THE GOTHIC VISIONS OF ANN RADCLIFFE AND MATTHEW G. LEWIS

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ABSTRACT

THE GOTHIC VISIONS OF ANN RADCLIFFE
AND MATTHEW G. LEWIS

By

Robert Princeton Reno

The Gothic romance was the most popular form of fiction in England between 1790 and 1820. But until recently, this narrative form has attracted little critical analysis, and it is still not fully understood. As the two most successful Gothic writers, Ann Radcliffe and Matthew G. Lewis have been closely associated in the history of literature, and their works have been presumed to share significant similarities. But again, these supposed similarities have never been carefully explicated, and the common assumption that each writer borrowed from and attempted to imitate the other is largely misleading. The purpose of this dissertation is first to examine in detail the themes and concerns of Radcliffe's five Gothic romances, and of Lewis's The Monk. The dissertation then goes on to establish the precise nature of

the intellectual exchange which emerges from The Mysteries of Udolpho and The Italian, and their relationship to The Monk. Close critical readings of these novels, and a consideration of the previous scholarship on the Gothic romance provide a fuller understanding of the literary achievement of Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis, and a greater insight into the contribution of Gothic narrative to the development of the novel through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Chapter One focuses on Radcliffe's struggle to mold her material into an interesting and meaningful narrative form. While her first romance, The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne, is largely unsuccessful, it provides an important link between Radcliffe's later novels and the Gothic romances of such earlier writers as Horace Walpole, Clara Reeve, and Sophia Lee. In A Sicilian Romance, Radcliffe eliminates many of the weaknesses of her first attempt, and introduces a concern with the private, interpersonal conflicts between a heroine and villain which were to dominate Gothic fiction through the following decades. The Romance of the Forest, which is Radcliffe's first successful novel, presents an interesting and sometimes charming account of

Adeline's encounter with a lascivious marquis. Radcliffe begins in this work to form her villain into a character of some depth and complexity.

Chapter Two examines Radcliffe's most popular novel, The Mysteries of Udolpho. In this romance, Radcliffe carries her preoccupation with the Gothic heroine to its furtherest extreme by allowing Emily to dominate the action from beginning to end. The greatest achievement of Udolpho is the representation of Emily's almost solipsistic view of the world around her. The greatest disappointment arises from Radcliffe's imperviousness to her heroine's failure to gain in maturity or wisdom as a result of her unusual experiences.

The third chapter analyzes the three spheres of action and belief which converge in The Monk. The chapter argues that Lewis was inspired rather than influenced by The Mysteries of Udolpho, and shows that The Monk can be viewed more accurately as a continuation of Radcliffe's work than as an imitation of her existent form. Lewis's more radical and pessimistic vision is discussed, and Ambrosio's violent career is interpreted as embodying an

implicit criticism of Radcliffe's presentation of good and evil.

Centering on The Italian, Chapter Four explicates Radcliffe's response to Lewis's criticism of her vision. While Radcliffe concedes in The Italian that the evil of this world may be stronger, more pervasive, and more destructive than she had implied in The Mysteries of Udolpho, she refuses to relinquish her essential optimism. Father Schedoni is her only fully realized hero-villain, and her most successful character creation. But he is destroyed in the end, as Radcliffe continues to assert that most people of goodness and virtue can hope to survive their encounters with evil and depravity.

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By

Robert Princeton Reno

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This work is dedicated to

Robert and Mary Ellen Reno,

and to Sandy.

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INTRODUCTION

To the extent that any literary genre or narrative form can be said to have had a definite beginning, the source of the Gothic novel can be traced to Horace Walpole's The Castle of Otranto, first published in 1764. Although Otranto was very well-received, few writers over the next quarter-century attempted to duplicate Walpole's achievement. Clara Reeve's The Old English Baron (1778), Sophia Lee's The Recess (1785), and William Beckford's Vathek (1786) are almost literally the only novels even partially in the Gothic vein to be published between The Castle of Otranto and Ann Radcliffe's The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne, which was issued in 1789. In spite of its clear emulation of Walpole's manner, Radcliffe's first novel caused little interest, and her second attempt, A Sicilian Romance (1790), was only slightly more successful. The Romance of the Forest (1791), however, was highly and almost universally praised,[1] and this reception seems to have convinced the writers of the day that they could indeed adapt Walpole's eccentric form to their own novels.

Over the following three decades, dozens of Gothic romances were published, and to these were added scores of Gothic stories released in the form of chapbooks, magazine fiction, and dramatic stage productions. But out of this great flood of Gothic literature, only a handful of titles have endured, including most prominently The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794), The Monk (1796), The Italian (1797), Frankenstein (1818), and Melmoth the Wanderer (1820). While the majority of the titles may have been quickly forgotten, however, the influence of the Gothic impulse has remained vital. The Byronic hero is a natural extension of Lewis's and Radcliffe's unnatural hero-villains, and the works of such writers as the Brontes, Dickens, Poe, and Melville in the nineteenth century show the effects of the Gothic novel in varying degrees. In the twentieth century, the tradition continues not only in the formulaic Gothic romance which holds a vigorous position in popular literature, but also in such novels as Faulkner's Sanctuary, Fowles's The Collector, and Nabokov's Lolita (in which a latter day hero-villain pursues his heroine over the highways in an "old and weak Melmoth").

As the undisputed masters of the Gothic romance, Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823) and Matthew G. Lewis (1775-1818)

were the most popular British novelists of the last decade of the eighteenth century. While they undoubtedly read each other's novels, it is very unlikely that they ever met, and they seem to have had little in common beyond the success of their Gothic romances. Lewis was open, loquacious, and even insistently sociable, but Radcliffe was shy, modest, and retiring. Lewis began to write at an early age, and he worked with an enthusiasm that is apparent in The Monk as well as in his letters. Radcliffe's career, however, did not begin until after her marriage in 1787, when she was "encouraged to her writing--urged to it, in fact--by her husband."[2] As the son of a wealthy government official, Lewis was widely known in society, and as the author of The Monk, he expanded his acquaintance to friendships with such writers as Scott and Byron. At his death, he left behind a large number of letters, and anecdotes of his life surface repeatedly in the books of his contemporaries. But Radcliffe consciously avoided social and literary circles, and she passed on no letters, notes, diaries, or other chronicle of her life or of her activities as a novelist.[3]

Because of this almost total lack of information about Radcliffe's biography, and particularly about her views on literature, her early novels take on a greater

significance than the importance which they would ordinarily have as the first attempts of an author who later became famous. "Mrs. Radcliffe's development was steady," as Bonamy Dobrée has observed,[4] and she possessed the rare ability to improve with each new novel that she published. For this reason, when all five of her romances are viewed together, they reveal in an unusually clear manner an author's struggle to mold her material into its most effective form. Thus, her first three novels deserve to be studied not so much for their own merits (although The Romance of the Forest is a good novel), but because they provide a helpful and interesting introduction to the debate which later emerges from The Mysteries of Udolpho and The Italian, and their relationship to The Monk.

As the Gothic romance develops through the 1790's, the proposition which is introduced in The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne is repeated many times and in many ways: while it is better, in a moral sense, to be good and kind and virtuous, the forces of evil are often powerful, frequently fascinating, and sometimes even attractive. The discussion of morality in the Gothic romance centers not in the glorious victory of good over evil, but rather in the extended periods of oppression during which the virtuous

must attempt to protect against the tortures and persecutions to which they are subjected by a villain who is able and effective in spite of, or perhaps because of, his depravity. Gothic fiction, then, is decidedly not an heroic genre, and once this is understood, a number of themes and conventions can be explicated with greater clarity. The Gothic hero, for instance, is curiously but almost invariably impotent in his attempts first to protect the heroine, and failing that, to rescue her from persecution. Although his goodness and virtue are reinforced by a bold impetuosity and a fearless determination, he is consistently outmaneuvered, outfought, and overshadowed by the older, stronger, and more experienced villain. In view of his almost total ineffectiveness, it soon becomes apparent that the hero in the Gothic romance is not to be understood as a chivalric champion; his primary function is rather to serve as a man with whom the heroine may appropriately fall in love, usually before her trials begin, and ultimately marry after her suffering has run its course. Almost as if to save him the embarrassment of repeated defeats, the hero is typically isolated from the principal action through long sections of the novel. Osbert and Alleyn are imprisoned in Radcliffe's first romance, and Vivaldi is arrested by the Inquisition

in her last. Hippolitus, the hero of A Sicilian Romance, is seriously wounded early in the narrative, and both Theodore in The Romance of the Forest and Valancourt in Udolpho are ordered to their regiments at crucial periods. In The Monk, Raymond is incapacitated for several months as a result of his encounter with the Bleeding Nun, and a long series of minor and coincidental developments keeps Lorenzo from acting in time to save Antonia.

Once the hero has been removed from the action, the heroine and the villain are essentially alone and free to play out their roles without interruption. Both Radcliffe and Lewis are skilled at surrounding their heroines with an oppressive sense of desolation--Emily is boarded with Montoni and his crude companions at Udolpho; Antonia's mother is dead and her aunt's return has been inexplicably delayed. Indeed, this feeling of desolation can become so pervasive that the heroine and the villain often seem to be the only occupants of an otherwise empty world. In this isolation, the importance of their struggle moves beyond the familiar and the expected until it has expanded finally to metaphysical proportions: their meeting is not simply an antagonistic encounter between two people, but rather an encounter between the very embodiments of good and evil.[5] Without

exception, the heroine, in whom violent opposition would be unthinkable, is young, beautiful, chaste, and entirely defenseless. The villain is older and much more experienced, mysterious and often depraved, powerful and cruelly ingenious. Given the greater strength and ability of the villain, the central problem which the Gothic novelist faces is to work out, in a convincing manner, the eventual salvation of the heroine. Or in broader terms, the question posed in Gothic literature can be rendered as follows: How will the struggle between good and evil be resolved in this world when the forces of evil are more powerful, more ingenious, and in every way more effective than those of good?

With each new novel, Radcliffe works to refine both this question and her answer to it. But she arrives at essentially the same conclusions in each of her five romances. First, her heroines believe firmly in the efficacy of goodness and virtue. This belief, however, draws its meaning, its validity, primarily from a religious faith, while the Gothic romance is concerned almost totally with this world. Thus the heroine's repeated assertion that God will protect the innocent seems irrelevant at best, and deluded at worst, for innocent people do indeed suffer in

Gothic fiction, sometimes even to the point of a tortured death. A second and much more original, meaningful, and interesting contention centers on the nature of evil, and asserts that it is inherently and unavoidably self-destructive. While official agencies, such as the Court of Paris in The Romance of the Forest and the Inquisition in The Italian, sometime preside over the villain's final demise, he almost always initiates his own downfall by attempting too much, by allowing his passions to rule his reason, or by failing to account for every eventuality. In view of this belief that evil, no matter how superior, will eventually cause its own destruction, the heroine's best and, indeed, only weapons are patience, forbearance, and endurance. As the representative of goodness and virtue, the heroine must gird herself with fortitude, and attempt simply to outlast the barrage of threat, menace, and even torture that is hurled against her.

All of Radcliffe's heroines survive their days and weeks of persecution, and all are said to live happily ever after at the end of their stories. But the villains also inflict considerable pain and cause great trauma before they finally overreach their own designs. Innocent women are imprisoned for years in both The Castles of Athlin and

Dunbayne and A Sicilian Romance. Virtuous people are murdered in The Romance of the Forest, The Mysteries of Udolpho, and The Italian. Thus the final question of the Gothic romance, and the question that Radcliffe is never able to answer completely, asks how much the good people of this world can endure before their pain and persecution render their long-delayed victory over evil hollow and meaningless. Ambrosio's dramatic descent into sin in The Monk is a strong indication that Lewis agreed with Radcliffe's contention that evil is inherently self-destructive. But other events of The Monk seem to imply that Lewis had doubts about some aspects of Radcliffe's position as it emerges from The Mysteries of Udolpho. The presentation of Ambrosio as a hero-villain, for instance, seems to question just how separate good and evil really are. And the great and violent suffering which pervades the novel seems to suggest that evil can cause considerably more damage before burning itself out than Radcliffe had supposed. Most tragically, the deaths of Elvira and especially Antonia cast a heavy shadow on the ability of good to withstand the onslaught of evil in the meantime. The sense of confidence and achievement which pervades The Mysteries of Udolpho suggests that Radcliffe felt, at the time, that she had

finally brought her material to its fullest and most meaningful expression. But Lewis's view in The Monk is more drastic. And his vision was sufficiently disturbing to bring Radcliffe to re-examine the position of Udolpho, and to attempt to respond to Lewis's implicit challenge in The Italian, which is both her most carefully argued romance, and the last that she ever published.

CHAPTER ONE

ANN RADCLIFFE'S FIRST NOVELS: A STRUGGLE FOR FORM

Published anonymously in 1789, The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne: A Highland Story is the unsophisticated work of an inexperienced author. The setting of this tale is described only as "the north-east coast of Scotland, in the most romantic part of the Highlands,"[1] and no specific time is assigned to the action. But the use of such medievalisms as knights, clans, castles, tournaments, and feudal pomp suggests the Middle Ages. The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne can therefore be seen as a descendant of The Castle of Otranto, or as an example of the "Historical-Gothic," as D. P. Varma calls it.[2] Radcliffe, however, seems to have known little about Scotland, and perhaps even less about the Middle Ages. Thus, her attempt "to blend," in Horace Walpole's words, "the two kinds of romance, the ancient with the modern,"[3] is limited to only the broadest of strokes needed to suggest a romantic time and place. But

even with this vagueness, Radcliffe's decision to write her first novel in the style of Otranto shows that she was aware of and apparently attracted to the Gothic romance at a time when it was only a rough and ill-defined mode of fiction.

The central conflict of The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne is rooted in the death of the Earl of Athlin, who was killed by a neighboring chief twelve years before the opening time of the narrative. The clans of Athlin and Dunbayne had been in dispute over their boundaries for some time, and although the Earl was slain in battle after being trapped by a "curious finesse," as Radcliffe describes it (p. 3), his death is treated by both author and characters as a heinous murder, rather than as the misfortune of war. Feeling that her strength at arms was insufficient to avenge her husband's death, Matilda, the Countess of Athlin, confined herself to her castle, and concentrated on raising her young children. But when Osbert reaches the age of nineteen, he is so outraged by accounts of his father's ignoble death that he determines to seek revenge at any cost. With this decision, the action begins, and the men loyal to Athlin swear by their swords "never to quit the cause in which they now engaged, till the life of their enemy had paid the debt of justice and of revenge" (p. 17).

Through this background, Osbert is identified as the apparent hero of the novel, but with the progress of the plot, a peasant named Alleyn becomes so active and important that he must be seen as sharing in the role of hero. Young, chaste, and beautiful, Osbert's sister, Mary, is singled out as the heroine, and as the first in a long line of young women who are threatened and pursued through Radcliffe's next four novels. Finally, Malcolm, Baron of Dunbayne, is labelled clearly as the villain, and as the man who will afflict Osbert, Mary, and Alleyn with the cruelest of tortures that he can devise. Unlike such later villains as Ambrosio and Schedoni, however, Malcolm is thoroughly one-dimensional in his evil, and possesses no redeeming characteristics, with the possible exception of his deathbed contrition. Indeed, good and evil in Radcliffe's first novel are almost as surely separate as are the castles of the title. Athlin is the shelter of the good and the virtuous, and at both the beginning and the end of the romance, its halls ring with feasting and good cheer. The fallen Earl is remembered with a loyal respect, and Osbert's determination to attack Malcolm is greeted with warmth by the people of his lands. Just a few miles away stands the castle of Dunbayne, invariably dark and gloomy.

Subterranean passages wind beneath its foundations, and men and women languish in its dungeons. The master of this castle is sadistic and tyrannical, and his followers are cowardly, untrustworthy, and controlled by fear alone.

His lack of kindness and virtue notwithstanding, Malcolm is an effective military leader, and his soldiers easily repel Athlin's attack. Osbert, who is a better orator than warrior, is quickly overcome, captured, and imprisoned. And although Alleyn fights valiantly in defense of his leader, he is eventually wounded and carried to a separate dungeon. Meanwhile, Athlin's men suffer such great and bloody losses that "a small part, only, of the brave and adventurous band who had engaged in the cause of justice, and who were driven back from the walls, survived to carry the dreadful tidings to the countess" (p. 30). The outcome of this attack is significant, for it reveals that even this unpolished first novel, Radcliffe had left behind the heroic ideal which holds that evil is weak in the face of virtue, and that those who are engaged "in the cause of justice" will return victorious from every battle.

After Athlin's unsuccessful attack on Dunbayne, Radcliffe seems a little uncertain of what to do next. Osbert, her principal hero, has been imprisoned, and

Dunbayne's military might has been shown to be far superior to that of Athlin. Her solution to the immediate problem of direction is to shift the focus from Osbert to Alleyn, the brave peasant whose loyalty and ability have earned him an unofficial position as Osbert's chief lieutenant. Unlike his noble leader, who continues to languish in prison for weeks on end, Alleyn manages a quick escape from his own cell, and happens to be passing through a forest just in time to rescue Mary from abduction by Malcolm's henchmen. Mary is greatly impressed by Alleyn's bravery in her defense, and he is no less taken by her beauty, charm, and modest gratitude. But there is little time for love at this moment, for Alleyn must think of a way to free Osbert from his cruel captivity at Dunbayne.

Although Alleyn goes through a great deal of hopeful maneuvering, Athlin's army was clearly inferior to begin with, and is even weaker after its recent defeat. Thus, the truth is that there is little that Alleyn or anyone else can do to secure Osbert's release, except to await word of Malcolm's intentions. For his part, the Baron is elated over his capture of Osbert, and "racked imagination for the invention of tortures equal to the force of his feelings" (p. 37). Instead of confirming his

advantage by simply executing Osbert without delay, Malcolm considers that "the sufferings of suspense are superior to those of the most terrible evils" (p. 37), and commands that his victim be permitted to live, but only under close guard, and in total ignorance of his future destiny. While the agony of uncertainty does indeed prey on Osbert's mind, it is clear that Malcolm has already begun to compromise his power, and as the days and weeks go by, it begins to seem that he has adopted his plan of suspense not so much to torture his captive, as to satisfy his own sadistic impulses. When he receives news of Alleyn's escape, however, the Baron is so infuriated that he issues orders for Osbert's immediate execution. But then, with an abruptness which is a frequent problem in this romance, he recalls his enduring lust for Mary, and decides privately that he will spare Osbert's life only if she will agree to become his wife. In spite of this determination, Malcolm is unable to resist the temptation to intensify his prisoner's agony by forcing him to watch the preparations for his execution, and by waiting until Osbert has fainted at "the remembrance of his mother, overwhelmed with sorrow" before returning him to his dungeon and announcing a reprieve (p. 85).

After another delay of several weeks, Malcolm halts a desparate and plainly futile attack on his castle by reading a message to the Countess of Athlin from the ramparts of Dunbayne: "The Baron Malcolm," he declares, "will accept no other ransom for the life and the liberty of the earl, than [Matilda's] beauteous daughter, whom he now sues to become his wife" (p. 97). After the initial shock of this pronouncement has passed, each of the principals reacts in the expected manner: Osbert rejects the proposal with heated indignation, exclaiming loudly that he would rather die. Alleyn, who is faced with conditions "which would bring destruction on the woman he adored, or death to the friend whom he loved" (p. 99), attempts to maintain the discreet neutrality appropriate to his low rank. Matilda assumes that she alone must make the decision for her children, but Mary keeps her own counsel and decides that she will sacrifice her own happiness to save her brother's life. In spite of its predictability, this situation contains a very clear expression of the closed nature of the Gothic romance, of the almost incestuous relationships which so frequently envelop its characters:

> The critical situation of Matilda can scarcely be felt in its full extent. Torn by the conflict of opposite interests, her brain was the

> seat of tumult and wild dismay. Which ever way she looked, destruction closed the view. The murderer of the husband now sought to murder the happiness of the daughter. On the sentence of the mother hung the final fate of the son. . . . Her mind shrunk from the idea of uniting her daughter to the murderer of her father. The ferocious character of Malcolm was alone sufficient to blight for ever the happiness of the woman whose fate should be connected with his. To give to the murderer the child of the murdered, was a thought too horrid to rest upon. The Countess rejected with force the baron's offer of exchange, when the bleeding figure of her beloved son, pale and convulsed in death, started on her imagination, and stretched her brain almost to frenzy (pp. 101-103).

Radcliffe seems to revel in the intricacies of familial interconnections, particularly as they relate to the roles of victim and persecutor. Although she learns to present them with greater subtlety, such relationships are important to each of Radcliffe's later novels, and indeed, to Gothic literature in general.

Matilda finds it so difficult to resolve the dilemma with which the Baron has presented her that she slips by default into the tactic of delay. But as it turns out, this inaction is the most effective plan that could have been adopted, for with each passing day, Malcolm's control continues to lessen. First, his sadistic delight in

another's suffering has led him to keep Osbert alive through many weeks, and now his lust for a woman has driven him to bargain with the enemy over whom he had recently held such absolute power. Moreover, far worse developments are soon to befall the Baron as a result of his cruel treatment of his own people, who become "impatient under the yoke of tyranny," and anxious to "resume the rights of nature" (pp. 133-34). As discipline among his men grows increasingly lax, Malcolm begins to punish even the slightest inattention with such great severity that his soldiers eventually find it more expedient to desert than to face the wrath of their implacable leader. Alleyn had effected his own release early in the narrative by convincing his guard to change allegiance, and the alienation among Malcolm's men is now so pronounced that he is able to use the same temptation to secure Osbert's long-awaited escape from Dunbayne. The Baron is "exasperated almost to madness" when he learns that Osbert has slipped away. But Athlin rings with joy at his deliverance, and "when the first transports of the meeting were subsided," reports Radcliffe, "the Earl presented Alleyn to his family as his friend and deliverer; whose steady attachment he could

never forget, and whose zealous services he could never repay" (p. 181).

A short time later, however, Osbert has occasion to question Alleyn about the possession of a bracelet which contains a miniature of Mary. The young peasant, who is much too honorable to lie or dissemble, confesses his love for Osbert's sister, and while the Earl is said to be "concerned" for Alleyn, we are told that "hereditary pride chilled the warm feelings of friendship and of gratitude" (p. 195). Over the following days, Osbert repeats his opposition to Alleyn's love in indignant and finally even insulting terms. Although his reluctance to allow his sister to marry a peasant is understandable in the context of the novel, his rude reaction to the discovery that Alleyn has dared to look on Mary with affection is simply too much for his characterization as a hero. Given his ineptitude as a soldier, his penchant for empty rhetoric, and especially the fact that he owes his sister's life as well as his own to Alleyn, his pompous talk of rank and dignity and fortune costs him the last bit of sympathy which he may have enjoyed. Indeed, by this point, the reader may well wish that Malcolm had decapitated the Earl of Athlin long ago.

But the Baron's own destruction is now all but complete. His rage at Osbert's escape leads him to venture from the protection of Dunbayne for the first time, and to mount an offensive on Athlin. His enemy is prepared for this attack, however, and Malcolm's long-practiced cruelty now turns against him with full force: "The fear of the Baron," writes Radcliffe,

> which had principally operated on the minds of his people, was now overcome by surprise and the fear of death; and on the first repulse, they deserted from the ranks in great numbers, and fled to the distant hills. In vain the Baron endeavoured to rally his soldiers, and keep them to the charge: they yielded to a stronger impulse than the menaces of their chief, who was now left with less than half his numbers (pp. 211-12).

These losses notwithstanding, the Baron's courage remains unabated, and he continues the fight until he is wounded gravely in close combat with Osbert. His injury is mortal, and as his life slips away, he attempts to ease his conscience by confessing that he has held his wealthy sister-in-law and her young daughter under guard for the past fifteen years. In addition, he reveals that the Baroness's infant son did not die as he had reported so long ago, but was placed in a peasant's cottage to be raised in obscurity.

With these confessions, Malcolm completes his villainous career, and The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne comes to an awkward hiatus. The Baron's death has resolved the initial conflict by giving Osbert his revenge, the Baroness and Laura have been freed at last, and the people of Dunbayne have been delivered from the rule of the tyrant. The unhappy love between Alleyn and Mary is the only remaining problem, but any reader who is even slightly familiar with literary conventions can easily--and rightly--predict that Alleyn will be revealed as the Baroness's long-lost son, and thus as a perfectly suitable husband for Osbert's noble sister. Just as it seems that evil has been purged from the land, however, Osbert is seriously wounded while pursuing several strangers through a ruined wing of Athlin, and Mary is once again carried away by ruffians on horseback. Although there is absolutely no indication of who is behind these latest crimes, Osbert displays the smallness of his mind for a final time by allowing his suspicions to rest solely with Alleyn. But when Mary is rescued for a second time, and again by Alleyn, the culprit is discovered to be Count de Santmorin, a noble Swiss who has resided at Athlin since surviving a shipwreck on the nearby coast.

Once he has been unmasked, the Count, whose suit Mary had politely refused on several occasions, is sincerely contrite, and nearly overcome by "a sense of his own unworthiness" (p. 263). While the Count's rash attempt to requite his love through abduction may well be out of character, as E. B. Murray complains,[4] it is nevertheless an interesting episode, and perhaps the most touching incident in the entire novel. The Count's desperate display of "the weakness of human nature" (p. 265), comes as a welcome, if unexpected, relief to the consistently artificial and stylized reactions that have prevailed through the narrative, and even Osbert seems a little more human as his amazement at the true identity of this latest villain gives way to apologetic embarrassment at having suspected Alleyn. Although Radcliffe lacks the sophistication in this first novel to draw out or to clarify the deeper meaning of this incident, it contains several important implications. First, the recourse of a predominantly good, kind, and decent man such as Count de Santmorin to violent means (and means which nearly bring about Osbert's death), casts doubt on just how separate and distinct good and evil really are. Malcolm's attempt to ravish Mary is to be expected as a result of his inherent

depravity; the Count's attempt, on the other hand, shows that even people who are basically good are sometimes capable of evil actions. And second, the fact that love or desire has driven an otherwise decent man to a criminal abduction demonstrates how irresistible the proddings of passion can be. Whether it is a lustful desire, or a sincere and honorable love, passion in the Gothic romance can strike without notice, and drive its victim to the most violent and irrational extremes. St. Aubert warns against the overindulgence of the heart in The Mysteries of Udolpho, and Emily is clearly frightened by the power of her emotive and intuitive faculties. But it is Lewis's Ambrosio who is most thoroughly and dramatically overwhelmed by lust, desire, and perhaps even love.

The weaknesses of The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne are numerous and very noticeable: the characters are almost invariably flat and stilted, and it is therefore difficult to care about or even to believe in their predicaments. Malcolm's evil is only vaguely motivated, and his maneuverings are largely uninteresting. Radcliffe seems to have been very uncertain about the characterization of her leading figure, of Osbert, Earl of Athlin, and he is very unconvincing as a hero, and essentially unlikable as a person.

The plot is full of delays and awkward transitions, and is overly dependent upon coincidence. The resolution is patently predictable, and the marriages which conclude the novel provide little satisfaction beyond that which arises from familiarity and fulfilled expectations. In spite of these problems, the themes which Radcliffe introduces in Athlin and Dunbayne--the issues and concerns which she begins to explore--are significant and potentially interesting. Her particular version of the eternal conflict between good and evil deserves further examination. Her hesitant probing of the nature of evil, and her tentative expression of the relationship between constructive emotions and self-indulgent impulses are worthy of further development. In short, Ann Radcliffe's first attempt at a Gothic romance is a failure as a novel, but a success as a demonstration that she has something to say. Thus, her task through her next attempts is to construct a fictional context and a narrative technique that are equal to her intellectual concerns.

Radcliffe's second novel, A Sicilian Romance, was first published in 1790, almost exactly a year after the release of her first.[5] Clara McIntyre reports that this second attempt was more widely and favorably noticed by the

reviewers of the day (p. 35), and D. P. Varma writes that it is a "more polished work and indicates a firmer grasp of Mrs. Radcliffe's abilities."[6] Even though it is not a great novel, A Sicilian Romance does show significant improvement over The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne. And most of these improvements seem to have arisen from a careful and perceptive attention to the weaknesses of her first novel, for Radcliffe has altered in A Sicilian Romance primarily those elements which caused her the most difficulty in Athlin and Dunbayne.

Perhaps the single most significant change that Radcliffe made in A Sicilian Romance was to break with the precedent of The Castle of Otranto by rejecting the use of the medieval trappings which were intended to evoke the atmosphere of the Middle Ages. While this decision undercuts Walpole's rationale of Gothic fiction as a blending of the ancient and the modern romance, it clearly gave the Gothic novelist a great deal more freedom and latitude. And judging from the proliferation of Gothic romances after 1790, especially as compared to the very few that had appeared during the twenty-five years between Otranto and A Sicilian Romance, this freedom seems to have been much needed. Moreover, the almost concurrent rise of the

historical novel--of fictional narratives set in bygone ages which make no particular use of Gothic characters, situations, or themes--seems to suggest that Walpole's attempt to merge two kinds of romance may have been a feat which only he could accomplish with any success. For her part, Radcliffe was certainly more comfortable with the more easily imagined setting of "the northern shore of Sicily," and the relatively modern time of "towards the close of the sixteenth century."[7] With the exception of Gaston de Blondeville, which she seems never to have intended to publish, Radcliffe did not return to a medieval setting, and most Gothic novelists seem to have been satisfied with comparatively modern, European settings until Shelley located a section of Frankenstein in England, and Charles Maturin chose Ireland as the base from which Melmoth roamed the world.

