

Beyond 'Monk' Lewis

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Abstract

“What do you think of my having written in the space of ten weeks a Romance of between three and four hundred pages Octavo?”, asks Matthew Gregory Lewis to his mother.¹ Contrary to the evidence—previous letters to his mother suggest the romance was a more thoughtful and time-consuming piece—Lewis was the first to feed a myth that would follow him for the rest of his life and beyond, implying he hurriedly cobbled together *The Monk* (1796) and that it was the product of an impulsive, immature and crude mind to be known soon after as, ‘Monk’ Lewis. The novel would stigmatise his name: he was famously criticised by Coleridge for his blasphemy, Thomas J Mathias described *The Monk* as a disease, calling for its censure, and *The Monthly Review*, for example, insisted the novel was “unfit for general circulation”.² All these readings distract us from the intellectual and philosophic exploration of *The Monk* and, as Rachael Pearson observes, “overshadow...the rest of his writing career”.³ This thesis is concerned with looking beyond this idea of ‘Monk’ Lewis in three different ways which will comprise the three chapters of this thesis. The first chapter engages with *The Monk*’s more intellectual, philosophic borrowings of French Libertinism and how it relates to the 1790s period in which he was writing. The second chapter looks at Lewis’s dramas after *The Monk* and how Lewis antagonised the feared proximities of foreign influence and traditional British theatre. The third chapter attempts to look more closely at *The Monk*’s influences on later gothic novels—*Zofloya, or The Moor* (1806) and *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820)—in light of Lewis’s philosophic explorations I discuss in the first chapter.

¹ Matthew Lewis, *The Life and Correspondence of M.G. Lewis* (London: Henry Coburn Publishers, 1839), 133-34.

² Review of *The Monk*, *Monthly Review* 23. (1797). 451.

³ Rachael Pearson, “Politics and Power in the Gothic Drama of M.G. Lewis” (PhD diss., University of Southampton, 2011).

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

Introduction

Prior to the “literary event”¹ that was the infamous novel, *The Monk* (1796), Matthew Gregory Lewis can be seen as a loving son who was mature in his role as intermediary between squabbling parents. He was an MP who made little noise, an unenthused diplomat, an avid translator of German and French works and an aspiring writer whose love for literature and desperation at getting his work staged were unquestionable. During this period, Lewis began writing a romance he described as in “the style of *Castle of Otranto*”, a mere side project it seemed, however, next to attempts at farces and dramas.² His learning of German in Weimar, plus attempts at staging *The East Indian*, *Adelaide*, the opera *Felix* and his translation of Schiller’s *Kabale and Liebe* (1784), all hindered the romance’s progress. Not until diplomatic service in the British Embassy at the Hague three years later did Lewis begin on the romance again having stumbled across Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). Months later, however, as if from nowhere, when all had gone silent on the slow-moving romance, emerging from the pen of a writer who was seemingly too preoccupied by stage productions, translations and socialising with new-found friends of the French aristocracy in Holland, an apparently new and far more impressive romance appeared. “What do you think of my having written in the space of ten weeks a Romance of between three and four hundred pages Octavo?”, asks Lewis to his mother; “I have even written half of it fair. It is called ‘The Monk’, and I am myself so pleased with it, that if the booksellers will not buy it, I shall publish it myself”.³

Are we to believe then that *The Monk* was written in ten frantic weeks or, rather, that it was produced over a more prolonged period? Implying the former of these two possibilities, Lewis was the first to feed a myth that would follow him for the rest of his life and beyond, implying he hurriedly cobbled together *The Monk* and

¹ André Parreaux, *The Publication of The Monk: A Literary Event 1796-1798* (Paris: Didier, 1960).

² Matthew Lewis, *The Life and Correspondence of M.G. Lewis* (London: Henry Coburn Publishers, 1839), 65.

³ Lewis, *Correspondence*, 133-34.

that it was the product of an impulsive, immature and crude mind. As Montague Summers states in one of the very first books on the Gothic novel, Lewis “frequently avowed a decided preference for his sobriquet “Monk””.⁴ Coleridge was probably the first to cement this idea, for in his famous *Critical Review of The Monk* he insists it was one of a number of romances that had “seized on the popular taste at the rise and decline of literature...impress[ing] a degree of gloom on the composition of our countrymen”.⁵ He hoped “the public [would] learn, by the multitude of the manufacturers, with how little expense of thought or imagination the species of composition is manufactured”.⁶ Others followed suit but with much harsher criticisms. Not only was *The Monk* a rushed piece of junk but it spread a disease that would infect, in the words of Thomas J. Mathias, “the life organs” of society.⁷ Mathias likened Lewis to John Cleland, whose erotic novel *Fanny Hill* (1749) was said to bring “a stigma on his name, which time has not obliterated, and which will be consigned to his memory whilst its poisonous contents are in circulation”.⁸ Once *The Monk* became associated with Lewis criticism of its contents was widespread. Originally the anonymously published novel was met with a positive review which described it as an “interesting production” that was very “skillfully managed, and reflects high credit on the judgement and imagination of the writer”.⁹

Lewis became more myth than man in much the same way as the Marquis de Sade, the man that many critics have said he drew great influence from and who David Coward describes as “a convenient vessel from which extremists have always drunk”.¹⁰ While clearly not holding the weight of Sade’s name in everyday language, Lewis, for contemporaries, was dangerous for anyone or any work to be associated

⁴ Montague Summers, *The Gothic Quest - A History of the Gothic Novel* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), 202.

⁵ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Review of *The Monk*, *Critical Review* 19, (1797). 194.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 194.

⁷ Thomas J. Mathias, *The Pursuits of Literature* (London, 1798), 243.

⁸ Obituary of John Cleland, *The Gentlemen’s Magazine* 59 (London, 1789) 180.

⁹ *The Monthly Mirror* 2, (1796). 98.

¹⁰ David Coward, introduction to *The Misfortunes of Virtue*, by the Marquis de Sade (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992). 7.

with. In the wake of *The Monk* he was then no longer this young, aspiring but unsuccessful writer; he was the notorious 'Monk' Lewis, one who sought to shock, repulse and titillate his readers all in one go.

Lewis most certainly, however, drank from the Sadean well, for embedded within scenes of haunted castles, ghosts, live burials and everything else conceivably 'Gothic', is a world of excess. It is not enough for Lewis to have in *The Monk* the innocent Agnes buried alive with her decaying infant, for Lewis has to position the scene as eerily sexual as she must also experience "the bloated toad[...]dragging his slimy track upon [her] bosom" and that of "the quick cold lizard[...]leaving his slimy track upon [her] face".¹¹

Sade, himself, perhaps explains this excess of *The Monk* best and, in so doing, is the first to align Lewis's work both with his own and with that great event which dominated the early 1790s, the French Revolution.

Perhaps at this point we should by rights analyse the new novels whose only merit, more or less, consists of their reliance on witchcraft and phantasmagoria, by naming the best of them as *The Monk*, which is superior in every respect to the strange outpourings of the brilliant imagination of Mrs Radcliffe[...]. It was the necessary offspring of the revolutionary upheaval which affected the whole of Europe. To those acquainted with all the evil which the wicked can bring down on the heads of the good, novels became as difficult to write as they were tedious to read[...]. Writers therefore had to look to hell for help in composing their alluring novels and project what everyone already knew into the realm of fantasy by confining themselves to the history of man in that cruel time.¹²

This kind of interpretation of the Gothic served to encourage a reading such as Ronald Paulson's, which was that the "Gothic did in fact serve as a metaphor with which some contemporaries in England tried to come to terms with what was happening across the Channel in the 1790s".¹³ The influence of Sade upon Lewis's writing of *The Monk* only adds to the idea of the novel as an explosive reaction to the events of the 1790s and, in some sense, only comes to reinforce this mythical idea of 'Monk' Lewis. While it is clear that Lewis most certainly did read Sade, there is nothing in his correspondences which would justify us in making biographical claims of this nature. Perhaps there is some critical myth making at work here as Angela Wright admits

¹¹ Matthew Lewis, *The Monk* (London: Penguin Books, 1998), 354.

¹² Marquis de Sade. "An Essay on Novels," in *The Crimes of Love*, ed. and trans. David Coward (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 13.

¹³ Ronald Paulson, "Gothic Fiction and the French Revolution," *ELH* 48 (1981), 534.

when describing Lewis's correspondences with his mother while in France as "scanty".¹⁴

At the moment of desired exchange and influence between Lewis and Sade there is clearly a gap in Lewis's biography. Markman Ellis insists that Lewis wanted to conceal his close proximity to the events of the Revolution and so most certainly omitted any mention of it from his letters to his mother.¹⁵ In the same way, I doubt Lewis would openly admit to his mother that he was reading pornographic material as horrific as Sade's. Rather it is what is not mentioned by Lewis that most intrigues us: as Angela Wright says, specifically of Lewis's advertisement to *The Monk*, the "sources that he did acknowledge in his infamous novel *The Monk* were not the most important ones".¹⁶ It is here, when attempting to reconcile Lewis the man (or boy) and Lewis the author, that Lewis becomes even more difficult to pin down than Sade. We know that Sade lived his life just as many of his characters did and so one can quite easily conceive of a man who was tried and arrested for abhorrent sexual abuse and non-payment of debts to have written books revelling in such topics as materialism, atheism, blasphemy, sex, orgies and rape. If Sade's biography appears to be consistent with his writings, however, the biography of Lewis – or what we know of it – only draws attention to the critical problem that the work poses. While on the one hand, *The Monk* was the work of a young man who claimed to have written it very quickly, on the other it can be seen as thoughtful and intelligent. The former of these two possibilities encourages this idea of 'Monk' Lewis, which not only does a disservice to *The Monk* but also, as Rachael Pearson highlights, "overshadow[s][...]the rest of his writing career".¹⁷ This thesis is concerned with looking beyond this idea of 'Monk' Lewis in three different ways which will comprise the three chapters of this thesis.

The first chapter seeks to finally give *The Monk* its due and answer the challenge talked of by Nick Groom:

¹⁴ Angela Wright, *Britain, France and the Gothic, 1764-1820: The Import of Terror* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 126.

¹⁵ Markman Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 98.

¹⁶ Wright, *Britain, France and the Gothic*, 123.

¹⁷ Rachael Pearson, "Politics and Power in the Gothic Drama of M.G. Lewis" (PhD diss., University of Southampton, 2011).

Unlike earlier fictions now classed as ‘Gothic’ novels, the challenge of reading Lewis’s *Monk* in the twenty-first century is not to explain its early impact—readers today quickly fall under its spell and are compelled to read on in horrified fascination—rather, it is to justify its status as a serious literature. Beyond its multiplying outrages[...]is there any deeper significance to Lewis’s novel?¹⁸

I propose to read *The Monk* in the context both of Sade and of a longer eighteenth-century tradition of French philosophical pornography. *The Monk* exhibits the boyish excessiveness of Sade but it also displays his philosophical vigour, particularly in the seductress and demon, Matilda, who possesses the rhetoric of Sade’s villains in her espousing of a libertine world where sexual desire rules and moral principles are dispelled. *The Monk* is also concerned with the implications of this world and possesses a self-reflectivity which aligns it with works going as far back as *Thérèse Philosophe* (1748). The novel finally reveals that those who embrace libertine principles give up the very thing that they seek: Freedom. What is ultimately at play in *The Monk* then is determinism, the notion that man is useless to fight his most innate desires and inclinations.

Some have recognised this philosophic exploration in *The Monk* more clearly than others. A key critical work in this respect is Peter Brooks’s essay, “Virtue and Terror”, which talks of how the novel “seems to give an especially clear and forceful symbolic representation of a passage into a world...in which the confident rationalism of the Enlightenment has been called into question”.¹⁹ The uncanniness of this is characterised by Brooks perfectly: “at the dead end of the Age of Reason[...]the novel [*The Monk*] can...be read as one of the first and most lucid contextualisations of life in a world where reason has lost its prestige, yet the Godhead has lost its otherness; where the Sacred has been reacknowledged but atomized, and its ethical imperatives psychologized”.²⁰ While clearly dated, using broad-brush terms which perhaps don’t sit well with today’s criticism, I wish to develop Brook’s suggestive insight about the philosophical content of the novel by situating it in the context of French philosophical pornography. For Brooks this psychologising in *The Monk* “makes it clear

¹⁸ Nick Groom, introduction to *The Monk*, by Matthew Lewis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), vii.

¹⁹ Peter Brooks, “Virtue and Terror: The Monk”, *ELH* 40 (1973), 262.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 249.

that the world of the supernatural which it has evoked...is interpretable as a world within the characters themselves, and that Ambrosio's drama is in fact the story of his relationship to imperatives of desire".²¹ The sexual forces of the Sadean novel then still rule but now manifest supernaturally, intensifying the uncontrollable power of one's own impulses and desires.

More recent works by Clara Tuite and the aforementioned works of Wright and Ellis, do a far better job of grounding Lewis' philosophical explorations within the issues of the day. Tuite, in the first half of her essay, "Cloistered Closets", sees *The Monk* as "a form of Enlightenment discourse", specifically "French anti-clerical pornography", and reads it within the 1790s as a "significant period" in the "history of the Protestant (specifically Anglican) confessional state".²² Angela Wright reads *The Monk* within a larger context of the Gothic and France, particularly regarding the difficulty writers had in drawing on French influences at a time when Anglo-French hostilities were at their strongest. Markman Ellis's chapter 'Revolution and Libertinism in the Gothic Novel', serves more as an introductory work on *The Monk*. Wider in its scope, it reads Lewis in line with the French Revolution and focuses more extensively on the scandalous publication of *The Monk*. This thesis works in line with all these critics, for it looks to contextualise *The Monk* within the 1790s as do Wright and Ellis with reference to Lewis's biography and it also looks to analyse more in-depth the philosophical exploration of Lewis's text similarly to Tuite.

Although the philosophical content of *The Monk* has received critical attention there remains, however, a prevalent counter-view that, as Dinah Birch argues, scholars 'have wanted to claim more dignity for the work than its teenage irreverence quite merits'.²³ Birch goes on to suggest "we risk losing sight of the 'increasingly deranged' narrative that confronts the novel's readers" and that it is not "the sober product of

²¹ Ibid., 257.

²² Clara Tuite, "Cloistered Closets: Enlightenment Pornography, The Confessional State, Homosexual Persecution and *The Monk*", in *Romanticism on the Net*, 8 November 1997. <https://www.erudit.org/revue/ron/1997/v/n8/005766ar.html>, n.o 6.

²³ Dinah Birch, "Proper Ghosts", review of *The Monk*, by Matthew Lewis, London Review of Books, June 16, 2016, <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v38/n12/dinah-birch/proper-ghosts>. n.p.

experience” but “the work of a boy—raw, fevered, irresponsible”.²⁴ This is a salutary reminder but there is a danger too of treating *The Monk* with critical condescension and not attending to the philosophical debates in which it was embedded. In the first chapter I wish to show that at moments of derangement and horror, which so encouraged critics to criticise Lewis and cement this myth of ‘Monk’ Lewis, there is always—lurking beneath and embedded within— philosophic content.

The second chapter looks at his writings of romantic drama and tragedy, comprising the majority of his literary output after *The Monk*, which were constantly criticised purely because they were written by the writer of that infamous book. Lewis’s subsequent relation to *The Monk*, however, was ambivalent, because at times he would play up to his popular reputation while at others he would seemingly attempt to escape its stigma. Even in the same work, *Adelmorn: The Outlaw* (1801), for example, Lewis remains apologetic about *The Monk* in its preface, only to fill the stage with the many stock conventions which he had been criticised for in his previous successful drama, *The Castle Spectre* (1797). Gone are the philosophical engagements of *The Monk*, instead what remains is the excessive, but now more blatantly ridiculous depictions of the supernatural which come to goad and play on the anxieties of contemporary theatre critics. His first two dramas represent a play on the anxiety about the invasion of foreign influence over the British stage professed by the likes of Coleridge and Wordsworth, who both called for a return to traditional theatre which they saw as inherently British and stretching back to the works of “the invaluable elder writers” Shakespeare and Milton.²⁵ As Lewis’s first two dramas show, and as Coleridge himself seems to know, things aren't that simple. “The so-called German drama”, writes Coleridge, “is *English* in its origin, *English* in its material, and *English* by re-adoption”.²⁶ This close proximity of German drama and English drama can be seen as a microcosm of, in the words of David Simpson, the more general “threatening

²⁴ *Ibid.*, n.p.

²⁵ William Wordsworth, “Preface”, in *Lyrical Ballads*, ed. Michael Mason. (London: Routledge, 1992), 64-65.

²⁶ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 263.

proximity” of Germany “to the idea of Englishness” in late eighteenth century.²⁷ In this sense, we get to Ian Duncan’s definition of the Gothic as representing “the crux or aporia of a myth of national culture, of ‘British’ identity [in which][...]the alien and the familiar, the natural and the unnatural or supernatural, are richly confused: neither one category nor the other is clearly stable”.²⁸

It seems then that Lewis revelled in such destabilisation of binaries. One neglected aspect of the philosophical and cultural engagement of Lewis’s writing from *The Monk* onwards is its underlying cosmopolitanism and responsiveness to other European literatures. Lewis borrows from Schiller, particularly with his villain Osmond, who is comparable to Franz Moor from *The Robbers* (1781), for they both espouse an idea of natural liberty which aligns them with the villains of Sade. Lewis’s work may be read through the lens of David Simpson’s concept of the Romantic stranger, under whose influence “categories become confused: domestic foreign, stranger and familiar, friend and enemy”.²⁹ The fear of the stranger was evident as much in France, where Robespierre at the outset of the Terror insisted that “foreigners have appeared the arbiters of public tranquility”,³⁰ as in Britain, where, Burke identified, in Simpson’s words, “a foreign enemy that was also embedded within”.³¹ Numerous other uncanny readings are encouraged by *The Monk*. In keeping with the novel’s debt to a certain French philosophy and pornography, Tuite sees Coleridge’s famous reading of *The Monk* as suggestive of “a form of nominal Anglicanism haunted by the paranoid fear that it cannot separate itself from its diabolical other (a Catholic other to be distinguished yet again from the low other of Protestant enthusiasm)”.³²

²⁷ David Simpson, *Romanticism, Nationalism, and the Revolt Against Theory* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1993), 86.

²⁸ Ian Duncan, *Modern Romance and Transformations of the Novel: The Gothic, Scott, Dickens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 22-23.

