Ideology and the First Gothics

by

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INTRODUCTION

> The publication of any work, at this time, in England composed of such rotten materials, is a phenomenon we cannot account for. [1]
>
> -1765 Review of The Castle of Otranto

Thus wrote the reviewers of the first Gothic novel, Horace Walpole's The Castle of Otranto. The so-called "rotten materials" mentioned here are the Gothic paraphernalia--dark castles, secret tunnels, mysterious screams, shadowy figures, and the supernatural--things widely accepted in modern literature, appearing in nearly all fantasy , science fiction, and horror novels. But in 1765 Walpole's work was indeed a phenomenon that is difficult to account for. After all, this was a time of "Enlightenment," a time of confidence in reason, when old dogmas were falling into doubt and a new scientific spirit of experimentation and naturalistic explanation was pervading England. Great technological advancements were being made in travel, farming, industry, and medicine. The English were interested in understanding and controlling nature. Newton and Descartes had revolutionized the fields of physics and mathematics, giving rise to a belief that the entire universe could be studied rationally. Many eighteenth-century laymen studied geology, zoology, botany, and historical geography. Intellectuals such as David Hume and Adam Smith even believed that a science of human behavior was possible. Reason and rationality were the fashion of the eighteenth century.

Consequently, the Gothic novel was ill-received by many, including the reviewers of Critical Review. Walpole's prototype

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1. Critical Review 19 (London, 1765) 51.

speaks a language far removed from reason. It talks of a by-gone time when the dead left their graves and when men's passions ran uncontrolled. The Castle Otranto contains secret doors, bleeding statues, living portraits, and haunting groans. The villain's feelings are uncontained and we see the surfacing of repressed desires, leading to rape, incest, and even murder. Far different than the popular sentimental novels of the mid-eighteenth century, and so contrary to accepted moral and philosophical beliefs of the period, the Gothic genre seemed destined for failure.

Yet The Castle of Otranto was extremely successful. The book went through numerous editions and spawned scores of other Gothic novels. The late eighteenth century, in particular, saw the genre flourish, for between the years 1790 and 1800 we have record of over 150 published Gothics, and there were probably others that have been lost over time.[2]

The Gothic's success, although contradictory to the period's established philosophies, is not inexplicable. While intellectuals and philosophers supported the school of reason, actual eighteenth-century ideology presents us with a different picture. The social and economic changes occurring within eighteenth-century society created specific expectations for men and women that could not fit into the confines of reason. In this thesis, I will discuss several of the ideological factors that contributed to the formation of the Gothic genre, and I will illustrate how the first Gothic novelists used their works to comment on the deficiencies of the period's philosophies of reason and rationality.

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2. Frederick S. Frank, The First Gothics (NY: Garland Pub., 1987) 458-60.

Chapter 1

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1.1 Social and Economic Transition

The latter half of the eighteenth century was a period of extreme social and economic change in England. The country's cottage industry of domestic manufacturing was diminishing as urban areas industrialized, and small family-run farms were being bought up and consolidated by wealthy land owners. As a result of these two capitalistic restructurings, we see a changing perception of the English family and its importance, and a redefinition of the economic and cultural situations of men and women. In this section I will present these changes, for I believe they were important factors in the development of the Gothic genre, and manifested themselves in several ways in these fictions.

1.1.1 The Agrarian Revolution

In the first half of the eighteenth century, open-field villages were the centers of the agricultural industry. Under this system, every home owner or tenant was allotted several strips of land scattered throughout the village's surrounding arable fields. Each family farmed their assigned lots in a

manner that had changed very little since the Middle Ages. Agriculture, however, was prosperous during this time period. The country's population was growing slowly and trade was flourishing. Many towns were increasing in population which created a demand for agricultural products from the neighboring farms. Along with this increased trade and town size came a high demand for textiles, so the wives and children of small farmers and laborers often found additional income carding and spinning wool.[3]

Agriculture was England's most profitable form of production during the eighteenth century, and the center of this industry was the family. Both the husband and wife worked together on the farm--the man did much of the heavy labor while the woman was responsible for cheese and butter making, the care of poultry and pigs, the marketing of products, baking, clothes making, and on smaller farms, much of the actual manual labor.[4] Women had a working partnership with their husbands, and both contributed to the family income.