A shift in emphasis from hero to heroine is another important change in A Sicilian Romance. Radcliffe may simply have found it easier to work with female characters (although Father Schedoni is the best character creation in her canon), but the fictional heroine as descended from Pamela, Clarissa, and Sophia Western was by convention relatively defenseless, and therefore approrpiate to an

embodiment of the passive endurance which is required in the struggle with the overbearing evil of the Gothic villain. More importantly, a revision in the primary conflict of the romance mandates the presence of a heroine as the leading character: the main conflict in The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne is largely social and military, and has to do with affairs of duty and honor; the conflict of A Sicilian Romance, however, is much more private and intimate in nature, and has to do with personal autonomy and will in affairs of love, courtship, and marriage. These latter concerns became almost inseparable from the Gothic romance, and Radcliffe increased the dominance of her heroine in The Romance of the Forest and especially in The Mysteries of Udolpho, until The Monk convinced her to view the conflict from the other side, to relate The Italian with the villain as the most important character.

The plot of A Sicilian Romance is fairly simple in outline, but confusing in detail. Basically, the narrative tells of the trials of a young woman who wishes to marry the young man with whom she has fallen in love, but whose father insists, out of concern for wealth and power, that she marry the man of his choice. Like Sophia Lee's The Recess, of which Radcliffe is said to have been "among the

warmest admirers,"[8] A Sicilian Romance opens with a leisurely description of two sisters who are being raised by a governess in a large, but mostly uninhabited castle. Julia, who is to be the principal heroine, is eighteen years old, and is described as imaginative, animated, and enchanting, with dark eyes, and dark auburn hair. Her twenty year old sister, Emilia, has blue eyes and flaxen hair, and is comparatively timid, retiring, and contemplative. Although their father, brother, and stepmother reside in splendor in Naples, Julia and Emilia have been left to the care of Madame de Menon, a close friend of their mother, the first Marchioness. While Emilia is perfectly happy with her obscure but tranquil existence, Julia "would sometimes sigh for the airy image which her fancies painted, and a painful curiosity would arise concerning the busy scenes from which she was excluded" (1.14).

The first disruption of their uneventful life is caused by the mysterious appearance of a flickering light in the long-since deserted and now decaying south wing of the castle. This unsettling occurrence, which leads to rumors of ghosts and spirits, is followed by the arrival of the Marquis, who has come to attend the deathbed of his confidential servant, and to prepare the castle for a grand

celebration of his son's majority. The Marquis, we are told, was "naturally of a haughty and overbearing disposition." But though his "passions were vehement," his wife, the second Marchioness, "had the address to bend them to her own purpose; and so well to conceal her influence, that he thought himself most independent when he was most enslaved" (1.6-7). This Marchioness, Radcliffe observes somewhat later, returned her husband's sincere affection "with seeming tenderness, and secret perfidy. She allowed herself a free indulgence in the most licentious pleasures," continues Radcliffe, "yet conducted herself with an art so exquisite as to elude discovery, and even suspicion. In her amours she was equally inconstant as ardent, till the young Count Hippolitus de Vereza attracted her attention" (1.23-24). But Hippolitus' outward elegance and perfection are matched by a refinement of mind and a purity of virtue which would never permit him to engage in adultery. All his "frigid indifference," however, "served only to inflame the passion it was meant to chill," and with each new rebuff, the Marchioness becomes more determined to win him as her lover (1.24-25). The Marquis' son, Ferdinand, is also kind and virtuous, in spite of having been raised by such dissolute parents. He and Hippolitus are close friends,

and travel together to Sicily to attend the festive parties, dinners, and dances.

Not surprisingly, Julia and Hippolitus fall in love almost at first meeting. But their troubles begin soon after, as the Marchioness, burning with rage and jealousy at the easy success of her rival, convinces the Marquis to marry Julia to a much older man who has been induced by her beauty to solicit her hand. Although the Duke de Luovo has been married twice before, both wives "had fallen victims to the slow but corroding hand of sorrow." And his character is best revealed in Radcliffe's matter of fact statement that "he delighted in simple undisguised tyranny" (1.129). Faced with the prospect of being married to such a man, Julia determines on elopement, but the Marquis learns of her plans, and is waiting to surprise his daughter and to wound her lover seriously. Hippolitus is carried away barely alive, and Ferdinand, who had assisted in the attempted escape, is locked in a dungeon. Julia is confined to a small room, but two days later, when preparations for her union to the Duke are complete, the Marquis discovers that she has disappeared. The Duke's original passion for the lovely Julia is now greatly augmented by the intolerable affront of her wedding day desertion, and

by the public embarrassment to which he has been subjected. The Marquis, of course, looks foolish and incompetent as a father, and the Marchioness is enraged by the frustration of her scheme to punish her rival.

At this point, the plot shifts to a structure of flight and pursuit. Julia, who had escaped with the help of her serving girl, spends several weeks in a remote cottage, and when this retreat is discovered, she takes refuge in a convent. But when the abbot insists that she must either take the veil or go back to her father, she flees for a third time, and is eventually forced to secrete herself in a cavern which winds back into the mountains. Although there are interludes of comparative tranquility, Julia's flight is fairly frantic on the whole, as she is pursued not only by her father's servants, but by the Duke and his followers as well. At one point, she is actually overtaken by a second irate father who has mistaken her for his own runaway daughter. To add to the confusion, Ferdinand and later Hippolitus join in the search in an attempt to protect Julia from the Duke and the Marquis. Moreover, everyone involved in this great chase must contend with the murderous bandits who roam through the forests and mountains.

Radcliffe's decision to set her novel in Sicily adds an interesting touch to Julia's flight by creating a claustrophobic sense of no escape. She can travel only so far in any direction before coming to the sea, and her one attempt to sail to the mainland is aborted when a violent gale forces her ship back to the rocky coast, almost as if the island is refusing to give her up. When she discovers that the cavern which she has entered in a last, desperate hope of sanctuary winds beneath the castle of Mazzini, Julia realizes that her many weeks of travel have come full circle, and that her flight has ended, unwittingly, at the very point from which it began. In exploring this cavern, Julia finds a secret door, passes through a hidden passageway, and finally comes upon a dungeon in which a lone prisoner languishes. This inmate, she soon learns, is her mother, the first Marchioness, who has been confined for the past fifteen years after her husband had convinced the world of her death by staging a mock funeral. As a final irony, the door through which Julia entered the dungeon has locked behind her, and she now has no choice but to give herself up to a life of oppression with the Duke, or to remain unmolested in prison with her loving mother.

Although the Marquis is greatly angered by Julia's success in eluding capture, he soon faces much more serious problems as A Sicilian Romance moves toward a surprising and impressive catastrophe. The Marquis had imprisoned his first wife so that he would be free to marry Maria de Vellorno, with whom he was, and still is, deeply infatuated. Except for the lone servant who had attended the Marchioness over the years, no one had ever known of her continued existence. The Marquis was therefore shocked to disbelief when the abbot of the convent where Julia had sought refuge revealed his knowledge that the first Marchioness is alive and a prisoner. After several weeks of brooding, he decides that he must protect himself by destroying the only proof of the abbot's bold accusation. But while he is contemplating the murder of his first wife, his second is with a young man who has eagerly accepted the role that Hippolitus had refused so adamantly. When the Marquis is finally informed of Maria's illicit activities, which have been going on for many years, his schemes come crashing in on him with astonishing force and rapidity. His first impulse is simply to kill Maria, and to "expiate her guilt with her blood" (2.187). But to even his own surprise, he discovers that he loves her in spite of her infidelity,

and that he cannot endure the thought of injuring her. "It seemed as if his desire of her affection," explains Radcliffe, "increased with his knowledge of the loss of it; and the very circumstance which should have roused his aversion, by a strange perversity of disposition, appeared to heighten his passion, and to make him think it impossible he could exist without her" (2.190). Ruled by this great and continued affection, he determines only to admonish his errant wife, "to reprove and to punish, but hereafter to restore her to favor" (2.191).

Thus the Marquis de Mazzini displays a human weakness comparable to that which leads Count de Santmorin to abduct Mary in The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne. But the Marquis' blind adoration of Maria is established early in the novel, and his present emotions are therefore convincing, as well as interesting and even touching. Maria, however, shares none of her husband's tenderness, and when she is upbraided with heated insults and harsh reproaches, she boldly asserts her innocence by inventing a tale to explain her conduct. Although he dearly wishes to believe this story, the Marquis cannot doubt the evidence of the embraces he has witnessed, and he leaves his wife sobbing bitterly on the couch. Later that evening, the Marquis

falls suddenly and seriously ill. Calling for Ferdinand, he orders him to bring the Marchioness to his room, but Maria is discovered "lifeless and bathed in blood" with a dagger by her side (2.197). A letter indicates that she has taken her own life after plotting revenge on her husband by poisoning his wine. With his dying breath, the Marquis tells Ferdinand of his imprisoned mother, and urges him to go quickly to keep her from tasting the tainted food that he has just carried to her dungeon. However, Hippolitus has already rescued both the Marchioness and Julia. The cruel father and his licentious wife are dead, the innocent wife is restored to her loving children, and Julia is free at last from oppression and terror.

From beginning to end, the action of A Sicilian Romance is much more insular and private than that of Athlin and Dunbayne. The conflicts are those of personal and domestic life, and victims and persecutors are members of the same family. While Julia is not characterized in such great detail as Emily St. Aubert in The Mysteries of Udolpho or Ellena di Rosalba in The Italian, she is certainly more fully developed than the heroine of Radcliffe's first romance. Similarly, while the Marquis is single-minded in his attempts to control his daughter, his evil

is better motivated in the end and much more complex than that of the Baron of Dunbayne. Indeed, when Radcliffe reveals that much of his cruelty springs from a doting affection for a wicked and undeserving woman, she evokes enough sympathy for her villain to cause a mild feeling of pathos when his eyes are opened and his life destroyed.

In spite of these improvements, there are several serious problems in A Sicilian Romance. The account of Julia's flight, for instance, continues on far too long after its interest has given way to repetition, confusion, and coincidence. Thus, this longest section of the narrative is also the weakest. On the other hand, the concluding section is the best, but the briefest, section of the romance. The revelation of the Marquis' conflicting and paradoxical emotions--of his continued and even increased adoration of the wife who has spurned his love to the point of ridicule--gives substance and depth to his character. And Maria's flagrant adultery, her artful excuses, and her brutal revenge show her to be as great, if not so subtle, a villainess as the Marchesa di Vivaldi of The Italian. Given the power and interest of the unusual relationship between the Marquis and the Marchioness, it is unfortunate

that Radcliffe did not develop their personalities sooner and devote more time to detailing their interactions.

In addition to these weaknesses, other, less serious problems can be noted. Unlike her handling of the Marquis, Radcliffe never succeeds in developing the Duke de Luovo beyond her initial description of 'delighting in simple tyranny.' He glides through the novel more as a concept than as a person, and he is never more than a dreadful possibility which Julia must avoid. Emilia suffers from an even greater neglect, as she is never given any purpose or function to justify her presence in the narrative. And although the plot flows more smoothly than that of The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne, there are several awkward moments, such as that which arises when Ferdinand is needed to attend his dying father: "Ferdinand, in escaping from the hands of the banditti, it was now seen, had fallen into the power of his father," says Radcliffe. "He had since been confined in an apartment of the castle, and was now liberated to obey the summons" (2.196). But even with its weaknesses, A Sicilian Romance shows clear improvement over The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne. Thus Radcliffe's second novel attests to her ability to learn from her previous failures, and more importantly, its

moments of undeniable power and interest look forward to the Gothic masterpieces that she was soon to compose.

Published in 1791, The Romance of the Forest was highly popular with the reading public, and widely praised by the literary reviewers of the day. In the twentieth century, The Romance of the Forest is still very readable, and is generally regarded as Ann Radcliffe's first major novel.[9] Writing with greatly increased power and interest, Radcliffe completes in her third novel the winnowing of extraneous material that she had begun in A Sicilian Romance. Secondary characters such as parents, brothers, sisters, and governesses have been eliminated, and Adeline is utterly abandoned and alone when she is thrust without explanation into the care of Pierre and Madame La Motte. The absence of subplots leaves Radcliffe free to concentrate on her heroine, and Adeline dominates this romance almost as totally as Emily is to dominate The Mysteries of Udolpho. The focus of The Romance of the Forest is even more narrow and inward than that of A Sicilian Romance, and the central conflict is more specifically sexual and more potentially dangerous, for Adeline is faced not with merely an unhappy marriage, but with seduction, rape, and ultimately murder.

The villain with whom Adeline must contend is much more ingenious, subtle, and treacherous than his earlier counterparts, and the evil which he embodies is exquisitely tempting and attractive, rather than patently offensive and grotesque. Whereas Mary and Julia are permitted to contemplate their persecutors from a distance, Adeline is brought face to face with Montalt on several occasions. And while the heroine's struggle with the villain in each of the earlier novels is obscured by numerous tangential conflicts, the maneuvering between the heroine and villain of The Romance of the Forest is placed uncluttered at the center of the narrative. Thus, the greater success of Radcliffe's third Gothic romance can be attributed primarily to a tighter, more controlled action, to more fully developed characters and incidents, and to an emphasis on the extended and complex encounter between an interesting heroine and a convincing villain.

The Romance of the Forest opens in April of 1658 as Monsieur and Madame La Motte are forced by unspecified legal and financial difficulties to flee the city of Paris, and to seek shelter from the law in a distant town or village. Having lost the road in the dark and rainy night, La Motte approaches a "small and ancient house, which stood

alone on the heath."[10] The rude appearance of the inhabitants of this house fills him with apprehension, and after he has been kept in suspense for some time, "a beautiful girl, who appeared to be about eighteen" is forced upon him at the point of a pistol. "You are wholly in our power," exclaims one of the ruffians. "If you wish to save your life, swear that you will convey this girl where I may never see her more" (43.6). La Motte obviously has little choice in the matter, and he is also touched by the apparent distress of the young woman who stands trembling by his side. Returning to his carriage with Adeline, he permits his party to be conducted back to the main way. After several more days of travel, these unhappy wanderers are again overtaken by night, and their carriage overturns in the darkness of a thick and gloomy forest.

La Motte and his wife, Adeline and the servants are then forced to spend the night in a deserted and partially decayed abbey that they have discovered in the midst of a clearing. With the return of day and the revival of his spirits, La Motte considers that, with a few repairs, the abbey could well provide an ideal haven from all his difficulties. And indeed, all goes smoothly at first. After several days, however, La Motte begins to disappear

into the forest at intervals, and to respond to his wife's attentions with some coldness and irritation. Her naturally jealous disposition leads Madame La Motte to suspect that her husband is meeting secretly with Adeline, and as a consequence, she adopts a subtle but unmistakable rudeness toward her young companion. The arrival of the La Mottes' son, Louis, brightens the household for a time, but when Madame observes that he has plainly fallen in love with this woman of unknown family and fortune, her unspoken animosity toward Adeline increases. Some time later, the quietly depressed routine of the abbey is again broken, this time by the sudden appearance of the Marquis de Montalt and a group of chevaliers. La Motte and the Marquis exchange looks of surprise and hostility on first meeting. But whatever they may have been, their differences are apparently settled in private, for the Marquis invites the La Mottes to stay on at the abbey, which is situated on his lands, and even becomes a regular visitor in their newfound home. Adeline's personal melancholy is somewhat relieved and her hopes for the future revived when she notices a handsome young man in the Marquis' party, and Theodore also seems to have noticed Adeline. But the Marquis has remarked her beauty and grace just as surely as has Theodore.

And to her great dismay, Adeline discovers that Montalt has designs on her virtue, and that La Motte, her only possible guardian and protector, is urging her to receive the Marquis with warmth and intimacy.

In some respects, Adeline is similar in her role of heroine to Mary and Julia, but there are significant differences in their situations. Most importantly, Adeline is the first of Radcliffe's heroines who is a true "child of sorrow," who is completely friendless and alone as she enters the wide and frightening world. Mary enjoys the loving comfort and sympathy of the Countess and Osbert, and Alleyn seems always to be on hand to rescue her from danger. While the Marquis de Mazzini is more of an enemy than a father, Julia can turn to Emilia and Madame de Menon for solace, and Ferdinand does his best to insure her happiness. Adeline, however, has lived among strangers since she was seven, and is now essentially an orphan. At her mother's death, the man who is supposedly her father gave her up to a convent, and seemed totally indifferent to her happiness. When she was twelve, this man informed her that she must become a nun, but after several years of debate, he relented in his demands. Finally, Adeline's joy at escaping the convent turned quickly to fear as this rude

and sullen father left her alone with a gang of ruffians at the house on the heath.

Because of these experiences, Adeline thinks of her father with more fear than fondness, and while her new companions seem kind enough at first, La Motte's apparent treachery and Madame's cold hostility leave her with no protection other than her own ingenuity and courage. Moreover, neither Mary nor Julia has any cause to worry about her rank and fortune, but Adeline's peculiar background leaves her social position and even her identity in doubt. Thus Madame La Motte treats her sometimes as a poor unfortunate, and sometimes as a dangerous rival, but always as a person of little consequence. And as Richardson's Pamela had discovered long ago, few people who have the power to prevent it are willing to intercede in the attempt of a wealthy man to debauch an unknown woman. For all these reasons, Adeline (and later, Emily and Ellena as well) exists inevitably as a person apart: even when she is in seemingly sympathetic company, her private sorrows and concerns keep her in an isolation that can never by completely dispelled until she finds out who she is, in both the literal and the figurative sense, and until she establishes

a place in the world that is hers by right rather than by gift.

Adeline's personality--her thoughts, feelings, and particularly her sensibility--is also more fully developed than those of the earlier heroines. Her inner or spiritual isolation is reinforced by a physical separation: "the lower apartments," explains Radcliffe, "being insufficient for the accommodation of the family, a room above stairs was prepared for Adeline" (43.40). And it is to this room that she retires to relax her defenses and to indulge her heart. By focusing on her heroine during these quiet moments, Radcliffe develops her kind, generous, and sensitive nature, and explores her hopes, fears, and anxieties. In the privacy of her room, Adeline considers how to ease the La Mottes' depression, and puzzles over Madame's sudden and inexplicable coldness. After her first meeting with the Marquis' party, "the image of Theodore pursued her to her chamber" (43.119), and as her thoughts wander to daydreams, she first suspects that she has fallen in love. Later, she retreats to her apartment as her only sanctuary from the Marquis' attentions, and she trembles in seclusion for the success of her plan to escape the abbey and her would-be ravisher.

One night as she is sleeping in her room, Adeline is disturbed by dreams of a "large old chamber belonging to the abbey" in which a man lies dying (43.135). Soon after, she discovers a hidden suite which adjoins her own apartment, and which is exactly like the one in her dream. In these dreadful chambers, she finds an old dagger "spotted and stained with rust," and a yellowing manuscript "tied with a string and covered with dust" (43.144-45). Retiring early to her room on several successive nights, she studies the manuscript and pieces together its shocking story. Her gradual realization that the author of this account was imprisoned and eventually murdered in the very rooms in which she now sits fills Adeline with a superstitious terror, but she also feels a deep sympathy and sorrow for this unknown sufferer: "O that I had been near!" she exclaims, "yet what could I have done to save thee? Alas! nothing. I forget that even now, perhaps, I am like thee abandoned to dangers from which I have no friend to succour me" (43.175). Although Adeline's character is just as surely stylized as is the language of her lament, Radcliffe's many descriptions of her most private thoughts and feelings create a sense of intimacy shared by reader, author, and heroine. Taking us into confidence, Radcliffe

has permitted glimpses of her heroine at her weakest and most vulnerable. And this engenders a sympathy for Adeline which renders both her specific fears and her vague anxieties significant and important. In short, while we may not grant the verisimilitude of Radcliffe's heroine, we readily concede the validity of her feelings of inadequacy and uncertainty, of loneliness, doubt, and desolation, for we ourselves have felt them.

The characterization of the villain, of the Marquis de Montalt, also shows advances over the presentations of his counterparts in The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne and A Sicilian Romance. Most significantly, he is the first of Radcliffe's villains who is not what he seems to be, the first whose inner depravity is carefully concealed by an outer refinement and gentility. Although Montalt is eventually revealed as an incorrigible villain who is capable of the most heinous crimes, there is, at first, an interesting tension between his good and evil impulses. Thus it is not entirely fair or accurate to say that his politeness is simply and completely a mask or subterfuge; in a sense, he really is a gentleman:

> The Marquis was polite, affable, and attentive; to manners the most easy and elegant was added the last refinement of polished life. His

> conversation was lively, amusing, sometimes even witty. . . . Adeline listened till the cheerfulness which she had at first only assumed became real. The address of the Marquis was so insinuating and affable that her reserve insensibly gave way before it and her natural vivacity resumed its long lost empire (43.124-25).

In light of this description, the Marquis is perhaps most similar to Montoni of The Mysteries of Udolpho. They are both inherently cruel and immoral, but they are also quite refined, and can be very charming and attractive when it suits their purposes.

In spite of this similarity, there is a clear difference in the motivation of these two villains. In his perpetual coldness, Montoni seems entirely uninfluenced by lust and physical passion; rather he uses implicitly sexual threats in an attempt to gain control of the wealth and power that he so desires. Montalt, on the other hand, uses the great wealth which he already possesses in an attempt to seduce women to the sexual intimacy that he seems to crave. Montoni, in plain words, is engaged in extortion through a form of sexual blackmail. But Montalt, at least initially, is interested only in making love, in establishing an amorous relationship with the beautiful young woman whom he has found at his abbey. At its beginning, then,

the conflict between Adeline and the Marquis is one more of values than of criminality. The openness with which he makes his original proposal suggests that he fully expects that Adeline will be interested in his invitation, and the women who surround him with adoration at his chateau show that many have already found his proposals attractive. Indeed, one who is ruled more by pragmatic concerns than moral ideals may judge that Adeline, in her friendless, penniless, and nameless circumstance, could do a great deal worse than to become the richly kept mistress of a handsome and elegant marquis. But Adeline is deeply offended, and rejects his offer with "an air of ineffable dignity" (43.152). In his worldliness, the Marquis seems to assume that Adeline is simply holding out for a more advantageous offer, and he therefore asks her (although insincerely) to claim his title as well as his love by becoming his wife.

Adeline, of course, stands firm in her refusal, and the Marquis finally resorts to trickery to have her brought to his chateau. But even when she is in his absolute power, he continues to follow the gentle course of seduction. "Adeline," says Radcliffe, "was astonished" by the magnificance of her surroundings, for the Marquis' chateau is truly a pleasure palace, "splendidly illuminated and fitted

up in the most airy and elegant taste" (43.195). The decor of his salon appeals to each of the senses: there are frescoes "representing scenes from Ovid" and from "the Armida of Tasso," silken couches, silver lamps, busts of Greek and Roman poets, vases of flowers which "breathed the most delicious perfume," a banquet of "fruits, ices, and liquors," and "music such as charmeth sleep" (43.195-96). But Radcliffe also stresses that the Marquis' villa is not the gaudy creation of a mere sensualist; rather, it is the residence of a man who possesses true taste, elegance, and refinement. Thus, once again, the common convention which holds that evil is ugly and grotesque is refuted, and for a brief moment, it seems that Adeline, alone of Radcliffe's heroines, may be tempted from the path of virtue:

> Adeline listened in surprise, and insensibly became soothed and interested; a tender melancholy stole upon her heart and subdued every harsher feeling. . . . A female voice, accompanied by a lute, a hautboy, and a few other instruments, now gradually swelled into a tone so exquisite, as raised attention into ecstasy (43.196).

Her spell is broken at first by the entrance of the Marquis, but as he addresses her in "a gentle voice," and looks on her with "a studied air of tenderness" (43.198), again the temptation seems real.[11] The enchantment recedes for a

second time, however, and Radcliffe signals through the aphoristic tag at the end of the following vignette that Adeline's internal victory, at least, is assured:

> He led her, and she suffered him, to a seat near the banquet, at which he pressed her to partake of a variety of confectionaries, particularly of some liquors, of which he himself drank freely: Adeline accepted only of a peach (43.200-01).

In spite of this rebuff, the Marquis continues to plead his love and eventually attempts to embrace Adeline, but "with a look on which was impressed the firm dignity of virtue, yet touched with sorrow, she awed him to forbearance" (43.203). And in answer to her complaints of fatigue, the Marquis permits Adeline to retire for the night, after reminding her again that their marriage will be celebrated early the following day. Adeline casts scarcely a glance at the voluptuous accommodations of her chamber--at the richly canopied bed, decorated with solid silver cupids, which dominates the room like a pagan altar--before seeking a means of escape. To her delight, one of the windows is unlocked, allowing her to make her way out into the gardens. Wandering hopelessly lost and disoriented through the extensive grounds, she is finally saved by Theodore, who has deserted his regiment and come to rescue

his beloved from the lascivious designs of the Marquis. But next day, Theodore is overtaken, wounded, and charged with assaulting his commander, as well as desertion. Adeline, sunk in misery, is returned to the abbey, and to imprisonment.

Quite by accident, the Marquis has come to suspect Adeline's true identity, and his thoughts turn from seduction to more drastic measures. And in a scene which foreshadows Schedoni's intricate maneuvering with the Marchesa in The Italian, Montalt attempts to coerce La Motte into murdering Adeline. For a long time, La Motte assumes that the Marquis is speaking of rape, but at last he understands more clearly:

> "Watch her closely," interrupted the Marquis, "and on no account suffer her to leave her apartment. Where is she now?"
> "Confined in her chamber."
> "Very well. But I am impatient."
> "Name your time, my Lord---to-morrow night."
> "To-morrow night," said the Marquis---"To-morrow night. Do you understand me now?"
> "Yes, my Lord, this night if you wish it so. But had you not better dismiss your servants, and remain yourself in the forest? You know the door that opens upon the woods from the west tower. Come thither about twelve--I will be there to conduct you to her chamber. Remember then, my Lord, to-night---"
> "Adeline dies!" interrupted the Marquis in a low voice scarcely human. Do you understand me now?"
> ---La Motte shrunk aghast---"My Lord!" (44.68).

After further maneuvering, La Motte agrees to commit the crime, and the discussion, as in The Italian, then moves on to a debate over details. And that night, La Motte steals toward Adeline's bed, dagger in hand, just as Schedoni later approaches Ellena in her sleep. But at the last moment, Adeline awakes, and losing his nerve, La Motte allows her to flee the abbey with a servant. When the Marquis arrives the following morning, La Motte tells him of Adeline's escape, naming Peter as the sole accessory. And at this point, we are given, for the first time, a clear and undisguised picture of the Marquis' inner character:

> The strong workings of his soul, which appeared in his countenance, for a while alarmed and terrified La Motte. He cursed himself and her in terms of such coarseness and vehemence as La Motte was astonished to hear from a man whose manners were generally amiable, whatever might be the violence and criminality of his passions. To invent and express these terms seemed to give him not only relief but delight (44.83-84).

The Marquis' violent curses have the effect of punctuating the end to his term of absolute power, and Adeline's successful escape brings to an end the first long section of The Romance of the Forest. The fairly brisk pace and interesting action of this segment, which begins when Adeline is thrust into La Motte's care in the house on the heath, give way to a long and leisurely account of Adeline's travels

through southern France, Savoy, Nice, and Languedoc. Among the several new characters introduced in this section are Monsieur and Clara La Luc, who invite Adeline to stay in their home, and who are soon discovered as Theodore's father and sister. The rather loosely established conflict of this section centers on the fate of young Theodore, and, after several weeks of uncertainty, La Luc, Clara, and Adeline receive a report that he is under sentence of death in a Paris prison. Since he has been condemned for threatening the life of his superior officer, Theodore's vindication is inextricably bound with the Marquis' destruction. While the long-delayed denouement is finally interesting, the intervening section is far too lengthy and uneventful, and Radcliffe was to develop a similar situation in The Italian much more expeditiously.

The Marquis' many crimes begin to unravel as a result of his decision to gain revenge on La Motte by having him arrested for armed robbery. "The elegance of his manners," reports Radcliffe, "had so effectually veiled the depravity of his heart that he was a favourite with his sovereign" (44.208). And for this reason, the Marquis feels that he may proceed with impunity against his enemy. This time, however, his vengeful passions have led him too

far. Although La Motte had in fact encountered and robbed the Marquis shortly after taking up residence in the forest, he attempts to discredit this allegation by charging that Montalt had commissioned him to murder Adeline. Several of the Marquis' hirelings, disgruntled at their meagre rewards, also give evidence, and it appears for a time that Adeline is the "natural child of the Marquis de Montalt and of a nun belonging to a convent of Ursulines" (44.202). As sordid as this charge is, the Marquis hopes that his most serious crime will remain forever secret. But a man named d'Aunoy, the sullen man whom Adeline had known as her father, is finally located and brought to the stand. Under questioning, he confesses that, in 1642, he had assassinated Henri, Marquis de Montalt, on orders from his half-brother, the present Marquis. Adeline's testimony is all that is needed to complete the case against the villainous Marquis, but she speaks reluctantly and with some sorrow, for she realizes that "in punishing the destroyer of her parent," she must unavoidably "doom her uncle to death" (44.218).

