

SCOTT'S REFINEMENT OF THE GOTHIC  
IN CERTAIN OF THE WAVERLY NOVELS

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## PREFACE

Having long had an interest in and a taste for the Gothic element in literature, I was especially impressed with Scott's The Bride of Lammermoor, which was a required reading in the English novel course taught by Dr. Agnes Berrigan. It was pointed out that Scott had skillfully used the Gothic in this novel, and from this grew the idea of a treatment of Scott's improvement over his predecessors in the Gothic tradition.

This thesis is based upon four specific novels: Walpole's The Castle of Otranto, Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho, Scott's The Monastery and The Bride of Lammermoor. Clearly discernible flaws are analyzed in the first two mentioned and Scott's refinement is shown in the latter two. He has not, however, been wholly successful in The Monastery, which he readily admits. But even it is a distinct improvement over the earlier Gothic. The other of Scott's novels listed in the bibliography were read for a better understanding and background of Scott's writing.

Sincere appreciation is acknowledged to Dr. Clinton C. Keeler, my advisor, for guidance and meaningful suggestion, and to Dr. Agnes Berrigan for help in deciding upon a subject.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The word "Gothic" has taken on various meanings and connotations from its first use as an adversely critical term applied to early medieval architecture, through its final acceptance as a term describing a new type of architecture, to its application to literature in the late eighteenth century. John Ruskin has perhaps given it its best analysis, recognizing as he did that the Gothic quality was due to both external and internal elements. His definition, although given for architecture, is valid in this study because Gothic literature can be analyzed with the same basic terms.

Gothic architecture is not Gothic merely because of pointed arches or grotesque sculpture, but because of a combination of these mingled with other external forms, such as vaulted roofs, and flying buttresses, together with what Ruskin calls "internal elements," e.g. "fancifulness, love of variety, love of richness," a sense of freedom, and what he terms "moral elements," which he numbers in the order of their importance:

- |                  |                            |
|------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Savageness    | 4. Grotesqueness           |
| 2. Changefulness | 5. Rigidity                |
| 3. Naturalism    | 6. Redundance <sup>1</sup> |

These, he says, are characteristics of the building. If applied to the builder they would be stated: "1. Savageness or Rudeness. 2. Love of Change.

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<sup>1</sup>John Ruskin, "The Stones of Venice," English Prose of the Victorian Era, ed. Chas. Harrold and William Templeman (New York, 1954), p. 900.

3. Love of Nature. 4. Disturbed Imagination. 5. Obstinacy. 6. Generosity."<sup>2</sup>

Ruskin goes on to say that a withdrawal of a majority of these elements would destroy the character of a Gothic building; similarly a piece of literature is not considered Gothic unless it is supplied with the necessary elements, both external and internal.

The term "Gothic" was not applied to the architecture of the North because the nations in which it originated were of Gothic lineage (though the Goths were Germanic), but because of its sternness and rudeness that contrasted with the character of the southern and eastern architecture so much that, as Ruskin said, it "appeared like a perpetual reflection of the contrast between the Goth and the Roman in their first encounter."<sup>3</sup> And so the Gothic style was at first considered barbaric.

In his chapter "On the Nature of the Gothic," in The Stones of Venice, Ruskin says that all good architecture expresses two great truths belonging to the whole race of man: "... the confession of Imperfection and the confession of Desire of Change." He then goes on to say that It is that strange "disquietude" of the Gothic spirit that is its greatness; that restlessness of the dreaming mind, that wanders hither and thither among the niches, and flickers feverishly around the pinnacles, and frets and fades in labyrinthine knots and shadows along wall and roof, and yet is not satisfied, nor shall be satisfied.<sup>4</sup>

Caroline Spurgeon remarks:

It is a touch of this spirit that Horace Walpole expresses in his Castle of Otranto. What appealed to him in Gothic art and romance generally was its strangeness, its novelty, its quaintness. The unexpected incidents and situations, the supernatural phenomena, the unfamiliar surroundings, these are the elements which delighted his restless, vivacious, witty mind, and which he bequeathed to English romantic fiction.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 901.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 915.

<sup>5</sup>Caroline Spurgeon, in her preface to The Castle of Otranto (New York, n.d.), pp. xii-xiii.

Since sometime before the middle of the seventeenth century, the pendulum had been swinging away from romanticism, and more attention was being given to perfection of form, clearness, and reason. It was a period when emotional release and high imagination were replaced by scientific curiosity and philosophical reflection. During this period there was such an admiration of symmetry, balance, and order, that the ancient Greek poets became sources of fixed laws. Even the flexible standards of drama laid down by Aristotle became hard and fast rules to the neo-classicists, except for a few like Dryden who were a little more liberal. To the eighteenth-century neo-classicists, the term "Gothic" was used synonymously with "barbaric" to indicate anything which offended their classic tastes.

Just as the pendulum had swung away from romanticism, and, by the beginning of the eighteenth century the middle ages had come to be regarded as a period of barbarism and everything that was Gothic was ridiculed, so it began to swing back again, and Horace Walpole's The Castle of Otranto, the first real Gothic novel, was a part of that reaction.

Walpole's novel appeared in 1764, about the middle of what Caroline Spurgeon refers to as the "Gothic revival," which lasted from about 1760 to 1770. She says:

It was a time indeed, when, in common with Mr. Hardcastle, men loved everything that was old—"old times, old manners, old books,"—and it was enough for a thing to be antique for it to have a claim on their admiration.<sup>6</sup>

This craze for the antique and awakened interest in the medieval was, no doubt, carried to as much of an extreme by some as classic tastes had been carried by others during the Neo-Classic period.

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. xvi.

Spurgeon mentions three sides of the Gothic or antiquarian revival which she feels gave the originating impulse to Gothic romance:

... the delight in collecting old things, the revival of Gothic architecture, and the taste for the Gothic tale of chivalry. The one grew very naturally out of the other. The delight in old objects easily expanded to a delight in old or Gothic architecture, and this in its turn actually gave the originating impulse to Gothic romance. It was Walpole's building experiments at Strawberry Hill which quite literally gave rise to The Castle of Otranto.<sup>7</sup>

Gothic romance has, as does Gothic architecture, its "external" and "internal" elements. The external elements consist of the different parts of the setting, the most common of which is the Gothic castle itself, usually with a deserted wing, dark galleries, apartments with sliding panels and secret passageways, subterranean vaults, a collection of the ancestral portraits, decaying tapestry that flutters in the breeze, flickering lamps whose flame burns blue at the approach of a spectre and goes out at the time when needed most, secret places for imprisonment, human bones, hidden manuscripts that reveal terrible injustices, suits of armor that occasionally seem to be animated, and certain mysterious doors with rust-encrusted locks. There are, of course, certain Gothic novels in which the rugged and gloomy countryside are as important external elements as is the castle itself.

The internal elements consist of such abstractions as an uncanny atmosphere of terror and mystery, which may be incited by adequate description of different parts of the setting as well as by the action and characters; a portrayal of chivalry, as seen in the customs and manners of the medieval world and especially exemplified in the hero;

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. xvi-xvii.

<sup>8</sup>Spurgeon goes on to explain that Walpole's Gothic novel arose from a dream he had, in which he imagined himself in an ancient castle seeing a gigantic hand in armor on a staircase.

and a genuine feeling of pity for the terrified heroine and her persecuted lover. These internal elements furnish the "spirit of disquietude" so necessary to Gothic romance, but a removal of a majority of either of the external or internal elements would impair the purely Gothic characteristic of a novel. When the external elements are skillfully employed the internal elements will naturally result.

William Watt, in his Shilling Shockers of the Gothic School, relates how the Gothic style in romance was seized by Grub Street hack writers, who "sacrificed literary standards on the altar of their own financial needs,"<sup>9</sup> and was cheapened by them. Though, says Watt, the taste for the Gothic or "tale of terror" was growing weaker by this time (1801), there were still a great many readers in England who favored it. The hacks took advantage of this opportunity and floods of their "blue books" appeared. Most of them were nothing more than imitations or abridgments of long novels, such as Mrs. Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho and Mathew Lewis' The Monk, and were ridiculous to the conscientious reader. These pseudo-Gothicists relied too much on the externals, which they did not employ successfully enough to produce the essential internal elements.

Though the Gothic technique was abused by these hacks, and Watt speaks derogatorily of them, he admits that they formed "an important step between the long Gothic novel and the more plausible short stories of terror."<sup>10</sup> It may also be added that they helped to keep the Gothic tradition just enough alive so as to provide a wider reading public for Scott's later works. Watt also lists several pronounced characteristics of setting and atmosphere employed by these writers that will, perhaps,

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<sup>9</sup>William W. Watt, Shilling Shockers of the Gothic School (Cambridge, 1932), p. 9.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

help the reader of this paper to better understand what the Gothic elements really are. They had the elements but so exaggerated and exploited them that they became ineffective.

Since the "shockers" were offsprings of the longer Gothic novels, it stands to reason that the machinery employed would resemble as closely as possible that of such famous Gothic novels as The Castle of Otranto and The Mysteries of Udolpho. The hacks were so eager to please popular tastes and to exceed what had been done in the horror story that they even used "blown up" titles to attract any taste for the horrific. Walpole had entitled his novel The Castle of Otranto, A Gothic Story. They went farther with such multiple titles as: "The Black Forest; or The Cavern of Horrors! A Gothic Romance"<sup>11</sup> and "The Secret Oath; or Blood-stained Dagger, A Romance."<sup>12</sup>

In helping to establish what the Gothic in literature is, before making applications in the following chapters, I feel it necessary to include what Watt refers to as the "unadorned elements of English Gothicism"<sup>13</sup> that appear in the "Shilling Shockers." He says: "All the Gothic machinery and characters appear again, preserved intact, but often exaggerated to an amazing degree."<sup>14</sup> With these, he says, we are able "to appreciate the absurd extent to which the Gothic vogue was carried in the declining years of its life."<sup>15</sup>

Watt says the shockers usually fell into two general groups: stories

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

with a monastery or a convent as a background, descended from such novels as The Monk; and stories which follow the trend of The Castle of Otranto and The Mysteries of Udolpho, the background of which was the Gothic castle.