²⁹ David Simpson, *Romanticism and the Question of the Stranger* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2013), 22.

³⁰ Maximilian Robespierre, *Virtue and Terror*, eds. and trans. John Howe (London: Verso, 2007), 104.

³¹ Simpson, *Question of the Stranger*, 2.

³² Tuite, “Cloistered Closets”, no. 5.

We are then in the realm of Freud's idea of the uncanny for it is his essay, as Simpson says, that is an example of the more "modern thought that has been much concerned with theorizing the stranger".³³ In my third and concluding chapter, I wish to look at some later literary engagements with *The Monk*, in particular Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya, or The Moor* (1806) and Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820). These novels, in their own ways, are also concerned with how otherworldly forces, which come to bring into question the coherence of an Enlightenment world, are in fact representative of forces latent within ourselves.

Dacre's *Zofloya*, the most openly indebted to Lewis's *The Monk*, seems to be engaged in a sort of one-upmanship with Lewis's novel in the amping up of both its transgressions and its philosophical interrogation of one's inclinations towards cruelty and evil. *Melmoth* exhibits the anti-Catholicism of *The Monk*, bringing back, thirty years on, through its many scenes of riot and brutal murder, the horrific moments of the French Revolution. The forces governing *Melmoth* are, however, unlike *The Monk*, given a vindication. *Melmoth* offers a radical reading of Lewis's debts to French philosophical pornography, for the heinous impulses of man displayed in *Melmoth* work in accordance with both nature and the will of God, reiterating the kind of determinism inherent within Lewis's work.

³³ Simpson, *Question of the Stranger*, 5.

The Monk, Libertinism and Determinism

Given to us as a sham, just as *The Monk* begins to build up a head of steam and reaches its inevitable close, the festival of St Clare is in full swing. “The full swell of the organ, accompanied by a chorus of female voices, ris[ing] upon the stillness of the night” is heard by the devout crowd and upon the services’ ending, the monks, who, “having been invited to assist at the pilgrimage”, are seen to be “marching two by two with lighted torches”.¹ The figures of St Lucia, St Catherine and St Genevieve come and go and the star of the show, the “damsel representing St Clare”, appears upon the summit of “a machine fashioned like a throne” with a “wreath of diamonds” around her neck.² The epitome of this hypocrisy, the prioress, who stands behind the throne, eyes heavenward, is confronted by Don Ramirez who, alongside Mother St Ursula, dramatically interrupts proceedings and accuses her of murder. Almost immediately, hearing the accusations and listening to no pleas of innocence from the prioress, the crowd, which was at once silent and “filled with reverence for religion”, quickly turn to a mob.³

They [the mob] forced a passage through the guards who protected their destined victim, dragged her from her shelter, and proceeded to take upon her a most summary and cruel vengeance. Wild with terror, and scarcely knowing what she said, the wretched women shrieked for a moment’s mercy: she protested that she was innocent of the death of Agnes, and could clear herself from the suspicion beyond the power of doubt. The rioters heeded nothing but the gratification of their barbarous vengeance. They refused to listen to her: they showed her every sort of insult, loaded her with mud and filth, and called her by the most opprobrious appellations. They tore her one from another, and each new tormentor was more savage than the former. They stifled with howls and execrations her shrill cries of mercy, and dragged her through the streets, spurning her, trampling her, and treating her with every species of cruelty which hate and vindictive fury could invent. At length a flint, aimed by some well-directing hand, struck her full upon the temple. She sank upon the ground bathed in blood, and in a few minutes terminated her miserable existence. Yet though she no longer felt their insults, the rioters still exercised their impotent rage upon her lifeless

¹ Matthew Lewis, *The Monk* (London: Penguin Books, 1998), 297-98.

² *Ibid.*, 299-300.

³ *Ibid.*, 297.

body. They beat it, trod upon it, and ill-used it, till it became no more than a mass of flesh, unsightly, shapeless and disgusting.⁴

They didn't stop there however, for

the incensed populace, confounding the innocent with the guilty, had resolved to sacrifice all the nuns of that order to their rage, and not to leave one stone of the building upon another[...]The rioters poured into the interior part of the building[...]They broke the furniture into pieces, tore down the pictures, destroyed the reliques, and in their hatred of her servant forgot all respect to the saint. Some employed themselves[...]in pulling down parts of the convent and others again in setting fire to the pictures and valuable furniture which it contained. These latter produced the most decisive desolation. Indeed the consequences of their action were more sudden than themselves had expected or wished. The flames rising from the burning piles caught part of the building[...]The columns gave way, the roofs came tumbling down upon the rioters, and crushed many of them beneath their weight. Nothing was to be heard but shrieks and groans. The convent was wrapped in flames, and the whole presented a scene of devastation and horror.⁵

Beneath the crumbling monastery, however, something even more alarming and disturbing was taking place. Ambrosio's raping of Antonia:

All this while Ambrosio was unconscious of the dreadful scenes which were passing so near. The execution of his designs upon Antonia employed his every thought. Hitherto he was satisfied with the success of his plans. Antonia had drunk the opiate, was buried in the vaults of St Clare, and absolutely in his disposal[...]Naturally addicted to the gratification of the senses, in the full vigour of manhood and heat of blood, he had suffered his temperament to acquire such ascendancy, that his lust was become madness. Of his fondness for Antonia, none but the grosser particles remained; he longed for the possession of her person[...]He stifled her cries with kisses, treated her with the rudeness of an unprincipled barbarian, proceeded from freedom to freedom, and, in the violence of his lustful delirium, wounded and bruised her tender limbs. Heedless of her tears, cries and entreaties, he gradually made himself master of her person, and desisted not from his prey, till he had accomplished his crime and the dishonour of Antonia.⁶

Lewis brilliantly juxtaposes the idea of the mob, as "barbarous" and "savage"⁷ with that of the "unprincipled barbarian" Ambrosio.⁸ For Freud, a mob allowed "the individual[...]to throw off the repressions of his unconscious instinctual impulses" and so, in the same way, Ambrosio, committing his crimes in the depths of the

⁴ Ibid., 306.

⁵ Ibid., 307.

⁶ Ibid., 323-28.

⁷ Ibid., 306.

⁸ Ibid., 328.

monastery, confronts his deepest and darkest impulses which have—until now—been repressed.⁹ The geographical interplay of this scene in *The Monk*, between the collective rebellion of the mob on the surface and Ambrosio's raping of Antonia underground brings to bare a particular view of the French Revolution which has its roots in Burke and Conservatism. According to this view, the Revolution was on the surface one of obvious terror, destruction, violence and murder, culminating in the fall of political institutions and figures standing for the Old Regime, but beneath lay a philosophy, in which the people were seen to be sovereign and free from the rule of Monarchy, State, Church and God. Edmund Burke believed this philosophy to belong to the great figures of what historian Robert Darnton has termed, "high enlightenment",¹⁰ insisting the British were not to become "the converts of Rousseau" or "the disciples of Voltaire" and that "atheists [were] not our preachers; madmen[...]not our lawgivers".¹¹ There seemed to be, however, an even darker, more vulgar and potentially more dangerous side to the Enlightenment that Darnton alludes to in his attempts to "penetrate into its underworld", one hidden beneath these *philosophes* who were apparently secretly plotting against us.¹² Some of the most popular books of pre-revolutionary France, according to Darnton, were not the ones that are now "passed piously from textbook to textbook", nor the ones that Burke saw as most dangerous.¹³ Lewis's *The Monk* points to this darker side of the Enlightenment, where the concern is not with a Rousseauen concept of civil liberty that Robespierre would later espouse, rather it is with the idea of natural liberty, one where man is controlled by his appetites and knows nothing of right or wrong.¹⁴ Rooted in the high

⁹ From Sigmund Freud *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, quoted in Ralph D. Stacey *Complexity and Group Processes: A Radically Social Understanding of Individuals*, trans. James Strachey. (East Sussex: Brunner-Routledge, 2003), 178.

¹⁰ Robert Darnton, *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1982), 1.

¹¹ Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London: John Sharpe), 119.

¹² Darnton, *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime*, 1.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁴ Scott McLetchie, "Maximilien Robespierre, Master of Terror", in *The Student Historical Journal 1983-84*, 1984. <http://www.loyno.edu/~history/journal/1983-4/mcletchie.htm> n.p.

brow philosophies of the materialists Diderot and d'Holbach, the most extreme form of natural liberty is found within the philosophical pornographic libertine novels and libels of pre-revolutionary France. In fact, the way in which this literary underworld is ruled (if in fact it had any rules at all) brings to bear the very idea of natural liberty: "It was a world of free-floating individuals—not Lockean gentlemen abiding by rules of some implicit game, but Hobbesian brutes struggling to survive".¹⁵

Lewis's most alluring and exciting borrowings are perhaps then the ones he failed to (or daren't) admit in his advertisement to *The Monk* and they, like Ambrosio, are submerged and hidden deep within. It is with the arbiter of Libertinism, the Marquis de Sade, that we get the most well-known and discussed borrowing. Angela Wright insists that Lewis read Sade and that the two were engaged in an exchange of borrowings, for *The Monk* "provided a stimulus for de Sade's comprehensive thematic revisions".¹⁶ According to Wright, "while he [Lewis] was in Paris in the summer of 1791, he acquired and read the second edition of the Marquis de Sade's novel *Justine, ou les malheurs de la vertu*".¹⁷ It is here that we get at the heart of *The Monk*, not only in terms of its exemplification of the libertine world but of that world's implications. *The Monk* is about what it means to accept a world where, given man is, in the words of d'Holbach, "secretly...determined by some exterior cause producing a change in him", everything thing one seeks—liberty, free will, freedom, etc—must ultimately be abandoned.¹⁸ Ambrosio is shown to be, from his very first moments with the adoration of the picture of the Madonna to one of his last in the raping of Antonia, controlled by forces above and beyond him. These forces appear supernatural, giving *The Monk* a gothic and uncanny edge, but they are at base representative of the forces which drive the novels of Sade, d'Argens and others.

The scene I have depicted in *The Monk* then can be read as a metaphor of the French Revolution and thus comes into contact with one of the most forthright

¹⁵ Darnton, *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime*, 23.

¹⁶ Angela Wright, "European disruptions of the idealized women," in *European Gothic: A Spirited Exchange 1760-1960*, ed. Avril Horner (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 40.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁸ Paul Henri Thiry Holbach, *The System of Nature, Or, Laws of the Moral and Physical World*, trans. H.D Robinson (New York: G.W & A.J. Matsell, 1836), 17.

arguments against aligning the Gothic novel with the French Revolution. David Richter makes the claim that “the Gothic as metaphor for the French Revolution runs aground on the ways in which critics during the most exciting phases of the revolution fail to make such conscious connections” and is therefore “attractive but empty”.¹⁹ Richter’s claims have been suitably handled by critics. Michael Gamer, for example, suggests that “whatever term reviewers used to describe Lewis’s romance, they associated it less with respectable romances of Ann Radcliffe than with the “Jacobin” productions of Holcroft and William Godwin”.²⁰ Lewis’s *The Monk* was then in some sense aligned with those works which were actively engaged in the debates surrounding the French Revolution in the famous pamphlet wars of the 1790s. What remains relevant about Richter’s claim, however, is his notion of “conscious connections”.²¹

‘Conscious’ then becomes the operative word, for we know full well that *The Monk* isn’t concerned with the conscious or manifest at all so why should we then treat certain contemporary readings of the text any differently? I do not, however, wish to treat readings of *The Monk* as ‘unconscious’ therefore, but perhaps treat the idea in the same way Lewis uses the word unconscious in the advertisement to *The Monk*: “I have not made full avowal of all the plagiarisms of which I am aware myself; but I doubt not, many more may be found, of which I am at present totally unconscious”.²² Lewis is clearly not unconscious of his plagiarisms and borrowings, instead he says this, in one sense to provoke his critics, something which becomes more prominent in his career after *The Monk*, and in another to conceal his borrowings. We are reminded again of Ambrosio—the ultimate libertine—lurking beneath the crumbling monastery; concealed, hidden and embedded within as he succumbs to his unconscious desires. The examples I wish to give of particular contemporary readings of *The Monk* therefore

¹⁹ David Richter, *The Progress of Romance: Literary Historiography and the Gothic Novel* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1996), 111.

²⁰ Michael Gamer, “Genres for the Prosecution: Pornography and the Gothic,” *PMLA* 114 (1999), 1047.

²¹ Richter, *The Progress of Romance*, 111.

²² Matthew Lewis, advertisement to *The Monk* (London: Penguin Books, 1998), 6.

were subtle, not obvious, straightforward or manifest and they themselves appeal to the underlying philosophic exploration in Lewis's work.

The first of this kind is found with the caricature, 'Luxury' (1801) (Figure 1), where we find a woman, with libertine literature littered around the room, holding *The Monk* in one hand and the other placed conspicuously under her dress.



(Figure 1. Charles Williams, *Luxury or the Comforts of a Rumpford*, 1801, print, 340 x 235 mm. British Museum, department of prints and drawings, London)

'Luxury' positions us as the libertine voyeur, reminding us of the voyeuristic scene in *The Monk*, where Ambrosio, looking through the magic mirror given to him by Matilda, "had full opportunity to observe the voluptuous contours and amicable symmetry of [Antonia's][...]person".²³ 'Luxury' reiterates Rousseau's turning down of "licentious

²³ Lewis, *The Monk*, 232.

and obscene” books described to him by “La Tribu, a most accommodating woman” as “inconvenient, because one can read it only with one hand”.²⁴ In a similar vein, the *Analytical Review*’s interpretation of *The Monk* sees a way, according to James Watt, of “defend[ing] Ambrosio in Enlightenment materialist terms as a figure whose response to sexual temptation is natural and instinctive”.²⁵ The review reads,

Indeed the whole temptation is so artfully contrived, that a man, it should seem, were he made as other men are, would deserve to be d—ed who could resist even devilish spells, conducted with such address, and assuming such a heavenly form...the monk, in fact, inspires sympathy.²⁶

Despite its tongue-in-cheek humour, the review speaks truest to *The Monk*. What we have here is the idea that Ambrosio—a mortal comprised merely of flesh and blood—could not have possibly done otherwise in his Satanically orchestrated descent from much-loved Monk of Madrid to sex-crazed rapist and murderer. In liberating himself from his monkish fetters, Ambrosio subjects himself to even greater controlling forces, they manifest supernaturally through the guise of Lucifer, but are within him and are his own urges, passions, desires, inclinations and instincts which he is useless to resist, repress or control. This review then shows how I hope to read Ambrosio’s own sorry story of determinism later in the chapter, where the “supreme message” in Sade—ultimate freedom—is flipped on its head.²⁷

There was, however, a review of *The Monk* that made obvious connections between Lewis’s book and the French Revolution. The *European Magazine* suggested that *The Monk* was composed of ideals and philosophies associated with the rumblings across the channel in France: “the presses of the Continent teemed with compositions of this character while the Revolution was preparing in France; yet what have the

²⁴ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Essential Writings of Rousseau*, ed. and trans. Leo Damrosch and Peter Constantine (New York: Modern Library, 2013), 364.

²⁵ James Watt, “Gothic,” in *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature, 1740-1830*, ed. Thomas Keymer and Jon Mee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 127.

²⁶ Review of *The Monk*, *Analytical Review* 24, (1796). 403-04.

²⁷ Leyland de la Durantaye, “Who Whips Whom”, review of *Justine et autres romans* by D.A.F de Sade, London Review of Books, February 19, 2015, <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v37/n04/leland-de-la-durantaye/who-whips-whom>. n.p.

infidels who produced it substituted in the place of the *religion* they have banished?”²⁸ Upon finding a ‘conscious connection’, Richter, with an ironic throw-away comment, writes that the reviewer was merely attempting to establish that “anyone who, like Lewis, would attack the Church established in Spain would attack the Church established in England. After all, French writing of this infidel sort had caused the revolution, and that same sort of thing might cause revolution here in England”.²⁹ Richter therefore wants his reader to read this particular review carefully, leaning toward the idea that it was chauvinistic, driven by religion not politics and thus, by virtue of being biased and clearly against anything which depicted the fall of religious institutions, not to be taken seriously. One would expect, for example, the *Analytical Review*, published by Joseph Johnson, the publisher of works by Godwin, Priestley, Wollstonecraft and others, to have been sympathetic to an anti-hero who sought to break free from the confines of his current situation only to suffer and be punished for it.

Richter therefore delves into the reception of the ordinary, everyday reader by suggesting that the late eighteenth-century view of literature, particularly, the romance, was beginning to change. Richter writes that “the Gothic sits astride a major shift in the response of readers to literature[...]a shift from reading for information[...]toward reading as an escape”.³⁰ *The Monk* was the one exception, however, “the moralists were out in full force at the appearance of *The Monk*”³¹ and so Lewis’s novel was not seen to seduce or lure the reader into an inward world full of distractions like that of Radcliffe’s, instead it was to evoke a certain simplicity which was seen to potentially corrupt and pollute the minds of its readers. Nowhere is this better exemplified than in James Gillray’s caricature, *Tales of Wonder!* (see Figure 2), where four women (three young and one older) are seen to be sat around a candle-lit table reading while *The Monk* is placed upon the table in full view. As Markman Ellis suggests, the responses of the woman sat around the table “display a mixture of moral

²⁸ Review of *The Monk*, *European Magazine* 31, (1797). 114-15.

²⁹ Richter, *The Progress of Romance*, 111.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 112.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 112.



(Figure 2. James Gillray, *Tales of Wonder!*, 1802, print, 254 x 350 mm. British Museum, department of prints and drawings, London)

outrage and prurient titillation”.³² Reviews of both Radcliffe’s novels and *The Monk*, for example, display this disparity. In a review of Radcliffe’s, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), the reviewer describes the reader as “upon the edge and confines of the world of spirits”³³ and therefore almost engulfed within the imaginative recesses of Radcliffe’s novel. While *The Monk*, was not to be seen in this light, it was, according to Coleridge, “poison for youth[...] [which] [...] if a parent saw in the hands of a son or daughter, he might reasonably turn pale”.³⁴

Here though we quickly move away from reader reception of the Gothic to authorial intention. The very exchange between Radcliffe and Lewis, in which *The Monk* can be read “as a satiric attack on the moral tendencies of Radcliffe’s fiction”, can be adequately explained through an appeal to the author and his or her intentions.³⁵

³² Markman Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 94.

