

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127 In one blue-book, Watt found the record number of swoons when "the entire harem swoons on the unexpected return of the bashaw," Shilling Shockers, p. 34.


129 Thompkins, The Popular Novel, p. 245.

130 Scarborough, The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction, p. 8.
ceiling on their attainment of sublimity. From Otranto's "garrulous servants whose chatter makes the abyss reverberate more hollowly,"\textsuperscript{131} to The Monk's Aunt Leonella and Dame Jacintha the humorous character provides Shakespearean relief.

There is a symbolical and allegorical nature to the Gothic novel which has not been significantly explored by critics. One of the special attractions which the medieval romances had for Hurd was their allegory: "We hear much of Knights-errant encountering Giants, and quelling Savages, in books of Chivalry. These Giants," he explained, "were oppressive feudal Lords. . . . Their dependants of a lower form . . . were the Savages of Romance."\textsuperscript{132} The symbolical and allegorical aspect of The Monk will be discussed in Chapter III.

In an anthology of mid and late eighteenth-century poetry, the editors make the point that aesthetic theory gained a significant hold on philosophy "in the realm of taste generally and in the approach to all the arts including literature." And their statement about the poets of the period applies equally well to the novelists: "... they were striving consciously, theoretically after certain special effects. We may not always like what they produced, but it engages our interest as any experimental art generally

\textsuperscript{131}Thompkins, \textit{The Popular Novel}, p. 226.

\textsuperscript{132}Lettere on Chivalry and Romance, p. 265.
Many critics have not liked the results of the experimentation. Saintsbury has written that most of the novels in the last part of the eighteenth century "represent experiment, sometimes partly mistaken kinds, like the terror novel of Mrs. Radcliffe and Lewis." Both Mrs. Barbauld in her *Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose* (1773) and Dr. Nathan Drake in his *Literary Hours* (1798) exhibited the experimental nature of their writing by preceding their Gothic tales with essays explaining their goals and theories of art. The desire for "colour and sublimity manifested" itself in lofty language, "often figurative, and tending strongly towards the blank verse of the theatre"; several novels were written in blank verse; and one, "less a novel on tiptoe than a relaxed poem," was written completely "in iambic measure." 

One other explanation needs to be made. Many terms are thrown about when the Gothic novel is being discussed; however, "Gothic," though a misnomer, is adequate, for

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135 Birkhead, *Tale of Terror*, p. 28.
"Romantic Novel is too vague and comprehensive, ... Elizabethan Novel would be decidedly misleading, ... Novel which reproduces the spirit of the Elizabethan Renaissance is manifestly impossible, ... [and] Terror Novel applies less accurately to Mrs. Radcliffe's work than to that of Lewis."\textsuperscript{138} Miss Birkhead applied the influential "tale of terror" as the generic term to a broader area than "Gothic Romance" which "remained a definitely recognised kind of fiction."\textsuperscript{139}

\textsuperscript{138}McIntyre, "Were the Gothic Novels Gothic?" p. 666.

\textsuperscript{139}Tale of Terror, p. 221. A complete discussion of all the terms, Schauer-Romantic, Schauerromane, Vorromantic, le roman noir, is beyond the scope of this study.
CHAPTER II

MATTHEW G. LEWIS: HIS LIFE

Mrs. Cornwall Baron-Wilson's anonymous, two-volume Life and Correspondence of M. G. Lewis, Author of "The Monk," "The Castle Spectre," &c. with Many Pieces in Prose and Verse, Never Before Published (London, 1839) obviously attempts to dispel the derogatory reputation which had grown up since Matthew Gregory Lewis's death in 1818. Her book is a padded, cumbersome, misleading, capriciously researched, compilation of unreliability as Louis F. Peck points out in his definitive biography, A Life of Matthew G. Lewis, 1961.

However, Mrs. Baron-Wilson's motive to exonerate Lewis was not only benevolent but, if it had succeeded, would have managed to assuage the critical prejudice in which many subsequent writers have so freely indulged, and would, consequently, have allowed these critics more objectivity and clearer insight. All too often, critical views of Lewis's work have been tainted by the personal reputation that he gained after the publication of The Monk in 1796.

1Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, p. vi. In subsequent references this book will be referred to as A Life, whereas Mrs. Baron-Wilson's will be referred to as Life and Correspondence.
The sensitivity to influential, if vague, sources, as well as the ebullience, inexperience, and artlessness of *The Monk*, have been continually interpreted by critics as immorality, blasphemy, plagiarism, duplicity, and vanity. But most importantly, critics have assigned these qualities to Lewis and have rewritten his biography accordingly. One of the first critics to present this position was Coleridge, whose review, for the most part, was the most perceptive of all the early criticisms of *The Monk*; yet still he could not overcome the urge to suggest that because "the sufferings in *The Monk* are so intolerable, the abominations are described so unhurriedly and so far beyond the needs of characterization . . . the reader suspects the man of a species of brutality who could find pleasure in wantonly imagining them."² Even Earnest A. Baker in his standard, *The History of the English Novel*, 1934, argues that "Lewis betrays the perverted lusts of a sadist. It was not merely a voracious but a morbid appetite that set him routing out the most horrifying stories of crime, Satanism, and fiendish cruelty that he could find in literature and recent collections of folklore."³


Interestingly though, Lewis foresees some of his own difficulties in *The Monk*. Raymond is warning his young page of the vicissitudes of authorship:

A bad composition carries with it its own punishment—contempt and ridicule. A good one excites envy, and entails upon its author a thousand mortifications: he finds himself assailed by partial and ill-humoured criticism: one man finds fault with the plan, another with the style, a third with the precept which it strives to inculcate; and they who cannot succeed in finding fault with the book, employ themselves in stigmatizing its author. They maliciously rake out from obscurity every little circumstance which may throw ridicule upon his private character or conduct, and aim at wounding the man since they cannot hurt the writer. In short, to enter the lists of literature is wilfully to expose yourself to the arrows of neglect, ridicule, envy, and disappointment. Whether you write well or ill, be assured that you will not escape from blame.4

Baker is not the only modern critic to attack Lewis. Sherburn and Bond in Baugh's literary history refer to him as an "'oversexed' adolescent," and Collins calls him "one of those freakish and fantastic little insects of which the enfolding amber of the eighteenth century is full."5 Saintsbury feels it is "unjust" to mention Lewis in the same breath with Ann Radcliffe and finds Walpole a gentleman and "true man of letters" while "Mat Lewis was a clever boy

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with a lively fancy, a knack of catching and even of anticipating popular tendencies in literature, a rather vulgar taste by nature, and no faculty of self-criticism to correct it."  

Mrs. Baron-Wilson stated clearly what she thought of Lewis’s writing but felt he was being unjustly accused of many things:

There is nothing else in English literature so wild, so extravagant, so utterly at variance with all the ordinary and received rules of art and of criticism (not to mention the recognised codes of morals), as the chief writings of 'Monk' Lewis. Yet we may tax the whole circle of our biographical literature to show us a man whose personal character and conduct—from his earliest youth to the close of his worldly career—were more strictly and emphatically those which we are accustomed to look for from a plain, right-thinking, common sense view of human affairs.

The best evidence shows that Lewis can be found, in fact, to have been somewhere between these extreme views. He was not ordinary. He was a successful novelist, playwright, poet, song writer, translator, who influenced and aided some of the greatest writers of his era.

Matthew Gregory Lewis was born July 9, 1775, to Matthew Lewis and Frances Maria Sewell Lewis. His father was wealthy; his income as Deputy-Secretary at War rose rapidly and he held extensive estates in Jamaica. Matthew entered Westminster School at the age of eight after attending

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7 [Mrs. Cornwall Baron-Wilson], *Life and Correspondence*, I, iv-v.
Marylebone Seminary whose "students were largely of the nobility and gentry."^8

Mrs. Baron-Wilson described Matthew's father as "a man of a tall and commanding person, cold and somewhat stately in his manners, and, even in the relations of husband and father, more likely to be respected than loved."^9 Mrs. Lewis, on the other hand, "was fond of surrounding herself with gay company, and her soirées became well known to musical, theatrical, and literary people." As Railo suggests, a disproportionate amount of emphasis is placed on the fact that Mrs. Lewis had a copy of Joseph Glanville's *Saducismus Triumphatus, or Full and Plain Evidence concerning Witches and Apparitions* in her home; however, since Mrs. Baron-Wilson reported that Matthew as a child enjoyed looking at the book and since the book was "abounding in descriptions of witches and visions," and "curious copperplates," it is pertinent to suggest it as an early influence on the young Lewis's imagination.\(^{10}\) When Matthew was six years old his mother left his father and took a lover. Mr. Lewis sued for divorce but did not receive it, and Matthew spent much of his time as "an umpire," as he put it.\(^{11}\) Even though she

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^9 *Life and Correspondence*, II, 84.


was well provided for by her husband, Matthew frequently
gave his mother money. Montague Summers holds that Lewis
turned to writing to aid his mother financially. But he
also argues that Mr. Lewis was "honour bound" to provide
handsomely for his wife because there was no actual guilt—a
statement which Peck conclusively disproves.

At fifteen, in April, 1790, Lewis entered Christ
Church from which he graduated in four years. He spent his
summer vacation of 1791 in Paris where he became familiar
with the contemporary French drama and Sturm und Drang plays,
which were common. It is this period when Lewis (at the
age of fifteen and sixteen) began industriously to discipline
himself to write. By September he had sent his mother a
completed play, which has been lost, and songs for a play
which she was writing, and had reported that he had completed
two volumes of a novel "which he expected to complete before
leaving Paris." This novel, a fragment of which was pub-
lished in Mrs. Baron-Wilson's Life and Correspondence, reveals
effectively the precocious skill and Horatian good
humor of the young Lewis. Like Fielding, Lewis owes Richardson
the dubious honor of influencing his first novel, for its

13 Ibid., p. 205.
14 Peck, A Life, p. 9.
15 II, 241-70.
title, *The Effusions of Sensibility; or Letters from Lady Honorina Harrowheart to Miss Sophonisba Simper: a Pathetic Novel in the Modern Taste*, being the first literary attempt of a Young Lady of tender feeling, identifies it as a burlesque of the Richardsonian novel and the text as a travesty on the sensibility, exalted style, and sham sensuality of Richardson and his imitators. 16 In the first letter Lady Honorina writes to Miss Sophonisba Simper that, while taking leave of the castle of Dunderhead, she could not resist hugging the little dog, Pompey, "blind of one eye and lame of one leg" which got her dirty; but, she explains, "it was the dirt of sensibility, and I felt myself proud of it." 17 Lady Honorina is obviously parodying the Pamela-like heroine when, lamenting, she asks "why did he [heaven] give me those winning manners, that amiable languor, those enchanting graces, which doom all who behold me to bend before the altar of my unfortunate charms?" After much more of this she adds, "Vanity is not one of my faults." 18 She explains to her friend an incident on the dance floor with the villainous Sir Barrabas Bagshot: "I hope your ladyship will

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16 Railo (*Haunted Castle*, p. 84) calls it "a parody of Richardson written in Fielding's style" and Frank Gees Black (*The Epistolary Novel in the Late Eighteenth Century* [Eugene, Oregon: University of Oregon, 1940], p. 98) says he may have had one of his sisters in mind.

17 [Baron-Wilson], *Life and Correspondence*, p. 244.

permit me to inquire to-morrow morning how your ladyship's great toe does.' This was too marked a speech for me possibly to mistake it for anything but an open declaration of the most ardent passion."19 Lewis lofts above the haughty style of sensibility:

My fond, feeling heart enjoyed not pleasures where no scope was allowed for the exercise of sympathetic sensations. It flew disgusted from the splendid follies of fashionable life, and sighed for the soft, secure serenity of sentimental sylvan scenes.20

After his return to Oxford, Lewis continued to write, producing several translations from French and completing the "comedy, The East Indian, performed at Drury Lane seven years afterward."21

The next notable experience to influence Lewis's literary productions, and subsequently that of English literature, was his visit to Germany in the following summer of 1792. His father, intending for his son eventually to pursue a diplomatic career, sent him to Weimar to learn the language, which Matthew accomplished easily. In Weimar, "then in its golden age, a center for the drama, music, and art of Germany," he met Goethe and Wieland and "determined his chief role in literary history, that of purveyor of German materials to the English Romantic movement."22 One critic has argued that Lewis's importance does not stem from

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19Ibid., p. 259.  
20Ibid., p. 251.  
21Peck, A Life, p. 10.  
22Ibid., pp. 11-14.
his having written *The Monk*, "these puerile effusions dashed down within the space of ten weeks," or any of his other works, but that his value rests on his having introduced German literature to England. 23 Miss Stockley in her book on the relationship of German literature to English at this time shows a high regard for the importance of Lewis as a translator. 24

Shortly after receiving his bachelor's degree from Oxford, Lewis left for The Hague where his father had secured him a position in the British embassy to Holland. After several months of ennui, he found acceptable company in The Hague with a group of French aristocrats who had had to seek asylum in Holland because of the revolution. 25 Because of the attacks on *The Monk* for its depiction of violence and horror, it is interesting to notice that while Lewis was writing the book at this time he also was subjected to violence because his duties necessitated his visiting towns near the war zone. In a letter to his mother dated November 22, 1794, he describes having seen a man holding his child on his lap hit by a cannonball which terribly maimed both the man and child. 26 While at The Hague, Lewis


26 [Baron-Wilson], *Life and Correspondence*, I, 142.
completed a farce, *The Twins*, which was to be "performed five years later at Drury Lane," and *The Monk*,\(^{27}\) which will be discussed in the following chapter.

Peck summarizes Lewis's life up to the publication of *The Monk*:

In his correspondence reflecting these early years, one theme stands out—his determination, even passion, to be a professional writer. The letters are packed with literary projects in every stage of progress—dramas, verses, translations, a romance—and apparently give only a partial glimpse of how much he actually wrote. From the ages of fourteen to twenty-one, as he later explains, he passed his time "scribbling Novels and Plays" and thus had the power "to deluge the town with such an inundation of Ghosts and Magicians, as would satisfy the thirst of the most insatiable swallower of wonders." In 1795, however, he still lived in carefree obscurity, a confident, impatient, and unsuccessful author.\(^{28}\)

It is difficult to separate much of the biographical information from its relationship with *The Monk* after its publication; for example, Lewis took a seat in the House of Commons before the second edition of *The Monk* (October, 1796) but was to be severely criticized for adding M.P. to his name on the title page. It is an interesting coincidence that he succeeded the celebrated Mr. Beckford of Fonthill Abbey, in the representation of Hindon, in Wiltshire, for which place he sat for some sessions. But the senate had no charms for the young poet. His parliamentary career was brief and inglorious... his attendance soon became extremely irregular; and in a few years he retired from it altogether.\(^{29}\)

\(^{27}\)Peck, *A Life*, p. 16.

\(^{28}\)Ibid., p. 17.

\(^{29}\)[Baron-Wilson], *Life and Correspondence*, I, 181.
The Monk was a tremendous success and, as Mrs. Baron-Wilson explained, excepting Lord Byron, few writers were ever more courted or caressed. The first names in rank and talent sought his society; he was the lion of every fashionable party; and it is whispered also, that, in spite of his somewhat plain features and insignificant figure, his romance made him a general favorite in the eyes of the fair. . . .