Towards the middle of the century, this open-field family economy began to give way to larger, high production farms. With the continually increasing town populations, improvements in transportation, and the pressures of war, small family-run farms became too wasteful to meet the country's needs. Small farms were enclosed--bought up and consolidated by the richer landowners. Most of these enclosures were carried out by Private Acts of Parliament,[5] against the will of the majority of small

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3. M. Dorothy George, England in Transition (George Routledge and Sons: 1931) 13-14.
4. Bridget Hill, Eighteenth Century Women, An Anthology (George Allen & Unwin Publishers: 1984) 111.
5. Before 1760, 244 such Acts had been passed, while between 1760 and 1820 there were 4000 enclosures. George, England in Transition 115.

farmers and cottagers.[6] Small holdings were nearly always eliminated under these acts, and the displaced farmers had to either seek new employment in towns or become wage laborers working in the newly enclosed fields owned by agricultural capitalists.

This capitalistic organization of agriculture redefined the roles of men and women in the country. For women, employment opportunities diminished greatly.[7] Many farms, especially in the east and south of England, began to specialize in high-yield cereal crops such as corn. The scythe was developed to harvest these crops. This tool, because of its large size, required great upper body strength and was consequently used almost solely by men.[8] Thus, in areas of cereal crop specialization, less work was available for women and their wages declined relative to men's. Many women were forced into positions as housewives, and occasionally, as seasonal wage laborers.[9] Women could no longer contribute significantly, if at all, to the family income.

The small freeholder who sold out to a large capitalist farmer also found himself in a less favorable economic situation. He now lived under a constant threat of unemployment, especially during summer and winter off-seasons. K.D.M. Snell argues that this lack of job security may have caused the male labor force to produce measures to eliminate female competition.[10] Thus, he argues, the decline in the family economy brought about by

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6. George England in Transition 112.
7. Hill 177
8. K.D.M. Snell, "Agricultural Seasonal Unemployment, the Standard of Living and Women's Work in the South and East, 1690-1860," Economic History Review, 2nd ser. vol. 134 (Aug. 1981): 422
9. Hill 177
10. Snell 433

enclosure may have greatly limited the possibilities of female employment.

The final result of these changing social and economic situations was a separation of the work place and the home--a separation that never existed on a large scale before the mid-eighteenth century. The enclosed farm was now the center of work, dominated by the male, while the home developed into a sanctuary away from that workplace and was dominated by the female.

1.1.2 The Industrial Revolution

Similar changes were occurring in England's second largest industry, textiles. After about 1760, textile production began to shift from a domestic to a factory industry. This transition is often associated with the industrial revolution. We must be careful, however, when placing this "revolution" historically, for in many areas industrialization and capitalistic industry began long before the mid-eighteenth century, while in some rural areas, relics of pre-industrial England still exist today. Nevertheless, the latter half of the eighteenth century was a time of great technological advances in textile production, and marked the first large scale centralization of labor in a factory system.

Before the evolution of the factory, manufacture was organized on a domestic system, where spinning and weaving were done in the home. This was not, however, a self-sufficient, non-capitalistic system. Capitalism was existent long before the

industrial revolution, and is largely responsible for it. Even before the centralization of labor, industry was commonly organized by capitalist employers who put out jobs to country cottagers.[11] For the employer, this system had many advantages. Labor was cheap in the country and he had no investment in equipment, for looms and spinning wheels were privately owned by the workers.

