

The presentation of emotion in the English Gothic novels of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, with particular reference to Ann Radcliffe's Mysteries of Udolpho, M.G. Lewis's Monk, Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, C.R. Maturin's Melmoth the Wanderer, Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre, and works by the minor Minerva press novelists Regina Maria Roche and Mary Anne Radcliffe.

Coral Ann Howells

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an examination of values and craftsmanship in the Gothic novel, and sets out to demonstrate that the changes which occurred between 1790 and 1820 constituted a series of experimental attempts to present new areas of emotional and imaginative awareness in fiction.

Though it is not a historical survey, some attention has been given to location. The studies of particular novels are related to the aesthetic tastes of the age, and an attempt is made to show how the Gothic novelists' preoccupation with emotion and fantasy distinguished their work from earlier fiction. The discussion follows chronological lines which reflect the developmental nature of the changes.

The characteristic emphasis in Gothic fiction is on irrationality and subjective experience. Though it is invariably melodramatic, there is a gradual movement away from conventionalised abstractions of feeling and character towards more precise analysis and description of individual emotional states. The novels I have chosen mark significant stages in this progress.

The Mysteries of Udolpho and The Monk established the pattern and the enthusiasm for Gothic fiction. In Mrs. Radcliffe's sentimental Gothic and Lewis's "horror" Gothic there is an insistence on sensational incidents and emotional crises which characterises the pre-Romantic ambivalent attitude towards irrational experience.

Frankenstein and Melmoth the Wanderer mark the assimilation of Gothic into the imaginative literature of Romanticism. Both are recognisably Gothic in their obsessional fantasies and their sensationalism, but both authors use external dramatics as techniques for realising inner states and motivations rather than as ends in themselves.

In conclusion, Jane Eyre shows the full realisation of the potential of Gothic, where fact and fantasy are fused into a realistic statement of total experience. It marks the break-through into the everyday world which the earlier Gothic novelists had rejected or failed to achieve.

Jane Eyre places the value of the earlier Gothic novels in perspective. In addition to expressing late eighteenth century emotional reactions against rationalist conventions, they can be seen as necessary experiments in working out a new emotional and imaginative vocabulary in fiction.

INTRODUCTION

This study is concerned with only one aspect of the Gothic novel - its treatment and presentation of emotion. My concern is with values and craftsmanship, so I am approaching the Gothic novel as a literary form to be judged on its own merits. I owe a debt to my predecessors in the study of Gothic fiction, who have located it historically and related it to the tastes of the age which produced it. I have tried to avoid going over the ground they have covered. My aim has been to go forward to consider aspects of literary technique which for the first time presented themselves as problems to the writers of Gothic fiction.

The Gothic novel stood at the beginning of many lines of development in prose fiction. For the first time, authors felt that their primary concern was with emotional and imaginative experience. The emphasis in the novel changed from presenting the illusion of everyday life as it was, or could be, lived, to presenting dream worlds of wish-fulfilment or morbid fantasy. It neglected the complexity of life, in order to concentrate on areas of subjective experience. Emotion and imagination are important in our experience of life, but they belong to the private world of the individual and they lie below the everyday world of social conventions and orthodox values. They inform and shape our values, but in their turn, emotional responses and instincts are formalised into the accepted patterns of social behaviour. The Gothic novelists turned away from the problems of man as a social animal to the problems of man as an individual, struggling to understand forces within himself which had no name in the world of social conventions. They were interested in exploring the world of feelings and imaginative awareness, and in seeing how important this was in relation to the rational codes of thinking and behaviour which society endorsed.

This presented new conceptual and technical problems for the novelist: it was necessary to discover and define the new values, and then to find a way of communicating new areas of experience to the reader. The period in fiction when the Gothic and Sentimental novels were most popular may be classified as pre-Romantic, but it is a historical classification based on themes and values, and says nothing about the literary experiments which characterised this fiction. My study is concerned primarily with the problems of craftsmanship involved in these experiments, and it differs in its approach from earlier criticism of the Gothic novel, in its emphasis on the literary qualities of this form.

Earlier Studies of the Gothic Novel:

Earlier studies of the Gothic novel have been comprehensive historical surveys, rather than detailed investigations of these novels as literature. There are several reasons for this: the need to chart a whole area of popular fiction belonging to an earlier generation, which had almost entirely disappeared from bookshelves and from memory by the beginning of the twentieth century; and, connected with the ephemeral nature of this literature, the extreme practical difficulty of finding copies of many of the novels. The first work for the critic was to make the Gothic novels known, and to find a place for this rather bizarre form of writing in the stream of fiction.

The most profitable initial approach to understanding the Gothic novel was to relate it to eighteenth century taste, and to see how it was the literary expression of the new enthusiasm for medievalism, picturesque beauty, and emotional experience, which prefigured the great age of Romanticism at the beginning of the nineteenth century. This is the approach adopted by J. M. S. Tompkins in The Popular Novel in England, 1770-1800 (1932), and by Davendra Varma who has followed her

line in his own investigation in The Gothic Flame (1957). J. M. S. Tompkins discusses all forms of the popular novel during the last thirty years of the eighteenth century: sentimental novels, Gothic novels, and propaganda novels. Her aim is to relate the fiction to the prevailing interests of the society in which it was produced, and to this end, she shows how the main themes (Sensibility, Didacticism, Terror and Supernaturalism) reflected the social attitudes and the aesthetic interests of the day. She discusses the important influence that the rise of women novelists had on shaping the course of fiction during the period, and places the novels of Mrs. Radcliffe in their contemporary context, by showing how the characteristics of her fiction were "a focus of all the romantic tendencies of her time." J. M. S. Tompkins is concerned with relationships, not with isolating particular words. Her comment on the Gothic novel shows clearly that she is interested in the genre more as a form of popular amusement than as a form of literature; she calls it "a glaring and picturesque façade ... uninhabitable by flesh and blood, or even by authentic ghosts ... but immensely stimulating to the cramped fancy of the age"(247).

Davendra Varma acknowledges his debt to J. M. S. Tompkins and his study is, like hers, a comprehensive one. He has no need to be concerned with the historical location of Gothic fiction, and his study deals with the internal dynamics of the form - its development and disintegration, and the perpetuation of its themes in Romantic literature. He is concerned with the ideas of Gothic fiction, and with the psychological impulses behind it, which he defines as "the Quest for the Numinous, common to all men." His study is extensive, rather than intensive. His later work in the field has shown a similar bias. His editorship for the Folio Press of the Seven Horrid



Novels mentioned in Northanger Abbey, and his recently finished book on eighteenth century circulating libraries, The Evergreen Tree, show that he is concerned with promoting a wider knowledge of what was written during the period, rather than with literary criticism and interpretation.

A more detailed study of the Gothic novel as an expression of eighteenth century aesthetic tastes appears in the work of S. H. Monk, The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theory in XVIIIth Century England (1960). He traces the development of eighteenth century aesthetic theories, and relates the taste for the sublime and the picturesque to the expression of strong emotions in literature and painting. His main emphasis is on the growing interest in emotional and imaginative experience in every form of art as the eighteenth century advanced. Elizabeth Manwaring's study, Italian Landscape in Eighteenth Century England (1925) deals with the influence of Claude Lorraine and Salvator Rosa on eighteenth century English taste, and shows how the landscapes in fiction were more frequently taken from landscape paintings than from nature itself. Monk and Manwaring have written essays in aesthetics, not in literary criticism. Both of them are concerned to show how strong the connection was between painting, poetry, and the novel, in a period when all art was directed towards presenting the sublime and its attendant emotional and spiritual exhilaration.

The question of the relation between the sublime and the characteristic Gothic emotion of terror is treated more often as an aesthetic than as a literary one. Edith Birkhead in The Tale of Terror (1921) has investigated the mechanics of fear in the Gothic novel, and has studied its techniques of visual presentation and supernaturalism to arouse a lively sympathetic response in its readers. Dorothy Scarborough's book The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction (1917) is similarly concerned with the aesthetic value of shock and terror though, like Varma, she goes beyond the eighteenth

century. She relates Gothic themes of terror to the Victorian Sensation novel of the 1860's and to early twentieth century fiction of terror and the supernatural. The studies of Eino Railo, The Haunted Castle (1927) and Mario Praz, The Romantic Agony (1933) are both concerned with isolating Gothic themes, and with showing how they were taken up and developed by the Romantics.

The critics who have related the Gothic novel to the tastes and tendencies of its age and who have shown its place in the development towards Romanticism, have been assisted in their surveys by the work of bibliophiles and literary historians like Montague Summers, Michael Sadleir, and J. R. Foster. Summers had a tremendous antiquarian enthusiasm for the curiosities of literature and he produced two encyclopaedic works on the Gothic novel, The Gothic Quest (1938) and A Gothic Bibliography (1940). They provide a vast if somewhat erratic source of information on the names, dates, and contents of most Gothic novels, though their nature precludes any evaluation of the material they present. The only detailed studies of the particular qualities of Gothic fiction which Summers attempted appears in his Introductions to two of the Seven Horrid Novels which he edited and reprinted, and in his Essays in Petto (1928). Even then, his attitude is mainly historical and he is rather patronising to them as works of literature. Michael Sadleir's contribution to Gothic studies was a very practical one, as without his efforts any extensive study of this form of fiction would now be impossible. He was a bibliophile who started collecting Gothic novels in 1922. By his continued enthusiastic searches for obscure Gothic fiction, he traced, preserved, and catalogued numbers of books which would otherwise have disappeared. He sold his collection to Robert K. Black in 1937, and it is now in the University of Virginia. The

university possesses a unique collection of Gothic material - novels, chapbooks, and magazines. These are readily accessible to all students and are an invaluable store of reference material. J. R. Foster in History of the Pre-Romantic Novel in England (1949) has produced a historical survey of the development of the Gothic novel out of the earlier Sentimental novel. The book traces the parallel courses of Gothic and Sentimental fiction during the 1790's and the first fifteen years of the nineteenth century. It outlines thematic developments in the fiction of this period, and contains plot summaries of most of the novels he discusses. His main concern has been to present evidence which was difficult to obtain, rather than to assess its literary value.