One obvious quality of Mrs. Baron-Wilson's biography of Lewis is the persistent attempt to involve him in intrigues with the fairer sex. He did become "warmly attached," however, to Lady Charlotte Campbell, the daughter of the Duke of Argyll, whom Lewis would visit for several months at a time after his having met the family in 1793. An experience that warrants mention, as both Mrs. Baron-Wilson and Peck have pointed out, because it indicates the amazing popularity of any "trifle from Lewis' pen" at the time occurred while Lewis and Lady Charlotte were walking at Inveraray Castle. While walking in the woods, they encountered a "maniac" girl who inspired Lewis to write "the well-known ballad of 'Crazy Jane.'" The ballad "Crazy Jane" became extremely popular, was set to music and sung by the fashionable and the

30Ibid., p. 179.
31Peck, A Life, pp. 46-47.
32[Baron-Wilson], Life and Correspondence, I, 186-87. Although "well-known" in 1839, this ballad is given in Appendix I.
"wandering damsels," and eventually created a fad of girls' hats called "Crazy Jane hats." 33

Regarding Lewis's private life, it should be mentioned that most writers, Summers, Railo, Parreaux, for example, describe Lewis as being homosexual, but as Peck points out:

the statement that Lewis was homosexual, while it would require for confirmation more convincing evidence than has been presented, is impossible to confirm or disprove. Moreover, the term is popularly used to cover such a wide range of phenomena, from the mere enjoyment of the company of one's own sex to the most appalling abnormalities, that a biographer who applies it to his subject would seem to need a careful definition of what he means, to say nothing of strong evidence. To publish the statement with such assurance was rather a pity, because since its appearance it has become fashionable to add piquancy to accounts of Lewis by describing him as sexually abnormal. 34

Even though he became famous, Lewis's life did not change radically after the publication of The Monk. In 1797, he completed his master's degree at Oxford, and he continued his prodigious writing output. In the five year period, "between the date of The Monk and 1801, eleven works were published or produced on the stage." In 1796, he published


34*Peck, A Life*, p. 66. As Peck explains, it was Montague Summers in his *The Gothic Quest* [1938] who first published the statement that Lewis was homosexual, and he based his evidence on a statement by Medwin (Conversations, p. 235) who wrote that he once heard Eyron say, "He was fond of the society of younger men than himself. . . . I remember Mrs. Hope [Pope] once asking who was Lewis' male-love this season!" (*A Life*, p. 65.)
the anonymous, unnoticed Village Virtues, a "dramatic satire." The year 1797 saw his The Minister which was a translation of Schiller's Kabale and Liebe. He followed his highly popular The Castle Spectre, performed at Drury Lane in 1797, with the comedies, The Twins and The East Indian, in 1799. He also "published Rolla, a translation of Kotzebue's melodrama Die Spanier in Peru oder Rollas Tod" and "The Love of Gain, a translation of Juvenal's thirteenth satire" in 1799. In 1801, Lewis published Alfonso, a tragedy in blank verse, and produced Adelmorn, the Outlaw: A Romantic Drama in Three Acts at Drury Lane.35

After The Monk and The Castle Spectre, Lewis's Tales of Wonder is his best-known work.36 The Tales of Wonder is particularly noteworthy in reference to the biography of Lewis, for his relationship to, and influence on, several major writers grew out of this collection of ballads. After having seen two of Walter Scott's translations from the German, Lewis expressed the desire to publish some of his ballads. "Scott, then an unknown young barrister four years

35 Ibid., pp. 52-53. Alfonso is discussed in some detail in Chapter IV.

36 Although usually dated 1801 (as by Summers, Farreaux and Railo), Peck mentions (A Life, p. 124 and n. 25, p. 311) that Oliver Farrar Emerson ("Monk" Lewis and the Tales of Terror," MLN, XXVIII [March, 1923], 154-59) gives 1800 as the publication of Tales of Wonder. Since the publication of A Life, Peck has discovered the additional evidence that John Wordsworth (brother to the poet) referred to the ballad collection in a letter, which proves it was published in 1800 ("On the Date of Tales of Wonder," ELN, II [September 1964-June 1965], 26-27.)
older than Lewis, was flattered by a request from such a
widely recognized literary figure," and they began communicat-
ing with each other in 1798. Lewis wrote to Scott explaining
the proposed collection which he called Tales of Terror at
this stage:

The Plan, which I propose to myself, is to col-
lect all the marvellous Ballads, that I can lay
my hands upon, and publish them under the title
of "Tales of Terror." Antient [sic] as well as
Modern, will be comprised in my design. . . .

Of the several sources for the ballads Lewis included
in the Tales of Wonder, Percy's Reliques was the leading
published source; however, it is usually remembered for
containing early poems of Scott's. But Lewis was more than

37 Peck, A Life, pp. 116-18. The spurious Tales of
Terror produced a complicated array of publications before
being settled. Farreux has a paragraph in his bibliography
(The Publication, p. 168) in which he explains that the
"bibliographical myth" that Lewis published Tales of Terror
arose out of confusion with An Apology for Tales of Terror
which was published "at Scott's request" in 1799, and with
an anonymous parody of Tales of Wonder called Tales of Terror.
Farreux credits Elizabeth Church in Modern Philology (1921-22).
M. Sadler in "Tales of Terror," The Times Literary Supplement,
January 7, 1939, corrected Montague Summers who had named the
Tales of Terror as being Lewis's several times in his Gothic
Quest [1936]. Sadler referred to an article by George P.
Johnston which had appeared in the relatively rare Proceedings
of the Edinburgh Bibliographical Society, 1890-1895 (Edinburgh,
1895). Peck, A Life, n. 14, p. 311, refers to both John-
ston's and Miss Church's articles as well as two by Oliver
Farrar Emerson, MLA (1923) and JEGP (1924). All of these
articles predate Summers' Gothic Quest and Baker's The History
of the English Novel, Vol. V (1934), both of which incorrectly
attribute Tales of Terror to Lewis.

a collector of Scott's work; he "introduced Scott to London society, arranged with his own publisher for the printing of some of Scott's work, and used his influence in the theater to have Scott's House of Aspen produced." 39 Lewis had known Robert Southey since Westminster School and asked him to contribute to Tales of Wonder, but they argued and were not friends again until 1805, when Lewis offered to "insure its reception," in Southey's words, if Southey would write a play. John Leyden also contributed a ballad to the work and had a "lighthearted love affair" with Lewis's sister Sophia. 40

Although Lewis's meeting with Byron was strained in 1813, because of the lines Byron had devoted to Lewis in his English Bards and Scotch Reviewers (1809), 41 "thereafter they often met in society and supped together. Byron valued Lewis' friendship and profited from his literary advice." 42 Peck discounts the often-told story that it was Lewis who proposed to the company at the Maison Diodati in Geneva that they each write a story. 43 However, Lewis did visit Byron

39 Ibid., p. 54. 40 Ibid., pp. 54-58.

41 See Appendix II for the segment.

42 Peck, A Life, p. 55. See Chapter IV, infra, p. 134, for the lines Byron borrowed from Lewis for Don Juan.

43 A Life, p. 159. Lafcadio Hearn, for example, tells this story and the equally untrue one that Byron wrote The Vampire, in Some Strange Literary Figures of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, ed. by R. Tanabe (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries, Inc., 1965), p. 78.
shortly after he, the Shelleys, and Dr. John Polidori decided each to write a story of the supernatural, which was to produce Polidori's *The Vampyre* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Even more significant to literary history than Lewis's establishing his reputation as a teller of ghost stories is his translation of Goethe's *Faust* for Byron. After reviewers of *Manfred* had "made much of Byron's debt to Goethe . . . Byron told his publisher, "*Faust* I never read, for I don't know German; but Matthew Monk Lewis, in 1816 at Coligny, translated most of it to me *viva voce*, and I was naturally much struck with it." 44

Meanwhile, over two dozen publications and dramatic productions had been keeping Lewis' name before the public in the ten years from 1803-1812, to say nothing of printed versions of his dramas and many editions of individual works. *The Harper's Daughter*, a tragedy reworked from *The Minister*, and *The Captive*, an ill-fated monodrama, were performed in 1803.45

In 1805 appeared one of Lewis's most popular works, *The Bravo of Venice. A Romance: Translated from the German*, which is a translation of Heinrich Zschokke's *Aballino der Grosse Bandit* (1794).46 Montague Summers finds that "Lewis has pretty freely adapted from Zschokke as the fancy took him," and quotes from Lewis's Advertisement:  

44 *Peck, A Life*, pp. 159-60.


I have taken some liberties with the original—
everything that relates to Monaldeschi (a personage who does not exist in the German romance), and the whole of the concluding chapter (with the exception of a very few sentences) have been added by myself. 47

Lewis then adapted The Bravo of Venice into a stage production, at the request of the manager of Covent Garden and called it Rugantino. It "not only made a most triumphant debut, but continued long after to be popular as an acting piece." 48 Part of Lewis's remarkable commercial success can be explained by the coincidence of timing, for the years 1804-1806 were the very height of "the vogue for imaginative terror." 49

In 1807, Lewis produced, with success equal to Rugantino, the tragedy of Adelgitha. It is written in blank verse like Alfonso, and, also like Alfonso, "contains numerous passages of great poetical beauty." It was "the favorite" of the season, according to Mrs. Baron-Wilson, but was "assailed, on the old ground of immorality" for the "very objectionable sentiment":

'Tis in man's power never to sin at all;
But, sinning once, to stop exceeds his power.

As the Life and Correspondence notes further, "This is something like the 'moral' of 'The Monk,' and calculated to exculpate wickedness, [rather] than to exemplify the easy

47 Summers, Gothic Quest, p. 268.
48 [Baron-Wilson], Life and Correspondence, II, 34.
descent from vice to infamy." Mrs. Baron-Wilson quoted Lewis as saying that *Adelgitha; or, the Fruits of a Single Error* was written "to illustrate a particular fact, viz., the difficulty of avoiding the evil consequence of a first false step." The prose romance, *Feudal Tyrants; or, The Counts of Carlesheim and Sargans*, is a very free translation of a German work. He improves the text by "adding, deleting, occasionally transposing phrases and short passages, and, rightly judging the narrative too complex, supplies retrospective transition." Because of the constant harassment by critics, he also "carefully omitted passages disparaging religion." The Wood Daemon; or, *The Clock has Struck. A Grand Romantic Melodrama, in Two Acts* was performed at Drury Lane in 1807. And the following year Drury Lane also presented *Venoni; or, The Novice of St. Mark's. A Drama, in Three Acts*. In 1808 also, Lewis published *He Loves and He Rides Away: A Favorite Ballad, Twelve Ballads, the Words and Music by M.G. Lewis, and Romantic Tales*.  

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50 *Life and Correspondence*, II, 35.  

The following year "the farce Temper, or The Domestic Tyrant was acted" and Monody on the Death of Sir John Moore was published and recited. Although Lewis announced in the middle of 1809 that he would probably write no more for the theater, he was persuaded to fashion Timour the Tarter for Covent Garden, which with the spectacle of One O'Clock, based on The Wood Daemon, was produced in 1811, followed in 1812 by Rich and Poor, a comic opera taken from The East Indian.

Poems, a small "collection of verses," also appeared in 1812, and was his last, except for the posthumously published Journal of a West India Proprietor.\(^{54}\)

Lewis's father died on May 17, 1812, and, except for approximately £1,000, Matthew received the whole estate making him a wealthy man at the age of thirty-seven.\(^{55}\) As a writer, according to Mrs. Baron-Wilson, he was now in the zenith of popularity. \ldots\ By turns he had astonished, fascinated, and amused; and in spite of the errors which had distinguished his career, his name, on the whole, was received as that of a man of genius, and one, moreover, from whom greater literary achievements were looked for than he had hitherto performed.\(^{56}\)

Lewis took the management of his business affairs seriously and seems to have thought of himself not as a writer, but as a West Indian proprietor by 1817.\(^{57}\) When he

\(^{54}\)Ibid., p. 67. The Journal (London: John Murray, 1834), is discussed in Chapter IV.

\(^{55}\)Ibid., p. 149.

\(^{56}\)Life and Correspondence, II, 119.

\(^{57}\)Lewis, Journal, pp. 363-64.
inherited his family fortune, Lewis inherited the Jamaica plantations which were manned by slaves, and this idea of owning humans seems to have bothered him more and more until he decided to take the very arduous and perilous voyage to Jamaica to see for himself that his slaves were not being mistreated or mistreated. He sailed from England November 11, 1815, sighted land December 24, and in the January 3, 1816, entry to his Journal he remarked that he was surprised to find his slaves happy, but was deeply troubled when they called him master.\(^58\) Opposition and public sentiment against slavery had gradually increased throughout Lewis's life,\(^59\) and Byron and Shelley seem to have influenced him against it;\(^60\) therefore it cannot be argued that Lewis was a leader in the sentiment against slavery. However, his reforms, such as abolishing the use of the cart-whip, increasing the slaves' days off, building a new hospital, and, in his absence, requiring that a record be kept of all punishments meted out, were not only progressive, but also stimulated quite a bit of hostile criticism from his fellow owners.\(^61\)

\(^58\) Journal, p. 62.

\(^59\) Peck, A Life, p. 150.

\(^60\) While visiting the Maison Diodati, Lewis wrote a codicil to his will (dated August 20, 1816) in which he stipulated reforms that would insure his slaves were humanely treated after his death. This codicil was witnessed by Byron, Shelley, and John Polidori. (Life and Correspondence, II, 162.)

\(^61\) Peck, A Life, pp. 155-57.
Even though production at his plantation had fallen to nearly a third, Lewis stuck by his reforms, and in the end it proved not only the most humanitarian, but the most practical.

After three months in Jamaica, Lewis left for England on April 1, 1816, and arrived at Gravesend June 5, 1816. He then traveled about Europe for a year and a half, visiting Byron at Geneva, crossing Northern Italy, visiting his sister Maria Lady Lushington at Naples, touring Greece and Switzerland, stopping in Paris, and finally departing for Jamaica again on November 5, 1817.

Although information on Lewis's journeys to Jamaica does not directly apply to his skill and importance as a Gothic novelist (except tangentially, since his trip provided him with material for his Journal which reveals his good sense, prose-skill, and interest in the native folklore) it does reveal the ridiculousness of many of the common misconceptions of Lewis, and, therefore, exculpates The Monk.

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62 Ibid., p. 156.

63 Ibid., p. 167. Peck reports that a letter dated 1834 from the magistrate appointed to supervise the slavery abolition in Jamaica "described the Lewis estates as valuable properties, whereas many others had by that time gone to ruin. The magistrate wrote that both the estates are now in the hands of his heirs, and not under the superintendence of the Court of Chancery. One of the proprietors, the son of Sir Henry Lushington, is now on the island, following the example of Lewis...."

64 Journal.

and other writings of the captious criticism which has been elicited by these biographical misconceptions.

Lewis visited his Hordley estate and found it "'a perfect hell,' full of tyranny, discontent, and general ill will."66 After imposing the rules he had established at his Cornwall estate, Lewis sailed for England. However, he had contacted yellow fever; he died, "apparently after great suffering," on May 16, 1818.67 As befitting the author of The Monk, his shipboard funeral was frighteningly eerie. An eyewitness account describes the coffin's immersion into the sea:

The coffin, encased in its shroud-like hammock, rose again almost immediately; the end of the hammock having become unfastened, and the weights which had been enclosed escaping, the wind getting under the canvass [sic] acted as a sail, and the body was slowly borne down the current away from us, in the direction of Jamaica.68

66 Ibid., p. 116.
67 Ibid., pp. 172-73.
68 [Baron-Wilson], Life and Correspondence, pp. 234-35.
CHAPTER III

THE MONK

Its Conception, Reception, and Criticism

On September 23, 1794, having passed his nineteenth birthday two months and two weeks earlier, Matthew G. Lewis wrote to his mother from The Hague:

What do you think of my having written, in the space of ten weeks, a romance of between three and 400 pages octavo? I have even written out half of it fair. It is called "The Monk," and I am myself so much pleased with it that, if the booksellers will not buy it, I shall publish it myself.1

His ebullience is as evident a month later (October 28, 1794) when he wrote the preface in imitation of Horace and, addressing the book, warned it of the vicissitudes of publication:

Go then, and pass that dangerous bourne
Whence never book can back return;
And when you find, condemned, despised
Neglected, blamed, and criticised,
Abuse from all who read you fall,
(If haply you be read at all),
Sorely will you your folly sigh at,
And wish for me, and home, and quiet.2

1[Mrs. Cornwall Baron-Wilson], The Life and Correspondence of M.G. Lewis (2 vols.; London: Henry Colburn, Publisher, 1839), I, 133-34. Hereinafter referred to as Life and Correspondence.

2The Monk (1st Evergreen ed.; New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1959), p. 53. Subsequent references to The Monk will be introduced parenthetically as here and will refer to this edition.
There has been a great deal of speculation as to the strict veracity of Lewis's statement that the novel had been written in ten weeks, especially since, four months earlier (May 18, 1794), he had written, "I have again taken up my romance; and perhaps by this time ten years, I may make shift to finish it fit for throwing into the fire." 3 In his definitive biography of Lewis, Louis F. Peck argues that the "again" in this statement identifies this work with one begun over two years before "in the style of the Castle of Otranto." 4 However, he had no motivation for stretching the truth in a letter to his mother, and probably his statement is essentially true.

