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GOthic LITERATURE

**A Study of Gothic Literature and
different examples of it through
the History of England and Europe**

B.A. THESIS

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PREFACE

There are many reasons for me to choose this objection, '*Gothic Literature*', to deal with, but the biggest reason is, it is a very interesting subject and at the same time it is part of our everyday life. To frighten of something is not different than to cry, to laugh or to get angry.

I should like to thank all my teachers for all the valuable teaching, helping and instructing me through my education that I have recieved in 'Near East University'.

This 'thesis' is the sign to show the significance of how my English has developed and how I am encouraged to search and write.

I am especially indepted to my supervisor and head of the department Assoc. Prof. Gül Celkan for giving guidance and advice in completing the graduation thesis.

INTRODUCTION

"Unhand me gentlemen .

By Heaven I'll make a ghost of him. "

Thus, spoke 'Hamlet' to his friends when he went in search of his father's ghost on the battlements of Elsinore castle.

Undoubtly, the first Elizabethans believed in ghosts, that they were at least as real presences as anyone else .

The Desire to be terrified is as much part of human nature as the need to laugh. This has been recognized for as long as stories have been told , and today, thriller writers and makers of horror movies depends on it.

The word 'Gothic' means 'wild' , 'barbarous' , and 'crude' . In literature , the term 'Gothic' refers to a particular form of the popular romantic novel of the eighteenth century. Gothic novels continued to appear in the nineteenth century and reemerged in strenght as part of the paperback revolution of the last half of the twentieth century.

Elizabeth Mac Andrew approached the essence of the gothic experience by defining it as the literature of the nightmare. Gothic literature evolved out of explorations of the innerself , with all its emotive, nonrational , and intuitive aspects. Thus, it emerged as a form of romanticism, but confronted the darker, shadowy side of the self. At its best, gothic to force the reader to consider all that society calls evil in human life.

Gothic novels called into question society's conventional wisdom , especially during the post-Enlightment period when special emphasis was placed on the rational , orderliness , and control . Gothic authors have challenged the accepted social and intellectual structures of their contemporaries by their presentation of the intense , undeniable, and unavoidable presence of the nonrational, disorder and chaos. These are most often pictured as uncontrollable forces intruding from the subconscious in the form of supernatural manifestations of the monstrous and horrenduos . Gothic literature , as Thompson noted , imposed a sense of 'dread' . It created a complex mixture of three distinct elements : 'terror', the threat of physical pain , torture and/or death ; 'horror' , the direct confrontation with a repulsive evil force force or entity; and the 'mysterious', the intuitive realization that the world was for larger than our powers of comprehension could grasp.

To accomplish its self-assigned task, gothic literature developed a set of conventions. Generally, action was placed in out-of-the-ordinary settings. Its very name was taken from the use of medieval settings by its original exponents, stereotypically an old castle. The most dramatic sequences of the story tended to occur at night and often during stormy weather. In plot, the characters attempted to function in the middle of an older but fading social order. It was a literary device that subtly interacted with the reader's own sense of disorder. The energy of the story often relied on the combined attack on the naive, innocent and defenders of the present order by momentarily overwhelming and incomprehensible supernatural forces in the form of ghosts, monsters, or human agents of Devil.

The Gothic novel was one aspect of a general movement away from classical order in the literature of the eighteenth century, and towards imagination and feeling, a development which ran parallel to the Romantic movement and presents many points of contact with it.

There is justification for the view held by some critics that the Gothic novel was a wrong turning, in the sense that it left the mainstream of the tradition developed by '**Richardson**', '**Fielding**', '**Smallet**' and '**Sterne**', and did not find its way back when that tradition continued with '**Jane Austen**', '**Sir Walter Scott**', and '**Dickens**'. Characterization tended to be sacrificed to the demands of complicated hair-raising plots, and the settings, elements and machinery associated with fear were over-exploited until they become monotonous. The weaker writers also overworked the emotionalism of '*the novel of sentiment*' developed by '**Richardson**', to which the Gothic novel was a natural successor. Saintly, heroines gushed tears by the bucketful.

No one can deny that it is against the stock, or cliché, responses that, as the '**I.A. Richards**' put it, 'the artist's internal and external conflicts are fought', and that with them 'the popular writer's triumphs' are made. On the other hand, it is narrow-minded automatically to equate 'popular' with 'hackneyed' or 'bad'. The popular '**Shakespeare**', '**Dostoyevsky**', and '**Dickens**' possessed the kind of energy that overspilled into excesses; it is at least doubtful whether their geniuses could have been expressed in a more selective way. The best Gothic novelists deserved their popularity, and some still demand to be read. Some were highly individual artists who added much to scope of the novel. Some exerted a seminal influence on other literary genres.

The gothic novel, in satisfying the hunger for mystery to replace the certainties of the eighteenth century, awe and fear to replace nationalism,

plundered the Middle Ages for its settings, content and machinery. The characters, though they may look medieval, are generally contemporary in thought and speech. Gothic architecture, though in a vague rather than a realistic way, was part of most novelists' settings- in the form of a half-ruined castle or abbey - and was used to create 'Gothic gloom' and sublimity, all those attributes that evoked awe. A castle had fairy-tale as well as medieval associations.

Such buildings displayed all the sides of fear: dark corridors, secret underground passages, huge clanging doors, dungeons with grilled windows. Nature was picturesque-ivy growing over the ruins and wild flowers in the cracks, and turbulently romantic-dense forests on mountain-sides, thunderstorms. The scene that hauntingly recurs is of large black mysterious birds encircling a castle on a stormy moonlit night, in which owls screech and bats flit about. There are evil doings in the vaults, terrified fugitives falling through passages with candles, a weird white-clothed figure glimpsed in a beam of moonlight that is fitfully cast across the ruin of a wall or a cell window, as it shines through the gaps in the thunderclouds.

Various changes of the supernatural and of witchcraft recall those found in the ancient classics, and in the Icelandic sagas. The 'Iliad' has ghosts, and the Icelandic sagas of the thirteenth century contain many supernatural elements, while the medieval romances, 'Dante' and 'Malory's' 'Morte d' Arthur' (1485) also used a powerful influence.

Terror and horror as main ingredients had been plentiful in poetry and drama from the 'Oedipus' of 'Sophocles' onwards, but not in the novel. Though terror is used effectively in 'Smallet's' 'Ferdinand Count Fathom' (1753), it only provides one or two episodes among many. Witchcraft had been important in much literature from 'Apuleius's' 'The Golden Ass' (about 170 AD) onwards, and there are many Elizabethan books on the subject, followed by a treatise on demands written by James I.

If we look at today's world, it is possible to come across many ghost stories or movies which are more than mere 'realism' or 'naturalism' because, more often than not, we have a surfeit of that in our workaday lives, and the grey monotony of television. Just as horror movies are wildly popular, the quieter, more private terrors of creepy stories can, as we sit by our fireside reading and relishing them, imagine worlds far from the everyday, however much the mise and scene is the same.

It is a strange business. We read in the newspapers increasingly graphic and grisly accounts of serial murders and are genuinely appalled,

empathizing with the victims and their grieving relatives and friends. There but for the grace of God... And then, casting down the newspapers or switching off the television news, we reach for a volume and without any sense of guilt feed our minds and fantasies on the manufactured horrors created for us by, at the very least, skilled craftsmen, some of them great writers.

THE ORIGINS of the GOTHIC and the VAMPIRE

Gothic fiction generally dated from the 1763 publication of *'The Castle of Otranto'* by British writer **'Horace Walpole'** (1717-1797). The tale described the interactions of the descendants of *'Aphonse the Good'*, a twelfth century ruler of a small Italian state. His heirs, both the good and the bad, joined some innocent bystanders in struggle to attain their personal goals, only to be diverted by the ghost that haunted their castle. The success of **Walpole's** novel inspired other writers to explore the gothic world. Most notable among those authors was **'Ann Radcliffe'**, who was often credited with developing the gothic novel into a true literary form through her novels *'The Castle of Athlin and Dunbayne'* (1789), *'A Scilian Romance'* (1790), *'The Romance of the Forest'* (1791), *'The Mysterious of Udolpho'* (1794), and *'The Italian'* (1797).

The popularity of the gothic novel directly led to the famous 1816 gathering of **Lord Byron**, **Percy** and **Mary Shelly** and **John Polidari** in Switzerland. Each was invited to wait out the stormy weather by writing and reading a ghost story to the others. **Mary Shelly's** contribution was the seed from which *'Frankenstein'* would grow. **Byron** wrote a short story that **Polidary** would later turn into the first modern vampire tale. The effect of the storm was heightened by the group's consumption of laudanum. This typified the role of various consciousness-altering drugs played in stimulating the imagination of romantic authors. The use of laudanum, opium, and/or cocaine produced a dreamlike state so prized by poets and fiction writers of era that they defined it as the essence of the creative moment. It also occasionally induced nightmares and encouraged the exploration of the darker side of consciousness.