The domestic system was, however, extremely inefficient. Much time was lost because of the great distances between cottages, and a high degree of organization by the employers was required to supply workers with the necessary raw materials and to retrieve completed products. The production was also slow since it frequently consisted of a series of steps that required varying degrees of skill and strength. Usually women and children were responsible for sorting, cleaning, and spinning, while men did the combing and weaving.[12] Often a person worked on just one step of the operation, which created a great deal of monotony. This, combined with the unsupervised nature of the domestic system, encouraged frequent breaks, a further barrier to efficient production.

The factory system offered a solution to these problems. The capitalist employer supplied a central building, necessary machinery and materials, and established fixed working hours. Under this system, he was in control of every stage of production. The first textile factory in England, the Derby silk-mill, was built in about 1717.[13] Very few factories,

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11. George, England in Transition 54.
12. T.S. Ashton, The Industrial Revolution 1760-1830 (Oxford U Press: 1948) 29.
13. Ashton, The Industrial Revolution 33.

however, were built until after Richard Arkwright developed the spinning frame in 1768, an invention that greatly increased the speed at which cotton could be spun. In 1771 the first water-driven cotton-spinning factory was built, and by 1781, hundreds of factories had been built throughout England.[14]

These early factories were dependent on water for power and had to be built at strategic locations throughout the countryside. Not until after 1790, when the steam engine was developed to drive the machinery, could cotton factories be put up in towns. Thus, by the end of the century, cities were becoming the centers of textile manufacture and trade. We should be careful to note that this early industrialization does not include the woolen industry, which was not mechanized until after the turn of the nineteenth century. In fact, although the years 1760-1830 are usually assigned to the industrial revolution, by the end of this period the majority of workers were still employed outside of the factory system.[15]

Nevertheless, the expanding cotton industry of the eighteenth century caused significant socioeconomic changes in England. By the late 1780's, domestic cotton-spinning was virtually nonexistent.[16] This meant that a large population of workers had to relocate to industrial centers. Furthermore, as spinning became a machine industry, the employment of women and children dropped, for far fewer workers were required to produce the same output possible under the domestic system.[17] Work for

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14. Ashton, The Industrial Revolution 72-3.
15. George, England in Transition 152.
16. Hill 198
17. George, England in Transition 134.

women became more difficult to obtain, and female wages dropped continuously from about 1760 to 1790.[18]

1.1.3 The Emergence of the Middle Class and the New Family

During the same time period that women's wages were dropping, the wages of men actually rose. In fact, not only were male wages rising, thus improving the standard of living, but industrialization created more possibilities for upward class mobility than any earlier age in England.[19] With industrial production, trade was flourishing and many merchants were making fortunes. Inventors, industrialists, and entrepreneurs flocked to the cities (mainly London) from every social class and from every part of the country to take advantage of the numerous economic opportunities. Small freeholders were tempted to sell their land and try their fortunes in trade, while wealthy merchants often bought up large estates.[20] Industrialization created, for the first time in England, a middle class, and at the same time broke down the old land-based system.

The economic opportunities associated with the emergence of a middle class, however, were limited almost entirely to men. The end of the eighteenth century was a time of high unemployment and low pay for women. The agrarian revolution greatly reduced women's possibilities for wage-earning employment on the family farm, and likewise, the industrial revolution eliminated most of the former female-dominated domestic industries. This period of

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18. Snell 420.
19. Ashton, The Industrial Revolution 17.
20. George, England in Transition 16.

transition, both in farming and in industry, found women without a place in the new order of things.[21] Not until the early nineteenth century, when the steam engine had been widely adopted in the factory system and a new population of workers was needed, were women faced with a widening field of employment.[22]

Married women were especially affected by the changing economic structure. Under the domestic systems of farming and industry, women could contribute to the family income while carrying out household work and looking after their children. With the factory system of manufacture and the day labor method of farming, where the workplace has been separated from the home, this is no longer possible. For a married woman to work, she had to abandon her children. Consequently, those women who could find employment were nearly all single.[23]