In this manner, The Romance of the Forest runs its course to a fairly satisfying and effective conclusion. Although her experiences have brought her perilously close

to an incestuous seduction or rape, and while she must own her uncle for the murderer of her father, Adeline has at last discovered her past, her name, and memories of a good father. Retaining his pride to the end, the Marquis poisons himself rather than submit to an ignominious death at the hands of the law. But his finer impulses also remain in evidence as he signs a full confession establishing Adeline's birth, title, and inheritance of a considerable legacy. Theodore, who has been completely exonerated, urges an immediate marriage, but Adeline insists that she must first return to the abbey and ensure that her father's remains are buried at last beside her mother's grave. With the completion of this sorrowful task, Adeline has righted the wrongs of the past as far as is now possible, and she is free to live out her life with only the recollection of past sufferings to dampen her happiness.

And with the completion of her third novel in as many years, Ann Radcliffe has brought her apprenticeship to a very satisfactory conclusion. Although there are still weaknesses in The Romance of the Forest, particularly the lengthy section describing Adeline's travels, it is a better novel than A Sicilian Romance, and a much better work than The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne. While neither Adeline

nor Radcliffe seems able to comprehend entirely the evil of the Marquis--the passions which can drive a man of many good qualities to a life of murder and wanton destruction--the treatment of these concerns in this novel prepares the way for a more considered presentation of the same themes in The Mysteries of Udolpho. Udolpho, in turn, inspires Lewis to complete The Monk, which then leads to Radcliffe's last version of the Gothic world in The Italian.

CHAPTER TWO

THE MYSTERIES OF UDOLPHO:

A TENTATIVE PERFECTION

Critics generally agree that The Italian is Ann Radcliffe's most successful literary work, but The Mysteries of Udolpho was clearly her most popular and best liked novel.[1] Although Udolpho does not contain any elements which could not have been found three years earlier in The Romance of the Forest, it is the first novel of the Gothic school to present a developed and balanced synthesis of those elements. Emily is a more rounded Adeline, Montoni is a more complex and central Montalt, and the castle in the Appenines is a more striking and organic setting than the abbey in the forest. The Mysteries of Udolpho is also Radcliffe's most ambitious and expansive novel as she follows her heroine through a variety of situations, and examines in detail her hopes and delusions, her suspicions and fears. By relating large parts of her long novel from Emily's point of view, Radcliffe is able

to create a convincing account of an individual state of mind. And it is this probe into Emily's psyche that stands as the most significant achievement of The Mysteries of Udolpho.

In the first third of the romance, Radcliffe describes Emily's upbringing and education in the sheltered setting of La Vallée. Her relationship with her parents, her travels with her valetudinary father, and her courtship with Valancourt are each examined in turn. But by the end of this section, both of Emily's parents will be dead, Valancourt and Emily will be separated--perhaps never to meet again--and Emily will be under the legal guardianship of her imprudent aunt and the inscrutable Montoni. In this manner, the opening third of the novel is characterized by a stripping away of Emily's supports and defenses as she slips from complete happiness and security to a situation filled with doubt, anxiety, and a restless foreboding. The isolation and vulnerability which result from this stripping process are characteristic of Gothic romance; the peace and tranquility of the opening are unusual, however, as the forceful opening, beginning in medias res and filled with dramatic tension, is much more common.[2] But the quiet beginning of The Mysteries of Udolpho is in

keeping with the careful attention to detail which is evident throughout the narrative, and it also gives Radcliffe an opportunity to present an unusually full account of her heroine's background.

The action of the novel is dated at 1584, but the historical setting remains hazy as Radcliffe shows little concern for the factual authenticity of the events which form the background of her narrative. Emily, who lives alone with her parents, is said to resemble her mother, "having the same elegant symmetry of form, the same delicacy of features, and the same blue eyes, full of tender sweetness."[3] As complements to these physical attributes, we are told that Emily manifests an "uncommon delicacy of mind, warm affections, and ready benevolence." She gives away her close kinship to sentimental heroines by displaying "a degree of susceptibility too exquisite to admit of lasting peace," and a sensibility which gave "a pensive tone to her spirits, and a softness to her manner, which added grace to beauty" (p. 5). Emily's philosophical father recognizes that people with too fine a sensibility often suffer great pain and anguish in the real world. He therefore bases Emily's education upon an attempt "to strengthen her mind; to enure her to habits of self-command;

to teach her to reject the first impulse of her feelings, and to look, with cool examination, upon the disappointments he sometimes threw in her way" (p. 5).

The first serious test of how much self-control Emily has learned comes when her mother dies after a sudden and brief illness. Although Emily is naturally moved by the death of her parent, she is certainly not incapacitated, and she seems quickly to recover her accustomed composure. However, her second trial, which comes with her father's death, is a very different matter. Devastated by this loss, Emily lapses into a psychosomatic illness and is confined to the convent of St. Clair. "The maternal kindness of the abbess," says Radcliffe, "and the gentle attentions of the nuns did all, that was possible, towards soothing her spirits and restoring her health. But the latter was too deeply wounded, through the medium of her mind, to be quickly revived" (p. 88). While it is possible that Emily is so seriously affected by St. Aubert's death simply because it so quickly follows that of her mother, her feelings toward her father are clearly both deep and conflicting. She often idolizes him as the benevolent master of her youth, yet she seems on other occasions to resent him for going away and leaving her alone in a frightening world.

And in her worst moments, she is even able to imagine that her seemingly exemplary father had kept a mistress, and that she is the illegitimate offspring of his secret affair. Moreover, Emily's grief at the passing of her father seems too excessive to be easily explained. At the height of her fever, for instance, she is "reluctant to leave the spot where her father's relics were deposited," and reflects that if she does not regain her health, "her remains would repose beside those of St. Aubert" (p. 88). Even after she has recovered from her sickness, she is tempted to withdraw from the world in order to "devote herself to the cloister, in a spot, rendered sacred to her by containing the tomb of St. Aubert" (p. 89). Through the remainder of the novel, Emily frequently loses herself in memories of her father (though she rarely thinks of her mother), and on several occasions, she fancies that his spirit has come to offer sympathy and guidance. These emotions indicate that Emily is torn between viewing her father as a hypocrite burdened by unconfessed sins, and a saint shrouded in heavenly goodness and eternal wisdom. Emily's reactions to her father and his death are important not simply because they show that she preferred one parent to the other, but because they demonstrate the power, suggestibility, and

morbid tendency of her imagination. In addition, her closeness to St. Aubert is a firm indication that her fate lies not with her mother at La Vallée, but with her father in the neighborhood of Chateau-le-Blanc.

An element of Radcliffe's writing which is particularly evident in the first section of The Mysteries of Udolpho is her use of picturesque landscape. Emily's journey with her father through the peaks and valleys of the Pyrenées, and over the plains of Languedoc gives Radcliffe an excellent opportunity to show her talent for painting verbal pictures at its best. As a result of this section and others like it, scholars have often described Radcliffe as a "pre-Romantic," and have explored extensively her use of the theories put forth in Burke's Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful (1757).[4] But these discussions lead quickly away from The Mysteries of Udolpho, and little has therefore been said about the meaning of Emily and St. Aubert's journey in the context of the novel itself.

Travel to warmer climates for reasons of health is surely an age-old practice, and the motif of journey-as-restorative had already appeared in Tristram Shandy (Volume VII, 1765) and Humphrey Clinker (1771) by the time that

Radcliffe began to write. But while Tristram's trip to France is presented as literally a flight from death, and while Matt Bramble becomes consistently healthier as he pursues his rambles, St. Aubert's journey is clearly a pilgrimage to death. With each day's travel, he becomes weaker, more languid, and less able to be inspired or revived by the magnificance of the landscape. When he reaches the neighborhood of Le-Blanc, he can go no further, and ironically, he dies within view of his late sister's chateau.

The relationship between the emotions which Emily experiences while passing through various landscapes, and the changes in her situation during the course of the narrative is also meaningful. Outlined briefly, Emily's travels with St. Aubert take her from the quiet fields and meadows of La Vallée, over the dizzying cliffs and crevices of the Pyrenées, and out onto the verdent plains of Languedoc. In other words, the travelers move from the calm and serene, through the rude and terrific, and back into the peaceful. The ending tranquility, however, is not the same as that with which the journey began, for it is firmly impressed with memories inspired by stupendous heights and thundering cataracts: "After traversing these

regions for many leagues," says Radcliffe, "they began to descend towards Rousillon, and features of beauty then mingled with the scene. Yet the travellers did not look back without some regret to the sublime objects they had quitted; though the eye, fatigued with the extensions of its powers, was glad to repose on the verdure of woods and pastures" (p. 43).

So, too, flows Emily's life as she moves from the quiet tranquility of her adolescence at the opening of the novel; through a year which includes the death of her parents, her persecutions at Udolpho, and the sufferings of an uncertain romance; to a final reunion with Valancourt, the happiness of which is tinged by memories of what they have experienced. Emily's most dangerous experience--her continued encounters with Montoni after the death of her aunt--is analogous to teetering on the highest summit of the Pyrenées. Each situation is filled with the pain and terror, tempered by a peculiar fascination, which Burke had associated with the sublime. And the image which Radcliffe uses to describe the lush groves and vineyards of Rousillon, which are nestled at the feet of the savage alps, will also apply to Emily's situation in the cruel world of

Udolpho--she, too, will "present a perfect picture . . . of 'beauty sleeping in the lap of horror'" (p. 55).

Much has been written about the heavy-handedness with which Radcliffe treats such episodes as Emily's reaction to the first sentence of St. Aubert's papers and the mystery of the object concealed by the black veil. Little has been said, however, about the skill with which she introduces the seeds of what will become the major interests and concerns of the novel. Montoni, for instance, is so closely connected with the Castle of Udolpho that his initial appearance early in the romance is easily overlooked. But Emily does meet him at Madame Quesnel's shortly after the death of her mother, and significantly, she finds him "an uncommonly handsome person, with features manly and expressive" (p. 23). Emily next meets Montoni after she has been left in the care of Madame Cheron, and although she continues to find him attractive, she is now somewhat uneasy in his presence: "Emily felt admiration, but not the admiration that leads to esteem; for it was mixed with a degree of fear she knew not exactly wherefore" (p. 122). Through these remarks, the mingled fascination and fear, which will characterize Emily's reaction to Montoni during

her stay at Udolpho, are established firmly but quietly in the early chapters of the novel.

Valancourt is also introduced early, and from the outset of his meeting with Emily and her father, he is marked clearly as the hero of the romance, and as the man whom Emily will eventually marry. "St. Aubert was much pleased," reports Radcliffe, "with the manly fortitude, simplicity, and keen susceptibility to the grandeur of nature" which he discovered in Valancourt (p. 34). Predictably, Emily finds him attractive in every way, and seems to fall in love almost immediately. But the most telling observation is made by St. Aubert: "This young man," he says often to himself, "has never been at Paris" (p. 41). He is correct in his conjecture, but more importantly, his comment subtly foreshadows the difficulty which will come between the young lovers and plunge Emily from the advent of happiness to the brink of despair.

The single most pervasive riddle of The Mysteries of Udolpho is also posed and carefully developed in the first section. Shortly after her mother's death, Emily overhears St. Aubert weeping alone in the night. Stealing quietly to his door, she watches in silence as her father gazes tenderly upon a miniature portrait which he then

places to his lips while sighing "with a convulsive force" (p. 26). Emily's anxiety at her father's obvious sorrow turns abruptly to amazement and confusion when she observes by chance that while the portrait represents a beautiful woman, it is clearly not the likeness of her mother. Emily's vague suspicions about St. Aubert's background are sharpened by his great, but unaccountable, interest in the Marchioness de Villeroi, and by his particular request that he be buried near the Villeroi family tomb. And when she unintentionally reads the first line of her father's papers, which she has been enjoined to burn unread, Emily feels certain that St. Aubert has sheltered a deep and possibly compromising secret in his heart.

More immediate problems, brought about by her aunt's bumbling interference and the menaces of Montoni, distract Emily from the mystery of her father's past through much of the second section of the novel. Thus, it is not until she escapes from Udolpho and arrives at Chateau-le-Blanc that she can begin to explore in earnest the roots of her fears and suspicions. The question of her father's strange behavior, however, is vital to the entire romance, for it is the only mystery to span the narrative from beginning to end, and the only element to bind Emily and Montoni together

with the organic force of a shared history. And on a very basic level, Emily cannot be sure of her own birth and identity until she understands fully the nature of St. Aubert's relationship with the Marchioness de Villeroi. Cast in the nearly mythical terms which characterize all successful romance, she must leave the familiar security of La Vallée, brave the many dangers of the Castle of Udolpho, and return alone to Chateau-le-Blanc. For not until she has laid to rest the ghosts of her past can she be free to live happily in the present, or to plan with confidence for the future.

Through the second section of The Mysteries of Udolpho, Emily and Montoni engage in an intricate psychological dance which is composed of emotional, sexual, and intellectual maneuvers. This dance is fascinating to follow, but it is also a very serious performance, for with each new posture, Emily could lose her wealth, her chastity, her sanity, or even her life. The general nature of her predicament is clear enough: she is in fact being held prisoner at Udolpho as Montoni attempts to force her to sign over the deeds to the property she has inherited. But the specifics of her situation and of her relationship with Montoni are difficult to define, and it is therefore

possible to place several differing interpretations on the events of this section of the novel.

It is possible, especially in retrospect, to make light of Emily's ordeal by pointing out that nothing so very terrible happens to her after all.[5] Under this view, Emily's own imagination, and not Montoni, is seen as her greatest enemy. A second, more extreme position suggests that Emily's view of her situation is not to be trusted because she is the victim of a pronounced neurosis, probably caused by sexual repression. Although Emily says that she fears and abhors Montoni, this position maintains that she subconsciously finds him very attractive and desirable. And under this interpretation, it is her sublimated sexual desire, and not a serious concern for the safety and well-being of herself or her aunt, which brings Emily to request so many audiences with Montoni.[6] But each of these views would make Emily out to be considerably more neurotic than she actually is, and more importantly, by concentrating solely on Emily, each would downplay the significance of Montoni to this section of the romance.

That Emily is only one of Montoni's many concerns is hardly deniable. At the same time, however, he is clearly aware of her presence at Udolpho, and he does

expend considerable energy in attempting to gain control of her estates. In addition, it is through his encounters with Emily that Montoni is raised from the level of a common desperado engaged in semi-legal activities, to the heights of a powerful, mysterious, and intriguing personage. Montoni begins his persecution of Emily a few weeks before they depart for Udolpho by insisting that she marry Count Morano. When Emily asks, in exasperation, what right he has to order her to marry anyone, Montoni replies angrily, "by the right of my will; if you can elude that, I will not enquire by what right you do so" (pp. 216-17). In this manner, the performance is begun: Montoni will insist repeatedly on the right of his will, while Emily does her best to evade the force of his wrath.

Awakened early in the morning of the day on which she expects to be married to the Count, Emily is surprised to find that Montoni has instead ordered an immediate departure for his castle in the Apennines. Perhaps by accident, but almost certainly by design, Emily is kept profoundly ignorant of the facts of her situation. She has no idea of why they have left Venice so suddenly, and only a vague notion of where they are going. She finds the dark and ruinous Castle of Udolpho to be strange and forbidding.

Since she has not been informed that she will no longer be required to marry Morano, she continues to fear danger from that quarter. And because she has only a slight familiarity with Montoni's character and background, she cannot be absolutely certain of what to expect from him. Should she look to him as a possible friend and protector, or should she rather loathe him as a potential rapist and murderer? As a result of the strangeness of her situation, and of the ignorance in which she is kept, Emily is deprived of almost every bit of factual information which a reasonable person could use to make rational decisions. In this predicament, her only recourse is to rely heavily on her intuition and imagination--not because she is neurotic, but because she has no other choice.

In her unprotected situation, both her intuition and her intellect tell Emily that sexual violation is the greatest danger to her security. Through much of the novel, this sexual destruction could come from any one of several sources. For a time, the most obvious threat comes from Count Morano, for it is only reasonable for Emily to assume that he will attempt to take by force the prize which he could not possess through marriage. Next, until she becomes more familiar with his character, Emily worries that Montoni

himself may decide to take her as his mistress. And finally, throughout her stay at Udolpho, Emily is distraught by the possibility that one of Montoni's companions may attempt to ravish her in her sleep.

Indeed, sexuality, and Emily's struggle to adjust to it while others attempt to use it against her, is one of the most involved and interesting aspects of The Mysteries of Udolpho. Perhaps because of his early passion for Laurentini, or because of his consuming desire for wealth and power, Montoni seems completely unmoved by thoughts of sexual affairs. Thus it is often observed that he himself "appears even less interested in [Emily] as a mistress than as a murder victim."[7] But in spite of this lack of personal sexual interest, Montoni is fully aware of Emily's sexuality and of her sexual fears. He recognizes, to her dismay, that Emily is a young and beautiful virgin, and that she finds threats of sexual destruction even more terrifying than threats of murder. In his attempts to compel her to relinquish her properties, Montoni therefore threatens, at first indirectly but finally quite openly, to give her over to the cruel designs of his jealous, hot-blooded, and frequently intoxicated comrades: "'You know the terms of my protection,' said he;

'if you really value this, you will secure it'" (p. 436). Since she has narrowly escaped the grasp of would-be ravishers on several occasions, Emily can scarcely doubt that Montoni will fulfill his threats. Moreover, she has heard "terrific reports of what was passing at the castle; of riots, quarrels, and of carousals more alarming than either" (p. 444), and recognizes that Montoni's control over his men is limited and fragile. Clearly, then, Emily is in a very dangerous position, for while Montoni himself may be sexually disinterested, a rape perpetrated by the members of his gang is an undeniable possibility.

In addition to using her sexual fears as a lever to pry loose her properties, Montoni also sees Emily's sexuality--her beauty, charm, and physical desirability--as a valuable commodity to be bought and sold on the open market. The mystery of why he is so insistent that Emily marry Count Morano, only to leave Venice just hours before the proposed wedding, is finally explained when the Count appears in Emily's bedroom to plead his love:

> "How can I gaze upon you, and know, that it is, perhaps, for the last time, without suffering all the phrensy of despair? But it shall not be so; you shall be mine, in spite of Montoni and all his villany."
>
> "In spite of Montoni!" cried Emily eagerly: "what is it I hear?"

> "You hear that Montoni is a villain," exclaimed Morano with vehemence,--"a villain who would have sold you to my love!--" (p. 262).

But while the Count complains bitterly about Montoni's conduct, he fails to mention that he himself had pretended to be wealthier than he is, and that Montoni had withdrawn from the deal simply to save Emily for a buyer who is able to pay a higher price.

Somewhat later in the novel, we are told that "Montoni had lost large sums to Verezzi, so that there was a dreadful possibility of his designing [Emily] to be a substitute for the debt" (p. 445). But Verezzi's claim to Emily is so hotly disputed by Bertolini, who had been led to believe that she was to be given to him, that she escapes unscathed from both men. Emily, of course, is thoroughly outraged by her captor's attempts to use her as his personal chattel. Montoni, however, is not alone in this particular form of deceit, for Emily's own aunt had misrepresented her financial worth in order to gain the handsome Italian as a husband. Unfortunately, Montoni had been playing the same game, and thus both husband and wife are greatly disappointed with the meagre fruits of their schemes.

There is hardly enough textual evidence to prove that Emily is actually in love with Montoni on a subconscious level. But there are numerous indications that she finds some enjoyment in courting danger by continuing to resist his demands. At first, it seems unlikely that Emily would so steadfastly refuse to sign over her relatively modest inheritance if she sincerely believed Montoni to be as vicious and ruthless as she often claims him to be. And when she continues to hold out even after she has witnessed her aunt's miserable death, it is clear that Emily is either very foolhardy, or very confident of her ability to control Montoni--to resist his demands with sufficient force to retain her estates, but not so forcefully that his threats become a reality. The reason that Emily gives for her resistance is typically sentimental: she is reluctant to think of marrying Valancourt unless she can offer him a respectible dowry. It soon becomes apparent, however, that Emily is a stubborn and strong-willed woman who is fully prepared to resist Montoni's injustice simply as a matter of principle: "I am not so ignorant," she exclaims, "of the laws on this subject, as to be misled by the assertion of any person. The law, in the present instance, gives me

the estates in question, and my own hand shall never betray my right" (pp. 380-81).

In a very real sense, Emily is at her best when she is in Montoni's presence, for while she is sparring with her persecutor, she is strong, resolute, and perceptive, with scarcely a trace of the weakness and near hysteria that so often cloud her mind when she is alone. Instead of shunning him absolutely, which would seem to be the safest and wisest course, she requests meeting after meeting with Montoni, and for many weeks, she succeeds admirably in matching his force with her own will. But as time passes, and Montoni becomes increasingly explicit about the form of torture that awaits her, Emily's resolution begins to waver. Montoni finally complains that "women delight to contradict and to tease" (p. 380), and after a particularly violent argument, Emily repents "of the rashness, that made her brave the power of such a man" (p. 385). No, Emily does not love Montoni, but she does share some of his characteristics of mind and personality, and in a perverse sense, each person is uniquely able to bring out the best in the other.

Although Montoni and Emily are not romantically involved, their debate over power, control, and possession

is nevertheless a distinctly sexual contest. It is characteristic for Gothic villains to assume that sexual dominance is the quickest and surest road to control of all facets of their victims. But in spite of this view, rape is clearly and inevitably a self-defeating activity, at least in Gothic literature. Ambrosio, for example, wants desperately to be loved by Antonia, and when she rejects his advances, he seizes on rape as the only way to fulfill his passion. Unfortunately, he does not realize until it is too late that the love he desires can never be taken, but only given. Similarly, rape as a play for power and control is also fruitless in practice because it unavoidably negates the strongest motive which the heroine may have had for relinquishing any part of her autonomy. Since most sentimental heroines would rather die than live a 'life of shame,' there is very little left that the agressor can do after rape, and thus the balance shifts ironically in favor of the victim. Richardson's Lovelace makes this very point when he reports that the rape of Clarissa has been accomplished: "And now, Belford," he writes, "I can go no further. The affair is over. Clarissa lives."[8] This villain can do no more; he has played out his hand and is now impotent. But while the affair may be over for

Lovelace, it is just beginning for Clarissa as she ascends to heights of power and sanctity that reveal her ravisher to be almost pathetic in comparison. Montoni, however, seems to recognize that the effectiveness of sexual intimidation lies not in the act itself, but rather in the anticipation of that act. While he prods Emily ever closer to the reality of a brutal rape, he is careful always to retain her virginity as hostage to his demands.[9]

Thus Emily is never ravished in a physical sense. But she is so concerned about the possibility of a sexual violation that she is scarcely aware that her mind is being violated, that her emotions and intellect are close to collapse. And here again, comparisons to Clarissa are instructive: Lovelace has sworn to revenge himself on all women, and has decreed a particular vengeance against the Harlowe family. In his depravity, he assumes that the rape of Clarissa, "the most excellent of women," will accomplish both goals quite effectively. But while he finally manages to penetrate her body, it soon becomes apparent that he has left her essence--her inner soul or the reality of her being--almost entirely untouched. The great bitterness and finality of his defeat therefore spring from the realization that he has devoted all his power, energy, and

resources to the subjugation of a lone and defenseless woman, only to see her emerge from her ordeal with more strength, more beauty, and more ascendancy than ever before.

In a sense, Emily's case is just the reverse of Clarissa's, for while she is able to save her chastity, she comes perilously close to losing her mind. Beginning with the early description of her 'too exquisite susceptibility,' there are numerous indications that Emily is a ready candidate for madness. When she returns alone to La Vallée after the death of her father, we are told that "the melancholy subjects, on which she suffered her thoughts to dwell, had rendered her at times sensible to the 'thick-coming fancies'[10] of a mind greatly enervated. It was lamentable," Radcliffe continues, "that her excellent understanding should have yielded, even for a moment, to the reveries of superstition . . . which deceive the senses into what can be called nothing less than momentary madness. Instances of this temporary failure of mind had more than once occurred since her return home" (p. 102). And when she lifts the black veil during her rambles through Udolpho and reveals the object that it had concealed, Radcliffe reports that "horror occupied her mind, and excluded, for a time, all sense of past, and dread of future

misfortune" (p. 249). Somewhat later, as she plays on her lute in an effort to soothe her troubled mind, we are told that "there were times, when music had increased [her] sorrow to a degree, that was scarcely endurable; when, if it had not suddenly ceased, she might have lost her reason" (p. 284). And after she has stumbled across a corpse, "ghastly and horrible," while following Barnardine through the winding chambers of the castle, Emily does indeed lose her sanity for the remainder of the night:

> Thus compelled to bear within her own mind the whole horror of the secret, that oppressed it, her reason seemed to totter under the intolerable weight. She often fixed a wild and vacant look on Annette, and, when she spoke, either did not hear her, or answered from the purpose. Long fits of abstraction succeeded; Annette spoke repeatedly, but her voice seemed not to make any impression on the sense of the long agitated Emily, who sat fixed and silent, except that, now and then, she heaved a heavy sign, but without tears (p. 350).

Clarissa is also driven to distraction, but not until she has in fact been ravished. And even then, she is able to regain an acute and effective form of sanity which allows her to win a clear-cut victory by transcending Lovelace, her family, and ultimately the world. Emily's case, however, is much more ambiguous as her fears hang heavily, though often without focus, over her days and

nights in the harsh, male dominated world of Udolpho. Time and space often seem vague, indefinite, and slippery, and the castle itself, with its hidden spectacles of terror, its dark and labyrinthine hallways, and its doors which cannot be locked on the inside, sometimes seems intentionally malignant. Emily is forced to watch her aunt languish and die under Montoni's cruel mistreatment, and is then left to speculate endlessly on the dread nature of her own fate. She can never know when she may next discover the body of some butchered unfortunate, or when her bedroom may next be invaded by Montoni, or Morano, or Verezzi, or Bertolini. The anxiety of anticipation and the lack of any decisive occurrence rack her sensibility until her mind becomes almost as chaotic as she perceives her surroundings to be. As the days go by, the feeling that she is losing her grip, that she is no longer in complete control of events, of her senses, or even of her reason, becomes ever stronger.

But somehow, she manages to hang on, to survive her ordeal with both her mind and body intact. Even this triumph is uncertain, however, for her escape from Udolpho occurs as much by chance as design, and is an unexpected and dream-like as was her capture and persecution: "They passed, without interruption, the dreadful gates, and took

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the road that led down among the woods. . . . Emily was so much astonished by this sudden departure, that she scarcely dared to believe herself awake; and she yet much doubted whether this adventure would terminate in escape" (pp. 451-52). Emily is free at last, but Udolpho still looms against the moonlit sky, and Montoni remains as its irresistible master.

After her terrifying experiences at Udolpho and her fortuitous escape from its walls, Emily's adventures at Chateau-le-Blanc, which are related in the third and final section of the novel, may seem to have the potential of falling into disappointing anticlimax. This potential was apparently realized for Edith Birkhead who complains that "so exhaustive--and exhausting--are the mysteries of Udolpho that it was a mistake to introduce another haunted castle, le-Blanc, as an appendix."[11] But this judgment is surely misdirected, for the last section of The Mysteries of Udolpho can hardly be considered an appendix in any sense, and Chateau-le-Blanc is not simply another haunted castle.

Indeed, from a structural point of view, the account of Emily's adventures at Udolpho comes much closer to true digression in that very little occurs to forward the principle concerns of the plot. Emily's primary challenge

while she is under Montoni's sway is to hang on to what she already has (her estates, her virginity, her sanity), and therefore, the Udolpho section ends with Emily in nearly the same circumstances that she was in when it began. The status of her courtship with Valancourt remains uncertain, no new light has been shed on the mystery of her father's past, and she still does not know how she will provide for herself through the rest of her life.