Once introduced, the vampire became a standard theme in gothic romanticism, especially in France. Leading the French exploitation of the vampire was **Charles Nodier**. However, virtually every romantic writer of the nineteenth century from **Samuel Taylor Coleridge** to **Edgar Allan Poe** ultimately used either the vampire or a variation on the vampiric relationship in his or her work. Gothic fiction reached a high point in 1897 with the publication of the great vampire novel, *'Dracula'*. Like **Polidari**, **Stoker** brought the *'Gothic'* into the contemporary world; but **Stoker** developed his themes far beyond **Polidary**. *'Dracula'* played on traditional gothic themes by placing its opening chapters in a remote castle. Contemporary Transylvania (like contemporary Greece in **Polidari's** story) replaced the older use of medieval settings and effectively took the

reader to a strange pre-modern setting. However, **Stoker** broke convention by bringing the gothic world to the contemporary familiar world of his readers and let lost evil from a strange land on a conventional British family. Neither the ruling powers, a strange heroic male, nor modern science could slow, much less stop, the spread of that evil. Except for the intervention of the people who love of nonconventional and supernatural wisdom (**Abraham Van Helsing**), the evil would have spread through the very center of the civilized but unbelieving world with impunity. Eventually, of course, **Van Helsing** was able to organize all the forces of good, including the necessary implements of what most considered on not existent religion, to defeat '*Dracula*'.

THE GOTHIC GENRE

Three names are essential in Gothic genre are **Ann Radcliffe**, **Mathew Lewis**, and **Charles Maturin**.

The novels of Mrs Radcliffe are not strong in characterization, nor in speculation. The story can build up towards a powerful climax, as it does throughout *'The Italian'* (1797), but in most of her other books the author gives the interest by over-complicating her plots.

Nevertheless, she is very gifted. In one word, she added poetry to the novel. This poetry is found in her descriptions of landscape, and in the moods and feelings of her characters, who are for the most part 'figures in a landscape', they are in love with it, see divine order in it (as Wordsworth did) are moved by it (like some of Shakespeare's characters) and are dominated by it.

It is almost entirely a Mediterranean landscape which pervades her six novels, and is used as the settings for her repeated theme: she pretends a beautiful heroine who undergoes many dangers, and is made mysterious by apparently supernatural happenings, before being able to marry the man she loves.

'The Mysterious of Udolpho' (1794) and *'The Italian'* are her best works. Apart from the settings, the novels presents many of **Walpole's** Gothic elements - old manuscripts revealing secrets and so on - but she keeps the supernatural at a distance. 'Emily' the heroine of *'Udolpho'*, faints at a terrible sight - a corpse's face being consumed by worms. She later discovers it was a picture - an image of wax used by penitents in the past for contemplation. Strange shadows and weird music turn out to have equally rational explanations. 'Radcliffe' referred to her work as 'romance or phantasia', but the more concentrated later novel is less compromisingly Gothic.

Her wicked tyrants are her most interesting characters. 'Montani' in *'Udolpho'*, who marries Emily's aunt and tries to cheat her out of her inheritance, and the monk 'Schedoni' in *'The Italian'* are lonely, strong-willed, handsome men with extraordinary passions, capable of great cruelty and also of great suffering. They show the strong influence of the bloodthirsty criminals of the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists, while **Walpole's** 'Manfred' showed how some humanity could be added; on the other hand, it was mainly **Mrs Radcliffe's** versions that inspired

Maturin's, Byron's and Scott's romantic villains. She also improved on Walpole's talkative servants, giving them more depth and humour.

'Udolpho' is about sixteenth century French people mainly and 'The Italian' about seventeenth century Italians, but in Gothic fashion they have the mentality and concerns of Mrs Radcliffe's contemporaries.

Unlike the other Gothic writers she is moderate in her exploitation. Most of the information for the background had to be derived at second hand, from such German authors as Shiller -she had read his 'Ghost-Seer' or 'Apparitionist'(1795)-and Marguis Grosse's 'Genius', which was translated as 'Horrid Mysteries' in 1796. And she is typically vague, using the settings and rituals symbolically, rather than with any attempt at realism.

The author who first saw the huge potential in this subjectmatter was Mathew Lewis. In 'The Monk' (1796) Lewis used the scandalous accouts of going-on in monasteries and in the prison of the Inquisition to sensational and horrific effect. The exaggerations and implied condemnations were partly due to a desire to capitalize on a sudden resurgence of interest in such themes, because of the revival of the Spanish Inquisition in 1768; at the same time the development of different kinds of secret societies, mostly liberal and revolutionary, before and after the French Revolution of 1789 also played a part.

The term called 'horrific effect' of Lewis needs a little explanation, for there is an important distinction within the Gothic genre between terror and horror. Mrs Radcliffe's effects evoke terror, which implies 'uncertainty and obscurity', as she herself, having avoided Walpole's mistake of too much clarity, expressed it on article: "*terror awakens the faculties whereas horror contracts, freezes and nearly annihilates them. Horror includes 'revolt' as well as 'fear'.*"

There had been horror in the last part of 'Vathek' (1786) and there was to be horror in 'Frankenstein' (1818) though not in a dominant mood, and the restraints of the latter owes much to Mrs Radcliffe. But Mary Shelly's father William Godwin, wrote some Gothic novels, notably 'Caleb Williams' (1794) and 'St Leon'(1799), which have particular interest seen as halfway houses between terror and horror; these books place the emphasis on psychology, and mystery.

These stories took the Gothic novel a stage further in its evolution, but no one was ready for the shock of 'The Monk', which had the effect of releasing passions and breaking mental barriers with the force of an

earthquake. While he lacked the poetry or the subtlety of **Mrs Radcliffe**, whom he admired but found 'weak'. **Lewis** possessed the energy and instinct to make a credible marriage of reality with the supernatural - something which **Walpole** had failed and **Mrs Radcliffe** did not dare to do.

Charles Maturin's 'Melmoth the Wanderer' (1820) is as astonishing and, in its own way, as fruitful a work as *'The Monk'*. It is a combination of terror and horror. The necromantic 'Melmoth' has bought with his soul 150 years of youth from Devil, and in his wandering through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries attempts to find new victims: people undergoing extreme suffering are offered the chance of exchanging places with 'Melmoth', if they give up their souls. They all refuse. This makes a unifying theme for a collection of different stories, although **Maturin** scarcely exploits its dramatic possibilities to the full. The subject include the Englishman 'Stanton', who is losing his mind in a London asylum, and 'Isodora', whom 'Melmoth' marries in Madrid. They are married by the hand of a dead hermit and the witness is the ghost of a murdered domestic servant 'Isadora' suffers at the hands of the jury. Her child by 'Melmoth' dies in prison, and she dies of a broken heart after refusing 'Melmoth's' offer.

'Maturin' was an inspiration not only for writers with Gothic association such as **Poe**, but also, directly or indirectly, for many different kinds of writers - for writers of suspense stories in Britain such as **Wilky Collins** and **R.L Stevenson**, for psychological terror stories such as **Henry James's 'The Turn of the Screw'**, for **Oscar Wilde** (especially *'The Picture of Dorian Gray'*) and for the modern detective novel. The great Italian classic of **Manzoni**, *'I Promessi Sposi' (The Betrothed)* (1825), has a long section in which a young woman is forced to take the monastic vows. The most extensive influence of 'Melmoth' was on French literature - on **Victor Hugo**, **Dumas Pere**, and **Balzac** among many others.

'Melmoth' like **Lewis's 'Monk'**, as well as inspiring greater writers, was of course vulgarized in many imitations. To add to the other 'damned immortal' associations there is in him a strong suggestion of the mythical vampire, the 'undead' who return to life each night and suck the blood of people, who then also become vampires. The most talented of the writers on vampires, such as **Bram Stoker** (1847-1912) whose best novel was *'Dracula'* (1897), put much of 'Melmoth' into their protagonists, though there was also the example of *'The Vampyre'* by **Polidari** published a year before 'Melmoth'.

The work of **E.T.A. Hoffmann** (1776-1822), one of the finest writers of horror tales that Germany has produced, was among the German influences of **Maturin**, particularly in the black magic business. **Hoffman** wrote one definitely Gothic novel, translated as *'The Devil's Elixir'* in 1824, about a monk succumbing to the Devil's temptations. He had the same interest as **Maturin** in powerful minds, whether strangely hypnotic or in league with the Devil, and this concern is much in evidence in the three *'Tales of Hoffman'* that formed the basis of **Offenbach's** opera. In *'The Sandman'* a young student, under the spell of an evil magician Coppelius, falls in love with a doll, and finally jumps off a high building to his death. In another, a young man loses his reflection to his lover, and in the third a consumptive girl singer prefers singing herself to death to living safely and obediently.