The popular amusement aspect of Gothic fiction was touched on by J. M. S. Tompkins and Dorothy Scarborough, as it expressed the attitudes and tastes of the age in which it was produced. The end of the eighteenth century was the great age of the circulating libraries, and for the first time novel reading became a widespread leisure activity among women. Gothic fiction formed a considerable part of the material available, and several studies on circulating libraries and reading habits have been done. I have already mentioned the most recent one, The Evergreen Tree.<sup>(1)</sup> There are two earlier ones which provide much valuable bibliographical information, and also give some indication of the curve in the popularity of Gothic fiction. The earliest study is the M.A. thesis of H. Winifred Husbands, "The Lesser Novel 1770-1800" (London, 1922). She defines the "lesser novel" as the "circulating library novel" and gives a valuable list of over 1300 titles of these novels with their dates and authors. In addition, she interprets recognisable trends and themes in the fiction of this period. Dorothy Blakey's study, The Minerva Press,

(1) I do not know whether Davendra Varma's book has yet been published; I read it in manuscript.

1780-1820 (1939) gives complete statistical information on the publications of the Minerva Press and details of its circulating library, which was one of the biggest and most popular in the period. It provides valuable background against which to measure the effectiveness of the frequent criticisms of novel reading in literary magazines at the time, and helps us to place in context the growing number of burlesques on Gothic romances which appeared towards the end of the eighteenth century.

These earlier studies have been absolutely necessary to give us a comprehensive view of this minor form of fiction, which reflects the manners, the fantasies and the behaviour codes of another generation. Now that the historical work has been done, the next important step is to examine these novels as literature. It is easy to criticise the Gothic novel because it does not provide what we now demand of fiction. It is all too tempting to rationalise our irritation with the verbosity of these novelists, their exaggeration, their sentimentality, and their evasion of the important issues which their subject matter inevitably raises. But it is a pointless exercise in literary criticism. The useful critical approach, it seems to me, is to discover how clearly the Gothic novelists saw their problems, and to examine how they attempted to present new areas of experience within the novel form. I have concentrated on the treatment and presentation of feeling, because this appears to be the most distinctive thing about the Gothic novel. It is basic to their conception of the purpose of novel writing, and it is also the area which demanded new literary techniques for its expression.

In my first chapter, I have attempted to show the importance that the Gothic novelists themselves assigned to

emotion and imagination, and how their preoccupations with certain types of feeling distinguished them from earlier eighteenth century novels and from the contemporary Sentimental novel. This study of values is meant to place the Gothic novels in a critical context, rather than a historical one. The same approach to them as literature applies to my discussion of the ways the Gothic novelists chose to present feeling. The general conclusions drawn are all, I hope, supported and illustrated by the examination of particular novels which follows.

The method I have adopted in the main body of the thesis is one of close textual study. I have chosen certain Gothic novels from the period 1794-1820, which seem to mark significant developments and changes in the treatment of emotion. I have examined them in some detail, looking at their treatment of plot, character, and moral argument, and its relation to the presentation of states of feeling. I have also chosen particular passages from these novels, where with the evidence before us we can see how the writer defines and explores his values, and how he establishes a relation between the emotion he is trying to express and the reader to whom it is being communicated. The Gothic novel is particularly suitable for this type of detailed literary criticism, because it is a sporadic sort of fiction with all its energies concentrated in dramatic displays of feeling or in set pieces with strong visual and emotional appeal. Gothic novels are not novels of consistent organic development, where plot, character, and ideas relate and illumine each other as a unified impression. They are episodic novels, or even "situational" novels, if this word defines more clearly the concentrated build-up to a particular crisis and the quick withdrawal from it, as another line of interest replaces it. If I may use a popular Gothic image of the stormy sea, I can most aptly describe the movement of a typical Gothic novel. It is a never-ending series of wave crests, alternating with great troughs, before the

next wave rises to its crescendo and in turn comes crashing down. While it makes the study of particular passages the only profitable means of critical analysis, it also suggests the need for the passages to be chosen carefully. There are long passages in any Gothic novel, of varying degrees of vagueness and slackened interest, which are there to fill in bits of plot and character definition, and to give necessary explanations after the shock value of a crisis has been exploited. One reading is enough to extract their meaning. It is pointless to go over and over them, as there is the tendency to falsify by reading into them more than is demonstrably there.

The passages I have chosen in each of the novels are frequently long; Gothic was a literature of full statement, not of implication. At the risk of undue length, I have included the texts in the body of the thesis, because it is essential to have them before us in practical criticism and sometimes it is difficult to obtain the books that I am discussing. The marked similarity of content in many of the passages is not accidental. As the Gothic novel was a literature of emotional display and dramatic crisis, the same types of situation occur again and again in all the novels. I have tried to show that there is a consistent emphasis on certain types of emotion, which, by their frequent occurrence in fiction for the first time, may be characterised as Gothic. The novels I have chosen all present anxiety states, ranging from melancholy meditations and vague foreboding to outbursts of terror and horror. They are all novels of restlessness and dissatisfaction, and three of them, The Monk, Frankenstein, and Melmoth, are concerned specifically with suffering and frustration. Gothic fiction was a literature of personal tension and doubt, and for the first time, novelists were faced with communicating states of feeling, without the backing of a consistent moral and social order against which to measure and evaluate emotions. They were uncertain what importance to give to emotion and intuition, so part of their problem was

to work out a system of values where emotion and reason stood in a different relation to each other from that of earlier fiction. As novelists, they had to work out their evaluation of different types of experience through the medium of character and story, where states of mind and feeling could be realised imaginatively, and they had to find new techniques of literary expression to communicate the new experiences with force and flexibility.

Mrs. Ann Radcliffe is the first novelist I have chosen, because her particular definition of Gothic made the form popular, and her way of handling new emotional situations set a pattern which was followed with few variations for the next twenty years. She provided a new form of literary entertainment which gave her middle-class lady readers plenty of vicarious emotional and imaginative thrills, without disturbing their fixed beliefs in religion and morality. Her version of Gothic was an extension of the cult of Sensibility under the influence of Burke's aesthetic theory of the sublime into the region of anxieties, fears, and terrors. She played upon her readers' insecurities and sense of helplessness, to suggest mysterious threats of danger from human and superhuman agents, and created an atmosphere of suspense and dread, without ever giving it the substance of reality. Her treatment of fear and terror was not directed inward to understanding of these feelings in the characters who experienced them, but was always directed outward in an attempt to arouse the imaginative sympathies of the reader. Her techniques for presenting feeling were so external that emotion was reflected back from her visual presentations of situation and scenery to the characters and to the readers equally. She was not concerned with registering felt emotion, but with communicating the quality of an emotion to the reader. Indeed, she was much

better at handling her readers' emotions than those of her characters. She wrote escapist fiction purely for its entertainment value, exploiting the discrepancy between feeling and reason in order to separate feeling off into the world of fantasy and indulgent day dream.

We come a stage closer to a genuine attempt to explore emotional states in M. G. Lewis's The Monk. Unlike Mrs. Radcliffe, Lewis was really interested in strong emotions, particularly sexual desire and in the sufferings and guilt which attended it in an age when social decorum did not admit its existence. His novel was an attempt to deal with the inner psychological conflict between a man's uncontrollable instincts and his outward image of orthodoxy. Lewis was interested in tracing the workings of passion to their limits. However, he was hampered by his own lack of insight into their effects on character and by the conventional mores of the novel, which made it impossible to present a character with Ambrosio's impulses as other than monstrous. In the end, Lewis evaded the implications of the emotional issues he had raised, by imposing a moral theme on his subject matter. The monk's sexual frustration was revealed as part of a diabolical plan to damn his soul, and the terror and horror of the emotional content was transformed into the terror of the supernatural. Lewis's methods of investigation and presentation were crude and he could not show the monk's struggles convincingly by the melodramatic methods he adopted. In many ways, however, his failure is interesting, because under the sensationalism and hysteria there was a genuine attempt to study the impulses behind sexual violence, and The Monk opened up new areas of emotional experience to fiction.

I have called Mrs. Radcliffe and Lewis the first explorers in the new field of emotional and imaginative experience, because they recognised new values and made the first technical



experiments in communicating these values to their readers. However, they took only the first steps, and both of them were inadequate to present emotion with any of the force of a particular and fully-realised experience. They frequently gave a rough external equivalent of an emotion and left the reader to supplement what they failed to tell. The Gothic novel by the end of the 1790's was full of strong emotional content, expressed in techniques borrowed from poetry and the drama which were still inadequately adapted to the demands of prose fiction.

The restlessness and neurosis in the content of Gothic fiction appealed strongly to contemporary readers, and the demand for it in the new circulating libraries was so strong that minor novelists turned out scores of Gothic romances, modelled on the patterns set by Lewis and Mrs. Radcliffe. They were the occupiers of the new emotional territory. All they did was to domesticate the themes of love, passion, murder, and revenge, and to set up conventions of writing based on the inadequate methods of their predecessors. It was a period of sensational and melodramatic fiction, filled with clichés of expression and coarse-grained orthodox moral statements. The minor Gothic writers did not see behind the traditional characters or situations and they had no ability to analyse the emotions of which the sensational images were only the result. Consequently, the Gothic novel as a form of writing fell into very low repute by the second decade of the nineteenth century. When writers with a serious purpose took up the form, they felt the need to disclaim authorship of "mere terror novels".

Mary Shelley and Maturin, when taking up the Gothic form in Frankenstein and Melmoth, made it clear in their prefaces that they were using Gothic situations only for their

imaginative and emotional appeal. They were Romantic in their sympathies, and the Gothic novels they wrote had an imaginative freedom which had been lacking in the earlier novels. Both of them declared that they were really attempting to do something more than merely to arouse gratuitous horrors, and these two novelists writing over twenty years after Udolpho, pushed Gothic fiction in a new direction. There was a movement away from the interest in external dramatics to a concern with the emotional imperatives behind action, and a new confidence in asserting the superiority of emotion and imagination over rationality. Unlike their predecessors, they were not so ready to bring down the balance in favour of orthodox social and moral institutions and to deny psychological truths which upset decorum and conventional ways of thinking. For the first time, a serious attempt was being made to relate the situational interest to a particular character's emotional state and to make the outer world a dramatic extension of the inner world. The anxieties and neuroses so characteristic of Gothic fiction were still there, and indeed aggravated in both Frankenstein and Melmoth by the extraordinary circumstances in which the main characters were placed. The mildly neurotic feelings of isolation became romantic pangs of cosmic loneliness, and the nostalgic desire to retreat from the pressures of life was transformed into an obsessional concern with the individual's private fantasy world. Emotions were expressed most often in hyperbole, and Mary Shelley and Maturin were obviously hampered by Gothic rhetoric and melodramatic methods of presentation. However, they were sensitive analysts of feeling, and both of them evolved stylistic techniques which gave some impression of emotional movement and variety. Mary Shelley was concerned with the problems of the creative artist, and Maturin with the moral necessity for suffering, and the very themes suggest the diversity of interest and the new serious concerns of

these Romantic writers of Gothic fiction. By 1820, the Gothic novel as a popular genre had ceased to have an independent significance and was rapidly being assimilated into the imaginative literature of Romanticism.