The stories of the first group generally included:

... a convent for the imprisonment of a disobedient heroine, which should have: one cell for solitary confinement; one underground vault for slow starvation; one large nave for taking the veil and for funerals, with a window through which the melancholy hero could view the sad procedure; one dismal bell to ring upon such occasions to inform the approaching relatives of the nun's fate; a congregation of nuns to stand about looking pale and chanting "Nunc Dimittis" and "De Profundis"; and a generous assortment of Madonnas, crucifixes, coarse food, and human skulls and bones, preferably female.<sup>16</sup>

The authors of the "Shilling Shockers", limited by space, could not dwell for long on such details as had formed an intrinsic part of Mrs. Radcliffe's tales, such as "The solemn music of howling wind, thunderstorms, moping owls, fluttering bats, doors creaking on their hinges, and the romantic beauty of the country side."<sup>17</sup> Neither could they elaborate on details of architecture, but could only approximate the "... complicated maze of underground vaults, dark passageways, sliding panels, and trap doors...."<sup>18</sup> Watt goes on to mention the "deserted wing", which he says "... is not necessarily the residence of the ghost of an unburied ancestor. It often serves as a base for the operations of villains and their female counterparts."<sup>19</sup>

In addition to architectural peculiarities, Watt mentions certain other Gothic properties, such as the animated portrait (animation is not confined to portraits alone in the shockers, but knights and horses in

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

paintings move about and do battle), unusual birthmarks, mysterious manuscripts, and miniatures.

It is not proposed that a perfect standard for the Gothic shall be set up in this introductory chapter, a standard by which the novels dealt with can be measured, but merely that an understanding of the Gothic elements and the trends the Gothic has taken at different periods be established for the sake of applications and judgments to be made in the succeeding chapters.

Though the architecture (castle or monastery) was an indispensable part of the Gothic mode, "Because the architectural ruin was the readiest symbol of that time which Walpole's age found "barbarous",<sup>20</sup> it is important also to take note of the conventional Gothic characters. In considering them, it seems proper to speak first of the heroine, who is usually the most prominent. Especially is this true in Mrs. Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho and The Romance of the Forest, as well as in Walpole's The Castle of Otranto.

It is proposed by some that Gothic romance writers, in order to increase the terror for the heroine, created her a contemporary of the time in which they wrote and transported her back in time to the age and environments of which they wrote.

Walpole's method and that of his followers in fiction and drama, was to transport to the period which had created this structure, a sensitive contemporary whose reaction to the dark surroundings was highly exploitable.... One grasps Walpole's principle of composition best by supposing that the author reasoned in this fashion: What barbarous times! What dark terrors they hold for my contemporaries! What horrors would result were one of us thrust suddenly into a Gothic castle in Gothic times....<sup>21</sup>

It seemed to them only logical that if a character could be created with

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<sup>20</sup>Bertrand Evans, "Manfred's Remorse and Dramatic Tradition," Publications of Modern Language Association, LXII (1947), p. 754.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

the feelings, temperament, and refinement of a later and what they considered a more enlightened period and placed in the environment of an earlier, stranger period, her terror and the reader's pity for her would be increased.

The Gothic heroine is a delicate, sensitive creature who gives the impression of being a fine China doll and too good for this world. She is accomplished in painting, sewing, playing a musical instrument, singing, and composing poetry (Emily has all these talents in The Mysteries of Udolpho). She is also exquisitely beautiful and her morals are the highest. She is virtue personified, and it is usually her high ideals and principles that are assailed and that cause her struggle. She is tenderhearted and delicate and is moved to tears or fainting at the slightest provocation.

Perhaps it should be explained here that the descriptions of characters given are typical and there is no set rule saying they must conform specifically to such criteria; there can be many variations. This sense of freedom and non-conformity is, after all, a vital part of the Gothic spirit.

The heroine is, however, usually overdone in goodness and personal accomplishments. Watt gives a good illustration from one of the "shockers" showing to what extreme the author went to convey the perfection of beauty and virtue of the heroine:

Her mind was a rich jewel contained in a most beautiful casket. Her natural and acquired accomplishments could not be surpassed. Her size exceeded rather the common height of women; but the symmetry and proportion of her shape prevented that from being a defect. Her skin was white as the unsullied snow on the mountain, save where the crimson of her lips, and the rosy hue of her cheeks, opposed a shining contrast to the shining brightness of her bosom: her eyes were large and sparkling; but mild as the moon in the evening of summer, when she darts her trembling beams through the intermingled branches of the forest, and gilds the glittering

stream that murmurs at their roots....<sup>22</sup>

The earlier and better Gothic novelists never went to this extreme, though it will be seen that Mrs. Radcliffe came close to it in her delineation of Emily in The Mysteries of Udolpho and in Adeline in The Romance of the Forest.

These examples from the "Shilling Shockers" should lend all the more credit to what Scott has done for the Gothic novel. He has not only improved over the first and better Gothic novelists, but has had to bring the style up from such a decline as is exemplified in the "shockers."

Watt expresses his distaste for the exaggerated state in which the authors of the shockers have left the heroine. To him, the "shocker" heroine seemed:

A spineless creature, swept about like a leaf in the autumn wind by her own feelings, it is her business in the shockers to get into trouble, and then to pine away with the aid of her plaintive music and poetry and an inherent ability for sighing and weeping, leaving the almost hopeless task of extrication to the unfortunate hero. The only courage and initiative she ever displays is an unfailing tendency to explore the dark recesses of castles and convents, and even this is more attributable to curiosity than to courage.<sup>23</sup>

It remains to discuss the typical Gothic hero, villain, and ghost; the lesser characters will only be mentioned.

The Gothic hero, like the heroine, is above average in ability. He is an excellent horseman and hunter, writes and quotes poetry, and is sensitive to natural beauty. His morals and ideals are the highest, but, like the Greek tragic hero, he usually has some inherent weakness or flaw that causes him to suffer.<sup>24</sup> There is often his hopeless love for the

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<sup>22</sup>Edmund and Albina; or Gothic Times, (London, 1801), p. 6., quoted by William W. Watt, Shilling Shockers of the Gothic School (Cambridge, 1932), p. 32.

<sup>23</sup>Watt, p. 33.

<sup>24</sup>It is in this respect that Scott has made one of his greatest refinements.

heroine, which he is prevented, at least for a time, from fully expressing, as the heroine is often forced to marry someone else. The hero is persecuted by the villain, who has usually usurped his estates, as in The Castle of Otranto and The Bride of Lammermoor. In The Mysteries of Udolpho, the hero, Valancourt, suffers for his love of Emily and finally during their long separation falls victim to his passions and almost becomes a reprobate, but is penitent and accepted by Emily in the end. Ravenswood, in The Bride, is a victim of his pride, as well as his love for Lucy Ashton.

The hero is extremely good-looking and "well-made." In short, the Gothic hero is the perfect counterpart for the heroine. The pattern for the description of the hero's appearance was probably set by Walpole in his description of the portrait of Alfonso the Good, whose exact likeness everyone saw in Theodore, the peasant, the hero of the novel. "... with large black eyes, a smooth white forehead, and many curling locks like jet; in short...a young hero resembling the picture of the good Alfonso...."<sup>25</sup>

The Gothic villain in the earlier novels was not the completely depraved and Satanic personality he was later to become in the "shockers." Manfred, in The Castle of Otranto, is a victim of the past. It is not his fault that he is the last of his house and that a curse is upon him. Mrs. Radcliffe's Montoni is also affected by a former tragedy. There is this certain element in the villain that solicits some sympathy from the reader. He is not the "incorrigible monster of depravity"<sup>26</sup> that appeared in the later pseudo-Gothic tales.

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<sup>25</sup>Horace Walpole, The Castle of Otranto (New York, n.d.), p. 40.

<sup>26</sup>Watt, p. 39.

The Gothic villain was created to heighten the terror of the heroine and to harass the hero. It was the prime function of him and his forces to keep the lovers apart. He was usually

... a feudal tyrant, dark-eyed, mysterious, foreboding, haughty, with the colors of his habitat on his brow, his mind, and his morals. Very possibly, in his creation and later development, Gothicists drew consciously or unconsciously upon Satan, the wicked uncle of folk tale, and the Elizabethan machinating villain. But if they did, it was only incidentally. Certainly none of these prompted the creation of the Gothic villain or served as the source of his creation.<sup>27</sup>

So it would seem that the villain was meant by his creators to have some personality and some individuality of his own, not merely to be the necessary wicked element that is to oppose the good. In other words, the better Gothic villain offers some excuse for his depravity. His cruelty and depravity do, however, outweigh any sympathy the reader may have, and he serves his purpose as one of the "external elements" that the Gothic tale could not very well do without.

Since the supernatural had played such an important part in earlier Gothic story, the authors of the "shockers" felt they had to include it, and, according to Mr. Watt, they did so without any apparent excuse or necessity to the plot. "Many of the abridgers retained the ghost from the novel purely for the sake of the thrill it was calculated to produce, and did not bother to give it any excuse for appearing."<sup>28</sup>

It remained for Sir Walter Scott to restore meaningful appearances of ghosts and to make them more plausible after this type of degradation. He does, however, seem almost to fall into the same snare as his predecessors, in his less successful attempt at the Gothic in The Monastery when he has Mary Avenel's father's ghost appear to her for no obvious

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<sup>27</sup>Evans, p. 755.

<sup>28</sup>Watt, p. 42.

reason. In this he merits Una Pope-Hennessy's criticism: "... Scott indulges in one of his unsuccessful excursions into the domain of the supernatural...."<sup>29</sup> In a fuller treatment of his use of the supernatural, later, there will be other inept uses emphasized in this particular novel. But, as will be finally pointed out, he more than makes up for it in his splendid use of the supernatural in The Bride of Lammermoor.

Although the Gothic apparition has here been classified as a character, perhaps this is too concrete a name for it. It seems to possess qualities of character, property, and atmosphere. But, in some novels, such as The Bride, the apparition has actually been a character; Old Alice plays a part in the story, then dies and appears to Edgar Ravenswood.

There are numerous lesser stock characters in the Gothic novel, which will be only mentioned and not treated individually here. There are garrulous servants, such as Walpole's Bianca, Radcliffe's Annette, and Scott's incomparable seneschal, Caleb Balderstone. There are also the necessary peasants and the "banditti," which are, in many cases, talked about but never seen. If the story requires it, there are dignified or unscrupulous church men and pious nuns.

It would put too much limitation on the Gothic novel to say that it had to follow a stock plot; although, as has been implied in the discussion of characters, the plots are essentially similar: the villain and his forces opposing the love-struck hero and heroine and attempting to force an unfavorable marriage; the surprising discovery of a long-lost relative, the recovery of estates by the rightful heir—all these are elements of the Gothic plot. The essential freedom in the basic ideal of the Gothic is illustrated in the variation of plot. For example,

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<sup>29</sup>Una Pope-Hennessy, Sir Walter Scott (London, 1949), p. 69.

some of them had happy endings where the hero and heroine were reunited, while some others had tragic endings where the life of one or the other, or of both, was lost. A further example of that freedom is seen in the essentially Gothic novel of Scott's, The Monastery, which seems to have neither hero nor heroine, in the traditional Gothic sense. The typical Gothic plot, as described above, could not, without the other proper elements, be called a "Gothic plot." So it would be proper to say that such a thing as "Gothic plot," in its own right, does not exist. Let it suffice to say that the plot of a Gothic story must have conflict, as the plot of any story must have. It is not intended that a great deal should be made of plot in this work, but more attention will be given to setting, atmosphere, and character.