Hoffman can be over-morbid and lacks the psychological insights of **Maturin**, but for a hothouse originality that infected **Dostoyevsky** among others he deserves a mention here among the best practitioners of the Gothic genre.

GOTHIC and POPULAR

The influence on English literature of the German terror-romance at the turn of the eighteenth century is illustrated by Jane Austen's satire upon the Gothic novel, '*Northanger Abbey*', in which she shows how such literature could reduce its readers' capacity for enlightenment. Completed in 1803, the publishers held it back till 1818, apparently afraid that it would do harm to the Gothic market. In the city of Bath **Isabella Thorpe** is recommended to read seven 'horrid' novels, and these have been analysed in **Michael Sadleir's** essay, '*The Northanger Novels*'. Only one, '*Clermont*' a chapsodical romance dated between 1793 and 1798, is not German in provenance or inspiration. '*The Catle of Walfenbach*', '*Orphan of the Rhine*', '*The Mysterious Warning*' and '*Midnight Bell*' are substantially Gothic and heavily German-influenced, the first strongly suggesting '*Utranto*' the third '*Udolpho*'. Then there are '*Necromancer of the Black Forest*' with content directly borrowed from the German, and pointing to '*Melmoth*', and '*Horrid Mysteries*', a translation from German.

The Gothic novel, however, lost favour and quality after 1820. It had fallen into the hands of unskilled, imitative writers: the result was that either the repetition of horrors in vulgar copies of **Lewis** blunted appetites, or the dependance on Radcliffe-type explanations become tedious. The decline of the Gothic was assisted by different kinds of novel notably **Eaten Standart Barrett's** '*The Heroine*' or '*The Adventures of Cherubina*' (1813), **Scott's** '*Waverly*' and **Jane Austen's** '*Northanger Abbey*' of 1818. Both the first and the last of these satirezed the genre, but it was a very slow process (Jane Austen recieved 10 pounds for *Northanger Abbey* while over twenty years earlier Mrs Radcliffe had recieved 500 and 800 pounds for '*Udolpho*' and '*The Italian*' respectively). From about 1830 a lurid kind of Gothic continued in series of magazine stories such as '*Terrific Tales*', or longer '*Shockers*', with screaming covers.

As Gothic literature declined, popular literature of other kinds, but much of it having Gothic attributes increased. For with the newly invented paper-making machines and rotary presses of the early nineteenth century literature for the masses was now being produced in quantity. Some of the appetite for the strange had been and was being deflected from Gothic to Romantic -to **Shelly**, **Byron** and **Southey**, whose '*Thalaba the Destroyer*' (1801) used Oriental mythology and encouraged reprinting of '*The Arabian Nights*'. In spite of the *Northanger* list, the borrowings from German of popular literature as a whole were mainly romances, often without the supernatural, such as **Bürger's** '*Leonare*', translated as '*The Chase*' in

1796 by **Scott** and folk tales such as those collected by the **Grimm Brothers**. What is of interest for the moment is that some of the new kinds of popular literature exploited Gothic elements and qualities in various ways.

The supernatural, for instance, was often used as a divine agency to support the accepted morality that frequently provided the message. A typical plot, for example, shows the evil monk being beaten in his designs on the maiden he has imprisoned when part of the monastery collapses on top of him, while the maiden makes her escape.

The influence of the German tales of terror spread beyond Gothic novels to many other kinds of popular literature. *'The Monk'* and *'Melmoth'* owe an obvious debt to the Faust legend: this was also combined very effectively, from the late thirties, with the German werewolf theme - in **G.W.M. Reynold's** *'Wagner the Werewolf'* (1847) a German peasant is given perpetual youth by Satan provided he becomes a werewolf every seven years. Imitations of German stories often had German characters.

There were many satires of the Gothic novel and the over-sensitive heroine of both the Gothic romance and the sentimental romance that preceded it was a frequent butt... **Barret's** *'The Heroine'* (1813) provides at times a hilarious send-up of the excesses of **Mrs Radcliffe** and **Lewis**, using phrases from the originals to make the parodies stick. Cherubine, a country girl who suffers various 'Gothic' adventures looking for her lost parents says: "*Oft times I sit and weep, I know why; and then I weep to find myself weeping. Then, when I can weep, I weep at having nothing to weep at...*"

Jane Austen borrowed much of the situation of *'Udolpho's'* Volume IV, chapter 4, from chapter 20 of *'Northanger Abbey'*. The heroine, Catherine Morland, is shown through the old abbey to her room, where someone had died twenty years before, by the old housekeeper, Dorathy. Catherine's head is full of Gothic novels, and she expects at least a secret passage, and perhaps an imprisoned wife somewhere and a few skeletons. But all she finds, in a japanned cabinet is what appears to be a laundry list.

Jane Austen has a lot of fun with the Gothic conventions, and although the satire is gentle and subtle enough in the novel, her dislike of the unnaturalness of so much Gothic heroics is very clear, and the message, in this earliest published work - that the use of imagination without reason can dangerously damage one's judgement - was to be developed in her later novels. Like Catherine, the heroines of *'Pride and Prejudice'*, *'Sense and*

Sensibility ' and the others would suffer in the real world , and loose their illusions .

Thomas Love Peacock , a friend of **Shelly** , satirized in *'Nightmare Abbey'* (1818) the way in which the poet and his followers derived their schemes for changing the world , not only from **Shelly's** father-in-law from that year , **Godwin** , but from Gothic fomanes and German tragedies and tales of terror - the way they made use , for example , of such secret societies as the Illuminati , founded by the German **Weishaubt** in 1776 , who considered that they possessed special enlightenment , believed in republicanism and were organized like freemasons . **Shelly** is represented by 'Scythrop Glowry' in the book and **Mary Shelly** as 'Stella' , but it is a problem for today's reader that many of the characters cannot be traced to the originals who suggested them , and since **Peacock** is very close to the events he was living through , the obscurities are many .

For the student of Gothic literature , nevertheless , the satirical wit of *'Nightmare Abbey'* provides plenty of compensation . There is a scene between 'Scythrop' and 'Marionetta' (based on Shelly's first wife Harriet Westbrook) , in which he suggests that they drink their mixed blood as a sacrament of love - (they would see 'visions of transcendental illumination and soar on the wings of ideas into the space of pure intelligience) - that echoes a scene in *'Horrid Mysteries'* between Rosalia and Don Carlos . However , 'Marionetta' 'had not so strong a stomach as 'Rosalia' , and turned sick at the proposition '**Peacock's** aim in *'Nightmare Abbey'* , as he expressed it in a letter to '**Shelly**' , was to 'bring to a sort of philosophical focus a few of the morbidities' of the literature of the time . It is light-hearted burlesque and is diffused over the wide target of both Gothic and Romantic extravagances .

GOTHIC and ROMANTIC

The imagination of pre-romantic poets, notably **Blair**, **Blake**, **Burns**, **Collins** and **Young**, were strongly drawn to nocturnal themes, to graveyards haunted by ghost and demons, and to the imagery of dreams and nightmares. They were stimulated by the treatment of such themes and imagery to be found here and there in **Percy's** *'Reliques of Ancient English Poetry'* of 1765 and **James Macpherson's** *'The Poems of Ossian'* (1760-63), in the *'Arabian Nights'*, and in cheaply printed collections of medieval legends such as *'Dr. Faustus'* and *'Wandering Jew'*. And even earlier than this we find such a representative poems as **Collin's** *'Ode to Fear'* (1751).

*"Thou to whom the World unknown
With all its shadowy shapes is shown.
Who see'st, appall'd, the unreal scene
While Fancy lifts the veil between
Ah, Fear! Ah, frantic Fear
I see, I see thee near.*

The Romantic movement in poetry and the Gothic movement in the novel shared some of their origins-their interest in medievalism and in the supernatural, for instance. At times, Gothic qualities appear to be one aspect of Romanticism. Writers moved from one to the other. **Mrs Radcliffe**, **Lewis** and **Maturin** inserted verses into their novels; **Scott**, **Stelly**, **Byron** and **Coleridge**, while the poets experienced with the Gothic novel and drama.

The Gothic principles expounded by **Walpole** in his preface to the second edition of *'Otranto'* - to create extraordinary, or supernatural, situations but people them with believable characters behaving believably- has a strong affinity with **Coleridge's** recipe for Romanticism, expressed thirty years later in the preface to the *'Lyrical Ballads'*. The interest in libertarian ideas, in spiritual worlds, in the grotesque and the horrible in both Gothic and Romantic has been sufficiently noted.