While it is true that Emily is tricked into thinking that she has seen a ghost in the bedchamber of the late Marchioness, Chateau-le-Blanc has little in common with the Castle of Udolpho, for the atmosphere is wholly different and Emily's situation is entirely changed. At Le-Blanc, Emily is among friends, she is no longer threatened with rape or murder, her surroundings have returned to focus, and her mind has regained a degree of stability. On the other hand, the pain and terror which she encounters at Le-Blanc may well be more threatening and chilling than anything she endured at Udolpho, for they spring not from the extraordinary circumstances of a nightmarish imprisonment, but from the plain reality of life as we all know it.[12]

The pain that Emily experiences comes from her belief that Valancourt has fallen into unforgivable dissipation and must therefore be rejected as an unworthy lover. Her information comes from Count De Villefort, who has adopted Emily almost as a daughter: "and I will inform you," says the Count, "that the Chevalier's extravagance has brought him twice into the prisons of Paris, from which he was last extricated, as I was told upon authority, which I cannot doubt, by a well-known Parisian Countess, with whom he continued to reside, when I left Paris" (p. 507). Although the Count is openly partial to Du Pont and hopes that Emily will eventually consent to marry him, he is an honorable man, and the truth of his reports can hardly be doubted. To confuse the situation even further, Emily's delicacy of mind will not allow her to relate to Valancourt in explicit terms the charges she has heard against him. And Valancourt, who also possesses a finely developed sensibility, is so enmeshed in a web of self-accusation that he exaggerates the extent of his crimes in his own mind, and refuses as a point of honor to attempt to exonerate himself to Emily. Through her many weeks of travail, Emily had drawn strength and hope from the constant expectation of being wedded to her dashing lover. But now that such a

union seems impossible, she is truly broken, and feels that there is little left for which to live.

As she is presented in the first two sections of the novel, Emily is a fairly sympathetic character, and seems to deserve the reader's support most of the time. But in this affair with Valancourt, which Radcliffe calls "the most severe occasion of her life" (p. 518), she behaves less than admirably as she embraces a blind and faithless pessimism which brings her understanding of mature love into serious question. While her heart tells her that she loves Valancourt as much as ever and that she can never be happy without him, she yields to "the precepts, which she had received from her deceased father, on the subject of self-command," and permits herself to be ruled entirely by "the superior prudence of the Count" (p. 518). This course of action shows first that Emily is ready to believe, at second and even third hand, the worst of the man she supposedly loves. Further, her reluctance to request that Valancourt give a full and open explanation of his conduct demonstrates that she values her delicacy more than his happiness and reputation. And finally, her willingness to accept the notion that several months of possible vice lead inevitably to a life of decadence

indicates that she knows little of trust and less of faith. Although Radcliffe insists, after Mons. Bonnac has cleared Valancourt's good name, that "the mistake had been mutual" (p. 653), Emily seems primarily to blame since she never really gave Valancourt a chance either to explain or to prove himself. It also seems that she should have realized that the promptings of the heart are sometimes more reliable than the conclusions of the mind, and most importantly, that mature love demands trust and confidence in oneself as well as in the beloved.[13]

Emily's terror at Chateau-le-Blanc arises from her encounter with Laurentini di Udolpho, now a nun at the convent of St. Clair, and the subsequent revelation that the Marchioness de Villeroi had been St. Aubert's favorite sister, and that she had been poisoned to a slow death by her jealous husband at the instigation of the seductive Laurentini. Through this meeting, Emily is brought face-to-face with a confessed murderess, and is given the opportunity to see that not all villains are tall, dark, and threatening men--and that not all victims escape unharmed from their persecutors. There is a strong sense of the vicissitudes of life about this section, as Laurentini tells Emily, in effect, there but for fortune go you: "I

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was then innocent;" exclaims Laurentini, "the evil passions of my nature slept. . . . Sister! beware of the first indulgence of the passions; beware of the first! Their course, if not checked then, is rapid--their force is uncontroulable--they lead us we know not whither" (p. 646). Her assertion seems to be that there are evil passions lurking within each of us, and that it is only through constant vigil and careful control that we keep them from overwhelming our reason, our judgment, and all that is good about us.

We know Emily well enough by now to be all but certain that she will never become any man's mistress, much less a murderess. But the mad Laurentini and the murdered Marchioness nonetheless represent real conditions of life to which Emily could easily have been reduced had her mental balance been slightly more fragile, or had Montoni been a little more direct in his attempts to gain her estates. Thus the most terrifying aspect of the novel is neither the horror which Emily finds at Udolpho, nor the ghosts which she thinks she sees at Chateau-le-Blanc. It is rather the fact that two young ladies, one very much like Emily and the other differing only because of the lack of wisdom with which she was raised, should be made to suffer so greatly,

and to die so dismally. In the way of most romance, Emily will marry Valancourt and live happily ever after, but from an examination of her story, it is difficult to perceive any sufficient reason why this should be the case. She could just as easily have fallen victim to rape, or murder, or insanity, or to any other of the thousand ills to which we are prey.

While the achievements of The Mysteries of Udolpho are numerous, so also are the failures. And while the presentation of Montoni may be its greatest innovation, the characterization of Emily is finally its biggest disappointment. In almost every study of the novel, Emily has been passed over as just another sentimental heroine, but this description is not wholly accurate, and therein lies the problem. If Radcliffe had been content with an easily recognizable stereotype, she could have drawn her heroine with several broad and sweeping strokes (as Mary Anne Radcliffe was to do with Rosalina in Manfroné), and the reader could go rapidly forward secure in the knowledge that he is completely familiar with the fictional type. But Ann Ward Radcliffe was considerably more ambitious, as she obviously worked hard on the details of Emily's character, and seems to have been intent on creating a

heroine with a truly proper sensibility. In other words, Emily was to have been a heroine whose sensibility was based not on convention, but rather on reason and experience.

Through the early part of the narrative, St. Aubert serves as advocate for a responsible and constructive form of sentiment. The primary aim of his deathbed speech on the subject is simply to warn Emily against the effects of "an ill-governed sensibility," and of "a heart, that is continually alive to minute circumstances."[14] He certainly has no intention of teaching his daughter to reject feeling altogether, for the total lack of sentiment, he maintains, "is a vice more hateful than all the errors of sensibility" (p. 80). Rather, he is anxious for Emily to understand the importance of tempering her finely developed sentiments with the strength of fortitude, and to recognize that the most exquisite feelings imaginable are useless and empty unless they lead to the active virtue of practical charity. Thus, in the end, St. Aubert is merely recommending a middle road between an overactive and therefore debilitating sensibility, and a heart that is unable to feel at all.

Emily's task through the course of the novel is therefore to learn to live her life according to the principles of proper sentiment that her father has outlined. Although St. Aubert had seemingly intended to limit his discussion to the control of sentiment or feeling, it soon becomes apparent that Emily (and probably Radcliffe) interprets his meaning more broadly to include imagination, intuition, and passion or desire, as well as emotion. Emily, however, has trouble making fine distinctions, and seems never to realize that her father was trying to tell her that both sentiment and reason or reflection are necessary to a happy life. As a result, she emerges as a naturally imaginative and susceptible person who has developed a severe distrust of her intuitive faculties, and an inflated view of the efficacy of reason, reflection, fortitude, and rationality.

While she is staying at Udolpho, Emily attempts almost daily to place a check on her imagination, which, she feels, is a dangerous indulgence. But as we have seen, reason itself is at best an unreliable guide through the murky world in which she is forced to reside. Intuition, on the one hand, often leads her to suffer from imaginary terrors, but reason and reflection, in their turn,

frequently point to equally horrifying conclusions. Because of this dilemma, Emily finally finds herself in a psychological stalemate with no where to go and nothing to do. And thus arises the peculiar passivity that was to become a mark of the conventional Gothic heroine.

When she arrives at Chateau-le-Blanc, Emily seems determined to do better, to be ruled solely by reason and to base her actions on prudence and reflection. But once again, she ends up on the wrong side of the issue, as she is too quick to overrule her feelings and to believe evil of the man she says she loves. If it were not for the chance conversation between Du Pont and Bonnac, it is doubtful that Emily would ever have had enough insight and wisdom to have been able to straighten out her misunderstanding with Valancourt. In light of her actions, I find it difficult to believe that Emily ever learns the lesson that her father had presented, for she never seems to understand that our rational and intuitive faculties must work together, that each must inform the other if we are to plan with judgment and to act with wisdom.

The second disturbing aspect of Emily's character is her apparent imperviousness to the lessons which could be drawn from the events of her unusual life. When she

sets off on her own after the deaths of her parents, she is young, sheltered, and understandably naive. Over the following months, however, she experiences much and is witness to more. But while she is chronologically a year older at the end of the novel, there is almost no indication that she has been changed in any lasting or constructive manner by the succession of extraordinary occurrences to which she has been exposed. Moreover, Radcliffe herself seems blind to her heroine's lack of growth--she seems totally aware that Emily's failure to learn from her experiences is a weakness in her character.

Emily's encounter with Montoni is, of course, the foremost example of her failure to learn new wisdom or to grow to a greater maturity. When she first comes under the control of her aunt's husband, Emily holds a very simple and clear-cut view of the world, a view which distinguishes neatly between good and evil. Thus, as she becomes acquainted with Montoni's true character and recognizes the evil of which he is capable, her reason tells her that he must be shunned and despised. And yet, on a nonrational level, Emily feels a peculiar attraction to the mysterious Montoni. After all, he is a handsome, intelligent, and commanding person who is able, when he so chooses, to act

with courtesy and refinement. But this ambivalent reaction to the character of an obviously evil man causes Emily to feel very uneasy and even guilty. She therefore attempts to deny any attraction to her captor by persisting in seeing him as nothing more (nor less) than a cruel and barbarous murderer. While I do not agree that Emily is sublimating a desire for sexual contact with Montoni, or a longing, as some have suggested, to be raped in the virgin bed of her lonely chamber,[15] I do believe that she is not entirely honest with herself about her reactions to the evil that she sees around her. And because of this personal dishonesty, Emily fails to learn the obvious lesson presented with this experience--the lesson that people are never completely good nor wholly evil, and that while we should recognize and defend against their evil, we should also be aware of and willing to admit to their more admirable qualities.

Several other episodes reinforce Emily's failure to learn essentially this same lesson. While gazing out her window at Udolpho one afternoon, Emily observes three ladies from Venice enter the castle with two male companions. Later that evening, when Emily is walking alone in the hallway next to her room, she hears "distant sounds

of merriment and laughter" which soon degenerate into "the wild uproar of riot" (p. 383). And finally, when she distinguishes "female voices mingling with the laughter," she can no longer avoid the conclusion that Signora Livona and her friends are concubines who have come willingly to the castle to satisfy the sexual urges of Montoni's men. Emily's reaction to this realization is one of shock and horror, but this Signora Livona is, of course, the same woman whom Emily had known and liked in Venice, the same woman whose "beauty and fascinating manners . . . won her involuntary regard; while the sweetness of her accents and her air of gentle kindness awakened with Emily those pleasing affections, which so long had slumbered" (pp. 183-84). Emily's present feelings of disgust and rejection may be understandable, but her failure to recognize, either at the moment or any time later, that Livona could well retain some qualities of kindness and gentility, even though she may be fallen in a sexual sense, is disappointing.

Emily's difficulties with Valancourt can also be traced in part to this same source. When she meets and is courted by this young man in the first section of the novel, she clearly idealizes him as a good, kind, and virtuous person. But when she is told in the third section that he

has participated in acts of questionable morality, she is shattered, and rejects him absolutely and almost out of hand, even though her original evaluation of his goodness had been essentially correct, if somewhat exaggerated.

The examples of Laurentini and the Marchioness, as I have suggested, give Emily an impressive opportunity to see what she herself could have become. But while she feels shock and horror at Laurentini's crimes and pity for the sufferings of her aunt, there is no indication that she internalizes their experiences by applying them to her own situation. Thus, while we as readers may have hoped to find a wiser, more forgiving, and less intolerant Emily at the conclusion of the narrative, this wish is not fulfilled. While we may recognize that Emily's happiness at the end of her tale must surely be attributed more to chance than to design, Emily treats it as little more than a fitting reward and her just desert. And when Ann Radcliffe draws her concluding moral by insisting "that innocence, though oppressed by injustice, shall, supported by patience, finally triumph over misfortune" (p. 672), we can only recall the murdered Marchioness, who, from all accounts, was at least as innocent as her brother's daughter, and ponder her sorry fate. The Mysteries of Udolpho, then,

is an engrossing and ambitious romance, but it is finally a fiction which outgrows certainly its heroine, and perhaps also its author.

CHAPTER THREE

THE MONK: A CHALLENGE

TO THE FORM

On May 15, 1794, Matthew G. Lewis arrived at The Hague to assume his new position in the British embassy to Holland. Three days later, he wrote a letter to his mother which included high praise of The Mysteries of Udolpho, as well as some mention of his own literary activity: "I have again taken up my Romance," wrote Lewis. "I was induced to go on with it by reading 'the Mysteries of Udolpho,' which is in my opinion one of the most interesting Books that ever have been published."[1] In a second letter to his mother, dated September 23, 1794, Lewis announced with open pride and excitement the completion of "a Romance of between three and four hundred Pages Octavo . . . called 'The Monk'" (p. 213). Whether Lewis really did complete an entirely new romance in "the space of ten weeks," or whether this work was patched together from bits and pieces taken from a "portfolio bulging with materail" as Lewis

Peck suggests (p. 20), need not concern us. For it is clear that the experience of reading The Mysteries of Udolpho provided Lewis with the inspiration that he needed to complete a work of his own. Thus, Lewis's letters suggest a sympathetic link between Udolpho and The Monk, but the depth of similarity between these two Gothic masterpieces should not be exaggerated or accepted as a given of literary history. While Radcliffe's novel undoubtedly had an effect on Lewis' imagination, The Monk is not an imitation of The Mysteries of Udolpho; it seems, more accurately, to pick up where Udolpho leaves off. In this chapter, I will explore how Lewis uses The Mysteries of Udolpho as a point of departure for the construction of his own distinctive version of the Gothic world.

A summary of the form of the Gothic romance as seen in The Mysteries of Udolpho can be used as a basis for understanding more clearly what Lewis has done in The Monk. The culmination of all that Radcliffe had been working toward through her first three novels, Udolpho embodies a strong sense of purpose and direction, a feeling that she was, for the first time, truly at ease with her material and confident in her ability. Among the more noticeable characteristics of The Mysteries of Udolpho are the

centrality of the role of the heroine, the closeness of the narrator's point of view to that of the heroine, and the ambiguity in the characterization of the villain. None of these characteristics, however, represents a difference in kind in comparison to the earlier romances; they are rather differences in degree as Radcliffe has chosen to accentuate further those same elements with which she had been working for some time.

Emily St. Aubert, as we have seen, is without question the dominant figure of The Mysteries of Udolpho. She is introduced at the beginning of the novel, and the course of her life is carefully charted as she moves from La Vallée, to the Castle of Udolpho, to Chateau-le-Blanc. Although Montoni may be a memorable character, he is not the most important figure in Udolpho. His role is subservient to that of the heroine, and his primary function is to persecute Emily by subjecting her to threatening situations. Through a narrowing of the distance between the narrator's and the heroine's points of view, Radcliffe has created a convincing account of Emily's struggles with a series of misfortunes, persecutions, and disappointments. Radcliffe is able, as Robert Kiely has written, "to subordinate everything to an individual state of mind."[2]

Because of these characteristics, The Mysteries of Udolpho can be described as a heroine-centered romance, and indeed, it can be ranked as the best of the heroine-centered Gothic romances.

Although Montoni's role is smaller and less central than is Emily's, he is nevertheless a very interesting and even attractive figure. He is much more complex and fully developed than are the villains of The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne, A Sicilian Romance, and The Romance of the Forest, and his motivation is considerably more ambiguous. The interest and attraction that Montoni holds for the reader can be attributed to his energy, his air of mystery, and his power of command. He is a decisive person: when he is present, the pace of the narrative picks up, and the action is more conclusive. While Emily is not conscious of any attraction to Montoni, some part of her psyche clearly finds him fascinating, perhaps because men of his obvious experience, strength, and maturity are foreign to her sheltered and decorous existence. In Radcliffe's first three novels, the villains are fairly one-dimensional, and their malevolence is prompted primarily by lust, with touches of pride and greed. Montoni's initial motivation is also fairly direct, but as time passes, and his

persecution of Emily becomes increasingly protracted and severe, their relationship becomes very complex and involved. On one level, Montoni's interest in gaining control of Emily's inheritance continues, but on another level, her resistance to his demands becomes a matter of principle: he simply cannot accept the thought of being overruled by a "mere woman." On yet another level, Montoni seems to derive a perverse pleasure from generating sexual anxieties in his victim. And finally, it is possible that Emily, with her combined innocence and strength, is as strange and fascinating to Montoni as he is to her.

The Mysteries of Udolpho is, then, a heroine-centered romance, but a romance which also includes the most complex and compelling villain of any Gothic novel written before the publication of The Monk. For this reason, Udolpho can be understood as both an end, and a beginning. Through her first four novels, Radcliffe enlarges the role of, and identifies herself more closely with her heroine, until Udolpho becomes almost exclusively a chronicle of Emily's mental and emotional states of being. Lewis's interest in The Mysteries of Udolpho, however, does not seem to have centered on the characterization of this heroine; rather, his imagination was captured by the

presentation of the villain. In his letter of May 18, Lewis expresses a personal identification with Montoni: "and when you read it," he asks of his mother, "tell me whether you think there is any resemblance between the character given of Montoni in the seventeenth chapter of the second volume, and my own. I confess that it struck me" (Peck, p. 209).[3] It is therefore not surprising that Lewis should have decided to promote the villain to the central role, and to concentrate on his descent into sin, rather than on the trials of a heroine. But Ambrosio is not simply another Montoni, for while he proves capable of great evil, he is himself a victim to some degree, and he also displays a number of sympathetic and admirable characteristics. Thus Lewis's most important accomplishment in The Monk was to break with the form of the heroine-centered Gothic romance by developing a complex and ambiguous character who can be described as a hero-villain.

The characterization of this hero-villain proceeds by degrees which are relative to the overall structure of the novel. Through the first two chapters, all of the major characters are introduced, and two major conflicts--Agnes's pregnancy and Matilda's passion for Ambrosio--are established. This brief opening section includes Ambrosio's

refusal to keep Agnes's condition secret, and ends with the report that Ambrosio himself has "yielded to the temptation" and "remembered nothing but the pleasure and opportunity" that he found in Matilda's longing embrace.[4] The next four chapters, which comprise roughly one-third of the novel, present the intercalated story of Raymond and Agnes. Although Don Raymond's history contains no direct mention of the Monk, the experiences of these young lovers will bear significantly on the development of the novel, and on Ambrosio's relationships with Matilda and Antonia. In addition, the interruption of the main plot at a crucial and interesting point has the effect of holding Ambrosio and Matilda in suspension. As a result, when we return to them after Raymond's encounters with the robbers of the forest, the Bleeding Nun, and the Wandering Jew, it is difficult to dispell the impression that Ambrosio has been enjoying the pleasures of his mistress for some weeks.[5] The third and most substantial section of The Monk plays out the conflicts that are set in motion in the first two sections, while concentrating heavily on Ambrosio's progress from Matilda's arms to Satan's talons.

The first chapter of Lewis's romance contains a great deal of information about Ambrosio, but it is

presented largely in the form of simple reports. This monk, whose saintliness and eloquence have made him the talk of all Madrid, is treated for the present as a social phenomenon which can be examined only from an external point of view. Lewis's flare for the dramatic is apparent in the opening scene of the novel in which he employs the technique of peopling his stage with a large number of characters, all of whom are awaiting the appearance of the leading actor. Through a chance conversation between an older woman and two young men of rank, we learn that Ambrosio was found on the doorstep of the Capuchin abbey when he was "yet an Infant," and that no one had ever succeeded in discovering anything about his past or his family (p. 17). He was raised in the shelter of the monastery where he came to be highly regarded for his intelligence, his application to his studies, and his strict adherence to the rules of the order. When he had attained the proper age, Leonella is told, he became a member of the order, and at the age of thirty, he was elected to the position of Superior of his society. Not until "these last three weeks" did Ambrosio ever leave the abbey, says Don Christoval, and "He is reported to be so strict an observer of Chastity,

that He knows not in what consists the difference of Man and Woman" (p. 17).

When Ambrosio finally arrives at the church, he is described as "a Man of noble port and commanding presence. His stature was lofty and his features uncommonly handsome," Lewis continues. "He bowed himself with humility to the audience: Still there was a certain severity in his look and few could sustain the glance of his eye at once fiery and penetrating" (p. 18). His sermon, however, was indeed effective, and the entire congregation, including even the irreligious, seemed charmed by his oratory: "The discourse was of considerable length; Yet when it concluded, the Audience grieved that it had not lasted longer." And when Ambrosio began to leave the church, Lewis tells us, "His auditors crowded round him, loaded him with blessings, threw themselves at his feet, and kissed the hem of his Garment" (p. 19). From the beginning, then, it is clear that Ambrosio, this monk who is "surnamed 'The Man of Holiness,'" is indeed an exceptional person. He has risen at an early age to the highest position in a prestigious religious order, his fame as a devout has spread to every corner of Madrid, and most interestingly, he truly is eloquent and effective as a preacher of the Word of God.

At the same time, there are also indications early in the novel that Ambrosio has a store of less admirable characteristics. The first hint is presented in the epigraph to the chapter which implies a similarity between Lord Angelo of Measure for Measure and Ambrosio:

> ----Lord Angelo is precise;
> Stands at a guard with envy; scarce confesses
> That his blood flows, or that his appetite
> Is more to bread than stone (p. 7).

A second indication comes in the form of an ominous question posed by the narrator: "The Abbot . . . quitted the Church, while humility dwelt on every feature. Dwelt she also in his heart?" (p. 20). And in response to Antonia's enthusiastic praise of Ambrosio, Lorenzo points out that until recently, he had spent all his days in the cloister, and that the true test of his virtue is only just beginning now that he must occasionally face the temptations of the outside world. Leonella exclaims that she "never saw such a stern-looking Mortal," and Don Christoval adds that "Too great severity is said to be Ambrosio's only fault" (p. 22). But a much more dramatic representation of the events to come is presented when Lorenzo falls asleep in the cathedral, and dreams that the ceremony which would wed him to Antonia is interrupted by "an Unknown":

> His form was gigantic; His complexion was swarthy, His eyes fierce and terrible; his Mouth breathed out volumes of fire; and on his forehead was written in legible characters--'Pride! Lust! Inhumanity!'
>
> Antonia shrieked. The Monster clasped her in his arms, and springing with her upon the Altar, tortured her with his odious caresses. She endeavored in vain to escape from his embrace (p. 28).

These hints, rumors, and reactions single out pride, lust, temptation, inhumanity, and severity as characteristics which will plague Ambrosio, and Lorenzo's dream seems to suggest that Antonia, who feels a strong and spontaneous attraction to the Monk, may well become his victim. This view is reinforced by a Gypsy's prophesy which predicts that Antonia will suffer from "Lustful man and crafty Devil," and which warns her to beware of "One more virtuous . . . /Than belongs to Man to be" (p. 38).

Shifting the focus from Antonia for the time being, the second chapter concentrates on the relationship between Ambrosio and Rosario/Matilda. But we are first given an account of Ambrosio's cruel reaction when he reads Raymond's note to Agnes and learns of her pregnancy. Although Agnes pleads desperately for compassion and forgiveness, Ambrosio responds with indignant severity: "What! Shall St. Clare's

Convent become the retreat of Prostitutes? Shall I suffer the Church of Christ to cherish in its bosom debauchery and shame? Unworthy Wretch! such lenity would make me your accomplice. Mercy would here be criminal" (p. 46). After the intercepted letter has been given to the Domina, and Agnes can see that her cause is lost, she berates Ambrosio for his cruelty and curses him in prophetic exclamations--in terms that Ambrosio will recall on several occasions, and that Satan will repeat just before plunging the Monk to a lingering death: "But the day of Trial will arrive!" predicts Agnes. "Oh! then when you yield to impetuous passions! when you feel that Man is weak, and born to err; When shuddering you look back upon your crimes, and solicit with terror the mercy of your God, Oh! in that fearful moment think upon me! Think upon your Cruelty! Think upon Agnes, and despair of pardon!" (p. 49).

As if to lose no time in the fulfillment of this prophesy, Rosario reveals to Ambrosio within hours of Agnes's outburst that she is a woman, and that she is in love with him. By the next afternoon, Ambrosio has determined to insist that Rosario, now known to the Abbot as Matilda, leave the monastery at once. But this resolution is forgotten when Ambrosio is bitten by a poisonous

serpent, and Matilda saves his life at the risk of her own. As he watches the beautiful Matilda languish in bed under the effect of the venom, he can no longer resist her charms, and just two days after spurning Agnes as a whore, Ambrosio himself succumbs to sexual desire. At this point, the reader may, at best, be puzzled by this model of monastic life who is now locked in the embraces of a passionate young woman. But the more probable reaction is to dismiss Ambrosio as a religious hypocrite, as a fallen man who attempts to conceal his true character behind an aura of self-righteous holiness. In fairness to Ambrosio, however, we must admit that the easy opportunity, the alluringness of the woman, and most importantly, her frank confession of her own desire create an almost unbearable temptation. "I lust for the enjoyment of your person," says Matilda. "I feel with every heart-throb, that I must enjoy you, or die" (p. 89).

Ambrosio's weakness in yielding to desire may be either damned or forgiven, but Matilda's brazen declaration of sexual passion is very startling and unexpected, especially in comparison to the delicately modest speech invariably employed by Radcliffe's heroines. From Lewis's day to our own, the character of Matilda has consistently been

praised as one of the most striking creations in The Monk. S. T. Coleridge judged this character to be "the author's masterpiece," and added that "it is, indeed, exquisitely imagined, and as exquisitely supported."[6] As many critics have now pointed out, however, there is also a problem of inconsistency in Matilda's character: although Satan claims near the end of the novel that Matilda is "a subordinant but crafty spirit" sent from Hell to tempt Ambrosio (p. 440), there are several instances in which she reacts in private not as a daemon, but as a mortal. When Ambrosio loses consciousness after having been bitten by the serpent, for instance, we are told that Matilda "rent her hair, beat her bosom, and not daring to quit Ambrosio, endeavoured by loud cries to summon the Monks to her assistance" (p. 71). In a second instance, when Matilda thinks that Ambrosio is asleep, she speaks of her deep love for him in a lengthy soliloquy (pp. 78-79). Later in the novel, we are informed that "Matilda with every succeeding day grew more attached to the Friar," and that "He was become dearer to her than ever" (p. 235). And finally, when it has become clear to Matilda that Ambrosio no longer cares for her, Lewis reports that "her eyes filled with involuntary tears" (p. 258). This inconsistency does not seem to

have been much noted before Edith Birkhead drew attention to it in her critique of Lewis's novel,[7] and I doubt that many readers find it troublesome today. Nevertheless, the inconsistency does exist, and it is difficult to discuss Matilda's character without first addressing this problem.

The most obvious explanation of the inconsistencies in Matilda's characterization is that Lewis simply changed his mind as he neared the end of the novel, and failed to align the earlier passages with his new conception.[8] But Peck disagrees with this view, saying that "it seems clear that the author, though he fell into inconsistencies which could easily have been removed, had determined upon her evil nature from the start" (p. 39). Nothing is said, however, about why this seems clear.[9] While I would not maintain that Satan is necessarily lying when he claims Matilda for his agent, it may be helpful to remember that devils in literature (as seen, for example, in Doctor Faustus and Paradise Lost) are notorious braggarts, and certainly not above stretching the truth.[10] Lowry Nelson's comment that the ironies announced at the end of The Monk are "rapid and crude" clearly applies to Satan's very implausible claim that Ambrosio was about to be pardoned, and I continue to suspect that his assertion about Matilda was a specific

touch that Lewis added with little reflection.[11] But whether Matilda be woman or daemon is not finally of much consequence, for both Ambrosio and the reader believe that she is a mortal, and Satan's gloating revelation does little to change the imaginative richness of the character that Lewis has created in Rosario/Matilda.

In a technical sense, the problem with the characterization of Matilda can be thought of as a flaw, as the error of a young and exuberant writer. But in a larger sense, this confusion between the mortal and the daemonic can be seen as representative of the general conflation of roles and worlds that permeates the entire romance. Matilda, for example, is first introduced as Rosario, a young boy who has formed a particular friendship with Ambrosio while serving his noviciate in the Capuchin monastery. She soon confesses, however, that she is really Matilda de Villanegas, and that, as a woman, she is in love with the Abbot. After the immediate shock of this revelation has passed, there is talk of Matilda remaining in the abbey as a chaste and platonic friend. But once she has saved Ambrosio's life and is herself on the verge of death, good intentions give way to desire, and she becomes the seducer and the lover of the Man of Holiness. When we return to

Matilda after the story of Raymond and Agnes, we soon discover that she has become a confirmed mistress who "put every invention of lust in practice, every refinement in the art of pleasure, which might heighten the bliss of her possession, and render her Lover's transports still more exquisite" (p. 224). In purging herself of the poison which she has extracted from Ambrosio's wound, Matilda reveals that she is an adept in the occult sciences, and after her lover has grown tired of her and expresses a desire to possess Antonia, she uses her magical powers in her role as procuress. Boy, woman, friend, healer, seducer, concubine, magician, procuress--these are all facets of Matilda's complex personality.[12]

Several other characters are also seen in a variety of poses. At the beginning of his tale, Ambrosio is called Saint, Preacher, and Abbot of the Capuchins. He later becomes Matilda's lover, Antonia's persecutor and ravisher, and the murderer of Elvira and Antonia. He can be called Father and Brother in the clerical sense, and through ties of blood, he is Antonia's brother and Elvira's son. Agnes's plan to impersonate a ghost leads Raymond to confound the two, and as a result of his confusion, the Bleeding Nun insists on treating him as her lover. Agnes herself

eventually becomes a nun, only to fall into the roles of lover, prisoner, and mother. For her part, Antonia is such a consummate victim that her roles as daughter and sister fade in comparison. These relationships are important in The Monk because identity, whether real or assumed, frequently determines the course of the action. The success of Matilda's interactions with Ambrosio, for instance, depends on the continued success in the world at large of her disguise as Rosario. Ambrosio must rely on his identity as a monk and a confessor to gain admittance to the Dalfa household, and his position as Antonia's brother seems to account for her strong and immediate attraction to him. Finally, the confusion between Agnes and the Bleeding Nun forces Raymond to the awareness that there are things in the world that he does not understand and cannot control.