In order to show how Scott has enlivened and refined the Gothic technique, as seen in The Bride of Lammermoor, it will be necessary in the following chapter to subject the two Gothic novels that are considered the best, Walpole's The Castle of Otranto and Mrs. Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho, to close scrutiny, pointing up the faults or "rough places" in each.

## CHAPTER II

### FLAWS OF REPRESENTATIVE PREDECESSORS OF SCOTT IN THE GOTHIC GENRE

Horace Walpole has the distinction of being the founder of the Gothic novel, and Mrs. Radcliffe that of establishing its vogue. Walpole won this acclaim by his novel, The Castle of Otranto, which inaugurated a new era of supernatural and terroristic romance. Mrs. Radcliffe won her distinction by her most popular Gothic novel, The Mysteries of Udolpho, in which she refined and improved the Gothic elements by her descriptions, elimination of bulky supernatural appearances, polishing of characters, and more subtle exploitation of the atmosphere of terror.

Though these two novels are the first brought to mind when Gothic romance is mentioned, and though they have many praiseworthy qualities, there are certain inherent flaws that must be understood in order to more clearly reveal the difference in quality between them and the later works of Scott. Looking back from the twentieth century, we are more conscious of what Watt refers to as "unadorned elements of English Gothicism" in the novels of Walpole and Radcliffe than contemporaries of theirs would, perhaps, have been. We also have later supreme works of the same mode, such as Scott's, for comparison that they, of course, did not have.

Scott was himself a great admirer of Walpole's Castle of Otranto, and who knows but that it inspired and influenced him in some of his

writing, as it had others before him.

Every Saturday morning, recounts John Irving, he and the two other boys would make their way to Salisbury Crags with their books tucked under their arms; volumes of Spenser, Ariosto, and Boiardo. Horace Walpole's Castle of Otranto was a favorite of theirs with all its "gothic" mystery and its colossal ghost. The boys would read aloud to each other, and John Irving noticed that weeks and even months afterwards, Wattie Scott could remember and repeat the passages or pages that had particularly impressed him.<sup>1</sup>

Scott later wrote an introduction to The Castle of Otranto, in which he emphasized certain faults as well as merits. He is still, in his introduction, an admirer of Walpole, and his praise for the novel outweighs his adverse criticism; yet he is mature enough to evaluate without prejudice. It will be made evident in the treatment of The Bride of Lammermoor that Scott has profited by his own criticism. He has avoided what he objects to in the The Castle of Otranto and employed successfully the techniques he praises.

According to Scott, Walpole was a lover of the antique, as was Scott himself. This admiration for the past was made evident in the architecture of the houses of each of the men and in their collections of the paraphernalia of the age of chivalry. This taste for the past was a necessity for the type of literary work they were to do. Scott describes Walpole's taste as evidenced in his residence at Strawberry Hill:

Mr. Walpole's domestic occupations, as well as his studies, bore evidence of a taste for English Antiquities, which was then uncommon. He loved, as a satirist has expressed it, "to gaze on Gothic toys through Gothic glass;" and the villa at Strawberry Hill, which he chose for his abode, gradually swelled into a feudal castle, by the addition of turrets, towers, galleries, and corridors, whose fretted roofs, carved panels, and illumined windows were garnished with the appropriate furniture of scutcheons, armorial bearings, shields, tilting lances, and all the panoply of chivalry.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Hennessy, p. 43.

<sup>2</sup>Sir Walter Scott, in his "Introduction" to The Castle of Otranto, Horace Walpole (New York, n.d.), p. xxviii.

Walpole seemed to be trying to revive the past in his literal surroundings and in literature. He wanted to resurrect the feudal characters, to make them as much alive in literature as his contemporaries were. He had already surrounded himself with objects from the age of chivalry and fitted a Gothic mansion into more modern surroundings; now he sought to fit Gothic romance into modern literature.

As, in his model of a Gothic mansion, our author had studiously to fit to the purpose of modern convenience, or luxury, the rich, varied, and complicated tracery and carvings of the ancient cathedral, so, in *The Castle of Otranto*, it was his object to unite the marvellous turn of incident, and imposing tone of chivalry, exhibited in the ancient romance, with that accurate exhibition of human character, and contrast of feelings and passions, which is, or ought to be, delineated in the modern novel.<sup>3</sup>

This is what Scott felt Walpole was attempting to do and is exactly what he, himself, did in his novels, some fifty to sixty-five years later.

It was Scott's conviction that Walpole, by creating the Gothic setting and typical feudal characters, hoped to induce the reader to project himself into that period of superstition to the extent that supernatural occurrences would not seem absurd to him. Scott says:

It was his Walpole's object to draw such a picture of domestic life and manners, during the feudal times, as might actually have existed, and to paint it chequered and agitated by the action of supernatural machinery, such as the superstition of the period received as a matter of devout credulity.<sup>4</sup>

The first part of this objective Walpole has achieved successfully. Although he wastes no description upon them, he has his feudal castle with its courts, galleries, towers, dungeons, "... a subterraneous passage, which led from the vaults of the castle to the church of St. Nicholas,"<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. xxx.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. xxxiii-xxxiv.

<sup>5</sup>Walpole, p. 17.

a trap door with a secret spring, and ancestral portraits. The parts of the castle are merely mentioned and not dwelt upon to increase an uncanny atmosphere of terror such as Mrs. Radcliffe achieves by her lengthy and vivid descriptions, combined with her characters and situations at hand. The terror that Walpole does achieve arises more from the incidents than from the setting itself; though, by the mere mention of different parts of the castle as they have to do with the story, he makes the reader feel that he has been placed in a "Gothic castle in Gothic times."<sup>6</sup> There are a few incidents in the novel, however, where terror arises from the environment as well as from the action. Such an incident occurs when Isabella is making her way through an underground passage that leads to St. Nicholas' church:

... believing ... that she was near the mouth of the subterraneous cavern, she approached the door that had been opened; but a sudden gust of wind, that met her at the door, extinguished her lamp, and left her in total darkness. Words cannot paint the horror of the princess's situation. Alone in so dismal a place, her mind impressed with all the terrible events of the day....<sup>7</sup>

Walpole has his feudal tyrant, Manfred, who has the power of life and death over his family and vassals and who is restrained from some of the crimes he would commit only by the power of the church; though he does defile even its law of sanctuary and murders his own daughter on consecrated ground.

Feudal manners and customs are seen in the procession of Prince Frederic and his train into Otranto:

First came two harbingers with wands, next a herald, followed by two pages and two trumpeters. Then an hundred footguards. These were attended by many horse. After them fifty footmen, clothed in scarlet and black, the colors of the knight. Then a led horse. Two heralds on each side of a gentleman on horse back, bearing a banner, with the arms of Vicenza and

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<sup>6</sup>Evans, p. 754.

<sup>7</sup>Walpole, p. 21.

Otranto quarterly.... The knight's confessor, telling his beads. Fifty more footmen, clad as before. Two knights habited in complete armour, their beavers down, comrades to the principal knight. The squires of the two knights, carrying their shields and devices. The knights own squire.... The knight himself on a chestnut steed, in complete armour, his lance in the rest, his face entirely concealed by his visor, which was surmounted by a large plume of scarlet and black feathers. Fifty foot-guards, with drums and trumpets, closed the procession, which wheeled off to the right and left, to make room for the principal knight.<sup>8</sup>

This is an excellent description, though not an extravagant one, of a medieval nobleman of high rank, traveling with a complete retinue, and affords an example of the knowledge of the author about such things as the accoutrements of knights and their subordinates and their customs of travel and accompaniment.

Isabella is herself an example of unquestioned obedience to a feudal parent. She has acquiesced in a marriage arrangement that is displeasing to her, though circumstances prevent its taking place. Matilda, the real heroine of the story, indicates that her obedience to parents is explicit: "... a child ought to have no ears or eyes, but as a parent directs."<sup>9</sup> These examples, along with the fact of the parents arranging marriages for the benefit of the family fortune and honor, are marked characteristics of the feudal life and manners of the medieval world.

After setting and characters, there remains the superstitions of the times to be established to prepare the reader for appearances of the supernatural that would seem almost automatically to accompany such circumstances. Walpole does a good job of establishing the superstitions of the period as seen in several of his characters. The peasant, Theodore, was imprisoned under the gigantic helmet without food, since his warders "firmly believed, that, by his diabolical skill, he could easily supply

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

himself with nutriment."<sup>10</sup> Nor was superstition confined to servants or peasants, for the princess Isabella "... shrieked, believing it the ghost of her betrothed Conrad."<sup>11</sup> Manfred himself screams in rage at Diego: "Is it only a ghost, then, that thou hast seen?"<sup>12</sup> Of course, the servants exemplify superstition to the highest degree and Matilda's waiting woman, Bianca, seems to have no doubt that ghosts exist and are seen by mortals. She addresses her mistress thus: "Oh! dear Lady, I would not speak to a ghost for the world."<sup>13</sup>

Into this medieval world of chivalry and superstition, Walpole leads his reader and strives to put him in the frame of mind so that he will not seek explanations. He has prepared his reader to expect the supernatural; thus, he has succeeded in the first part of his objectives as stated by Scott.

It is in his use of the supernatural itself that objections are raised. Walpole, in his own words, says:

I have given reins to my imagination till I became on fire with the visions and feelings which it excited. I have composed it in defiance of rules, of critics, and of philosophers; and it seems to me just so much the better for that reason.<sup>14</sup>

This wildness and freedom is, of course, an inherent part of the Gothic spirit, but the Gothic, either in architecture or literature, can be too overloaded in one element, until it becomes marred, ugly, and displeasing. This is not to say that Walpole's Castle of Otranto is ugly, marred and

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>14</sup>Scott, p. xxii.

displeasing, for it has some good qualities, but he does press too hard on the element of the supernatural. Even his admirer, Scott, objects:

It cannot, however, be denied, that the character of the supernatural machinery in the Castle of Otranto is liable to objections. Its action and interference is rather too frequent, and presses too hard and constantly upon the same feelings in the reader's mind, to the hazard of diminishing the elasticity of the spring upon which it should operate.<sup>15</sup>

If Scott felt that Walpole pressed too heavily upon that "spring" upon which the supernatural operates, to please his Scott's contemporaries because of their way of life and education, how much more is the present-day reader convinced that he has done so.

In his revolt against the cold reason of his age, Walpole went too far and almost defeated his purpose.