Where Romanticism and Gothicism part company most conspicuously, perhaps, is in the former's insistence that Beauty is most closely associated with pain, desire, sorrow. The Gothic novelists were well aware of the hypnotic appeal of their satonic villains, with their 'virele beauty' and which they flaunted as extravagantly as their suffering and cruelty; but

whereas the novelists exploited the characters for dramatic and horrific effects, the Romantic poets philosophied about the phenomenon.

'Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought', **Shelly** says in 'To a Skylark' and **Keats** says that melancholy 'dwells with Beauty-Beauty that must die'.

The Gothic descriptions of corpses and skeletons, mingling fascination and loathing, are refined in the Romantic poets to a longing for what is beyond death, in a spiritual, of unknown, world-for what cannot be described. **Keats** expressed this idealism in lines of 'Ode on a Grecian Urn':

*"Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are Sweeter..."*

Death to the Romantics is a release from ugliness. On the death of **Keats**, **Shelly** rejoices that age would not spoil that beautiful spirit. The idea is extended by Romantic extremists/outsideers such as **Baudelire**, who searched for beauty where death and despair were near-in the hospitals for the poor and brothels of Paris. Imagination was all; it was the feelings that were to be stimulated rather than the mind.

The term Romantic has been obscured and devalued by its loose application to literature of all ages that emphasises imagination and the subjective at the expense of the rational and ordered, which follows rules. But even in the stricter, late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century sense, and confining the term to those writers who were consciously following a definite, Romantic aim, the movement has a much less exact meaning of historical period than the Gothic. Romanticism is a current that can be traced right through to today, while Gothicism is a stream that goes underground, out of sight, for long periods, and then reappears in different forms. Part of the reason for the decline in Gothic as a genre was the absorption of many of its aspects by Romanticism.

Byron acknowledged that;

*"Otway, Radcliffe, Schiller, Shakespeare's art,
Had stamped her image in me."*

With all these sources **Byron** added much of himself. He was a man who lived, loved and drank so hard that at his death at thirty-six his brain and heart showed the signs of very advanced age.

Byron's *'Manfred'* talking of Astarte, provided the Motto for the 'fatal men' of Romantic literature: "*I loved her, and destroy'd her*". Vampires are these fatal men in their most symbolic form. **Byron** mentions vampires in his poem *'The Giaour'*, and this poem inspired **Polidari** to write the first vampire novel in English. Vampires were usually men in the first half of the eighteenth century; thereafter, they are mainly represented as women.

'The Wandering Jew', which became such a significant Gothic motif, has an unforgettable characterization in **Coleridge's** guilt-tortured *'Ancient Mariner'* (and later turns up in Keats's *'Endymion'* and Shelly's *'Alastor'*). **Piranesi's** etching haunted **Coleridge** as well as **Walpole** and **Beckford**. In *'Confessions of an Opium Eater'* **Thomas De Quincey** tells how **Coleridge** described to him **Piranesi's** etching entitled *'Dreams'*: staircases one after the other, with **Pranessi** standing at the top of each one, before an abyss.

There is a close association between dreams - and their importance for the creative writer - and drugs. **De Quincey** in his *'Confessions'* held that dreams crystallized the particles of past experience into a symbolic pattern. In an opium-induced dream the writer could see how the crystallization took place. The influence of opium can be seen in **Poe**, **Baudelaire**, **Crabbe**, **Coleridge**, **Wilkie Collins** and **Francis Thopson** who regularly took it, and **De Quincey's** thesis has much corroboration in the evidence from these writers that they learned from opium, by observing their imaginations at work.

Both interior and exterior settings in the Romantic poets often produce unmistakable echoes of the Gothic novels they consumed. **Coleridge's** ballad *'Christabel'* is a masterpiece of Gothic with its haunted castle, and moonlight gleaming through torn clouds. **Wordsworth** in his verse play *'The Borders'* as well as borrowing a good deal of its content from **Schiller's** *'The Robbers'* and from various Gothic fictions, has learned from **Mrs Radcliffe** how to put terror into the shapes and moods of natural scenery. **Byron's** drama, *'Manfred'*, has Gothic halls, a tower with a secret room, and demons, and his *'Childe Harold'* has picturesque passages that could have been written by **Mrs Radcliffe**, as could many of those in **Keats** and **Shelly**. **Keats** in *'The Eve of St. Agnes'* plundered *'Udolpho'* for the castle, shadowy passages, moonlight and feudal jollifications. When he attempts gorgeous descriptions, as in *'Lamia'*, it is **Beckford** that comes to mind **Shelly**, apart from his two Gothic novels *'Zastrozzi'* (1810), and *'St Irvine'* (1811) has bits of Gothic everywhere.

In early nineteenth century prose fiction, the Gothic spirit, unmistakable as it is, manifests itself in different ways. **Scott**, the admirer of **Mrs Radcliffe**, took Gothic details to fill in his pictures and was rarely unfaithful to history. The Gothic manifestations of the **Brontës** are very interesting. **Charlotte's** Rochester in '*Jane Eyre*' and **Emily's** Heathcliff in '*Wuthering Heights*' have strong resemblances to Schedoni and **Byrons** Manfred: Rochester's locked-up mad wife is reminiscent of one in **Mrs Radcliffe's** '*A Sicilian Romance*', and '*Wuthering Heights*' has nightmares and ghosts. Both novels have Gothic weather, and when **Emily** falters, she has Heathcliff 'crushing his nails into his palms, and grinding his teeth to quieten the maxillary convulsions.' But the stories, with all their passions, are rooted in the reality of the simple, domestic life of the English countryside: their emotive power is enhanced by their credibility.

The other and the important Romantic Gothic writer is the American **Edgar Allan Poe** (1809-49). His heroes have affinities with the lonely outsiders of the American literary tradition in **Melville** and **Hawthorne**, but more obviously and forcefully he learned a great deal from **Coleridge**, **Byron**, **Keats**, **Shelley** and **De Quincey**. The main impulse for his tales of horror was the German Gothic literature.

Poe's reputation is much higher in France than in Britain or the United States; he is regarded as the leading spirit of Symbolism, whom **Baudelaire**, **Mallarmé**, **Verlaine** and **Rimbaud** followed with reverence. Even more, if **Jules Verne** is the father of modern science fiction, **Poe** is the grandfather, and he also significantly developed the detective story, with lessons for **Stevenson** and **Arthur Conan Doyle**. '*The Murders in Rue Morgue*' (1841) was based on actual American case, transposed to Paris. **Poe's** powers of deduction were such that he could work out the ending of a **Dickens's** novel by reading the first chapter.

Poe also added psychology: his main interest, more so than **Maturin's**, was in what went on 'inside' his protagonists' minds, and his descriptions of doom-laden settings and furniture are genuinely, and symbolically, relevant to the tale, not just spurious additions. The study is generally profound because most of the protagonists, like Usher in '*The Fall of the House of Usher*' (there were but peculiar sounds, and these from stringed instruments, which did not inspire him with horror) are endowed and cursed with an abnormally cultivated sensitivity. Estranged from reality, often inhabiting heavily curtained rooms, they lose their sanity and sometimes their lives. They are driven back into the prison of themselves. That is a horror symbolized in other tales by being drowned in whirlpools (as in '*A Descent into the Maelstrom*'), being buried alive (as in '*The*

Cask of Amontillado'), being subjected to the most ingenious tortures the Spanish Inquisition could devise (as in 'The Pit and the Pendulum'). After Poe the Gothic spirit become diffused. The Romantic movement had particularly made the most of its supernatural aspects, and many different kinds of novel and would do the same.



Alexandre Dumas - French writer whose best known novels dealt with 19th century France. His most popular contribution of 'The Three Musketeers' (1844) and 'The Count of Monte Cristo' (1844-45) were successful in popularizing the 17th century. He was also a successful novelist in the 19th century. Dumas also wrote a number of popular tales. The American Nathaniel Hawthorne, in both style and content, was deeply influenced by the supernatural, by the 'old' in the 'new' with 'The Scarlet Letter' (1850) and 'The House of the Seven Gables' (1851) and a number of other tales of the supernatural. Hawthorne's 'The Scarlet Letter' is a novel of the 19th century and this is a novel which Hawthorne regarded as a masterpiece.

'The Scarlet Letter' (1850) is a novel of the 19th century. Hawthorne, who was a descendant of a long line of Puritan ministers, wrote with a sense of humor and a sense of the supernatural. Hawthorne's 'The Scarlet Letter' is a novel of the 19th century and this is a novel which Hawthorne regarded as a masterpiece.