To conclude my study, I have leapt ahead twenty-seven years, from Maturin's Melmoth to Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre. Here is what we can without hesitation call a good Gothic novel, one which reached beyond experiment and found a new way of communicating strange and powerful emotional experiences. Charlotte Brontë used recognisably Gothic conventions, but she realised the potential of the Gothic novel by taking the traditional character types and situations and using them as instruments for dramatising and accurately describing emotional states. It stands at a distance which is not only chronological but emotional, representing the full development of confidence in irrational forms of experience. The coherence of its values is reflected in the presentation, where instead of generalisations about feeling and isolated moments of crisis, there is an accurate delineation of emotional experience, a sense of the continuity of personality, and an absence of arbitrary distinctions between fact and fantasy. Charlotte Brontë entered her heroine's mind and showed how rational and irrational awareness could be assimilated into a single individual's experience of life. It marks the significant advancement beyond private obsession and fantasy to a study of human relationships, and is a realisation of the values and pressures of the world outside the self. As the successful Gothic novel, Jane Eyre places the novels of the period 1790-1820 in perspective. It provides a definition in emotional and imaginative fiction against which to measure the earlier attempts at presenting new areas of awareness within the novel form.

I have followed a chronological arrangement in my discussion, in order to reflect the developmental nature of the changes which occurred in Gothic fiction. Within the recurrent situations of emotional crisis which characterised the Gothic novel, there were attempts by creative writers to realise and communicate the qualitative differences between types of strong feeling. The novelists I have chosen show the slow but consistent line of development towards the analysis of inner states through the externals of violent action and emotional display.

We cannot avoid evaluating the achievements of the Gothic novelists, but this can come only after a critical study of their methods. We shall probably decide that the Gothic novel between 1790 and 1820 has only a historical significance, but we can reach this conclusion confidently only after analysing their ways of presenting emotion, and deciding how much is of experimental interest and how much, if anything, is of permanent value.

Chapter I.      Emotion in the Gothic Novel:  
                  A General Survey of Values and  
                  Methods of Presentation

The eighteenth century Gothic revival is the expression of so many new impulses in the thinking habits and aesthetic tastes of the time, that it is very difficult to define exactly what value the word "Gothic" has when it is applied to fiction.<sup>(1)</sup> All through the eighteenth century, the word is synonymous with "medieval", and is used to describe anything that is non-classical, extravagant, or mysterious. It has no precise meaning as a descriptive term, and it may be applied to architecture, history, behaviour or literature. Its changing connotations reflect the changes in eighteenth century taste, from appreciation of the limits of classical order, when anything Gothic was viewed with disfavour, to a new enthusiasm in the second half of the century for the eccentric, the wild, and the imaginative. By the time Walpole used the word Gothic to describe his "new species of Romance", The Castle of Otranto in 1764, the word had come to symbolise

(1) I am concerned only with Gothic as a meaningful description of a certain type of novel, but I have been helped towards my understanding of the term by studies on the semantic development of the word in the eighteenth century:

- W.C. Holbrook, "The Adjective Gothique in the XVIIIth Century", MLN, LVI (1941), 498-503;  
A.E. Longueil, "The Word Gothic in XVIIIth Century Criticism", MLN, XXXVIII (1923), 453-460;  
and by the following works on general taste, architecture, and gardening:  
W. Jackson Bate, From Classic to Romantic: Premises of Taste in 18th Century England (Harvard, 1946);  
B. Sprague-Allen, Tides in English Taste (1619-1800), II (N.Y., 1958);  
Sir Kenneth Clark, The Gothic Revival (Lond., 1928);  
A.O. Lovejoy, "The First Gothic Revival and the Return to Nature", MLN, XLVII (1932), 419-446;  
E. Malins, English Landscaping and Literature (Lond., 1966)

everything that was popularly associated with medievalism: architecture, superstition, emotional and imaginative extravagance.

Horace Walpole is one of the most important figures in the Gothic revival. His attitudes and his tastes reflected the growing dissatisfaction with all that Neo-Classicism stood for, and his practical efforts in architecture and literature did much to define "Gothic" preoccupations and values. He built his Gothic "castle" at Strawberry Hill, Twickenham, and wrote a book, The Anecdotes of Painting (1762) where he discussed the special appeal of Gothic architecture. To Walpole, as to his contemporaries, Gothic architecture did not seem to have any organisational or structural principles, but seemed a mass of extravagant ornament, capable of arousing "sensations of romantic devotion" in the beholder. He contrasted the "unrestrained licentiousness" of Gothic with the simplicity and proportion of classical Palladian architecture, and came out in favour of Gothic. He stressed its emotional and imaginative qualities:

It is difficult for the noblest Grecian temple to convey half so many impressions to the mind as a cathedral does of the best Gothic taste - a proof of skill in the architects and of address in the priests who erected them. The latter exhausted their knowledge of the passions in composing edifices whose pomp, mechanism, vaults, tombs, painted windows, gloom and perspectives infused such sensations of romantic devotion .. One must have taste to be sensible of the beauties of Grecian architecture; one only wants passions to feel Gothic.(2)

When he wrote the first Gothic romance, Walpole was transferring his enthusiasms from architecture to prose fiction,

(2) Anecdotes of Painting (Strawberry Hill, 1762), I, 107-108 (Chap.V). My underlining, to emphasise the antitheses.

and keeping the same non-classical and non-rational values. Gothic to Walpole was not so much a word, as the focus for his antiquarian tastes and his literary and architectural fantasies. It is interesting to consider Walpole's own remarks about his concept of Gothic. Apparently he did not take it very seriously, either in architecture or writing. In a letter to Mary Berry (17 October 1794), he says of Strawberry Hill, "Every true Goth must perceive that they [the house and its early Gothic rooms] are more the works of fancy than of imitation."<sup>(3)</sup> He told the Rev. William Cole (9 March 1765) that his inspiration for writing Otranto was a dream he had "of a gigantic hand in armour" at the top of a great Gothic staircase.<sup>(4)</sup> His Gothic taste was evidently the expression of the pre-Romantic enthusiasm for the Middle Ages, as a new ideal in art and letters.

His prefaces to the first and second editions of Otranto are interesting as his statement of the values he saw in Gothic. Quite clearly, Walpole realised that Otranto was something new in English fiction, in its material, its presentation, and its aims.<sup>(5)</sup> Its concerns were much closer to those of drama and poetry than to those of contemporary fiction. He presented Otranto in his first edition as a translation of a fifteenth century Italian manuscript, which gave him the licence to retreat from the concerns of everyday

(3) Horace Walpole's Correspondence, ed. W.S. Lewis (O.U.P., 1937-65), XII, 137.

(4) *ibid.*, I, 88.

(5) In a letter to Mme. du Deffand (11 March 1767), he implied his concerns with emotionalism and fantasy, when he said: "I have not written for this century, which wants only cold reason." (original letter in French). *Ibid.*, III, 260.



life into an imaginative medieval past where he could write about miracles and supernatural phenomena.<sup>(6)</sup> His enthusiasm for the mysterious, the strange, and the terrible was symptomatic of the growing interest in the Middle Ages, which, as a literary cult, was treated more extensively in poetry than in other forms of writing. Walpole wrote about the Middle Ages in the same spirit as Richard Hurd two years earlier had done in his Letters on Chivalry and Romance, and as Percy did, when he published his Reliques of Ancient English Poetry in 1765. Walpole's pseudo-medieval borrowing reminds us of Chatterton's poetic forgeries fifteen years later, produced out of a similar enthusiasm.

Like the poets, Walpole was, he said, "desirous of leaving the powers of fancy at liberty to expatiate through the boundless realms of invention", but at the same time he was mindful of the example of "the brightest genius that England has produced", "where fancy and probability were blended to give a complete picture of human life." The genius was Shakespeare, and his literary form was the drama, not pure poetry. Walpole consciously imitated Shakespeare in his characterisation, his dramatic situations, and his treatment of plot development. He said:

I might have pleaded that, having created a new species of romance, I was at liberty to lay down what rules I thought fit for the conduct of it: but I should be more proud of having imitated, however faintly, weakly, and at a distance, so masterly a pattern, than to enjoy the entire merit of invention, unless I could have marked my work with genius, as well as with originality.

(6) The first edition was published under the pseudonym, William Marshall, Gent., and the second edition under his own name.

Walpole was expressing the popular enthusiasm for Shakespeare as the characteristic English genius, separated from classical restrictions and associated with an earlier era of freedom.<sup>(7)</sup> Pope had compared Shakespeare with an ancient piece of Gothic architecture, and Johnson had praised "his transcendental and unbounded genius". Shakespeare was certainly the major influence on Walpole, but another dramatic influence is implicit in his statement of the aims of his romance. When he talked about his desire to evoke an energetic emotional response in his readers, he borrowed his terminology from Aristotle's Poetics, as his reference to the "tragic" combination of pity and terror shows:

Everything tends directly to the catastrophe. Never is the reader's attention relaxed. The rules of the drama are almost observed throughout the conduct of the piece ... Terror, the author's principle engine, prevents the story from ever languishing; and it is so often contrasted by pity, that the mind is kept up in a constant vicissitude of interesting passions.

He was aware that the new areas of experience that he wanted to embody in fiction could be communicated only by adopting techniques from the drama. In the drama, the emphasis had always been on strong passions and states of high emotion,

(7) In his Anecdotes, Walpole contrasted Shakespeare's genius with classical rules of art, to Shakespeare's advantage: "Cato is a regular classical drama, Macbeth an extravagant one; yet who thinks the genius of Addison equal to Shakespeare's? The one copies rules, the other the passions." This statement appears as a footnote which is not in the 1762 edition, but added in a later edition (1798), reprinted in the World Library of Standard Books (Lond. after 1879), 71.

whereas earlier fiction had neglected these areas, or treated them only as side issues.<sup>(8)</sup>

Walpole was trying to shift the balance in prose fiction away from the illusion of everyday life and "truth to nature" towards a world of fantasy, which demanded from its readers imaginative, rather than intellectual, assent. He said that he was trying to blend the two kinds of romance then known, "the Ancient, all imagination and improbability, and the Modern, where Nature is intended to be copied."<sup>(9)</sup>

In fact, Walpole did not keep the balance between the imaginative and the everyday worlds. With the earlier eighteenth century novelists, the reader is always aware that emotional and imaginative experience is situated in a larger world, where the values of intense feeling are seen in perspective.