By the too frequent recurrence of his prodigies, Mr. Walpole ran, perhaps, his greatest risk of awakening la raison froide, that cold common sense, which he justly deemed the greatest enemy of the effect which he hoped to produce. It may be added also, that the supernatural occurrences of the Castle of Otranto are brought forward into too strong day-light, and marked by an over degree of distinctness and accuracy of outline. A mysterious obscurity seems congenial at least, if not essential, to our ideas of disembodied spirits, and the gigantic limbs of the ghost of Alphonso, as described by the terrified domestics, are somewhat too distinct and corporeal to produce the feelings which their appearance is intended to excite.<sup>16</sup>

The supernatural appearances in The Castle of Otranto fail to afford the thrill that they were, no doubt, calculated to afford, since the situations themselves lack imagination. Who can imagine anything being supernatural and ghostly that is as solid as the gigantic helmet, which crushes Manfred's son, remains in the courtyard for days, even serves as a prison, and then vanishes into thin air. The giant sword, which requires a hundred men to bear it, seems equally ridiculous. That these objects should appear and remain long enough to be handled, even inspected, "He

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., pp. xl-xli.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., pp. xli-xlii.

touched, he examined the fatal casque,"<sup>17</sup> seems too much even for the strongest fancy. From the nose of the statue of Alphonso, drops actual blood, and the portrait of Manfred's grandfather becomes animated and is not satisfied with merely appearing to move, gesture, sigh, weep, or look sternly upon his descendant as a warning, but steps out of the frame, walks down the hall and slams a door behind him. In these cases the supernatural is, as Scott says, "brought forward into too strong day-light." There is not that obscure mystery, wispiness, and "beyondness" that really makes for successful use of supernaturalism after the stage has been properly set. Walpole comes closest to this in the single instance of the apparition of the cowed monk with the fleshless face of a skeleton that appears to Frederic, warns him to discontinue his suit for Matilda, and then vanishes from sight.

Mathew "Monk" Lewis, who wrote shortly before Scott began writing, makes the same error as Walpole, only to a lesser degree. He has a rather too physical ghost in The Monk in the instance of the bleeding nun, who carries a lamp in one hand and a dagger in the other. She physically embraces Lorenzo and deceives him into thinking she is his beloved Agnes, rides with him for several miles in a carriage, and, later, haunts him at night. He is able to hear her approach by her "heavy step" on the stairs. Lewis does, however, have other apparitions that are less physical and more plausible to the imagination. Such an example is seen in Antonia's mother appearing to her and warning her that in three days they will meet again through Antonia's death. Antonia is here in such a state of mind that she would be most likely to see a ghost if she were superstitious. She has lately returned from her mother's funeral

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<sup>17</sup>Walpole, p. 4.

and is in the room where she was strangled. Such a filmy and fleeting spectre is more pleasing to the fancy than a huge hand or gigantic hairy leg clad in armour.

When such objects as the gigantic helmet and sword in The Castle of Otranto are, as Scott complains, "too distinct" and too sustained, when they are supposed to be supernatural, they become as any other of the physical properties of the setting and lose any tendency to excite terror. They only arouse curiosity.

The all too frequent apparitions make the element of the supernatural too commonplace to be effective, and Walpole must himself admit in the story that Manfred has been subjected to so many supernatural incidents that he is "... almost hardened to preternatural appearances...."<sup>18</sup> In fact, it becomes such a common thing with him that he carries on his intrigues in a most business-like way, as though insensible of the omens that are trying to oppose him at every turn. He seems to look on the ancestral ghosts as nuisances and seems more annoyed than terrified at their interferences in his private affairs.

Whether or not the novel was, as Caroline Spurgeon contends, "... written as a half joke by the clever, dilettante, unromantic, eighteenth-century man of fashion...."<sup>19</sup> cannot be absolutely determined; but if it is to be considered the "father" of the Gothic novel, a genre that is definitely serious, the clumsy use of the supernatural must be considered a flaw. Because of this flaw, the novel has none of the eeriness, the indefinable terror that is the cogent ingredient in a good ghost story.

Lewis' The Monk seems almost as much overloaded with the supernatural

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>19</sup>Spurgeon, p. xi.

as The Castle of Otranto, but it does contain a certain element of terror that Walpole does not even approach. Lewis has, in fact, done something in this phase of the Gothic that Mrs. Radcliffe has not even done in The Mysteries of Udolpho with all her situations of supreme terror. Monk Lewis has added horror to terror in The Monk. Terror itself is "intense fear," but horror is terror combined with repugnance or disgust. He gives the reader a "whiff" of the graveyard as he combines the realism of decaying corpses, half eaten by worms, with the supernatural. Don Raymond is not only terrified but repulsed at the nightly kiss from the decayed lips of the bleeding nun apparition. It is also in a sepulchre under St. Clare's Convent and amidst the stifling stench of decaying corpses, that Ambrosio holds his first rendezvous with the Fallen Angel himself. It is in this same cavernous sepulchre, in a secret vault, that Agnes is chained after being given a strong sleeping potion, and where, when she awakes, is not only terrified to her wits' end but nauseated as well. When she later relates this horrible experience, she does not fail to indicate this:

As I raised myself with this design, my hand rested upon something soft: I grasped it, and advanced towards the light. Almighty God! What was my disgust—my consternation! In spite of its putridity, and the worms which preyed upon it, I perceived a corrupted human head, and recognized the features of a nun who had died some months before. I threw it from me, and sank almost lifeless upon my bier.<sup>20</sup>

It is in this subterranean burying place that Agnes' baby is born, which she holds in her bosom long after it is dead and begins to decompose; the worms crawl from it onto her own body. Antonia also wakes in this place from a strong opiate and discovers a rotting corpse on either side of her.

Perhaps this type of horror would be too blunt and shocking for Mrs. Radcliffe, but whether it is an improvement over her use of terror or not,

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<sup>20</sup>Mathew Gregory Lewis, The Monk (New York, 1906), p. 323.

it is a definite improvement over the supposed terroristic instances in The Castle of Otranto. It may be argued, however, that Lewis dabbles too much in this sort of thing. Mrs. Radcliffe comes rather close to this kind of horror in the case of the figure in a state of decay that Emily sees behind the black veil, but even it turns out to be only of wax.

Mrs. Radcliffe has all the usual Gothic machinery at work in The Mysteries of Udolpho, and there are opinions that she was the greatest of Gothic writers. Some assert that her retirement from the Gothic lists marked the definite decline of the Gothic vogue:

Some commentators, seeing in Mrs. Radcliffe's work the finest flowering of the school of terror, have traced the falling away of the general interest in Gothic fiction from the day she laid down her pen in 1797 and have termed later novelists in the tradition, like Lewis and Maturin, "belated advocates" of an outmoded genre.<sup>21</sup>

There is little doubt that in The Mysteries of Udolpho Mrs. Radcliffe rightly deserves much of the praise she gets. She is unsurpassed by other Gothacists in her power of vivid description, which is cast over her novel like a fine lace veil. It is true that Scott seemed to favor Walpole's style, which is almost void of any description, rather than Mrs. Radcliffe's, which, he says "not unfrequently encumbered her kindred romances"<sup>22</sup> and which was a "showy and wordy exuberance of a style fitter for poetry than prose."<sup>23</sup> But although Mrs. Radcliffe's descriptions seem a little long-winded for our taste as well as for Scott's, she has discovered one thing of great importance: the value of atmosphere. By her descriptions of landscapes, ruins, castles, costumes,

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<sup>21</sup>K.K. Mehrotra, Horace Walpole and the English Novel (Oxford, 1934), p. 162., quoted by R.D. Mayo, "How Long was Gothic Fiction in Vogue?" Modern Language Notes, Jan., 1943, vol. 58, p. 58.

<sup>22</sup>Scott, p. xlv.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. xlvi.

and characters, she successfully achieves atmosphere of tenderness, awe, terror, or whatever the incident warrants. She has the ability to harmonize the feelings of the reader with those of her characters in particular situations.

In the first lines of The Mysteries of Udolpho, Mrs. Radcliffe captivates her reader with a brilliant description of the part of the province of Gascony which was Emily's home:

To the south, the view was bounded by the majestic Pyrenes, whose summits veiled in clouds, or exhibiting awful forms, seen, and lost again, as the partial vapours rolled along, were sometimes barren, and gleamed through the blue tinge of air, and sometimes frowned with forests of gloomy pine, that swept downward to their base. These tremendous precipices were contrasted by the soft green of the pastures and woods that hung upon their skirts; among whose flocks and herds and simple cottages, the eye, after having scaled the cliffs above, delighted to repose.<sup>24</sup>

Such majestic scenes as this and lengthy, but effective, descriptions of Emily's parents, their fine qualities, and their extremely happy home life help, by contrast to her environment at Udolpho, to increase her terror when she is lifted out of this almost "Heaven on earth" and plunged into the most dismal surroundings and among the most depraved people.

As the story progresses and Emily journeys toward Udolpho, the scenery changes from the magnificently beautiful to a wilder, more dismal, and foreboding countryside, which Mrs. Radcliffe is no less apt in describing to produce an atmosphere of gloom and apprehension. The first glimpse of the castle itself fills Emily with anxiety:

Emily gazed with melancholy awe upon the castle, which she understood to be Montoni's; for, though it was now lighted up by the setting sun, the gothic greatness of its features, and its mouldering walls of dark gray stone, rendered it a gloomy and sublime object. As she gazed, the light died away on its walls, leaving a melancholy purple tint, which spread deeper and deeper as the vapour crept up the mountain, while the battle-

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<sup>24</sup>Ann Radcliffe, The Mysteries of Udolpho (London, n.d.), vol. 1., p.5.

ments above were tipped with splendor. From those, too, the rays soon faded, and the whole edifice was invested with the solemn duskiness of evening. Silent, lonely, and sublime, it seemed to stand the sovereign of the scene, and to frown defiance on all who dared to invade its solitary reign. As the twilight deepened, its features became more awful in obscurity....<sup>25</sup>

Mrs. Radcliffe is equally capable of depicting her characters. She has all the typical Gothic characters, but, by elaboration of description, she has made them seem more alive than Walpole has his characters in The Castle of Otranto. There is so much told about the personal appearances and traits of each, that the reader feels he is acquainted with them.

Emily is the typical Gothic heroine, overdone in personal appearance, goodness, and accomplishments. "Hers was the contour of a Madonna, with the sensibility of a Magdalen; and the pensive uplifted eye, with the tear that glittered on her cheek, confirmed the expression of character."<sup>26</sup> She shows her skill many times in singing, playing the lute, and composing verses. She is delicate and sensitive and weeps and faints profusely.

Mrs. Radcliffe's hero is clearly portrayed both in personal appearance and in quality. He is an ideal young man, who has sturdiness and love of sport combined with sensitivity of beauty and appreciation of the arts. He is of gentle nature and often "tears tremble in his eyes," or his voice "trembles" as he speaks affectionately to Emily. He is even more perfect in the eyes of Emily by his having been associated with her father, whom she looked upon as being infinitely good.

The villain, Montoni, is capable of the blackest of crimes and plays the part well in harrassing the heroine to the point of distraction and keeping her separated from her lover. He has the typical Gothic appearance, and his character appears even more imposing to the gentle eye and

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 90.