Charles Dickens wrote many important tales within the 19th century and his novels, as well as his short stories, were very popular. Dickens's most famous works, 'David Copperfield' (1849) and 'Great Expectations' (1861), are both novels of the 19th century. Dickens's 'David Copperfield' is a novel of the 19th century and this is a novel which Dickens regarded as a masterpiece. Dickens's 'Great Expectations' is a novel of the 19th century and this is a novel which Dickens regarded as a masterpiece.

The American Sheridan Le Fanu (1814-73) was like Poe a link between the 18th and 19th centuries. He wrote many tales of the supernatural and this is a novel which Le Fanu regarded as a masterpiece.

MODERN GOTHICS

From the 1830's to today there has been a flood of literature descending from the Gothic. Most directly, there have been fiction about supernatural, including stories of ghosts. Vampires, werewolves and weird transformations; detective and thriller fiction, fantasy and science fiction. Some of this is mediocre, escapist stuff, but there are more names to put beside those already mentioned, and many other writers of exceptional interest.

Alexandre Dumas, a French writer, apart from his long list of historical novels, dealt with the supernatural. *'The Wolf Leader'* (1857) uses that popular combination of 'Wandering Jew' and werewolf themes, becoming a werewolf for periods being the Devil's condition for continuing life. **Dumas** also wrote a number of vampire tales. The American **Nathaniel Hawthorne**, in both tales and novels, makes considerable use of the supernatural, or the weird, to symbolize evil. *'The House of the Seven Gables'* (1851) involves a family curse - the ghosts of ancestors haunting the house because one of the family condemned an innocent man - and this is a theme which **Hawthorne** handled in several works.

'The Queen of Spades' (1834), a short story by the greatest of Russian poets, **Pushkin**, uses the supernatural in a simple but masterly way, and combines irony and fantasy, and requires no aid from white sheets and clanging chains.

Charles Dickens wrote many supernatural tales within the novels and the magazines he edited between 1850 and 1870, encouraging contemporaries, notably, **Wilkie Collins** and **Bulwer Lytton** to pursue them. **Henry James's** *'The Turn of the Screw'* (1898) is about two children possessed by the evil spirits of dead servants. **Franz Kafka**, whose work is of allegory, fantasy and horror, defying easy categorization, has had a strong influence on so much modern fiction since, wrote three works demanding mention: *'The Castle'* (1930), *'The Trial'* (1937), and the long *'Metamorphosis'* (1937), in which a young man becomes a cockroach. **Poe** and **Kafka**, **Guy de Maupassant** put many of his own phobias and nightmares into his tales of supernatural terror before he died in 1893,

The Irishman **Sheridan Le Fanu** (1814-73) was, like **Poe**, a link between the Gothic and the psychological horror of modern times. In novels

numerous tales he dealt with all aspects of the supernatural, and his mastery of suspense and ability to sustain an atmosphere without slipping into bathos or unconscious humour have given him the status of a classic-though a neglected one. His tales show his strength, rather than his novels. Among his masterpieces are the short stories '*Carmilla*', about a countess vampire which achieves psychological insight into lesbianism without detracting from or vulgarizing the horrific effect, and '*Green Tea*', about a man haunted by a strange creature resembling a monkey.

Of the long list of British writers in this genre during the Victorian period, **Lord Bulwer-Lytton**, with the superb story '*The Hounded and the Hounders*' (1859) among historical and occult works; **Lord Dunsany** (1878-1957) with his fantasies of other worlds, many containing a chilling evil presence at the heart of them; **M.R. James** (1862-1936), an ingenious but much less frightening version of **Sheridan Le Fanu**, his inspirer; and **Walter de la Mare**, the poet, who wrote various collections of ghost stories, and whose novels include '*Memoirs of a Midget*' (1921), about a woman two feet tall-all these are well worth reading.

H.P. Lovecraft's works, though readable, lack literary merit, and elements of racism and snobbery alienate many readers. But his fantasy worlds and weird tales are original, and enthusiasts for Gothic will admire his formidable knowledge of the literature of the supernatural. His critical work, '*Supernatural Horror in Literature*' was published in 1927. More recent supernatural stories have shown an interest in magic, witchcraft and the occult in general.

A pattern for the development of the detective novel can be made out as follows; **Godwin**, **Lewis**, **Poe**, **Wilkie Collins**, **Sheridan Le Fanu**. **Le Fanu's** '*The House by the Churchyard*' (1863) is a fine example. **Collins** wrote two compelling detective novels. '*The Woman in White*' (1860) and '*The Moonstone*' (1868) well written and sustaining the mysteries throughout. '*The Woman in White*' is one of the forerunners and best examples of what are called 'thrillers': added to the suspense/detection interest, there are adventures and more recognizable Gothic elements in this work, including a persecuted heroine and a devilish criminal. '*The Moonstone*' is one of the best detective novels.

Both detective novels and thrillers use such Gothic techniques such as ingenious murder methods, the theft of wills and other documents, wrongful suspicion, suspense, mysteries explained at the end. City streets replace castle corridors. The persecuted heroine is still there, if dreyer-eyed and more able to look after herself. The Gothic hero-villain may have

become a mad scientist, a much nastier Frankenstein, as in **Ian Fleming's** thrillers, or he may be the detective, with an intellect far superior to that of anyone around him, and the evil refined down to mere eccentricity. Perhaps the most famous detective in fiction is **Arthur Conan Doyle's** egoistic 'Sherlock Holmes' a pale thin man, of astonishing detective ability (Like Poe's), who takes opium and plays the violin. He was the progenitor of a long line of detectives, including **Dorothy L. Sayers' 'Lord Peter Wimsey**, **Agatha Christie's 'Hercule Poirot'** and the Belgian writer **Simenon's 'Maigret'**.

The three English writers were generally concerned with plot rather than sensation, but they did write books that contained horror. One of **Doyle's** best novels, in fact, is '*The Hound of the Baskervilles*' (1901), a Sherlock Holmes story where the detective is confronted not by a werewolf but a vicious hound with a villainous master. **Sayers** put together large anthologies entitled '*Great Short Stories of Detection*', '*Mystery and Horror*' (1929-34), and **Agatha Christie** also had a penchant for the weird, which surfaced in parts of many novels and in a fine volume of tales entitled '*The Hound of Death*' (1933).

Iris Murdoch, a philosopher as well as a novelist, uses Gothic elements in some of her novels, notably in '*The Unicorn*' and '*The Time of the Angels*', the first set in a remote, coastal region, with a castle, a swamp and cliffs above the sea. She gives the landscape a romantic power over the characters, and the castle is a prison for the chief character. 'Honrah Crean-Smith, cursed by her husband to remain inside for seven years. The Gothic settings and situation enable the author to fabricate a mythical environment in which she can explore various ideas about good and evil, guilt and innocence, and freedom.

The earlier mention of 'mad scientists' suggests the link between the Gothic novel and science fiction. On the model of 'Frankenstein' the best science fiction has some concern for science's role in the future and often has political and moral messages to deliver.

IN OTHER MEDIA

Angela Carter wrote a fantasia of the '*Dracula*' story for radio recently, called '*Vampirella*'. There has been much work in the Gothic genre done for radio, both adaptations and original work. What can misfire or become unconsciously absurd on the page or when represented on film or TV screen may take compelling and frightening shape in the mind encouraged to imagine. As the child said, when asked, why he preferred radio to television, he answered; '*The Pictures are better*'.

Where the effects has to be intimate, where the terror can be projected in subtle ways, where images can be unsensationally changed with symbolism, and where the atmosphere can be built up slowly and surely, than television can be a very effective medium. Ghost stories in a mainly domestic setting have tended to work best, there have been satisfying TV versions of such works as '*Dracula*' to confound these generalizations.

The attraction of Gothic horror for the cinema is obvious. One of the most influential films ever made is the classic German horror film, **Robert Wiene's** '*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*' (1920). The identity of Caligary, an eighteenth century Italian showman who hypnotised a man and used him to commit murders, is taken over by the crazed director of a psychiatric institute. The script by **Carl Mayer** and **Haas Jonowitz** has the flavour of **Hoffman**. **Mary Shelly's** novel had been filmed in 1908, 1916 and 1920, but these versions no longer exist, and Hollywood's '*Frankenstein*' of 1931 remains the classic. This was followed by sequels adding to the story - '*Bride of Frankenstein*' (1935) whose ambiguous title compounded people's inclination to make the name refer to the monster instead of the scientists, and '*Son of Frankenstein*' (1939), and there have been many imitations since. "As a man I should destroy him, as a scientist I should bring him back to life", the scientist says in '*Son of Frankenstein*'. The effect of the films is to make fears and suspicions about the powers of the scientists explicit, by the vivid imagery. The monster, in the first film of this series, was given a criminal's brain, and this is naively supposed to explain his evil nature from the start - **Mary Shelly's** socialistic message, of course, does not survive.