Walpole changes the relationship between the outside world and subjective experience, by emphasising the values of sensory perceptions, emotional reactions, and the powers of fancy and imagination. They are the most important types of experience in the private world of fantasy. Walpole's Gothic world was situated in an imaginative medieval past, where

(8) It is true that in Sir Charles Grandison Richardson had presented insanity and picturesque raving in the character of the Italian girl, Clementina, and his lady readers had received her enthusiastically. But it was an isolated melodramatic episode, and not central to the concept of the novel. The "haunting" scene in Smollett's Ferdinand Count Fathom is treated similarly, as a matter of local interest only.

(9) Clara Reeve's Progress of Romance (1785) gives a fuller definition of Walpole's literary terms from a contemporary point of view.

any subjective preoccupation could be explored without the restricting demands of everyday life. Once his fantasy world is established, there is no clear line between reactions to real phenomena and reactions to imagined phenomena, so that dreams, supernatural occurrences, and ghosts have a legitimate existence.<sup>(10)</sup> Otranto represented a new emphasis in the novel, and the name "Gothic" became associated with other novels which were concerned with emotional indulgence in a world of medieval fantasy.

Otranto was the prototype of the late eighteenth century Gothic novel. It gave a direction and a literary form to new enthusiasms, and in fact, the characteristics and preoccupations of Gothic fiction remain essentially unaltered from Otranto to Melmoth. After Walpole, there is an apparent hiatus in Gothic fiction for about thirty years, which may seem odd in view of the already popular enthusiasm which his romance reflected. The explanation is, I think, that Walpole's type of escapist fiction could not immediately supplant the well-established sentimental novel. It was too full of miracles and supernatural occurrences to be acceptable to an age which regarded truth (either historical truth or truth to nature) as the basic requirement and excuse for fiction.<sup>(11)</sup>

(10) The Surrealists claim Walpole as their predecessor. For a study of the significance that they attach to Otranto, see D. Varma, The Gothic Flame (London, 1957), 66-71.

(11) For an excellent discussion of the concept of truth in eighteenth century fiction, see Vivienne Mylne, The 18th Century French Novel; Techniques of Illusion (Manchester, 1965), Chaps. I & II.

Writers and readers believed that the novel should treat human relationships in a setting which gave the illusion of real life. As a result, novelists borrowed only certain elements of Otranto, like the picturesque medieval architecture and the prevailing moods of gloom and fear. In the 1770's and 1780's, historical Gothic novels and sentimental Gothic novels were written, but there was always a division of interest, and the emphasis was on the historical or sentimental part, rather than on the Gothic. It was not till 1790 that Mrs. Radcliffe restated Walpole's Gothic values, in a fantasy form similar to the pattern of Otranto.<sup>(12)</sup> With a return to the imaginative medieval world, Mrs. Radcliffe implicitly rejected the notion that a novel should be "true to life". Instead, like Walpole, she appealed to the reader's sense of wonder and fear, and engaged his imaginative sympathy.

Mrs. Radcliffe establishes Gothic fiction as fantasy literature, concerned with emotions, not with facts. It is no use our asking for a realistic presentation of everyday life, when this is never the Gothic novelists' intention. The relevant question to ask is, how close do the Gothic novelists get to a convincing portrayal of the strong feelings and imaginative experiences which they claim as their special subject matter? Again, we may refer back to Walpole's preface, to find a clear statement of the particular sort of emotional truth that he wants to tell:

He wished to conduct the mortal agents in his drama according to the rules of probability; in short, to make them think, speak, and act, as it might be supposed mere men and women would do in extraordinary positions.

The two main points to be drawn from Walpole's statement are that he is interested in commonly observed reactions, rather than in the reactions of any particular person, and that he is

(12) Ann Radcliffe, A Sicilian Romance.

interested in situations which subject human nature to unusual and extreme pressures. His preoccupation with extraordinary situations, and with emotional reactions which are typical rather than individual, sets the pattern for the treatment of emotions in Gothic fiction. Its directions and limitations were therefore laid down thirty years before it became popular, and all the technical experiments during the thirty years when it was in fashion were only attempts to explore the implications of Walpole's statement in the Otranto preface, and to redefine his values more accurately and more truthfully.

Before we go on to consider the relation between the emotional values in Gothic fiction and the techniques which the novelists use to express them, some general discussion about ways of presenting emotion in fiction may be relevant. Emotion has two basic aspects: its outward appearance, and its inward movement in the mind. The artist has to start from these two extremes, the objective and the subjective, in his attempt to evolve techniques for presenting emotion. If we limit our consideration of technical possibilities to literature, we see that the simplest form of presentation is the description of observable behaviour, from which a character's feelings may be deduced. It may be a static presentation like a character portrait, or it may be dynamic, in a dramatisation of feeling in action.

It is much more difficult to communicate states of mind and movements of feeling, because feeling is by its very nature inconsistent and various in its intensity. The simplest approach is that of lyric poetry, where emotion is given a form in words, which is not necessarily related to anything outside the feeling itself. When feeling is related to

character, as it always is in the novel, the closest equivalent of the lyric poem is for the character to communicate his own feelings in a dramatic soliloquy. Unhampered by his relations with other people, he has the opportunity for self-analysis or self-indulgence, in his communings with himself. There is also the possibility of combining the character's thoughts and feelings with a modicum of authorial comment, by the use of inner reportage. Experience is refracted through a character's mind but it is conveyed in the third person, not the first. Mrs. Radcliffe is the only Gothic novelist to use the indirect interior monologue, and in her hands it becomes a refined technique for arousing suspense rather than a vehicle for the character's emotions. It is an interesting variation on the soliloquy, but in its effects it is closer to a form of authorial intrusion than to a dramatic presentation of feeling. The modern stream of consciousness technique has developed out of the soliloquy, as a refinement in the method of getting into a character's mind while he is in the very process of registering experience. However, a novel has other pressures besides revelation of feeling - pressures of plot, time sequence, character development, and moral argument. One interest has to balance another. It is not possible for a novel to be a lyric poem.<sup>(13)</sup> Feelings must be dramatised and developed in words and relationships, if not in actions. The main technique for developing feelings and attitudes is direct or reported conversations between characters.<sup>(14)</sup> Conversation may lack the degree of psychological truth which the soliloquy possesses, because what a person says is likely to be conditioned by the attitude of his hearers. However,

(13) Though Brigid Brophy describes Elizabeth Smart's By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept (1945) as a lyric poem in novel form, it still has non-lyrical elements of plot and character interaction in it.

(14) Or letters, which are a rough conversational equivalent.

it has the advantage of truth to nature, being much closer to the way people behave in real life. In the novel, a character's feelings are shown in relationships, and emotional experience has to be linked with the causal progressions which are part of the whole texture of fiction.

The statements of feeling in the first person, which we get in soliloquies and in conversation, are supplemented by authorial comment. According to literary convention, the author has the creator's right to know as much about his characters' minds and feelings as he chooses. The advantage of the third person omniscient narrator in fiction is that the narrator can explore his characters' feelings, and at the same time relate them to the past and the future, and to the overall structure of the novel, in a way that a character could not do himself, limited to personal preoccupations. It is the authorial point of view which allows for emotion to be worked into a coherent structure.

Soliloquy, indirect interior monologue,<sup>conversation,</sup> and authorial comment may be loosely grouped together as statements of feeling. The term becomes clearer when we contrast the directness of statement with its opposite, suggestion or implication. An emotion need not be named by the author, or acted out in some verbal or behaviouristic way by the character, for its presence to be communicated in fiction. It is possible to make the reader believe in the existence of an emotion and to arouse his sympathetic response, by setting up an imagistic relationship between an emotional state and something in the external world. The techniques of correspondence are what I would classify as presentation of emotion by implication, where the quality and the movements of feeling are suggested in images, metaphors, and symbols. Just as the simplest method for showing the outward appearance of emotion is visual



description, so the simplest method for showing inner states is by means of a visual equivalent. Like the outward description, it may be static, showing the quality of a feeling, or it may be dynamic, showing the movements and successive impulses of feeling. The choice of an appropriate visual equivalent will depend partly on tradition, and partly on the particular tastes of the author and his age. The most common objective correlative for feeling in English literature is natural scenery. As we shall see, eighteenth century writers are particularly susceptible to its charms, using picturesque landscapes description and sublime scenery full of violent movement as metaphors for emotional states.

It is not unusual for a particular scenic description or property to be used so frequently that it acquires certain patterns of associated feelings and ideas around it. It then becomes <sup>an</sup> accepted focal point of reference, and its function changes from a simply illustrative one to a symbolic one. Techniques for presenting emotions by symbols may be crude or very complex, but either way, symbolic significance brings us to the furthest point in this general discussion of ways of presenting emotion in fiction. It is the ultimate refinement in techniques of implication, and it allows, in theory anyway, for the most subtle registration of the flux and the complexities of emotional experience.

The range of technical possibilities for presenting feeling which are available to an author is limited by considerations of value, appropriateness, and the author's own ability, not to mention historical considerations. In examining the literary craftsmanship of the Gothic novelists, it is impossible to separate them entirely from their eighteenth century context. Our biggest difficulty in evaluating their presentation of feeling is the historical gap between the eighteenth and twentieth century tastes in

in emotionalism, which makes it impossible for us to respond to the stimuli they offer. When an author is trying to communicate feelings, not ideas, his main efforts are directed to arousing a sympathetic response in his readers. In his Otranto preface, Walpole speaks of the mechanisms he uses to involve his readers emotionally and imaginatively, and it is clear in the novels of Mrs. Radcliffe and her successors that they all recognise a similar need. The novels are full of direct appeals to the reader to project imaginatively into given situations, and there is continual pressure towards involvement, in the author's hints and comments and in the use of traditional character types and situations. Judging from their popularity with circulating library readers, the Gothic novelists managed their contemporary readers properly. But times and attitudes have changed; their language of feeling is outdated and fails to involve us. It is the emotional jargon of another generation, and to us seems overwrought and verbose. We cannot help looking at it objectively, which is the very way it was never meant to be looked at. In consequence, we see it as overdone in its presentation of surfaces, and inadequate in its treatment of the implications and subtleties of feeling.