Thus, the latter half of the eighteenth century created a restructuring of the family. The man and woman no longer both contributed to the family economy. Rather, the husband was now the breadwinner while the wife was usually stuck at home, unemployed or caring for her children. She was now dependent on her husband. The agrarian and industrial revolutions created separate spheres of work and home, and as Kate Ferguson Ellis illustrates, the typological conception of domestic happiness and the idea of home as a sanctuary away from work emerged during this time.[24]

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21. Ivy Pinchbeck, Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution 1750-1850 (Augustus M. Kelly Pub.: 1930) 306.
22. Pinchbeck 155.
23. Pinchbeck 197.
24. Kate Ferguson Ellis, The Contested Castle, Gothic Novels and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology (University of IL Press: 1989).

This new structure created a layering of dependency. The male, if a factory worker or farm laborer, was dependent upon his employer and was vulnerable to unemployment and wage cuts. If a tradesman, he was reliant upon the demands of the market, and his fortune was not necessarily secure from one day to the next. In either case, men no longer had direct control over their own employment and were constantly threatened by the dangers of a capitalistic system. Women, no longer able to contribute to the family income through domestic industry, were thrown on the mercy of their husbands. This triple structure, capitalism-husband-wife, when it failed to operate smoothly, could lead to new forms of tyranny--oppressive husbands, despotic employers, overbearing societal pressures--tyranny that, I will argue later, manifests itself in the pages of the Gothic novel.

1.1.4 Urbanization and the Rise of Literacy

The latter half of the eighteenth century was a time when England's population exploded and there was a large movement from the country to the cities. Between the years 1750 and 1801, the total population of England jumped from 5.7 million to 8.6 million persons, an extremely dramatic increase after a period of slow growth.[25] During these same years, the population of London rose from 676,000 to 900,000.[26]

The explosion of the national population is largely attributed to a fall in the death rate. Many factors contributed

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25. E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield, The Population History of England 1541-1871 (Harvard U Press: 1981) 533-34.
26. M.D. George, London Life in the XVIIth Century (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co.: 1925) 329.

to this decline, such as healthier diets, improved sanitation, advances in medicine, and better infant care.[27] Besides this decrease in the death rate, Wrigley and Schofield suggest that the population was greatly affected by a national decrease in the average age of marriage.[28] By marrying younger, woman have more years of fertility in which to bear children, and thus, the average family size increased. In London, however, the death rate still exceeded the birth rate.[29] The large population increase was caused solely by a migration of people from the country to the city. With the enclosure of farms and the disappearance of domestic industries, thousands of men and women moved to London seeking better standards of living than the country could provide.

With the increasing population of the city and the emergence of a middle class, London's literary activity began to mushroom, for there was now a large number of people with both money and leisure time. Literacy in London was estimated to be as much as six times greater than in much of the countryside.[30] Children were often taught to read in the home when five or six years old.[31] All of these factors caused circulating libraries to flourish. Books became available to nearly everyone except the lowest classes, and whereas in the seventeenth century most publishers concentrated on divinity and classics, in the eighteenth century a much larger and wider market developed. And perhaps the most significant cultural change during this time

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27. Ashton, The Industrial Revolution 4.
28. Wrigley and Schofield, 256.
29. George, England in Transition 92.
30. Lawrence Stone, "Literacy and Education in England 1640-1900," Past and Present 42 (Feb. 19690) 125.
31. J.H. Plumb, Georgian Delights (Little, Brown and Co.: 1980) 26.

period was the rise in female readership and the increased popularity of the novel.[32]

Of course, a large readership reflected a large body of novelists. In literary centers, scores of novelists, good and bad, were finding their ways into print. For the first time in English history it was possible for a significant number of both men and women to make a living by writing.