In addition to this layering of roles, several worlds, both literal and figurative, are juxtaposed in Lewis's novel. The most obvious contrast is the geographic distinction between the Old World as embodied primarily in Spain, and the New World as represented by the West Indies. In its best light, the New World can be seen as a place of refuge, as a land to which one can flee to escape the forces and restrictions of the more civilized nations.

Elvira and Gonzalvo fled to Cuba to elude the anger of a father who was outraged by his son's marriage to a shoemaker's daughter. Similarly, it is to Hispaniola that Lorenzo says he would fly if his uncle were to object to his proposed union with Antonia. The New World is also a place where people such as Antonia, with her beauty, grace, sincerity, and perfect innocence, are born. But at the same time Elvira lost her husband and two other children to "the diseases incidental to Indian atmospheres." And if we believe her claim that "nothing would have saved my young Antonia but my sudden return to Spain," the brave New World across the Atlantic must be seen as dangerous and inhospitable (p. 214). "The abruptness of [his mother's] flight," as Leonella puts it (p. 13), denied Ambrosio the opportunity to visit this new land. But ironically, it is the bite of the Cientipedoro, which Lewis notes "is supposed to be a Native of Cuba, and to have been brought into Spain from that Island in the Vessel of Columbus" (p. 72), that almost kills him, and that changes the course of his life so drastically.[13]

One view of the Old World is presented in the lines that Antonia's father wrote as he began his voyage to the West Indies. Because he has been forced by his father's

anger to flee his native land, he feels that he has been banished from all that he holds dear. Thus his poem, entitled "The Exile," paints an exaggerated picture both of the dangers of the New World with its "snakes and tigers," and of the pleasures of the Old World with its "Happy Swain," its "Mountain-Girl," and its "Shepherd chaunting his wild rustic notes" (p. 216). Aside from this idealized, pastoral view, the Old World is a place where an orphan can rise to a position of power through the structure of the Church, and where high-minded individuals such as Lorenzo can attempt to make the class system function in a benevolent manner. The Old World, in short, is civilized, while the New World is wild and unsettled. But the perils of the New World are those of nature--of climate, disease, and strange, exotic beasts. The dangers of Spain, on the other hand, are found not in nature, but in people and institutions, for the Old World is the Established World, the world of order, power, and control.

The principal institutions of the Established World as seen in The Monk are the Church, and the wealthy, titled class. With its status as the oldest, continually existing religious and authoritative body in the Western World, the Roman Catholic Church is a very appropriate symbol of the

established order. This status further enhances Lewis's decision to set his novel in a Catholic country at a time when the Church obviously wielded considerable social, political, and economic power in addition to its religious and moral influence. And by attributing superstition to many of his minor and nameless characters, Lewis renders the power of the Church even more complete. The noble class is, of course, another traditional symbol of the Established World; members of this class are frequently depicted as having sufficient wealth and influence to control the lives of people not only in lower social positions, but occasionally in their own class as well. Apart from religious and social institutions, the concept of the Established World can be understood to encompass the normal and the accepted in general. Thus the meaning of this figurative world is defined in its broadest terms by the way things are--by the way people live their lives, and by the assumptions that they hold about man and his place in the universe.

As the head of a religious order within the framework of the Catholic Church, Ambrosio is, at the beginning of his tale, an ideal representative of the Established World. He is, in essence, the symbol of an institution

which, in turn, symbolizes power, control, and authority. His religious career can be said to have begun on the day on which he was found at the abbey door. As an orphan, alone in the world with no known name or family, much less wealth or position, he would ordinarily have had little opportunity within the accepted structures of society. Ambrosio manages, however, not only to survive, but to transcend his brethren, and to become renowned throughout the land for his learning, eloquence, and piety. Clearly, he has understood the functioning of the system in which he found himself, and has been skilled in manipulating that system to his best advantage. But Matilda de Villanegas does not live within the boundaries of this Established World, and she does her best to tempt Ambrosio to reject the world that he knows and has mastered in favor of another, radically different world that is defined in opposition to the normal, the familiar, and the accepted.

The little that we are told of Matilda's life reveals a woman whose past is similar to Ambrosio's in some respects, but who chanced to develop an entirely different world view. Born into a noble family, she was orphaned at an early age. She inherited her father's great wealth, however, and was raised by an erudite uncle who educated

her extensively, not only "in sciences universally studied, but in others, revealed but to a few, and lying under censure from the blindness of superstition" (p. 60). In the process of inculcating her with great knowledge, this uncle also freed her mind from "the shackles of vulgar prejudice," as Matilda phrases it, and taught her "to look with adoration upon the pure and virtuous." With her wealth and beauty, she was courted by "the noblest Youths of Madrid." But this unusual young woman saw only "vice, dissipation, and ignorance" in her suitors, and no one gained her favor until she happened to hear Ambrosio preach at the Cathedral of the Capuchins (p. 60). From that day forward, her seemingly hopeless love for this churchman grew deeper and stronger until she became obsessed with the thought of uniting her life with his in some manner.

Matilda's approach to the predicament of loving, to the point of despondency and declining health, a monk who is widely celebrated for his holiness and chastity shows the degree to which she is removed from the Established World. By the artifice of her portrait as the Madonna to her boldness in entering the monastery, by her threat of suicide to her saving of Ambrosio's life at the risk of her own, by her frank admission of carnal desire to her

free and unreserved fornication with the virgin Abbot, Matilda demonstrates repeatedly that she is not bound by the conventions of the world, that the restrictions and taboos of society, religion, and morality are as gossamer to her. As the plot progresses, Matilda becomes stronger, more domineering, and more absolute in her rejection of accepted standards of action and belief. She saves her own life by striking a bargain with Satan, she urges Ambrosio first to the seduction, and failing that, to the rape of Antonia, and when this unfortunate cries desperately for help, Matilda advises that she be silenced by murder. All of these actions indicate that Matilda is not to be located in the Established World of institutions and authority, of conventions and controls. She is rather a world unto herself, a world in which self is placed above society, will above law, libido above morality, and man above God.

At the same time, this aggressive, abandoned woman who defines her own destiny, and who hesitates at no evil constitutes but one side of Matilda's total character. Lewis has also infused much of the novel with an unfocused but very present feeling that Matilda is a lost and lonely woman who is doomed to live a life apart, and who must act

as she does not of choice, but of necessity. From the first moment that she sees Ambrosio, she conceives an infatuation for him, and try as she may, she is completely unable to control this passion. Even though she knows that her love for Ambrosio must inevitably work his ruin, she simply cannot resist the impulse which forces her first to enter the monastery, then to reveal that she is a woman, and finally to blurt that she must enjoy his person or die. Byron is reported to have commented that Lewis "should have made the daemon really in love with Ambrosio,"[14] and, in a sense, that is precisely what he has done. The most interesting sense in which this is true, however, is not when Matilda is understood in a Christian framework as a devil from Hell, but when she is seen as a figure from folk legends, as a woman who is destined to love through eternity, but always to destroy through that love.

Other literary examples of destructive love centered in reluctant but enticing women are not plentiful, yet this figure does appear in the work of two of Lewis's contemporaries. Geraldine in Coleridge's "Christabel," for instance, seems to experience a moment of doubt and

dread just before joining her chaste and beautiful benefactress in bed:

> Yet Geraldine nor speaks nor stirs;
> Ah! What a stricken look was hers!
> Deep from within she seems half-way
> To lift some weight with sick assay,
> And eyes the maid and seeks delay.
> (Part I, 11.255-59; composed 1797)

And Keats's La Belle Dame, who is quite obviously some sort of faery child, "wept and sighed full sore" before lulling her knight at arms to sleep (1.30; composed 1818). As a character in a novel, Matilda is developed with more realism than are Geraldine and La Belle Dame, but her relationship to these haunting (and haunted) women who are driven to seduce and enthrall is nonetheless apparent. Though she eventually displays an attitude of haughty condescension, Matilda is deeply devoted to Ambrosio through much of the novel. In spite of her bold plans, the futility of her love is clear from the beginning, and the pain that she suffers as Ambrosio grows increasingly indifferent is reported on several occasions. Her pathos is truly touching at times, and her daring is often striking. All of these characteristics merge to make Matilda seem neither fully human nor entirely spirit, to set her off in a world that is beyond normal experience and rational explanation.

Lewis's interest in the figures and themes of folklore is clear, and his familiarity with ballads and legends informs many parts of his novel. On the other hand, it is not always possible to arrive at a clear Christian interpretation of The Monk. Water-Kings, Bleeding Nuns, and Wandering Jews, for example, have no certain place in traditional theological structures, and on the whole, Christianity is poorly equipped to deal with supernatural worlds which cannot be identified either with Heaven or with Hell. And while there is much talk about God in Lewis's romance, His exact nature and powers are not always clear. Thus Peter Brooks has asserted that the universe of The Monk is actually more pagan than Christian:

> "God" has become rather an interdiction, a primitive force within nature that strikes fear into men's hearts but does not move them to allegiance and worship. God as experienced by Matilda is no longer a symbol and incarnation of the Sacred, but rather of the nature of a taboo. The way in which she brings him to bear on the situation--and it is a way that Ambrosio will accept--suggests a world where there is no longer an operable idea of the Sacred or Holy, but rather a set of supernatural forces in the universe which must be acknowledged, combatted, propitiated, conjured with. "God" is simply one figure in a manichaeistic daemonology.[15]

This does not mean, however, that God is entirely irrelevant to The Monk. His existence is indeed acknowledged,

but as Brooks indicates, His attributes are open to question. In the Alternative World in which Matilda resides, His meaning is particularly ambiguous, for in this world, God is either just one more traditional authority to be opposed along with Church, law, and conventional morality, or He has no real influence on events at all. But regardless of her nature and motivation, whether woman, devil, or daemon, Matilda's role as seductress is clear and unchanging: for whatever reason, she must tempt Ambrosio to forsake the Established World that he has come to symbolize, to pass beyond the boundaries of the accepted, the known, and the predictable, and to join with her in a world apart. Finally, it is her tragedy, or perhaps her triumph, to recognize that nothing she can say or do will actually change Ambrosio into a new man, to understand that she can serve only as a means for the expression of the man that he has been from the start.

While I have described the Established World as civilized and as based upon order and control, this world is also corrupt and potentially dangerous. Evidence of widespread decadence is found not only in Ambrosio's descent into dissipation and crime, but in so many other characters and events that the entire social structure

often seems rotted and diseased. In relating the story of her life with the bandits of the forest, Marguerite describes "Young Men of family" who have turned to robbery and murder after squandering their paternal inheritances on vice and excess (p. 122). Donna Rodolpha, a Baroness, is so vain that she assumes without a moment's doubt that Raymond is in love with her, and so abandoned that she is eager for adultery. Her hatred and implacability are brought to light when she learns the truth of the situation, and her attempt at vengeance through murder is almost successful. Similarly, Elvira's father-in-law, who is a Marquis, hounds his son into exile, abducts his grandson, and deserts him to the caprice of monkish tutors while reporting to his family that he is dead. Beatrice de las Cisternas, a distant relation to Don Raymond, was compelled by her parents to enter the convent, but her "warm and voluptuous character" soon led her to elope with the Baron Lindenberg and to become his mistress. "Not satisfied with displaying the incontinence of a Prostitute," the Wandering Jew tells Raymond, "She professed herself an Atheist: She took every opportunity to scoff at her monastic vows, and loaded with ridicule the most sacred ceremonies of Religion" (pp. 173-74). And in a short time, she is so consumed with

passion for the Baron's younger brother that she is willing to murder the first Baron in order to enjoy the second.

The Domina of St. Clare's Convent, however, is perhaps the most thoroughly despicable character in the entire novel. Proud, cruel, intolerant, and ruthless, this tyrannical woman has determined to make St. Clare's into her ideal of a model religious order by attracting wealthy patrons, enlisting the daughters of noble families, and enforcing the most rigorous and inhumane regulations that her companions will permit. When Agnes de Medina draws shame to the convent by becoming pregnant, and, what is worse, allowing the renowned Abbot of the Capuchins to learn of her condition, the Domina swears to punish her with the utmost severity. Agnes's torture begins when she is forced at the point of a dagger to drink a liquor which she has been told is a poison. As she believes that she is on the verge of death, the Prioress and her accomplices "interrupted with sarcasm the prayers in which She recommended her parting soul to mercy: They threatened her with heaven's vengeance and eternal perdition: They bad her despair of pardon" (p. 354).

When Agnes next awakens, she slowly realizes that she has been put through an actual funeral and then entombed

in a vault among the moldering remains of deceased nuns. But her suffering does not end here, for the Prioress and her minions soon appear to inform her that she is to be chained to the wall of a dank and dreary dungeon located beneath even the burial vaults. And when Agnes ventures to plead for mercy on behalf of her unborn infant, the Domina responds with unparalleled barbarity:

> Abandoned Woman, speak of him no more! Better that the Wretch should perish than live: Begotten in perjury, incontinence, and pollution, It cannot fail to prove a Prodigy of vice. Hear me, thou Guilty! Expect no mercy from me either for yourself, or Brat. Rather pray that Death may seize you before you produce it; Or if it must see the light, that its eyes may immediately be closed again for ever! No aid shall be given you in your labour; Bring your Offspring into the world yourself, Feed it yourself, Nurse it yourself, Bury it yourself: God grant that the latter may happen soon, lest you receive comfort from the fruit of your iniquity! (p. 410).

This cruelty on the part of the Domina far exceeds, in intent if not in result, the worst of Ambrosio's crimes. And her tortures of Agnes are, of course, carefully premeditated and carried out in cold blood. Yet the Domina needs no spirit from Hell to tempt her to sadistic activities, or to urge her over moments of hesitation and compassion. With religious leaders such as the Prioress and her three

accomplices already at large, and with sexual passion and irrational hatred blinding the judgment of people throughout the land, one may well wonder that Satan should feel any need to center direct attention on a single, lone monk. It would seem, in short, that his work is proceeding very nicely as it is; it would seem that the Established World is in itself glutted with corruption and decadence.

The third figurative world embodied in The Monk is that defined by the younger generation, by Raymond, Agnes, and Lorenzo. Having somehow risen above the taint of the world into which they were born, these young people are representative of a new social order, of an order that is based on kindness and reason rather than hatred and superstition. From the dawning of their romance at Lindenberg Castle, it is clear that Raymond and Agnes are a modern couple, that they have rejected many of the assumptions, and the prejudices, of their forebears. In particular, they refuse to accept the notion that others, whether parents, guardians, or whomever, have the right to control their lives in significant ways. Thus, while they are willing to comply with accepted practice in declaring their love to Donna Rodolpha, once they meet with irrational resistance, they do not hesitate to proceed with

a plan of their own. And it is also clear that both Raymond and Agnes believe that they actually are in control of their lives, and that their reason and ingenuity will prove sufficient for their happiness.

Schematically, the world proposed by the younger generation can be located somewhere between the Established World of power and authority, and the Alternative World represented by Matilda: they would reject the ignorance, corruption, and cruelty of the former without lapsing into the hedonistic amorality of the latter. Agnes, for example, is outraged that her mother had destined her to a cloistered life before she was even born (and for selfish reasons at that), but she considers elopement only because of her aunt's cruelty, and because she is convinced that Raymond is an honorable man. Similarly, when Raymond discovers that Agnes has in fact become a nun, he infiltrates the convent grounds disguised as a gardener on the one hand, while applying to the proper authorities for the revocation of her vows on the other hand. In this manner, Raymond and Agnes attempt to exert their personal rights and independence while recognizing at the same time the need to accede to the reasonable demands of the established order. In spite of their refreshing pragmatism and rationality,

however, Raymond and Agnes are not as fully in control of their lives as they may wish to believe. Significantly, this recognition is forced upon them by the very worlds that they would deny: Raymond is caught in the icy grip of a being from the nether world, while Agnes comes to feel just how powerful and exacting the authority of the Established World can be.

Through the first several chapters of The Monk, Lewis restricts himself to events of the natural world, but these events--Lorenzo's dream, the Gypsy's prophecy, Rosario's revelations--are certainly ominous. And Raymond's ordeal at the cottage in the forest only just remains within the bounds of reality: "And while I fixed him without motion upon the floor, Marguerite wresting the dagger from his hand, plunged it repeatedly in his heart till He expired." And a little later, "We were obliged to pass by the Barn, where the Robbers were slaughtering our Domestics. The door was open: We distinguished the shrieks of the dying and the imprecations of the Murderers!" (p. 118).

The first weeks after Raymond's arrival at Lindenberg Castle provide an interlude of happiness, romance, and even comedy, but Donna Rodolpha's storming jealousy soon

brings an end to this calm. At this point, The Monk arrives at a critical transition, for Agnes's ingenious plan to escape the castle by impersonating the Bleeding Nun is also an ingenious technique on Lewis's part to remove entirely the already weakened distinction between real and unreal, and to carry the novel, characters, reader, and all into a world where the fantastic mingles easily and familiarly with the mundane. As Raymond awaits the appearance of his disguised lover on the appointed night, the atmosphere seems charged, everything is wound tightly in anticipation, and presently a figure appears: "A chaplet of Beads hung upon her arm; her head was enveloped in a long white veil; Her Nun's dress was stained with blood, and She had taken care to provide herself with a Lamp and dagger. She advanced toward the spot where I stood. I flew to meet her, and clasped her in my arms" (p. 155). But this woman whom Raymond embraces is not his Agnes; this being whom he escorts to his nuptial carriage is not his beautiful bride. She is rather a legend come to life, the embodiment of the superstition that Raymond and Agnes would exploit in order to consummate their own union. And the price that this spectre exacts for their audacity and disbelief is to hold Raymond enthralled, and

to set off a succession of events which eventually places Agnes at the mercy of a merciless tyrant.

The intercalated story of Don Raymond, then, is not so irrelevant an interruption as it may first seem or as some critics have complained,[16] for it serves several important functions. Most significantly, Raymond's encounter with the Bleeding Nun, and later with the Wandering Jew, has the effect of remaking reality in such a way that Ambrosio's subsequent experiences will seem very plausible, and perhaps even logical and inevitable. "The natural order of the world has given birth to something else," writes Peter Brooks, "and after this point, the rest of Raymond's adventures . . . follow with perfect appropriateness and plausibility. And not only Raymond's adventures: when we return to the main plot, to Ambrosio, Matilda, and Antonia, we move with ease into the evocation of diabolical agents, the use of magic mirrors and magic myrtle branches and subtle opiates" (p. 255). It is also in Raymond's story that representatives of the Established World, the New World, and the Alternative World are first brought together and locked in a struggle for dominance that will continue throughout the novel. Finding themselves pressed on both sides, Raymond and Agnes discover

first that there are powers in this world that they do not understand and cannot control, and second that the tyranny of authority is not as easily combatted as they had supposed. Their youthful optimism, in short, receives a setback as they learn that the road to a new and reformed world is long and arduous. Finally Raymond's Agnes emerges from this story as a foil to Ambrosio's Antonia: both women are drugged, declared dead, and carried down into the subterranean burial vaults held in common by the Capuchin monastery and St. Clare's Convent. Only one of these victims, however, will ever again see the light of day.

Shortly after the conclusion of Raymond's tale, we return at long last to Ambrosio, who is only just arising from the couch where we left him. His "burst of transport was past," Lewis reports, and "His heart . . . became the abode of satiety and disgust" (p. 223). These feelings do not long endure, for Ambrosio is soon making love to Matilda once again and "with redoubled ardour" (p. 224). Through the following days and nights, he repeats his sin many times, worried only that Rosario's true sex will be discovered, and that his concubine will then be placed beyond his embrace. Certainly there is nothing in Ambrosio's actions at this point to ameliorate his character,

to make him seem any less villainous or hypocritical. But interestingly, it is at this juncture in Ambrosio's career that Lewis makes his most concerted attempt to explain why he acts as he does, and thereby to win a degree of sympathy and understanding for his hero-villain. The method that Lewis adopts in this attempt is to delve into Ambrosio's background, and the rationale of his analysis is roughly Rousseauistic in that he insists on a clear distinction between Ambrosio's "real and acquired" character: "The fact was, that the different sentiments, with which Education and Nature had inspired him, were combatting in his bosom" (pp. 237-38).

"It was by no means his nature to be timid," continues Lewis. "But his education had inspired his mind with fear so strongly, that apprehension was now become part of his character." Had Ambrosio's innate tendencies been permitted to grow and mature, Lewis implies, he would have been a very different person: "He was naturally enterprising, firm, and fearless: He had a Warrior's heart, and He might have shone at the head of an Army. There was no want of generosity in his nature: The Wretched never failed to find in him a compassionate Auditor: His abilities were quick and shining, and his

judgment vast, solid, and decisive" (p. 236). Clearly, then, the crucial variable in the development of Ambrosio's character was his chance desertion by his parents, and his subsequent upbringing in a monastery under the guidance of an abbot described significantly as a "very Monk":

> His Instructors carefully repressed those virtues, whose grandeur and disinterestedness were ill-suited to the Cloister. Instead of universal benevolence He adopted a selfish partiality for his own particular establishment: He was taught to consider compassion for the errors of Others as a crime of the blackest dye: The noble frankness of his temper was exchanged for servile humility; and in order to break his natural spirit, the Monks terrified his young mind, by placing before him all the horrors with which Superstition could furnish them. . . . While the Monks were busied in rooting out his virtues, and narrowing his sentiments, they allowed every vice which had fallen his share, to arrive at full perfection. He was suffered to be proud, vain, ambitious, and disdainful: He was jealous of his Equals, and despised all merit but his own: He was implacable when offended, and cruel in his revenge (p. 237).

In light of this analysis and of the admirable qualities that he does in fact display on occasion, it is easy to believe that had Ambrosio been raised under more normal circumstances, he may well have had a place in the New World represented by Raymond, Agnes, and Lorenzo. Indeed, with his natural generosity and compassion, his judgment, boldness, and strength of mind, he might well have been a

leader in the opposition to ignorance, superstition, cruelty, and despotic authority. As it happened, however, this potential was carefully repressed, or rather redirected into channels endorsed by the controlling powers. Thus Ambrosio is himself a victim of the corrupting influence of the Established World that he comes ultimately to symbolize.

In addition to the perverting effect of his upbringing and education, Ambrosio is victimized in several other ways. The victory in the battle between his natural and learned character, Lewis insists, is to be decided by a third element of his personality--by his passions. "Unfortunately his passions were the very worst Judges," Lewis continues, "to whom He could possibly have applied." As a result, "the natural warmth of his constitution" and "the over-whelming torrent of his desires" prove too much for "Religion's barriers," and "all impediments yielded before the force of his temperament, warm, sanguine, and voluptuous in the excess" (pp. 238-39). In a sense, Ambrosio is a victim of this excessively voluptuous constitution, for he is largely driven by his passions, almost without any control, from one crime to another. Thus, he is often confused and frightened by the crimes he commits, and he

seems consistently surprised by the evil of which he is capable. And although he is Matilda's lover, he is also, to an extent, her prey and her puppet: she is determined, for whatever reason, to seduce this monk. The temptations that she embodies seem almost too much for the coldest of men, let alone for one of a warm temperament and in "the full vigour of Manhood" (p. 90). Even after he has transferred his affections to another woman, Matilda still exercises considerable power over Ambrosio by denying him her bed, by enabling him to view Antonia stepping naked into her bath, and by providing him with the means to gain access to the woman he so desires. Because of these factors--because of chance, circumstance, and other forces beyond his control--it is possible to feel some sympathy and concern for this murderer-rapist. His evil is patent and his damnation is inevitable, but his loss also partakes of the tragic. Looming far larger than Radcliffe's Montoni, this complex and fascinating character is Lewis's hero-villain.

While Ambrosio may suffer under a variety of forces, Antonia is the consummate victim of The Monk. One of the first characters to be introduced in the romance, she is described with conventional hyperbole: "Her lips were of

the most rosy freshness; Her fair and undulating hair, confined by a single ribband, poured itself below her waist in a profusion of ringlets; Her throat was full and beautiful in the extreme; Her hand and arm were formed with the most perfect symmetry" (p. 12). Given this description and her early introduction, a reader familiar with Radcliffe's first novels may understandably conclude that Antonia is to be the heroine of this present romance. And she is similar to Emily, Adeline, and the others in some ways, but she also possesses important differences. The heroines of Radcliffe's novels are the protagonists of their narratives, but Antonia is, purely and simply, the victim of Lewis's novel. Born in the West Indies, she seems to represent the freshness, the cleanliness, and the optimistic naivete of the new found lands; transported back to Spain, she is gradually overwhelmed by the urbanity, sophistication, and complex deceitfulness that seem inescapable in older societies. And while Radcliffe's heroines are no doubt innocent in experience, they are not so innocent in mind. That is to say, while they are all virginal in a physical sense, they seem to have a rather full understanding of sexual functionings. Thus Emily and Adeline tend to be very suspicious and distrustful; they tend to

see in almost every man a potential ravisher, and to react accordingly.

Antonia, however, is innocent in mind as well as in body. While she exhibits a natural modesty in the presence of strangers, she seems to have little idea that anyone would want to violate her in any way. She feels a strong and instinctive attraction to Ambrosio, and she therefore greets him with a warm and open friendliness. Her sincerity is not clouded by any thoughts of dark designs, and not until Flora finally explains "the Monk's designs and their probable consequences in terms much clearer than Elvira's, though not quite so delicate" (p. 333) does she seem to comprehend the threat that Ambrosio could pose to her. Because of the single-mindedness with which she is presented, one may choose to complain that Antonia is a "plaster statue,"[17] but at the same time, the appeal of her characterization is in its very simplicity, and its interest is in the great purity of her role as victim. Antonia, in short, is a lamb, and her sacrifice is inevitable.

Through the last section of The Monk, Ambrosio finds himself caught up in a situation which becomes ever more grave and complex with each new day. At first, it is

tempting to conclude, as has D. P. Varma, that a "struggle between religion and passion" is at the heart of his dilemma.[18] But Ambrosio's concern with the religious meaning of his sins is, in fact, minimal. He adopts a carefully legalistic stance toward Divine Judgment, and is anxious only that he not resign absolutely the last possibility of salvation. Indeed, his greatest concern is not that he has strayed from the path of God, but that his reputation as a devout will suffer if his crimes are discovered. And the further he falls from Heaven, the greater his concern for his reputation becomes. Thus Ambrosio's struggle may be described more accurately as a conflict between the Established World in which he holds a prestigious position, and the Alternative World to which Matilda would convert him. Although he is greatly attracted by the freedom, and especially the pleasure, that he sees in his lover's world, he is very reluctant to give up the power, security, and familiarity of his place in the Church. He therefore attempts to straddle worlds, to enjoy the benefits of each without pledging full allegiance to either. Matilda insists that this attempt at a middle road is a sign of weakness, an example of sniveling hypocrisy: to her mind, if one is not "God's Friend," then he must necessarily be

"God's Enemy" (p. 269). But ironically, Ambrosio persists on his chosen course even to the murder of Antonia, which he perpetrates in a last, desperate attempt to salvage a fame and reputation that have been thoroughly moribund for some time.

On another level, Ambrosio is reluctant to join absolutely with Matilda because he feels threatened in a very basic and personal sense by her and by what she represents. He recognizes that she is stronger than he is, and he is frightened by the mental, and particularly the sexual, power that she displays. "He found himself unable to cope with her in argument," Lewis notes, "and was unwillingly obliged to confess the superiority of her judgment. Every moment convinced him of the astonishing powers of her mind" (pp. 231-32). And in comparing Antonia to Matilda, Ambrosio complains that his present lover is too aggressive: "How enchanting was the timid innocence of [Antonia's] eyes, and how different from the wanton expression, the wild luxurious fire, which sparkles in Matilda's! Oh! sweeter must one kiss be snatched from the rosy lips of the First, than all the full and lustful favours bestowed so freely by the Second. Matilda gluts me with enjoyment even to loathing, forces me to her arms, apes

the Harlot, and glories in her prostitution. Disgusting!" (pp. 242-43). Ambrosio is appalled that anyone, much less the harmless and gentle woman that Matilda had once seemed to be, would deny so absolutely the normal strictures of religion, morality, modesty, and every other accepted control. Most importantly, he sees in a complete acceptance of Matilda a complete admission that he, too, has dedicated himself without reservation to the values for which she stands. He would then be forced to admit that he is indeed willing to maneuver, dissemble, ravish, torture, and even murder in the name of pleasure, of self, of the here and now. And in the end, the only significant difference between the Established World in its corrupt and decadent state, and Matilda's Alternative World is awareness--self-awareness and a confession of self-knowledge.