It cannot be forgotten that the Gothic novelists were influenced by the eighteenth century cult of sensibility, which resulted in the glorification of feeling for its own sake. Sensibility had taught them to dissociate the value of an emotion from the validity of its cause, and we find the same tendency in the Gothic novelists. They are concerned with emotions as values in themselves, separated not only from causality, but also from considerations of character. As a

result, they tend to treat emotions as absolute states, and to concentrate on the quality of different types of feeling, rather than to relate feeling to individual characters. They are not, like Richardson, concerned with realistic character development and with emotions as the product of a particular character's experiences. Instead, they are more concerned with the type of feeling that would be appropriate to a certain set of circumstances, and they present it as a single quality, invariable in its intensity and its means of expression. It would not be entirely true to say that their inflexibility was a historical limitation related to the evolution of the novel in the late eighteenth century. Both Richardson and Sterne before them had shown that emotions fluctuated and were inconsistent, not absolute states, and they had evolved literary techniques which registered emotional processes and changes. The Gothic novelists choose to limit their emotional and psychological realism for very definite reasons.

The main reason is that they are writing fantasy fiction, the end of which is entertainment, not truthfulness. They are much more concerned with arousing a sympathetic emotional response in their readers, than with gaining their intellectual assent to a literary structure which claims to be a representation of life. Of course, eighteenth century literary assumptions forbade the direct statement of their purpose, and it was necessary for the Gothic novelists to follow Walpole's example in claiming for their romances a moral purpose and a truth to nature which they obviously did not possess to any marked degree. Walpole had set the pattern for the fantasy of gloom, mystery, and terror, and later Gothic novelists continue to exploit the same strange areas of emotional experience, and to treat <sup>similar</sup> violent themes of passion, jealousy, murder, and catastrophe. Coleridge's

description of Gothic fiction in 1798 gives a good indication of its qualities and its popularity, despite the adverse opinion of literary critics like Coleridge himself. As the same state of affairs continued for another twenty years, his criticism is worth quoting:

It was not difficult to foresee that the modern Romance, even supported by the skill of its most ingenious votaries, would soon experience the fate of every attempt to please by what is unnatural, and by a departure from that observance of real life, which has placed the works of Fielding, Smollett, and some other writers, among the permanent sources of amusement. It might for a time afford an acceptable variety to persons whose reading is confined to works of fiction, and who would, perhaps, be glad to exchange dullness for extravagance; but it was probable that, as its constitution (if we may so speak) was maintained only by the passion of terror, and that excited by trick, and as it was not conversant in incidents and characters of a natural complexion, it would degenerate into repetition, and would disappoint curiosity. So many cries 'that the wolf is coming' must at last lose their effect.(15).

The Gothic novelists follow "truth to nature" only in so far as it is necessary to retain their readers' imaginative belief in a world of illusion. They want to exploit, rather than to explore, new areas of emotional and imaginative experience, and the obvious way to do it is to create a strong sense of identification in the reader. If a situation is unusual or striking enough, the reader's interest will be aroused, and it is necessary only to give a general outline of a character's emotional reactions in order for the reader to identify completely. Under such conditions, a detailed analysis of a particular character's reactions would go against the Gothic novelists' purpose. They want to emphasise the

(15) Unsigned review of Mrs. Radcliffe's The Italian, Critical Review, XXIII (June 1798), 166-169. Reprinted in Coleridge's Miscellaneous Criticism, ed. T.M. Raysor (Lond., 1936), 378.

sameness of human reactions in extreme situations, not their possible variety. Walpole had recognised the necessity for not straining the reader's credulity too far, when he emphasised the ordinary nature of his characters' reactions to extraordinary situations. He uses the appropriate type of reaction, which is sound technique in relation to the reader's powers of belief. The later Gothic novelists followed his technique until character types and typical emotional reactions became so conventionalised through frequent use that they lost their power to arouse the reader's sympathy.

An interesting deviation from the pattern of conformity occurs in M. G. Lewis's treatment of Ambrosio in The Monk. Ambrosio's behaviour and emotions cannot be fitted into the normal pattern, precisely because Lewis portrays him as an anomaly in human nature, a man whose passions allow him to fall under the domination of the devil. His ruin is meant to be a warning of the denaturising effects of passion. Coleridge criticised Lewis for straining the reader's credulity to breaking point, because Lewis was putting both the character and the situations outside the limits of commonly shared experience. His analysis of the reader's powers of imaginative belief is a more subtle rethinking of Walpole's earlier statement:

The Romance-writer possessed an unlimited power over situations; but he must scrupulously make his characters act in congruity with them ... The extent of the powers that may exist, we can never ascertain; and therefore we find no great difficulty in yielding a temporary belief to any, the strangest, situation of things. But that situation once conceived, how beings like ourselves would feel and act in it, our own feelings sufficiently instruct us, and we instantly reject the clumsy fiction that does not harmonise with them.(16)

(16) Unsigned review of Lewis's Monk, Critical Rev., XIX (Feb. 1797), 194-200. *ibid*, 373.

His criticism is a measure of the difficulty facing Lewis in trying to create a character who is neither a typical human being nor a supernatural "shadow of imagination". Ambrosio's emotional and moral ambiguity makes him too awkwardly individual to fit into the generalised treatment of character and feeling which was characteristic of Gothic fiction, and The Monk remains the special case of an early but interesting failure at psychological individuation within the form. Generally, characters tend to be "flat" rather than "round", representing elements of human nature rather than complex personalities, and their emotional reactions may be predicted according to the types they represent. Most of them do not have an inner principle of vitality. Their life is reflected back to them from the author's descriptions and from the reader's sympathetic identification with them.

The most common method of characterisation in Gothic fiction is the character sketch or full-length portrait. It is a non-dramatic presentation of emotional and moral qualities, based on the assumption that there is a readily-perceptible correspondence between a person's outward appearance and his inner nature. The idea was supported by the principles of physiognomy outlined by the eighteenth century Swiss clergyman and mystic, Johan Caspar Lavater. His book on physiognomy, Physiognomische Fragmente (Essays on Physiognomy) (1775-1778) attempted to establish empirical evidence for physical and psychological correspondences in individuals. He gave a scientific status to a popularly-held belief, and his work was so well-known that one of the early nineteenth century sentimental novelists, Mrs. Martin, refers to it by name in a discussion between her hero and her heroine, in The Enchantress (1801). She assumes, obviously, that her readers

will understand the reference.<sup>(17)</sup> The character sketch had been regarded as a useful literary convention long before the Gothic novelists used it. It had always been part of dramatic convention to represent different types by appropriate physical appearance, and Richardson and Smollett had used sketches in their novels to establish minor characters. As a suggestion of personality, open to development or contradiction by succeeding experiences, physical description is useful, but as it is used by the Gothic novelists, it is utterly restrictive and unrealistic.

The character sketch presupposes a very simple psychology, where character is a fixed and unalterable quantity. This is the convenient literary fiction which the Gothic novelists adopt: they work with a set number of character types, notably heroes, heroines, and villains. The types are easily identifiable from their physical description, and as every type has its fixed emotional and moral attributes, the sketch serves as a statement of inner character as well as a visual presentation. So, once the character is established by a description of face and figure, the readers know the role that he will play. The surprises and suspense of Gothic fiction depend entirely on the organisation of the plot, and not at all on the behaviour of individuals. It is a literature which exploits moments of strong emotion, but it does this by broadly delineated displays of types of feeling, not by investigations of the feelings of particular characters.

(17) The first English translation of Lavater appeared between 1789 and 1798, Essays on Physiognomy, trans. H. Hunter, 3 vols. (London). Actually, the eighteenth century Rationalists misinterpreted Lavater's work. They thought that physiognomics would establish a method for the interpretation of facial features and expressions, and this was the popular misconception which the Gothic novelists inherited. In fact, Lavater's studies are commentaries on individual characters and personalities which he observed. They are directed towards a celebration of the inherent divinity and individuality of man, and are not concerned with general scientific principles at all.

There is always the tendency, in the Gothic novels, as in any popular fiction, to idealise the sympathetic characters and to vilify the bad, till they become projections of the reader's fantasies or fears, and lose the quality of flesh and blood figures. The heroines are idealised images of feminine beauty and sublimated sexual fantasy. They can always be recognised by their delicate beauty and their mild expression of innocence and sweet sensibility, The heroes tend to be tall, handsome, and elegant, with fine eyes that reveal their nobility and benevolence of soul ,.. while the villains are usually large dark men, with passionately flashing eyes.

Character types in Gothic fiction are the expression of different aspects of fantasy experience and represent emotional impulses which are never treated openly in fiction at that time. The heroine is the most important character type in women's sentimental fiction, and everything about her suggests that she is the sublimation of feminine sexual fantasy. She has all the physical attributes which attract men's admiration, but she usually escapes the penalties of commitment to any of her admirers. A heroine is always the object of adoration and is always in love herself, though it is most unusual for her to be married. The only reference to future commitment is her happy marriage at the end of the story, accompanied by vague promises of unalterable bliss. Always a figure of virginal innocence, robed in white to emphasise her purity, frequently emerging from a convent at the beginning of the story, she is essentially untouched by everyday experience. She lives in her own world of private emotional exhilaration and her attitude to the world and to other people is a rather irresponsible one. The whole notion of the romantic heroine is adolescent and escapist, as her adventures with the villain and her discreet relations with her lover emphasise. She is presented with the alternatives of sensibility



and passion in the persons of the romantic hero and the villain, and there is never any doubt in her mind about which she will accept. She accepts the first, and remains blissfully ignorant of the second. The heroines in early Gothic novels are repelled by sexual passion, and the later heroines who fall in love with hero-villains never explore the implications of the magnetic attraction they feel. Even Maturin's heroine Immalee, who is actually married to Melmoth, her demon lover, remains essentially innocent and ignorant and dies untainted by her contact with him.

The heroine is the ideal aspect of sexual fantasy, representing the values of beauty and innocence, ennobling affection, and mutual respect. The passionate side of sexual fantasy is not entirely neglected, but many aspects of sexual love are evaded or repressed. The only overt aspect is the fear of sexuality, which is at the basis of the heroine's <sup>invariable</sup> withdrawal from the villain. Sometimes there are covert attempts, even in Mrs. Radcliffe, the most discreet of lady writers, at sexual innuendo, as on the occasion in Udolpho when the heroine is accused of being secretly in love with the villain. However, the accusation is made by a jealous lover and is therefore easily deniable. It is only a timid excursion into the possibility of a heroine being sexually attracted to a man of opposite character from herself, and not until Maturin does the attraction of opposites come to play a significant part in the development of the love story. In Lewis's The Monk, the guilt and fear of sexual passion is basic to the working-out of the story, but the death of the heroine after being raped is balanced against an earlier version of her apotheosis, which symbolised her essential innocence and purity. There is one odd point in The Monk, as ambiguous as Mrs. Radcliffe's reference, where the heroine, on first seeing the monk, is strangely attracted by him, and feels an indefinable sense of excitement at his appearance. The

point is not taken up or developed, but it stands as an interesting forerunner to the attraction which the later Gothic hero-villain exerts over women. Frankenstein is almost asexual, and yet the threat and fear of sexuality is there, in the scene where Frankenstein's bride is murdered on her wedding night by the monster. Sexual passion was associated with danger and bestiality, so it is to be expected that its only full expressions in Gothic fiction would be rape, murder, death or damnation.