"softened mind" of the heroine:

She looked on his dark countenance, she again thought she saw the murder of her aunt; and her mind was so convulsed with horror, that she had not power to recall thought enough to explain the purport of her visit....<sup>27</sup>

The cohorts of the villain are equally "dark-countenanced" and vicious, and serve to assist him in his "wicked designs."

There is in this story, as well as in other of the better Gothic novels, a garrulous servant, Annette, whom, it seems, is introduced for comic relief. This type of character serves to relieve some of the terror, preventing monotony, but also is usually so naive and superstitious that there is added impetus to the preparation of the reader for the preternatural. Annette and Dorothee are both more than ready to furnish ghostly explanations for any slight incident that seems the least mysterious. This tends to get the reader in the mood for the eerie.

The castle itself in The Mysteries of Udolpho has all the necessary environs for a Gothic romance: its solitary situation, its outer and inner court, the battlements for stationing of guards, the great marble staircases, the closed apartments (said to be haunted by the late "Lady of the Castle"), the dreaded "east turret," the torture chamber with the great iron chair, the dark and lofty galleries, the secret passages in the walls, and the dismal castle clock—all these, so amply depicted, serve their purpose well as the setting for the tale of terror.

Though this novel is not set in strictly feudal times as The Castle of Otranto is, the castle is a feudal one and there is a good representation of a castle under siege when the "enemy" attacks. Though this battle is not described, the battle field around the castle is shown cluttered

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., vol. 2., p. 17.

with pieces of armour when Emily is conducted back to Udolpho.

It is not character, setting, and atmosphere that are most objectional in The Mysteries of Udolpho; it is the rational explanation of all the mysteries. Mrs. Radcliffe employs none of the supernatural, but substitutes postponed explanation. There is rather a feeling of disappointment when this becomes evident, and there is no incentive for a second reading, as far as story interest is concerned.

Sir Walter Scott objected to this trait in Mrs. Radcliffe's writing and gives three good reasons why he feels that her logical explanation is a flaw:

In the first place, the reader feels indignant at discovering he has been cheated into a sympathy with terrors which are finally explained as having proceeded from some very simple cause; and the interest of a second reading is entirely destroyed by his having been admitted behind the scenes at the conclusion of the first. Secondly, the precaution of relieving our spirits from the influence of supposed supernatural terror, seems as unnecessary in a work of professed fiction.... Lastly, these substitutes for supernatural agency are frequently to the full as improbable as the machinery which they are introduced to explain away and to supplant.<sup>28</sup>

Fully admitting that what Scott says is true about the improbability of the explanations and that his objections are well founded, credit must be paid Mrs. Radcliffe's ingenuity for holding her reader in such suspense as she does until she is ready to enlighten him. The reader is eager to know what Emily has seen behind that "horrid black veil" but not a hint is given until near the end of the story when it is explained as a wax dummy, representing a human form in the process of decomposure. The mysterious visitant on the battlements that is deemed a spectral apparition is discovered to have been Monsieur Du Pont, who was a prisoner, and who had found a secret passage that let him out on the ramparts, where he went for exercise. It was also he who was discovered to have been

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<sup>28</sup>Scott, pp. xxxviii-xxxvix.

the ghostly voice that terrified Montoni and his people. This he had achieved by that same secret passage in the walls of the castle. The mysterious and ghostly flame that played upon the pikes of the guards, frightening the superstitious ones, was explained to have been nothing more than electricity from the storm clouds. Even the mysterious music heard in the dead of night is explained as having been made by the mad nun Agnes. When all these incidents which seemed so terrific at the time are explained by natural means, the effect gained by suspense is lost. There are scenes where terror is derived from natural circumstances, such as Emily's imprisonment at Udolpho, the cruel treatment and death of Madam Montoni, the open grave in the underground vault, Emily's journey through the thick woods at night with two supposed murderers as conductors, and Montoni's threats and cruelty. Such incidents remain as remembrances of terror when the story is finished, but even they are minimized when the incidents having to do with the supernatural are so fully explained.

It is a pleasure to turn from this earlier Gothic to that of Scott, whose employment of it raises the Gothic to a dignity and technical excellence not achieved before.

### CHAPTER III

#### SCOTT'S USE OF THE GOTHIC IN THE MONASTERY AND IN THE BRIDE OF LAMMERMOOR

Sir Walter Scott's love for the past, his romantic inclinations, and his thorough knowledge of his native land with all its superstitions and colorful history helped to qualify him for the task of refining the Gothic tradition. He was a voracious reader and from childhood was an avid listener to tales and legends, especially those of his native Scotland. His boyhood was spent saturating himself with the past of Edinburgh, one of the most romantic cities in the world. An unusually retentive memory was a great advantage to him in his writings.

Scott had a way of making the past become alive to himself and therefore seem alive to his reader. He was like the Biblical Ezekiel who stood in a valley full of dry bones and saw them come together "bone to his bone," become clothed with flesh, and stand upon their feet "an exceeding great army." Through his vivid imagination Scott was able to conjure visions of stirring, medieval times "In a land where the horses remained almost constantly saddled, and the sword seldom quitted the warrior's side—where war was the natural and constant state of the inhabitants, and peace only existed in the shape of brief and feverish truces...."<sup>1</sup> Thus he saw and described the Scottish border country in the early sixteenth century. It was not as though Scott felt out of place in his age and tried to live

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<sup>1</sup>Sir Walter Scott, The Monastery (New York, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 17.

only in the past, but he had an unusual appreciation for antiquity and felt that the time of chivalry afforded a heritage worth preserving.

For him, the past, often by virtue of some chance revelation or contact, ceased to be the past and became in his consciousness as immediate as the present.... For him, dry bones reassembled themselves and became clothed in flesh, and rubble reconstituted into settings for pageantry.<sup>2</sup>

With such power of imagination as a propelling force, the "Wizard of the North" established a veritable baronial mansion at Abbotsford. Here he resided and surrounded himself with the paraphernalia of chivalry and other objects from the medieval world. This furniture and trappings from the "barbarous" age provided fuel for his imagination and the great Gothic house itself furnished him with an atmosphere that aided in the inspiration of his writings. Abbotsford was a physical expression of Scott's love and appreciation for the past:

There it stood with its museum, its glorious gilt-caged library complete with volumes of Monfaucon, variorum classics and Byron urn. Through the scutcheoned windows the green and golden sunlight fell upon the stone floor of a baronial hall; shields of heraldic devices told their story from the cornice, nuns' heads peeked from the angles; it was a boy's fancy come true, for the sick boy who had lain in bed all those years ago in Edinburgh reading feats of arms and learning the language of heraldry had managed to transmute his visions into solid shape and was master in this wonderland.<sup>3</sup>

Saturated as he was with the medieval world, Scott wrote The Monastery after being inspired by the ruins of the Cistercian abbey near the village of Melrose in Southeastern Scotland. Scott was familiar with such places not only through his interest in history but through an acquaintance gained by his extensive walking tours. The ruins of the abbey were only "a morning's ride" from Scott's house and furnished a ready symbol of an earlier age, a "contact" to make the past become as the present for

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<sup>2</sup>Hennessy, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

him. The heaps of rubble that had once been a great abbey became the stage and "setting for pageantry" for The Monastery. It sparked his imagination. This much he intimated to his son-in-law:

"As we proceeded, he talked without reserve of the novel of The Monastery .... 'It was a relief,' he said, 'to interlay the scenery most familiar to me with the strange world for which I had to draw so much on my imagination.'"<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps it was a relief for him to give reins to his fancy after he had just completed the long historical novel Ivanhoe. At any rate, his imagination is unbounded in the supernatural in The Monastery, and the novel brings Walpole's Castle of Otranto to mind in more instances than one. In the first place, Scott remained anonymous as the author and pretended that the story was from a Benedictine manuscript found in the ruins of the abbey. Similarly, Walpole had remained anonymous and pretended that the manuscript of his Castle of Otranto was found in the library of an ancient Catholic family in the north of England and had been printed in Italy in the year 1529.

Caroline Spurgeon accused Walpole of writing his novel as a "half-joke" because of his unlimited and ridiculous use of the supernatural.

Una Pope-Hennessy makes a similar accusation against Scott:

Delighted with the notion of perpetrating a new hoax on the public, he arranged to sponsor both novels The Monastery and The Abbott elaborately in the manner reminiscent of The Castle of Otranto.<sup>5</sup>

It is true that Scott has done what he himself criticised Walpole for doing, e.g. pressing too hard upon the "spring" upon which the supernatural turns and "too constantly upon the same feelings in the reader's mind."<sup>6</sup> The

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<sup>4</sup>J.G. Lockhart, The Life of Sir Walter Scott (New York, 1848), p. 329.

<sup>5</sup>Spurgeon, p. 74.

<sup>6</sup>Scott, p. xl.

White Lady of Avenel apparition is too physical, too sustained, and too frequent, just as Alphonso's ghost and accoutrements were in The Castle of Otranto. But Scott extricates himself from the accusation of "perpetrating a hoax on the public" in his 1830 introduction to The Monastery. Here he explains what the White Lady is and why he has chosen such an agent:

The popular belief no longer allows the possibility of existence to the race of mysterious beings which hovered betwixt this world and that which is invisible. The fairies have abandoned their moonlight turf; the witch no longer holds her black orgies in the hemlock dell; and

"Even the last lingering phantom of the brain,  
The churchyard ghost, is now at rest again."

From the discredit attached to the vulgar and more common modes in which the Scottish superstition displays itself, the author was induced to have recourse to the beautiful, though almost forgotten, theory of astral spirits, or creatures of the elements....<sup>7</sup>

These creatures or spirits belonged to the elements of air, earth, fire, and water. Their life span was several times longer than that of a human being and they had no life after death. In traditional Highland superstition these spirits were attached to families. The White Lady was of the element of water and seemed to have a mysterious tie with the house of Avenel.

Scott felt that other types of supernatural beings had been exploited and that perhaps this type would be refreshing. Apparently he had intended to use a more conventional ghost, for, according to Lockhart, as quoted by Hennessy,

The Monastery was designed to have contained some supernatural agency, arising out of the fact that Melrose had been the place of deposit of the great Bruce's heart. The writer shrank, however, from filling up in this particular the sketch as it was originally traced.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Scott, p. 18.

<sup>8</sup>Hennessy, p. 75.

Nobody knows just why Scott changed his mind and used the White Lady, as she has no connection with the great Bruce's heart; but, at any rate, she plays a considerable role in the story. In fact, she is too much in the lime light. Her appearances are made more frequent by the fact that she can be summoned into existence, or visibility, by a human being with a brave heart and a strong will. Halbert Glendenning has these qualifications and conjures her frequently at the fountain by the holly tree in a secluded glen. He is advised by her and even accompanies her on a fantastic trip into the heart of the earth to a chamber where she has secured the Bible of Lady Avenel.