³³ Review of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, *Edinburgh Review*, 38 (1823), 360.

³⁴ (Samuel Taylor Coleridge), Review of *The Monk*, *Critical Review* 19, (1797). 196.

³⁵ Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction*, 83.

We know that in the writing of *The Monk* Lewis read Radcliffe's *The Mysterious of Udolpho* and that her later novel, *The Italian* (1797) was a direct response to Lewis's text. Therefore we must turn to Lewis himself, establishing what we know about him biographically, particularly in relation to the production of *The Monk*.

We know very little regarding Lewis's own political views, his first attempted foray into print and politics saw him jokingly oppose parliamentary figures Richard Brinsley Sheridan and Charles James Fox on the topic of the Empress of Russia, Catherine the Great, and the Russian empire's backing of the Targowica confederation in April 1792. Despite this, Lewis was to be later recognised by Fox as a friend and, put alongside Fox's enthusiasm at the fall of the Bastille, his strong support for the Revolution in France and his famous rift with Burke, we can speculate that Lewis was far more sympathetic to the reformist rather than loyalist side of the Revolutionary controversy. His days in parliament, however, were swift and without note and, with reference to his letters, Lewis was far more concerned with his writings and staging of plays in London. Any notion that Lewis was drawn more to the reformist and radical side of the Revolutionary debate, however, is thrown into doubt with a poem he wrote titled, "France and England in 1793":

Full in the splendour of meridian Day,
Bright as its beams, the Angel Freedom lay.
...how with anger did her bosom swell,
When on the plains of France her glances fell!
Here the wild People drenched the soil with blood,
And bathed exulting in the crimson flood:
Justice was spurned; Religion awed no more:
The holiest Shrines were dyed with human gore;
And still while trampling Heaven's and Nature's laws,
Hoarse was the shout—"We sin in Freedom's cause!"—
...The Angel turned, and saw with true delight,
Dear to her heard and pleasant to her eyes,
The glittering Cliffs of sea-girt Albion rise.
With love maternal o'er the Isle she hung;
The burst of fondness faltered on her tongue;
And in her eyes while rapture's sun-beam played,
In sounds melodious thus at length she said.
—"Flourish, fair Island, long my favourite State,
Parent of all that's good, of all that's great,
Where Liberty's true Fire its light displays;
But not that fatal, that deluding Blaze,
Which, like the gleams by Lamps in Churches shed,

Shine but to show the reliques of the Dead.³⁶

As Angela Wright insists, the poem “suggests that as the revolutionary excesses unfolded in Paris, Lewis lamented them in a manner similar to Edmund Burke’s tragic view in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*”.³⁷ It is this “deluding Blaze”, particularly the idea of laying bare all the excesses of the Revolution, that Lewis attempts to exhibit in *The Monk*.³⁸ Lewis’s novel is an attempt to make some sense out of the most horrific scenes of the Revolution and showcase the implications of a world of natural liberty where justice and religion are “spurned”.³⁹

In returning to *The Monk*, we get no grand introduction like that of Walpole’s *Castle of Otranto* (1764). Lewis’s advertisement to the book, combined with an imitation of an imitation in the form of Pope’s ‘Imitations of Horace’ serve as the only introduction to *The Monk*. Interestingly, Pope’s ‘Imitations’ were met with the same challenge of plagiarism that Lewis’s *The Monk* was, particularly through the figure of Samuel Johnson, who described Pope’s work as “uncouth and party-coloured; neither original nor translated, neither ancient nor modern”.⁴⁰ The reference to the poem then by Lewis reveals he was self-conscious of his work, not merely in terms of particular borrowings, but of its future scrutiny and criticism, describing it as an “ill-judging book” that will never return unscathed from the clutches of its baying critics.⁴¹ The idea of his knowledge of this makes his claims in the advertisement all the more interesting, especially when we consider it in relation to his letter to his father, where he apologises for the controversy caused by his book:

³⁶ Matthew Lewis, “France and England in 1793”, (Ms. 114, National Library of Jamaica), repr. in *The Monk*, ed. D.L. MacDonald & Kathleen Scherf (Ontario: Broadview Literary Texts, 2004), 385-386.

³⁷ Angela Wright, *Britain, France and the Gothic, 1764-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 129.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 386.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 385.

⁴⁰ Samuel Johnson, quoted in Jacob Fuchs *Reading Pope’s Imitations of Horace* (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1989), 15.

⁴¹ Matthew Lewis, preface to *The Monk* (London: Penguin Books, 1998), 3.

Let me, however, observe that twenty is not the age at which prudence is most to be expected. Inexperience prevents my distinguishing what could give offence [...] To do much good, indeed, was more than I expected of this book[...]but though I did not expect much benefit to arise from the perusal of a trifling romance, written by a youth of twenty, I was in my own mind quite certain no harm could be produced by a work whose subject was furnished by one of our best moralists, and in the composition of which I did not introduce a single incident, or single character without meaning to inculcate some maxim universally allowed. It was, then, with infinite surprise that I heard the outcry raised against the book, and found that a few ill-judged and unguarded passages totally obscured its general tendency.⁴²

Expressing an apparent sense of naivety, Lewis claims he was unaware of the potential power of his novel but where is this naivety in the preface to the book? It could easily be explained away by suggesting Lewis was merely pulling the wool over his father's eyes but this sense of naivety and innocence as a defence against the criticisms of *The Monk* crops up again in the preface to his romantic drama, *Adelmorn: The Outlaw* (1801). Even within *The Monk* we find Lewis attempting to legitimise his own position as a young, innocent and naive writer through the figure of young Theodore, whose attempts at poetry are thoroughly examined and criticised by his master and friend Don Raymond. In an ironic twist, Don Raymond's criticisms of Theodore's poetry also reveal Lewis's full awareness of the potential dangers he faced in the writing of *The Monk*, warning Theodore that he

cannot employ [his] time worse than in making verses. An author, whether good or bad, or between both, is an animal whom everybody is privileged to attack...[when] they who cannot succeed in finding fault with the book, employ themselves in stigmatizing its author[...]In short, to enter the lists of literature is wilfully to expose yourself to the arrows of neglect, ridicule, envy and disappointment. Whether you write well or ill, be assured that you will not escape blame.⁴³

Don Raymond's final verdict places Theodore and his writing squarely in relation to Lewis, insisting that "most of the basic ideas are borrowed from other poets" and that he is most probably "unconscious of the theft".⁴⁴ Again this word unconscious appears, reminding us of its usage in Lewis's advertisement to *The Monk*.

Lewis's letters to his mother would seem to be our best bet in establishing Lewis's political views, particularly as we know that during his correspondence with her he travelled to France, Germany and Holland whilst compiling *The Monk*. Only one

⁴² Matthew Lewis, *The Life and Correspondence of M.G. Lewis* (London: Henry Coburn Publishers, 1839), 155-57.

⁴³ Lewis, *The Monk*, 172-73.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 173.

letter is found marked, Paris, however, dated September 1792, in which he mentions a particular French play he has translated and the writings of a farce he hopes to be staged; he mentions nothing concerning the events of the Revolution. As a later letter to Lewis's mother reveals, however, this play that he saw in Paris could have been Jacques-Marie Boutet de Monvel's *Les Victimes cloitrées* (1791) which would form the basis for Lewis's *Venoni; or, The Novice of St Mark's* (1809). In comparison to the omission of French Revolution, it is understandable that Lewis openly admitted to his mother that he had met "M. de Goethe, the celebrated author of Werter". It is hardly surprising that we come across more letters and information of Lewis's stay in Weimar, where he jokes with his mother that she should not be surprised if he shoots himself "one of these fine mornings".⁴⁵

Don Raymond's journey within *The Monk* from an atheistic and calculated Paris to a romanticised and more feeling Germany, in some regard, resembles Lewis's own travels. For Don Raymond, who travels in disguise as Alphonso d'Alvarda, was at first "enchanted with it [Paris], as indeed must everyman who is young, rich and fond of pleasure".⁴⁶ He soon came to discover, however, that the people of Paris "at bottom [were] frivolous, unfeeling and insincere".⁴⁷ Angela Wright suggests that "although Lewis's character expresses distaste for Parisian circles in which he moves, it is important to bear in mind that this is a condemnation of society in Paris, and not of France itself".⁴⁸ Interestingly, Lewis, through the voice of Don Raymond, does exhibit the somewhat typical English view of the French characterised best by David Simpson: "France was variously (and even simultaneously) the home of craven Catholics and bold atheists, subservient royalists and extreme anarchists, licentious libertines and cold calculators".⁴⁹

The Monk is then home to all these caricatures of French society. The very beginning of the book brings to bare the shallowness of Catholicism as we are warned

⁴⁵ Lewis, *Correspondences*, 72.

⁴⁶ Lewis, *The Monk*, 86.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁴⁸ Wright, *Britain, France and the Gothic*, 126.

⁴⁹ David Simpson, *Romanticism, Nationalism, and the Revolt Against Theory* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1993), 64.

that the congregation gathered at the Monastery who await the arrival of the orator, Ambrosio, were not “assembled either for motives of piety or thirst of information”:

The women came to show themselves, the men to see the women: one were attracted by curiosity to hear an orator so celebrated; some came, because they had no better means of employing their time till the play began; some, from being assured that it would be impossible to find places in the church; and one half of Madrid was brought thither by expecting to meet the other half.⁵⁰

We also see this through the eyes of Don Lorenzo who, awaiting the arrival of Don Raymond and Mother St Ursula in their plan to interrupt the festival of St Clare,

had long observed with disapprobation and contempt the superstition which governed Madrid’s inhabitants. His good sense had pointed to him the artifices of the monks, and the gross absurdity of their miracles, wonders, and supposititious reliques. He blushed to see his countrymen the dupes of deception so ridiculous, and only wished for an opportunity to free them from their monkish fetters.⁵¹

It was perhaps these instances that Coleridge had in mind when he suggested *The Monk* was a “blending, with an irreverent negligence, all that is most awfully true in religion with all that is most ridiculously absurd in superstition”.⁵² As Clara Tuite suggests, “what Lewis’s text offers is for Coleridge an uncomfortable blend of protestant anti-Catholicism with French revolutionary anti-Catholicism, and the mock-didacticism associated with Lewis’s French revolutionary champion, the Marquis de Sade”.⁵³

The difficulty in determining what exactly Lewis intended with *The Monk* makes more sense if we sketch the political moment in which the novel was written. The idea that philosophy was at the heart of the Revolution is further strengthened by its appearance, not only with Burke and Conservatism, but with radical and reformist discourse. It is first found in the dissenter Richard Price’s *A Discourse on the Love of our Country* (1789), addressed to the Society for Commemorating the Revolution in Great Britain. He suggests that much like Britain’s Glorious Revolution of 1688—influenced by writers such as Milton, Locke, Sidney, etc—writers and philosophers in France had

⁵⁰ Lewis, *The Monk*, 2.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 297.

⁵² Coleridge, *Critical Review*, 195.

⁵³ Clara Tuite, “Cloistered Closets: Enlightenment Pornography, The Confessional State, Homosexual Persecution and *The Monk*”, in *Romanticism on the Net*, 8 November 1997. <https://www.erudit.org/revue/ron/1997/v/n8/005766ar.html>, n.o. 6.

also “sowed a seed which has since taken root, and is now growing up to glorious harvest”.⁵⁴ Tom Paine, whose *Rights of Man* (1791) was a direct reaction to Burke’s *Reflections* (1790), considers the Revolution “a consequence of a mental revolution priorly existing in France...the only signs which appear to the spirit of liberty during those periods are to be found in the writings of the French philosophers”.⁵⁵ Despite Burke’s apparent rhetorical power, however, the revolutionary controversy in its early stages favoured the radical and reformist side. The *Sheffield Register* and *Sheffield Patriot* alongside the Society for Constitutional information mass produced radical works, Paine’s *Rights of Man* was one of the most notable and sold considerably better than Burke’s *Reflections*; part one sold fifty thousand copies in 1791 and Burke’s *Reflections* sold thirty thousand in its entirety.⁵⁶ This was in part due to the fact that Paine waived potential earnings to boost sales and thus its accessibility allowed it to infiltrate and influence the public on a level Burke could not. This popularity and sympathy for the Revolution, however, would soon turn to repudiation of reformist and radical theories. This change coincided with the Terror which reigned over France and affirmed Burke’s fears. The British saw the deaths of Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette and other figures of the nobility, coupled with the guillotining of over 16’000 people from September 5th 1793 to July 28th 1794. The fear of the circulation of philosophy, however, and the influence of the *philosophes* regarding the French Revolution was still strong. It was the combination of the writer and working man that posed the greatest threat to Britain, for a radical work “placed in the hands of the masses made it a political tool”⁵⁷ much like “the diffusion of opinion and ideas[...]through the new and mighty engine of the press”⁵⁸ utilised by the *philosophes*.

⁵⁴ Richard Price, “A Discourse on the Love of our Country,” in *Burke, Paine, Godwin, and the Revolution Controversy*, ed. Marilyn Butler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 26.

⁵⁵ Thomas Paine, “Rights of Man”, in *Rights of Man, Common Sense, and Other Political Writings*, ed. Mark Philp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 144.

⁵⁶ Marilyn Butler, introduction to *Burke, Paine, Godwin, and the Revolution Controversy*, ed. Marilyn Butler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 35.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁵⁸ Seamus Deane, *The French Revolution and Enlightenment in England, 1789-1832* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1988), 166.

This kind of intellectual enemy was all the more reinforced by the publication of Abbé Barruel's popular work in Britain, *Memoirs Illustrating the History of Jacobinism* (1797). Barruel sought to draw the lines between the French Enlightenment and the revolutionaries not merely in terms of influence, but on the accusation that the *philosophes* alongside the Bavarian Illuminati and the Freemasons conspired to bring down Christianity, Monarchy, and State. Barruel insists the "principles and plans of these conspiring Sects!" were "in the darkness[...]conceived, but in broad day[...]executed".⁵⁹ *The Monk's* interplaying of the destructive nature of the mob above and the concealed sexual acts of Ambrosio below play this out perfectly, for it displays how beneath the obvious manifestations of Revolution there was a philosophy embedded within.

It is important to consider this conspiracy theory of the French Revolution as a right-wing invention. Mallet du Pan, in the same year as Barruel's *Memoirs*, implied that Voltaire, one of the central figures of this conspiracy and one of the most famous enemies of Christianity, could never have wished the downfall of the King, the nobility or of the society which maintained his privileges. He writes,

Voltaire was born under Monarchy, and for it: the the perseverance and sincerity of his enthusiasms for Louis XIV, are irrefragable proofs of it. His indifference for natural rights of people, shows itself at every line of his grand view of the reign of that Monarchy.⁶⁰

Du Pan still admits that Voltaire, while being a mere "flatterer" in relation to politics, was still "a fanatic antagonist of Christianity[...]and an indefatigable conspirator against all positive religion".⁶¹ Robert Darnton affirms this idea of Voltaire to some degree, for he was said to be part of the intellectual elite, *Le Monde*. He was one of "the established writers [who] enjoyed an estate [and] derived honour and wealth from the established cultural institutions".⁶² In dispelling the actual proofs of this theory of the *philosophes* and insisting that there are no grounds for its belief we establish its danger

⁵⁹ Abbé Barruel, *Memoirs Illustrating the History of Jacobinism*, trans. T. Booker (London, 1799), 391.

⁶⁰ Mallet du Pan, *The British Mercury* (London, 1798), 344.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 344.

⁶² Darnton, *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime*, 29.

as polemical. Seth Payson, for example, wrote *Proofs of the Real Existence, and Dangerous Tendency, of Illuminism* (1802), despite no evidence of any conspiracy: “Such proofs have not, I confess, come to my knowledge”.⁶³

The time of *The Monk*’s publication then in March 1796 appears to be doubly troublesome as it emerged at a time when both opinion had dramatically shifted against revolutionaries and the fear of philosophy and intellectualism were seen by Burke and other prominent figures as a danger to institutions of civil society, monarchy and church. Lewis knew this and so there was no viable way of directly associating with anything French never mind philosophic. Lewis’s attempts then to legitimise his book by claiming to be unconscious of certain borrowings, coupled with the difficulty one comes across in establishing any motive or intention in the writing of the book, can be explained within the context of the contemporary moment I have sketched.

Finally returning to *The Monk*’s scene I began this chapter with, the collective rebellion of the mob on the surface and a submerged individual liberation below not only gives us a certain idea of Lewis’s concerns with a dark Enlightenment philosophy but it also feeds into the ways in which we can begin to read the novel. It brings to bear two avenues of pursuit that Ronald Paulson grappled with in his *Representations of Revolution* (1983): “the aesthetic” and “the political-historical”.⁶⁴ The political-historical, in terms of *The Monk*, belongs to the obvious and manifest textual representations of the French Revolution found in the mob’s ransacking of the convent and its murdering of the prioress. Numerous critics have likened some of the greatest and most memorable events of the French Revolution with this scene in *The Monk*. So much so that Nick Groom, in the newest Oxford edition of *The Monk*, for example, introduces the novel within the specific context of Princess de Lamballe’s horrific death at the hands of a blood thirsty mob.⁶⁵ Her death, retold by the London Times, in which “her thighs were cut across, and her bowels and heart torn from her”

⁶³ Seth Payson, *Proofs of the Real Existence, and Dangerous Tendency of Illuminism*, (Charlestown: Samuel Etheridge, 1802), 3.

⁶⁴ Ronald Paulson, *Representations of Revolution, 1789-1820* (London: Yale University Press, 1983), 7.