Faced with the impossible task of attempting to balance two contradictory worlds, Ambrosio sees Antonia as a way out. He seems to assume without a second thought that he will be able to enjoy sexual interludes with this lovely young woman while continuing to occupy his position as Abbot of the Capuchins. Perhaps because of her tender age and her perfect innocence, he regards Antonia as easily seduced, and as a woman whom he can readily control. He

fantasizes that with time she will grant him her favors willing, but always with a proper sense of modesty and decorum. She will make no physical or intellectual demands on him as has Matilda, and he will be the dominant partner in their relationship. Solipsistically, he understands Antonia's open avowal of affection for him as an expression of a desire for sexual intimacy, and with that, passion takes over: "Ambrosio no longer possessed himself; Wild with desire, He clasped the blushing Trembler in his arms. He fastened his lips greedily upon hers, sucked in her pure delicious breath, violated with his bold hand the treasures of her bosom, and wound around him her soft and yielding limbs" (p. 262). Antonia's screams and Elvira's sudden interruption soon destroy his ecstasy, however, and he is forced to admit that his desires will not be as easily satisfied as he had assumed.

Just why Ambrosio lusts so irrepressibly and exclusively for Antonia is unclear, but tentative answers can no doubt be found in subconscious motivations. In his fallen state, he is perhaps envious of Antonia's innocence, and wishes to blemish her purity to prove in a perverted manner that his own crimes are not so hideous after all. Conversely, he may feel that a relationship with Antonia

will restore his lost innocence through a form of association. Or perhaps his desire to ruin her is an expression of a totally unconscious sibling rivalry, a feeling which may be rendered as, "You basked in the love of our parents while I was corrupted beyond redemption in a monastery." Or even of sibling attraction in the sense that an incestuous encounter can be interpreted as an extreme form of narcissism, of pride and vanity.[19]

Judged with more sympathy and less psychology, Ambrosio's attraction to Antonia can be understood simply as a longing for a normal life, for a life with no Church fame or prestige, but with no monastic restrictions. A life in which sexual activity is neither criminal nor profane, but rather sacred and even holy. "What would I refuse to sacrifice," asks the Monk, "could I be released from my vows, and permitted to declare my love in sight of earth and heaven? . . . To share in her joy when happy, to kiss away her tears when distrest, to see her fly to my arms for comfort and support! Yes; If there is perfect bliss on earth, 'tis his lot alone, who becomes that Angel's Husband" (p. 243). No matter how we finally interpret Ambrosio's motivation, it is clear that his victim's purity and innocence form the cornerstone of his

attraction. And thus, as long as he remains a monk, any attempt to satisfy his lust will be inevitably self-defeating, for innocence is not preserved through rape, and pure love does not arise from torture. But then, Ambrosio's entire career is blatantly self-destructive, and as he advances from one outrage to another, it is only a matter of time until he is discovered, exposed, and repudiated.

The Monk, however, is not an optimistic novel, and even though Ambrosio is indeed apprehended and hauled before the Inquisition, there is little sense of relief, or feeling that justice has at last been served. Lewis's novel features the convergence of worlds and the collision of values which we may expect to cause upheavals of sufficient force to reorder society, and to purge the universe of evil, at least for a time. But instead of major eruptions which bring the expulsion of corruption and tyranny followed by the ascension of a new and better order, we encounter only a series of tremors, violent in nature, but limited in scope and indiscriminate in destruction. As an example of these tremors, Don Ramirez is successful in arresting the Domina of St. Clare's Convent on behalf of Lorenzo and the Inquisition. But the people of the vast

crowd, on whom he had depended for support, grow quickly and wildly out of control after hearing St. Ursula's account of Agnes's torture and apparent death. And once again, a bold and daring plan to right the wrongs of the Established World goes awry. On this occasion, the result is the beating of the Domina into "a mass of flesh, unsightly, shapeless, and disgusting" (p. 356), the sacking of the convent, and the murder of several nuns "who were perfectly innocent and unconscious of the whole affair" (p. 394).

Agnes is eventually discovered in her dungeon, and is carried back to the living world, back to her opulent family and her languishing lover. But the exclamation with which she greets her liberator--"There is a God then, and a just one!" (p. 372)--rings hollow and pathetic. For concurrent with this joyous praise of God, another completely innocent and defenseless woman is being ravished and slaughtered "by the side of three putrid half-corrupted Bodies" (p. 379). And Ambrosio, the Man of Holiness who once seemed to hold such promise, is finally corrupted, ruined, and thoroughly brutalized by his brief stay in the world. Tortured beyond endurance by the Inquisition, he takes the last step, and sells his very soul to Satan,

only to suffer a lingering death described in terms which seem to mock the Creation: "Six miserable days did the Villain languish. On the Seventh a violent storm arose: The winds in fury rent up rocks and forests: The sky was now black with clouds, now sheeted with fire: The rain fell in torrents; It swelled the stream; The waves overflowed their banks; They reached the spot where Ambrosio lay, and when they abated carried with them into the river the Corse of the despairing Monk" (p. 442).

Raymond and Agnes, Lorenzo and his new found Virginia manage to secure a life of happiness and tranquility, but several innocent women and a fallen man are sacrificed along the way. Moreover, there is no significant reform of the established order; indeed, there is no lasting redemption of any kind. To emphasize this, Lewis gives us three glimpses of the general populace, of the great numbers of nameless people who persist through the novel. The first view is at the very beginning of the romance when hundreds of people flock to the Church of the Capuchins to hear Ambrosio's sermon. Adopting a satirical stance, Lewis informs us that this multitude has assembled neither from "motives of piety," nor from "thirst of knowledge" (p. 7). Rather they have come, with few exceptions, out of idle

curiosity, because of vanity's desire to be seen, or as an escape from the boredom of their lives. Our next encounter with the crowd is on the night dedicated to St. Clare, on the night during which the convent is overrun, looted, and burned by a frenzied mob. And at the end of the novel, it is again the general populace of Madrid, the same people who had once adored Ambrosio as a saint, who have the final say about the Monk. The tenor of their judgment shows clearly that nothing has changed, that the great majority of the world goes on as always in spite of the terror and the horror that a few have experienced: "The story of how a Sorcerer had been carried away by the Devil, was soon noised about Madrid; and for some days the whole City was employed in discussing the subject. Gradually it ceased to be the topic of conversation: Other adventures arose whose novelty engaged universal attention; and Ambrosio was soon forgotten as totally, as if He never had existed" (p. 438).

For all their differences, both Radcliffe and Lewis attach endings to their narratives in which they retreat from the dark views implicit in the stories that they have told. At the conclusion of The Mysteries of Udolpho, Emily is convinced that God is in Heaven, and that all is right

with the world. In The Monk, Lewis attempts to create a sense of order and stability by meting out a series of punishments and rewards. Ambrosio and the Domina of St. Clare's suffer agonizing deaths, and the Monk, at least, is presumbly damned to Hell for eternity. Having paid the penalty for their incontinence (though Agnes is forced to pay by far the greater price), Raymond and Agnes are restored to each other, and to happiness. Lorenzo, who was allowed the consolation of embracing Antonia through her dying moments, eventually finds peace with Virginia, and his uncle is spared the difficulty of deciding whether he would permit Lorenzo to marry an obscure young woman of only the most modest means. Even very minor characters, such as Flora and the nuns who voted with the Domina on the question of how to deal with Agnes, meet their respective rewards and punishments. But in spite of this detailed settling of accounts, Elvira and especially Antonia remain as stark reminders of suffering that can be neither justified nor explained away.

Although Radcliffe fails to explain the justice of the murder of Emily's innocent aunt, it is possible to come away from The Mysteries of Udolpho with a degree of confidence that the good of this world are rewarded and the evil

punished. The same cannot be said of The Monk, however, for Lewis is never able to expunge completely the subtle but very insidious pessimism that pervades his novel. He can never quite dispell the impression that various forces of the universe conspire to level out all extremes, to expel from the world all persons who cannot be reduced to a mean of plainness and mediocrity. Thus Antonia is too good, too kind, and too innocent to survive, and Ambrosio's evil is too bold and unusual to go unpunished. Indeed, Ambrosio is subjected to this leveling process even before he embarks on his life of sin with Matilda, for as soon as his childhood tutors detect an extraordinary potential in their young pupil, they begin the careful task of denying that potential, of dragging him down to their own level. While Lewis retains much of the pressing sense of claustrophobia that Radcliffe had generated in The Mysteries of Udolpho, he also incorporates several panoramic views of society at large. And it is the crowd, the great mass of common people, that is perhaps his best symbol of the leveling forces at work in the world. In their idleness and boredom, the people of Madrid search unceasingly for anything that is at all unusual or novel. Like a swarm of locust, they descend on their prey through mindless

chatter or riot if need be, and never loosen their grip until the extraordinary has been rendered average, and the exceptional mundane.

The inclusion of society in The Monk has the effect of spreading the evil beyond specific characters and situations in a sense that Radcliffe never attempted in Udolpho (but that is in evidence in The Italian). The traumas that Emily St. Aubert experiences, as I suggested in the last chapter, have a spatial and temporal quality; they exist as a valley of shadows from which one will eventually emerge, or as a dream from which one will awake with the dawning of a new day. But the evil in The Monk seems much more persistent; it seems to function in an almost cyclical manner. Even though Ambrosio has been overcome and expelled, the forces that made his crimes possible still endure. There will always be an established order, an impetus for reform, and people who define their own worlds independently of all conventions and restrictions. The only hope for change lies in the success of those pushing for a new and better order, but even the best of New Worlds becomes old, reformed becomes established, and the whole process begins once again. As long as there is great human potential, there will be the possibility of the corruption

and perversion of that potential. Thus Lewis's novel seems to suggest that there will be more mothers who are murdered, more sisters who are polluted, and more Ambrosioes who will stare and wonder at what they have become.

The examination of good and evil in The Monk is, then, much more complex and detailed than that in The Mysteries of Udolpho. Many shades of grey have been interposed between the black and the white as Lewis has presented a longer and more steadfast view of the evil of which man is capable. While Radcliffe had focused on the transformation of the reality in Emily's mind, of the nature of her internal world, Lewis centers on the transformation of physical reality, of the world out there. And while Emily's anxious and even hysterical state of mind makes almost anything seem possible, the destruction of the barriers between natural and supernatural embodied in Raymond's headlong ride through the night with the Bleeding Nun makes almost anything indeed possible. Like the horses harnessed to Raymond's carriage, the forces of normal reality are out of control, and people are driven almost at random to extremes of lust, passion, hatred, and cruelty. When Emily discovers that she is in fact her father's daughter, psychological ghosts are exorcised, and her world

is set to rights. But when Ambrosio learns the truth of his parentage, the horror and darkness of the world become thicker and more inescapable. The mere fact that a few members of the younger generation are able to secure their happiness does little to ease the violence done to others. And the fact that these young people (like Radcliffe's Emily) have little understanding of what they have been through, and only a slight appreciation for the meaning of their victory cancels much of this last remaining hope. In spite of its dark and murky view, Matthew Lewis's The Monk is a remarkable novel, and a story of great interest and energy. Finally, The Monk stands as an implicit challenge asking Ann Radcliffe to look again, to peer more deeply into the recesses of the Gothic world that she had worked so hard to create.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ITALIAN: A STRUGGLE TO RESPOND: THE FINAL FORM

The popular and critical acclaim of The Mysteries of Udolpho established Ann Radcliffe as one of the most successful novelists of the eighteenth century.[1] And Matthew Lewis, with the bold violence and sensuality of The Monk, broadened the subject matter of the Gothic romance, heightened the complexity of its interpretation of life, and stimulated even more interest in an already popular genre. Thus, by 1797, the public was surely looking forward to the release of Radcliffe's next novel, and George Robinson was willing to pay her £800 for the right to publish it.[2] Although The Italian, or the Confessional of the Black Penitents seems never to have achieved quite the popularity of The Mysteries of Udolpho, it was indeed successful with the reading public, and even more so with the critics. While some have preferred The Mysteries of Udolpho, and a few The Romance of the Forest, the majority

of literary critics and scholars in Ann Radcliffe's own day, and particularly in the twentieth century, have praised The Italian as her masterpiece.

Inasmuch as The Italian was published shortly after the release of The Monk, comparisons between the two are perhaps inevitable. Moreover, the plot and characters of The Italian clearly invite such analysis. "In The Italian," says Clara McIntyre, "the dominating power is the Church; and the figure of Schedoni--sinister, mysterious, and apparently austere, but inwardly depraved--is not unlike Lewis' conception of his Monk."[3] Writing with less equivocation, Ernest Baker states plainly that "Schedoni is manifestly conceived in rivalry to . . . Ambrosio."[4] Edith Birkhead also points to the likenesses between Schedoni and Ambrosio, and then cites additional similarities: "The dramatic scene where Schedoni stealthily approaches the sleeping Ellena at midnight recalls the more highly coloured, but less impressive scene in Antonia's bedchamber. The fate of Bianchi, Ellena's aunt, is strangely reminiscent of that of Elvira, Antonia's mother."[5] Schedoni and Ambrosio, however, are as different as they are similar, and to say simply that Radcliffe "undertook to rub out [The Monk] by bowdlerizing the work in her next book, The

Italian,"[6] is no more accurate than to say that The Monk is nothing more than an imitation of The Mysteries of Udolpho. Thus, the similarities most often cited between The Monk and The Italian are important not really for what they tell us about either novel, but rather as indicators of a deeper and more substantive exchange between Radcliffe and Lewis.

The debate in which these two Gothic writers engaged through their novels can be outlined as follows: In composing her first three romances, Radcliffe worked diligently to create a narrative form which would center on the physical, mental, and psychological struggle between two persons. As the form developed, the role of the heroine as victim became increasingly dominant, and the nature of her conflict with villain became ever more exclusively psychological and sexual. The strong air of confidence and satisfaction which permeates The Mysteries of Udolpho suggests that Radcliffe felt that she had finally brought her Gothic narrative to its fullest and most meaningful expression. But then Matthew Lewis, fascinated by Udolpho and anxious to establish a literary reputation of his own, composed a romance in the Gothic vein which seems to suggest that while Radcliffe's novels are interesting, their view of the human personality and of man's capacity for evil is

oversimplified and unjustifiably optimistic. Finally, in her next novel, and the last to be published in her lifetime, Radcliffe undertook to fashion a reply to Lewis's implicit criticisms, but a reply that was to be rendered in her own terms. Had The Monk never been written, it is conceivable that Radcliffe would have broken off her literary career somewhat earlier, allowing The Mysteries of Udolpho to stand as her final word. Or if she had published another romance in the absence of The Monk, it would surely have been much closer to Udolpho than to The Italian. But while Lewis's novel may have made The Italian possible in a sense (in much the same sense that Udolpho made The Monk possible), it is nonetheless a distinctly Radcliffean romance. Much more than simply a proper and decorous version of The Monk, Radcliffe's last novel is an attempt to present an objective and thoroughgoing view of evil in the world without falling into either the oversimplifications of The Mysteries of Udolpho, or the sensationalistic and brutal outlook of The Monk.

The manner in which Radcliffe chose to respond to Lewis's challenge to her view of man and evil can be explored by comparing The Italian not only to The Monk, but to her own earlier novels as well. The handling of

characters and roles in The Italian, for instance, represents an unmistakable departure from her established practice, for the movement toward a heroine-centered romance, which had culminated in The Mysteries of Udolpho, is largely reversed. While Ellena di Rosalba is clearly the heroine of her romance, she is not nearly so dominant as either Emily St. Aubert, or Adeline in The Romance of the Forest. Indeed, Ellena is not even the most important character in The Italian, for that distinction is reserved for Schedoni. In answer to Lewis's use of Ambrosio, a character that he developed from the potential that he had sensed in Montoni, Radcliffe created a fully realized hero-villain of her own, and cast him in the central role of her last novel.[7] To complement this hero-villain, she went back to A Sicilian Romance and brought the lascivious Marchioness forward as the rounded and very effective villainess embodied in Vivaldi's mother, the Marchesa. And at the same time that the importance of the heroine was decreased, the role of the hero was enlarged and revitalized. As a result, Ellena and Vivaldi play roles of approximately equal importance, but each is nonetheless carefully subordinated to the character of Schedoni.

This reworking of roles makes The Italian much more complex, and perhaps more interesting, than The Mysteries of Udolpho, because it opens the narrative to a much broader range of possibilities. No longer are we limited to following the experiences of a lone heroine as she attempts to deal with problems arising first from one source, and then another. Instead, we are given extended views of the hero-villain's relationships with the villainess, the heroine, and the hero. Each interaction is important in itself, and yet all three are woven tightly into the structure of the plot. While the relationship between Ellena and Vivaldi is similar to that between Emily and Valancourt, the couple in The Italian spends more time together, and yet the danger that each must face alone creates a deeper and more meaningful bond between them. And whereas Emily is only one of Montoni's many concerns and may never actually be in as much danger as she often thinks she is, Vivaldi and particularly Ellena are the sole objects of Schedoni's considerable powers of persecution, and Ellena, at least, comes perilously close to being murdered.

These are the more obvious ways in which Radcliffe altered her established form, and it seems likely that many of these changes were indeed made in response to how Lewis

had handled his characters in The Monk. To this extent, Clara McIntyre's speculation that Radcliffe, having noted Lewis's success, "might have thought it worth while to attempt a study in the same field" seems reasonable.[8] But a less obvious, although more significant difference between The Mysteries of Udolpho and The Italian is found in the objectivity and detachment of the narrator. One of the greatest disappointments in Udolpho is Emily's apparent failure to learn from her experiences, and to become a more tolerant, understanding, and simply wiser person as a result of what she has been through. But even more distressing is that Radcliffe herself seems completely unaware of this failing in her heroine. Never does she give any indication that Emily should have changed in response to the unusual traumas she has endured, and never does she hint that Emily's feelings through the last section of the novel are in any way inappropriate. It seems, in short, that Radcliffe had worked so hard to merge her point of view with Emily's mentality that she is finally unable to break free and to achieve the distance necessary to provide meaningful comment on her heroine's lack of growth.

In narrating The Italian, however, Radcliffe avoids this problem by keeping her own point of view carefully

divorced from those of her characters. Her decision to focus alternately on several characters, and especially to divide the role of victim between Ellena and Vivaldi, allows her to retain an effective distance, and keeps her from being identified too closely with any one character. Interestingly, the more irrational characteristics which had been attributed to Emily in Udolpho are assigned in The Italian, not to Ellena, but to Vivaldi. A tendency toward superstition, a habit of rushing to unfounded conclusions, and an unpredictable impetuosity are features of Vivaldi's personality, as they were of Emily's. But before the conclusion of The Italian, Vivaldi is made embarrassingly, and pointedly, aware that he has displayed these weaknesses. Ellena, then, never becomes quite so hysterical as Emily, but at the same time, she is not subjected to the severe, calculated, and prolonged psychological torture that Emily encounters at the Castle of Udolpho. The dangers that Ellena faces are more immediate and physical, and the method that Radcliffe gives her to deal with them shows significant growth in the author, if not in the heroine. Moreover, in presenting the characters of Schedoni and the Marchesa, Radcliffe shows that she has also learned how to construct a convincing account of internal personalities

without relinquishing her narrative integrity. Schedoni may well be her most striking and complex character, and yet it is clear that she has retained her detachment and objectivity in the process of creating him.

It is doubtful for several reasons that Radcliffe could have learned these lessons simply by reading The Monk. First, Lewis's own point of view is quite various: at the opening of his romance, he adopts a broadly satiric stance which implies considerable detachment, but this distance is soon collapsed as the satiric pose is employed only briefly and intermittently through the remainder of the novel. Raymond's lengthy tale is related exclusively in the first person. And Lewis himself allows Raymond and Agnes to go blithely on with their lives, in spite of their extraordinary and tortuous experiences, and in spite of the fate that they know Antonia to have suffered. Second, Lewis and Radcliffe, for all their similarities, approach Gothic narrative through two very different methods. Radcliffe proceeds through subtle indirection, while Lewis's technique is to shock through open and very graphic descriptions. The terrors of Radcliffe's world frequently lurk beneath the surface and are present to the reader largely through implication; those of Lewis's world stare

the reader in the eye and scream in his face.[9] Finally, there are slight but important variations in the focus of each of the three novels in the sequence that we have been considering. As a heroine-centered romance, The Mysteries of Udolpho emphasizes the reactions of a young woman to prolonged and essentially sexual anxiety. Leaving the heroine behind, The Monk looks at the perversion of an inherently good, and potentially great man, and then focuses on his subsequent fall from authority and innocence to sin and corruption. The primary interest of The Italian, however, is not in how a good man becomes evil; rather it focuses on the fascination and grandeur of "a man called father Schedoni," and particularly on the workings of his brilliant but evil mind.[10]

Whether or not The Italian is singled out as Radcliffe's best novel, Schedoni is praised almost universally as her most interesting and memorable character.[11] Nearly from the beginning of the romance to its conclusion, Schedoni controls the action, influences other characters, and occupies the reader's attention even more completely than does Ambrosio. Unlike The Monk, there are no interpolated tales in which Schedoni is not involved, and even in those segments in which he is not physically present,

such as the section describing Ellena's confinement to the convent of San Stefano, the power of his maneuvering is invariably perceived. Like Montoni, Schedoni's chief characteristics are his air of mystery, his strength of will, and his keenness of intellect. His monastic brethren know nothing of his past or family, and, given "his severe reserve and unconquerable silence," they can only speculate that he is afflicted either by "a haughty and disordered spirit," or by "some hideous crime gnawing upon an awakened conscience" (p. 34). He is in the habit of coming and going at intervals, and although he is watched, "there were times when it was unknown whither he had retired." As for his mental faculties, some brothers "said that he had talents, but denied him learning; they applauded him for the profound subtlety which he occasionally discovered in argument, but observed that he seldom perceived truth when it lay on the surface" (p. 34).

In outward appearance, Schedoni is certainly an imposing personage:

> His figure was striking, but not so from grace; it was tall, and, though extremely thin, his limbs were large and uncouth, and as he stalked along, wrapt in the black garments of his order, there was something terrible in its air; something almost super-human. His cowl, too, as it threw a shade over the livid paleness of his

> face, encreased its severe character, and gave an effect to his large melancholy eye, which approached to horror. His was not the melancholy of a sensible and wounded heart, but apparently that of a gloomy and ferocious disposition. There was something in his physiognomy extremely singular, and that can not easily be defined. It bore the traces of many passions, which seemed to have fixed the features they no longer animated (pp. 34-35).

From this first description, Schedoni may seem to be a copy of Montoni or Ambrosio, but as his personality develops, his individuality becomes apparent. One difference is that while Ambrosio is initially innocent at least in deed, Schedoni (and perhaps Montoni) has commited several crimes long before the opening time of The Italian, and is therefore beyond society and the law from the outset. Moreover, at the opening of The Monk, Ambrosio already occupies the very kind of high position in the Church toward which all of Schedoni's efforts are exerted. Consequently, Ambrosio is urged to commit his crimes by desires of the flesh, while Schedoni seems to feel few carnal impulses, and is driven instead by pride and avarice. Because of his voluptuous personality, Ambrosio's throughts and emotions run out of control almost from the moment that he first discovers that Rosario is a young and beautiful woman. But one of Schedoni's foremost characteristics is the

strong and careful control that he attempts to maintain over mind and body at all times. After once experiencing the delights of sexual intercourse, Ambrosio comes to live for the body and for pleasure; Schedoni, however, does his best to deny the body and to repress all feeling. This asceticism is represented neatly by the "several instruments of torture" that Vivaldi finds in the Confessor's cell, and by the report that Schedoni is "severe in his devotion, and in self-punishment terrible beyond the reach of" any of his brethren (pp. 102 and 105).

We can also note again that The Monk and The Italian ultimately have different centers of interest. The emphasis in Lewis's romance is more on how Ambrosio comes to be evil, and to that end, we are given careful descriptions of his perverting education and of the strange circumstances that unite to bring him to the point of incest and murder. Schedoni's evil, however, is presented largely as a given, and Radcliffe then concentrates on how his evil influences his thoughts and actions. As a result, Schedoni is not so clearly victimized as is Ambrosio, and his evil is not so obviously self-destructive. As Frederick Garber has observed, "the villains do not . . . share the same sins, and at this point of divergence the monks of Lewis

and Mrs. Radcliffe reveal an ultimate difference in outlook. Schedoni wants power and status (and the wealth that comes with them) but Ambrosio's passions are self-destructive and have no other goal than immediate gratification."[12] Finally, bringing The Mysteries of Udolpho back into consideration, we can see that Schedoni is closer to Montoni than to Ambrosio. Thus it seems that Radcliffe began with the outline of her first Italian, and developed him into the strong, fully rounded, and dominant figure of her second. Montoni, then, may well have provided the inspiration for Ambrosio, but he is the direct forebear of Schedoni.

In keeping with her intention of clarifying her Gothic view, Radcliffe makes the central conflict of The Italian much more clear and specific than it is in any of the earlier romances: Vivaldi, the only son of a noble, wealthy, and proud family, has fallen in love with and wishes to marry Ellena di Rosalba, a young woman of lower rank and only modest means. Even in his love-stricken state, Vivaldi recognizes that Ellena's family "was of such a condition as rendered the consent of his parents to a marriage with her unattainable" (p. 12). And further, he finds it difficult "to believe that she would condescend

to enter a family who disdained to receive her" (p. 14). In spite of his awareness of his parents' displeasure, Vivaldi continues his pursuit of Ellena, but when he presses his suit to her guardian aunt, he is told quite plainly that "though Signora di Rosalba is [the Vivaldi's] inferior in rank, she is their equal in pride" (p. 24). To further complicate this situation, the Marchese, who is by far the more reasonable and considerate of Vivaldi's parents, is greatly prejudiced against Ellena by reports that she is an abandoned and conniving woman who is attempting to trick or blackmail his infatuated son into marriage. Finally, the Marchesa, who needs no false or misleading information to conceive an inveterate hatred of Ellena, is willing to adopt the most drastic measures to keep her son from marrying the woman he loves.

"The mother of Vivaldi, descended from a family as ancient as that of his father," says Radcliffe, "was equally jealous of her importance; but her pride was that of birth and distinction, without extending to morals. She was of violent passions, haughty, vindictive, yet crafty and deceitful; patient in stratagem, and indefatigable in pursuit of vengeance, on the unhappy objects who provoked her resentment. She loved her son," Radcliffe

concludes, "rather as being the last of two illustrious houses, who was to re-unite and support the honour of both, than with the fondness of a mother" (pp. 7-8). While the Marchese expresses his disapproval of Vivaldi's attachment through open and angry confrontation, the Marchesa learns more of her son's thoughts and affections through subtle and indirect questioning. And while the Marchese feels that he can do little more than threaten disinheritance as the consequence of disobedience, the Marchesa, "despairing to effect [her designs] by open violence . . . called in an auxiliary of no mean talents, and whose character and views well adapted him to be an instrument in her hands" (p. 33). This auxiliary, of course, is Father Schedoni, and in the several exchanges between the Marchesa and her Confessor, we are presented not only with some of Radcliffe's very best writing, but also with her most detailed and convincing examination of the evil mind.

During their first meeting, Schedoni and the Marchesa merely discuss "the means of accomplishing their general end" (p. 35). The motivation of each party is clear and straightforward at this point: the Marchesa wants simply to prevent a marriage between her son and Ellena, while Schedoni is anxious to help her achieve this end in

the expectation that she will use her influence at court to obtain his promotion to "a high benefice" (p. 35). Even before this consultation, Schedoni has employed an agent to deliver slanderous reports of Ellena's background to the Marchese, and to enjoin Vivaldi not to visit his beloved--"Go not to the villa Altieri," warns the mysterious monk before slipping into the murky gloom of nearby ruins (pp. 13, 15, and 41). When these relatively mild measures prove ineffectual, Schedoni and the Marchesa meet again, agree that their efforts "should no longer be confined to remonstrances," and determine to have Ellena carried off to an obscure convent. It is also during this second meeting that their relationship begins to become more complex: "During the warmth of this sympathy of resentment," says Radcliffe, "the Marchesa and Schedoni mutually, and sincerely, lost their remembrance of the unworthy motives, by which each knew the other to be influenced, as well as that disgust which those who act together to the same bad end, can seldom escape from feeling towards their associates" (pp. 53-54). With this loss of awareness, the conspirators begin to move closer together, at the same time that their plotting begins to move beyond practical motivational concerns, and to leave behind accepted social and moral

considerations. Their conspiracy, in short, is beginning to become a thing apart; it is beginning to take on meaning and interest in and of itself.