She is too sustained and physical, or, to use Scott's phrase again, she is "brought forward into too strong day-light, and marked by an over degree of distinctness and accuracy of outline."<sup>9</sup> This is shown by the fact that she is mistaken for a human being. Father Philip, the sacristan of Kennaquhair Monastery, thinks she is mortal and offers her conveyance across the river on his mule. Because he has confiscated Lady Avenel's Bible, she literally lifts him from the mule and almost drowns him in the river as she purloins the Bible to return it to its owner. At another time she pushes Father Eustace from his saddle to save him from being pierced by the lance of a moss-trooper.

The White Lady is more mysterious and less tangible at her first appearing, which makes her somewhat more plausible than she is when she begins her playful dunking of monks and harrassing of border robbers. She is seen first by the old work horse Shagram and by the very young Mary Avenel in a dark glen that leads to the tower of Glendearg: ... seeing Shagram stare with his eyes, distend his nostrils, and tremble

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<sup>9</sup>Scott, p. xli.

with terror, hinted that he surely saw more than they could see. In this dilemma, the child suddenly exclaimed—"Bonny ledly signs us to come yon gate." They all looked in the direction where the child pointed, but saw nothing, save a wreath of rising mist, which fancy might form into a human figure....<sup>10</sup>

Had Scott kept his use of the supernatural in this vein, it would probably have been more successful. For this filmy, fleeting wispieness that plays between the mortal's imagination and his sense of reality so that he can never be quite sure of what he has seen or of whether he has really seen it at all, is most effective in a story in which the preternatural plays a part. But when that being that is supposed to be other than mortal appears and acts so much like a mortal that it is mistaken for one, then the effect of eeriness is lost and the situation may become ludicrous or, at least, less impressive.

The White Lady has changed from the faintly-outlined phantom of the glen to a thing of more solid reality when she attacks Christle the moss-trooper. He later relates: "... she had a bulrush in her hand, with one touch of which she struck me from my horse, as I might strike down a child of four years old with an iron mace...."<sup>11</sup>

Adverse criticism against Scott's use of the White Lady apparition is mitigated some by his explanation that she is not like the conventional ghost, that she is of another order of beings. The explanation comes from her own mouth as she converses with Halbert Glendenning in a melodious chant:

"What I am I must not show—  
What I am thou couldst not know—  
Something betwixt heaven and hell—  
Something that neither stood nor fell—

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<sup>10</sup>Scott, p. 118.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 217.

Something that through thy wit or will  
 May work thee good—may work thee ill.  
 Neither substance quite, nor shadow,  
 Haunting lonely moor and meadow....  
 Wayward, fickle is our mood,  
 Hovering betwixt bad and good,  
 Happier than brief-dated man,  
 Living twenty times his span;  
 Far less happy, for we have  
 Help nor hope beyond the grave!"<sup>12</sup>

Besides this explanation there is another factor in favor of her existence. Her dwelling place is in Glendearg, which is comparable to the actual glen of Allen in the neighborhood of Melrose. This glen is said, by traditional superstition, to be a familiar refuge of the elfin race. The definite superstitions about such beings make the White Lady, in this setting, seem less objectionable.

Indeed, the country around Melrose, if possessing less of romantic beauty than some other scenes in Scotland, is connected with so many associations of a fanciful nature, in which the imagination takes delight, as might well induce one even less attached to the spot than the author, to accomodate, after a general manner, the imaginary scenes he was framing to the localities to which he was partial.<sup>13</sup>

Scott felt that:

There was therefore no great violence in supposing such a being as this to have existed, while the elementary spirits were believed in; but it was more difficult to describe or imagine its attributes and principles of action.<sup>14</sup>

This is a partial admission on the part of Scott that he was rather uncertain of himself in his use of the astral spirit. Even though he somewhat justifies his creation of her, he is unsure as to what appearance she should have and what part she should play.

Since the White Lady is "Something betwixt heaven and hell," is neither

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 244-245.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

angel nor demon, she seems rather artificial in a novel with a monastic background and where the principal conflict is between factions of the Christian religion. This is all the more true since the monastery plays such a part as to almost become a character in the story. At least it affects the lives of each of the characters in one way or another. In this monastic atmosphere it is only natural that Christie thinks he is seeing the Blessed Virgin Mary when he sees the White Lady. It would have been more fitting to The Monastery if it had been a vision of the Virgin. It seems rather illogical that if the spirit were not of Heaven or of Hell that she should play such a part as she does in aiding the Reformers. Buchan says "She is neither credible nor awesome ... and repeatedly she carries the tale into the realm, not of fantasy, but of farce."<sup>15</sup>

Sir Walter realized that his White Lady was not a success and that his use of her as the supernatural element had impaired The Monastery. In an introduction written some ten years after he wrote the novel he admits:

Either, however, the author executed his purpose indifferently, or the public did not approve of it; for the White Lady of Avenel was far from being popular. He does not now make the present statement, in the view of arguing readers into a more favorable opinion on the subject, but merely with the purpose of exculpating himself from the charge of having wantonly intruded into the narrative a being of inconsistent powers and propensities.<sup>16</sup>

Scott wants his readers to know he is aware of his failures in this point and has sufficiently stated his reason for deciding upon a "fairy" agent for his supernatural element in this particular novel.

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<sup>15</sup>Buchan, Sir Walter Scott (New York, 1932), p. 228.

<sup>16</sup>Scott, pp. 21-22.

Another instance of supernaturalism in The Monastery that seems out of place is the appearance of Mary Avenel's father's ghost to her in the spence of the tower of Glendearg. There is no apparent reason for his appearance, and it plays no part in the story itself. It is almost as though Scott has here fallen into the snare that Watt accuses the hack writers of, that of introducing a ghost for no other reason but the thrill it was calculated to produce. It also seems inconsistent to have a ghost of the conventional type in the same story where the astral spirit is the main agent of the supernatural.

Scott has not been altogether successful in his use of the Gothic in The Monastery, but neither has he been completely unsuccessful. With all its deficiencies, it is a definite refinement over earlier Gothic romance. He has succeeded in giving a most lucid and detailed picture of the feudal system as it existed during the time of the story. This is not just a picture of the external trappings such as Walpole displays in his procession of Prince Frederic into Otranto, but one that reveals the feelings and obligations that existed between lord and vassal and how their lives were affected by the same. The powerful barons are mentioned, whose vassals cultivate the arable land and are obliged to do military service for him when it becomes necessary. The villages where the vassals clustered in groups of thirty or forty families are described as having several small towers with battlements, "shot-holes," and strong doors.

As Scott goes on to describe the physical arrangement of the feudal system as well as the obligations that existed between lord and vassal, he makes clear that the great church possessions such as the Halidome of St. Mary's, were operated on the same system.

After the feudal setting is established, Scott peoples it with

characters corresponding to the times. Monastic life and order are fully portrayed in Abbot Boniface and his monks at the monastery of Kennaquhair, the seat of St. Mary's Halidome. It is evident more than once in the story that the Lord Abbot's word is law, not only to the monks but to the vassals as well. His power is the same as that of a secular baron, except that it is intensified by superstition.

The incident of Stawarth Bolton's visit to the little tower of Glendearg offers an example of the virtue of medieval chivalry. Stawarth is a captain in the English army "whose scarlet cloak, bright armour, and dancing plume, proclaimed him a leader."<sup>17</sup> His generosity and gallantry are shown in his refusal to plunder the house of a valiant warrior's widow and in his placing the little household under his protection from other English troops by leaving his red embroidered St. George's cross as a token.

The Scottish border raiders or "moss-troopers," as they were called, are exemplified in the person of the sacrilegious Christie of the Clint-hill. He lives by plunder and serves a secular baron. According to Dame Elspeth Glendenning, there is no crime too black to be attributed to his kind. The Glendennings themselves are examples of vassals who must take all precautions against displeasing their liege lord.

Scott has his people in their proper places playing their separate parts in a feudal world, but they are not mere puppets or devices. They are not flat like Walpole's characters nor stereotyped as Mrs. Radcliffe's are. They are not just names; they have individuality. Halbert Glendenn-ing is a good example. He is a vassal to the church but not a typical one.

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 101.

He refuses to cower and surprises those about him with his "rashness" and his desire to rise above his level:

"I am glad the Abbot comes hither. I will know of him by what right this stranger is sent hither to domineer over us under our father's roof, as if we were slaves and not freemen. I will tell the proud priest to his beard——"<sup>18</sup>

He frequently talks of his desire to be a knight and ride under the banner of some great nobleman.

There are, as in any story, the necessary typical characters, such as Dame Glendenning, Christie, the miller Hobb, the servants Tibb Tacket and Martin, and others. But even these are somewhat more rounded and are an improvement over Walpole's, about whom he tells little except their names, positions, and brief action in the story.

The plot of The Monastery is by no means the typical Gothic, e.g. it does not contain the conventional struggle between the Gothic villain and the hero and heroine. In fact, there is no hero or heroine of sufficient interest to carry the story forward and intensify the action. There is conflict however; it is between the Roman Catholic faith and that of the Reformers. The former is championed by Father Eustace and the latter by the preacher, Henry Warden. With the same sincerity and purity of intention, they dedicate themselves, the one to the support of the sinking fabric of the Catholic Church in Scotland and the other to the establishment of the reformed doctrine.

The novel cannot be condemned from the Gothicism's point of view for not having a typical Gothic plot since variation of plot is a privilege of the writer who delights in Gothic freedom. But Scott admits that The Monastery is "an unconnected course of adventures."<sup>19</sup> It does

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 307.

<sup>19</sup>Scott, p. 29.

not have the unity of plot that Walpole's Otranto has or even that of Mrs. Radcliffe's Mysteries of Udolpho. The incidents do not inevitably grow out of one another as Aristotle said they should in good plot. Scott admits that "the province of the romance writer being artificial, there is more required of him than a mere compliance with the simplicity of reality."<sup>20</sup> But he blames his "tangled presentation of incident" on the Benedictine manuscript.

If Scott was partially unsuccessful in certain elements of the Gothic in The Monastery, which he admits he was, he has more than made up for it in The Bride of Lammermoor. In this novel Scott has removed the ridiculous and added the needed touch of seriousness and closeness to real life, yet retained the "power of awaking suspense and disquieting the mind with murmurings from another sphere."<sup>21</sup> This spirit of "disquietude" is the essence of the Gothic spirit at its best. It is what Walpole sought to evoke but failed to accomplish. Mrs. Radcliffe wanted to achieve this but produced temporary terror instead. Lewis sought to impart this disquietude to his reader in The Monk, but instead he produced horror and shock.

It is easy to see that some of Scott's novels had deep roots in the old romance of terror, which, by the time of his writing, had suffered a lag. But when Scott breathed new life into the old forms, the general audience returned with the same eagerness but with more rewarding results.