1.2 Sentimentalism

The literature of the mid-eighteenth century appears to have been a response to the rapidly changing economic and social situations in England. Faced with different living conditions and new life-styles, the English seemed to have a need for guidance in their behavior. Thus, the literature of the time showed people how to behave in different situations, how to express themselves, and how to respond, verbally and physically, to life's various experiences. It was a literature of "sensibility," that embraced feeling and taught people sympathy and charity, told them when to cry, when to kneel, and when to swoon. Sentimentalists believed that man was born with a good nature that, if properly nurtured, allowed him to live a virtuous, happy life. They theorized that a society could be built on the satisfaction man gets when he is benevolent, that individual desires and collective needs can be perfectly balanced. They projected a society where the poor and dependent

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32. Plumb 68.

would automatically benefit from the kindness and generosity of the wealthy.[33]

Sentimental writers took their work extremely seriously. They felt their literature had a didactic duty to direct their readers towards their innate goodness.[34] By showing characters of refined sensibility in distress, the novelists hoped to educate the readers by arousing their sympathy. The literature carried a basic assumption that life and art were directly linked, that literature could affect real life.[35] Sentimental literature was supposed to cultivate the reader's finer feelings. When a character cries, expresses feelings of compassion, or does some act of charity, these fictional feelings and attitudes are reciprocated in the reader and are transformed into reality.

The sentimental character, however, is often one dimensional, and does little more in a work than contemplate feelings and reflect upon benevolence. The reader's literary enjoyment comes from being pulled into the hero or heroine's mind, and vicariously experiencing the character's feelings. No one would read a sentimental novel such as Richardson's Sir Charles Grandison for its plot without being highly disappointed. As Johnson once said, "If you were to read Richardson for the story, your impatience would be so much fretted that you would hang yourself. But you must read him for the sentiment, and consider the story as giving occasion to the sentiment."[36] In seven volumes, three hundred and eighteen letters, the book centers on a single event, the marriage of Harriet Byron and Sir

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33. Mary Poovey, "Ideology and The Mysteries of Udolpho," Criticism 21, (1979) 308.
34. Elizabeth MacAndrew, The Gothic Tradition in Fiction, (Columbia University Press: 1979) 24.
35. Janet Todd, Sensibility, An Introduction, (Metheven & Co.: 1986) 4.
36. Boswell's Life of Johnson, ed. George Birkbeck Hill (Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1964), II, 175.

Charles Grandison. The focus of the book is not on the characters' actions, but their sensibilities. It is about Sir Charles' charity, his prudence, and his manners. It is about Harriet's modesty, her chastity, and her flawless etiquette. The novel is about crying when one should cry, blushing when one should blush, and speaking when and how one should speak. As Janet Todd states, sentimental works are marked by "the arousal of pathos through conventional situations, stock familial characters and rhetorical devices."[37] The characters in these works were created as models for the readers to emulate. Most eighteenth-century authors beleived that people could better themselves by acting in the same proper manner as these fictional characters, and that they could improve their sensibilities by vicariously experiencing, through reading, the characters' feelings.

We should note that the sentimental ideology established by writers such as Richardson is gender specific. Both men and women have the capacity to develop and express their innate goodness, yet women were thought to express sentiment more sincerely and more spontaneously than men.[38] It is Harriet, not Sir Charles, who is unable to control her feelings. She is constantly blushing, trembling, and feeling faint in situations that elevate her emotions. The sentimental heroine's body became a text on which she inscribed her feelings. Women were viewed as being closer to nature than men, possessing a superior faculty for emotion and a greater compassion for suffering. Thus, a

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37. Todd, Sensibility 2.
38. Todd, Sensibility 19.

sexual double standard evolved wherein women became the preservers of the sentimental virtues, and the survival of an orderly society depended upon their influence on men.[39]

Yet the sentimental ideology presented in fiction could not successfully govern real life. Eighteenth century industrialization and the consequential emergence of a middle class created a family system in which only the work of the man was needed. Women had suffered an economic decline as well as a lessened position of power within marriage. Thus, while reality revealed the financial and social impotence of women, sentimental literature portrayed the elevation of the maiden or mother.[40] Fiction and actual life were not consistent with each other.