Bram Stoker's novel '*Dracula*' and later Gothic works were inspired by the much greater writer **Sheridan Le Fanu**, a point that needs emphasizing as the enormous success of **Stoker's** book has eclipsed his fellow Irishman. **Stoker** receives more attention because it is his image of the vampire - the tall pale Count in the black cloak, repeated and imitated

in many books and films - that has become the standart image and immediately comes to mind . Apart from that , he is extremely readable .

The first and greatly influential '*Dracula*' film was **Murnau's** '*Nosferatu*' , made in Germany in 1922 . In 1931 the Hollywood version , '*Dracula*' , by Universal , with 'Bela Lugosi' as Dracula , launched the whole series of horror films , including the various sequels on the '*Dracula*' theme as well as on the '*Frankenstein*' one. One or two of the earliest are regarded as classics and have been repeated on TV . In the 1960's Hammer Films of Great Britain returned to these and related themes -mummies , werewolves , zombies , and a number of 'creepies' adopted from **Poe** . There have been half a dozen excellent film versions of '*Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*' and three of **Conan Doyle's** '*The Hound of the Baskervilles*' , the most recent for television in 1974.

The best horror films , like the best Gothic literaure , give shocking scenes a dramatic function and do not include them for mere sensation , and most have been adopted from novels worth attention . Again, as in literature , suggestiveness often has a more powerful effect than explicitness .

Psychopatic disorder has been a common motif in recent horror films . Usually it is associated with sexual repression and family tensions .*Psycho*' , from the novel by **Robert Bloch** , published in 1959 , is a good example , and the nearest to a Gothic horror film made by one of the masters of cinematic suspense , **Alfred Hitchcock** . This film achieved some of the most spine-chilling effect seen in the cinema with very little violent action . A famous scene is that of the stabbing to death of a woman while under a shower , behind a shower curtain , in which almost everything is left to the imagination while the blood is seen trickling away with the bathwater.

The central character of '*Psycho*' is a schizophrenic who hates his mother , and , the film inspired a number of 'schizophrenic films' , including '*Homicidal*' , '*Blood Sisters*' and '*Schizo*' . The thread to the family can , of course , be traced back to many different literary themes in the past ; it is sufficient for the moment to trace it to '*Frankenstein*' and '*Dracula*' and their progeny . In **Hitchcock's** '*The Birds*' (1963) , from a story by **Daphne du Mauriner** , when birds in thousands and terrorize a small town with sudden , ferocious invasions the horror comes from realizing how vulnerable and artificial are the family's barriers against disintegration . The forces for destruction may be slumbering within the instution itself . At the same time , the wider - spread tensions of a civilized society may find outlet in the destruction of natural forces and , as in '*The Birds*' , these may take revenge .

'The Omen' (1976), film and novel by **David Seltzer**, is about an American ambassador to London and his wife, who have a demon-child, agent of the Devil's scheme to bring about the end of the world. 'The Voice of reason' is represented by a photographer who gets his head sawn off, and there is other violence and much occult business involving crucifixes. There are cheap effects in these films, but they have a flair and vitality to compensate.

The Gothic-horror films and the hybrid forms generated by combination with science fiction or with the occult, have a strong association with dreams, of the kind that inspired **Walpole, Beckford, and Mary Shelly**. So we have not travelled too far away from our original trinity after all.

After mentioning the 'Gothic Genre' and its relationship with other genres such as romantic or modern, it is going to be good to deal with the most important gothic stories and their writers.

HORACE WALPOLE : "*The Castle of Otranto*"

Horace Walpole, the fourth Earl of Oxford, the youngest son of the statesmen 'Robert Walpole', had a long and productive life, as 'Member of Parliament' for twenty-six years, writer of essays, memoirs, and as an antiquarian with a taste for Gothic architecture. He died in 1797 at the age of eighty. **Walpole** suffered some ridicule in his own time for the eccentricity of turning his home at Strawberry Hill, Twickenham, near London, into a little Gothic Castle, and for the extravagances of his novel '*The Castle of Otranto*' (1764). He had his champions, but today he and his novel are regarded curiosities. Here is a widely talented dilettante, who through an accident of literary history created one of the most influential novels ever written. A greatly remarkable work, it is hardly readable today for its own sake, but it contains innovations that have inspired numerous imitations and developments.

The rooms at Strawberry Hill were, in Walpole's words; "*more the work of fancy than imitation*", more Rococco than Gothic. There was a monastic hall with statues of saints in arched windows and a staircase with suits of armour, but much of the decoration was sentimental or quaint. The Gothic Revival, as the architectural and antiquarian movement was named after the early decades of the eighteenth century, had been separate from the revival of the Gothic in the 'grave-yard' verse of the pre-Romantic poets. But in mid-century there were writers of importance known both in the field of literature and as students of Gothic architecture, such as **Thomas Gray** and **Kenneth Clark** maintains in '*The Gothic Revival*' that **Gray** has undeservedly been overshadowed by the attention given to **Walpole**, and that it was literary taste which influenced the new Gothic architecture rather than the other way round.

However that may be, **Walpole's** importance in both movements derives from combining extensive antiquarian interest, a desire to revive Gothic architecture, and his liking for the medieval tales of chivalry. All these elements come together in the novel, inspired by a dream of the author's in which he found himself in a castle and saw a gigantic, hand in armour at the top of a staircase; the story was then written in a two month rush.

Even the basic plot, quite apart from the supernatural elaborations and difficulties in method, cannot be taken seriously today. One has to make a

great effort to see it from , the standpoint of the age , hungry for magic and mystery after many decades of nationalism .

The setting is Italy . 'Manfred' , the prince of Otranto , has arranged the marriage of his son 'Conrad' to 'Isabella' , daughter of the true heir . The evening before the wedding a huge helmet falls on Conrad , killing him , and it is discovered by a peasant , 'Theodore' , that the helmet is like one now missing from a black marble statue of 'Alfonso the Good' , a former prince , in the church of St. Nicholas .

Manfred says that he will divorce his wife 'Hippolita' and marry 'Isabella' . At this , the plumes of the helmet shake , the portrait of Manfred's grandfather in the gallery comes to life , sighs , and goes into a chamber .

'Isabella' escapes from 'Manfred' through an underground passage and is given refuge by Father Jerome at the church of St. Nicholas . On the way she has met and fallen in love with 'Theodore' . 'Matilda' , Manfred's daughter , has noticed that 'Theodore' , with his jet black hair , is like the portrait of Alfonso in the gallery , and is also in love with him . 'Manfred' is told by garrulous servant that a giant's leg in armour has been seen in the chamber at the end of the gallery .

Father Jerome is ordered by 'Manfred' to give 'Isabella' and to behead 'Theodore' , but when the monk discovers that 'Theodore' is his son , the young man is spared . Isabella's father , 'Frederic' , the Marquis of Vicenza , arrives . He is the nearest relative to the last rightful owner Alfonso . An enormous sword , carried by 100 knights , is let fall near the helmet where it cannot be moved . 'Manfred' tries to persuade 'Frederic' that there should be a double wedding . He with 'Isabella' , 'Frederic' with 'Matilda' . Three drops of blood fall from the nose of the statue of 'Alfonso' to protest .

'Manfred' confesses that his grandfather poisoned 'Alfonso' in the 'Holy Land' , and by a fictitious will the grandfather was declared his heir . 'Jerome turns out to be 'Count Falconara' . 'Matilda' is killed by her father who in an insane fit of jealousy takes her for 'Isabella' , and the castle is shaken by thunder . The giant 'Alfonso' appears in the middle of ruins , shouting ; *'Behold in Theodore the true heir of Alfonso'* . The new prince , Theodore , marries 'Isabella' . 'Manfred' and his wife will spend the rest of their lives in the convent , repenting .

Walpole's aim was to make the supernatural appear natural especially through the portrayal of characters placed in unusual circumstances . He wanted to evoke all the magic , the marvels and the chivalry of the Middle

Ages without losing the reality of his own time; the characters, therefore, although contemporary in thought and speech, were as fully credulous about the supernatural machinery as if they were 11th-12th century people. **Sir Walter Scott**, strongly influenced by **Walpole**, pointed out that this was the first modern novel to attempt such an effect, and by calling his work Gothic, **Walpole** rescued the term from its previous derogatory sense of anything that offended against true taste.

Appreciating that his effort could lead to bathos if not disaster, **Walpole** treated his work as a half-joke in his first edition, pretending that it was a translation from an old Italian manuscript.