⁶⁵ Nick Groom, introduction to *The Monk*, by Matthew Lewis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), vii.

reduced her, in much the same way as the Prioress, to a “mangled body[...]dragged through the streets”.⁶⁶ The aesthetic, on the other hand, represented in three parts by Paulson (the beautiful, the sublime and the grotesque) concerns the story of Ambrosio. “These aesthetic categories”, writes Paulson, “resolved themselves into various types of progression, and the French Revolution was[...]the sequence from a sense of liberty as freedom from oppression to freedom to do whatever you want”.⁶⁷ In the world of *The Monk* this is then the progression from civil liberty to natural liberty. The progression that concerns us here, however, is that of the sublime toward the grotesque which, according to Paulson, “was the perfect revolutionary paradigm[...]it showed either the human emerging triumphantly from nature or the human subsiding or regressing into nature—or ambiguously doing both”.⁶⁸

The very passage from the sublime to the grotesque can be read, firstly, within the Gothic passage from Radcliffe to Lewis which has been well-documented in the studies of the Gothic. Radcliffe’s use of the sublime, spelled out in her preface to her final book *Gaston de Blondville* (1826), has its roots in Burke whose concept of the sublime and its necessarily obscure nature are integral to the opposition to philosophy, which, as David Simpson suggests, “he continually imaged as cold, abstract, and heartless”.⁶⁹ The sublime then was one of Burke’s ways of

proclaim[ing] the rights of immethodical thought and expression, presenting them as the rhetorical incarnation of a free and liberal society itself imagined as uniquely British—a society that could tolerate no restrictively exact definitions and must frustrate any desire for a merely rational predictability.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ “British Newspaper Coverage of the French Revolution: The September Massacres”, last modified February 22, 2000, <http://oldsite.english.ucsb.edu/faculty/ayliu/research/around-1800/FR/times-9-10-1792.html>. n.p.

⁶⁷ Paulson, *Representations of Revolution*, 7.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶⁹ Simpson, *Romanticism, Nationalism and the Revolt Against Theory*, 19.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 19.

As Richard Miles observes, Radcliffe's "terror depends on obscurity"⁷¹ (Burke was to describe the sublime, and its producing of terror, on the level of obscurity)⁷² while Lewis's horror depends on "physicality observed with "libidinous minuteness".⁷³ This is exhibited by Markman Ellis in relation to libertinism, who insists "*The Monk's* most significant revision of its chosen model, the Radcliffe gothic novel, is its deployment of a libertine descriptive language in moments of sexual encounter".⁷⁴ While Lewis reveals all, Radcliffe does not and instead shuts the door on the world of *The Monk* by concealing desire through a veil of ignorance, virtue and innocence. An example of this in Radcliffe can be found in *The Italian* (1797), where the monk Schedoni is about to kill his prisoner, the innocent Ellena. As Schedoni stoops over his potential victim, Ellena's "dress perplexed him; it would interrupt the blow and he stopped to examine whether he could turn her robe aside, without waking her".⁷⁵ After battling with his conscience, Schedoni resolved to do the deed, "drawing the lawn from her bosom, he once more raised it to strike" only for a "new cause of horror[...]to seize all his frame".⁷⁶ At this moment Ellena, despite the fact she turns out to be his niece, cries: "My father!".⁷⁷ If Lewis was writing the scene, however, Schedoni would have succumbed to sexual passions upon the removing of her robe, he would have killed her out of guilt and, as he battled with those innermost desires which ruled him, realised that he'd both had sex with and murdered his own daughter.

Ambrosio's story, where he thought he'd triumphed and become ruler of himself only to realise that he was subject to other forces beyond his control, perfectly categorises Paulson's notion of progression from the sublime to the grotesque. At once Faust and Don Juan, Ambrosio thought he was achieving, as Stephen Greenblatt

⁷¹ Robert Miles, "Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis," in *A New Companion to The Gothic*, ed. David Punter (West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 93.

⁷² Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and the Beautiful* (Oxford: Routledge, 2008), 28.

⁷³ Miles, "Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis", 93.

⁷⁴ Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction*, 89.

⁷⁵ Ann Radcliffe, *The Italian* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 271.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 271.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 274.

says of Don Juan, “liberty in libertinism”, only to find that this so-called liberty had come at the cost of the very thing he sought.⁷⁸ His regression into nature is horrifically complete when, as a doomed man cast headlong by the winged Lucifer from “a dreadful height”, his broken body is feasted upon by “myriads of insects” which “darted their stings into his body, covered him with their multitudes, and inflicted on him tortures of the most exquisite and insupportable”.⁷⁹ The word ‘exquisite’, however, implies that the narrator revels in the final punishment of Ambrosio as if it is, in some sense, justified. This more conservative ending to *The Monk*, in which Ambrosio is ultimately punished for embracing a libertine world, does not sit well with Lewis’s borrowings of anti-authoritarian libertine literature for it complicates any notion of *The Monk* as political allegory. Clara Tuite notices this in relation to the mob’s ransacking of the convent, where, like Ambrosio’s raping of Antonia, it is given to us a “utopian moment” only for it to become “self-defeating once it is realized in practice”.⁸⁰ For Tuite, this scene “superimpos[es] Gothic dystopia upon either a conservative Protestant or radical Enlightenment critique of the Inquisitional regime and of the power of resistance”.⁸¹

The Monk then, unlike Sade’s *Justine* (1791), is a moral universe. The characters within it are ultimately punished for their wrong doing: Ambrosio and the prioress are met with the most horrific of punishments, the mob that ransack the convent are crushed beneath its falling walls, Baptiste and his banditti are eventually captured having tried to rob and kill Don Raymond, Beatrice is killed for her crimes, and her own death, committed by her lover Otto, is rectified when Don Raymond finally lays her bones to rest. Sade’s world, however, is one where there is no justice and where nature only rewards the strong and wicked. This is shown from the very outset of Sade’s tale in the comparison of the two sisters Justine and Juliette. The latter embraces the libertine world, for she “appeared sensitive only to the pleasures of freedom without giving a single thought to the cruel circumstances that had broken

⁷⁸ Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespeare’s Freedom* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2010), 96.

⁷⁹ Lewis, *The Monk*, 376.

⁸⁰ Clara Tuite, “Cloistered Closets”, n.o 9.

⁸¹ Tuite, “Cloistered Closets”, n.o 9.

her chains”.⁸² However, it was on the point of acquiring a husband, Comte de Lorsange, who “bequeath[ed] the rest of his fortune to her if he should happen to die before her”, that Juliette’s true wretchedness and libertinage comes to the fore.⁸³ She planned to murder her husband:

forgetting all the moral values of her upbringing and education, perverted by poor counsel and dangerous books, in the pursuit of pleasure alone and determined to acquire a position in society and avoid life in chains, dared to contemplate the crime of shortening her husbands life.⁸⁴

Juliette is, however, as seems to be the case with Sade’s world throughout the novel, rewarded for her crimes. As a true libertine craving freedom, Juliette was “no longer a kept woman” but having acquired the wealth from her murdered husband became “a rich widow who held fine dinner-parties, to which both court and town were only too glad to be invited”.⁸⁵

Her sister, Justine, is given the same opportunities, for having spent “the little money that they [her parents] had left [her]”, she sought the help of “Monsieur Dubourg, one of the richest merchants of the capital...whose wealth and credit were most likely to lessen the rigours of [her] situation”.⁸⁶ Justine wishing to be of service to Dubourg in the hopes earning a living, soon realises that the services Dubourg has in mind are not the ones she had envisioned. The only hope Justine has of acquiring a living is, according to Dubourg, in “pleasing men, and to make an effort to find someone who would consent to take care of you”.⁸⁷ Dubourg is the first of many characters in Sade’s novel to present the world that lies in front of Justine, for she must, if she is going to exist within this Sadean world, embrace libertinage and the freedom that is inherent within it. The many reasons why she feels she cannot conform to this world—God, religion, faith and virtue—represent, for Dubourg, in an

⁸² Marquis de Sade, *Justine or the Misfortunes of Virtue*, ed. and trans. John Phillips (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 7.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 15-16.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

earlier version of Sade's *Justine*, simply titled *The Misfortunes of Virtue* (1787), "the illusory chain by which hypocrites and imposters have always set out to deceive and subjugate the strong".⁸⁸ These illusory beliefs that Justine holds dear are then in the words of Dubois, the woman who aids Justine in her escape from prison, "absurd ideas [which] will soon lead to the workhouse".⁸⁹ *The Monk*, in the same way, depicts this world through Matilda who, with similar vigour and rhetoric, scorns these very same illusory chains. Ambrosio, having spent his first night with Matilda, recoils from her, displaying a sense of naivety toward the world in a similar way to Justine:

'Dangerous woman! [...] into what an abyss of misery have you plunged me! Should your sex be discovered, my honour, nay, my life, must pay for the pleasure of a few moments. Fool that I was, to trust myself to your seductions! What can now be done? How can my offence be expiated? What atonement can purchase the pardon of my crime? Wretched Matilda, you have destroyed my quiet for ever!'⁹⁰

Despite his "lust being satisfied", Ambrosio seemingly still clings to the chains which imprison him. Matilda meets this with scorn and argues for this libertine world that Ambrosio seeks to deny,

Have *I* not shared in *your* guilt? Have *you* not shared in *my* pleasure? Guilt, did I say? In what consists ours, unless in the opinion of an ill-judging world? Let that world be ignorant of them, and our joys become divine and blameless! Unnatural were your vows of celibacy; man was not created for such a state: and were love a crime, God never would have made it so sweet, so irresistible!⁹¹

The very form which Matilda's reaction to Ambrosio takes, with its bombardment of rhetorical questions, is similar to that of Ironheart's in *Justine* on the topic of God:

Now, if he is unnecessary, can he be powerful, and if he is not powerful, can he be God? Finally, if nature derives itself, what is the point of a moving agent? And if the agent acts to move matter, how can it not be matter itself? Can you conceive of the effect of the spirit on matter, and matter being moved by a spirit that is unmoved itself?⁹²

⁸⁸ Marquis de Sade, *The Misfortunes of Virtue*, ed. and trans. David Coward (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 14.

⁸⁹ Sade, *Justine*, 27.

⁹⁰ Lewis, *The Monk*, 193.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 194.

⁹² Sade, *Justine*, 41.

The world of *Justine* then is one of atheism and the philosophic arguments for that world are put forth with force and vigour by Sade's villains. Justine, at numerous stages, implores the mercy of God—"oh my protector and my guide, I ask for your benevolence, I implore your clemency"—but her position is ridiculed both by the villains and the world of the novel itself.⁹³ By the end, however, once she is made to recount her tale, she realises the implications of her own story but cannot bring herself to quite admit it.

To tell you the story of my life [...] is to offer you the most striking example of the misfortunes of innocence, it is to accuse the hand of Heaven, it is to question the will of the Supreme Being, it is a kind of revolt against his sacred wishes [...] I dare not⁹⁴

The world of *The Monk* then is not outright atheistic, after all it contains the greatest of supernatural forces but herein lies its uncanniness. Justine's own imploring of God is met by an empty universe which does not care about her well-being or progress through life, while Ambrosio's own cries for God occur in a world where we would expect the appearance of the divine. The divine appears or is alluded to in the Gothic novels of Radcliffe, Dacre and Maturin but has no part to play in *The Monk*. For Peter Brooks, God, in *The Monk*, becomes "an interdiction, a primitive force within nature[...] simply one figure in a manichaeistic daemonology".⁹⁵ What becomes of the demonic in *The Monk* then also is its existence as a manifestation of those unconscious and impulsive desires which exist within man. This is exemplified in the aforementioned mirror scene of *The Monk* where, Ambrosio acting as the voyeur, uses a magic mirror to look upon Antonia bathing. Lewis positions both Ambrosio and us as readers within the voyeuristic position associated with libertine literature. However, what is important here is the fact that the way in which Ambrosio is able to spy on Antonia is not through a gap in the bushes, as in *Justine*, or through a peephole but through a mirror. As Wendy Jones suggests, "Ambrosio passively observes the mirror's images, which then influences his actions; yet they obey the grammar of his own desire".⁹⁶ Jones goes on to suggest that the "narrative may or may not be fictitious—is

⁹³ Ibid., 47.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 15.

⁹⁵ Peter Brooks, "Virtue and Terror: The Monk", *ELH* 40 (1973), 251.

⁹⁶ Wendy Jones, "Stories of Desire in the Monk", *ELH* 57 (1990), 131.

Antonia really undressing for her bath?”.⁹⁷ The scene of Antonia is for Ambrosio too good to be true for it is at once an orchestrated design of the demonic and also a reflection of his own desires and impulses. The mirror then represents one of the many ways in which Ambrosio’s demise is orchestrated by powers above and beyond him.

Sade’s world, however, is not wholly exempt from these forces of control and orchestration. For Monsieur de Bressac, in his attempt to convince Justine to join him in poisoning his mother, tries to convince her of the determining force of nature: “All the promptings she [nature] sends us are the instruments of her laws. Human passions are nothing but the means which she employs to achieve her aims. When she needs more individuals, she inspires love in us and thus creates them”.⁹⁸ Bressac speaks of nature as if it is a God in itself, for when he attempts to justify his homosexuality, he insists that he “will continue to adore the charming deity that has us under its spell until we die!”.⁹⁹ In *Thérèse philosophe* (1748), however, the idea of nature is for the abbé, “a construct of the mind, a mere empty word”¹⁰⁰ and that nature “is a word devoid of sense and is merely the effect of which God is the cause”.¹⁰¹ This does not mean that the world is not determined: “What, Madame[...]don’t you remember that we’re not free at all, that all our actions are necessarily determined?”.¹⁰² Thérèse comes to a similar conclusion as the villains of Sade’s novel, insisting that “happiness depends upon the confrontation of our organs, our education, and our external sensations”.¹⁰³ Ultimately, what resounds in *Thérèse* is, however, the existence of God: “There is a God. We Should love Him, for He is a

⁹⁷ Jones, “Stories of Desire”, 131.

⁹⁸ Sade, *Justine*, 63.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁰⁰ From Jean-Baptiste de Boyer, marquis d’Argens, *Thérèse Philosophe*. Quoted in *The Forbidden Bestsellers of Pre-Revolutionary France*, trans. Robert Darnton (London: Harper Collins, 1996), 276.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 281.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 281.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 299.

supremely good and perfect being".¹⁰⁴ The God of *Thérèse* becomes something akin to Spinoza's Pantheism, in which He is the totally of everything.

The Monk then is perhaps the convergence of these two worlds proposed by Sade's Justine and d'Argen's *Thérèse*, in which the brutally rational Enlightenment world of the libertines is uncannily home to forces—Devil, God and Nature—which are both within and around man.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 299.

“In grim array though Lewis’s spectres rise:” Lewis’s Gothic Drama

Lewis’s *Castle Spectre* (1797) lived and died by its ghost. Its success, one reviewer suggests, was “attributed...to the happy management the author has exhibited in the paraphernalia of his spectre”,¹ while others, Lewis suggests in the printed version of his play, were against the appearance of ghosts “because belief in Ghosts no longer exists!”.² “Many erroneous assertions have been made respecting this drama”, writes Lewis; “[particularly] that if Mr. Sheridan had not advised me to content myself with a single Spectre, I meant to have exhibited a whole regiment of Ghosts”.³ Lewis was unable to shake off the name that he had gained for himself following his infamous novel and so, as the *Monthly Visitor* suggested, *The Castle Spectre* was seen to represent, unsurprisingly, “those traits which gave popularity to [The] Monk”.⁴

The ghost of Evelina, who in *The Castle Spectre* appears to Angela clad in “white...flowing garments spotted with blood”,⁵ can be considered the most prominent of these stock traits, reminding us of the story of the bleeding nun in *The Monk* which, according to the book’s advertisement, was borrowed from a “tradition still credited in many parts of Germany”.⁶ As the stage directions inform us, with “a large wound appear[ing] upon her bosom”, the ghost “stops opposite Reginald’s picture...approaches Angela...invoke[s] a blessing upon her, points to the picture, and retires to the Oratory”.⁷ One could easily read this as a call for incest, as previously, Osmond, who has Angela’s father, his brother, Reginald, imprisoned in the dungeon of

¹ Review of *The Castle Spectre*, *Monthly Mirror* 5, (1798). 106.

² Matthew Lewis, preface to *The Castle Spectre* (London, 1797), I.

³ *Ibid.*, I.

⁴ Review of *The Castle Spectre*, *Monthly Visitor* 2, (1798). 536.

⁵ Matthew Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* (London, 1797), 54.

⁶ Matthew Lewis, advertisement to *The Monk* (London: Penguin Books, 1998), 6.

⁷ Lewis, *The Castle Spectre*, 54.

the castle, insists his niece “must lie a bride in my arms, or Reginald a corse at my feet”.⁸ At first, Angela feels she has no other choice, “I will to Osmond, will promise to be his, will sacrifice my happiness, my peace of mind—everything but my father” but as “the Castle-bell tolls” she sees another way: “I will not fly and abandon my father!—Yet may not my flight preserve him? Yes, yes I will away to Percy...his vassals may easily surprise the Castle, may seize Osmond[...]and tomorrow may see Reginald restored to freedom”.⁹ The ghost appears to remind Angela of the task at hand and in so doing echoes the sexual indiscretions of the bleeding nun herself who, in life as Beatrice de las Cisternas, “display[ed] the incontinence of a prostitute...professed herself an atheist” and sought to murder her lover, Baron Lindenberg, to be with his brother, Otto.¹⁰ Beatrice was, however, betrayed by Otto, for upon meeting him, having completed the ghastly deed, he “plunged [the dagger], still reeking of his brother’s blood, in her bosom, and put an end to her existence by repeated blows”.¹¹ The soul of Beatrice was to then forever haunt the Castle of Lindenberg dressed “in her religious habit...furnished with the dagger which had drunk the blood of her paramour and holding the lamp which guided her flying steps”.¹² Like the bleeding nun, the ghost of Evelina is the manifestation of a dark family secret, of betrayal, lust, murder, calls for vengeance and the threat of incest. The last of these brings *The Castle Spectre* into close proximity with Horace Walpole’s *Castle of Otranto* (1764), in particular Manfred’s attempts to marry Isabella, his dead son’s fiancé, and his closet play *The Mysterious Mother* (1768), which centres around the Countess of Narbonne’s incest with her son, Edmund.

George Haggerty finds in *The Castle Spectre* a continuation of “the imagination and peculiar fantasies of Horace Walpole”.¹³ Just as the incest plot of *Mysterious Mother* “unmans” Walpole “because it places him in lurid relation to the erotics of family life”,

⁸ Ibid., 52.

⁹ Ibid., 52.

¹⁰ Lewis, *The Monk*, 151.

¹¹ Ibid., 152.

¹² Ibid., 152.