Sentimental ideology seemed to rationalize women's position by assigning great importance to a life of powerlessness. Since the man was submersed in the unfeeling, aggressive world of capitalism, the woman and her domestic sphere provided a retreat from the working world, a place where feminine charms could civilize the man's energies.[41] As her economic importance dropped, the void was filled with a newly acquired moral importance. Women came to be viewed as the conscience of society.

This new construction of femininity, while it supported a male dominated society, played a paradoxical role by actually providing women with a certain amount of power. Women had very specific social responsibilities within the household: she was the nurse who had to care for her husband and relatives; she was

39. Todd, Sensibility 20.
40. Todd, Sensibility 135.
41. Poovey, 310.

the paradigm of manners and was needed to improve the conduct and disposition of the male sex; and, she was the teacher, responsible for the development of her children's minds.[42] In short, the middle-class wife was responsible for preserving the home and civilizing society.

Thus, as Nancy Armstrong illustrates, women's strength grew out of their positions within the domestic sphere:

> "Those cultural functions which we automatically attribute to and embody as women--those, for example, of mother, nurse, teacher, social worker, and general overseer of service institutions--have been just as instrumental in bringing the new middle classes into power and maintaining their dominance as all the economic take-offs and political breakthroughs we automatically attribute to men.[43]

So even though the woman did not have any public power, she was an important part of this social structure--it could not function properly without her. Both the public and private spheres were needed to make up a stable middle class. Nevertheless, because of the different roles given to men and women, this system was vulnerable to abuse. The woman was dependent upon the man for a home, food, and clothing. Her very survival rested in his hands. The man, on the other hand, relied on the woman for her services as a mother and homemaker. Yet he could survive without her. Her services were desirable, but not necessary. Sentimental ideology was founded on the assumption that men would not abuse their positions as the providers, for it assumed that they would gain happiness through the benevolent use of their power. Unfortunately, this social structure, in the case of ill-natured, aggressive men, actually supported tyranny. An ideology that

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42. Poovey, 309.
43. Nancy Armstrong, Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel (Oxford University Press: 1987) 26.

assumed humans were inherently benevolent and supported female dependency upon men, could not stand up when faced with men who were not naturally good.

This short-coming of sentimentality provides one way to explain the development of the Gothic genre. In the Gothic we find the same under-developed heroines that we see portrayed by Richardson, Burney, and other sentimental novelists. For example, in Ann Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho, we see Emily nursing her sick father, "pressing him to eat, or adjusting the pillow she had placed in the back of his arm-chair," (p. 47). We see her faint when she realizes her father is dying: "her tears stopped, and, gazing at him for a moment with and expression of unutterable anguish, a slight convulsion seized her, and she sunk senseless in her chair," (p. 76). When in the company of other women, we see her sensible education: "she knew nothing of Paresian fashions, or Paresian operas; and her modesty, simplicity, and correct manners formed a decided contrast to those of her female companions," (p. 24). Emily, and nearly all other Gothic heroines, is straight from the pages of Richardson. She is intelligent yet ignorant of the ways of the world, virginal, modest, and not quite in control of her emotions. She is, in effect, a model of middle-class sentimentality. Yet Radcliffe and the other Gothicists greatly modified the sentimental novel. They remove the "conventional situations and familial characters" that Todd associates with the genre and focus instead on the moment when the heroine loses her protection, when the ideal of sentimentality fails, and she must face, for the first time, evil and passion.

Thus, the Gothic appears to be a critique of sentimental ideology. Whereas sentimental literature focuses on virtue, the Gothic portrays the weakness of virtue when threatened by vice. From a social perspective, the Gothic, although a fantasy genre, is actually more realistic than the sentimental novel, for it gives evil its due and recognizes it as a real threat to happiness. Each author that I will study in this work handles this topic differently, and in the following chapters, I will illustrate how the short-comings of sentimentality were addressed in the pages of the first Gothic works.