Charlotte Brontë revolted against restrictive conventions for treating love relationships in fiction, but Rochester himself still has some of the devilish fascination of the traditional hero-villain about him. Charlotte Brontë was not entirely free of convention in her handling of sexual love, and the earlier Gothic novelists, writing novels of fantasy and emotional indulgence, were more timid than she. There are implications of sexual attractiveness in their novels, in a superficial and stylised way. The heroine is always beautiful and passive, the hero is good-looking and energetic, and the villain's flashing eyes and powerful physique suggest his passionate nature. The implications are seldom developed, or if they are, the outcome is inevitably tragic. By this method, conventional morality was vindicated, after exploiting the emotional appeal of what was officially regarded as immoral.

I have discussed at some length the Gothic novelists' treatment of sexuality, because I think that their treatment of love relationships typifies the unresolved conflicts and repressions which were the basic weaknesses of Gothic fiction. Just as the implications of sexual situations are glossed over or romanticised, so are the implications of other types of emotional situations. They would appeal to the reader's fantasy, but were unacceptable in terms of orthodox social morality. The treatment of terror, cruelty, and the supernatural is evasive, and only the outward signs of inward tension are

presented to the reader. Gothic fiction is full of brutality and violence, the heroines suffer from persecution mania, and there is a high incidence of hysteria and madness. However, the causes of such violent behaviour are never adequately explained. The failure to present a convincing relation between cause and effect is only partly the result of technical inability to treat new types of emotional experience. It is also a failure to evaluate experience, and reflects a basic ambivalence in the attitudes of the novelists themselves. They wanted to exploit violent emotions, but at the same time, they were not certain enough of their own values to revolt against the eighteenth century literary conventions. Emotions were the real centre of interest, but they still adhered to the conventions of plot structure and moral purpose. The inconsistencies that this caused are particularly evident in the work of the earlier Gothic novelists.

Alan Rodway in The Romantic Conflict points out that the ambiguities of Gothic fiction have a historical significance in the development of romantic attitudes. He sees the Gothic novel as a phenomena of pre-Romanticism:

"Lacking a philosophy of rebellion, the pre-Romantic is not proud, but ashamed of feeling anti-social. (18)

This would explain on the one hand, the happy endings in a return to orthodox moral values, and on the other, the guilt of villains who defy social and moral laws and who are finally punished for their disobedience. The ambivalent values of Gothic are most clearly reflected in the treatment of emotions, where the novelists are unable to resolve the conflict between feeling and reason in any satisfactory interpretation of experience. It is a literature of private tension, which finds its release in escapist fantasy and in generalised emotional effects.

(18) The Romantic Conflict. (Lond., 1963), 32.

The appeal of the Gothic is essentially visual, concentrating on outward appearances from which an emotional content may be inferred. The characteristic preoccupation with externals is what gives Gothic fiction its sensational and melodramatic quality. Uncertain of their values, and unfamiliar with techniques for registering changing feelings, the Gothic novelists did not evolve a satisfactory vocabulary of feeling for themselves. Instead, they borrowed techniques for expressing emotion from poetry and from drama, and tried to adapt them to the needs of novel writing. It is an interesting period of experiment, but too often, they merely transplanted dramatic and poetic techniques wholesale into prose fiction, without modifying them to fit comfortably into a different literary form. They tended to present feeling dramatically or lyrically, as a quality or a value in itself, but did not shape it into the experience of a particular character. As a result, the Gothic novels lack a sense of the relatedness between people and their feelings and the outside world, which gives to the novel its life-like complexity and variety.

The Gothic novel is a literature of emotional display, concentrating on outward appearances to establish static character types, and on facial expression and behaviour to register felt emotions. Their technique of giving every emotion its physical equivalent is based on the theory of the eighteenth century Associationist psychologists, who believed that sensation and emotion were so closely allied that psychology was only an aspect of physiology. Their theory was inclined to reduce human beings to automata reacting in predictable ways to set stimuli, and it neglected the possibility of individual variations and unexpected reactions. On the basis of their idea of predictability, the psychologists established patterns of reaction, with close parallels between physical

sensation and emotional experience. According to the behaviourist theory, ideas, sentiments, sensations, and muscular movements were all interrelated by associative processes, and the stronger the feeling experienced, the more violent its physical expression would be. The Gothic novelists seized on the externals without delineating the corresponding inner experiences, and so there was always the danger that physical display would be unconvincing when it was not supported by an adequate analysis of its causes. In the world of the minor Gothic novelists between 1800 and 1810, the idea degenerated to the point where exaggeration and over-acting were the commonest ways for suggesting intense feeling. The novelists reasoned in a way opposite to the Associationist psychologists, maintaining that if physical expression were violent, then feeling must be so by logical extension. The rationale for wallowing in emotional display is stated explicitly in 1810 by one of the Minerva novelists, A.F.Holstein:

If a frame is convulsed by deepest emotion, and the countenance with anguished suffering, the depiction is too strong to be misinterpreted. (19)

The idea that emotional and physical reactions were predictable limited the variety of emotional treatment in Gothic fiction. Certain behaviour patterns soon came to be associated with certain types of feeling. There is no doubt some validity for depicting extreme states of emotion according to a fixed pattern; the very choice of extremes limits the possibility of varied reactions. As Virginia Woolf points out, there

(19) Love, Mystery, and Misery! 2 vols. (Minerva, 1810), I, 194-5. I have slightly changed the grammatical construction but not the sense of the original.

are not many possible ways or registering shock and terror:

It is unlikely that a lady confronted by a male body stark naked, wreathed in worms, where she had looked, maybe, for a pleasant landscape in oils, should do more than give a loud cry and drop senseless. And women who give loud cries and drop senseless do it in much the same way. That is one of the reasons why it is extremely difficult to write a tale of terror which continues to shock and does not first become insipid and later ridiculous. (20)

The Gothic novelists, like the sentimental novelists before them, always tended to exaggerate emotional responses, so we find that they are more often depicting unusual heights and depths than showing the vast intermediate area of mixed and variable feeling which constitutes much of everyday life experience. Their range was in fact limited by their preference for hysteria and emotional violence, and their presentation was limited by behaviouristic convention. Their method was adequate to express the type of emotion, but it was not flexible enough to register variations in intensity, or successive moments of feeling. The characters react automatically to stimuli, and the language of these novels reflects the conventionalising process to which simplified behaviouristic theories led.

Fear always reduces its victim to "ashy paleness" and to fits of trembling or fainting, frequently accompanied by stifled groans. There is no reflection of qualitative differences between different sorts of fear, as characters react in identical ways to the slightest frisson or to nightmarish horror. Any agitation or distress tends to make men and women "stagger" or "totter", while they gaze around with "a frenzied expression" or a general "wildness of aspect". Sudden shock causes the "crimson blood" to rush to the face "with suffocating violence", or at other times the blood may rush away, leaving the person "death pale". All the strong

(20) Review of E. Birkhead, The Tale of Terror, Granite and Rainbow, ed. L. Woolf (London, 1958), 59.

emotions have their physical correspondences in facial expression or bodily movement, and it is needless to detail the many "fearful despairing groans" of the villains, the "chilly agues of terror", the "distracted looks" and "deathly cheeks", and the "streaming tears of rapture" of true lovers reunited.

The overall impression is of hysterical insistence on emotional reaction and indulgence in feeling for its own sake. The absurdity to which physical display of emotion could lead is illustrated in the amusing account of how Thomas Babington Macaulay once kept a list of the number of fainting fits which occurred in a five volume Minerva novel of 1806. (It was Kitty Cuthbertson's Santo Sebastiano). Macaulay's list of faintings reads as follows:

Julia de Clifford	11
Lady Delamore	4
Lady Theodosia	4
Lord Glenbrook	2
Lord Delamore	2
Lady Enderfield	1
Lord Ashgrove	1
Lord St. Orville	1
Henry Mildmay	1

Macaulay's sister ends the account by selecting a typical passage from the novel "to serve as a specimen of these catastrophes":

One of the sweetest smiles that ever animated the face of mortal now diffused itself over the face of Lord St. Orville, as he fell at the feet of Julia in a death-like swoon.

The passage may serve as a specimen of the overwrought emotional displays in the general run of Gothic fiction. (21)

(21) I am quoting from Amy Cruse, The Englishman and His Books in the Early 19th Century (London, 1930). She gives the anecdote, as told by Macaulay's sister Hannah, pp.101-102.

The preference for physical displays led to an extensive use of dramatic scenes, many with overtones of Shakespearean and Jacobean drama, and of the contemporary Gothic melodrama. The strongest influence on the Gothic novel was the drama, and Shakespeare was the most powerful single influence. His influence is consistently acknowledged by all the Gothic novelists from Walpole, through Mrs. Radcliffe, Lewis, the Minerva novelists, to Mary Shelley and Maturin. Clara F. McIntyre has shown Shakespeare's influence on the dramatic structure and character types in Gothic fiction.<sup>(22)</sup> However, I believe that Shakespeare's influence on content, as well as presentation, is more pervasive than she or anyone else has suggested.

It is easy to see the appeal that Shakespeare would have had for these novelists, when we see the way in which that most influential and articulate eighteenth century critic Dr. Johnson interprets the qualities of Shakespearean drama in his Preface to Shakespeare (1765). Johnson appreciates Shakespeare's "transcendental and unbounded genius", and though his preferences for what he finds in Shakespeare may well differ from the later eighteenth century novelists', his discussion of Shakespeare's qualities gives us some insight into what the eighteenth century saw in Shakespeare. Johnson presents Shakespeare as a writer essentially English, and outside the classical tradition. He sees him as belonging to the English nation and English literature in its infancy, when people were mainly interested in tales of "adventures, giants, dragons, and enchantments". All that "Gothick mythology of fairies", as Johnson calls it, was beyond the ordered social and moral system of Johnson's day, and back in the "barbarous times". Johnson makes it plain that Shakespeare's plays stand outside the classical orders of art as well.<sup>(23)</sup>

(22) Ann Radcliffe in Relation to her Time (Yale Studies in English, 1920); "Were the Gothic novels Gothic?" PMLA, XXXVI (1921), 664-667.