As soon as he discovers that Ellena has been abducted, Vivaldi suspects that his mother's confessor is involved. Even though he has no actual proof of Schedoni's culpability, he searches him out in the convent of Spirito Santo and accuses him of the kidnapping. When Schedoni does not answer this charge or even acknowledge his presence, Vivaldi becomes increasingly incensed and frustrated. Failing to understand that the monk is engaged in an act of penance through silent meditation, Vivaldi exclaims, "What means this mummery?" (p. 103). And when he has run out of patience and has no idea of what to say or do next, he stumbles onto hints provided by Paulo's rambling story of a strong confession: "'Speak! Answer me,'" he demands, "'or dread what I may unfold. Yet silent! Do you know the convent del Pianto? Do you know the confessional of the Black Penitents?'" (p. 105). These questions, which seem to cloak such knowledge, are finally enough to rouse Schedoni who fixes his eyes on Vivaldi and curses him with great force before rushing out of the church: "'Avaunt!' cried he in a tremendous voice; 'avaunt! sacrilegious boy!

Tremble for the consequence of thy desperate impiety!'" (p. 105).

In spite of this show of bravado, Schedoni is deeply unsettled by the implications of Vivaldi's queries, and he is convinced at first that the Marchesa also knows of his previous crimes. Thus, when he is summoned to a third interview at the Vivaldi Palace, Radcliffe describes his appearance in terms which epitomize the Gothic villain: "His visage was wan and wasted, his eyes were sunk and become nearly motionless, and his whole air and attitudes exhibited the wild energy of something--not of this earth" (p. 110). While he is soon relieved to discover that the Marchesa, at least, is apparently ignorant of his past, his interest in her affairs is greatly increased, and his motivation is now much more personal and complicated. First, he must continue to worry about the actual extent of Vivaldi's knowledge, and should it prove necessary, he must be prepared to protect himself against damaging disclosures. Moreover, because of his implacable nature, Schedoni now desires to revenge the public insults to which Vivaldi has subjected him. And finally, he must think of a way to settle his personal dispute with Vivaldi without angering his intended benefactress. For these reasons,

Schedoni is not prepared to suggest any specific actions during their third conference, but he is able to probe the Marchesa's attitude toward her son, and to insinuate that it may be necessary to adopt measures against Vivaldi as well as Ellena. He begins by complaining indirectly about the "horrible impiety" of which Vivaldi has been guilty, and when the Marchesa entreats him to "speak explicitly" so that she can show that she is able to "lose the mother in the strict severity of the judge," he recounts the incident at Spirito Santo in exaggerated and invented terms (p. 111). "The Marchesa," we are told, "listened to the relation with no less indignation than surprize, and her readiness to adopt the confessor's advice allowed him to depart with renovated spirits and most triumphant hopes" (p. 112).

By the time of their next and most important meeting, the Marchesa has received word that Vivaldi has discovered Ellena's place of confinement, and that they have succeeded in escaping from the convent. Schedoni can see immediately that the Marchesa is furious even to distraction in the belief that her son is already married and lost forever. Sensing that she is filled with despair as well as anger, he allows her to continue to believe that Vivaldi is indeed married, for he feels that he will then be able

to enjoy his revenge without alienating the Marchesa. In addition, Schedoni has determined to accomplish his various ends by proposing, with great subtlety and indirection, that Ellena be murdered. While this plan is certainly cold-blooded, the reasoning behind it is also very logical, for if Schedoni can bring the Marchesa to agree to the murder of Ellena, he will then have made her an accessory to a heinous crime. This, he feels, will enable him to extort whatever power or position he may desire, and also to proceed with impunity against Vivaldi. Even in her agitated state, however, the Marchesa is not easily led, and Schedoni must make use of all his powers of insinuation, flattery, and sophistry to achieve his goal.

When this situation is viewed impartially and in the light of familiar or normal morality, its nightmarish aspects become clear, for what began as a simple, and even understandable attempt to keep a romantic and headstrong young man from marrying to disadvantage has evolved rapidly into a complex and almost demented plot to commit murder. While Schedoni's methods are indeed cruel, they are also, as I have suggested, quite logical--we need only recall the recommendations of that other Italian, of Niccolò Machiavelli, to understand why he proceeds as he does. But the

motivations of the Marchesa are much more difficult to comprehend fully. Even though she is a vindictive woman, it is difficult to believe that she would resort to murder merely because she thinks that her son's intended marriage is imprudent. Because of this disparity between the magnitude of the crime that she contemplates and her overt reason for considering it, the Marchesa is quite probably influenced by other, less apparent motives. From a psychological viewpoint, for instance, it is tempting to conclude that the Marchesa is the victim of a subconscious sexual attraction to her son, and that she will therefore go to great extremes to prevent him from marrying any woman. There is, however, absolutely no indication in Radcliffe's text that this is the case; indeed, when "the father of a lady, who was held suitable in every consideration" proposes a union between Vivaldi and his daughter, the Marchesa shows no disapproval whatsoever (p. 165).

Yet, from another point of view, the Marchesa clearly is involved in plotting to commit murder from other motives in addition to the anger and disappointment that she feels at her son's choice of mates. One indication of this is the great care that Radcliffe takes to show that the discussions between Schedoni and the Marchesa have been

largely abstracted from the reality about which they are supposedly concerned. Thus, Radcliffe states plainly, as I have already noted, that the conspirators "mutually, and sincerely, lost their remembrance of the unworthy motives, by which each knew the other to be influenced" (p. 53, my italics). Schedoni, of course, is aware of the advantage, and perhaps even the necessity, of insulating his accomplice from the brutal reality of their meditations. And as the measures that they consider become ever more serious and savage, he increases his efforts to isolate the Marchesa--and even himself--from the image of a young and innocent woman groaning in the agony of death.

As a result of this abstraction, the exchanges between Schedoni and the Marchesa become, in effect, a contest of will and intellect in which each participant attempts to minimize his own involvement, and seemingly his own guilt, while hoping to maximize that of his opponent. As this contest becomes more complex, and hence more challenging, it finally becomes possible to speak of the quality of one's performance almost entirely without reference to any other structure of values. In these exchanges, then, Radcliffe is elaborating on the game in which Emily and Montoni were engaged, and in the process, she presents

the reader with a striking instance of the confusion between means and ends: while the plotting is intended to lead ultimately to Ellena's death, the game itself is so fascinating that its relationship to the real world is quickly forgotten by the participants. In short, playing the game becomes a motive in itself, as it generates an excitement and an intensity that are comparable to those of a sexual encounter. Both Schedoni and the Marchesa clearly enjoy their intricate and subtle maneuverings, much as Emily and Montoni seem to have enjoyed their repeated confrontations.

The debate on whether to murder Ellena can easily be identified as the pivotal episode of The Italian. Structurally, this consultation, which actually consists of two separate meetings on successive days, spans two chapters very near the middle of the romance (Vol. II, Chs. 3 and 4). By accounting for the Marchesa's belief in the need for more drastic measures, the developments of the first half of the novel lead up to this extended conversation, and the plan of action which is finally agreeed upon during this conference prepares the way for the events of the remainder of the narrative. Moreover, it is also during this meeting that the contest between Schedoni and

the Marchesa is carried to its highest and most fascinating level.

The Marchesa's exact reasons for calling Schedoni to this all-important conference are not entirely clear: on one hand, Radcliffe says that the Marchesa now believed her son to be "irrecoverably lost," but on the other hand, we are also told that she wished to examine "whether there remained a possibility of dissolving these long-dreaded nuptials" (pp. 165-66). In either case, it seems doubtful that she has contemplated murder on her own, and perhaps her greatest desire is simply to achieve "the relief of expressing her emotions." Schedoni, however, almost certainly has murder in mind from the outset, and it is he who begins the game when he responds to the Marchesa's despair by placing a tentative suggestion in play, only to withdraw it almost immediately:

> "Perhaps that is affirming too much," observed Schedoni.
> "How, father!" said the Marchesa.
> "Perhaps a possibility does remain," said he.
> "Point it out to me, good father! I do not perceive it."
> "Nay, my lady," replied the subtle Schedoni, correcting himself, "I am by no means assured, that such possibility does exist" (p. 167).

Although the Marchesa clearly wishes him to commit himself with a specific suggestion, Schedoni refuses to do so, and instead, concludes the first exchange by maintaining flatly that "There is no remedy" (p. 168).

It then falls to the Marchesa to open the second exchange, and she does so by lamenting that there is no "law to prevent, or, at least, to punish such criminal marriages" (p. 168). This time around, Schedoni plays along, and even asserts that death is the appropriate punishment for a crime such as Ellena's. At first, the Marchesa responds favorably and insists that she has "a man's courage," but she soon wavers and is forced to admit that "some woman's weakness still lingers at [her] heart" (pp. 168-69). Exceedingly sensitive to implication, Schedoni takes this as a hint, and withdraws his suggestion for a second time. The Marchesa is forced to open yet another exchange, and although she gives Schedoni several broad opportunities to repeat his advice, he again refuses to do so. As a result, the Marchesa, recognizing by now that she has been badly outmaneuvered, has no choice but to repeat the advice herself: Is it not your opinion, she asks, "that justice, equally with necessity, demands--her life?" But Schedoni is determined to secure victory at this point,

and replies only that he "may have erred" before insisting that he must depart at once to attend an important mass (p. 170). The Marchesa is obviously anxious to decide upon a definite course of action, but since Schedoni insists on delaying any decision, she can do no more than to arrange for another meeting on the following evening. The Confessor then leaves "with the silent footstep, that indicates weariness and conscious duplicity," while the Marchesa remains in her room, "shaken by ever-varying passions, and ever-fluctuating opinions" (p. 171).

With the dusk of evening rapidly gathering, the second half of this great game transpires in the gloomy north cloister of the church of San Nicolo. One of the most interesting aspects of this entire affair is that, in spite of all their talk and maneuvering, each participant seems to have decided independently on Ellena's murder through the small hours of the intervening night. Nevertheless, the Marchesa adopts a passive role, and indicates that she wishes Schedoni to lead her once again through argument to conclusion. With his characteristic genius, Schedoni begins by attributing his own suggestion of the previous day to the Marchesa: "One way, only, remains for you to pursue, in the present instance," says he. "It is

the same which your superior sagacity pointed out, and taught me to approve" (p. 172). But with continued caution, the Marchesa pleads indecision, and thereby forces Schedoni to reiterate the discussion in detail. He first presents the argument from law and then goes on to thatfrom virtue, although each is, of course, twisted to the point of complete inversion. Finally, the Confessor concludes his presentation with careful euphemism and high rhetoric: "she is sent to an eternal sleep, before her time.——Where is the crime, where is the evil of this? On the contrary, you perceive, and you have convinced me, that it is only strict justice, only self-defence" (p. 173).

The Marchesa, however, still does not express an opinion on the act of murder itself; rather she asks Schedoni to explain the particulars of how such a plan may be carried out. Thus, by skipping from the question of "whether" to a consideration of "how," the Marchesa allows the fact of murder to come into existence as a foregone conclusion without ever having to approve it directly. At this point, her insulation from the reality of the crime is almost impenetrable, and she therefore takes the offensive by attempting, also for Machiavellian reasons, to bring Schedoni to agree to commit the murder himself. But

as he begins to sketch a disjointed outline of how the deed may be accomplished, it becomes apparent that the main business of the meeting is finished, and that the conspirators have now slipped into private reveries.

Schedoni mentions "one poor man, who sustains a miserable existence by fishing" and "a lone dwelling on the beach," which we later discover to be the agent and scene of his former crime. As he is captured by this memory, he begins to speak in fragments and to mutter as if he is talking more to himself than to his fellow conspirator. But this makes little difference, for the Marchesa is caught up in her own thoughts which tend solely toward the deed which she has been contemplating. She notices an "inscription over a Confessional, where appeared, in black letters, these awful words, 'God hears thee!'" She then detects the "low and querulous notes of an organ," and presently, the "slow chaunting of voices" (pp. 176-77). Finally she recognizes with great emotion that "it is a first requiem; the soul has but just quitted the body!" These circumstances are almost too much, and "her breathings," we are told, "were short and interrupted." She leaves the Confessor and walks alone until, at long last, she indulges in a full release of tension and emotion: The

Marchesa "wept without restraint," while Schedoni exclaims to himself, "Behold, what is woman!" (p. 177).

In attaining the insight and detachment necessary to compose this scene, Radcliffe shows how far she has come as an author since The Mysteries of Udolpho. No longer is she unaware of the failings of her characters, or unconscious of the implications of her material. Furthermore, it seems quite likely that Radcliffe designed this intercourse between Schedoni and the Marchesa specifically to parallel the relationship between Ambrosio and Matilda, and thereby to answer, in large part, Lewis's challenge to the validity of her Gothic view. And this answer consists quite simply of demonstrating, with great skill and force, that the sexuality which is so perversive in The Monk is not the only foundation on which guilt and obscenity can be constructed.

While there is certainly no evidence that Schedoni and the Marchesa engage in literal sexual activity, they clearly are involved in a form of intellectual adultery, in an affair which is strikingly similar to an illicit sexual association.[13] Consider, for instance, the intimate relationship that they share, and notice that the Marchese, the husband, is carefully and repeatedly barred from their

consultations (pp. 35, 112, 166, and 172). Notice that the Marchesa tells Schedoni that she wishes to "converse on the subject nearest [her] heart, and without observation" (p. 170). And mark her admission that her "only relief" comes from consulting with Schedoni, and her insistence that he is her "only counsellor," her "only disinterested friend" (p. 172). Moreover, looking at their conference which extended through two days, we find several specific parallels: On the first day, they meet in the Marchesa's chambers, and Schedoni's deliberately convoluted talk of murder works his partner into a highly impassioned state. But when he feels that her excitement is intense, he breaks off the discussion abruptly and without a conclusion, thus leaving the Marchesa "agitated and perplexed" (p. 170). As a result, it is almost in desperation that she hastily arranges what can only be described as a tryst for the following evening. And during this rendezvous, Schedoni follows through on his designs, and their plans are finally consummated in the resolve that Ellena will die. As in a sexual encounter, their conversations are filled with flattery, and they repeatedly stroke each other, not with touch, but with words. Each knows what the other wants, but both maneuver at length to avoid

initiating the last act. And when they finally arrive at a definite decision, it has been so finely argued and achieved through such subtlety that it is impossible to say that either is more guilty than the other.

The relationship between Schedoni and the Marchesa continues to carry sexual overtones even after they have determined on Ellena's death, and have been separated for some time. Having failed to carry out his criminal mission, Schedoni returns reluctantly to the Marchesa, who fully expects to hear that her desires have been satisfied, and that Ellena is dead. Indeed, the anxiety of waiting for this report seems to have made the Marchesa all but physically ill. After describing the magnificant and voluptuous decor of her chambers, Radcliffe turns to a description of the Villainess herself:

> The Marchesa reclined on a sofa before an open lattice; her eyes were fixed upon the prospect without, but her attention was wholly occupied by the visions that evil passions painted to her imagination. On her still beautiful features was the languor of discontent and indisposition; and, though her manners, like her dress, displayed the elegant negligence of the graces, they concealed the movements of a careful, and even a tortured heart. On perceiving Schedoni, a faint smile lightened upon her countenance, and she held forth her hand to him; at the touch of which he shuddered (p. 292).

Schedoni and the Marchesa then exchange a series of flattering amenities, which is followed by an embarrassed silence as "neither of the parties seemed to have sufficient courage to introduce the subjects that engaged their thoughts" (p. 292). Schedoni is desperately attempting to hide his emotions and to think of a graceful and plausible way to confess that he has not consummated their designs after all. And in perhaps the clearest terms that she ever uses, Radcliffe describes the implicitly sexual nature of the Marchesa's intimate involvement with this man and their plot to commit murder:

> Had Schedoni been less occupied by his own feelings, he might have perceived the extreme agitation of the Marchesa, the tremor of her nerves, the faint flush that crossed her cheek, the wanness that succeeded, the languid movement of her eyes, and the laborious sighs that interrupted her breathing, while she wished, yet dared not ask, whether Ellena was no more, and averted her regards from him, whom she almost believed to be a murderer (pp. 292-93).

Clearly, then, the Marchesa's reaction to the presence of Schedoni is very similar to that of a coy and beautiful woman longing yet dreading to receive her lover to her bed.

By drawing a parallel between two kinds, or perhaps two sources, of guilt--one based in the illicit sexual affair between Ambrosio and Matilda, and the other located

in a conspiracy to commit murder--Radcliffe has delineated one level of meaning. A second level of meaning is established by the association between two kinds of obscenity, for the depravity which pervades the image of a monk copulating in his cell with a woman who has been linked to the Madonna is rivaled by that in the image of a Confessor and his Penitent plotting in the House of God to murder an innocent woman.[14] With these two images in mind, we can understand the Marchesa's motivation, or the basis of her desire to have Ellena murdered, in greater detail. As we have seen, her initial and practical motive of wishing to keep Ellena from becoming Vivaldi's wife tends to get lost in her exciting maneuvers with Schedoni. But given the circumstances surrounding her rendezvous with the Confessor in the Church of San Nicolo, it seems that the Marchesa is feeling still other attractions and even more perverse desires. It seems, in general, that she is experiencing an almost irresistible temptation to become involved in the performance of that which is absolutely forbidden. Specifically, she seems to derive a demented form of excitement from the thought of exercising absolute power--the power of life and death--over another person. And to plot all of this in the very presence of God, and

at the same time that a Mass for the Dead is being celebrated, provides a union of fascination and terror, of attraction and perversion that is so strong that the Marchesa can scarcely endure it. With its great complexity of passion and neurosis, the relationship between Schedoni and the Marchesa is quite possibly Radcliffe's most subtle and successful creation. And it is undoubtedly the best example of her technique of implication and indirection, and of her practice of veiling deep-seated corruption with the semblance of reason and decorum.

Another crucial relationship, and one which is equally subtle if not quite so complex, is that between the villain and the heroine, between Schedoni and Ellena. But before Ellena ever encounters Schedoni in person, she is imprisoned at his instigation in an isolated convent high up in the mountains. The abbess of this community, an acquaintance of the Marchesa, at first gives Ellena a choice between marrying a man who will be chosen for her, or simply becoming a nun. But Ellena steadfastly refuses both alternatives, and when she complains publicly that she is being held against her will, the abbess threatens her with close confinement, which seems, in this case, to imply certain death.

On the whole, Ellena is somewhat more spirited and sensible than most of her fictional sisters, but one characteristic that she shares with them is an overriding concern for propriety and social appearances. Therefore, even though she faces imprisonment, torture, and possibly death, she hesitates to leave the convent with Vivaldi, who has arranged for her escape, for to do so would be to imply connections and commitments that she wishes to avoid. Increasing dangers, however, and Vivaldi's repeated assurances that he will not press her on the question of marriage, convince her to quit the convent while escape is still possible. But predictably, they are scarcely beyond the convent gates when Vivaldi urges Ellena to permit him to lead her to "the first altar" where they can be married (p. 144). Ellena refuses even to consider such a plan, but over the next several days, Vivaldi continues to plead with her to become his wife (pp. 150 and 179). In a sense, this insistence, which Ellena considers highly indelicate, causes her more pain than do the persecutions of her admitted enemies, because she now feels harassed and even betrayed by the man who says that he loves her. After several arguments on the subject, however, Ellena finally relents and agrees to wed Vivaldi with no further delay. But she has

tears in her eyes when she announces this decision, and she even says that marrying at this time will injure her pride and cause her to feel degraded. With typical impetuosity, Vivaldi attributes her tears to reluctance, and complains heatedly that her "love is feeble," and that her "whole heart" is no longer his (p. 182). From this exchange, it seems that a large part of their conflict stems from Vivaldi's demands for an absolute and uncompromising love: Ellena is simply not certain that she can love so completely, and, in any case, she is somewhat frightened by the finality of the decision to try. Vivaldi's most persuasive argument is that not until they are married will Ellena be safe from further plotting. This contention completes the ironic set of the son, who innocently assumes that marriage offers certain protection, and the mother, who views the report that Vivaldi is indeed married as an absolute demand that his wife be murdered. "Oh, wretched, wretched mother!" says the Marchesa, "to what has the folly of a son reduced thee!" (p. 177).

Adopting a technique that is used frequently in the Gothic romance, Radcliffe shows that this secret marriage which has not been sanctioned by the groom's parents is indeed ill-advised by having Vivaldi and Ellena

arrested by supposed officers of the Holy Inquisition just as they are about to exchange their vows. Vivaldi fights valiantly to protect Ellena, but he is severely wounded and finally overcome by loss of blood. The lovers are then taken away in separate carriages, and they are kept apart from this point until very near the end of the novel, as Radcliffe deals first with Ellena's encounter with Schedoni, and then with Vivaldi's experiences as a prisoner of the Inquisition.

The traumatic events with which Ellena is faced as Schedoni's captive are similar in some respects to Emily's trials at the Castle of Udolpho. Although Ellena quickly perceives that her kidnappers are not really official agents, she can only speculate that they are minions of the Marchesa, and she has no idea of where they are taking her or of what they plan to do with her. At a "lonely dwelling, which stood so near the margin of the sea, as almost to be washed by the waves," her journey comes to an end, and she is received by a man called Spalatro, who is marked by the "gaunt ferocity of famine," and the combined effects of "villainy and suffering" (p. 210). Although her surroundings are forbidding and her anxiety great, Ellena suffers no direct violence through the first night. In the

morning, she is wise enough to suspect that her breakfast may have been poisoned, which indeed it has, and her careful abstinence allows her to live through the first day. Toward evening, Spalatro, who is surprised to find her still living, lets Ellena out of her locked chamber, and invites her to walk on the beach until her supper is ready.

The description of Ellena's walk by the sea, and of her first face-to-face meeting with Schedoni, is skillfully arranged and very impressive in its effect. Behind Ellena is the ruinous and dismal mansion that is her prison; before her some distance down the beach is a rude hamlet that represents escape and security. On one side, the waves are pounding the shore, night is falling all around, and a thunderstorm is gathering in the heavens above. Observing that Spalatro is not in sight, Ellena has turned her steps toward the hamlet when she notices a monk, a "sacred protector," approaching in her direction with a slow and thoughtful stride. Her heart leaps with joy, and she fully expects to be able to enlist his aid. But so stark and rough is the monk's appearance that Ellena remains silent as they pass, and then quickens her pace toward the village. The monk, however, has turned around and soon overtakes her again, but "still Ellena could not

summon courage enough to attempt engaging his compassion" (p. 221). Monk and maiden pass and repass several additional times, and with each encounter, Ellena becomes increasingly agitated and ever more terrified, "though she knew him not for her persecutor" (p. 221). Eventually, the monk pauses next to Ellena and subjects her to a series of obscure questions: "'Whither go you?' 'Who, and what is it that you fear?' 'Poor insect! who would crush thee?'" (pp. 221-22). Then as he is leading her back to the decayed mansion, the monk finally refers directly to the Marchesa, and Ellena knows that she can expect no succor from him.

Overcome by horror at the realization that there is no hope, Ellena faints to the sand at the monk's feet. And here, while Ellena lies unconscious on the beach, Schedoni reveals a hint of the conflicting passions that mark him as a hero-villain:

> As he gazed upon her helpless and faded form, he became agitated. He quitted it, and traversed the beach in short turns, and with hasty steps; came back again, and bent over it--his heart seemed sensible to some touch of pity. At one moment, he stepped towards the sea, and taking water in the hollows of his hands, threw it upon her face; at another, seeming to regret that he had done so, he would stamp with sudden fury upon the shore, and walk abruptly to a distance (p. 223).

Confirming his resolve, Schedoni thinks of using his dagger, but he fears that traces of blood on the sand may give evidence of his crime. He then considers carrying her into the waves so that she will drown and leave no clues. But just as he is about to lift her in his arms, Ellena revives, and her shrieks subdue his courage once again.

At this point, Radcliffe interrupts the action of her narrative briefly to work on the humanizing process that will allow Schedoni to be understood as a person as well as a villain. Although the exact nature of his previous crime is not yet revealed, we are told that the Confessor, whose title had formerly been Count di Marinella, was the younger son of an old family. His love of ostentation had led him to exhaust his rather small inheritance, and pride had then urged him to leave the area where he was known. He next emerges as a monk in the convent of Spirito Santo, and his determination to rise to a position of power in the Church was revealed by his strict observance of the rules of his order, and by his unequalled reputation for self-denial and discipline. But while his superiors professed to admire his dedication, it soon became apparent that they had no intention of promoting him to a substantial office. Perceiving the necessity of

seeking advancement "by other avenues," Schedoni nurtured the confidence of the Marchesa di Vivaldi, and he must now murder Ellena as the price of preferment (pp. 225-27).

With his characteristic caution, Schedoni would rather that his mercenary perform the deed itself, but Spalatro refuses, partly because he has lost his nerve, and partly because he wants more money. In the dispute that follows, each attempts to maneuver the other into committing the murder, until Schedoni, exasperated at his hireling's cowardice and insubordination, moves soundlessly up the stairs, dagger in hand. With much irresolution, he approaches the mattress where Ellena, exhausted by the trauma of the past days, has fallen into a troubled sleep. But just as he is about to plunge his poniard into her breast, he pauses to bare her bosom because he fears that her dress "would interrupt the blow" (p. 234).[15] Suddenly, Schedoni draws back in astonishment, for in his preparations to murder Ellena, he has chanced to discover that she is wearing a miniature which bears a likeness which is his own. Forgetting the lateness of the hour and the peculiar appearance of his presence in her room, he calls loudly on Ellena to awake. He demands to know whose portrait she is wearing, and her innocent answers lead him to

believe that he has been plotting for so long to murder a woman who is his own daughter. This discovery, coming on top of the tension that he has obviously experienced through the evening, is too much for Schedoni, and the humanity which Radcliffe had begun to develop bursts forth in a great flow of emotion:

> Ellena's terror began to yield to astonishment, and this emotion encreased, when, Schedoni approaching her, she perceived tears swell in his eyes, which were fixt on her's, and his countenance soften from the wild disorder that had marked it. Still he could not speak. At length he yielded to the fulness of his heart, and Schedoni, the stern Schedoni, wept and sighed! He seated himself on the mattress beside Ellena, took her hand, which she affrighted attempted to withdraw, and when he could command his voice, said, "Unhappy child! ——behold your more unhappy father! (p. 236).

While his force of character, his subtle machinations, and his great energy of mind and body may have won Schedoni our interest and fascination, only this show of sincere emotion and of the weakness that is human gains him a measure of sympathy. And the message which Radcliffe seemingly intended this episode to carry is that no mortal, no matter how wicked he may seem, is completely evil. (Imagine the implications if Radcliffe had had Schedoni recognize Ellena as his daughter, and murder her nevertheless!)

Ellena is quite naturally amazed almost beyond belief by Schedoni's sudden revelation. Although she does not know the full story of her family background, she had always been taught to believe that both her parents had died long ago. Thus, to discover a father under such strange circumstances, and in the person of the very monk whom she has found so terrifying, causes a surge on conflicting emotions including disbelief, surprise, relief, and dread. Schedoni's heartfelt insistence, however, and his knowledge of many specific and intimate details of her family, soon convince her that he is indeed what he claims to be. At this point, Radcliffe is once again faced with a heroine who has endured many trying and frightening experiences, but who is now emerging into a period of relative peace and safety. In The Mysteries of Udolpho, Emily seems simply to leave her trauma behind in Montoni's castle--she seems to shake off her terror as one would shake away the recollection of a bad dream. And Lewis's Agnes seems to deal with her more brutal tortures in much the same manner. Finally, Ellena also participates in a similar process, but this time, Radcliffe is very clear and deliberate in her description of what is happening as her

heroine attempts to interpret and hopefully resolve the traumas that she has experienced.

The key section of Radcliffe's account of this process reads as follows:

> When Ellena's mind became more tranquil, she noticed again the singularity of Schedoni's visit to her apartment at so sacred an hour. . . . The suspicions, however, which she had formerly admitted, respecting his designs, were now impatiently rejected, for she was less anxious to discover truth, than to release herself from horrible suppositions; and she willingly believed that Schedoni, having misunderstood her character, had only designed to assist in removing her beyond the reach of Vivaldi. The ingenuity of hope suggested also . . . that in the first impatience of parental anxiety, he had disregarded the hour, and come, though at midnight, to her apartment to ascertain the truth.
>
> While she soothed herself with this explanation . . . she perceived on the floor the point of a dagger peeping from beneath the curtains! Emotions almost too horrible to be sustained, followed this discovery; she took the instrument, and gazed upon it aghast and trembling, for a suspicion of the real motive of Schedoni's visit glanced upon her mind. But it was only for a moment; such a supposition was too terrible to be willingly endured. . . . (p. 242).

To clarify what is happening, we can place emphasis on such phrases as "release herself," "willingly believed," "ingenuity of hope," "too horrible to be sustained," and "too terrible to be willingly endured." Through the use of these words, Radcliffe shows clearly that Ellena realizes

the truth of the situation, but that she chooses, seemingly with a conscious act of will, to deny this knowledge, to blot the awareness that Schedoni is a would-be murderer from her mind. Thus, when Ellena finally marries Vivaldi, she can live happily ever after, not because she is unrealistically insensitive to the effects of traumatic experiences, but because she has participated in a process of psychological repression. While this may not necessarily be good for Ellena's mental health, it does show that Radcliffe is now fully aware of a problem that is apparent in her earlier works, and that she has given her heroine a plausible and meaningful way of dealing with it.