Chapter 2

Horace Walpole and The Castle of Otranto

> Shall I confess to you, what was the origin of this romance? I waked one morning, in the beginning of last June, from a dream, of which, all I could recover was, that I had thought myself in an ancient castle (a very natural dream for a head filled like mine with Gothic story), and that on the uppermost banister of a great staircase I saw a gigantic hand in armour. In the evening I sat down, and began to write . . .[44]

One summer night in 1764, Horace Walpole had a dream that inspired him to write The Castle of Otranto, the first Gothic novel. Walpole published this tale that same winter, on Chrismas Eve, and introduced the world to a genre that has been in existence ever since. Walpole was extremely nervous about the public's reception of his unusual work, and stated in a letter to William Mason: "I published the Castle of Otranto with the utmost diffidence and doubt of its success."[45] In fact, he was so worried about scarring his reputation with this work, that he printed the first edition under a fictitious name: "Translated by William Marshal, Gent. From the Original Italian of Onuphrio Muralto, Canon of the Church of St. Nicholas at Otranto" (Title page, first ed.). In the preface he states that the book came from a manuscript found "in the library of an ancient catholic

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44. The Letters of Horace Walpole, Fourth Earl of Orford, vol. 6, ed. Paget Toynbee. (Clarendon Press, Oxford: 1904) 195.
45. Letters, vol. 6, 213.

family in the north of England. It was printed at Naples, in the black letter, in the year 1529." The Castle of Otranto, however, sold very rapidly from its first printing on Christmas eve of 1764.[46] Walpole, encouraged by his book's success, prepared the book for a second printing of 500 copies, and to this new edition he wrote a new preface signed by "H.W." This premiere Gothic work has been in print ever since its first release in 1764, and has gone through over 100 editions.[47]

Walpole's head was indeed filled with "Gothic story." He was one of the many English aristocrats interested in antiquarianism, and Otranto was definitely influenced by this interest. Walpole, and England in general, was obsessed with the past. The Enlightenment was more than a time of great scientific advances, it was also when the first dictionaries and encyclopedias were written. The English of the eighteenth century were beginning to collect, compile, and catalogue information about themselves and the world around them. Inevitably, they also became interested in finding out more about their past. This was a time of the awakening of the historical imagination, when architecture imitated the vaulted ceilings and pointed arches of the middle ages, and many members of the upper class were collecting antiques and hoarding old manuscripts.

Perhaps no Englishman was more of a fanatic antiquarian than Horace Walpole. In 1748, at the age of thirty, he purchased Strawberry Hill, where he immediately began laying out and planting his fourteen acres of land. The following year, after

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46. John Riely, "The Castle of Otranto Revisited," The Yale University Library Gazette 53 (July, 1978) 4.
47. Riely, 17.

an antiquarian tour in Sussex, he began to modify his house, gradually transforming it into a miniature Gothic castle, complete with old stained-glass, arched windows, battlements, pinnacles, and a tower.[48] He decorated the structure's interior with medieval arms and armor, and giant, old tapestries. The bed chambers were dark and gloomy, and the main staircase was enormous, grim, bare, and winding.[49] This "castle," Walpole's home, is quite similar to many of the descriptions in The Castle of Otranto, and Walpole showed his sense of humor in his first preface when he stated: "The scene is undoubtedly laid in some real castle. The author seems frequently, without design, to describe particular parts." Writing about himself, he concludes that "the author had some certain building in his eye."

Horace Walpole was the son of England's prime minister, Robert Walpole, and was a politician, a man of letters, and a printer. He was also a dreamer. In a letter to his friend George Montagu in 1766, he writes:

> Visions, you know, have always been my pasture; and so far from growing old enough to quarrel with their emptiness, I almost think there is no wisdom comparable to that of exchanging what is called the realities of life for dreams. Old castles, old pictures, old histories, and the babble of old people, make one live back into centuries that cannot disappoint one. One holds fast and surely what is past.[50]

From Walpole's fascination with a by-gone time hatched the first novel of haunted castles, ghosts, and secret corridors. Inspired by a dream, written from within the plaster facade of Strawberry Hill, and printed under a false name by the author himself, The

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48. Martin Kallich, Horace Walpole (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1971) 74.
49. Devendra P. Varma, The Gothic Flame (London: Arthur Barker LTD, 1957) 45.
50. Letters, 387-88.