¹³ George Haggerty, *Queer Gothic* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 84.

the ghost of Evelina represents “broken masculinity...emerg[ing] from the depths of the scene in order to disrupt the victimizing patriarchal order”.¹⁴ It was for this very reason that Otto in *The Monk* opted to murder his accomplice and lover, Beatrice, for not only did he wish “to conceal his share in the murder” of his brother but he wanted to “free himself from a woman whose violent and atrocious character made him tremble with reason for his own safety”.¹⁵ Ambrosio too had this feeling as he stared into the eyes of Matilda which “flashed with a fire and wildness which impressed the monk at once with awe and horror”.¹⁶ It is not until Matilda offers to help Ambrosio obtain his next object of desire, Antonia, that she truly gains dominion over him and becomes a source no longer of excitement, novelty and pleasure but one of revulsion, disgust and fear. In initially refusing her aid, which is to summon the help of demons, she insists Ambrosio’s mind “proves to be feeble, puerile and grovelling, a slave of vulgar errors, and weaker than a woman’s”.¹⁷ In turn, it was Matilda who “assumed a sort of courage and manliness in her manners and discourse”.¹⁸ What Ambrosio now recoils from is that Matilda has become manly and more forceful in her guidance of his passions. He is disturbed by her “scoffing tone, that bold and impious language [which] is horrible in every mouth, but the most so in a woman’s”.¹⁹

While this is the relationship, according to Clara Tuite, which is “laid bare” by Lewis, representing the most major concerns regarding the libertine world of the book, not everything is displayed in “libidinousness minuteness”.²⁰ “What *The Monk* does not uncover”, writes Tuite, “is the romance plot of monastic male homoeroticism”.²¹ This refers to Ambrosio and Matilda’s initial encounter in the

¹⁴ Ibid., 88-92.

¹⁵ Lewis, *The Monk*, 152.

¹⁶ Ibid., 197.

¹⁷ Ibid., 231.

¹⁸ Ibid., 200.

¹⁹ Ibid., 230.

²⁰ Clara Tuite, “Cloistered Closets: Enlightenment Pornography, The Confessional State, Homosexual Persecution and *The Monk*”, in *Romanticism on the Net*, 8 November 1997. <https://www.erudit.org/revue/ron/1997/v/n8/005766ar.html>, n.o 11.

²¹ Ibid., n.o 11.

novel, in which Matilda disguises herself as the male novice Rosario whose “head [was] continually muffled up in his cowl”.²² The cowl plays the role of the Radcliffean veil, not only does it conceal, as in the case of Ambrosio, who desiring to see Antonia, “quit the abbey by a private room” and had “the cowl of his habit[...]thrown over his face”,²³ but, in the words of Eve Sedgwick, it is “a metaphor for the system of prohibitions in which sexual desire is enhanced and specified”.²⁴ What really produces the act of concealing for Tuite is Rosario’s revelation that he is in fact a woman, “what is significant here is that Rosario’s revelation...is precisely a strategy of evasion. This unveiling is in fact not an unveiling but a re-veiling in female costume”.²⁵ We are contending here then with the famous ‘open secret’ of the male Gothic, which was that Lewis, alongside Walpole and Beckford, was homosexual and that his writings, like theirs, deal with this issue in numerous ways.

Coleridge’s damning assessment of Walpole’s *Mysterious Mother*—“the most disgusting, detestable, vile composition that ever came from the hand of man”—was the first to allude to his sexuality in relation to his work, insisting that “no one with a spark of manliness, of which Horace Walpole had none, could have written it”.²⁶ This was itself a reaction to Lord Byron’s own view on Walpole and his play:

it is the fashion to underrate Horace Walpole[...]the author of *Mysterious Mother*, a tragedy of the highest order and not a puling love-play. He is the father of the first romance, and of the last tragedy in our language, and surely worthy of a higher place than any living writer.²⁷

Coleridge, however, did not take Byron at his word, insisting he did “not believe that Byron spoke sincerely; for I suspect that he made a tacit exception in favour of himself

²² Lewis, *The Monk*, 40.

²³ *Ibid.*, 210.

²⁴ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (New York: Methuen, 1986), 143.

²⁵ Clara Tuite, “Cloistered Closets”, n.o 15.

²⁶ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Specimens of the Table Talk of the Late Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, vol. 2 (London, 1835), 303.

²⁷ Lord Byron, preface to *Marino Faliero, Doge of Venice: An Historical Tragedy* (London: John Murray, 1842), 18.

at least”.²⁸ Perhaps we are to then read both *The Castle Spectre* and Lewis’s later drama, *Adelmorn: The Outlaw* (1801),—works which so closely resemble Walpole’s own—similarly to how Coleridge read Byron’s own reading of Walpole. While the ghost of Evelina does share similarities with *The Monk*’s bleeding nun, the ghost also represents a major break with Lewis’s book, representing the passage into a new world, in which the supernatural is no longer offered to us as a metaphor for anything related to the natural world like sexual desire or passion but is now given over as farcical, playful, ridiculous and pantomimic. Lewis’s dramas accentuate the comedy that is already latent in Walpole’s *Castle of Otranto* (1764).

It is no surprise then that reviewers explanation of *The Castle Spectre*’s “unaccountable popularity” was on the level of pantomime and farce: “There is a sufficient number of Ghosts, Hobgoblins, Cells, Trapdoors...to serve for a pantomimic exhibition of the most extravagant nature”.²⁹ The opening scene in *Castle Spectre* is the perfect display of this more playful side to Lewis’s work, in which we witness a comical discussion between Father Philip and Motley. Father Philip criticises Motley on his “scandalous course of life” whereby he “pervert[s] the minds of the maids and keep[s] kissing and smuggling all the pretty girls”.³⁰ Motley in return replies by asking “how is a poor little bit of flesh and blood, like me, to resist such temptation?” and flips the accusation by suggesting Father Philip place himself in his position; “put yourself in my place: Suppose that a sweet smiling rogue, just sixteen with rosy cheeks, sparkling eyes, pouting lips, &c”.³¹ Motley then has some accusations of his own against Father Philip:

MOTL. You You—May I ask what was your business in the beech-grove the other evening, when I caught you with buxom Margery the miller’s pretty wife? Was it quite necessary to lay your heads together so close?

FPHIL. Perfectly necessary: I was whispering in her ear wholesome advice.

²⁸ Coleridge, *Specimens of Table Talk*, 303.

²⁹ Review of *The Castle Spectre*, *Morning Herald*, 16 December, (1797). 2.

³⁰ Lewis, *The Castle Spectre*, 2.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

MOTL. Indeed? Faith then she took your advice as kindly as it was given, and exactly in the same way too you gave it with your lips and she took it with hers!—Well done Father Philip.³²

The serious enterprise of *The Monk*, which revolves around the very impossibility of resisting temptation, is now reduced to an almost irrelevant exchange, appearing as mere comic relief. What seems so dreadful and threatening in *The Monk* turns to something completely ridiculous.

In a later scene, we see Percy sneak into the Castle to acquire a meeting with Angela, where, disguised in the armour he is to “pass for Earl Reginald’s spectre” and listen in on the conversation between Angela and her captor, Osmond. Having refused Osmond’s hand in marriage, “Never, so help me Heaven!”, he seizes her crying that her “fate then is decided!”.³³ At this moment Percy cannot resist revealing himself, shouting “hold”, to which his presence is revealed. “Relapsing into his former passions”, having heard the cry of what he thinks is a ghost of the Castle, Osmond again seizes Angela, after which Percy, now fully engrossed in the part of Reginald’s spectre, “extends his truncheon with a menacing gesture, and descends from the pedestal”.³⁴ Angela rushes from the chamber with Percy in hot pursuit and Osmond, regaining himself, also follows, “Hell, and fiends! I’ll follow him, though lightning’s blast me!”.³⁵

While we do not literally see the chase, we do see it comically through the eyes of Alice just as Motley comes looking for Percy:

MOTL. What can he have done with himself? Perhaps weary of waiting for me in the Armoury, he has found his way alone to Angela. How now, dame Alice, what has happened to you? You look angry.

ALICE. By my troth fool. I’ve little reason to look pleased. To be frightened out of my wits by night, and thumped and bumped by day, is not likely to put one in the best humour.

MOTL. Poor soul! And who has been thumping and bumping you?

³² Ibid., 3.

³³ Ibid., 19.

³⁴ Ibid., 19.

³⁵ Ibid., 20.

ALICE. Who has? You should rather ask who has not.—Why only hear:—As I was just now going along the narrow passage which leads to the Armoury—signing to myself, and thinking of nothing, I met Lady Angela flying away as if for dear life!—So I dropped her a curtsey—but might as well have spared my pains. Without minding me any more than if I had been a dog or a cat—she pushed me on one side: and before I could recover my balance, somebody else, who came bouncing by me gave t’other thump—and there I lay sprawling upon the floor. However, I tumbled with all possible decency, and took great care that my petticoats should cover my legs.

MOTL. Somebody else! What somebody else?

ALICE. I know not—but he seemed to be in armour.

MOTL. In armour? Pray, Alice looked he like a ghost?

ALICE. What he looked like, I cannot say—but I’m sure he didn’t feel like one: However, you’ve not heard the worst. While I was sprawling upon the ground, my Lord comes tearing along the passage—The first thing he did was to stumble against me—away went his heels—over he came—and in the twinkling of an eye there lay his Lordship! As soon as he got up again—Mercy! How he stormed—He snatched me up—called me an ugly old witch—shook the breath out of my body—then clapped me on the ground again, and bounced away after the other two!³⁶

Percy’s attempt to disguise himself as one of the many spectres of the Castle reminds us of Agnes’ own attempts in *The Monk* to disguise herself as the bleeding nun in the hopes of eloping with Don Raymond. This then has horrific and significant effects upon the world of *The Monk* that ensues while Percy’s very own ghostly disguise reminds us more of the comical clattering of armour, the giant armoured hand and the helmet that falls and kills Conrad in *The Castle of Otranto*.

Prior to Percy’s donning of Reginald’s armour, he asks whether Motley believes in the story of Reginald’s spectre to which he replies,

Oh! Heaven forbid! Not a word of it. Had I minded all the strong things related to this Castle, I should have died of fright in the first half-hour. Why, they say that Earl Hubert rides every night round the Castle on a white horse; that the ghost of Lady Bertha haunts the west pinnacle of the Chapel-Tower; and that Lord Hildebrand, who was condemned for treason some sixty years ago, may be seen in the Great Hal, regularly at midnight, playing at football with his own head! Above all, they say that the spirit of the late Countess sits nightly in her Oratory, and sings her baby to sleep!³⁷

While Motley ridicules the stories, it is with Alice, *The Castle Spectre*’s very own Bianca, that we find a mind plagued by belief in ghosts. Alice professes to Father Philip that she heard her lady’s ghost last night; “I heard the guitar lying upon the Oratory table

³⁶ Ibid., 20-21.

³⁷ Lewis, *The Castle Spectre*, 16.

play the very air which the Lady Evelina used to sing while rocking her little daughter's cradle".³⁸ Father Philip jokingly questions how an immaterial substance such as a ghost could "play upon an instrument of material wood and cat gut".³⁹ As the Father begins to scorn her for this "vulgar prejudice", however, the two believe that the ghost does in fact appear, "Look! Look!—A figure in white!—It comes from the haunted room", only for it to turn out to be Angela; "it's only Lady Angela!".⁴⁰ Startled but reassured, Father Philip makes a swift exit, insisting that if "next time you are afraid of a ghost[...]instead of calling a priest to lay the spirits of other people in the red sea, call for a bottle of red wine to raise your own. Probatum est".⁴¹

It is perhaps these comical scenes that the reviewer in the *British Critic* had in mind when it was suggested that *The Castle Spectre* "keep[s] up[...]a kind of nonsensical curiosity about the grossest improbabilities and amus[es] the eye with pantomimic display".⁴² Eighteenth-century Pantomime, as John O'Brien suggests, typically consisted in the types of scenes that we find in *Castle Spectre*, in which "the plot becomes the pretext for a variety of set-piece comic scenes, transformations, tricks and chases[...]; spectacular scenery; magical transformations and special effects".⁴³ The very "roots of Romantic melodrama" described by Jacky Bratton, seemed to be conducive to pantomime:

Why this genre should have come to dominate the Romantic stage, and how it was related to late eighteenth-century upheavals in European society and revolutionary politics is a question with several answers. In Britain growing urban populations offered the possibility of larger audiences: theatres increased in size, both in their auditoria and, necessarily, in the dimensions of the stage[...]The forms of theatre which developed under this impetus relied less on the individual actors' interpretation of a writers work, but rather more on an expanded palette of effects" opera and ballet

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴² Review of *The Castle Spectre*, *British Critic* 11, (1798). 437.

⁴³ John O'Brien, "Pantomime," in *The Cambridge Companion to British Theatre, 1730-1830*, ed. Jane Moody and Daniel O'Quinn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 103.

flourished, and the dominant dramatic form became melodrama, a genre which weaves its meanings from music, mime, comedy and spectacle.⁴⁴

Not only do we find this in *The Castle Spectre* but in one of Lewis's last works titled, *Timour the Tartar: A Grand Romantic Melodrama* (1811), which was written to replace George Colman the Younger's *Blue-Beard* (1798). *Timour the Tartar* consists of numerous grand scenes which take advantage of the larger stage. The first is described as "the interior of a fortress, with a bridge in the back ground",⁴⁵ while the great duel scene of the play consists of Agib's towered prison, "decorated throne[s]" and horses on stage taking "part in...combat".⁴⁶

This then brings us back to the ghost of Evelina, whose appearance is readied for us by the ridiculous and pantomimic scenes which depict ghosts as ridiculous illusions existing purely in the minds of comical characters. The ghost's appearance, however, is too little, too late, for it does not appear as a call for vengeance as in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, say, nor as a manifestation of a guilty conscience. It appears when all has been unfolded and the villain Osmond's crimes have already been exposed. Reviewers, eager to condemn Lewis's foray into theatre, latched onto this, insisting "the spectre, from which it [*The Castle Spectre*] is named, instead of being necessary, contributes not a tittle to the plot of the drama, and might be omitted without any change".⁴⁷ Similarly the *Analytical Review*, while being open to "the disclosure of the world of departed souls", insists the ghost "makes no discovery, and promotes in no degree the progress of the drama, or the development of intrigue".⁴⁸ Lewis knew, however, that his ghost was a necessary evil, not to the plot of the play, but to its success and appeal to audiences. He would probably have watched James Boaden's dramatising of *The Monk* a year later with *Aurelio and Miranda* (1798) and saw that it failed in part, due to the omission of the supernatural. Miranda, in the role of

⁴⁴ Jacky Bratton, "Romantic melodrama," in *The Cambridge Companion to British Theatre, 1730-1830*, ed. Jane Moody and Daniel O'Quinn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 117-18.

⁴⁵ Matthew Lewis, *Timour the Tartar; Grand Romantic Melo Drama* (New York: E.B Clayton, 1830), 3.

⁴⁶ Lewis, *Timour the Tartar*, 21.

⁴⁷ Review of *The Castle Spectre*, *British Critic* 11, (1798). 437.

⁴⁸ Review of *The Castle Spectre*, *Analytical Review* 28, (1798). 184.

the demonic Matilda, is not of supernatural origin and merely looks to win Aurelio as a husband rather than deceive him and work his downfall; “it was no sooner found out that Miranda was a virtuous women, instead of a demon, that many in the pit and galleries evinced with dissatisfaction”.⁴⁹ For *The Castle Spectre* to become, as Jeffrey Cox suggests, “the greatest theatrical success of the gothic drama”,⁵⁰ Lewis had no other choice but to summon the supernatural, ignore the critics and, in the words of Wordsworth, “[fit] the taste of the audience like a glove”.⁵¹ Wordsworth’s words, in a letter to Hazlitt, criticise Lewis’s pandering to audience tastes and reveals the generally perceived state of theatre at the time of *The Castle Spectre*’s performance onwards. As Wordsworth suggests in the preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), “the invaluable work of elder writers...[Shakespeare and Milton]...are driven into neglect by frantic novels, sickly and stupid German tragedies”.⁵² Wordsworth’s comments are perfectly exemplified in the satirical print found in the *Satirist*, ‘The monster melo-drama’ (figure three), which depicts Lewis, dressed in a monk’s habit, alongside his fellow dramatists, suckling on the teat of a three-headed beast which tramples on the works of Shakespeare.

Coleridge saw “Kotzebue and his imitators”, of which he considered Lewis one, as the prime examples of this infection of foreign influence onto the British stage.⁵³ He saw this both in comedy which was produced now to “make us laugh merely much less to make us laugh by wry faces, accidents of jargon [and] slang phrases of the day”, and in tragedy which now sought “to wheedle away the applause of the spectators...to work on their sluggish sympathies by a pathos not a whit more respectable than the maudlin tears of drunkenness”.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Stewart Marsh Ellis, *The Life of Michael Kelly: Musician, Actor and Bon Viveur, 1762-1826* (London: Gollancz, 1930) 259.

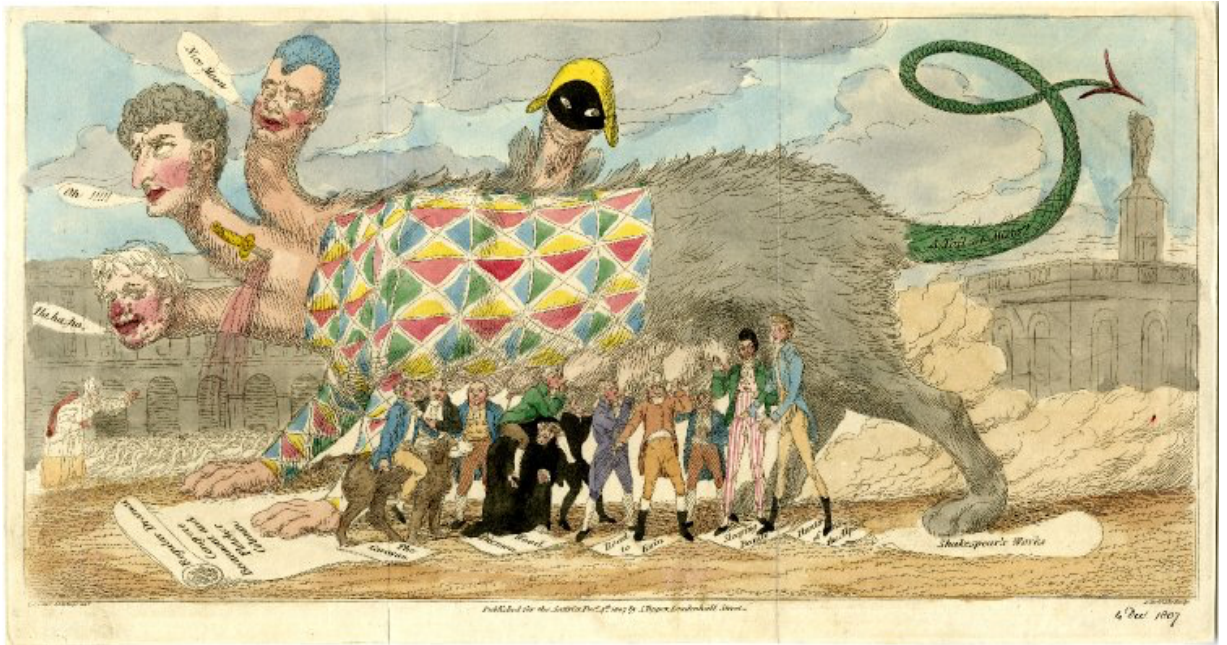
⁵⁰ Jeffrey Cox, *Seven Gothic Dramas, 1798-1825* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1992) 5.