Oddly enough, the first issue of the first edition has not been dated conclusively; however, both Peck and Parreaux accept the conclusions of William B. Todd "that a first edition of The Monk was probably printed in 1795, while the actual first published issue was withheld for some reason until March, 1796, when it officially appeared with new title leaves." 5 The problem is that, although there is

3 [Baron-Wilson], Life and Correspondence, I, 124.
a great deal of secondary evidence that The Monk was published in 1795, none of these copies have been found.

The year and a half between his finishing the novel and its appearance to the public must have seemed a long time to the young writer; but its appearance and enthusiastic reception by the public must have made up for the delay. Peck, following Todd, dates the second edition, October, 1796, but Parreaux found evidence that it came out before September 14, 1796. In either case, it obviously sold well. And Lewis was obviously pleased, for it was in this edition that he first affixed his name—in the first edition he had used only his initials, M.G.L., at the end of the preface.

However, nearly everything about The Monk soon came under critical fire—including the author—and, although a complete description of all the criticism of The Monk is beyond the scope of this study, the major recurrent approaches and evaluations of the novel must be outlined.

Little did Matthew Lewis know that even his age at the time of his authorship would be evidence used against him when he wrote in the preface:

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6 For example, Mrs. Cornwall Baron-Wilson so states in Life and Correspondence, p. 151.
8 Parreaux, The Publication, p. 43.
10 See Chapter II.
Again, should it be asked your page,
"Pray, what may be the author's age?"
Your faults, no doubt, will make it clear,
I scarce have seen my twentieth year,
Which passed, Kind Reader, on my word
While England's throne held George the Third.
(p. 34)

But even in such standard modern works as Baker's
The History of the English Novel one finds, "realism has no art beyond that of a matter-of-fact recital; after all, Lewis was only twenty when he published The Monk." 11 Lewis's age draws a rare note of levity in Baugh's influential literary history: "Or (to regard the matter with less gravity), The Monk may be considered the dream of an 'oversexed' adolescent, for Lewis was only twenty when he wrote it." 12 Other young writers have not received the same invectives. Miss Scarborough does not chastise Beckford for being twenty-five when he completed Vathek or Mary Shelley for being nineteen when she began Frankenstein. 13 Steeves's tone is laudatory when he mentions that Frances Burney was "probably"


12 Albert C. Baugh, ed., A Literary History of England, Book IV: The Nineteenth Century and After (1789-1939), by Samuel C. Chew and Richard B. Altick (2nd ed.; New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1967), p. 1195. Baugh should have edited more closely, for Lewis's statement that he was scarcely in his twentieth year did not mean that he was twenty years old.

only seventeen when she began to write *Evelina*, yet he finds *The Monk* "tainted with juvenility; for Lewis was not yet twenty when he wrote it."\(^1\)

Much of Farreaux's book is devoted to the legal, political, social, and religious conditions affecting the attack on Lewis, and he shows that it was Lewis's rank and position that particularly rankled the critics.\(^2\) Lewis had no way of knowing, but when he ascribed his new title, M.P., with his name on the second edition, he made himself even more vulnerable to censorious attack. Coleridge was shocked: "Yes! the author of the Monk signs himself a Legislator!—We stare and tremble."\(^3\)

Most of the disapprobation of *The Monk* was, and is, directed at the morality of the novel—its lack of didacticism, its profanity, its eroticism, and its too realistic description of crude charnel-house horrors. As to the first charge, Lewis answered in a letter to his father, February 23, 1798:


\(^{15}\)Ibid., p. 265. His next phrase, "although it is supposed to have undergone substantial revision before it was published," must be interpreted as a conscious attempt to mislead his readers—the implication being that Lewis was actually much older when he finally finished revising the book.

\(^{16}\)The Publication, passim.

Addison will vouch for me: the moral and outline of my story are taken from an allegory inserted by him in *The Guardian*, and which he commends highly, for ability of invention and propriety of object. Unluckily, in working it up, I thought that the stronger my colours, the more effect would my picture produce; and it never struck me, that the exhibition of vice, in her temporary triumph, might possibly do as much harm as her final exposure and punishment would do good.\(^1\)

Actually, as he admitted further on, his purpose was not didactic anyway: "But though I did not expect much benefit to arise from the perusal of a trifling romance . . . I was in my own mind quite certain that no harm could be produced . . . ."\(^1\) This argument would not have impressed his detractors because it was the "official creed of authors, critics and public, that the function of the novel was explicitly educational and its main business was to inculcate morality by example."\(^2\) The real irony, as Peck points out, is that there was no justification in this charge anyway, "for *The Monk* is carefully equipped with a two-fold moral lesson: pride is a sin and mercy a virtue."\(^2\) But what Peck, in his desire to defend Lewis, does not point out is that in its tone *The Monk* is not prescriptive, but descriptive.

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\(^1\) [Baron-Wilson], *Life and Correspondence*, p. 156.

\(^2\) Ibid.


Lewis is modern in this respect; he has treated ethics thematically. One feels upon completing *The Monk* that pride is a sin, but one does not feel that he has been told to search his soul and purge his pride.

The second question of morality arose out of a passage in which the Bible was discussed. Ambrosio, with intentions less than honorable, had called on Antonia and found her reading the Bible. Upon examination, however, he discovered that the Bible had been recopied with "all improper passages either altered or omitted" by Antonia’s mother who "was convinced that, unrestricted, no reading more improper could be permitted a young woman" (p. 258). Although these views were not uncommon in Lewis’s day, the Methodists and the Evangelical party of the Church were sensitive to them. 22

But Lewis had not finished; his choice of words, such as brothel, and editorial tone in the following lines were unfortunate:

Many of the narratives can only tend to excite ideas the worst calculated for a female breast: every thing is called plainly and roundly by its name; and the annals of a brothel would scarcely furnish a greater choice of indecent expressions. Yet, this is the book which young women are recommended to study, which is put into the hands of children, able to comprehend little more than those passages of which they had better remain ignorant, and which but too frequently inculcates the first rudiments of vice, and gives the first alarm to the still sleeping passions.

(p. 253)

The criticism is led by Coleridge who "denounces Lewis' irreverent passage concerning the Bible—though he does not find it too pernicious to quote in full—and expresses the belief that 'a mind may be so deeply depraved by the habit of reading lewd and voluptuous tales, as to use even the Bible in conjuring up the spirit of uncleanness.'"\textsuperscript{23}

"But where Coleridge had stared and trembled, [Thomas James] Mathias bellows."\textsuperscript{24} The fourth dialogue of Mathias's highly successful satirical poem, \textit{The Pursuits of Literature}, came out in July of 1797, and was the first to attack Lewis and \textit{The Monk}.\textsuperscript{25} Coleridge, the conservative, had attacked Lewis, but had managed to find a few kind words; Mathias, the arch-conservative, defender of the Crown and the faith, although hiding behind anonymity, plainly argued in both prose and poetry that Matthew Lewis should be tried for his blasphemy. Parreaux quotes from a note in \textit{The Pursuits of Literature}, "I believe this 7th Chap. of Vol. 2 is actionable at Common Law."\textsuperscript{26}

Although all the facts have not been obtained, according to Parreaux, the opposition to \textit{The Monk}, which grew dramatically after \textit{The Pursuits of Literature}, finally did

\textsuperscript{23}Coleridge, "A Review of \textit{The Monk}," as quoted in Peck, \textit{A Life}, p. 25.

\textsuperscript{24}Peck, \textit{A Life}, p. 26.

\textsuperscript{25}Parreaux, \textit{The Publication}, p. 106.

\textsuperscript{26}Mathias, p. 239, as quoted in \textit{The Publication}, p. 109.
result in a court injunction. According to the Life and Correspondence,

the Attorney-general was actually instructed by one of the societies for the suppression of vice, to move for an injunction to restrain its sale. To use the language of the law, a rule nisi was obtained, and the young author did not think proper to show cause against it. The rule, however, was never made absolute, and the prosecution was dropped. 27

As to the eroticism of The Monk, Coleridge felt this was "a fault for which no literary excellence can atone." He wrote, in his influential review, that the novel was a book "which if a parent saw in the hands of a son or daughter, he might reasonably turn pale." And that it gives "the most painful impression ... of great acquirements and splendid genius employed to furnish a mormo for children, a poison for youth, and a provocative for the debauchee." 28 Mathias, again, "seems merely to have followed the lead of the Critical Review, since he dwells on exactly those objections brought forward by Coleridge." He compared The Monk, as pornography, to Cleland's Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure. 29

The last element of immorality on which The Monk was attacked regarded the realistic charnel-house descriptions. Coleridge objected to the "sufferings" and abominations which

27[Baron-Wilson], pp. 153-54.


were described in too great of a detail.  

Because of the great outcry and subsequent legal action, Lewis acquiesced, and the fourth edition of *The Monk* was fully expurgated of all the objectionable passages including the section on the Bible quoted above.  

Even into the twentieth century, critics have found *The Monk* immoral, although the objections are more often aimed at the revolting scenes rather than at the erotic ones. 

One widely-read literary history, for example, describes Lewis as being "capable only of such coarse, broad strokes in characterization and setting as make his scenes of lust and torture and rotting corpses repellent beyond description."  

A more recent work, however, characterizes the modern reader's reaction to *The Monk* by saying that the novel is remembered for the wrong reason of being risqué which it is not.  

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30 *Peck, A Life*, p. 25.  
too, to remember that The Monk was not alone, and not the first, to shock its readers. Steeves has compiled a long list of books in which "sexual violence, or an attempt at it, has at least an incidental place"—often the "actual complication" of the novel.34 Another critic has written a ten page article outlining the incest theme in eighteenth-century works.35 Even Lewis's realistic description of the revolting had its harbingers in the satire of Smollett and Swift, who "made pretty liberal use of the physically revolting."36

As could be expected, all the talk of immorality, like Byron's "Cain" and "Don Juan" added to its popularity,37 but one cannot argue that The Monk's popularity when it was published and subsequent existence has depended solely on its sensational aspects, for as Kehrotra describes it, Arville Castle, An Historical Romance (1795), was even more violent and gruesome than The Monk, yet, of course, it is now all but forgotten.38

34Ibid., p. 98. Among his examples are Pamela, Tom Jones, Peregrine Pickle, and Evelina, as well as "dozens of minor novels."


36Steeves, Before Jane Austen, p. 132.

37[Baron-Wilson], Life and Correspondence, I, 151.

Lewis’s "tantalizing remark," as Peck calls it, that there are probably many more sources than he has named in the Advertisement, "together with a general suspicion that The Monk was too remarkable an achievement for a nineteen-year-old author, encouraged the belief that Lewis was deliberately concealing literary debts." Thus, the second major critical issue was raised: the question of originality and plagiarism.

It began, as the question of morality, in February, 1797, with the publication of a review—itas was not Coleridge in the Critical Review, however, but the European Magazine—which accused The Monk of lacking originality.

The accusation of plagiarism has proven to be more popular to modern critics than that of blasphemy was to Lewis’s contemporaries. Miss Birkhead typically represents this biased view when she states that Lewis "appears ... rather as the perpetrator of a series of ingenious thefts than as the creator of a novel." Then for proof she quotes the Monthly Review (June, 1797):

The outline of the Monk Ambrosio’s story was suggested by that of the Santon Barissa [Barsisa] in the Guardian; the form of temptation is borrowed from The Devil in Love of Canzotte [Cazotte], and the catastrophe is taken from The Sorcerer. The adventures of Raymond and Agnes are less obviously imitations, yet the forest scene near Strasburg brings

39Peck, A Life, p. 20.
40Ibid., p. 24.
to mind an incident in Smollett's Count Fathom; the bleeding nun is described by the author as a popular tale of the Germans, and the convent prison resembles the inflictions of Mrs. Radcliffe. [The bracketed corrections are hers.]

After this quotation, Miss Birkhead has one contribution of her own to add: the reviewer should have mentioned the legend of the Wandering Jew as having been a "borrowing." 41

To take these sources in order, it seems unfair to accuse Lewis of having stolen the outline of the story when the first line of the Advertisement to The Monk acknowledges this source so plainly: "The first idea of this Romance was suggested by the story of the Santon Barsisa, related in The Guardian" (p. 32). Martha Pike Conant calls "The Santon Barsisa" the best tale in the collection of Oriental tales called the Turkish Tales. This tale was quoted in some detail by Steele in the Guardian (No. 143) which was Lewis's source. 42

The tale has the appealing theme that so fascinated Lewis: only one minor mistake is all that is necessary to begin an inextricable series of events leading to doom and damnation. The plot, as summarized by Praz, reveals the similarities with The Monk:

Satan, alarmed at the excessive holiness of Barsisa, sends him the daughter of a king to


heal, and thus tempts him, first to sin, and then to kill his victim. Barsisa is arrested; in his danger he acknowledges Satan as his god, and Satan in return promises to save him, but betrays him.43

Called by Peck "trenchant but illogical," Dorothy Scarborough's statement that Lewis "defended the indecency of his book by asserting that he took the plot from a story in The Guardian . . . ingeniously intimating that plagiarized immorality is less reprehensible than original material"44 reveals how close some critics get to hysteria when discussing The Monk.

As to Miss Birkhead's second item in her list of Lewis's "borrowings," Peck has found that the evidence on which the "proof" of Lewis's debt to Cazotte is based is false; there is, therefore, no reason to doubt Lewis's statement that he did not see Le Diable Amoureux until after The Monk was published.45 However, "it is quite certain that the conclusion of The Monk as it originally appeared was inspired by Veit Weber's" tale Teufelsbeschworung, or The Sorcerer; Lewis later eliminated this very powerful scene and replaced it with a moralistic passage, "possibly because the borrowing was promptly pointed out


44 The Supernatural, p. 17.

in the *Monthly Review*. 46

It should have embarrassed Miss Birkhead to repeat the statement, "The adventures of Raymond and Agnes are less obviously imitations," without some proof, and because one scene "brings to mind" another novel is inconsequential.

Lewis did say that the bleeding nun was a living traditional tale, but he said so in acknowledgment of the influences in the Advertisement (p. 32) and should not be chastised for it. In addition, to call a writer's use of folklore and traditional material, such as the "bleeding nun" legend and the wandering Jew, "theft" is akin to calling a poet's use of a literary heritage appropriation. Baugh's *A Literary History* unites the accusation of theft and the charge of immorality by arguing that Lewis "adopted the great themes of Faust and Ahasuerus" to "crude purposes." 47

That these aspects of the indebtedness of *The Monk* are included as representative of the critical condemnation of the novel is another of the ironies associated with this subject, for it is Lewis's ability to utilize the appeal of archetypal characters and motifs while satisfying the conditions of Gothicism that made *The Monk* popular and which insured its long, though precarious, existence to today. Steeves named other "traditional sources":


47p. 1195.
Apart from its central theme of the apostate monk, which was not unfamiliar, Lewis taps traditional sources for other matters of legend. The wandering Jew, the haunted castle, the demon lover, the wayside inn as a cover for a shambles, all have a part in the continuity of The Monk.48

Finally, the "convent prison" not only "resembles the inflictions of Mrs. Radcliffe," but resembles the inflictions of most Gothic novels. Clearly, these influences do not justify Miss Birkhead's pejorative remark that Lewis "is one of the Dick Turpins of fiction and seizes his booty where he will in a high-handed and somewhat unscrupulous fashion."49

It is unfortunate that Miss Thompkins relied so trustingly on an article in Herrigs Archive, CXI, by Georg Herzfeld which stated that Lewis took two-thirds of The Monk "almost word for word from a German romance, Die Blutende Gestalt mit Dolch und Lampe, oder die Beschwörung im Schloß Stern bei Prag."50 For the German romance has been found to be "an adaptation of the German version of The Monk."51 Because of following this misinformation, Miss Thompkins's very useful and reliable book The Popular Novel in England: 1770-1800 only mentions The Monk directly a few times and

48Before Jane Austen, p. 271.
49Tale of Terror, p. 64.
50Thompkins, The Popular Novel, p. 245.
once she refers to it as "a German adaptation" without even mentioning its name. 52

Peck has found "more than fifty works and authors that have from time to time been named as Lewis' creditors," but he points out, "to name works Lewis may have read is easy—he read a great many." The problem is to show specific debt, and hunting through Gothic literature for a single source is frustrating because, in finding it, "one finds also a dozen others." 53 These remarks apply to Baker who mentions that "features [of The Monk] can be traced to Marlowe's Doctor Faustus, and probably to Greene's Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay, though perhaps the borrowings may have been indirect," 54 to Saintsbury who finds models on "the poems of Bürger and the other early [German] romantics" and the fiction of Schiller and of Heinse, 55 to Mehrotra who points out the similarities in the names Matilda, Theodore, and Father Jerome, and the similar gypsy prophecies in The Monk and The Castle of Otranto, 56 to Chew and Altick who claim Lewis was influenced by reading "Tiech, Spiess, Musäus, and other prolific spawners of the macabre," 57 and to Praz who

52 P. 246.
54 Sentiment and the Gothic, p. 208.
56 Walpole and the English Novel, pp. 150-51.
57 The Nineteenth Century, p. 1195.
finds that the naked devil conjured up in *The Monk* (p. 273) has "a touch of Eblis in *Vathek."*58 Feck sums up the issue of plagiarism and originality in *The Monk* well:

Undoubtedly other incidental borrowings will be discovered from time to time. It has never been shown, however, that Lewis' debt to one or to several works was so heavy as to discredit the originality of his romance.59

In fairness to the early critics and to *The Monk*, it should be mentioned that not all of the criticism was negative and prejudiced.