(23) cf. Walpole's comment on Shakespeare & Addison, p.25.



He quotes the criticisms of Voltaire and Pope and the example of Addison's Cato, on Shakespeare's lack of respect for classical decorum, and adds to it his own criticism of Shakespeare's looseness:

He had no regard to distinction of time or place, but gives to one age or nation, without scruple, the customs, institutions, and opinions of another, at the expense not only of likelihood, but of possibility.(24)

The Gothic novelists accepted Johnson's facts about Shakespeare's time and about his art, but interpreted them to their own liking, and so saw Shakespeare as the image of freedom in literature. His plays pointed the direction they wanted to follow, in content, and in dramatic presentation. Shakespeare had treated the strong passions and emotions "by which all minds are agitated, and the whole system of life is continued in motion"(p.13) and he had presented his material in a sensational and interesting way. Johnson, speaking of Shakespeare's use of the marvellous, said:

His plots, historical or fabulous, are always crowded with incidents, by which the attention of a rude people was more easily caught than by sentiment or argumentation and such is the power of the marvellous, even over those who despise it, that every man finds his mind more strongly seized by the tragedies of Shakespeare, than of any other writer; others please us by particular speeches, but he always makes us anxious for the event, and has perhaps excelled all but Homer in securing the first purpose of a writer, by exciting restless and unquenchable curiosity and compelling him that reads his work to read it through. (32)

It is small wonder that the Gothic novelists followed Shakespeare as a model, borrowing his plots, his dramatic situations, and his character types. They preferred Hamlet and Macbeth to all Shakespeare's tragedies, seeing Hamlet as a tragedy of revenge and Macbeth as a tragedy of blood.

(24) Johnson on Shakespeare, Essays and notes selected and set forth with an Introduction by Walter Raleigh (Lond., 1908), 21.

Shakespeare's supernatural elements appealed very much to them, with their apparitions, prodigies and portents. Several writers, including Mrs. Radcliffe in Udolpho, and Mrs. Sleath in The Nocturnal Minstrel; or, the Spirit of the Wood (1810) have ghosts walking on battlements; like the ghost of Hamlet's father, Mrs. Sleath's ghost is even in full armour. The wild heath scene with the weird sisters in Macbeth complements the popular enthusiasm for Ossian, and Scottish heaths are used to arouse feelings of terror in readers, from Mrs. Radcliffe's first novel, The Castles of Athlyn and Dunbayne (1789) to Mrs. Kelly's Baron's Daughter (1802) and T. J. Horsley Curties's Scottish Legend (1810). Scott's poems and Waverley Novels were enthusiastically received by a public who had been accustomed by a long literary tradition to associate Scotland with mystery and adventure.

The influence of Shakespeare's treatment of strong passions in situations of dramatic crisis may be seen in the number of murder scenes which bear a close resemblance to Hamlet's midnight visit to Claudius, or to Macbeth's murder of Duncan. Lady Macbeth's agonised vision of the blood on her hands is the model for the scenes where women who have committed crimes of passion are tortured by their guilt. Signora Laurentini in Udolpho and Lady St. Clair in Mrs. Kelly's Ruins of Avondale Priory (1796) are women of the Lady Macbeth type. Francis Lathom, on the other hand, uses the image quite literally in the Midnight Bell (1798), when the hero is awakened by his mother, her hands covered in blood, and told to flee from his home.

Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet with its theme of the passionate "star crossed lovers" was, it seems, thoroughly attractive only to M. G. Lewis. The obviously physical quality of their love was something that the Gothic novelists could not condone, as it was against all the interests of the morality which they so explicitly supported in their fiction. However,

the idea of true lovers being forced to undergo terrible trials, and the suggestive scenic possibilities of the funeral vaults as a fit place for lovers to meet, appealed to them very much. As a result, the sentimental secret meetings of lovers beside tombs in the dead of night, with the possibility of being frightened by a ghost or a mysterious monk, are too numerous to mention.

The picturesque expression of strong feelings which Shakespeare's characters showed, influenced the Gothic novelists in their presentation of emotional reactions. The villains stamp in fury like Othello, or have the lean hungry look of Cassius, while the heroes, driven to distraction by despair or jealousy, confront the heroines in the pale dishevelled Hamlet style. Ophelia's madness in its sweetly pathetic expression of wandering wit, affected many of the sentimental heroines, and several Gothic heroines as well. Perhaps the most Ophelia-like is Ines in Maturin's Milesian Chief (1813), who, having gone mad with grief, throws herself in the river. When she is saved, she runs shrieking into the church, to interrupt the marriage of her lover with another woman.

Shakespeare's pervasive influence on the Gothic novel showed the appeal of his plays, with their strong passions of jealousy, hate and revenge, illicit loves, unnatural murders, and the fear of the supernatural. Like Shakespeare, the Gothic novelists recognise these emotions as the mainsprings of action, but unlike him, they have neither the ability to get inside their characters and examine their subtleties of feeling, nor the stylistic power to communicate fully the awareness they do have. They are further hampered by their moral duty to show that submission to strong feeling leads to destruction. They are restricted by having to deal with strong passions only in order to condemn them. The result of these restraints and inadequacies is, as we have seen, to reduce the implications of their Shakespearean borrowings to fit their moral clichés,

and to exploit only the externals of Shakespearean drama. They concentrate on the sensational incidents to which passions led, and on the physical expression of emotion in a character's facial movements and actions. The dramatic presentation of feeling in Gothic novels is so close to the drama proper with its emphasis on scenery, situation, and picturesque expression of emotion, that it gives us the constant impression of watching a group of actors. Everything that is felt is directly related to the impression that it is likely to have on an audience, and we are left in doubt as to the genuine depth of a character's feelings behind the emotional display.

The language which the characters use is affected by extensive literary borrowing. Instead of trying to find a verbal equivalent by which feeling could be directly realised, the Gothic novelists turned to the Elizabethan dramatic tradition and borrowed its phraseology without understanding the emotional content which it expressed. Like the action, language becomes a form of dramatic pose, and is consequently removed from any personalised statement of feeling. The heroes and heroines speak in elegant formulae, while the villains rant and rave in extravagant hyperbole. There is some attempt to give the servants dialectal speech, but apart from Maturin's convincing Irish peasant dialect in Melmoth, it is humorous caricature rather than genuine speech. When we compare the effect of the Gothic novelists' use of dialogue with that of Scott and Dickens, we see very little of the flexibility of style which characterises the greater writers.

The language is appropriate to the character type, but does not in any way suggest the individuality of a particular speaker. As a statement of feeling, it is generalised, and tends therefore to be both vague and vehement. As there is nothing precise in the delineation of an emotion, the idea of intense feeling can only be conveyed by exaggeration and hyperbole. Instead of conversation giving us an insight into a character's feelings, in the Gothic novel the effect is just the opposite. The

particulars of individual feelings and of relationships are blurred by orthodox rhetoric, and conversation is restricted by decorum to being a statement of the outward appearance of emotion.

When behaviour and speech are as totally conventionalised as they are in Gothic fiction, they are little more than rough equivalents for types of feeling. Yet they differ in quality and potential from the presentation of scenery and landscape as the equivalents for emotional states, which we also find in Gothic fiction. There are many scenes where the heroine meditates on natural scenery and sees in the surroundings a reflection of her own feelings. Just as frequent are the detailed descriptions of sublime and picturesque landscapes, which appear to have only a very loose connection with either character or action. The Gothic novelists' extensive use of landscape as metaphor for emotional states was in part a reflection of the general late eighteenth century aesthetic taste, and in part it was a conscious borrowing from poetry and painting.

Both these art forms had been exploring the possibilities of the affective appeal of landscape all through the eighteenth century, and the Gothic novelists were the first to transfer poetic and visual effects to prose fiction. Both the "prospect" poems and landscape painting had an important influence on eighteenth century appreciation of nature, as Kenneth Clark points out in The Gothic Revival:

The eye of fashion looked at landscape through a literary medium, and the emergence of the word 'picturesque' shows that nature was also seen through the medium of another art, that of painting. There can be no doubt that the vision of eighteenth century England was strongly coloured by the Italian landscape painters, especially Claude [Lorrain] and Salvator Rosa, whose popularity and influence has been proved by an impressive accumulation of passages. [Notably E. Manwaring, Italian Landscape in 18th Century England.] (61-2)

As Clark shows, the popular view of nature was a consciously literary and pictorial one. From painting, the Gothic novelists borrowed the idea of static presentation of scenery to reflect the quality of emotional experience. Poetry on the other hand, is more dramatic, registering impulses and changes of feeling, though not necessarily related to the feelings of a particular character.

The peculiarly eighteenth century taste for paintings which reflected nature and mood led directly to the set pieces of scenic description which we find in so many Gothic novels. There are incidental references to landscape painting and painters in earlier eighteenth century novels. J. M. S. Tompkins quotes examples from Smollett and Mackenzie where appeals are made to the names of Salvator and Rembrandt to supplement the prose description.<sup>(25)</sup> James Thomson had hoped to convert into poetry:

Whate'er Lorrain light-touched with softening hue,  
Or savage Rosa dashed, or learned Poussin knew.

Tompkins criticises the Gothic novelists' use of picturesque landscape description as an aberration of literary technique peculiar to themselves:

For a generation the connection between descriptive prose and pictorial art was mistakenly close - it is an error, in that it fixes and flattens the scene into a momentary rigidity, breaking the flow of life in the narrative. (354)

They continually suspend the action to admire the view, either in authorial description, or in the characters' frequent sketches of delightful prospects. It is an attempt to arrange and appreciate visual phenomena, frequently unrelated to character or plot. Mrs. Radcliffe popularised it as a form of aesthetic indulgence in her novels, but like so many other forms of emotional display in Gothic fiction, it was not closely related

(25) The Popular Novel in England, 1770-1800 (Lond., 1932), 356.

to the internal demands of the novel. It was meant to arouse an appreciative response in the reader. Again, we see the influence of eighteenth century Associationist theory on the novel, in the assumption that the mind reacts automatically to certain stimuli. The Gothic novelists believed that if the same visual images were introduced into a novel as into a painting or a natural landscape, they would produce a sublime or picturesque effect, which would in turn cause the reader to react with emotional exhilaration.