⁵¹ From William Wordsworth, letter to William Hazlitt. Quoted in *William Hazlitt: The First Modern Man*, by Duncan Wu (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 12.

⁵² William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 383.

⁵³ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 185.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 258-59.



(Figure 3. Samuel De Wilde, *The monster melo-drama*, 1807, print, 183 x 347 mm. British Museum, department of prints and drawings, London)

For Coleridge, however, the infection of German drama on the stage, coupled with its great popularity, had even greater and more dangerous implications. Not only was this influence encroaching on what Michael Gamer calls the “theoretical urge[...]associated with romanticism”, which was to renew the theatre to its former glory with appeal to the Ancients and Shakespeare by “defining tragedy as the most intellectual, imaginative, integrative, evocative, generically “pure”, and innately British of dramatic forms, and of disassociating it from contemporary trends toward spectacle and supernatural effect”.⁵⁵ Rather, in the wake of Abbé Barruel’s *Memoirs Illustrating the History of Jacobinism* (1797), which insinuated that the Bavarian Illuminati, alongside the *philosophes*, conspired against state, church and monarchy, “the whole secret of dramatic popularity” consisted in “a moral and intellectual Jacobinism” which causes “confusion and subversion of the natural order of things[...]by representing the qualities of liberality, refined feeling, and a nice sense of honour[...]in persons and classes where experience teaches us to least expect them”.⁵⁶ We find this type of criticism within a review of a translation of Kotzebue’s *Lover’s Vows, or the Child of Love* (1799), which suggests the piece

⁵⁵ Michael Gamer, *Romanticism and the Gothic: Genre, Reception, and Canon Formation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 129.

⁵⁶ Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, 190.

is a striking specimen of the authors manner, and of the general tendency of his dramatic works. That tendency is to make mankind believe that criminal passions and actions are chiefly to be found in the higher ranks of society, and that virtue, sensibility, and all the nobler feelings are in general the characteristics of lower orders.⁵⁷

It is with the figure of the villain-hero in Gothic drama that we find this, for as Jeffrey Cox suggests, “they seem to represent not only an aristocratic past against which the hero and heroine struggle, but also a new freedom of the self that threatens any moral order, traditional or bourgeois”.⁵⁸

In *Castle Spectre*’s Osmond we see Schiller’s Franz Moor, the villain of *The Robbers* (1781) who, jealous of his brother, conspires to bring him down by turning his father against his favourite son, “thou wilt never more press thy darling to thy bosom”.⁵⁹ He bemoans his position as the ugly, unloved son;

Why did I not crawl first from my mother’s womb? [...] Why not the only one? Why has she heaped on me this burden of deformity? [...] On my lord, the lady seems to have collected from all the race of mankind whatever was loathsome into a heap, and kneaded the mass into my particular person. Death and destruction!⁶⁰

Despite these inequalities, however, Franz concludes that “men’s natural rights are equal; claim is met by claim, effort by effort, and force by force—right is with the strongest—the limits of our power constitute our laws”.⁶¹ Osmond similarly bemoans his own condition, suggesting “nature formed me the slave of wild desires; and fate, as she frowned upon my cradle exclaimed, ‘I doom this babe to be a villain and a wretch’”.⁶² By seemingly absolving themselves of blame, their choice of villainy is given to us as the natural order of things; it accords with nature because, at the end of it all, nature doesn't care as law and order are merely manmade. Again, we come across this idea of natural liberty talked of by Rousseau, where man has “the absolute

⁵⁷ Review of *Lovers’, or the Child of Love*, *Anti-Jacobin Review* 9, (1801). 78.

⁵⁸ Jeffrey Cox, *In the Shadow of Romance: Romantic Tragic Drama in Germany, England, and France* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1987), 114.

⁵⁹ Friedrich Schiller, *The Robbers*, trans. David Widger (Project Gutenberg, 2006), <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/6782/6782-h/6782-h.htm> n.p.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, n.p.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, n.p.

⁶² Lewis, *The Castle Spectre*, 23.

right to anything that tempts him and that he can take”⁶³ which, as we have already seen, can be found in *The Monk* and in *Sade*, where the villains of *Justine* (1791) overpower and manipulate the heroine simply because they have the power and nature only rewards the strong. Rousseau in *The Social Contract* (1762), according to Matthew Simpson, however, “is no longer referring to a way of life located somewhere in the prehistoric past” but to a “state of nature[...]to which anyone can return”.⁶⁴ What Osmond and Franz then worryingly represent is a freedom that is graspable.

Ulric, the villain of Lewis’s next drama, *Adelmorn: The Outlaw* (1801), is a figure who doesn’t quite attempt to absolve himself of blame by bemoaning his place within a tragic world where he could not have done otherwise. Instead we find a man attempting to destroy any possibility of his crimes being discovered: “My plots succeed—Count Roderick is no more. The Outlaw’s death decreed, and Cyprian, my sole accomplice, ere this has buried his fatal secret in the grave—Ha!”.⁶⁵ Ulric’s most prominent scene, however, is in fact where his guilt is all but confirmed, appearing as a vision in a dream to Adelmorn, where the ghost of the murdered Roderick appears with “a wound on his bosom, and his garments stained with gore[...]holding a bloody dagger towards heaven”.⁶⁶ The vision represents a conscious effort by Lewis to psychologise the supernatural, something he does elsewhere when Adelmorn is the only one to hear “a hollow voice” which cries, “My blood demands vengeance!”.⁶⁷ The criticisms that some reviewers made of *Adelmorn*, in particular that his “preternatural agents”, as the *Critical Review* puts it, were superfluous and “damaged the Outlaw” were unjustified.⁶⁸ Unlike the ghost of *The Castle Spectre*, it is clear the ghosts of *Adelmorn* have a purpose other than to merely appeal to popular demand; they appear

⁶³ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, ed. and trans. Maurice Cranston (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968), 65.

⁶⁴ Matthew Simpson, “Political Liberty in the Social Contract”, IWM Junior Visiting Fellows Conferences 8 (1999): p.4, accessed December 10, 2016, <http://www.iwm.at/wp-content/uploads/jc-08-011.pdf>.

⁶⁵ Matthew Lewis, *Adelmorn: The Outlaw* (Dublin, 1801), 65.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁶⁸ Review of *Adelmorn: The Outlaw*, *Critical Review* 2nd series 34 (1802). 232.

as voices and visions to rouse Adelmorn's passions so that he will avenge his uncle's murder at the hands of Ulric. However, his vision of Ulric being carried away by demons amidst a "chorus of invisible spirits", which is a momentous moment within the play where we, as audience or reader, begin to believe in Adelmorn's innocence, comically fails.⁶⁹ According to Louis Peck, "the audience...mistook these visionary events for representation of reality and, having seen Ulric irrevocably disposed of, were totally confused when in the next scene he re-entered as if nothing had happened".⁷⁰ This failing was not completely Lewis's fault, the stage directions are insistent that it is a dream: "[He sleeps]"; "[Part of the wall opens, and discovers (in vision) a blasted Heath by moonlight]"; "[The wall closes; Adelmorn, who during this vision, expresses the various emotions produced by it upon his mind, starts suddenly from his couch]".⁷¹ Perhaps the very medium of theatre itself failed him

Nowhere is this more evident than in one of Lewis's more serious works, *The Captive* (1803), a monodrama concerning a woman who, having been imprisoned by her husband, descends into madness. As Lewis himself reveals in a letter to his mother, his monodrama was "too terrible for representation, and two people went into hysterics during the performance [and] two more after the curtain dropped".⁷² What was it that so shocked the audience?—surely this piece would seem significantly milder than an equivalent scene in *The Monk*, where we see Agnes's own imprisonment in the catacombs of the monastery amidst hideous creatures and her own child's maggot-infested body. Margaret Baron-Wilson, the first biographer of Lewis's, speculated that the audience's "nerves were unable to withstand the dreadful truth of the language and the scene".⁷³ This dreadful truth has been latched onto in contemporary writings on *The Captive*, for example, Jeffrey Cox suggests that if we read *The Captive* in the light of Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria, or the Wrongs of Women* (1798),

⁶⁹ Lewis, *Adelmorn*, 62.

⁷⁰ Louis Peck, *A Life of Matthew G. Lewis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), 116.

⁷¹ Lewis, *Adelmorn*, 62-63.

⁷² Margaret Baron-Wilson, *The Life and Correspondence of M.G. Lewis* (London: Henry Coburn Publishers, 1839), 234.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 233.

we find that Lewis is concerned with an “all-too-normal social state” in which wives are oppressed by their husbands.⁷⁴ Lewis admitted, however, that the work “was merely a picture of madness” and that he “did not expect that it would succeed”.⁷⁵ Even Lewis saw that the work was “uniformly distressing” and so was left “a little painful” having witnessed Mrs. Litchfield almost faint performing the role of the captive.⁷⁶ What ultimately failed Lewis, as Deborah Russell suggests of *The Captive*, and is the case for the failed scene in *Adelmorn*, was its “immediacy”.⁷⁷

One who attempted to overcome this medium and whose work *The Captive*, in part, resembles is Joanna Baillie. She, goes against the grain, for as Michael Gamer suggests, she gives us an “alternative to the “German” models so popular at the end of the eighteenth century by attempt[ing] both to write permanently popular plays and to reform a national drama in perceived decline by bringing it back to its Shakespearean roots”.⁷⁸ For Gamer, it was “making the mind the sole source of gothic effects” that separated her. Gamer uses the example of *De Montfort* (1798), where De Montfort looks to catch Rezenvault wandering alone “to visit some old friend, whose lonely mansion/ Stands a short mile beyond farther wood”.⁷⁹ The surroundings are given over to us, through the eyes of De Montfort, as being supernatural while Rezenvault, who enters as De Montfort exits, sees the same scene, only to respond to it differently. What Gamer attempts to do with this example is to show how Baillie’s works “demonstrate a doubleness of perspective [which][...]allows her audience to participate fully in the mental processes that produce De Montfort’s superstitious responses”.⁸⁰ Like the monologues of De Montfort and Rezenvault as they react to the scene, Lewis uses the woman captive’s descending into madness as a way for the

⁷⁴ Cox, *Seven Gothic Dramas*, 45.

⁷⁵ Lewis, *Correspondence*, 234.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 234-35.

⁷⁷ Deborah Russell, “Much Too Terrible for Representation: Matthew Lewis’s *The Captive*”, *The Gothic Imagination*, April 15, 2013, <http://www.gothic.stir.ac.uk/guestblog/much-too-terrible-for-representation-matthew-lewis-s-the-captive/> n.p.

⁷⁸ Gamer, *Romanticism and the Gothic*, 135.

⁷⁹ Joanna Baillie, *De Montfort; A Tragedy in Five Acts* (London: 1808), 65.

⁸⁰ Gamer, *Romanticism and the Gothic*, 139.

audience to experience her descent. The woman captive eventually succumbs to the madness she has so far attempted to deny:

Mark, how yon Daemon's eye-balls glare
He sees me!—Now with dreadful shriek
He whirls a serpent high in the air—
Horror!—The Reptile strikes his tooth
Deep in my heart so crush'd and sad!—
Aye, laugh, ye fiends!—I feel the truth!
Your task is done!—(*With a loud shriek*) I'm mad! mad!⁸¹

Unlike the extensive stage directions concerning the appearance of the Gaoler and the Madmen, the Daemon is not to appear onstage and is a mere emergence of her imagination representative of her descending into utter madness.

Baillie's attempts to appeal both to Shakespeare and popular tastes reveals, as Gamer suggests, "the problem[...]of separating Shakespeare from the supernatural drama of the 1790s"⁸² or, to put it another way, separating Shakespeare from the Germanised theatre of the late eighteenth-century. For Jeffrey Cox, however, Gothic drama's attempts at traditional tragedy "lies less with these supernatural presences on the stage [which Baillie evokes] than with Shakespeare's presentation of unnatural powerful villains such as Richard III or Edmund or Iago".⁸³ In Lewis's *Castle Spectre*, we are very much left with a villain in Osmond who resembles Shakespeare's own Richard III. He, like Osmond and Franz, bemoans his sorry existence:

Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time
Into this breathing world scarce half made up,
And that so lamely and unfashionable
That dogs bark at me as I halt by them.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Matthew Lewis, *The Captive in Seven Gothic Dramas, 1789-1825*, ed. Jeffrey Cox (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1987), 229.

⁸² Gamer, *Romanticism and the Gothic*, 130.

⁸³ Jeffrey Cox, "The Gothic Drama: Tragedy or Comedy," in *The Oxford Handbook of Georgian Theatre, 1737-1832*, ed. Julia Swindles and David Francis Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 408.

⁸⁴ William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Richard III*, in *The Complete Works*, ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 1.1.19-24.

Richard, however, “cannot prove a lover” and so to “entertain these fair well spoken days” is “determined to prove a villain/And hate the idle pleasures of these days”.⁸⁵ Lewis’s Osmond, however, represents a villain who’s retention of power is intertwined with an attempt at sexual liberation. Unlike Richard with Lady Anne, or Manfred with Isabella, Osmond seems to have a genuine incestual desire for Angela as she is not merely an object in the gaining and retaining of power.

It is here perhaps that we get to the heart of Lewis’s drawing from numerous European borrowings and his goading of the tensions between the close proximity of a traditional British theatre and the infection of foreign influence. Coleridge was not completely blind to this for he knew the close proximity of Germany and England: “The so called *German* drama, therefore, is *English* in its origin, *English* in its material, and *English* by re-adoption”.⁸⁶ For Coleridge, one would “recognise the so called *German Drama*” as a mix of ingredients, significantly the combination of the famous Gothic stock-conventions of “mysterious villains[...]the ruined castles, the trap doors, the skeletons, the flesh-and-blood ghosts” which were, in turn, the “literary brood of the *Castle of Otranto*”.⁸⁷ Lewis himself, jokingly, admits his debt to *The Castle of Otranto* in footnotes, where he suggests the “situations of Angela, Osmond and Percy...so closely resemble those of Isabella, Manfred, and the animate portrait in *The Castle of Otranto*, that I am convinced that idea must have been suggested by that beautiful Romance”.⁸⁸ Frederick Burwick suggests that “Lewis phrases this identification of source to make it seem as if the borrowing was not at all conscious and that he recognized it only afterwards”.⁸⁹ Lewis then is as provocative here as he is in the advertisement to *The Monk*, where the borrowings he was apparently “totally unconscious” of are the ones which are the most contentions and integral to the story of Ambrosio. What Lewis is doing here ultimately is goading his critics, for he knows

⁸⁵ Ibid., 1.1.28-31.

⁸⁶ Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, 263.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 211.

⁸⁸ From Matthew Lewis, preface to *The Castle Spectre*. Quoted in *Romantic Drama: Acting and Reacting*, by Frederick Burwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 171.

⁸⁹ Burwick, *Acting and Reacting*, 171.

full well that aligning his work with Walpole's would bring with it a myriad of criticisms which would see his *Castle Spectre* working within traditions that were seen as detrimental to the traditional British stage. Lewis actively takes on David Simpson's concept of the Romantic stranger where "categories become confused: domestic and foreign, stranger and familiar, friend and enemy".⁹⁰

Unlike Baillie, Lewis was attempting to combine traditional British theatre with a more popular, foreign model only to exacerbate the troubling proximity of the two. However if Lewis was, like Baillie, in anyway attempting to reconcile legitimate drama with popular German models, his attempt was bound to fail. Lewis admitted as much in the preface to *Adelmorn*, where he insists the play "is witten [sic] by the author of "The Monk"; therefore it must be immoral and irreligious".⁹¹ He was conscious of his reputation as 'Monk' Lewis, one whose work was expected to contain gothic conventions and the supernatural. It seems, however, that Lewis heeded the warnings given to him by reviewers of *Adelmorn*—"We shall be happy when he gives us occasion to speak of him as a genuine English dramatist"—in the writing of *Alfonso, King of Castile* (1801).⁹²

"Contrary to the usual custom", writes Lewis in the preface to *Alfonso*, "I will publish this Tragedy previous to its performance".⁹³ Following "so many wilful misrepresentations" of his previous work, *Adelmorn*, Lewis printed the play before its performance "to depriv[e] my censurers of the plea of *involuntary mistaking*".⁹⁴ For the most part this worked, in fact some reviewers even complimented Lewis on this admission. The faults that Lewis himself picked out, in particular the ending of the play where Cesario's plan to blow up the Castle and kill the King, are agreed upon by most reviews. Lewis's printed play was accepted by Mr. Harris, for "he only objected[...]to the catastrophe, as being calculated rather to excite horror than pity,

⁹⁰ David Simpson, *Romanticism and the Question of the Stranger* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2013), 22.

⁹¹ Matthew Lewis, preface to *Adelmorn: The Outlaw* (London, 1801), 2.

⁹² Review of *Adelmorn: The Outlaw*, *Critical Review* 2nd series 34 (1802). 232.