Original as **Walpole's** mixture was, it was in the peculiar combination of the elements in a new kind of novel that the originality lay, rather than in the elements *per se*. The laws of chivalry, and the saintly hero and heroine came from the old romances, and there are incidents that show **Walpole's** acquaintance with fairy tales and oriental tales - for example, the servant Bianca rubbing a ring before the giant 'Alfonso' appears is reminiscent of stories in the '*Arabian Nights*'. There was a restless ghost, Patroclus, in Homer's '*Iliad*'. The talkative servants derive from **Shakespeare's** use of them as comic relief in his tragedies.

Walpole was remarkably inventive. There were three innovations in his novel. First, there was the use of the Gothic castle of romance. All the Gothic machinery is there - vaults, passages, dungeons, convents, gust of wind, moonlight, groans and clanking of chains - and **Walpole** in his matter of fact way demonstrated its potential. He showed how it could be used in combination with old romance elements and how ghost could be given a definite function in the plot. The device of the portrait coming to life is found in many subsequent Gothic novels, notably **Maturin's** '*Melmoth the Wanderer*'. So are the devices of feigning translation from an old manuscript, and such borrowings from old romance as prophecies, dreams and Theodore's birthmark, by which his father recognises him. **Mrs Radcliffe** and others favoured the restoring of the hereditary rights of their protagonists after they had been cheated, as they were restored to 'Theodore', and **Walpole's** use of Italy as a setting was copied by many, for the monks and the horrors of the Inquisition - if they did not prefer to make it Spain.

Secondly, **Walpole** was innovative in the way he used the forces of nature to produce an atmosphere, to indicate the mystery of life, the possibility of evil forces shaping man's fate. As 'Isabella' hurries through the underground passages, her lamp is blown out by a gust of wind, and the same wind will relentlessly blow out heroine's candles and lamps for

many years to come. Moonlight is supposed to add to the magnificence of the giant Alfonso's appearance, and it will more effectively accompany future ghosts.

Thirdly, 'Theodore', in his appearance, provides one of the sources of the famed Byronic hero - dark haired, handsome, melancholy and mysterious. The other characters became the stock characters of Gothic fiction, and once again **Walpole's** pointed to the way they would generally develop, though he did not provide more than sketches - the tyrant, the heroine, the challenger, the monk and the peasant who turns out to be noble.

The most evident shortcoming in the eyes of the modern reader is that **Walpole** fails to create an atmosphere of mystery. The pace and clarity that push the story forward work against mystery, since what is required is some vagueness or obscurity, that would stimulate the reader's imagination. The plot is complicating, and the machinery appears too quickly, one episode crowding upon another, before each has time to take effect. Since the characters lack individuality, the reader is not sufficiently involved. Amusement or irritation is too often the reader's reaction to a scene which is aimed at producing a shudder so that the illusion rarely displays any power. From **Walpole's** shortcomings in this sphere **Mrs Radcliffe** was to learn how to create eeriness and grandeur by setting a slower pace in which the atmosphere has time to build up.

The associations of 'Otranto' with a dream, and the author's readiness to draw upon the unconscious, together with such magic happenings as the flow of blood from statue have led to talk of **Walpole** as 'the first surrealist novelist'. But it hardly seems necessary to protest, to protest so much; absurd as he appears today, sufficient claims have already been made for giving him attention.

WILLIAM BECKFORD : "*VATHEK*"

The influence of the Oriental upon '*Otranto*', has been noted . The '*Arabian Nights*', which dates from about 1800 , was translated into French by **Antonio Galland** in 1704 , and other Oriental tales appeared in English at about the same time : more recently there had been such works as **Voltaire's** '*Eastern Tales*'. Most of these had been read by the scholarly **William Beckford** (1759-1844), the author of '*Vathek*' (1786), an Oriental - Gothic production of great originality . It is about a Caliph who in his hunger for knowledge and power becomes a disciple of Eblis , (The Arab version of Satan) , commits many horrible crimes and undergoes numerous adventures before finding eternal torment . **Beckford** also translated Oriental tales and wrote satires and travel diaries .

'*Vathek*', being exotic and poetic was not at first considered Gothic . But the following Gothic novels and tales incorporated the fairy-tale exotic as well as terror , and **Beckford's** combination was highly influential , in both Gothic and Romantic fields .

Like many Gothic writers , **Beckford** was eccentric . He was set apart both the great wealth he inherited from his father and by his homosexuality . There was a scandal over his relationship with **William Courtenay** , the young son of **Lousia Beckford** . She was married to a cousin of **William's** , but was in love with the writer and encouraged the relationship with her son as a kind of sacrificial offering . **Beckford** was almost forced by his family to travel abroad for several years , and he was not excepted by society when he returned .

'*Vathek*' was written very rapidly in French when he was twenty-two , translated by his tutor **Samuel Henly** and finally revised by the author . Its composition seems to have been directly inspired by the week of Christmas 1781 , which **Beckford** spent at his luxurious country seat , with **Louisa , William Courtenay** and the painter **Alexander Cozens** , who has been suspected of having initiated the writer into magical practises . **Beckford** never forgot this visit and nearly sixty years later described it in enthusiastic terms :

"Immured we were for three days following-doors and windows so strictly closed that neither common daylight nor commonplace visitors could get in or even peep in....It was the realisation of romance in all its fervours , in all its extravagance . The delirium into which our young and fervent bosoms were cast by such a combination of seductive influences may be conceived only too easily ."

It is the last part of the novel that impresses itself upon the imagination. Encouraged by the sorceress 'Carathis', his mother, Vathek has arrived at the underground palace of Eblis, where the promise to entertain him with the sight of the 'pre-Adamite Sultans' great treasures is to be fulfilled. He is accompanied by four princess and 'Nauroniha', the daughter of one of his emins, whom he has abducted on the way. The splendour of the scene is evoked by the use of exact and sensuous detail. There are

".....rows and columns and arcades, which gradually diminished, till they terminated in a point radiant as the sun when he darts his last beams athwart the ocean. The pavement, strewn over with gold and dust and saffron, exhaled so subtle an odour as almost overpowered them. They however, went on and observed on infinity of censers, in which ambergris and the wood of aloes were continually burning."

The horror is just as stylishly described. A multitude wanders aimlessly through these luxurious surroundings with 'the livid paleness of death', their right hands not leaving their hearts, some in a trance, some 'shrieking with agony', all avoiding each other. Further on, through halls lit by torches and braziers, in a place with long curtains, ornamented with crimson and gold, they enter 'a vast tabernacle hung round with the skins of leopards' in which Eblis sitting on a globe of fire being adored by multitudes - 'a young man, whose noble and regular features seemed to have been tarnished by malignant vapours'. In the gloom of a huge, domed hall are the wasted forms of the pre-Adamite kings, lying with hands covering their hearts, and through the transparent chest of the most renowned 'Vathek' sees the heart in flames. The guide says that after a few days during which they enjoy the sights and are permitted to demand access to all the treasures, 'Vathek' and his companies will suffer the same fate.

They wander in increasing despair through the halls, without appetite for the magnificent banquet laid out, and without curiosity. There is more power here than in most Gothic writers, and it has accumulated in the more light-hearted, earlier scenes in which 'Vathek' prepares for and accomplishes the journey: here **Beckford** takes us so urbanely into the fantasy that we accept any fairy tale. We smile when people collapse or even die under a darting glance from Vathek's eye, but it is a smile of complicity.

Thus, we accept the fate of the fifty boys sacrificed to the 'Giaour', the Indian who guides Vathek to Eblis. Vathek pushes them one by one over a cliff, at the bottom of which the Giaour is waiting to eat them. (We are, however, glad to learn, much later, that a good Genius saved them.) 'Carathis' makes a sacrifice to the Subterranean Genii, pling serpents' oil, mummis, rhinoceros' horns, strongly smelling woods, and 'a thousand

other horrible rarities' on top of the tower and setting it alight. We almost admire her expediency when 140 inhabitants of Samarah, the capital city, bring water to the top of the tower. 'Carathis' has them strangled by her servants - a band of mutes and black women - and thrown on top of the pile to make an even bigger sacrifice.

Yet when 'Carathis' arrives, as planned, at the Hall of Eblis, the atmosphere of deep dejection makes her crimes now appear shocking abominations rather than absurd exaggerations in **Voltaire's** *Candide* style. We shudder when she explains to 'Vathek' how she has buried his wives alive with the help of her black women, 'who thus spent their last moments greatly to their satisfaction', before setting fire to the tower and destroying them, too, together, with mutes and serpents. We leave them, together with 'Nouronihar' and the four princess, with hearts on fire, all hating one another, 'In ghastly convulsions', screaming.

The tragic mood of this last episode suggests a degree of identification with 'Vathek' on the part of **Beckford** himself. While in earlier scenes the author seems to be standing back from the action, and he makes fun of the old and the reverent, in the end he no doubt projected some of his own sense of being rejected and isolated, young as he was when writing the novel, into 'Vathek' and willingness to follow him into any crime, is another *Louisa*.