The influence of painting is most obvious in landscape description, but its effects are there too in the presentation of character. Female beauty and goodness is often represented in portrait paintings or miniatures, with which the beautiful heroine is identified. The most complete identification between the heroine and the ideal woman occurs in Lewis's The Monk, where the portrait of the Virgin Mary and the portrait of the monk's mistress are discovered to be one and the same. There is also a preference in Gothic fiction for figure groups, imitated from the paintings of Caravaggio or Guido Reni. The rather superficial emphasis on formal arrangement and chiaroscuro lighting effects could be regarded as theatrical, if it were not for their static tableau-like quality.

The Gothic emphasis on display for its own sake continually pushes fiction away from precision and analysis towards emotional and visual impressionism. The tendency of eighteenth century landscape poetry was towards vague generalisation of emotional states, rather than towards a flexible parallel for changes in feeling. The Gothic novelists borrowed many of their techniques for evoking moods. From the Graveyard poets, they borrowed gloomy twilit scenery, and from Collins, Beattie, and Akenside, they took over techniques for describing sublime landscape. There is the possibility for limited emotional movement here, as gloomy scenery prompts characters to meditate and reflect, and sublime landscape arouses sensations of fear and emotional exhilaration. It is not unusual to find complete lyric poems in Gothic novels. Mrs. Radcliffe's Udolpho was advertised

as "a Romance interspersed with some pieces of poetry", and Lewis and the sentimental Gothic writers imitated her model. The poems are ostensibly the direct expression of a character's mood. Sensitive heroes and heroines write poetry as easily as they sketch landscapes or play musical instruments. In fact, the relation between poem and character is a purely conventional one. The poems stand by themselves as minor nature lyrics, and if they were to be left out, it would not affect the presentation of feeling in any way. The lyric poem in Gothic fiction is another example of a literary borrowing which has not yet been assimilated into the novel form. It is as odd in its static interruptive quality as the long scenic descriptions derived from painting. Movements of feeling in a lyric poem are not analogous to those in fiction, where feeling must be dramatically related to character.

The second more sophisticated stage of using natural scenery dramatically, to parallel the changing moods and emotions of a character, develops slowly in Gothic fiction. The early novelists like Mrs. Radcliffe imply a rough equivalence between a cloud-tossed sky or a storm and moods of uneasiness or terror. It is an impressionistic effect, using scenery emblematically to suggest the quality of emotional violence rather than movements of feeling. The emphasis on general effects leads also to the allegorical use of scenery, where natural conflicts represent general moral truths about the human condition. Storms are the most popular images to represent violent emotion, because elemental conflict with its rising crescendo and dying fall is the most obvious parallel for emotional tumult. The novels of Mary Shelley and Maturin are full of storms, and Maturin is particularly conscious of nature's power to reflect "corresponding impulses in the heart of man". Only in these later novelists do we find nature imagery being used with a flexibility approaching that of Romantic poetry, where the Pathetic Fallacy forms a precise



equivalent for changing degrees of emotional intensity. The general impression in Gothic fiction is of scenery being used emblematically rather than dramatically. It is there as a background to reflect emotional states or to prompt moral reflections, but it is static and theatrical in its effects.

Certain types of scenic background are consistently associated with certain emotional states. The sentimental Gothic novelists place their romantic lovers in idyllic pastoral settings, to express the happy innocent nature of their love and their freedom from worldly cares. Fielding and Smollet had used the pastoral convention in Tom Jones and Humphrey Clinker to suggest the contrast between the innocence of country life and the depravity of the town, but Mrs. Radcliffe and her imitators used it more as a landscape of escapism than as a social comment. The social implications are there, but country life is so consistently sentimentalised that it becomes a nostalgic image of emotional indulgence. While the lovers are happy and peaceful they stay in the smiling countryside, but as soon as their love is threatened and their trials begin, they are forced away from the country. Heroines are usually taken under the care of an aunt into the corrupt society of towns, or else into rugged mountainous country peopled with banditti, and dominated by a villain who invariably has a desolate fortified castle at his command. Rocky landscapes with their grim appearance and their associations with fear and hardship are extensively used as the settings for tragic romantic love. The associations of feeling and landscape here have a varied derivation from Ossian's poetry, Salvator Rosa's paintings, Shakespearean drama, and Burke's popular aesthetic theory of the Sublime. Scenery used so consistently becomes associated with situation and action, as well as with feeling. It is quite common in Gothic fiction to find landscape symbolically linked to plot and directed outwards to evoking readers' reactions, rather than expressive of characters' emotions.

There is such a sameness about the scenery in Gothic novels, that by the process of repetition, it becomes mechanistically conventionalised. The most frequently-used settings assume the force of symbols. It is a crude associative symbolism, and is really only another form of verbal shorthand by which writers can suggest emotions, relying on the readers' recognition processes to fill in the details. The most common symbols are picturesque architectural features, like ruins, castles and underground labyrinths, all of which are associated with forms of fear.

The Gothic novel is inseparable from Gothic architecture. Walpole was the first to exploit the traditional associations of gloom and fear around castles and abbeys, in Otranto, and they remain the most consistent scenic properties in all Gothic fiction. The eighteenth century poets as far back as Pope in Eloisa and Abelard (1717), had been aware of the value of ruins to evoke sensations of a melancholy and fearful sort, and the Graveyard poets consistently used ruins in their twilight meditations on death and decay and the ravages of time. Walpole inherited the ruin as a stage property from the poets, and in Otranto he laid a new emphasis on the element of religious superstition which was inherent in the English view of Gothic architecture. The Gothic monuments in eighteenth century England were almost exclusively ecclesiastical, being the relics of Henry VIII's campaign against the Roman Catholic monasteries, so "Gothic" was linked in the English mind with popery and spiritual fears. Walpole and the later novelists made the ruin their peculiar fictional property, by transforming it from a picturesque backdrop into a symbol of fear. They exploited the sinister spiritual overtones of Gothic ecclesiastical architecture, and by a process of visual association, all ancient architectural structures become identified with the fear of a superior and threatening power.

Ruins of Gothic abbeys and monasteries are associated with spiritual fears, and by a natural process of extension, with the fear of the supernatural. All the Gothic novelists use ruins, decaying tombs, and funeral vaults to create sensations of fear and terror in their characters and in their readers. Frequently, fear is stimulated by the presence of white-robed forms or mysterious black-hooded monks, who glide through the obscure corridors and arcades of the ruins. Though most of the Gothic novelists finally deny the power and the existence of the supernatural, they do not deny the reality of the experience of fear itself. They often use the strong emotional response aroused by the "supernatural" to strengthen their moral arguments. Their technique is to transform superstitious fears into equally strong fears of human wickedness, by showing that supernatural appearances are really based on the machinations of evil human beings.

The other most commonly used symbol of fear and dread is the castle. In Otranto, Walpole had established it as the mark of tyrannical power, and in Gothic fiction, the castle is associated with physical dread more than with psychic dread. The number of heroines imprisoned in castles where they are entirely at the villain's mercy and frequently assaulted by him, emphasises the sexual fears which the castle symbolised. In the sentimental Gothic novels, the heroines usually manage to escape unscathed, but in some of the later novels, the threat is explicit. T. J. Horsley Curties in his Scottish Legend describes the heroine's mother being taken to a castle, drugged by a potion "which persuaded her that she was in perfect security", and then seduced. Mary Ann Radcliffe's Manfrone makes the same point a little more violently, when the villain, having failed to seduce the heroine in her father's castle, drags her off to his own, and to rape her in its dungeons.

The castle is closely associated, structurally and symbolically, with the labyrinth. Heroines since Isabella in Otranto had been pursued by lustful villains through miles of winding corridors, in a state of panic and uncertainty. Their fear of getting lost and their fear of the unknown are as strong as their fears of attack, and many heroines have gone, candle in hand, exploring dark labyrinths, with no thought of pursuit. The darkness and uncertainty makes them bewildered and afraid, and it is the irrational state of *égarement*, when one no longer feels circumstances to be under one's control, that is almost certainly the appeal of the image. By extension, it could be applied to any wandering state of disorientation, and is sometimes used to describe the forlorn heroine's wanderings in a dark wood, or through the streets of London or Paris, destitute and almost mad with fear and anxiety. Fanny Burney's Cecilia had wandered in this way, and Mrs. Roche's heroines spend nights of wild panic fear, after they have escaped from the tangible threats of the villain.

The Gothic novelists have a sensitivity for visual forms, which is both an advantage and a disadvantage. It gives their fiction a strong aesthetic appeal, but their continual emphasis on picturesque presentation casts an atmosphere of unreality over it. They write novels which are full of emotional impressions, but nothing is precise or individualised. They are very aware of the affective power of certain images, like castles and abbeys, but none of them has much feeling for individual words. Their sensitivity, which is visual rather than semantic, encourages the tendency towards broad delineations of types of feeling, at the expense of particular moments of individualised feeling. They frequently retreat from detailed representation, by saying that feelings "defy analysis". Instead of exploring and defining, they appeal directly to the readers to substitute their own experiences for that of the character. It is an obvious device to involve the reader, and at the same time makes

up for technical deficiencies. The Gothic novelists' language is inadequate to express the experiences they wish to communicate, and we find that when they do try to show complex emotional states, their language breaks down. We are left with characters raving in a "frenzy", or overcome by "transports" or "raptures". (Even "rapturous transports", if the emotion is particularly intense). Their ways of expression prevent us from believing in the emotional and imaginative experiences which they take for their subject matter. Yet their continual use of such material forces us to recognise that they were attempting something new in prose fiction. They were trying to present a way of experiencing life where the most important factors were strong emotion, imagination, and intuition, rather than rational awareness.

My discussion of values and techniques in this chapter has lumped together Gothic fiction over thirty years (1790-1820). It would be unrealistic to think that over this period when reading and writing novels was more popular than ever, that the kind and quality of Gothic fiction did not change. The basic preoccupation with fear and terror and all kinds of overwhelming emotions remained constant, but there are certain lines of development within Gothic fiction. I have indicated them in my classification of chapters in "Initial Explorations", "Occupation of Familiar Territory" and "New Directions". I have treated Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre as a "New Way"; it is not really a development of Gothic fiction, but a code to it. Charlotte Brontë makes a separate departure into the world of fantasy and subjective experience, so I have not included a discussion of her methods in this chapter. Jane Eyre is able to stand by itself, to illumine and to evaluate the rest.

SECTION I. INITIAL EXPLORATIONS

Chapter II. Ann Radcliffe, The Mysteries of Udolpho