⁹³ Matthew Lewis, preface to *Alfonso, King of Castile* (London, 1801), 3.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

and therefore as unfit for public representation”.⁹⁵ The part of the catastrophe that was omitted was Cesario’s murdering of his father and Lewis agreed “that of the two, the new catastrophe seems to...[be] the best calculated for the stage”.⁹⁶ For the most part, *Alfonso* was well received by audiences and critics who, despite its obvious failings, saw it a success. The *British Critic* insisted that “the catastrophe seems to us faulty in both its forms; but so much dramatic genius is displayed in the whole, that we doubt not that the author will hereafter write a better tragedy”.⁹⁷ The *Monthly Mirror*, in a similar vein, insists that

whatever may be its faults, the general merit of the production is sufficient to atone for them.—The subject is deeply interesting; the plot is skilfully involved; the characters are drawn with great force, and very finally contrasted; the situations are new and striking—sometimes hazardous, but always dramatic.⁹⁸

But Lewis was unable to quite escape the associations his name firmly brought with it. One review was even critical of him keeping “ghosts off the stage in the fourth and fifth acts”, suggesting he “lay[...]great violence on his inclinations” and couldn't “forebear making” the supernatural “visible to Ottilia and Amelrosa”.⁹⁹

Reviews, positive and negative, called for Lewis to “hereafter write a better tragedy”.¹⁰⁰ The result of which was, *Adelgitha, or the Fruit of Single Error* (1806), a play in which Lewis could not resist returning to certain themes of *The Monk*. Just as in *The Monk* all the dark and sinister events happen underground, in the catacombs of the monastery, and most of the main characters find themselves at some point in the book there, the final moments of *Adelgitha*, in particular her killing of Michael Ducas which leads to her own suicide, happen in a Gothic cavern seen, according to the stage directions

through a natural Arch in the centre of the back-scene. The sea is visible, with the Moon shining on it. On one side of the Arch is a rough-hewn staircase, conducting to an upper Gallery, and on the same side is the Mouth of an inner cave, partly overgrown

⁹⁵ Ibid., 4-5.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 5.

⁹⁷ Review of *Alfonso, King of Castile*, *British Critic* 20 (1802), 558.

⁹⁸ Review of *Alfonso, King of Castile*, *Monthly Mirror* 13 (1802), 410.

⁹⁹ Review of *Alfonso, King of Castile*, *Critical Review* 34 (1802), 355.

¹⁰⁰ *British Critic* 20 (1802), 559.

with ivy and other tangling weeds; it is ornamented with a Cross, an Image, a Skull and Cross-Bones.¹⁰¹

What Adelgitha confronts as she “decends the flight of Steps”¹⁰² is not merely Michael, the holder of her dark secret, but herself; to meet again the “guilty heart [that]...revelled/In wanton love, and pleasure’s wild excess”.¹⁰³ At first, in pleading with Michael—“Spare me! Spare me!/Show mercy yet!”¹⁰⁴—she is in his complete power but in this dark gothic place she soon finds her impulsive self yet again:

Adelgitha [in a terrible voice, while she seizes the dagger, which lies near her,
and starts from the ground]
Then perish, tyrant!—[stabs him].¹⁰⁵

She soon relapses from her “menacing attitude”¹⁰⁶ at the word of murderess and it is here that Lewis toys with the appearance of the supernatural and the Faustian pact Ambrosio made with Lucifer in *The Monk*:

Rise, daemons, rise! ’Tis Adelgitha calls you;
Her hand has signed in blood the infernal bond,
Which makes her yours for ever! Rise then, rise,
And shake the rocks with the horrid mirth, loud shrieking
—“Rejoice! rejoice! the murderess is our own!”—¹⁰⁷

At the hearing the commotion, Lothair enters with his sword drawn, “Murder shrieked!—Ha!—Speak thy business here, and what thou art?”.¹⁰⁸ Adelgitha resumes her rage—“A fiend”, she answers, “who comes to banquet on the blood among these rocks; who much has drank, and thirsts for more!”—only to relapse once again on realising that it is Lothair.

¹⁰¹ Matthew Lewis, *Adelgitha, or the Fruits of a Single Error* (London: D.N Shury, 1806), 85.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 89.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 92.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 94.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 94.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 94.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 94

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 95

What this chapter has attempted to display then is both Lewis's playing up to his profile as, 'Monk' Lewis, and his attempts to deny it. In keeping with this idea of 'Beyond 'Monk' Lewis', I wished to consider Lewis's works after *The Monk* far more extensively and consider him within the context of the anxieties felt by critics and reviewers concerning the state of British theatre in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century.

The Monk and its Afterlives

The associations which *The Monk* (1796) brought to Lewis's name persisted well after the publication of its first edition. So much so that five years after the book's initial publication in 1796, Lewis was still—ostensibly at least—apologising for the stir *The Monk* had caused in the preface to *Adelmorn: The Outlaw* (1801): “A fault were it one ever so serious committed at twenty, and followed during a course of years by no error of a similar nature, might, I should think, be forgiven without exercising any dangerous lenity”.¹ As late as 1804, Coleridge showed dismay at his poem, “The Mad Monk”, being included alongside a work by Lewis in Mary Elizabeth Robinson's collection of poems later known as *The Wild Wreath* (1804), implying the danger it would have to his reputation; “I have a wife, I have sons, I have an infant Daughter—what excuse would I offer to my own conscience if by suffering my name to be connected with those of Mr Lewis?”.² In the letter to Robinson, Coleridge would reiterate his own criticism of *The Monk* found in the *Critical Review* seven years earlier; “My head turns giddy, my heart sickens, at the very thought of seeing such books in the hands of a child of mine”.³ “The crux of what Coleridge fears”, writes Michael Gamer, “is the impossibility of separating the name Lewis from the pornographic reputation of *The Monk*”.⁴ Associating with Lewis's name then was so damaging to one's reputation that it can be seen to “take on, at least in part, the properties of genre”.⁵ Nowhere is this better exemplified than in the case of Charlotte Dacre's homage to Lewis, *Zofloya or, The Moor* (1806), which was one of those “sundry novels”

¹ Matthew Lewis, preface to *Adelmorn: The Outlaw* (London, 1801), p2.

² Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs (London: Constable, 1932), 233.

³ *Ibid.*, 233.

⁴ Michael Gamer, “Genres for the Prosecution: Pornography and the Gothic,” *PMLA* 114 (1999), 1051.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1051.

talked of by Lord Byron, written “in the style of the first edition of the Monk”.⁶ One particular review goes as far as to suggest that “Mr Lewis’s Monk” was “the *chaste model*”, both in “style” and “story”, on which Dacre’s novel was based.⁷ Put more memorably, in the poetic words of William Henry Ireland, it was “Lewis, of monkish renown,/Who tickled the fancies of the girls of the town” and made Dacre’s “lewd heroine act the same thing”.⁸ “Mistress Radcliffe fear[ed] herself outdone”⁹ and so the Gothic novel, in the wake of *The Monk* and in the eyes of its critics, took a turn for the worse: it was now under the influence of ‘Monk’ Lewis, who sought to “awake foul desires,/[...]banishing decency”.¹⁰ In this chapter, therefore, in order to conclude my account of looking ‘Beyond ‘Monk’ Lewis’, I wish to give far more attention to this turn and suggest that Ireland was correct in his assertion that *The Monk* did “breathe *new philosophy*” and, with it, life into a Gothic novel that had foundered in the arduously descriptive pages of Radcliffe.¹¹ In returning to the Gothic’s origins, found in the pages of Horace Walpole we can begin to establish what it was that Lewis ushered into this new phase of the Gothic.

In the preface to the second edition of *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), Walpole insists that “the great resources of fancy have been dammed up, by a strict adherence to common life”.¹² His solution “was an attempt to blend...two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern. In the former, all was imagination and improbability: in the latter, nature is always intended to be”.¹³ How successful Walpole was with this blend is unclear and perhaps unanswerable, but everything rationale or believable is done away with in *Otranto* and the world of the novel is littered with otherworldly events

⁶ Lord Byron, *The Poetical Works of Lord Byron* (London: Gall and Inglis, 1857) 106.

⁷ Review of *Zofloya, or The Moor*, *Annual Review* 5. (1807). 542.

⁸ William Henry Ireland, *Scribbleomania: Or, the Printer’s Devil’s Polichronicon; a Sublime Poem* (London, 1815), 141-142.

⁹ George Daniel, *The Modern Dunciad* (London, 1815), 92.

¹⁰ Ireland, *Scribbleomania*, 144.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 143.

¹² Horace Walpole, preface to second edition *The Castle of Otranto* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 9.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 9.

that are borderline ridiculous. Most importantly, Walpole's world encourages an oversimplified view that the Gothic was a reaction to the Enlightenment; bringing to light forces which put into doubt the apparent rationality, coherence and order of the natural world. Ann Radcliffe, taking on the gothic clichés of *Otranto* but dispensing with the literal depictions of the supernatural, depicts a world where the threat of supernatural forces are forever hanging in the air but the reader is, by the end, always assured that it is still our natural world that her characters inhabit. *The Monk* collapses these two binaries of the Gothic. *The Monk* is a reversion of the Radcliffean model; revealing what is hidden and concealed in Radcliffe, and turning what is outright ridiculous in Walpole into something ghastly, shocking, sensational and uncanny. Supernatural forces return with added revulsion, in *The Monk*. Lewis's Lucifer, for example, has the majesty and otherworldliness of *Vathek's* (1789) Eblis but he appears now to only represent the deepest and darkest impulses of the characters of the novel. As touched upon in the first chapter, *The Monk* represents a libertine Enlightenment world uncannily thrown back on itself, a point which can be made clearer by reference to Terry Castle's probing question regarding the notion of the uncanny more generally in the late eighteenth-century: "Might one argue, extrapolating from Freud, that the uncanny itself first "comes to light"—becomes a part of human experience—in that period known as the Enlightenment?"¹⁴

Ann Radcliffe was then the arbiter of women's gothic writing, remembered by Thomas De Quincey as "the great enchantress of that generation".¹⁵ Charlotte Dacre, however, didn't follow that mode, choosing a new, idiosyncratic path for women's writing by aligning *Zofloya, or The Moor* with Lewis's *The Monk*. Dacre's contortion of the Radcliffean model goes one step further than even Lewis's, whose own heroine, stripped of her veil of innocence, is subject to the full force of the cruelty of nature. The heroine of *Zofloya*, Victoria, who has for at least half of the novel been subjected to the almost clichéd experiences of Radcliffean heroines, turns into the very villain from whom these heroines recoil. Ellena, in Radcliffe's *Italian* (1796), sees in

¹⁴ Terry Castle, *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 7.

¹⁵ Thomas De Quincey, *The Works of Thomas De Quincey* (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1863), 74.

the “scenes of nature” from her convent prison, the veil which “obscures the features of the Deity, and conceals Him from the eyes of his creatures”.¹⁶ By contrast, the scenes of Zofloya’s “Castella Berenza”, described in the same typical Radcliffean style, with its “loftiest spires” and “majestic sublimity”, are for Victoria the perfect arena to complete her evil plans:

‘Here, then, without danger, may I pursue the path leading to the summit of my wishes; no prying eye can pierce through, here, the secret movements which, to compass my soul’s desire, may be requisite. Hail then to these blissful solitudes, hail to them, since they perhaps may first witness the rich harvest of my persevering love; and for such a love, perish—perish, all that may oppose it!’¹⁷

Enjoying the landscape but for an entirely different reason and purpose, there is no allusion to the Almighty here, only man’s destructive appetites. This world then, so different from Radcliffe’s but so like Lewis’s, is characterised perfectly by Zofloya who, in sensing the hesitation of Victoria in the completing of her evil plans, rehearses the rhetoric of Lewis’s Matilda and Sade’s own villains:

‘It is not that you hesitate,’ in an accent half serious, half disdainful, returned the Moor; ‘and why *should* you hesitate? *he* had no hesitation in sacrificing to himself your young and beautiful person, for his gratification; and why should you hesitate, now, at sacrificing him for yours? You hate him; yet you receive with dissembled pleasure those endearments which he lavishes upon you. In depriving him of life, you would do him far less wrong. Surely the conscience of Victoria is not subjugated to a confessor? From whence then arises this unexpected demur? Is not self predominant throughout animal nature? and what is the boasted supremacy of man, if, eternally, he must yield his happiness to the paltry suggestions of scholastic terms, or the pompous definitions of right and wrong? His reasoning, then, is given him only for his torment, and to wage war against his happiness’.¹⁸

As in *The Monk*, and later in Maturin’s *Melmoth* (1820), this alluring and attractive world comes at a price, one which, for Victoria, has already been unwittingly written in blood to Satan and by the end must be paid.

Zofloya, revealing himself as Satan—the orchestrator of her demise—finally has Victoria in his possession and, delighting in utterly fooling his victim, “whirled her headlong down the dreadful abyss!—as she fell, his demoniac laugh, his yells of

¹⁶ Ann Radcliffe, *The Italian* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 106.

¹⁷ Charlotte Dacre, *Zofloya, or The Moor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 165.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 155.

triumph, echoed in her ears, and a mangled corpse, she was received into the foaming waters”.¹⁹ The book then concludes by questioning the cause of her demise:

That his [Satan’s] seductions may prevail, we dare not doubt; for can we otherwise account for those crimes, dreadful and repugnant to nature, which human beings are sometimes tempted to commit? Either we must suppose that the love of evil is born with us (which would be an insult to the Deity), or we must attribute them (as appears more consonant with reason) to the suggestions of infernal influence.²⁰

It is question implicit in *The Monk* but explicitly asked here, reminding us of the question which pervades French pornographic literature as posed by Thérèse, in d’Argen’s *Thérèse Philosophe* (1748), to the “canny [and][...]stupid theologians” who sought to deny her the pleasures that she could not resist.²¹ “Who put in me the two passions which warred within me, the love of God and the love of sensual pleasure?”, questions Thérèse, “is it nature or the devil? Choose”.²² Like *Thérèse*, Dacre’s novel demands something of its reader. We know that throughout *Zofloya* the concern is with the origins and effects of mankind’s inclinations to do evil, for just like the historian, addressed in the first page of the novel, “who...must not content himself with simply detailing a series of events”, we, as the readers, “must ascertain causes” and “draw deductions from the incidents as they arise, and ever revert to the actuating principle”.²³ Victoria then in “childhood gave proofs of[...]a corrupt nature” and due to being the offspring of a marriage born from “the delirium of passion” and “the madness of youth” was “of an implacable, revengeful, and cruel nature, and bent upon gaining ascendancy on whatever she engaged”.²⁴ The narrator implies that the first seeds of Victoria’s evil nature were planted by her mother’s running “from the scenes of her past honour and her happiness[...]from the embraces of her children” into the arms of her seducer, Ardolph. Victoria in this first instance in the novel becomes a depiction of a more conservative evil, unlike Sade’s Juliette, for example, whose

¹⁹ Ibid., 267.

²⁰ Ibid., 268.

²¹ From Jean-Baptiste de Boyer, *Thérèse Philosophe*. Quoted in *The Forbidden Bestsellers of Pre-Revolutionary France*, trans. Robert Darnton (London: Harper Collins, 1996), 250.

²² Ibid., 250.

²³ Dacre, *Zofloya*, 3.

²⁴ Ibid., 4.

descent into utter depravity is very much against her upbringing and is conditioned by the Sadean world in which she moves, Victoria's evil doesn't seem to be something essential or innate.

This, however, is thrown into doubt upon the first appearance of Zofloya which occurs midway through the novel when Victoria's evil inclinations are already beginning to reach tipping point at the prospect of a marriage between the man whom she desires, Henriquez, and the woman whom she hates, the innocent Radcliffean styled enemy, Lilla:

Time rolled on, and the effervescence of Victoria's mind increased almost to madness...The most wild and horrible ideas took possession of her brain; crimes of the deepest dye her imagination could conceive appeared as nothing, opposed to the possibility of obtaining a return of love for Henriquez.²⁵

Berenza, her husband, is also not safe from her wrath for he is also seen as an obstacle in the way of her desired object, "secretly wishing" that her husband and Lilla, "nay, even the whole world, (if it stood between her and the attainment of her object,) could become instantly annihilated".²⁶ As she retired to her chamber, however, to contemplate these feelings and as "her bosom ached with exhausting conflict of the most violent passions" she, unlike *The Monk's* Ambrosio, is aware of some power above and beyond her that she can't quite comprehend or locate: "for an instant [she] believed herself under the influence of some superior and unknown power".²⁷ We are to believe that this power is Zofloya, the Moor who appears in Victoria's dream in

a noble and majestic form. He was clad in a habit of white and gold; on his head he wore a white turban, which sparkled with emeralds, and was surmounted by a waving feather of green; his arms and legs, which were bare, were encircled with the finest oriental pearls; he wore a collar of gold round his throat, and his ears were decorated with gold rings of an enormous size.²⁸

His appearance is comparable to the appearance of the alluring Lucifer in *The Monk*, who, as "a youth...scarcely eighteen", appeared "perfectly naked" with "a bright star...

²⁵ Ibid., 134.

²⁶ Ibid., 135.

²⁷ Ibid., 135.

²⁸ Ibid., 136.

upon his forehead” and “circlets of diamonds...fastened round his arms and ankles”.²⁹ There seems to be a one-upmanship at work here, for Dacre attributes a certain otherness to Zofloya that Lewis’s Lucifer does not possess. He is, after all, black and his orientalism is reiterated in the garments and jewels that he wears. The transgressive nature of Ambrosio and Matilda’s relationship—between man and demon—is also amped up by Dacre, for Victoria at certain moments in the novel seems to have a sexual attraction toward Zofloya and their first meeting within the dream, in which she agrees to be his, is akin to a marriage.

At first Victoria seems to refuse the proposal, for as Zofloya “bent his knee, and extended his arms towards her...she looked upon him with dread, and essaying to fly, stumbled and awoke”.³⁰ Her next dream, however, would prove to be too much for her to deny him for a second time:

She now saw herself in a church brilliantly illuminated, when, horrible to her eyes, approaching the altar near which she stood, appeared Lilla, led by Henriquez and attired as a bride! In the instant that their hands were about to be joined, the Moor she had beheld in her preceding dream appeared to start between them, and beckoned her towards him; involuntarily she drew near him, and touched his hand, when Berenza stood at her side, and seizing her arm, endeavoured to pull her away. ‘Wilt thou be mine?’ in a hurried voice whispered the Moor in her ear, ‘and none then shall oppose thee.’ But Victoria hesitated, and cast her eyes upon Henriquez: the Moor stepped back, and again the hand of Henriquez became joined with Lilla’s. ‘Wilt thou be mine?’ exclaimed the Moor in a loud voice, ‘and the marriage shall *not be!*’—‘Oh, yes, yes!’ eagerly cried Victoria, overcome by intense horror at the thoughts of their union.³¹

The dream acts as a warning to Victoria which she does not quite comprehend as she does not get what she desires, for when Henriquez is finally hers he is “changed to a frightful skeleton”.³² Despite this, “the conclusion which at length she drew was this, that every barrier to the gratification of her wishes would ultimately be destroyed, and that she should at length obtain Henriquez”.³³ The dreams soon get more intense and are dominated by the appearance of Zofloya, in which she “wandered with him” atop her eventual grave which was “the ridge of some huge precipice” with the “angry

²⁹ Matthew Lewis, *The Monk* (London: Penguin Books, 1998), 237.