For the outworn motifs and machinery of the romance of sentimental adventure, Scott offered equivalents which afforded the reader the same excitement while they carried all the conviction of real life. The wicked marquis's, the scheming monks, the savage banditti, and the phantoms of the Gothicists were transformed by the wizard of the North

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 29-30.

<sup>21</sup>Buchan, p. 197.

into the genuine outlaws, clerics, border barons, and ghosts of highland tradition; the operatic landscapes with castles and ruins metamorphosed into the actual mountains, forests, glens, caverns, and impregnable fortresses of the North Country.<sup>22</sup>

By using historical places and by making his characters more like real people instead of demons or angels, Scott has brought the Gothic romance closer to the reader. He has achieved what he felt was Walpole's objective, that is getting the reader so to project himself into the story that he yields to the atmosphere and expects the unusual. When this happens there is not so much room for rational questioning by the reader. In Scott's introduction to Walpole's Castle of Otranto, he explains how easily this may be done with an actual physical setting:

He who in early youth has happened to pass a solitary night in one of the few ancient mansions which the fashion of more modern times has left undespoiled of their original furniture, has probably experienced, that the gigantic and preposterous figures dimly visible in the defaced tapestry, the remote clang of the distant doors which divide him from living society, the deep darkness which involves the high and fretted roof of the apartment, the dimly seen pictures of ancient knights, renowned for their valour, and perhaps for their crimes, the varied and indistinct sounds which disturb the silent desolation of a half-deserted mansion; and, to crown all, the feeling that carries us back to ages of feudal power and papal superstition, join together to excite a corresponding sensation of supernatural awe, if not of terror.<sup>23</sup>

Since Scott cannot furnish all his readers with the actual experience of being in such a setting as he has here described, he does the next best. He places them there mentally and they are prepared for the reception of prodigies congenial to the creed and feelings of the actors. In such situations, superstition becomes contagious.

According to Scott's biographers, The Bride of Lammermoor was written during his broken years when he was "living in a remote world of pain"<sup>24</sup> and the novel seems to have some of that pain integrated

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<sup>22</sup>Mayo, p. 64.

<sup>23</sup>Scott, pp. xxxiv-xxxv.

<sup>24</sup>Buchan, p. 193.

into its fabric, for "it wounds without healing, and perturbs without consoling."<sup>25</sup> From the shadowy world created by the opium prescribed for his pain, Scott seemed to draw from depths that he had not yet tapped. After he had composed it, according to Buchan, he had no recollection of the composition and after its first reading pronounced it "monstrous, gross, and grotesque."

Regardless of the condition under which Scott wrote The Bride of Lammermoor, it has unity of plot and the incidents grow inevitably out of one another. "In some ways it is the most perfectly constructed of all the novels, for the sense of marching fatality is unbroken by an awkwardness of invention or languor of narration."<sup>26</sup> The story begins with a funeral, which is overhung with a gloom that is to prevail throughout the novel. Scott's description lacks the extravagance of Mrs. Radcliffe's and is more effective in the moderation. He uses it in the funeral scene to achieve a melancholy atmosphere and to depict the feudal system in a form of decay:

It was a November morning, and the cliffs which overlooked the ocean were hung with thick and heavy mist, when the portals of the ancient and half-ruinous tower, in which Lord Ravenswood had spent the last and troubled years of his life, opened, that his mortal remains might pass forward to an abode yet more dreary and lonely. ... banner after banner, with the various devices and coats of this ancient family and its connections, passed under the low archway of the courtyard....<sup>27</sup>

Here some of the outward trappings of an older order, the feudal order, are seen. The funeral not only sets an atmosphere of gloom and foreboding, but is symbolic of the death and decay of that mode of life. Some of the deeper feelings and loyalties that were prevalent in the feudal

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 196.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Sir Walter Scott, The Bride of Lammermoor (New York, 1871), pp. 30-31.

period are exemplified later in the story in the person of Caleb Balderstone, ancient seneschal of the house of Ravenswood.

From the funeral, the story moves on to the warning of old blind Alice to Ravenswood, and the stage is set for tragedy. There is an ending of madness and death for the lovers. The prophecy of Thomas the Rhymer,

"When the last Laird of Ravenswood to Ravenswood shall ride,  
And woo a dead maiden to be his bride,  
He shall stable his steed in the Kelpie's flow,  
And his name shall be lost for evermoe!,"<sup>28</sup>

hangs over them like a black cloud of doom and, to change the figure, serves as a thread woven through the story to tighten the plot.

Buchan remarks that The Bride is "of the fantastic Gothick pattern," and, as such, it has a Gothic setting. Ravenswood Castle and Wolf's Crag serve as the architectural background, and both convey the fact that the order of feudalism is passing. Since Sir William Ashton has taken over the ancient home of the Ravenswoods, it has taken on a certain gaudiness in decoration that better suits the rising class of the bourgeois, while the last heir of Ravenswood is obliged to reside in the crumbling tower of Wold's Crag. The great castle of Ravenswood still bears evidence it was built partly for defence:

The whole bore a resemblance partly to a castle, partly to a nobleman's seat; and though calculated, in some respects for defense, evinced that it had been constructed under a sense of the power and security of the ancient Lords of Ravenswood.<sup>29</sup>

The banners and portraits of the Ravenswoods have been taken from their places in the great hall of the castle and put away. But it is interesting to note how Scott achieves effect by the use of a portrait

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 170.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 212.

as part of the Gothic machinery. As before mentioned, portraits have played a prominent part in conventional Gothic story. Scott uses a more subtle technique such as he suggests in his introduction to The Castle of Otranto: "There are few who have not felt, at some period of their childhood, a sort of terror from the manner in which the eye of an ancient portrait appears to fix that of the spectator from every point of view."<sup>30</sup> The figure does not step out of the portrait as Walpole would have him do, nor does he weep, sigh, or "heave his breast," hence there is no absurdity attached. It is as if an ancestor of the Ravenswoods protests from the grave against the usurpers of this ancient house:

All looked up, and those who knew the usual state of the apartment observed, with surprise, that the picture of Sir William Ashton's father was removed from its place and in its stead that of old Sir Malise Ravenswood seemed to frown wrath and vengeance upon the party assembled below.<sup>31</sup>

Note how Scott has safely used the word "seemed" here. It is this ability to achieve eeriness without leaving himself open to the criticism of the rationalist and yet furnishing enough of the mystic element to satisfy the romanticist, that makes Scott a good Gothicism. This type of skill also prevents his getting himself into a corner that he must later explain himself out of, as Mrs. Radcliffe does.

It is never fully explained how the exchange of portraits took place, but it is significant that it should be Malise Ravenswood's portrait since he had in his lifetime retaken the castle from a usurper by disguising himself and his followers. The sign for attack had been the placing of a bull's head, the ancient symbol of death, upon the feast table with the words "I bide my time." Ever since, the bull's head had been in

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<sup>30</sup>Scott, p. xlii.

<sup>31</sup>Scott, The Bride, p. 309.

the Ravenswood family crest.

There are no "nose-bleeding statues" in The Bride of Lammermoor, but the bull's head crest itself serves to provoke the same anxiety in the mind of Sir William Ashton as he is preparing a report on young Ravenswood's action at his father's funeral, a report that could lead to his arrest:

... in pause of his task, chanced in looking upward, to see the crest of the family (for whose heir he was whetting the arrows, and disposing the toils of the law), carved upon one of the corbeilles from which the vaulted roof of the apartment sprung. It was a black bull's head, with the legend, "I bide by time;" and the occasion upon which it was adopted mingled itself singularly and impressively with the subject of his present reflections.<sup>32</sup>

This incident could be considered a refinement over the incident of Alphonso's statue's nose bleeding to warn the usurper, Manfred, of vengeance in The Castle of Otranto. The situations have similarities, but the effect is greater on the character in Scott's novel, as he changes his mind about the report. The reader feels this effect also. Since the portrait and bull's head are not animated but only seem to be, there is a mysterious conveyance, an implanting of uneasiness in the minds of the spectators.

Since medieval setting is a part of English Gothicism and Scott

... had read widely in the medieval chroniclers, and had in his head a mass of more or less accurate antiquarian knowledge of arms, heraldry, monastic institutions, and the dress and habit of the middle ages.,<sup>33</sup>

he was able to give a beautiful picture of one of the remaining feudal noblemen traveling with his retinue. By virtue of Scott's description, it is a more colorful train than that of Prince Frederic in Walpole's Otranto. The running footmen and other members and parts of the procession are described, and the picture is concluded with more of the

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>33</sup>Buchan, p. 198.

author's intensity of vision:

The dresses and liveries, and number of their attendants, their style of travelling, the imposing, and almost warlike air of the armed men who surrounded them, placed them far above the laird, who traveled with his brace of footmen....<sup>34</sup>

Such was the approach of the Marquis of A \_\_\_\_\_, Ravenswood's kinsman, to the present estate of Sir William Ashton.

Wolf's Crag Castle and the once dependent village of Wolf's Hope provide more Gothic setting. Wolf's Crag is in ruins, and its lord no longer holds sway over the village, as they are no longer dependent upon a feudal lord for their protection. Caleb tries, however, to keep feudalism alive by seeking to extract revenues that the villagers have long since felt they were no longer obliged to pay.

With all her vivid and extravagant description, Mrs. Radcliffe has none in The Mysteries of Udolpho that surpasses Scott's description of Wolf's Crag. In fact, it may be safely said that she has none so effective. It could not be better for Gothic atmosphere. Buchan said that "He never wrote better descriptive prose than in his picture of Wolf's Crag in Chapter VII."<sup>35</sup> As Ravenswood and his guest, Bucklaw, drew near to the ancient fortress

The sea had long announced their approach to the cliffs, on the summit of which, like the nest of some sea eagle, the founder of the fortalice had perched his eyry. The pale moon, which had hitherto been contending with flitting clouds, now shone out, and gave them a view of the solitary naked tower, situated on a projecting cliff that beetled on the German ocean. On three sides the rock was precipitous; on the fourth, which was that towards the land, it had been originally fenced by an artificial ditch and drawbridge, but the latter was broken down and ruinous, and the former had been in part filled up, so as to allow passage for a horseman into the narrow courtyard, encircled on two sides with low offices and stables, partly ruinous, and closed on the landward front by a low embattled wall, while the remaining side of the quadrangle was occupied

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<sup>34</sup>Scott, p. 213.

<sup>35</sup>Buchan, p. 194.

by the tower itself, which, tall and narrow, and built of greyish stone, stood gleaming in the moonlight, like the sheeted spectre of some huge giant. A wilder or more disconsolate dwelling, it was perhaps difficult to conceive. The sombre and heavy sound of the billows, successively dashing against the rocky beach at a profound distance beneath, was to the ear what the landscape was to the eye—a symbol of unvaried and monotonous melancholy, not unmingled with horror.<sup>36</sup>

The Gothic nature of the atmosphere created by the situation and appearance of Wolf's Crag is later enhanced by a violent thunderstorm and by the fact that the heroine, Lucy Ashton, and her father have taken shelter there. This is one of the scenes where terror is derived from natural circumstances and where the hero is on hand to support the fainting heroine.