Four months after *The Monk* had appeared, the *Monthly Mirror* for June gave it a page of unqualified admiration. "We really do not remember," said the critic, "to have read a more interesting production. The stronger passions are finely delineated and exemplified in the progress of artful temptation working on self-sufficient pride, superstition, and lasciviousness. . . . The whole is very skilfully managed, and reflects the highest credit on the judgment and imagination of the writer."60

As a matter of fact, nearly all the contemporary reviewers felt that the book was good and that it revealed genius in its author.61 It was felt to be so skilful that Mathias


60 Ibid., pp. 23–24. This review was written before the signed edition of *The Monk* was released, but even after the storm of criticism broke in February of 1797, there were defenders of *The Monk* and of Lewis. See *A Life*, pp. 27–28, and Farreaux's chapters, "Ambiguity of Contemporary Feeling About *The Monk*: Horror and Fascination," and "Advocates for *The Monk,*" in *The Publication*.

in his The Pursuits of Literature argued that this made the book even more dangerous. What if the author of The Monk "is a man of genius and fancy?" he asked. "So much the worse . . . the novel is more alluring on that account." 62

Coleridge also had a few commendatory remarks—"it was, he said, "the offspring of no common genius." 63 But then he took what has proven to be a minority position in praising the plot of The Monk. He acknowledged that the subplot was too long, but added that it was "skillfully subordinated and connected with the main story," in Peck's words. 64 Critics have often underestimated the skill involved in the relationship of the subplot to the major plot of the novel; Baker, for example, states that the subplot is "tied into the plot rather than united with it, and has very little bearing on the main theme." 65

Plot and Organization

At the risk of giving the impression of triteness, which Nelson points out is the danger of narrowly summarizing The Monk, 66 something of the intricacy and interrelationship

62 The Pursuits of Literature, as quoted in Parreaux, The Publication, p. 28.
64 A Life, p. 24.
65 Baker, Sentiment and the Gothic, p. 211.
of the dual plots should be shown.

The primary plot of the novel is devoted to showing the fall of Ambrosio, the Capuchin Monk, from his position as the most holy man in Madrid to his death and damnation. The opening scene of the book is well chosen to introduce the major characters involved in this fall: a large crowd has filled Ambrosio's church in expectation of his sermon when Antonia and her aunt Leonella enter. Unable to sit, they start to leave, but are detained by two "cavaliers" who offer them their seats. By the end of the novel, Antonia, epitome of innocence, "rather bewitching than beautiful" and "scarcely fifteen" (p. 39), will have been abducted from her home, raped in the subterranean vaults of the monastery, and stabbed to death by Ambrosio. The Monk is described as he arrives at the church:

He was a man of noble part and commanding presence. His stature was lofty, and his features uncommonly handsome. His nose was aquiline, his eyes large, black and sparkling, and his dark brows almost joined together.... Study and watching had entirely deprived his cheek of colour. Tranquility reigned upon his smooth unwrinkled forehead; and content, expressed upon every feature, seemed to announce the man equally unacquainted with cares and crimes.  

(p. 45)

This description does not identify Ambrosio as a typical Gothic villain, yet his penetrating glance does.

Still there was a certain severity in his look and manner that inspired universal awe, and few could sustain the glance of his eye, at once fiery and penetrating. Such was Ambrosio, abbot of the Capuchins, and surnamed "The Man of Holiness."  

(p. 45)
Ambrosio gave his discourse;

yet, when it concluded, the audience grieved that
it had not lasted longer. . . . As Ambrosio
descended from the pulpit, his auditors crowded
round him, loaded him with blessings, threw them-
selves at his feet, and kissed the hem of his gar-
ment. (p. 45)

Only those uninitiated to the Gothic novel would be
surprised to find Ambrosio, in the final paragraph, being
carried aloft by the devil, "till reaching a dreadful height,
he released the sufferer. . . . Bruised and mangled," Ambrosio
lay in the sun by a river; "myriads of insects" drank his
blood and "inflicted on him tortures the most exquisite and
insupportable. . . . The eagles of the rock tore his flesh
piecemeal, and dug out his eye-balls with their crooked
beaks." Hearing the river, he vainly tried to find it to
quench his thirst.

Blind, maimed, helpless, and despairing, venting
his rage in blasphemy and curses, execrating his
existence, yet dreading the arrival of death
destined to yield him up to greater torments, six
miserable days did the villain languish. On the
seventh a violent storm arose: the winds in fury
rent up rocks and forests: the sky was now black
with clouds, now sheeted with fire: the rain fell
in torrents; it swelled the stream; the waves over-
flowed their banks; they reached the spot where
Ambrosio lay, and, when they abated, carried with
them into the river the corpse of the despairing monk. 67
(p. 420)

The tie, in the opening scene, of this story with the subplot

67Ibid., p. 242. Nelson calls this "the local
masterpiece of gothic novel writing" which "in an obverse
way . . . is quite as violent and yet rhetorically finished
as Pushkin's poem 'The Prophet,' which it strangely resembles."
is through the character Lorenzo, who falls in love with Antonia and finds her with Ambrosio in time for her to die in his arms, but who also is the brother of Agnes, the heroine of the subplot. Agnes is presented as a foil to Ambrosio. Like him, she is innocent at first, is a member of a cloistered religious community, is led to sin through sexual desire, and is tortured beyond all but Lewis's graphic descriptive abilities. Unlike Ambrosio, Agnes is an unwilling, rather than unknowing, member of a religious group, and is finally released from her suffering. However, the major differences between the two lie in their personalities and the manner of their temptation, i.e., Ambrosio was proud and unmerciful, while Agnes was kind, and Ambrosio's temptation was calculated by Matilda, while Agnes and Raymond did not consciously intend for their relationship to develop to the point it did.

To show how the Raymond and Agnes subplot "moves along intermittently with the story of the monk himself" requires that the plot be summarized as it appears rather than dividing it into its elements.

After Ambrosio's sermon, in the first chapter, Lorenzo speaks of his sister Agnes whom he thinks has taken "the veil by her own desire" (p. 51). Waiting to see Agnes who is a member of the convent of St. Clare which is next.
to Ambrosio's monastery, Lorenzo discovers Raymond de las Cisternas passing a note to Agnes. The scene then shifts away from Lorenzo and picks up Antonia on her way home from the sermon. Notable in this chapter is the existence of foreshadowing which, of course, lends plot unity to the novel. Ironically, "Antonia, while she gazed upon him [Ambrosio] eagerly, felt a pleasure fluttering in her bosom which till then had been unknown to her" (p. 45). Lorenzo has a surrealistic dream presaging future events in which a gigantic monster with "Pride! Lust! Inhumanity!" branded into his forehead prevents his marriage to Antonia (p. 53); Antonia is forewarned of her impending doom by a gypsy in the first of nine poems in the novel:

"Jesus! what a palm is there!  
Chaste, and gentle, young and fair,  
Perfect mind and form possessing,  
You would be some good man's blessing:  
But, alas! this line discovers  
That destruction o'er you hovers;  
Lustful man and crafty devil  
Will combine to work your evil;  
And from earth by sorrows driven,  
Soon your soul must speed to heaven."
(p. 62)

Another technique—it could not be called a "fault" in this instance—that is introduced in the first chapter is the sharp change of time and setting indicated in the text by a line separating the sections.

Chapter II, again shifting back to the time immediately following Ambrosio's speech and focusing on Ambrosio, is completely devoted to Ambrosio and his relationship to Agnes.
and a new character, Rosario. Lewis shows Ambrosio alone, and, for the first time, the reader is permitted to see behind the public to the private man. He is definitely not saintly. As soon as he is in the privacy of his cell, he bursts with feelings of pride and superiority. As Peck points out, this part of the story "is well proportioned and swift—even as the monk reflects upon his impregnable virtue, Rosario, the instrument of his future destruction, knocks softly at the door." 69

Rosario, a young novice who mysteriously never allowed anyone to see his face, had become very close to his abbot—"Ambrosio was every day more charmed with the vivacity of his genius, the simplicity of his manners, and the rectitude of his heart: in short, he loved him with all the affection of a father" (p. 67). Unfortunately for Ambrosio, Rosario reveals that he is not the novice Ambrosio thought, but a young maid, Matilda de Villanegas. Ambrosio is appalled and adamant that she leave, but Matilda, in a move calculated to excite his pity by threatening suicide, ripped open part of her habit and "half exposed" her bosom. This scene with its description of Matilda's "beauteous orb" and the following in which Ambrosio in a dream confused Matilda with "the image of his favourite Kadona" were deleted from the fourth expurgated edition of The Monk. 70 After saving Ambrosio's

69 A Life, p. 38.
70 Ibid., p. 34.
life by sucking the poison from his snake bite wound and thus endangering her own, Matilda finally entices the monk to forget "his vows, his sanctity, and his fame," and the chapter ends.

The other important event in the second chapter is the relationship of Ambrosio to Agnes, for this is one of the major ties between the primary and the subordinate plots. After Agnes received the billet-doux from Raymond, she went to confess to Ambrosio. He discovered and read the note which revealed that she was pregnant and that she planned to escape the convent on the following night. She begged him for compassion, but he showed none, calling in the prioress and watching as she was dragged away. But it is Agnes who supplies the prophecy of doom this time:

"Hear me! . . . man of an hard heart! Hear me, proud, stern and cruel! You could have saved me; you could have restored me to happiness and virtue, but would not; you are the destroyer of my soul; you are my murderer, and on you fall the curse of my death and my unborn infant's! . . . But the day of trial will arrive. Oh! then when you yield to impetuous passions; . . . when, shuddering, you look back upon your crimes, and solicit, with terror, the mercy of your God, oh! in that fearful moment think upon me!" (p. 72)

After the night of dreaming of Matilda and the Madonna, he remembered Agnes. "'I already feel thy curse!'" he said (p. 89).

Chapters III, IV, and V constitute the weight of the Raymond-Agnes subplot; although, since background information about Antonia is also supplied, the chapters always
provide contrast if not substance to the principal story. It should always be remembered, however, that the subplot can be shown to embellish and support more substantially the primary plot and the theme than they are usually given credit. The Monk is a Gothic novel which, as explained above, by definition means that it contains a very complex, but often episodic, plot. It is true that The Monk is "involved and interrupted," but it is not true that it "scarcely begins to show interest until it is nearly a third completed." Lewis had said this about Mrs. Radcliffe's Mysteries of Udolpho and consciously built interest and mystery to a peak in Chapter II before stopping to relate the Raymond and Agnes plot.

Lorenzo and Raymond are introduced as they were left in Chapter I—hurrying to Raymond's hotel to clear up what appears to Lorenzo as an affront to the honor of his family. Raymond finds he must digress to when he set out on his adventures, and all of Chapter III is devoted to an adventure of his with an organized group of banditti in Germany—banditti and robbers, incidentally, were popular in Gothic novels at the end of the century. The only tie, however, that Raymond's exciting narrow escape has with the story he is telling Lorenzo is that in escaping, he rescued the

71 Steeves, Before Jane Austen, p. 266.
72 See Thompkins, The Popular Novel, p. 256, for Anne Radcliffe's use of minor characters.
baroness Lindenberg, Donna Rodolpha. In the next chapter and the next volume, Lorenzo is invited to the castle of Lindenberg where he met and fell in love with Agnes, the baroness's niece. Lewis skillfully keeps the point of view clear by having Lorenzo occasionally interrupt Raymond's narrative to question him. Out of this Lorenzo learns for the first time that his family had decided on Agnes's going to a convent and that when the time came she did not want to go. There is a further complication, however, in the love affair of Raymond and Agnes: Donna Rodolpha is infatuated with Raymond and upon learning of his interest in her niece, banishes him from the castle.

To get Agnes out of the castle, she and Raymond devise the scheme of her impersonating a legendary ghost, the bleeding nun, who was supposed to leave the castle every fifth year on the fifth of May.

It is at this point, over a fourth of the way through the book, that Lewis introduces the supernatural and fully utilizes his ability to frighten. It is this segment, also, that was so frequently plagiarized by the playwrights and chap-book writers of the day. Coleridge praised this and the related wandering Jew segment of the novel. "Coleridge had been impressed, he said, by the tale of the Bleeding Nun, 'truly terrific.' He recognized the 'great vigour of fancy' displayed in the 'bold' and 'happy' conception of the Wandering Jew. . . ."73

73 Parreaux, The Publication, p. 76.
Raymond appeared at the castle at the appointed hour, picked up Agnes, and their escape seemed perfect. But the carriage rolled faster and faster until the postillions were thrown off; "thick clouds obscured the sky: the winds howled around" them and they finally wrecked (p. 167). From his recovery room, Raymond could learn of no trace of Agnes and that night he was visited by the "visionary nun" who

grasped with her icy fingers my hand . . . and, pressing her cold lips to mine, again repeated,
"Raymond! Raymond! Thou art mine!
"Raymond! Raymond! I am thine!
"In thy veins while blood shall roll,
"I am thine!
"Thou art mine!
"Mine thy body! Mine thy soul!"

(pp. 170-71)

The wandering Jew enters the tale as the exorcisor of his nightly visitor.

Raymond finishes recounting his history to Lorenzo by explaining that he discovered Agnes in the Convent of St. Clare, disguised himself as a gardener to gain entrance (in the common motif from folklore), and "in an unguarded moment" seduced her (p. 193). She then rejected him until, learning that she was pregnant, she wrote to him. His reply to this letter was the one Ambrosio intercepted.

Lorenzo, after learning of the circumstances of Raymond and Agnes's affair, forgives Raymond and works with him to obtain the release of Agnes from the convent. He also continues his courtship of Antonia, although her mother,
Elvira, discourages the relationship. Lorenzo is finally told by the villainous domina of St. Clare that Agnes has died. After two months with no more information, he decides to ask his uncle's permission to marry Antonia.

John Berryman, in his introduction to the text of *The Monk* used herein, outlines the first five chapters and states,

I have scarcely ever read an excellent novel which for so long fails to declare its quality. Up to the sixth chapter, or halfway through the book, it is charming and interesting in varying degrees, eminently readable, but hardly remarkable. Then it becomes, with great suddenness, passionate and astonishing. (pp. 12-13)

Although Berryman underestimates the value of the first half of the novel in providing the expectation of the reader, which is finally satisfied in the last half, it is true that the novel seems to fairly flow toward its conclusion through the second half.

Chapter VI begins dramatically when

the burst of transport was passed; Ambrosio's lust was satisfied. Pleasure fled, and Shame usurped her seat in his bosom. . . . A melancholy silence prevailed, during which both seemed buried with disagreeable reflections. (p. 226)

Ambrosio's guilt plagues him. His feelings vacillate. He decides to adhere strictly to every rule of his order save chastity, but the author enters to remind the reader that because of his vows Ambrosio's crime was most heinous. Matilda, it will be remembered, is dying of the snake venom which she obtained in saving Ambrosio's life. It therefore
becomes necessary for her to descend into the catacombs running beneath St. Clare’s to conjure her devil and effect her cure. Once again Lewis offers a bond in the two plots of the novel. As Ambrosio and Matilda enter the subterranean passages, they overhear the evil prioress explaining to a nun why Agnes must "be made a terrible example of my justice and resentment" and be punished "with all the rigour of which our severe laws admit" (p. 232). The monk decides to intercede on Agnes’s behalf, but Matilda warns him that it may draw suspicious attention to him. He agrees but notes the hardened change in Matilda. Ambrosio then rapidly tires of Matilda and after seeing Antonia daydreams of her. Meanwhile Antonia was dreaming of the monk and Lorenzo as the bell in the Capuchin cathedral rang midnight portentously.