³⁰ Dacre, *Zofloya*, 136.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 136.

³² *Ibid.*, 136.

³³ *Ibid.*, 137.

waters wa[ving] in the abyss below”.³⁴ But that is not the most disturbing thing, for there is someone or something looking upon her while she sleeps, orchestrating her dreams:

hastily awaking, scarcely could she assure herself that Zofloya stood not at the side of her bed! At one time the delusion was so strong, that she even fancied, after gazing for a minute at least, that he was a few paces from her bed, and that she saw him turn, and walk slow and majestically towards the door. At this, being no longer able to resist, she started up, and called him by his name; but as she did so, he seemed to vanish through the door, which still remained shut. Surprised, she passed her hand over her eyes, and looked round the chamber; all was lonely, she beheld no further traces of his figure, and, difficult as was the persuasion, she endeavoured to believe the whole a delusive dream.³⁵

This brings to bear the uncanniest and most gothic of images, Henry Fuseli’s *The Nightmare* (1781) (see Figure 4). The image has encouraged interpretations from the



(Figure 4. Henry Fuseli, *The Nightmare*, 1781, Oil on Canvas, 101.6 x 127 mm. Detroit Insititue of Arts, Detroit)

³⁴ Ibid., 143.

³⁵ Ibid., 144.

comic to the fantastical but lends itself best perhaps to the Freudian idea of the uncanny. It depicts the mythological folkloric beliefs surrounding dreams and nightmares that Freud seeks to dispel in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), particularly that “peoples of classical antiquity...took it for granted that dreams were related to the world of supernatural beings in whom they believed”.³⁶ But *The Nightmare* also depicts the very nature of the dream itself; of the unconscious desires and wish-fulfillments which are deep within us.

Andrei Pop reveals this uncanniness in showing the very difficulty one has in interpreting Fuseli’s image:

All depends on the place and mental state of the spectator: where is he or she, and: is he or she awake? The sleeping body and the dimly lit interior, furniture, and the drapery are consistent with the experience of an exterior, waking spectator; but the demon must stand for the experience of the sleeper. Is Fuseli proposing a split view, the body and room being real and seen by a waking spectator, while the demon and horse are seen ‘from sleeper’s-eye-view’? This would only raise new difficulties, for how can Fuseli indicate the split to a viewer who is awake by default? Another possibility: the spectator sees a real scene at the moment of falling asleep, and dreams the demon and horse in addition to a real view of the room. Or the spectator is dreaming horse, demon, and sleeping women *in toto*.³⁷

Zofloya engages with this uncanniness in *The Nightmare*, in which the demon—Zofloya, in this case—is both a physical entity which resides over Victoria and a manifestation of her unconscious. What Victoria is wrestling with ultimately, as she wriggles and writhes in her bed sheets, is not Satan or some other “internal influence” but her own unconscious desires which, upon the appearance of Zofloya, she is ready to make manifest and take action upon: “death and destruction entered her thoughts, and twice she started up, as impelled to execute some dreadful purpose, she knew not what!”.³⁸ But there is always that lingering notion she is not at all in control, that in her waking from “the wildness of her distempered fancy” she expects “to behold somewhat that should corroborate her idea”.³⁹ The question of infernal influence or inherent evil posed by the narrator has its answer within *Zofloya*: they are one and the

³⁶ Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. A. A. Brill (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1997), 6.

³⁷ Andrei Pop, *Antiquity, Theatre, and the Painting of Henry Fuseli* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 91.

³⁸ Dacre, *Zofloya*, 135.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 135.

same thing. A contemporary reviewer of the novel alludes to this point, seeing the appearance of “the supernatural agent...totally useless, as the mind of Victoria, whom Satan, under the form of Zofloya, comes to tempt, is sufficiently black and depraved naturally, to need no temptation to commit the horrid crimes she perpetrates”.⁴⁰ Zofloya, however, only seems superfluous when we assume that he is a separate entity to Victoria rather than the manifestation of her deepest and darkest desires. This idea of the double (doppelgänger) in *Zofloya* is subtly pointed to throughout the book. The first instance is upon Victoria and Zofloya’s first meeting, in which Victoria “wandered into the garden...to brood over her criminal passions”.⁴¹ Working herself up at the thought of the “detestable Berenza!”, Victoria cries that it is he who she “should wish annihilated!”, only to hear a “faint echo” which “seemed to repeat her last words, in a low, hollow tone, as if sounding at a distance”.⁴² Zofloya is, as is always the case in the book, not far away, for every moment of secrecy Victoria wishes to obtain in concocting her evil plan to poison Berenza, Zofloya appears “as if informed by sympathetic influence to her wishes”.⁴³

It is here that we get to the greatest of doppelgängers, Melmoth the Wanderer, who, like Zofloya, is as much a figment of his potential victim’s imaginations as he is a physical entity. Just as the transgressive elements in *The Monk* are amped up by Dacre, the anti-Catholic fervour which drives *The Monk* returns in Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* but now with added vigour. The first example of this is in the Wanderer’s attempts to convince the innocent Immalee of the falsity of the world’s religions, showcasing the many “artificial and picturesque religion[s] standing in the place of that single devotion to God”.⁴⁴ This showcasing is blood curdling, for looking through the telescope given to her by Melmoth, in which she looks upon “the coast of India, the shores of the world near”, she sees the practices of worship in these religions in all their hideous glory:

⁴⁰ Review of *Zofloya, or The Moor*. *Monthly Literary Recreations; Or, Magazine of General Information*. 1, (1806). 80.

⁴¹ Dacre, *Zofloya*, 146.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 146.

⁴³ Dacre, *Zofloya*, 166.

⁴⁴ Charles Maturin, *Melmoth the Wanderer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 297.

As the procession moved on, sparkling amid desolation, and triumphant amid death, multitudes rushed forward from time to time, to prostrate themselves under the wheels of the enormous machine, which crushed them to atoms in a moment, and passed on;—others ‘cut themselves with knives and lancets after their manner,’ and not believing themselves worthy to perish beneath the wheels of the idol’s chariot, sought to propitiate him by dyeing the tracks of those wheels with their blood.⁴⁵

Maturin compares Hindu devotional practice to Catholic ones, insisting that many of the devoted religious people in this scene “hoped for an interest in these voluntary sacrifices, with as much energy, and perhaps as much reason, as the Catholic votarist does in the penance of St Bruno, or the exculpation of St Lucia”.⁴⁶

Subtly, Maturin compares this scene that Immalee witnesses from her telescope with an earlier moment within the story of Alonzo di Moncada where, hiding in the Jew’s house from fear of discovery, having escaped the Inquisition, he watches “a procession...the most solemn and superb ever witness in Madrid”.⁴⁷ At first, the procession is pleasing to Moncada’s eye, because “nothing was ever more imposing, or more magnificent”, but “suddenly a tumult seemed to arise among the crowd”.⁴⁸ What ensues then is something straight out of *The Monk*, for the Suprema, who is the object of the rioters’ bloodlust, meets the same end as *The Monk*’s prioress:

Amid yells like those of a thousand tigers, the victim was seized and dragged forth, grasping in both hands fragments of the robes of those he had clung to in vain, and holding them up in the impotence of despair. The cry was hushed for a moment, as they felt him in their talons, and gazed on him with thirsty eyes. They dashed him to the earth—tore him up again—flung him into the air—tossed him from hand to hand as a bull gores the howling stiff with horns right and left. Bloody, defaced, blackened with earth, and battered with stones, he struggled and roared among them, till a loud cry announced the hope of termination to a scene alike horrible to humanity, and disgraceful to civilisation[...]Dragged from the mud and stones, they dashed a mangled lump of flesh right against the door of a house[...]With his tongue hanging from his lacerated mouth, like that of a baited bull; with one eye torn from the sock, and dangling on his bloody cheek.⁴⁹

The power of the mob is like that of a force of nature: unstoppable, unreasonable and uncontrollable. Its ability to deface and annihilate the hypocrisy and idolatry of the scene is akin to nature’s power to ultimately destroy a religious culture that the two

⁴⁵ Ibid., 292-93.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 293.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 252.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 253.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 255.

lovers in Monacada's writing of *The Tale of Indians* witness when they meet to prove their sincerity to each other. What is stressed here is nature's power over man: the "violent action of nature...seemed to say, Mortals, write your line with the chisel, I write my hieroglyphics in fire".⁵⁰ What the mob does to the Suprema, resembles nature's destruction of "the idol of Seeva", in which the idol's "horrid mouth was still visible, into which human hearts had been formerly inserted".⁵¹ Once Melmoth's magic tricks are stripped away, man must contend wholly with nature and the lustful impulses, inclinations and desires which it has bestowed upon him. But, as is also the case in *The Monk*, there seems to be an even greater force at work here which puts this naturalised picture into utter doubt. As Catherine Lanone suggests, "*Melmoth the Wanderer* conveys the disturbing forces plaguing society, and depicts potential disruption and the violence inherent in humanity".⁵² Through Melmoth himself, in his insistence that "the proudest temples erected to his [God's] honour crumble into dust", Maturin offers us a far more radical reading of *The Monk*.⁵³ "An inextinguishable and acceptable victim", the Suprema's death is vindicated, for it is implied to be the work of God through nature.⁵⁴ Melmoth's attempts to convince Immalee of the falsity of religion, in an attempt to transfer his bargain with the devil to her, is "constrained by a higher power", whereby he inadvertently convinces Immalee to become a Christian and accept "Christ as [her] God".⁵⁵ Defeated, Melmoth "fled, murmuring" taking with him "the shades of night" and upon returning, "no longer attempt[ing] to corrupt her principles...or mystify her views of religion", realised the futility of his situation; he was subject to forces—God, nature and Devil—which had already determined his eventual end.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ Ibid., 277.

⁵¹ Ibid., 277.

⁵² Catherine Lanone, "Verging on the Gothic: Melmoth's journey to France", in *European Gothic: A Spirited Exchange 1760-1960*, ed. Avril Horner. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 72.

⁵³ Ibid., 297.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 297.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 297.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 297.

Moncada's companion, the one who betrays him in his attempted escape from monastery, is the embodiment of Maturin's more radical version of the world of *The Monk*. He displays a vigorous critique of the Catholic Church in expressing the impossibility of Moncada's escape from the monastery with the aid of his brother, Juan:

Two boys, one the fool of fear, and the other temerity, were fit antagonists for that stupendous system, whose roots are in the bowels of the earth, and whose head is among the stars,—*you* escape a convent! *you* defy a power that has defied sovereigns! A power whose influence is unlimited, indefinable, and unknown, even to those who exercise it, as there are mansions so vast, that their inmates, to their last hour, have never visited all the apartments; a power whose operation is like its motto, one and indivisible. The soul of the Vatican breathes in the humblest convent in Spain,—and you, an insect perched on a wheel of this vast machine, imagined you were able to arrest its progress, while its rations was hurrying on to crush you to atoms.⁵⁷

The last words in this quotation remind us again of “the enormous machine” that Immalee sees which “crushed” the devotees into “atoms in a moment”⁵⁸ and that of the procession which looked as if it were trampling on “the bodies of kings”.⁵⁹ For Moncada, the companion represents the very embodiment of the Devil in Bermudez de Belmonte's, *El Diablo Predicador* (1624), where “the infernal spirit is the hero” disguised as a monk “cross[ing] himself with visible marks of a devotion equally singular and edifying”.⁶⁰ As the companion laughs at Moncada's demise, Moncada “expected to see another being”—perhaps the Devil himself—only to find that “it was still the same”.⁶¹ The companion insists that this hypocrisy inherent within Catholicism, where he sees “priests, in all their pomp of office, appearing to the laity like descended gods” is not the work of the devil but the workings of “the naked frame of the natural mind...‘earthly, sensual, devilish’”.⁶² What the companion reiterates is an atheistic world—“I have no religion, I believe in no God, I repeat no creed”—where the numerous forces in the book converge and collide, uncannily becoming one and

⁵⁷ Ibid., 219-220.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 297.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 253.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 222.

⁶¹ Ibid., 219.

⁶² Ibid., 223.

the same thing.⁶³ The companion then succeeds in escaping judgement because he acts in accordance with the will of the world of *Melmoth* just as Sade's villains do in *Justine* (1791).

This convergence of forces in *Melmoth* comes to the fore upon the collapsing and crumbling of the Inquisition in Madrid where, "amid shrieks, and darkness, and flames",⁶⁴ Melmoth apparently admires his handiwork and "survey[s] the scene in perfect tranquillity".⁶⁵ The cause of the fire, however, is left ambiguous. At one point the book implies Melmoth was the instigator of the crime, for he insists to Moncada that he has "the power of effecting [his] escape from the Inquisition" to which Moncada duly, after a horrific dream, cries "save me",⁶⁶ while, at another point, it is implied that the fire is the will of God:

Behind and around us stood the officials and guards of the Inquisition, all watching and intent on the progress of the flames, but fearless of the result with regard to themselves. Such may be the feeling of those spirits who watch the doom of Almighty, and know the destination of those they are appointed to watch. And is not this like the day of Judgement?⁶⁷

All the potential forces which could have caused the fire are given credence; despite the fire being "extraordinary, from the well-known precautions adopted by the vigilance of the holy office against such an accident", it is not out of the realms of possibility that it was the hand of man that caused it, as is the case in an equivalent scene in *The Monk*.⁶⁸ Amidst the collapsing of the walls of the inquisition, however, what is reiterated is Moncada's spotting of Melmoth, where he recognises "the figure...who had visited [him] in the cells of the Inquisition".⁶⁹ Despite the chance to escape, he sought to point out the figure to the authorities but "no one had the time...

⁶³ Ibid., 224.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 243.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 242.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 237.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 241.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 240.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 242.

to give a glance towards [him]”.⁷⁰ Melmoth, one of the many possible perpetrators of this crime, seems to be only a figment of Moncada’s mind—ungraspable and unobtainable—disappearing in a cloud of smoke and flame as the Inquisition’s walls finally give way. The altercations between Moncada and Melmoth in the cells of the Inquisition imply as much, for when Moncada goes back to his cell after being questioned by the inquisitors, he falls asleep and, dreaming of his “eyes flash[ing] and melt[ing] in their sockets”⁷¹, sees his “tempter” stooped over him.⁷² Moncada was unsure “whether this inscrutable being had not the power to influence [his] dreams” and again the Gothic reinforces the uncanniness of Fuseli’s *Nightmare* and the difficulty of distinguishing between supernatural influence and the unconscious desires within the dreamer.⁷³ This doubleness is exemplified perfectly in Moncada’s own sense that he was haunting himself in his dream: “I saw *myself*; and this horrid tracing of yourself in a dream,—this haunting of yourself by your own spectre, while you still live, is perhaps a curse almost equal to your crimes visiting you in the punishments of eternity”.⁷⁴

Melmoth, his tempter, perhaps knows this too well. There seems to be a haunting of himself in the last moments of his existence as he seemingly prepares to meet Satan and pay the price for the life he has lived. As has been the case throughout *Melmoth*, however, the blurring of reality and illusion are at their most prominent here. Imaged as real moments in *Zofloya* and *The Monk*, the pact to be paid to Satan, only seems to occur within what is titled in the book as ‘The Wanderer’s Dream’. When John Melmoth traces his ancestor’s journey from the room in which he fell asleep to the precipice from which he has apparently fallen, the “down-trodden track” only reveals the footsteps “of one impelled by force to walk”.⁷⁵ For Marshall Brown, Melmoth “never does become real” for his “death is indescribable: a night of

⁷⁰ Ibid., 242.

⁷¹ Ibid., 236.

⁷² Ibid., 237.

⁷³ Ibid., 237.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 236.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 542.

inarticulate cries, a set of indecipherable traces”.⁷⁶ Brown insists that “for Melmoth to become real, he needs the influence of something external: communication with others who are genuine selves”.⁷⁷ At every moment he appears to his victims, however, Melmoth becomes a figure that is, in the words of his ancestor John Melmoth, “almost tangible”.⁷⁸ He appears only to John Melmoth as that of a dream: “was it in a dream or not, that he saw the figure of his ancestor appear at the door?”.⁷⁹ Even when the Wanderer, looking over a shipwreck, is in John Melmoth’s grasp —“within the reach of his mind and his arm”— he is still “defying space and time”.⁸⁰ For before John can get “foot to foot, and face to face” with his nemesis, he is distracted by the falling of a man off a cliff: “on its tottering insecurity hung the life-grasp of man, his hold failed—he fell backwards—the roaring deep was beneath, seeming to toss its ten thousand arms to receive and devour him”.⁸¹ The whole scene, however, in particular John Melmoth’s close proximity to the Wanderer, is then merely limited to that of another dream, for the man who has fallen awakes and whispers faintly, ‘What a horrid dream!’”.⁸² The man’s fall reiterates Melmoth the Wanderer’s own dream and indeed, we must ask, as does the final narrator of *Melmoth*, “what were the visions of his [Melmoth’s] last earthly slumber?”.⁸³ Melmoth gives us the final clue for, despite all the supernatural abilities he apparently possesses, he cries “my existence is still human!”.⁸⁴

As in *Melmoth* then, what is reiterated by the end in *The Monk*, once all the excessive violence, gore, blood, murder, sex and supernaturalism are stripped away is man and his relation to the forces of nature that exist both within and around him.

⁷⁶ Marshall Brown, *The Gothic Text* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 145.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 145.

⁷⁸ Maturin, *Melmoth*, 66.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 66-67.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 67.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 538.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 538.

It is here that we are brought full circle, for we see in Lewis not merely, 'Monk' Lewis, an immature sensationalist who horrified and repulsed his readers but a writer who was interested in covertly exploring philosophic issues, who wrote dramas, tragedies and comedies and who had a lasting effect on the gothic writers that succeeded him in their uses of sensationalism, excess and philosophy.

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