The characters in The Bride of Lammermoor are not so melodramatic as earlier Gothic characters and even approach to the level of tragic figures. In fact, Buchan claims that they "do not fall below the tragic structure."<sup>37</sup> The hero is not the mere suffering, melancholy, Byronic type hero, but he is a man who has been deeply wronged. He is "a fully realized type of the aristocrat upon whom the ends of the earth have fallen...."<sup>38</sup> Young Ravenswood has the qualities of a Gothic hero—he has high principles, is good natured and noble, and capable of undying love; he is an excellent sportsman, though not crude; he is forgiving and even able to make friends with his avowed enemy, after his heart is softened by his love for Lucy—but, with all his goodness, he is not overdone to the extent of seeming to be almost angelic. In fact, he has a flaw that partly accounts for his destruction, his pride. Though this cannot be said to be the sole cause of it, for fate itself seems to be against him. He is not the "trembling," fainting type hero; Scott has

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<sup>36</sup>Scott, p. 77.

<sup>37</sup>Buchan, p. 195.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

given him the masculinity necessary to make him life-like. He is no less gentle and tender toward Lucy because of this but is also not so subdued and passive as some of the earlier Gothic heroes. There was a sort of awe in Lucy's affection for him, and she felt that

His soul was of a higher, prouder character, than those with whom she had hitherto mixed intercourse; his ideas were more fierce and free; and he condemned many of the opinions which had been inculcated upon her, as chiefly demanding her veneration.<sup>39</sup>

It will have to be admitted here that Lucy is more like the typical Gothic heroine than her counterpart is like the conventional Gothic hero. She has the highest principles, filial devotion, and accomplishments in fine arts. She plays the lute and sings beautifully, writes verses, and paints. She faints in the face of terror or danger, but is not so much given to this delicacy as are Mrs. Radcliffe's Emily and Adeline. Scott's first description of her character and appearance is reminiscent of that of the earlier Gothicists:

... for Lucy Ashton's exquisitely beautiful, yet somewhat girlish features, were formed to express peace of mind, serenity, and indifference to the tinsel of worldly pleasure. Her locks which were of shadowy gold, divided on a brow of exquisite whiteness, like a gleam of broken and palid sunshine upon a hill of snow. The expression of the countenance was in the last degree gentle, soft, timid, and feminine, and seemed rather to shrink from the most casual look of a stranger rather than court his admiration. Something there was of a Madonna cast....<sup>40</sup>

It is explained that her health is delicate, which partly accounts for her "angelic" appearance. Lucy's final madness adds some reality to her character. If some of the Gothic heroines were as delicate as they are painted to be, they could not have kept their "softened" minds from being affected by the terror and suffering they had to undergo. Lucy's sickliness may also partly account for her passiveness.

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<sup>39</sup>Scott, p. 198.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., pp. 37-38.

The Bride of Lammermoor does not have the conventional Gothic heroine-villain triangle. It is difficult to discover who the villain actually is. Sir William Ashton has too many good qualities and too many weaknesses to be actually termed a villain. He is, however, motivated by his wife to oppose the hero and force the marriage of his daughter to another than her love. Lady Ashton is a Lady Macbeth `à bon marché with a strong will and misguided pride who rules her house and her husband. She could be considered a female villain, but the real villain seems to be something more than mortal. Fate itself is the antagonist that harrasses and finally destroys hero and heroine. This element that takes destiny out of man's control and places it largely under the control of unknown forces lends the dignity of tragedy to this Gothic story. It is what Sophocles meant when he said, "Man cannot escape his fate, neither in walled cities nor in dark sea-beaten ships."

The fatal prophecy of Edgar Ravenswood's destruction seems to be tied in which the fountain that is said to bring bad luck to the Ravenswoods ever since an ancestor had suffered a tragedy there. It is here to this fatal fountain that Ravenswood carries Lucy to revive her after the ordeal of the wild cattle, and so begins to fulfill his ill-fated destiny. It is symbolic of the fall and death of the great house of Ravenswood, through the instrument of the Ashton family, that young Henry Ashton shoots a raven at the fountain. The Ravenswoods are traditional protectors of the raven. The mysteries tied in with the fountain make it a true part of Gothic setting, but it almost becomes a physical representation of the "villain," the unknown force against which the hero and heroine make their futile struggle.

The lesser characters in The Bride are more realized and individualized than the former banditti, peasants, and servants in Gothic story.

Great feudal loyalty is seen in Old Alice as one of the last retainers of the Ravenswood family. She is reluctant to accept any extra financial help from Sir William Ashton, whom she considers a usurper, and reminds him he is only keeping a part of a contract concerning his acquirement of the estates in keeping her small pension paid. She regards its receipt as from the Ravenswoods. She is no mere peasant, but one who is looked to as having a sort of second sight that is not usually given to human beings. Even her appearance differentiates her from the ordinary peasant.

Caleb Balderstone, as one of the lesser characters, may be slightly overdone in his humorous excuses and protestations concerning the family's honor, but he is more than just a garrulous servant. Even his humorous attempts at preserving the family honor seem to only deepen the darkness that is falling upon the house of Ravenswood. He represents the death throes of an older order. He is the last struggle of the feudal system to stay alive. He goes to all lengths with his loyalty, even to stealing food from the villagers and pretending the castle is on fire to prevent a noble visitor from seeing its bare condition. He is frank in admitting to young Ravenswood in his aside explanation: "I wad rather set fire to the tower in gude earnest, and burn it ower my ain head into the bargain, or I see the family dishonored in the sort."<sup>41</sup> He is unlike the ungrateful grave-digger, Mortsheugh, who has no pity or loyalty for the great family in its decline.

The lesser people are thus cunningly differentiated. Even the villagers that Caleb deals with are shown as real people and an insight is given into their way of life.

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 255.

The three hags that prepare corpses for burial are singular in appearance and character and when young Ravenswood met them they "... reminded him of the meeting betwixt Macbeth and the three witches on the blasted heath of Forres."<sup>42</sup> They are considered lesser characters but play an important role with their macabre graveyard jargon. Scott approaches Lewis' "terror-repugnance" combination in his treatment of the "leathern-chopped," paralytic hags but does not go to the extent of rotten corpses and worms. Instead he uses them as some sort of link from the world of reality to that of the unknown, adding more of the Gothic spirit to the story. Old Ailsie Gourley, one of the "witchwives," seems to have some kind of contact with the unknown. She foretells Lucy's death and that of Ravenswood, ending with—"I hae it frae a sure hand."<sup>43</sup>

As for horror in incident not directly concerned with the supernatural, the ordeal of the bridal chamber, where Lucy becomes ravingly mad and stabs her husband, can hardly be surpassed. It instills extreme horror in all concerned.

The supernatural itself has been handled so skillfully by the author that it does not provoke adverse criticism. There is a strain of the supernatural finely shown throughout the novel in the fatal prophecy. One feels that unknown forces are always at work, but there is nothing the critic can put his finger upon. For it can be seen that young Ravenswood helps to bring about his own downfall by his actions and judgments. There is a slight touch of the supernatural in old Ailsie Gourley, but she never admits, not even to her colleagues, that she is in league with Satan.

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 232.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

Scott has not overloaded his Gothic novel with the supernatural, which is a factor in contributing to the plausibility of what he does employ of it. His only spectre is Old Alice, and she appears briefly and only once. As young Ravenswood leaves his ancestral home at the rude request of Lady Ashton, his mind is a maelstrom of indignation, regret, and sad reminiscence. As he passes the fatal fountain he sees the spectre, which he first mistakes for Lucy and then recognizes as Old Alice:

The singularity of her dress, which rather resembled a shroud than the garment of a living woman—the appearance of her person, larger, as it struck him, than it usually seemed to be. ... as he approached, she rose slowly from her seat, held her shrivelled hand up as if to prevent his coming more near, and her withered lips moved fast, although no sound issued from them. Ravenswood stopped; and as, after a moments pause, he again advanced towards her. Alice, or her apparition, moved, or glided, backwards towards the thicket.... The trees soon hid the form from his sight....<sup>44</sup>

As Ravenswood ponders upon the apparition, he is himself not sure if he has really seen it or whether it was only in his imagination:

But the apparition, whether it was real, or whether it was the creation of a heated and agitated imagination, returned not again; and he found his horse sweating and terrified, as if experiencing that agony of fear with which the presence of a supernatural being is supposed to agitate the brute creation.<sup>45</sup>

Scott has pressed ever so lightly upon that delicate spring upon which he says the supernatural turns. He does not boldly declare a ghost was seen; he leaves it to the reader to decide. To the rationalist it may seem that Ravenswood is in such a state of mind that his imagination is the source of the apparition. To the Romanticist it is a being that has broken the barrier between mortality and immortality.

When Ravenswood reaches the cottage of Old Alice, he finds she was dead at the time of her appearance at the fountain. She had sent a

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., pp. 226-227.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

peasant in search of Ravenswood so that she could renew her warning to him. The reader is left to ponder the question with young Ravenswood:

Can strong and earnest wishes, formed during the last agony of nature, survive its catastrophe, surmount the awful bounds of the spiritual world, and place before its inhabitants in the hues and colouring of life?<sup>46</sup>

The apparition of Old Alice, when compared to the huge, physical, and sustained ghost of Alphonso in The Castle of Otranto, the White Lady of Avenel in The Monastery, or the bleeding nun apparition in The Monk, stands invulnerable against critical attacks that render them absurd.

The whole novel, The Bride of Lammermoor, is overshadowed by that "half world," which is neither of nature nor outside of nature, but is beyond our understanding.

In this novel Scott has improved over his representative predecessors and has avoided their flaws. He has given a better picture of the medieval world than Walpole, Radcliffe, or Lewis and has enlivened and realized his characters in contrast to the impossibly good and bad people of the earlier melodramatic Gothic cast. He has left his mysteries unexplained and the reader is enticed to a second reading.

Scott avoids Lewis' type of the blunt shock of decayed corpses and worms and has only a tinge of it in the instances of the hags.

He has not been extravagant in his description like Mrs. Radcliffe, but he has achieved a medium between her over-done description and Walpole's lack of it. This type of moderation in all points is an important factor in Scott's refinement of the Gothic. He has not made his novel "unsightly" by overloading in the supernatural or in any other of the Gothic elements. He has all the Gothic machinery but has breathed new breath

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 229.

into old forms; he has adorned the "unadorned elements of English Gothicism." The Bride of Lammermoor is the culmination, the climax of Gothic romance.

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