In the seventh chapter Matilda, now resigned to acting as an accomplice to aid the libidinous monk, tempts him to accept the supernatural aid of a door-opening myrtle branch by magically showing him Antonia in her bath, one of the most erotic descriptions of the novel. Ambrosio is waiting impatiently for the night as the chapter closes.

Chapter VIII is the first chapter of the third and final volume. In it Agnes’s "death" has produced despairing illness in Raymond and has prevented Lorenzo from proposing to Antonia. Ambrosio, with his magical "constellated myrtle," enters Antonia’s bedchamber, is surprised by her
mother, Elvira, whom he kills. The remembrance of Agnes and her curse again occurs to him.

Lewis is consistently best when building suspense and introducing supernatural events. One of the most skillful scenes of the novel occurs in the ninth chapter. Antonia is waiting for the arrival of her Aunt Leonella late into the night. Nervously, she begins to play her guitar, quits, takes up her embroidery frame, but keeps breaking the threads. Realism is obtained through description of details. "A flake of wax fell from the taper... upon a favorite wreath of violets." The sense of gloom and impending doom is as fine as any Mrs. Radcliffe ever created. She paced back and forth; entered the adjoining room, but it reminded her of her mother. She moved the light by a chair--her mother's favorite. There are symbols: "the cheerless hearth where stood an extinguished lamp, and a few dying plants in the window," "the taper, which now drew towards its end" (pp. 304-306). She quieted long enough to read the ballad "Alonzo the Brave and Fair Imogine"74 (pp. 306-309), but it excited her "strong inclination to the marvellous."

The symbol of the dying candle is taken up again as the description becomes textbook Gothic:

It was the dead of night; she was alone, and in the chamber once occupied by her deceased mother. The weather was comfortless and stormy; the wind howled around the house, the doors rattled in

74 This frequently anthologized poem is discussed in the following chapter.
their frames, and the heavy rain pattered against the windows. No other sound was heard. The taper now burnt down to the socket, sometimes flaring upwards, shot a gleam of light through the room, then sinking again seemed upon the point of expiring. Antonia's heart throbbed with agitation; her eyes wandered fearfully over the objects around her, as the trembling flame illuminated them at intervals. (p. 309)

She tried unsuccessfully to move. Lewis reveals his technique of creating suspense through his diction. Antonia "fancied" she heard a low sigh, and was about to take the lamp, when an "imaginary noise stopped her" [italics mine]. The choice of these words keeps the reader wondering whether what she heard was imaginative and suggests Antonia's doubts. Finally "she beheld a tall thin figure, wrapped in a white shroud which covered it from head to foot." Following conventional ghost-lore, Lewis uses the candle image the last time and introduces the favorite surrealistic symbol—the clock.

The dying taper darted a blue and melancholy flame as the figure advanced towards it. Over the table was fixed a small clock; the hand of it was upon the stroke of three. The figure stopped opposite to the clock: it raised its right arm, and pointed to the hour, at the same time looking earnestly upon Antonia.

The figure had come to say it would meet Antonia in three days. When Antonia asks whom she would meet and where, "The figure pointed to the ground with one hand, and with the other raised the linen which covered its face." Antonia recognized her mother and fainted. If this were a scene out of Ann Radcliffe, the reader would know that Elvira had not
really been killed by the monk, but as it is Lewis, one knows that the figure is a ghost and that Antonia will join her in three days.

In the conclusion of the chapter, Ambrosio administers the often-found potion which simulates death, and Antonia is immured in the convent catacombs.

The following chapters, X and XI, provide the conclusion of the novel. Lorenzo, having learned of the cruelty of the domina, stops the midnight St. Clare fete, and discloses the atrocities to the crowd, which brutally murders the prioress in the street. Lorenzo finds the horrible dying woman in the catacombs of the convent, not recognizing her as his sister Agnes. Meanwhile, Ambrosio, unknowing of the excitement, descends to the tombs to wake Antonia and violate her amidst the decaying corpses. Above, the convent bells are ringing, and the crowds are riotously hunting the nuns. Antonia dies in Lorenzo's arms, but there is a happy ending for Raymond and Agnes. And, after he recovers, Lorenzo marries Virginia who was introduced into the book in this chapter.

The final chapter is devoted to the Inquisition's trial by torture of Ambrosio, his sentence to die, pact with the devil, and subsequent betrayal and death.

As Coleridge pointed out, the two plots of The Monk are very closely entwined; however, there is another

75See n. 64, p. 84, supra.
element in the plot which should be mentioned: the short
digressions. After Raymond rescued the Baroness in Germany,
Lewis stopped to give several pages to the history of the
wife of the leader of the banditti—Marguerite (pp. 137-40).
Dame Jacintha rushed to the Abbot to find aid for Antonia
and attempted to divulge her whole history (pp. 313-17).
Peck mentions these as "other weaknesses" and explains, "The
reader's patience is sometimes tried by interpolated his-
tories, as when Marguerite, a minor character, introduces
her story with the weary formula, 'I was born in Strasbour,
of respectable parents.'" Although it is no justification of
Lewis's digressions, it should be pointed out that the inclusion
of the "little history," Steeves's term, is found throughout
the eighteenth-century novel and includes such well-known
examples as the Man of the Hill episode in Tom Jones and Henry
Mackenzie's The Man of Feeling which is "a bouquet of little
histories." In fact, by Steeves's definition, all of the
"History of Don Raymond" (pp. 113-97) may be considered as
a "little history." 

76 Steeves, Before Jane Austen, pp. 171-97.
77 Ibid., pp. 170-71. He describes the "little
history": "The narrator is the subject of his own narrative.
The story is moral; that is, a commentary upon conduct and
its relation to happiness. It usually relates the story of
a reckless or vicious life, illustrating the value of virtue
by the bad effects of wicked ways. In most cases, therefore,
the little histories are stories of libertinism and dissipa-
tion, ending in penitence."
Gothic Elements

Returning to the outline of Gothic elements in the first chapter of this study, *The Monk* will be considered as it reflects setting, characterization, humor, symbolism and allegory, and experimentation. The other elements have been discussed in relation to the criticism and the plot—the supernatural elements have been mentioned with a brief contrast suggested between Ann Radcliffe's and Lewis's techniques; some of the novel's sensibility has been revealed in the plot outline, and the didacticism, or lack of it, has been discussed in relation to the early criticism; and, finally, the theme of persecution is obvious, and criticism of his charnel-house realism has been indicated.

The setting of *The Monk* is Madrid, in the primary plot, and Germany, in the subplot. "The period is indefinite, but the reader calls up in imagination the time of the Inquisition and Philip II as a suitable background for the story."78 Although setting does not constitute the major atmospheric element in *The Monk* as it does in Mrs. Radcliffe's novels, one can see Lewis's ability to utilize the conventional Gothic settings in producing horror—e.g., the gloomy catacombs with their decomposing corpses produce much of the horror of the violation of Antonia by the monk.

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Besides the labyrinthine subterranean passageways, the Gothic cathedral is found:

The lamps were not yet lighted. The faint beams of the rising moon scarcely could pierce through the gothic obscurity of the church. Lorenzo found himself unable to quit the spot. The void left in his bosom by Antonia's absence . . . created that melancholy of mind, which accorded but too well with the religious gloom surrounding him. (p. 52)

Lewis occasionally utilized the picturesque external settings and descriptions of the Radcliffean brand of Gothic--the Monastery garden with its sham-ruins, for example:

In the bosom of this little grove stood a rustic grotto, found in imitation of an hermitage. The walls were constructed of roots of trees, and the interstices filled up with moss and ivy. Seats of turf were placed on either side, and a natural cascade fell from the rock above. (p. 74)

Following the theories of sublimity as developed by Burke, Hurd, Blair, and Alison, it is not surprising that Lewis chose "a precipice's brink, the steepest in Sierra Morena," for Ambrosio's destruction. The relationship of the scenery to state of mind of the characters was calculated to produce awe and terror in the reader.

The disorder of his imagination was increased by the wildness of the surrounding scenery; by the gloomy caverns and steep rocks, rising above each other, and dividing the passing clouds; solitary clusters of trees scattered here and there, among whose thick-twined branches the wind of night sighed hoarsely and mournfully; the shrill cry of mountain eagles . . . the stunning roar of torrents . . . and the dark waters of a silent sluggish stream, which faintly reflected the moon-beams, and bathed the rock's base on which Ambrosio stood. The abbot cast round him a look of terror. (p. 417)
Characterization in *The Monk* has raised two critical issues: (1) whether or not Matilda should be interpreted as a succubus, and (2) whether or not Ambrosio is believable. As to the first, it should be mentioned at the outset that Lewis was slightly inconsistent in drawing Matilda. Miss Birkhead seems to have raised this issue first when she wrote, "Lewis changes his mind about her character during the course of the book, and fails to make her early history consistent with the ending of the story." Summers more specifically identifies the problem as deriving from Satan's statement to the monk at the end of the novel:

Know, vain man! that I long have marked you for my prey: I watched the movements of your heart; I saw that you were virtuous from vanity, not principle, and I seized the fit moment of seduction. I observed your blind idolatry of the Madonna's picture. I bade a subordinate but crafty spirit assume a similar form, and you eagerly yielded to the blandishments of Matilda. (p. 418)

However, Summers's statement that "the whole discrepancy . . . could have been obviated by the omission" of the last sentence quoted above is not accurate. Throughout the book, Lewis describes Matilda as a woman devoted to Ambrosio. In her rather twisted manner she loves him. There are scenes of great tenderness between them, as when, thinking Ambrosio is asleep, she kisses him. She had craftily had her picture placed on the monk's cell wall so that his

79 *The Tale of Terror*, p. 67. It is speculated Miss Birkhead was first since her book was originally published in 1921.
religious zeal for the Madonna would be transferred to her, and she formed the unnatural alliance with Satan to save her life and tempted Ambrosio to do the same, but she was a diabolical woman, not a female devil.

Peck contradicts this position and remarks that "some readers are disappointed to learn that all her love was mere dissimulation." He then quotes Byron as having remarked

that *The Monk* "only wanted one thing, as I told Lewis, to have rendered it perfect. He should have made the daemon really in love with Ambrosio: this would have given it a human interest." 80

Summers, in another work, speculated that Lewis had first decided to present Matilda as a passionate woman and had changed her into a succubus while writing the novel. 81 Any resolution of the problem would simply add to the use of speculation of Lewis's motives; however, this writer was surprised as was Summers when he got to the section quoted above. Rather than mentally deleting it when reading it, as Summers is wont to do, 82 it should simply be considered an unfortunate inconsistency. 83

82 For the literary analogues of the woman disguised as a monk, see Thompkins, *The Popular Novel*, p. 277.
Like other Gothic novels, the villain is more interesting than the tamer heroines and heroes. Critical opinion is divided on the assessment of Lewis's skill in delineating the fall of Ambrosio.

One critic has found "Lewis's most important contribution to the Gothic genre" to be "the depraved but attractive Abbot of the Capuchins, Ambrosio, who shares honors with Mrs. Radcliffe's Schedoni of The Italian (1797) as the definitive romantic hero-villain." Another critic argues that Ambrosio is a superior character to Schedoni because Schedoni is described at the first as a hated and suspect man and, therefore, does not provide the ambiguity and interest of Ambrosio whose fall is the theme of the novel.

Nelson admits that Ambrosio is "a seemingly preposterous character whose motivation is carefully, if awkwardly, delineated." He sees in Ambrosio "not simply evil masquerading as good" but "a heightened model of the universal good-bad conflict in human nature. . . . The archetype," he adds, "would be Lucifer himself." Utilizing psychological

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84 Mehrotra traces Ambrosio back to Father Peter in William Hutchinson's The Hermitage (1772), "the first mild sketch of the monk who was later to become so famous and so mysterious in Lewis and Mrs. Radcliffe."


terminology, Nelson describes "Ambrosio's unconscious incest" as "a form of unself-critical narcissism." One can see Ambrosio's plight, if accepted allegorically, as similar to that described by modern existentialists and others.

By his own ambition and the adulation of the faithful, he is elevated to an impossible pinnacle of perfection. When the devil's temptations surround him he finds himself drawn into contradictory behavior: since he falls short of his ideal he must be damned; since he is led into debauchery he must be unredeemable; since he has sinned he must continue to be wicked to insure his damnation.

Representing a more negative position as regards the characterization of the monk, Mehrotra admits that the "conflict in Ambrosio's mind before his fall ... gives ... psychological interest to the book," but feels that it is "a clumsy conflict and of very short duration." Like Mehrotra, Baker seems to have difficulty in remembering the novel. He sees no complexity in Ambrosio, but calls him "a man of strong passions whose holiness is simply egotism, spiritual pride, and who is easily subdued by the wiles of a temptress."

Ambrosio, as the character of a Gothic novel, is not a round character--possibly a rounded character; but

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88 Ibid., p. 248. 89 Ibid., p. 240.
90 Mehrotra, Walpole and the English Novel, p. 152.
91 Sentiment and the Gothic, p. 209.
one can see in Lewis's delineation of Ambrosio the seeds of the romantic view of particularity in contrast to the neo-classic view of uniformitarianism. ⁹²

Of the remaining characters, little need be said. It is very difficult to distinguish Raymond from Lorenzo, and Agnes from Antonia. Peck finds that "a few scenes happily escape false sentimentality and emotional excess and bring Antonia to life as a charming, innocent girl," and that "Lewis shows precocious understanding" "in the relationship of Elvira and her daughter." Theodore, the young page of Don Raymond's, has many qualities which suggest that he might be autobiographical. ⁹³

Finally, a few of the characters are interesting for lending humor to the novel. ⁹⁴ Lewis captures the loquacious speech habits of Leonella effectively in the first chapter. She is garrulous, full of interjections, Chaucerian. After Antonia asks if not knowing the difference between the sexes makes her a saint like Ambrosio, Leonella bursts out:

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⁹⁴Wilbur L. Cross is mistaken in interpreting Lewis as having "employed magic and necromancy as the machinery of meretricious scenes, which were intended to be humorous." (*The Development of the English Novel* [London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1909], p. 107.)
"Holy St. Barbara!" exclaimed Leonella, "what a question! Fye, child, fye! these are not fit subjects for young women to handle. You should not seem to remember that there is such a thing as a man in the world, and you ought to imagine every body to be of the same sex with yourself. I should like to see you give people to understand, that you know that a man has no breasts, and no hips, and no— --"

and she is interrupted, "luckily for Antonia's ignorance" (p. 44).

In the ninth chapter Dame Jacintha plays a stock part in refusing to get to the point while relating a tragic event to a superior—Ambrosio. Theodore takes advantage of the ignorance of the old nuns:

"In Denmark, say you?" mumbled an old nun: "Are not the people all blacks in Denmark?"
"By no means, reverend lady; they are of a delicate pea-green, with flame-coloured hair and whiskers."
"Mother of God! Pea-green?" exclaimed sister Helena: "Oh! 'tis impossible!"
"Impossible" said the porteress, with a look of contempt and exultation: "Not at all: when I was a young woman, I remember seeing several of them myself." (p. 282)

As mentioned in the first chapter, the use of humor in the Gothic novel, which has as its goal the effect of sublimity, is no more incongruous than Shakespeare's "tickling the groundlings" in a tragedy.

Although an acknowledged reference by Lewis to the aesthetic theorists of his day and before has not been found, because of his sensitivity, his education, his wide reading, and his experience with some of the most progressive and intelligent men of his day, it would be presumptuous not to
assume that he was heavily influenced, as even the dis-
advantaged were, by the concept of the sublime. Burke's
theory of the sublime, Boulton states, may be used to
"systematize and explain the taste for Gothicism"; however,
rather than preparing a list of the qualities of the sublime,
it is important to see how Lewis interpreted the attainment
of sublime effect through his method of choice. Mehrotra
clearly identifies Lewis's goals:

What distinguishes Lewis's novel is its luridity,
its extravagance and its crude sensationalism. . . .
The Monk is not a novel of terror; it is a novel of
horror. The author does not try to evoke a shiver
of fear at the invisible, the mysterious and the
unknown; he tries to hammer his effects by visible,
concrete objects and gruesome details. The desire
to heighten the tone also accounts for the voluptuous-
ness of some of his descriptions.