"The major criticism of Schedoni," reports E. B. Murray, "is that his character disintegrates after he is shocked into believing that he had just about killed his own daughter."[16] While it is true that Schedoni's tears signal the end to his reign of terror over Ellena, he clearly recovers much of his former energy and command in other areas. Indeed, with respect to malignant villainy and perverse attraction, he never really attains his greatest strength or achieves his most horrifying triumph until he is on the verge of death. Unlike Ellena, Vivaldi really has become a prisoner of the Inquisition as the

result of Schedoni's charge that he committed sacrilege by subjecting a monk, engaged in the act of penance, to a stream of violent and heretical insults. After Schedoni is convinced that Ellena is his daughter, however, he sees Vivaldi as his son-in-law, and thus as the way to power and wealth that he has sought for so long. But when he goes to Rome to try to extricate Vivaldi, he finds that the tribunal wishes to question him not about his charge of heresy, but about his own former crimes. Through the cumbersome machinery of the Inquisition, which is set in motion by the vindictive Nicola, we eventually learn of the murder of Ellena's real father, and of the persecutions to which her mother was subjected.

Now that all of Schedoni's secrets are out and he has been condemned to death, we may expect him to be defeated and powerless. But instead, he remains interesting and exceptionally dynamic to his dying moment. His reaction to Vivaldi, for instance, is curiously mixed; on one hand, he tells him with a "smile of triumph and derision" that he is Ellena's father (p. 365), and he later taunts Vivaldi further by bragging of how easy it had been to play on his "prevailing weakness," on his "susceptibility . . . to superstition" (p. 397). But on the other hand, he also

makes "an ample confession of the arts that he had practiced against Vivaldi," and declares that "the charge of heresy, which he had brought against him, was false and malicious" (p. 394). At the same time, however, Schedoni's hatred of Nicola never moderates in the least, and it soon becomes apparent that, for his final triumph, he has contrived to poison not only himself, but his betrayer as well. As Nicola slumps to the floor, Radcliffe's villain becomes almost inhuman: "Schedoni uttered a sound so strange and horrible, so convulsed, yet so loud, so exulting, yet so unlike any human voice, that every person in the chamber, except those who were assisting Nicola, struck with irresistible terror, endeavoured to make their way out of it" (p. 402). With this exultation at having destroyed his destroyer, the Confessor's own life slips away, and "presently a livid corse was all that remained of the once terrible Schedoni!" (p. 404).

Vivaldi's encounters with Schedoni in the dungeons of the Inquisition are very complicated (and perhaps needlessly so), but the relationship between the hero and the villain is neither as subtle nor as interesting as the interactions between Schedoni and the Marchesa, and Schedoni and Ellena. The episode concerning the Inquisition is

intellectually important, however, for it brings a degree of coherence to Radcliffe's philosophical reply to Lewis's criticism of her attitude toward man and evil. At the heart of her position is, as Frederick Garber has put it, a belief "that an image of order had to be held onto, that not all men were nice but that God's good points took care of unpleasantness, however fascinating it was in its strangeness, however attractive in its strength."[17] The contention that there are both good and evil in the world, and that the good generally makes up for the evil, is neither particularly profound nor original. But the manner in which Radcliffe develops this view and integrates it into The Italian is indeed interesting and worthwhile.

As a gentlemanly representative of the Enlightment, Vivaldi is appalled by the cruelty and suffering that he finds in the operation of the Inquisition. While he is no doubt familiar with personal malice such as that manifested by Schedoni and Nicola, his firsthand contact with institutionalized evil seems to come upon him as an unanticipated and very distressing revelation: "That any human being should willing afflict a fellow being who had never injured, or even offended him," reports Radcliffe; "that, unswayed by passion, he should deliberately become the

means of torturing him, appeared to Vivaldi nearly incredible!" (pp. 311-12). And when he considers that the inquisitors probably look upon their position as the "summit of their ambition," he is even more disturbed. But Vivaldi's horror at the methodical cruelty of the inquisitorial process is eventually mitigated to a degree by his observation of a vicar-general who demonstrates through his handling of Schedoni's trial that he is fair and disinterested: "Tears fell from Vivaldi's cheek while he gazed upon this just judge, whose candour, had it been exercised in his cause, could not have excited more powerful sensations of esteem and admiration" (p. 352). The goodness of this man, however, is quickly undercut by the narrow and prejudiced views of another official who is more interested in appearances and condemnation than in justice. Good inquisitor and bad thus form a set as one respects the power and responsibility of his office, while the other sees his position as an opportunity to display self-importance and to dominate others by causing them to suffer.

Through this pairing of admirable and reprehensible characters, Radcliffe reminds her reader again and again that there is good in the world as well as evil, and provides a balance to the Gothic view which she may well have

felt to be lacking in The Monk. The abbess who persecutes Ellena, for instance, is very similar to the domina who tortures Agnes. But in The Italian, Radcliffe is careful to include a good abbess, a lady who is "a shining example to governesses of religious houses" (p. 299). Father Ansaldo, a good confessor, is juxtaposed to Schedoni, and Olivia, as a good woman, is opposed to the Marchesa. To a lesser extent, the Marchese can be seen as a good parent, or at least as an honest and just father, thus balancing to a degree the evil and duplicity of his wife. And when Olivia realizes that Ellena believes that Schedoni is her father, she replies by referring to sets of two fathers, two brothers, and two husbands: "The original of this portrait is not the Count di Bruno, my dear lord, nor your parent, but his brother, the cruel husband——" (p. 380). This quiet but repeated insistence on the redemption of evil through goodness constitutes Radcliffe's philosophical reply to the darkness and almost unbroken pessimism of Lewis's Gothic view. Her reply as a writer who is an artist is embodied, as we have seen, in the relationship between Schedoni and the Marchesa. Through her descriptions of their encounters, Radcliffe shows that she is able and willing to look just as deeply into the recesses of the

evil mind as did Lewis. Indeed, in a sense, her view of depravity is even more searching, because all the evil in The Italian is ultimately human in its source--all the passion and perversion can be traced nowhere but to this world.[18]

Although The Italian ends happily for Ellena and Vivaldi, as does The Mysteries of Udolpho for Emily and Valancourt, the evil that Ellena encounters as she learns of her identity is stronger and more immediate than any that Emily comes up against. The victim whom Ellena eventually uncovers, for instance, is not an aunt, unknown to her and long since dead, but a mother who is still living, and still haunted by the memory of a murdered husband and an abused honor. And while Emily's troubles never begin until she is almost a woman, Ellena is forced to grow up in obscurity and relative oppression, and with no knowledge of her loving mother or her dead father. Emily endures a period of great psychological trauma, but it has a definite end; Ellena, however, must live with the awareness somewhere in the back of her mind that she has nearly been murdered, and that the man who brought this terrible suffering to her and to her family was her father's brother. The effect in The Italian, then, is to tighten the circle of evil around

the heroine, to bring both oppression and oppressor closer to home until both have invaded her very family.

As the evil in The Italian is brought ever closer to the heroine, so too is the Gothic world brought closer to the England of Radcliffe's day. Conventionally, the Gothic romance had been set vaguely in a period long ago and a place far away, but The Italian has a very specific time and setting.[19] "It was in the church of San Lorenzo at Naples, in the year 1758," reads Radcliffe's opening sentence, "that Vincentio di Vivaldi first saw Ellena Rosalba" (p. 5). Dates and time references throughout the novel have been carefully calculated to accord with each other, and geographical references are clearly to modern Italy. And not only is Radcliffe specific in her setting, but she has brought the time of her narrative to within a generation of her own day, and has set the action in a European country with which her readers were likely to be familiar. The brief preface which provides a frame for the story called The Italian also moves the narrative closer to home by telling of an Englishman who happens to notice a strange, lurking figure while touring the Santa Maria del Pianto in 1764. This man, the Englishman is informed, is an assassin who has taken refuge from the law

in the sacred haven of the Church. The reference to this assassin is interesting from another point of view, for his mere presence implies another Schedoni--his story indicates that while one villain may be dead, other murderers are still at large in the world. And Radcliffe also shows her detached awareness of stereotyped views of Italy when her guide responds to the Englishman's disbelief that a murderer would be sheltered by the Church by replying, "if we were to shew no mercy to such unfortunate persons, assassinations are so frequent, that our cities would be half depopulated" (p. 3).

Radcliffe returns to this objectivity in the last chapter of The Italian when she includes observations which cut completely through the traditional pretense of the Gothic romance: The beautiful home where Ellena and Vivaldi choose to live after their marriage, says Radcliffe, "was, in truth, a scene in fairy-land." And somewhat later, she adds that "the style of the gardens . . . was that of England, and of the present day, rather than of Italy" (p. 412). These comments represent a dropping of the mask for an instant because Radcliffe seems to be saying that while the divine happiness in which she is allowing her characters to exist may be found in a fairy-land, it

is not easily or frequently found in the world as we know it. And further, she seems to imply that her tale is not about Italy after all, but about her own country and her own day. Her central purpose, then, has been not to tell a story of Machiavellian Italians and superstitious Catholics, but to penetrate to the good and evil of the human heart and mind, to warn against the corruption and irrationality to which passion and perverse desires can lead us, to expose the cruel hypocricy of false pride, and, most of all, to assert again the simple belief that with a little good luck and a great deal more patient endurance, the virtuous of this world may hope finally to rise above the evil, and thereby to lead reasonably tranquil and contented lives.

CONCLUSION

Ann Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho and The Italian have long been associated with Matthew G. Lewis's The Monk. Of the many who tried, Lewis was the only author to come even close to equaling Radcliffe's popularity as a Gothic novelist, and there are certain similarities in the characters and situations of their romances. But the standard critical view which speaks of borrowings and bowdlerizing is both vague and misleading. While The Mysteries of Udolpho, The Monk, and The Italian do share a special relationship, it is characterized not by influence and imitation, but by challenge and response.

Radcliffe's steady progress from The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne, to A Sicilian Romance, to The Romance of the Forest reveals a perceptive and self-critical struggle to eliminate those elements which were awkward and unsuccessful, and to concentrate ever more carefully on those characters, situations, and themes which were most interesting and meaningful. Her fourth novel, The Mysteries

of Udolpho, represents the culmination of five years of writing. Radcliffe's greatest achievement in Udolpho is the representation of Emily's almost solipsistic view of the world around her, of the state of mind which allows for her intricate and nearly subliminal relationship with Montoni.

Lewis does indeed speak of having been induced by Radcliffe's novel to go on with hiw own romance, but to a great extent, The Monk is a unique creation. Thus, it is more accurate to say that Lewis was inspired, and not influenced, by The Mysteries of Udolpho. Looking beyond the heroine, Lewis was able to see a potential in Montoni, and to go on to transform Radcliffe's shadowy villain into his own bold and fascinating hero-villain. The ambiguous characters, the overwhelming passions, the grim brutality, and the subtle but pervasive pessimism which result from his revisions stand as implicit criticisms of The Mysteries of Udolpho. Through his romance, Lewis seems to say that while Udolpho is interesting, its view of good and evil is too clear-cut, and its action is brought to an unjustifiably optimistic conclusion. In effect, The Monk challenges Radcliffe to reconsider the force of passion and perversion,

and to examine again the possible, and perhaps even likely, course of evil in this world.

In The Italian, Radcliffe attempts to fashion a response to this challenge in Lewis's own terms. She concedes that good and evil may be embodied ambiguously in a single person. She allows that admirable characteristics can be corrupted to perverse ends, and she grants that the innocent of this world may indeed suffer both physical and psychological tortures. But she continues to insist that even the cruelest of villains retains a touch of goodness and humanity. And she refuses to surrender her essential optimism, her belief that there is a reasonable chance (though not an absolute assurance) that a good person can endure the tribulation of evil days, and emerge into a life of relative happiness and tranquility.

Radcliffe and Lewis, of course, were debating the unanswerable, and later writers have continued the argument through numerous novels which draw on the energy of the Gothic impulse. Fortunately, there is no need to choose sides, for both authors have embodied their visions in fictions which remain vital and compelling to this day. Thus, I have made no attempt to endorse either Ann Radcliffe or Matthew G. Lewis as the better or more important writer.

Rather, my goals have been to clarify the complex relationship which binds their novels together, and to advance readings of their novels which may help to establish the importance of the Gothic romance to the development of the novel through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

NOTES

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

[1]For a summary of the contemporary estimates of Radcliffe's novels, see Clara Frances McIntyre, Ann Radcliffe in Relation to her Time, Yale Studies in English, 62 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1920), pp. 34-56.

[2]McIntyre, p. 13.

[3]The best modern biography of Lewis is Louis F. Peck's A Life of Matthew G. Lewis (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961). The earliest account of his life is Margaret Baron-Wilson's The Life and Correspondence of M. G. Lewis, 2 vols. (London: Henry Colburn, 1839). Biographical treatments of Ann Radcliffe can be found in Clara McIntyre's Ann Radcliffe in Relation to her Time. Aline Grant's Ann Radcliffe: A Biography (Denver: A. Swallow, 1951), and E. B. Murray's Ann Radcliffe (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1972).

[4]Introduction to The Mysteries of Udolpho, ed. Bonamy Dobrée (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. xii.

[5]The most memorable example of this encounter-in-isolation takes place in Shelley's Frankenstein (1818). As Victor pursues his creature across the frozen wasteland of the Arctic, their struggle becomes titanic, and clearly a representation of man's eternal conflict with his monstrous potentialities.

NOTES

CHAPTER ONE

[1]Ann Radcliffe, The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne: A Highland Story, advisory ed. D. P. Varma, Gothic Novels Series (1821; rpt. New York: Arno Press, 1972), p. 1. All future quotations from The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne are taken from this edition, which is a reprint of the 1821 edition published in London by J. Jones. Page numbers will be cited parenthetically in the text.

[2]The Gothic Flame (1957; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1966), p. 74.

[3]Preface to the second edition of The Castle of Otranto, ed. W. S. Lewis (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 7.

[4]E. B. Murray, Ann Radcliffe (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1972), p. 63.

[5]Although the specific publication dates of Radcliffe's first novels are not available, The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne was first mentioned in the Critical Review for September, 1789, and A Sicilian Romance was first noticed in the Monthly Review for September, 1790. See Clara Frances McIntyre, Ann Radcliffe in Relation to her Time, Yale Studies in English, 62 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1920), pp. 34-35.

[6]D. P. Varma, Introduction to A Sicilian Romance, advisory ed. D. P. Varma, Gothic Novels Series (1821; rpt. New York: Arno Press, 1972), p. xxi.

[7]Ann Radcliffe, A Sicilian Romance, advisory ed. D. P. Varma, Gothic Novels Series (1821; rpt. 2 vols. in 1, New York: Arno Press, 1972), 1, 1 and 5. Future quotations from A Sicilian Romance are from this Arno Press edition, which is also a reprint of the 1821 edition. Volume and page numbers will be cited in the text.

[8]Obituary notice of Sophia Lee in the Annual Register, 66 (1824), 217. Cited by McIntyre, p. 11.

[9]J. M. S. Tompkins writes on p. 259 of The Popular Novel in England (1932; rpt. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967) that "in The Romance of the Forest . . . Mrs. Radcliffe reached her full strength." D. P. Varma says that this novel displays "the first dawn of her mature powers" (Gothic Flame, p. 91). And in his introduction to Three Eighteenth Century Romances (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931), Harrison R. Steeves praises The Romance of the Forest as "probably as clear, natural, and intrinsically entertaining a piece as anything Mrs. Radcliffe wrote" (p. xiv).

[10]Ann Radcliffe, The Romance of the Forest, in The British Novelists, with an Essay and Prefaces, Biographical and Critical, by Mrs. Barbauld (London: R. and A. Taylor, 1820), 43, 6. All future quotations from The Romance of the Forest are taken from Mrs. Barbauld's edition; volume and page numbers will hereafter be cited parenthetically in the text.

[11]E. B. Murray points out the relevance of Richardson's Clarissa (as well as Milton's Comus) to this section of The Romance of the Forest (p. 105). While there are broad similarities between Montalt and Lovelace, Radcliffe's villain seems to be a true voluptuary, and there is no indication that he sees the seduction of Adeline as a way of gaining revenge on the entire female sex.

NOTES

CHAPTER TWO

[1]Bonamy Dobrée remarks that The Italian "is often regarded as her best book, though not the one best liked," and cites Coleridge's preference for Udolpho as characteristic. Introduction to The Mysteries of Udolpho, ed. Bonamy Dobrée (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. xiv.

[2]In the opening episode of The Castle of Otranto, for instance, Conrad is crushed beneath a giant helmet, and The Romance of the Forest begins with Adeline being thrust without explanation into the care of the La Mottes.

[3]Ann Radcliffe, The Mysteries of Udolpho, ed. Bonamy Dobrée (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 5. All quotations from The Mysteries of Udolpho are taken from this edition; page numbers will be given parenthetically in the text.

[4]Rictor Norton gives an interesting summary of the studies on this subject, "Aesthetic Gothic Horror," Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature, 21 (1972), 31-40.

[5]J. M. S. Tompkins presents this position in her discussion of Udolpho, The Popular Novel in England (1932; rpt. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), pp. 253-54.

[6]This reading of Emily's character is very similar to the interpretation of The Turn of the Screw which claims first that the young governess is in love with her employer, and second, that she "is a neurotic case of sex repression, and the ghosts are not real ghosts at all but merely hallucinations of the governess," as Edmund Wilson phrased it in "The Ambiguity of Henry James," Hound and Horn, 7 (1934), 393. Wilson's remarks are cited by Wayne Booth, who goes on to argue against the hallucination theory while supporting a straight or literal reading of the story, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), pp. 311-16.

[7]Robert Kiely, The Romantic Novel in England (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 72.

[8]Samuel Richardson, Clarissa, or the History of a Young Lady, abridged and edited by George Sherburn (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962), p. 305.

[9]Robert Kiely argues that Emily is "unravishable" because "the reader is never for a moment allowed to believe that [she] could be raped" (p. 72). But this argument is surely beside the point, for Emily is not the reader of a novel, but the heroine of a fiction. And in that role, she clearly sees herself as eminently ravishable; moreover, none of the male antagonists seems to have any doubt that she can indeed be raped. One may also argue with Kiely's choice of words, for while the reader probably does not expect that Emily will be ravished, he is certainly led to believe that she could be violated.

[10]Radcliffe takes her quotation from Macbeth, V.iii.38. In this passage, the Doctor assures Macbeth that his wife's illness is rooted not in her body, but in her mind.

[11]Edith Birkhead, The Tale of Terror (1921; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1963), p. 48.

[12]Frederick Garber has made a similar point by asserting that Mrs. Radcliffe instigated "the recognition that the horrors had moved from that which is not like us, and is therefore conveniently externalized, to the warfares within someone whose likeness to us holds more horror than his difference. For horrors to come out of something strange into the world is one thing, but for them to come out of persons like oursleves is quite another," "Meaning and Mode in Gothic Fiction," in Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture: Racism in the Eighteenth Century, ed. Harold E. Pagliaro, Vol. 3 (Cleveland: Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1973), p. 162.

[13]In an interesting, though finally wrongheaded article, Nelson C. Smith has suggested that Radcliffe's real intention in The Mysteries of Udolpho is to satirize her heroine, and to launch an "attack on the cult of sensibility" as represented by Emily, "Sense, Sensibility and Ann Radcliffe," Studies in English Literature, 13 (1973), 577-90. "Far from being an advocate of sensibility," says Smith, "[Radcliffe], like Jane Austen two decades later, shows its weaknesses and flaws" (p. 577). Yet through all her troubles with Valancourt, Radcliffe never once suggests or implies that Emily is acting selfishly, immaturely, or unwisely. To the contrary, she leaves the clear impression that Emily has no other choice under the circumstances but to reject her dissipated lover. The obvious alternative, however, had been presented in Tom Jones when Sophia, who has firsthand knowledge of Tom's failings, is nonetheless willing from the beginning to give him a second chance if he can pass the test of time.

[14]The extent of Radcliffe's interest in this theory of proper sentiment is demonstrated by the long and finely argued defense which she has St. Aubert pronounce almost with his dying breath. While his remarks show that Radcliffe was put off by artificial, excessive, and affected sentiment, they also show that she continued to believe that fine and proper feelings are important to a happy life.

[15]See Kiely, p. 75.

NOTES

CHAPTER THREE

[1]Louis Peck, A Life of Matthew G. Lewis (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), p. 208. Peck notes that Lewis's "ever have" has been changed to "has ever" in the Life, and that this passage has often been quoted in its altered form. See Margaret Baron-Wilson (Mrs. Cornwall Baron-Wilson), The Life and Correspondence of M. G. Lewis (London: Henry Colburn, 1839), 1, 123.

[2]Robert Kiely, The Romantic Novel in England (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 68.

[3]As Peck points out, the passage to which Lewis is referring actually occurs in Vol. 2, ch. 3, which is misnumbered as ch. 17 in the first edition.

[4]Matthew G. Lewis, The Monk: A Romance, ed. Howard Anderson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 90. All future quotations from The Monk will be taken from this edition; page numbers will be cited in the text.

[5]In complaining that "the deterioration in Ambrosio's character . . . is too swift," Edith Brikhead seems to consider chronological time only, and to underrate the extent to which Raymond's long tale extends the narrative time, The Tale of Terror (1921; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1963), p. 67.

[6]Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Review of The Monk: A Romance, in Critical Review, or Annals of Literature, 19 (1796), 194.

[7]Tale of Terror, pp. 63-70.

[8]Montague Summers has advanced this explanation in "Byron's 'Lovely Rosa,'" in Essays in Petto (London: [1928]), pp. 66-67.

[9]Looking at Peck's exact phrasing, I might also point out that having decided upon Matilda's "evil nature" is not necessarily the same as having intended her as a spirit from Hell.

[10]In the last act of Marlowe's Doctor Faustus, Mephostophilis replies to the charge that he tricked or bewitched Faustus by saying:

> I do confess it Faustus, and rejoice.
> 'Twas I, that when thou wert i' the way
> To heaven dammed up they passage. When
> Thou took'st the book to view the
> Scriptures, then I turned the leaves
> and led thine eye. (V.ii.99-103)

While these claims are certainly true in a figurative sense, if they are accepted as the literal truth--if we believe that Faustus was controlled mind and body from beginning to end--then he can no longer be seen as choosing of his own free will to sell his soul, and the justice of his damnation would become very questionable. Ambrosio's situation is open to a similar line of analysis, for it is important that he be primarily responsible for his crimes. In other words, it is essential to the meaning of both Doctor Faustus and The Monk that the hero be seen as a man with a free will, and not as a puppet who is jerked about by uncontrollable daemons.

[11]Nelson's comment appears in "Night Thoughts on the Gothic Novel," Yale Review, 52 (1963), 241.

[12]Whether it was intentional or not, Lewis frequently calls attention to the roles that his characters play through his habit of enumerating them, and incidentally, through his use of upper case letters: "Let us forget the distinction of sex," says Ambrosio to Matilda, "and only consider each other as Brother and Friend" (p. 89). And a little later, Lewis

adds, "He saw before him a young and beautiful Woman, the preserver of his life, the Adorer of his person" (p. 90). After Ambrosio has fulfilled his desire, Matilda is called, "Dangerous Woman" (p. 223), "the fair Wanton," and "the Syren" (P. 224). And when he remembers the poison that is still circulating in her veins, we are told that "the voluptuous Monk trembled less for his Preserver's life than his Concubine's" (p. 225).

[13]The final irony of this situation is that Lewis himself was to die on May 16, 1818 from yellow fever which he contracted while in Jamaica to visit his plantations (see Peck, pp. 171-75).

[14]Thomas Medwin, Journal of the Conversations of Lord Byron: Noted During a Residence with his Lordship at Pisa (New York: Wilder and Campbell, 1824), p. 130. Also recorded in Medwin's Conversations of Lord Byron, ed. Ernest J. Lovell, Jr. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 188.

[15]Peter Brooks, "Virtue and Terror: The Monk," ELH, 40 (1973), 251.

[16]Ernest A. Baker has written that Don Raymond's story is "tied into the plot rather than united with it, and has very little bearing on the main theme," The History of the English Novel (London: H. F. & G. Witherby, 1934), 5, 211. And Edith Birkhead has asserted that "in The Monk there are two distinct stories, loosely related . . . . Lewis forges a link between the two stories," she continued, "but the connection is superficial, and the novel suffers through the distraction of our interest," The Tale of Terror, pp. 66-67.

[17]Birkhead, p. 67.

[18]The Gothic Flame (1957; rpt, New York: Russell and Russell, 1966), p. 142.

[19]Peter Brooks discusses the psychology of *The Monk* at length in his article cited above.

NOTES

CHAPTER FOUR

[1]E. B. Murray says flatly that Radcliffe was the most popular novelist of the eighteenth century: "From the appearance of The Romance of the Forest (1791) through the critical appraisal of The Italian (1797), Mrs. Radcliffe experienced a popularity which no novelist before her--not Henry Fielding, not Samuel Richardson, not Tobias Smollett, nor Laurence Sterne--had come close to achieving." Ann Radcliffe (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1972), p. 19.

[2]Clara Frances McIntyre, Ann Radcliffe in Relation to her Time, Yale Studies in English, 62 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1920), pp. 14-15.

[3]McIntyre, p. 64.

[4]Ernest A. Baker, The History of the English Novel (London: H. F. & G. Witherby, 1934), 5, 200.

[5]Edith Birkhead, The Tale of Terror (1921; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1963), p. 69.

[6]Murray, p. 19.

[7]This innovation over the earlier novels is reflected even in titles, for The Italian is the first of Radcliffe's novels to draw its name from a character rather than a setting.

[8]McIntyre, p. 65.

[9]This difference in method probably accounts for the common assertion that Radcliffe is proper and refined, while Lewis is crude and tasteless. In actuality, there is almost as much passion and perversion in Radcliffe's Gothic world as in Lewis's. But Radcliffe is careful to impose a layer of civilization between what she says and what she means.

[10]Ann Radcliffe, The Italian, or The Confessional of the Black Penitents, ed. Frederick Garber (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 34. All future quotations from The Italian are from this edition; page numbers will hereafter be cited in the text.

[11]"There are no real parallels to this striking and original creation," says Frederick Garber, who then adds that Schedoni is "the only one of [Radcliffe's] characters who ever really lives" (Introduction to The Italian, p. xiii). And E. B. Murray carries Garber's assessment a step further by maintaining that "Schedoni is the only successful character creation in Mrs. Radcliffe's works" (p. 135).

[12]Garber, Introduction, p. xii.

[13]E. B. Murray calls this "spiritual adultery" (p. 139), but I prefer the term "intellectual adultery" because of the highly abstract and sophistical nature of their exchanges. I would agree, however, that the perversion which Schedoni and the Marchesa share is one of both the mind and the spirit. (Murray's full statement reads, "The powerful and, in its way, natural union of these two proud and malignant souls delineates a kind of spiritual adultery far more profound than the actual lasciviousness ascribed to the Marchioness Mazzini in The Sicilian Romance.")

[14]It is surely significant that this crucial meeting during which Schedoni and the Marchesa determine upon Ellena's murder is the only conference that takes place

not in the Marchesa's chambers, but in a church. It also seems meaningful that Radcliffe drops the titles of Schedoni and Father in this scene, and rather refers to her villain repeatedly as "the Confessor."

[15]The contention that the "lawn" which covers Ellena's breasts would obstruct the course of a razor-sharp dagger seems unfounded. Is this merely a weakness in detail, and one that could easily have been avoided, or does Radcliffe mean to suggest that Schedoni is moved by a sexual impulse to violate his victim's body with his eyes before stabbing her with his dagger.

[16]Murray, p. 138.

[17]Frederick Garber, "Meaning and Mode in Gothic Fiction," in Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture: Racism in the Eighteenth Century, ed. Harold E. Pagliaro, Vol. 3 (Cleveland: Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1973), p. 163.

[18]Garber makes this point in "Meaning and Mode" when he asserts that "Lewis went far, but he still had to end up doing as Beckford did, that is, protecting the human against itself and not against the supernatural. Without Mrs. Radcliffe's decorum or her courage," Garber continues, "Lewis backed off from attributing the full motivation for evil to Ambrosio, and made of Matilda's supple sexuality a supernatural trick from the Devil's workshop to entice the proud monk to Hell" (p. 168).

[19]The practice of ascribing a very vague setting to the Gothic romance begins with The Castle of Otranto. In the "Preface to the First Edition," Horace Walpole sets up the pretense that the narrative which follows was "printed at Naples, in black letter, in the year 1529 . . . . If the story was written near the time when it is supposed to have happened," Walpole continues, "it must have been between 1095, the era of the first crusade, and 1243, the date of the last, or not long afterwards. There is no other circumstance in the work that

can lead us to guess at the period in which the scene is laid" (ed. W. S. Lewis, New York: Oxford University Press, 1964, p. 3). Over the years following this first Gothic romance, there was a clear tendency to indicate place and time more exactly, and to move the action ever closer to the England of the day, both in geography and chronology.

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