Vathek's message has been convincingly interpreted by his biographer '**Marc Chadourne**', in the light of **Jean-Paul Sartre's** play '*Huis Clos*' (*No Exit*), as a parable on the theme that 'Hell is other people'. One man and two women are condemned to live in a prison cell, and each is in love with the person who does not requite the passion. Vathek's message, 'Chadourne', says, is that hell is within ourselves as well that passion is transformed into disgust, love to hate, and that we must say goodbye to all hope. However, far we go with **Sartre** or **Beckford** which especially appealed to such admirers as **Byron**, and **Edgar Allan Poe**.

The writings of **Hawthorne**, **Baudelaire**, **Meredith**, **Swinburne** **Mallarmé** and **Wilde** can be found along the many trails which lead from 'Vathek'. For the moment, it is most relevant to note that in 1815 the poet **Percy B. Shelly** and **Mary Godwin**, his mistress, had been reading it.

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT SHELLEY (1797-1861): "*FRANKENSTEIN*"

'*Frankenstein*' (1818) is the story of a scientist who in creating a human being finds himself responsible for a monster and a murderer: it displays strong similarities with '*Valhek*', in that the impulse behind it is the desire to show how dangerous can be the attempt to discover the secrets of life. The tale became one of the principal subjects of science fiction, and the scientist's tragedy is indirectly a criticism of the same 'unnatural' curiosity that author's husband, the poet, showed in some of his works.

Mary Shelly (1797-1851) derived a marked independence of mind and spirit from her father, **William Godwin**, the political theorist and author of '*Political Justice*' (whose belief in the perfectibility of man through reason strongly influenced her husband), and from her mother Mary Wollstonecraft, a strong fighter for women's rights. **Mary Godwin** met Shelly when she was seventeen: he left his wife, Harriet, and the pair moved to Switzerland, marrying in 1816, when Harriet committed suicide, and settling in Italy.

In the summer of 1816 the Shellys were staying with **Byron**, his physician **Dr John Polidori** and **Matthew Lewis** at a villa near Geneva. **Byron** read some German ghost stories and suggested they should each write one. Out of this came the first vampire story in English - **Goethe** had published a vampire work in 1797 - **Dr Polidori's** '*The Vampyre*', developed from a sketch by **Byron**. And **Mary Shelly** wrote '*Frankenstein*' after listening to conversations between her husband and Polidori about Erasmus Darwin's theories of evolution, and impelled by a dream concerning Darwin's experiments with the creation of artificial life.

On the surface level of a straightforward Gothic story '*Frankenstein*' is more frightening than most and also moving. Pathos becomes tragedy, and the central conflict is of strong interest. It is an obsessive, dramatic and symbolic hunt, like that of **Coleridge's** poem '*The Ancient Mariner*' (1797). The frenzy with which Frankenstein pursues the hidden knowledge, his disgust at the eight-foot tall monster he has made, his destruction of a half-finished wife for the monster, his remorse when the monster kills his brother, friend and wife, his chasing the monster in deepening despair - the reader is compulsively involved in this nightmarish experience.

The monster we can also identify with - we can recognize his misery at being repulsed in anger everywhere, and see how his crimes derive from bitter hatred of his creator.

The dramatic effect of this struggle is achieved by plain language, on the whole, which modestly keeps the story on the move. There is some awkwardness - Frankenstein is inclined to 'gnash his teeth' too often, and where vivid detail is required, the narrative often passes into abstractions. These are sometimes occasioned by the fact that 'Frankenstein' keeps his dangerous discovery secret - which is somewhat irritating to the modern reader. As an example, in Frankenstein's ghostly researches in graveyards, charnel house and laboratory, where the author is expounding on a passage in **Percy Shelly's** poem '*Alostor*', he has his eyes fixed on 'every object the most insupportable to the delicacy of the human feelings' and dabbles in 'the unhallowed damps of the grave', and so on. Yet the description of the monster at the moment of coming alive is concrete enough.

"His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black and flowing, his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but those luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes and straight black lips."

The descriptions of typical romantic scenery in the Swiss mountains - sombre pine forests, mists wreathed around the peaks - is straightforward: it suffices to set the scene or establish the atmosphere but does not slow down the momentum of the story.

The characterisation, apart from the two protagonists, is weak: they are moved around in the background like cardboard figures in a toy theatre, and all tend to speak in the same, formal and unnatural way. There are some uncertainties. The account of the monster being built of dead limbs does not convince, and many readers are incredulous at the way he lives undetected in a hovel from which he can see into a cottage, and, and is able to educate himself... when the family teach the language to an 'Arabian woman' who visits them.

The structure of the narrative is also confusing: the story begins and ends in letters from the sea captain, Walton, who is likewise looking for the unknown in the polar regions of the north, with Frankenstein's story enclosed in his, and the monster's inside Frankenstein's. To emphasize this defect, some of the episodes are too long-drawn-out.

What is the conflict in the story is something not fully appreciated until the lost pages, when the monster bends over the dead Frankenstein in grief and remorse, saying he will now burn himself on a funeral pyre, and we realise how much they have been part of one another. This theme has been hinted at several times, as for instance when Frankenstein said he considered the monster as his own spirit or vampire freed from the grave

and impelled to kill those he loved. Their parallel lives, each hunting and being hunted by the other, suggest their inter dependence as well as their hatred for one another.

The main message is thus dramatically and symbolically made clear: when reason is pushed to its limits, it breaks down, and the way in which the monster and his creator work towards each other's destruction implies that balance is the key to virtue, sanity and wholeness.

The psychological pattern of Frankenstein's progressive disintegration together with the monster's growing evil are reflected in much later literature, notably in **R.L. Stevenson's** story of the respectable doctor who transformed himself, by a concoction of his discovery, into the evil observe his normal self, who led a parallel but disreputable life: *'The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde'* (1888).

Frankenstein expresses moral and political lessons as well as psychological truths, most clearly in the monster's reproaches to Frankenstein when he asks for a wife. Frankenstein is convinced at that point by the argument that his monster's vice derives from his misery, and that as his creator he is obliged to try to make him happy. This is developed as a political message in the description of the monster's experience of society as a whole, and these are echoes of **Godwin's** socialistic theories. As the monster tries to adopt to society, he soon discovers that property is divided, and that there is 'immense wealth and squalid poverty', that man hates and repulses the poor and the wretched, and that poverty and isolation breed bitterness and crime.

'Frankenstein' or 'The Modern Prometheus' is the novel's full title, and the author's husband based his poetic drama *'Prometheus Unbound'* on the legend of the demi-god who stole fire from heaven for the benefit of mankind and was chained by Zeus to a rock as punishment. The reproaches made by the monster to his creator also echo those made by **Milton's** Satan in *'Paradise Lost'*. The creation of an artificial human being had earlier been treated in novels by **Godwin** and by **Goethe**.

Mary Shelly's book showed how the Gothic novel could widen its scope, and her kind of speculation on morality and man's scientific possibilities are also features of the best of today's science fiction. However, the power and vitality of 'Frankenstein' derive partly from the fact that **Mary Shelly** did not quite understand what she was doing, and when she became more mature and had to understand what she wrote, her imagination lost its force. 'Frankenstein', the most enduring of the Gothic

is that very rare phenomenon: a classic that was originally a best
and has remained extremely popular. Several films in the 1930s
on the novel, together with translations in numerous foreign
languages, have made the name Frankenstein synonymous with horror in
parts of the world.

The film based on the novel is a masterpiece of horror. The
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CONCLUSION

Much of the content of Gothic literature was inspired by dreams , or hallucinatory states that were self induced or produced by drugs . The frequency of films based on Gothic literature is no accident - dreams are full of weird and vivid imagery that films can effectively present . Apart from that , both Gothic literature and Gothic - horror films , aiming to be popular (even when also aiming at art) , are collective dreams , expressions of generally experienced desires and fears that tend to be repressed by individuals . This is part of the reason why the Gothic spirit is so easily given different ages .

The most important problem of the Gothic literature in past years was that it had not classified as a literary genre , however , writers like **Shakespeare , Dickens , Walpole , Graham Grene , Mary Shelly , Arnold Bennett , O. Henry , Edgar Allan Poe , D. H. Lawrence , Beckford** gave very good example of horror stories and helped this genre to gain importance . Today , gothic novels are widely read and gothic films are widely watched as much as political novels and films or psychological novels and films . However

A word of warning , if you are a sensitive disposition , and the howling of the wind , the creaking of a floorboard , the unexpected ring of a telephone bell , let alone the memory of a coffin being lowered into a grave , is likely to make your pulce race , your heart miss a beat , please do not attempt to read gothic stories or watch horror films in a house , or even room , when you are on your own , however you may be awake till the first beams of sun.

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