Although he overstresses Lewis's lack of concern for evoking
terror, Mehrotra's statement is useful in illustrating the
technical difference in the terror Gothic and horror Gothic
schools. One fortunate break with Mrs. Radcliffe was Lewis's
recognition of the "incompatibility of a certainly happy
ending for a 'tale of terror.'"

Nelson points out the Gothicist's legacy:

Curiously enough, the fascination for the bizarre,
the individual peculiarity, the monstrous seems to

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95 Edmund Burke, A Philosophical Enquiry into the
Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, ed. by
J. T. Boulton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958),
p. xciv. Hereinafter referred to as A Philosophical Enquiry.


have led more significantly to a fictional discovery of the true depths of human nature than to a mere exploitation of the sensational and the perverse. By its insistence on singularity and exotic setting, the gothic novel seems to have freed the minds of readers from direct involvement of their superegoes and allowed them to pursue daydreams and wish fulfillment in regions where inhibitions and guilt could be suspended. Those regions became thereby available to great writers who eventually demonstrated that sadism, indefinite guiltiness, mingled pleasure and pain . . . and love-hate, were also deeply rooted in the minds of the supposedly normal.98

Nelson adds, however, that in the case of The Monk the psychology "often stays on the surface"; but quickly remarks that "it is surprising . . . how close Ambrosio's outward struggles can come to a presentation of the subconscious drama of the mind."99 The earlier Gothic novel, The Castle of Otranto, is the perfect example, "made irresponsible use of such claptrap as chains and dungeons and prodigies of weather." However, "with The Monk . . . the claptrap has begun to take on symbolic resonance." He asserts that one can interpret "Ambrosio's descent into the tombs" as "a descent into evil," and find "the old mythic and Shakespearean theme of the sepulchral marriage bed."100

Instead of mythic significance, Steeves sees "a modern case of the Greek tragic hubris" in Ambrosio's fall. He says "the cause of his fall is his vainglorious confidence in his spiritual invulnerability" and "the vehicle of his

99Ibid., p. 242. 100Ibid., p. 248.
fall is a sexuality latent under fanatic monasticism, which is brought forward at the very opening of the story in his cruel exposure" of Agnes.

The Gothic novel has a direct tie with Biblical and medieval allegory through its symbolical use of the Gothic castles. The Gothic use of architecture can be seen to develop into the nineteenth-century personification of buildings, as in The House of the Seven Gables. 102

Although it is not usually mentioned in respect to the Gothic novel, one of the best approaches to an unbiased consideration of The Monk, and the other Gothic novels, is to consider it as an experimental novel. The period was one of great revolution and change. There were new political and aesthetic values and theories in the air. The arts were changing, and the artists were experimenting. There was a new poetry being formed with roots deep into the eighteenth century. And Matthew Gregory Lewis wrote The Monk thinking, "that the stronger my colours, the more effect would my picture produce."


CHAPTER IV

RELATED SIGNIFICANT WORKS OF LEWIS

Although The Monk is undisputed as Matthew G. Lewis's major work, his fame was retained and spread by his subsequent literary productions--The Castle Spectre and Tales of Wonder, for example.1 Some of the popularity of The Monk and much of Lewis's reputation as a talented writer depended on his poetry--his ballads primarily. Several of his works have received isolated attention from critics; several of them are particularly pertinent to his style and ability; and several illuminate aspects of The Monk and Lewis's Gothicism.2 These will be discussed in the following pages under the headings Prose, Plays, and Poetry, respectively.

Prose

Other than The Monk and the delightful The Effusions of Sensibility, mentioned in Chapter II, Lewis's only prose

1Lewis's Journal of a West India Proprietor, Kept During a Residence in the Islands of Jamaica (London: John Murray, 1834), names these on the title page.

2A tangential goal of this chapter is to dispel such statements as Lafcadio Hearn's that Lewis wrote "the most abominable stories written in the nineteenth century," and that his poetry was not much better than his prose, either as to tone or workmanship (Some Strange English Literary Figures of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, ed. by R. Tanaké [Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries, Inc., 1927], p. 79).
productions consist of his translations, which are beyond the scope of this paper, and his letters, tales, and Journal. Lewis's letters (most of them to his mother) are interesting only as they relate to biographical information and textual study of his works.

"In 1808 Romantic Tales appeared, a four-volume miscellany of seven ballads, one long poem, and five prose stories, largely translated and adapted from foreign literature," including Spanish--two of the ballads, and German--two ballads and four stories. Of the five prose tales, three were reprinted in a one volume edition in 1848 because, as the Advertisement states, "They deserve to be better known, and therefore are reprinted in the present form." Mrs. Baron-Wilson, writing twenty-one years after Lewis's death and thirty-one years after the first publication of Romantic Tales, says of the stories, they "are still much read, and many of them are highly deserving of popularity." Farreaux agrees with the choice of the first, "My Uncle's Garret Window," listing it and the Journal of a West India

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5 [Mrs. Cornwall Baron-Wilson], The Life and Correspondence of M.G. Lewis, author of "The Monk," "Castle Spectre," &c. with many Pieces in Prose and Verse, never before Published (2 vols.; London: Henry Colburn, Publisher, 1839), II, 45. Hereinafter referred to as Life and Correspondence.
Proprietor as the works, other than The Monk, which are "of interest and lasting value," and calling it "a charming little tale . . . which deserves to survive and be read."  

"Charming little tale" sounds inapplicable to Matthew Lewis; yet it is accurate. The tone is light and is established in the opening lines:

My uncle was a genius and a poet—of course, he was as poor as David's rat, and lived in a garret. He was a kindhearted man, and I loved him too sincerely to hesitate at putting my neck in jeopardy once a day by climbing the crazy ladder, which afforded the only means of reaching his celestial abode. Yet, after my taking all this trouble, it frequently happened, that I found my uncle too busy with his Muses to bestow any of his attention on so insignificant an animal as his nephew.  

So the narrator-nephew devises the diversion of carefully observing the habits of the family across the narrow street with his pocket telescope, and, because he can relate only their actions and not their speech, the "pantomimic tale," as Peck calls it, is born. Lewis utilizes this restriction most effectively, never straining the credulity of the reader and even adding suspense through the mystery of not knowing exactly what is being said. The story is light and sentimental; but the real effectiveness of the pantomimic

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7 Romantic Tales, p. 1.

8 Peck, A Life, p. 144.
technique does not become apparent until, while reading another story, one finds himself upset that the narrator can not only describe the appearance, but also the speech of the characters.

Lewis, in the preface to the first edition, identified the story as being "of German origin" but nothing more similar than a play which was performed in Weimar and which is similar only in its outline has been discovered. Although of German origin, there is nothing of the sensational which is generally associated with German influence of this time. "My Uncle's Garret Window," is a restrained domestic tale without any Gothicism, "uncommonly tame," says Edith Birkhead. Lewis seemed to feel obliged to explain that the head of the household was neither hero nor villain: "He seems to labour under some hypochondriacal complaint, and as he frequently suffers himself in his moments of weakness to indulge his ill-temper, I have not the least hopes of working him into a portrait of heroic fortitude: on the other hand, I have as little hopes of his furnishing my drama with a striking character for my villain."11

"The Anaconda," less poignant but more sentimental than "My Uncle's Garret Window," is almost as skillfully

9Ibid.


11Lewis, Romantic Tales, p. 2.
executed as the former story because of its tightly constructed frame-story. A realistic Oriental tale,12 "The Anaconda," along with the following tale, reveals the influence of the Oriental tale on Lewis.13 Everard Brooke's young Ceylonese servant tells the meddlesome old Mrs. Milman that his master obtained his wealth in Ceylon by brutally murdering Ann O'Conner. Mrs. Milman has everyone turned against Everard before he returns to tell the story that will exonerate him. While in Ceylon, Everard's friend had been held captive in a small outbuilding by a huge anaconda which finally killed him, days after his rescue by Everard, by its "pestiferous breath." The friend's wife died out of grief, and Everard recovered from a long grief-stricken illness only to inherit the friend's money and a deep reluctance for talking about the melancholy events. Mrs. Milman had, of course, misunderstood the broken English of Everard's servant and assumed that Anaconda was Ann O'Conner. Everard's host, however, was so embarrassed by the misunderstanding that "he placed the blushing Jessy in Everard's arms,"14 and all lived happily.


13 Miss Conant (ibid., pp. 47-48) also points out that "the realistic Oriental tales connect the Orientalizing tendency . . . with the more profound and widespread tendency of the age toward realism."

14 Romantic Tales, p. 104
As Peck has noticed, "the story depends for effectiveness upon the reader's ignorance and credulity respecting" the anaconda.\textsuperscript{15} But Lewis had accepted on good faith the professed "eyewitness account of how an anaconda killed and gorged a tiger" in The Scots Magazine,\textsuperscript{16} and, therefore, his questionable herpetology cannot be assessed as anything but ignorance.

The merits of the last story, "Amorassan; or, The Spirit of the Frozen Ocean," must primarily be judged as a translation, for Lewis translated it from Klinger's Der Faust der Morgenlander.\textsuperscript{17} The interest that he showed in translating it, however, and the changes which he made reveal something of his ability as a writer.\textsuperscript{18} First, it is interesting that it is an Oriental tale—this ties Lewis more securely to this influential, minor genre of the eighteenth century. Then, too, Lewis reduced Klinger's work by half, retaining but seasoning the moral arguments with narrative events, and adding more interest by having the sage disguised as a wandering Jew and changing the spirit from a beautiful youth to an imposing, cold, but lovely, woman.\textsuperscript{19} Lewis's technical

\textsuperscript{15}Peck, A Life, p. 142.
\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., pp. 142-43.
\textsuperscript{17}Ibid., p. 144.
\textsuperscript{18}Miss Conant identifies "Amorassan" as a member of a small number of tales which are "half-way between the imaginative Oriental tales and the moralistic" in The Oriental Tale, p. 71.
\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., pp. 144-45.
writing skill is again revealed in this story, for he carefully manages to relate his frame-story to the frame and keep, throughout the episodic plot, the characters clearly delineated.

Lewis's Journal is the inverse of The Monk; it discounts the author's reputation of being a jaded voluptuary. It seems to have surprised Coleridge who said,

> it is almost the only unaffected book of travels or touring I have read of late years. You have the man himself, and not an inconsiderable man,--certainly a much finer mind than I supposed before from the perusal of his romances, &c. It is by far his best work, and will live and be popular.  

Other than showing Lewis's versatility, the Journal is pertinent to this study for its publication of "The Isle of Devils: A Metrical Tale," discussed in the poetry section in this chapter.

### Plays

Between the years 1796 and 1812, Lewis published and had produced nineteen dramatic works. Of these, three have been chosen for discussion in this section: The Castle Spectre: A Drama in Five Acts, Lewis's most popular work.

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21 See Chapter II, supra, for the titles and dates.
next to The Monk; Alfonso, King of Castile: A Tragedy in Five Acts, considered by the author to be his best play; and The Captive: A Scene in a Private Mad-House, withdrawn by Lewis after one performance because of the hysteria it produced.

The Castle Spectre (Drury Lane, December, 1797) is one of the most remarkable Gothic plays. In it Lewis exploited the combined materials of his predecessors and contemporaries, English and German, and out-Gothicized them all. . . . [It provides] the best evidence of the state of Gothic drama after almost thirty years of development.22

Not only is The Castle Spectre interesting to the history of Gothic drama which began with Horace Walpole’s Mysterious Mother in 1768, but "its fame came to equal and perhaps to surpass that of The Monk."23 It is intricately related to The Monk, sharing some of the sources, and several

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22 Bertrand Evans, Gothic Drama from Walpole to Shelley (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1947), p. 132. Hereinafter referred to as Gothic Drama.

23 Ibid., p. 143. Evans adds that it "went through seven printed editions in 1798 and eleven by 1803." In an interesting twist on the usual procedure it was converted "into a prose romance by Sarah Wilkinson" in 1829. Mrs. Baron-Wilson in the 1839 biography reported that it ran about sixty nights, and continued popular, as an acting play, up to a very recent period" (Life and Correspondence, p. 211). The Castle Spectre was also popular in America judging from its having been published twice within a year after its publication in England. See Charles Evans, American Bibliography, Vol. 12: 1798-1799 (New York: Peter Smith, 1942), pp. 107, 345. The earlier edition, M.G. Lewis, Esq. M.P., The Castle Spectre: A Drama in Five Acts (Boston: Sold [by David West] at the Bookstore, No. 56, Cornhill, [1798]), is the one referred to herein.
specific features.\textsuperscript{24} Although many of the similarities in the two works belong to the common reservoir of Gothic motifs, such as the assumption of pseudonymity as a commoner to test the sincerity of love by both Percy in \textit{The Castle Spectre} and Don Raymond in \textit{The Monk}, there are, however, more specific similarities such as the inclusion of poetry, and more notably, the use of the supernatural with no attempt at rationalization—the bleeding nun of \textit{The Monk} becomes the benevolent bleeding mother in \textit{The Castle Spectre}.

\textit{The Castle Spectre}, with its heroine Lady Angela, its villain Earl Osmond, and its hero Percy, is a more stock Gothic work than \textit{The Monk}. But \textit{The Castle Spectre} is not too contrived to enjoy. The most interesting aspect of the play is the utilization of the bleeding ghost to provide unity to it. Throughout the first four chapters there are frequent references made by several of the characters and even one example of the "explained" supernatural in which Lady Angela is mistaken for the ghost. However, at the end of the fourth act, the doors of the oratory swing open and in a blaze of light stands a tall woman with her arms raised and spots of blood on her long white garment. There is soft music playing while she blesses Angela, and as she leaves, "instantly the organ's swell is heard; a full chorus of

\textsuperscript{24}According to Peck, it was not written later than 1796 and "he probably had at least some of its substance in hand as early as 1792," several years before \textit{The Monk} was written (\textit{A Life}, p. 71).
female voices chant 'Jubilate!' a blaze of light flashes through the Oratory, and the folding doors close with a loud noise."25

The Castle Spectre must be judged guilty of the sensationalism of which The Monk was accused. Throughout the play consistency of character, probability of action, and forward movement of plot are sacrificed . . . to immediate sensational effect. When opportunity arrives for a spectacle, forward action is abruptly halted, and an irrelevant, unmotivated, but thrilling scene is staged.26

Alfonso, King of Castile was a serious attempt by Lewis to write a good play. He wrote in the preface to the first edition, with what seems to be more seriousness than that usually expected of a writer's modesty, that he had "spared no pains" in writing it. "I now give it to the public," he wrote, "not as a good play, but as the best that I can produce: Very probably nobody could write a worse Tragedy; but it is a melancholy truth, that I cannot write a better."27 And it is not a good play. There are too many "harks" and "sighs," and falling prostrate at feet; bosoms throb too often: in Act I Otillia has a "panting brest" (p. 1) which Caesario soon notices is snowy and "swelled by storms of passion" (p. 5), in Act IV Amelrosa's

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26 Evans, Gothic Drama, p. 133.

"bosom throbs to know this fearful secret!" (p. 71), but earlier in Act III she had begged her father to "observe/ The strong convulsions of my gasping bosom!" (p. 62) so that he might be convinced of her absolute sincerity. For the most part, however, these faults can all be attributed to that which is probably the greatest difference in the expectation and taste of the reader and playgoer of Lewis's time and the present: sentimentality. Even more than the novels of the time, and even in this blank verse, serious tragedy which shows "a restraint rare in Lewis," the major fault of Alfonso is its pernicious, persistent sentimentalizing. Examples abound, but one should be shown: Orsino has just found his only son and exclaims,

I have him! hold him here! --Death alone parts us, My son! Victoria's son! --Come, come, my boy, Kneel at this tomb with me; join thou my suit For the blest dust beneath, and read through tears Here sleeps thy mother.  

If one could only isolate the sound quality and rhythm from the tone of the meaning of the lines, many of them would be good poetry. Peck mentions that although it has frequently been "remarked that Alfonso contains passages of worthy poetry, no one has ventured to point one out." It

28 Evans, Gothic Drama, p. 154.  
29 Alfonso, Act III, Sc. 2, pp. 59-60.  
30 Peck, A Life, p. 87. Although Peck's point is well taken, it is not absolutely true, for Mrs. Baron-Wilson cited a long passage from Act I in Life and Correspondence, pp. 225-27.
is interesting that he chooses the only lengthy descriptive passage in the play.

Yes, thou art lovely, World! That blue-robed sky; These giant rocks, their forms grotesque and awful Reflected on the calm stream's lucid mirror; These reverend oaks, through which (their rustling leaves Dancing and twinkling in the sun-beams) light Now gleams, now disappears, while yon fierce torrent, Tumbling from crag to crag with measured dash, Makes to the ear strange music: World! oh, World! Who sees thee such must needs confess thee fair! Who knows thee not must needs suppose thee good:31

An analeptic to the optimistic sensibility which begins to creep out before the last line is provided not only by the descriptive nature of the lines, but also by the world-weariness of Orsino who improvises on this theme in the lines immediately following:

But I have tried thee, World! know all these beauties Mere shows and snares; know thee a gilded serpent, A flowery bank, whose sweets smile o'er a pit-fall; A splendid prison, precious tomb, fair palace Whose golden domes allure poor wanderers in, And, when they've entered, crush them! Such I know thee And, knowing, loath thy charms!32

This is interesting poetry which could be spoken very well. The lines are rhythmical, yet varied with end-stops and enjambments. The generic "shows and snares" are concretely exemplified in effective images, "gilded serpent," "flowery bank," "fair palace," and oxymora, "splendid prison," "precious tomb," while the two weakest images, "flowery bank" and "fair palace" are qualified by

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clauses. But most importantly the tone is not noxious, an occurrence which is found only when the passage is descriptive, as above, when the events necessary to plot movement are being described, when a villainous character, at least a Byronic, world-weary character, is speaking, or when there is an element of horror introduced into the story. But interestingly, these are the elements for which Lewis was most often critically chastised, which suggests that Lewis was best when doing what he had done best—terrifying and horrifying, and that had he been allowed, he might have written more plays, even more horrifying and fascinating than those which he did.

By the time Lewis published Alfonso he had been conditioned by the critics to guard very carefully against any suggestive or objectionable material. He had had an especially difficult time with Adelmorn the Outlaw which had been presented earlier that year (May 4, 1801) at Drury Lane. There was very possibly an organized group of playgoers in the audience who had come prepared to object to any appearance of spectres on the stage; in the final scene, the ghost was supposed to have been frightening, but his flaming dagger ignited his own raiments and he hastily retreated to the tomb with the audience howling in laughter; one scene totally confounded the audience through its misunderstanding that the scene was supposed to represent a dream of one of the characters rather than a depiction of reality; and another
scene, in which a young healthy character laughed and joked and ate in front of an emaciated, dying one, was violently hissed as tasteless.33

With these circumstances in mind, it is easy to understand the rather plaintive statements Lewis made in the Preface to Alfonso later in 1801.34 He published the play before it was staged, he wrote, because "in the first place, when my Drama of 'Adelmorn the Outlaw' was played at Drury-Lane, so many wilful misrepresentations of it were made between the periods of its being performed, and of its being printed, that I resolved in future to take this method of depriving my censurers of the plea of involuntary mistaking."35 And even more to the point: "To the assertion, that my Play is stupid, I have nothing to object; if it be found so, even let it so be said: but if (as was most falsely asserted of Adelmorn) any anonymous writer should advance that this Tragedy is immoral, I expect him to prove his assertion by quoting the objectionable passages."36

Not only morality but propriety concerned him: "There are two passages in this Tragedy, which I am conscious might have been liable to misrepresentation; but with such authorities as I shall give for the propriety of the sentiments,

33Peck, A Life, p. 84.
34Lewis's preface to the first edition of Alfonso is dated December 12, 1801.
35Alfonso, p. 111.
36Ibid.
that Critic will be a bold man who shall venture to attack their morality. Into the bargain both passages will be omitted in the representation."\(^{37}\) Because he ended up doing so much changing and deleting before the final staging,\(^{38}\) it is difficult to determine the passages that Lewis had in mind, but because of his choice of the word "misrepresentation" and the audience's confusion about the dream scene in *Adelmorn*, it is reasonable to speculate that he was referring to the two death scenes, Ottilia's and Amelrosa's, in which the characters see spirits coming for them.

In the first of the two very powerful scenes, the death of Ottilia, there were two reasons other than its suggestion of supernaturalism, for omitting the scene from the staged version: Ottilia is stabbed to death by her lover, Caesario (a man killing a woman is, of course, most indecorous), and secondly, Orsino, who belatedly came to her defense, even though unaware of it, was fighting his son (another improper situation). The supernatural aspect of the scene is restrained, however; for Ottilia's spectre is identified with her husband whom she had poisoned and is therefore, the reader is made to feel, only a product of her guilty conscience. With effective acting the scene would have horrified the audience.

\(^{37}\)Ibid., p. vii.

\(^{38}\)Peck, *A Life*, pp. 87-88.
Help! help! The spectre grasps me,
And folds me to his breast, where the worm feeds!
He tears my heart strings!—Now he sinks, he sinks,
And sinking grasps me still! and drags me down with him,
A thousand fathom deep!—Oh! lost! lost! lost. 39

Amelrosa could not pass up the opportunity to moralize:

She's gone!—Sure earth affords no fright more awful,
Than when a sinner dies. . . . 40

When, in the next act, Amelrosa discovers she is dying,
her first concern is that her husband, Caesario, watch her so
that he might

... observe, how calm the transit,
How light the pain, how free death's cup from bitter,
When virtue soothes, and hope exalts the soul.
I've seen a sinner die: Last night I closed
Otilia's lids, and 'twas a sight of horror!
Each limb, each nerve was writhed by strange convulsions,
Clenched were her teeth, her eye-balls fix- and glaring;
She foamed, she raved, and her last words were curses!—
But look, Caesario!—I can die, and smile! 41

Like Otilia she has a spectral visitant which even the most
adamant enemy of the supernatural would have to accept;
unlike Otilia she is lead from this life by her mother,
"Rich in new youth, and bright in lasting beauty!" 42

There is not even the slightest breach of propriety as Amelrosa
is carried by her attendants off the stage to die, Caesario
following; but when, after only a few words from two of his
friends, he forgets his dying wife within and starts off to

39 Alfonso, IV, ii, p. 81
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid., V, ii, pp. 102-103.
42 Ibid., p. 103.
assassinate her father, he breaks not only a chivalrous code but a law of nature. Then, in a twist that most critics would have to explain as having been conceived in his basically heinous soul, Lewis has Amelrosa "shriek from within" and Caesario "stop, and remain motionless." 43

Amelrosa. (Within.)
Oh! Mercy, mercy!

Inis. (Within.)
She dies!

Estella. (Within.)
Nay, hold her! hold her down!

Amelrosa. (Within.)
Oh!—Oh!
(Solemn requiem, chaunted within.)
Peace to the parted saint! Pure soul, farewell!
(The scene closes.) 44

Horrifying, but whether a technical defect, subconscious inconsistency, or purposeful irony (which it seems to be), the impact of this scene lies in the choice of a very basic fear—death, the confrontation of a pure, idealized character—Amelrosa—with the fear, the character's resolution of the fear in the socially accepted manner—good living makes for painless dying, and then the shocking denial of the character's principle with, consequently, the denial of the reader's security.

This is, of course, horror Gothicism; but Alfonso is generally called the least "Gothic" of Lewis's plays. 45

43 Ibid., p. 104. These are Lewis's directions.
44 Ibid., V, ii, pp. 104-105.
45 Evans, Gothic Drama, p. 154.
which it is in machinery and trappings. Lewis could not have failed, however, to place his characters in a Gothic setting and one finds first a southern European location, "Burgos (the Capital of Old Castile)," in the medieval year of 1345 A.D. Act II, scene ii, is located in "A wild forest, with rocks, water-falls, &c. On one side an hermitage and a rustic tomb, with various pieces of armour scattered near it . . ." (p. 31). There is a cave, a palace, and "St. Juan's cloisters by moon-light.--On one side a Gothic chapel," "the inner cavern, partially lighted with lamps," plus thunder and lightning, a hermit, moans, discovered identities, as well as the heroine, hero, villain, and old priest (benevolent this time).

For the most part, Lewis's characterization can be summed up with the words "stock" and "sentimental"; however, there is one element of Amelrosa's personality which bears mentioning: she, more than the average masochistic heroine, suffers from algolagnia. In the second act she changes chivalric roles with her husband, when, upon parting, she "eagerly" begs him,

Oh! name it, name it!
But ask me nothing light in action: ask me

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46 Alfonso, p. viii.
47 Ibid., IV, ii, p. 69.
48 Ibid., IV, iv, p. 84.
Something strange, hard, and painful! Something, such
As none would dare to do but one who loves.
Name, name this blessed wish! 49

She enjoys elucidating the details of that which she argues
would be a kinder action by her father than withholding any
of his forgiveness:

Yes! strike me at your foot; spurn, trample, crush me!
Twist in my streaming locks your hand, and drag me,
Till from my wounded bosom streams of blood
Gush forth, and dye the marble red! . . . 50

Besides its occasionally high poetic quality, Alfonso
contains many elements of organization which reveal the
technical skill which Lewis possessed. Peck quotes a let-
ter written in 1802 which he characterizes as "representative"
of the contemporary criticism and which states that Alfonso
"is 'busy, animated, and involved, without perplexity,' and
we 'listen with breathless interest to the progress of the
scenes, and cannot pretend to guess at the denouement.'"51
This progression and ease of movement come, of course, from
the tight unity and organization of the play, for the plot
is complex. 52 There is frequent use of the formal apostrophe,
and within these figures there is frequent unifying repetition
in the address to the dew and the wind:

Dews of the morn, descend! Breathe, summer gales,
My flushed cheeks woo ye! . . . 53

49 Ibid., pp. 45-46. 50 Ibid., p. 54.
51 Peck, A Life, p. 88.
52 See Peck, A Life, p. 86, for a brief plot summary,
or Evans, Gothic Drama, p. 104, for a more extensive one.
53 Alfonso, p. 1.
Amelrosa addresses the wind and the sun:

. . . Gently, winds, I pray ye,
Breathe through this grove; and thou, all-radiant sun,
Woo not these bowers beloved with kiss too fierce.  54

Alfonso invokes the dew in a blessing:

Heaven's best dews
Fall on thy beauteous head, my Amelrosa.  55

And Amelrosa invokes stellar dew for her husband and then addresses the wind:

Now, ye stars,
Which nightly grace the sky, if ye love goodness,
Pour dews celestial from your golden vials
On yon dear gracious head:

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
Waft me, ye winds: To bear so blest a creature
Earth is not worthy!  56

Lewis's monodrama in verse, *The Captive*, was performed on March 22, 1803.  57 It provides an excellent example of the dependence that Lewis's plays placed on acting and staging for their effect, for it seems tame enough when read. It has proven to be popular as a poem,  58 yet with the tyrannical "Gaoler," the "melancholy music," the elaborate Gothic set, the "furious madman" with "glaring eyes," and the excellent

57 *Peck, A Life*, p. 90.  
58 *Lafcadio Hearn*, in his lectures delivered in 1899, stated that parts of *The Captive* may still be found in old fashioned readers and *books of oratory, Some Strange English Literary Figures of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, p. 77, and entitled "The Maniac," it was published in *William Cullen Bryant's anthology of poetry, A New Library of Poetry and Song* (New York: The Baker Taylor Company, 1900), pp. 339-40.
acting of Mrs. Litchfield, "an actress of great celebrity at this period," it proved to be too effective as a Gothic drama. Mrs. Baron-Wilson published a facsimile of the letter Lewis wrote to his mother after the first performance as a second frontispiece to her biography of Lewis:

The Papers will have already informed you, that the Monodrama has failed: It proved much too terrible for representation, and two people went into hysterics during the performance and two more after the curtain dropped. . . . In fact the subject (which was merely a picture of Madness) was so uniformly distressing to the feelings, that at last I felt my own a little painful; and as to Mrs. Litchfield, she almost fainted away—. . . .

Peck says that "this account is amply corroborated" and that "the only question seems to be how many fits were produced," citing several sources which claim more.

Lewis added another revealing statement in the letter to his mother: "the only chance was, whether pity would make the audience weep; but instead of that, Terror threw them into fits." If this statement may be amplified to include some of the scenes in The Monk, one can see Lewis's innocence of the charge of deliberately providing revolting descriptions with the aim of revolting his audience; it also may be seen

59 Baron-Wilson, Life and Correspondence, I, 236-41.
60 Ibid., I, n.p.
61 Peck, A Life, p. 91.
62 Baron-Wilson, Life and Correspondence, I, n.p.
to reveal the close relationship of Gothic terror and sentimental pity. 63

Both Alfonso and The Captive were poetic productions, but Lewis produced more poetry of note.

**Poetry**

A look at the poetry of Lewis is especially relevant to an understanding of his reputation as an artist and to the reputation of The Monk as art because, first, Lewis very carefully worked nine poems into the novel and, secondly, his poetry reveals his techniques as a Gothicist.

As Parreaux states, "the contemporary critics might be divided in their appreciation of the new novel, and most of them might look, as they did, rather unfavourably on it, yet even its most severe censors bestowed unstinted and unqualified praise on the poetry of The Monk." 64 Lewis was not, of course, the first novelist to insert verse into a novel. 65 Mrs. Radcliffe, who "had set the example of inserting verse, sometimes not very bad verse" in her novels, 66

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63 Of course, there is the equally plausible possibility that Lewis intended to terrify, but not to the extreme that he did. 64 *The Publication*, p. 49.


provided the most immediate precedent, but, as Walter Scott wrote, her poetry and songs "display more liveliness and richness of fancy, than correctness of taste, or felicity of expression."67

Berryman, in his introduction to The Monk, sums up the value of Lewis's poetry by describing him as:

A poet who was praised by Coleridge—who was the poet of Shelley's youth—of whom Scott said, in maturity, that 'he had the finest ear for the rhythm of verse I ever met with—finer than Byron's—ought to have imposed himself.' Lewis was in fact extremely promising as a poet and all his life retained an unusual power of metrical expression. He was perhaps, poetically, as accomplished a writer as one can be short of overwhelming achievement.68

Each of the poems in the novel is artfully worked in so that they embellish the work rather than detract from it. The first, "The Gipsy's Song," is the most closely united to the text by virtue of its being the speech of the Gypsy who foretells the tragic end of Antonia. The "Inscription in an Hermitage" provides Ambrosio with ironic statements, for by arguing against the Hermit's thoughts he reveals his unconscious dissatisfaction with monastic life. "Love and Age," written by Theodore, is criticized by Raymond in words that apply to the worst of Lewis's poetry—"you make a


terrible confusion of metaphors; you are too apt to make the strength of your lines consist more in the words than sense; some of the verses only seem introduced in order to rhyme with others; and most of the best ideas are borrowed from other poets."  

Ostensibly written by Antonia's father, "The Exile" was highly praised by contemporary critics and provided an inspiration to stanzas 18-20, Canto II, of Byron's "Don Juan."  

Berryman quotes Saintsbury in his History of English Prosody as saying, "It is quite certain that ["Alonzo the Brave and Fair Imogine"] showed the way to something like a new use of the anapest; that Lewis was a perfect master of easy metre years before Moore and decades before Praed and Barham; and that, in his time and place, he was really important prosodically."  

This ballad more than any of the other poems in the novel reveals the use of the horror Gothic in poetry, and provides the effect calculated by the Gothic in frightening Antonia in her late night experience with the spectre of her mother described in Chapter III; and, consequently, it adds Gothic horror to the scene.

69 Ibid., p. 205.


72 As Karl Kroeber suggests in "Trends in Minor Romantic Narrative Poetry," Some British Romantics, ed. by
Lewis's Poems is notable for the neo-classical elements in the poems, but "The Isle of Devils," which appears in his Journal, reveals that he continued to utilize the Gothic mode late in his career.

The Isle of Devils: A Metrical Tale, called by Coleridge "a fever dream--horrible, without point or terror," was "brought up" as Lewis puts it in four days while "extremely afflicted with seasickness." It is a long, 950 lines, narrative poem in heroic couplets except for the poems inserted to be sung by the characters (including one by the Tempest-Fiend). Although it is without point, it is not without a moral tagged to the end: "A life of pleasure, and a life of woe,/ when both are past, the difference who can show?" And it is certainly not without terror. The most pure Irza and her young cousin-lover Rosalno sail by the Isle of Devils toward Lisbon, but are spotted by the Tempest-


73 M.G. Lewis, Poems (London: Printed by D. N. Shury and Sold by Hatchard, 1812).


75 Journal, April 10, 1816.

76 Ibid., p. 289.
Fiend who wrecks the ship and throws them separately onto the Demon Isle. Irza is rescued from "monstrous dwarfs" who "screamed and chattered; and their eyes of flame, \\
Twinkling and goggling, told, what pleasure grim/ 'Twould give to rack and rend her limb from limb" by a monster, who, though gentler, is more horrible to look at. After the imps again attack her, she accepts the aid of the Demon-King and is carried to his splendid crystal grotto in which she eventually bears her rescuer's "monster child."

It is at this place that the redeeming, horrible, and most interesting part is found, for Lewis once again studies the psychology of conflict. True, it is unnatural conflict: maternal love versus moral repugnance of a child half demon; but its appeal is in the basic plight, not the fictional manifestation of the plight.

What lifts her burning head? why opes her eye? What makes her blood run back? A faint shrill cry! Too well, alas! that cry was understood: The monster pined for want, and claim'd its food. Then in her heart what rival passions strove! How shrinks disgust, how yearns maternal love! Now to its life her feelings she prefers; Now Nature wakes, and makes her own--"'Tis hers!" Loathing its sight, she melts to hear its cries, And, while she yields the brest, averts her eyes.77

The same conflict is presented to her again; as, while she is being rowed away from the island, she sees her monster-husband first dash her human child onto the rocks and then, finding that she will not relent in leaving, grasp

77Ibid., p. 277.
the demon child and leap to his death. In the remainder of the poem Irza becomes a lay-sister who "No nauseous task, no servile care declined." Although he exercised more restraint in the details than in The Monk, he fully utilized his ability to produce horror.

Before leaving Lewis's dramatic works, several of his statements revealing his lack of concern for some of the details which bothered his critics should be mentioned.

In The Castle Spectre, Lewis has four Negro slaves who assist Osmond in his villainous pursuits. Because the play has its setting in Wales before there were Negroes in the British Isles, it was pointed out that there was an anachronism in including these characters, but Lewis answered in the preface to the first edition that because of "the great applause" he did not feel that the audience was "greatly offended at the impropriety." He then added:

For my own part, I by no means repent the introduction of my Africans; I thought I could give a pleasing variety to the characters and dresses, if I made my servants black; and could I have produced the same effect by making my heroine blue, blue I should have made her.

Lewis revealed the same pragmatic attitude about the controversy of the ghost in the same play. Mrs. Baron-Wilson

78 Ibid., pp. 286-87. 79 Ibid., p. 288.
80 Evans, Gothic Drama, p. 133.
quotes from his preface:

The spectre was as well treated before the curtain as she had been ill used behind it; and as she continues to make her appearance nightly, with increased applause, I think myself under great obligations to her and her representative. 81

Regarding the faithfulness of his characters to history, he said:

As to the real character of Alfonso the XIth, I must own, that it no more resembles that of my Alfonso the XIth, than it does John the Painter's, or Peter the Wild Boy's. --I do not myself think that this departure from History is a matter of any consequence. 82

Lewis even claimed to have gotten the idea for Alfonso from a quick reply to a critic of his including the Negroes in The Castle Spectre.

I said in a moment of petulance, that to prove of how little consequence I esteemed such errors, I would write a play upon the Gunpowder Plot, and make Guy Faux in love with the Emperor Charlemagne's daughter. 83

Lewis reveals his concern for the sound quality of his poetry and shows again the concern for effect when explaining that although he recognizes the inconsistency of a word with reality, it "was so agreeable to my ear, that I could not find in my heart to leave it out." 84

81Life and Correspondence, p. 213.
82Alfonso, p. v.
83[Baron-Wilson], Life and Correspondence, I, 223.
84Journal, pp. 43-44.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND INFLUENCES

Lewis repeatedly revealed himself to be concerned with effect: in his statement that he desired to increase effect by heightening the color of *The Monk* and in his statements concerning his goal in *The Castle Spectre* there is the recurrent theme of desire to horrify. This desire has been shown to grow out of the aesthetic ideal of sublimity which was developed in years preceding *The Monk*. The implicit defect in this concept is that it may be used to justify sensational works which lack lasting merit, as was largely the case with *The Castle Spectre*, not to mention the mass of chapbook romances and inferior plays which were produced at the time. As has been shown, however, there have been many misconceptions which have grown up around Lewis, prejudicing his biography, and blocking a clear assessment of his literary worth. As has been shown also, Lewis displayed throughout his productions a versatility and occasional brilliance which cannot be attributed to temporary popular appeal.

The basis of merit in a work of literature is universality and appeal to the collective desire in men to relate to their environment, to understand one another, and their desires and unconscious drives. What is artistically good in *The Monk* does this. Within the framework of the Gothic
tradition with its emphasis on setting, atmosphere, and characterization, "Monk" Lewis produced a minor masterpiece of horror.

For the first time in literature, the Gothic novel depicted what modern existentialists call angst. Millions of men whether in an Eastern oligarchy or Western despotism had felt hopelessness, frustration and fear, fear of disease, starvation, civil injustice, and of the unknown, the evil of the anti-God which they trembled even to believe in and the supernatural of the ancient beliefs of their dreams and subconscious memory. The Gothic novelists of the eighteenth century captured this angst in their fiction. Always it was the same: a heroine and a monster; but the heroine's passivity did not bother these readers as it does some twentieth century critics, for they understood what it was to live graciously, behave predictably, and yet to experience anguish. But even more important (and universally overlooked) was the factor of identification with the evil villain; for the reader also knew that even though he could persevere like the heroine, yet he had the potential for the evil of the villain. This explains the necessity for the conflict in the villain; he was not simple; he was a developing character, a person who because of a very human fault found himself inexorably drawn into the coils of evil which destroyed him. "Existential predicament" was invented in the twentieth century; but the existential predicament was not. The
psychological description of man as an animal who too often finds himself entrapped by his own volition and unable through his intellect and cultural heritage to grapple successfully with the cause of his predicament, unable in fact to recognize even that the cause lies in him, is astute and is an important expansion of the technique and tools of novelists.

As for the heroine, she had existed before, e.g., in Richardson's *Pamela*. The essential difference between *The Monk* and *Pamela* is the villain. The Gothic heroine was not as finely and sensitively drawn as Richardson's, but whereas Mr. B. married Pamela, Ambrosio was wrested from society and life with a devil's talons sunk deep into his skull, into his brain. The difference in *The Monk* and *Pamela* also lay in the difference in the nature of Ambrosio and Mr. B.: the first was tragic and the second, irresponsible.

Setting and atmosphere, its progeny, are most important to a study or understanding of Gothicism and *The Monk*. Even though Gothic characters appear flat or elementary compared to the nineteenth and twentieth-century concepts of characterization, they were firmly entrenched in the eighteenth-century tradition. Many of the other elements of Gothicism were, too—didacticism and sentimentality, for example. Mrs. Radcliffe was the most important of the Gothic novelists in this respect. The originality and the appeal of *The Monk*, come primarily from Lewis's ability to utilize the Gothic
mode the most effectively. Being Gothic, The Monk is episodic, but by introducing supernatural, legendary, and mythical elements into the episodes, Lewis creates interest in them. Being a Gothic villain, Ambrosio has a penetrating glance and immures the heroine in a vault, but by shifting attention from the rather insipid heroine to the psychologically complex villain, he adds depth to his story which makes it appealing to the modern reader. Lewis's habit of intensifying Gothic elements may have been unfortunate in the case of his charnel-house detail, but, certainly, the erotic element of his sensual description seems tame to the twentieth-century reader. The even more obvious source of Lewis's style comes from the other half of Walpole's professed goal to utilize not only imagination, but also to strive for verisimilitude, a tendency in Gothic fiction exemplified by Mrs. Radcliffe's "explained" supernaturalism, which reveals her desire to limit imagination while retaining its effect and which in Lewis's fiction explains his retention of the intensely realistic horror descriptions.

In following the criticism of Lewis's The Monk and of his major works after the novel, one theme stands out: the incessant attacks by the critics on the alleged immorality of his works. One cannot help but wonder, as Farreaux does in his chapter, "Was Lewis's Literary Development Thwarted by Persecution?"\(^1\) whether the harrassment managed to squelch

those qualities which were best in his writing and consequently robbed the English novel of an even greater work than *The Monk*. The critical pressure on his work was primarily directed toward his dramatic works, and, as has been mentioned,\(^2\) in 1809 Lewis announced his retirement but was persuaded to produce several more pot-boilers. In December of 1811, he explained his selection of the poems to be included in *Poems* as being "from a great mass of Verses such as appeared to myself and my Friends to be the least discreditable";\(^3\) yet, compared to some of his earlier works, these poems are paltry, pedestrian exercises. Like Parreaux, this author is not able to answer the question of what might have been.

The Gothic novel after *The Monk* with mention of several of the major ones, the relationship to and influence on them by *The Monk*, and some consideration of the fate of Gothicism remain to be discussed.

Called "the best exponent of the terror novel," Charles Robert Katurin is quoted by one critic to have called *The Monk* "the most extraordinary production of this period" and to add that "few scenes of supernatural agency have more power than that in which the apostate spirit appears in all the beauty and despair of a fallen angel to Ambrosio in the

\(^2\)Surra, p. 62.

Melmouth the Wanderer (1820) is generally considered to be Maturin’s best and shares many similarities with The Monk—notably, its horror Gothicism with powerful scenes of torture, complex plot, and focus on the villain. Baker sees the influence of The Monk, as well as Godwin’s St. Leon on Maturin’s earlier novel The Fatal Revenge, or the Family of Montario (1807). 5

William Godwin, whose The Adventures of Caleb Williams (1794) Lewis had enjoyed, published St. Leon in 1799, and aligned himself with the Walpole tradition by stating in the preface that he had "mixed human feelings and passions with incredible situations, and thus rendered them impressive and interesting"; however, his purpose to provide a sounding board for his political and philosophical ideas places him out of the mainstream of the Gothic novel.

Rosa Matilda’s [Charlotte Dacre] Zofloya; or The Moor, A Romance of the Fifteenth Century (1806) easily reveals


the influence of The Monk according to Montague Summers.7 However, Zofloya is important to this study primarily for its tying of influence of The Monk to Shelley's Zastrozzi (1810).8 Shelley also wrote the Gothic St. Irvyne, or The Rosicrucian (1811) which reveals the close influence of the Gothic on his poetry.9 Walter Scott has frequently been found in debt to The Monk in Marmion (1808).10

The Gothic mode spread to America, of course, and to the leading exponent of Gothicism in the novel, Charles Brockden Brown. In an interesting example of the relationship of the two Atlantic countries, Brockden Brown then provided an influence on Shelley and on Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus.11 Also, in America, Washington Irving had read Mrs. Radcliffe and was influenced by Gothic architecture as was James Fenimore Cooper who

9 A.M.D. Hughes in "Shelley's Zastrozzi and St. Irvyne," MLR, VII (1912), 54-63, breaks down into motifs certain elements of The Monk and other Gothic novels and shows specifically their influence on Shelley's poetry in "Shelley and M.G. Lewis," MLR, I (1905-1906), 324.
11 Baker, Sentiment and the Gothic, pp. 211, 217.
"mentions both Mrs. Radcliffe and 'Monk' Lewis in one of his novels."\(^{12}\)

That there is a direct relationship between Edgar Allan Poe and Lewis has not been proved conclusively; although there is evidence that Poe was directly influenced by Lewis. Parreaux mentions a similarity in setting in Poe's tale, "The Cask of Amontillado," and the vaults of the Convent of St. Clare in The Monk.\(^ {13}\) Railo shows a close similarity in Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" and Lewis's relatively obscure poem "The House of the Heath"; the theme and the setting are so similar, he argues, "that one might well assume" that Poe is indebted to Lewis's poem for the mood and the contents, in part, of his tale.\(^ {14}\) One similarity in the two writers which has gone unnoticed is the common refrain of "No one comes: they will come no more" in The Monk\(^ {15}\) and the famous "Quoth the Raven, 'Nevermore'" in Poe's The Raven. Too much should not be made of the relationship, for Agnes repeats this refrain only once, but since it does correspond with the setting mentioned by

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\(^{13}\) The Publication, p. 163.


Farreaux, there may be some indebtedness on the part of Poe.

The Monk was most influential in Germany and France. Hoffman "took his inspiration" for Die Elixire des Teufels, and Grillparzer obtained the plot of Die Ahnfrau from it. 16 Fraz traces a priest and a female vampire in Théophile Gautier's La Morte Amoureuse to Ambrosio and the Bleeding Nun, although Summers calls this imagination. 17 Fraz also finds "a line of tradition" which "may be traced through the characters of these Fatal Women, right from the beginning of Romanticism."

"In this pedigree," he states, "one may say that Lewis's Matilda is at the head of the line: she develops, on one side into Velléda (Chateaubriand) and Salambô (Flaubert), and, on the other, into Carmen (Mérimée), Cécily (Sue), and Conchita (Pierre Louys)." 18 Finally, Lautréamont [Isidore Ducasse], considered along with Rimbaud by the twentieth-century Surrealists to be a predecessor, is said to have used "the roman noir and the Gothic novel of Monk Lewis and other writers" as models for his poems, Chants de Maldoror. 19


17 Ibid., p. 209; Summers, The Gothic Quest, n. 50, p. 299.


Considered individually, the other major Gothic novels had a widespread influence on the literature to come. Bertrand Evans, who practically builds his book around Lewis as a dramatist, argues persuasively that one of the secondary reasons for studying Gothic literature is to show its influence on the greater works of Romanticism, that the study of Gothic prose does not provide completely the relationships—he is referring to the development of the Byronic hero, in part—but that a study of Gothic drama does. 20

The Gothic villain and the romantic hero are, however, "members of the same genus. Both share an essential loneliness and feeling of incommunicability; both are generally scapegoats or guilt-haunted wanderers." 21 Ambrosio can be seen as standing midway between the Gothic villain and romantic hero, a posturing, guilt-ridden Byronic hero. The Gothic hero-villain contains a heightened propensity for good and evil and is "in touch with nether forces, originally demonic but later inside the mind." Finally, the Gothic villain "led eventually to the American and French versions of symbolism and to a recognition or rediscovery of myth as one expression of the psychic drama of the whole mind." 22

20 Bertrand Evans, Gothic Drama from Walpole to Shelley (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1947), p. 3ff.


22 Ibid.
As the foreshadowing of the future interest in the psychology of contradiction and artistic ambiguity, the Gothic novel, especially The Monk, is the purveyor of the themes of "Balzac, Dickens, Browning, Baudelaire, Dostoevsky, and their heirs." 23

23 Ibid., p. 250.
APPENDIX I

Crazy Jane

"Stay, fair maid! On every feature,
Why are marks of dread imprest?
Can a wretched, helpless creature
Praise such terrors in your brest?
Do my frantic looks alarm you?
Trust me, sweet, your fears are vain:
Not for kingdoms would I harm you--
Shun not then poor Crazy Jane.

"Dost thou weep to see my anguish?
Mark me, and escape my woe!
When men flatter, sigh, and languish,
Think them false--I found them so!
For I loved, Oh! so sincerely,
None will ever love again;
Yet the man I prized most dearly
Broke the heart of Crazy Jane.

"Gladly that young heart received him,
Which has never loved but one;
He seemed true, and I believed him--
He was false, and I undone!
Since that hour has reason never
Held her empire o'er my brain.
Henry fled!--With him, forever,
Fled the wits of Crazy Jane.

"Now forlorn and broken-hearted,
Still with frenzied thoughts beset,
Near the spot where last we parted,
Near the spot where first we met,
Thus I chant my lovelorn ditty,
While I sadly pace the plain;
And each passer by, in pity,
Cries 'God help thee, Crazy Jane!'"

1 [Mrs. Cornwall Baron-Wilson], The Life and Correspondence of M. G. Lewis, author of "The Monk," "Castle Spectre," &c. with many Pieces in Prose and Verse, never before Published (2 vols.; London: Henry Colburn, Publisher, 1839), II, 188-89. This is the "original version, copied from a MS. in the handwriting of the author."
APPENDIX II

English Bards and Scotch Reviewers

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

1807-1809, II, 265-82. Lewis was in good company following "simple Wordsworth" and Coleridge in Byron's satire.
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