Castle of Otranto was an unexpected addition to English literature.

Yet Otranto is not merely a medieval fantasy of Walpole's. In the preface to the second edition, he states his purpose in writing the book: "It was an attempt to blend the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern. In the former, all was imagination and improbability: in the latter, nature is always intended to be, and sometimes has been, copied with success" (19). Although his setting is Gothic and he utilizes supernatural machinery, "the actions, sentiments, and conversations, of the heroes and heroines," are based on modern times. Walpole takes eighteenth-century sentimental characters, and exposes them to his wild, fantastic world.

Thus, Walpole appears to have written The Castle of Otranto out of his dissatisfaction with the sentimental works of his time. From a letter to Elie de Beaumont in 1765, we can see further evidence of this: "Madame de Beaumont must forgive me if I add that Richardson had, to me at least, made that kind of writing insupportable. I thought . . . a god, at least a ghost, was absolutely necessary to frighten us out of too much senses."[51] His wording of the end of this comment appears significant, for he does not state "frighten us out of our senses," but rather, "out of too much senses." The final word seems to mean "sensibility," something of which he felt there was "too much," and which The Castle of Otranto puts under severe criticism.

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51. Letters, 200-1.

The novel begins like a fairy tale: "Manfred, Prince of Otranto, had one son and one daughter; the latter, a most beautiful virgin, aged eighteen, was called Matilda" (27). Walpole has introduced the typical romance heroine, yet in the following sentence, any prospects of a "happily ever after" ending are undermined: "Conrad, the son, was three years younger, a homely youth, sickly, and of no promising disposition; yet he was the darling of his father." We instantly realize that something is wrong in this family, for Manfred shows no "symptoms of affection to Matilda," although she appears to be quite worthy of them. The family's problems appear even worse when Hippolita, Manfred's wife, is introduced. Whenever she tried to advise Manfred about Conrad, "she never received any other answer than reflections on her own sterility, who had given him but one heir" (27).

Manfred's ill-treatment of his wife and daughter is partly explained by an ancient prophecy which pronounced that "the Castle and Lordship of Otranto should pass from the present family whenever the real owner should be grown too large to inhabit it" (27). Manfred, wanting to avoid the fulfillment of these words, is anxious to have his son Conrad married to the princess Isabella, and have the couple come into possession of Otranto. Hippolita, because of her sterility, and Matilda, because of her inability to extend the male line, cannot help in preventing this predicted doom. Only his sickly son can save Manfred from this forecasted ruin.

Conrad, however, is quickly removed from the story when a giant helmet falls from the sky, leaving nothing but the

"bleeding mangled remains of the young prince" (28). Because of this supernatural event, Manfred is thrown into a panic. His position as Otranto's patriarch is threatened by the prophecy, and his son, his only hope for avoiding ruin, is now dead. But he quickly devises a scheme to remedy this dilemma--he will find a new wife, and produce a new male heir: "without mentioning the unhappy princesses, his wife and daughter, the first sounds that dropped from Manfred's lips were, 'take care of the Lady Isabella'" (29). He must personally fulfill the role intended for Conrad, and marry Isabella himself. The Oedipal conflict of the son deposing his father has been reversed: Manfred's usurpation leads to the supernatural murder of his son, and the father then attempts to take the place of his child.

Yet Isabella is horrified by Manfred's proposition: "what do I hear! you, my lord! you! my father-in-law! the father of Conrad! the husband of the virtuous and tender Hippolita!" (34). She will not consent to his proposal, for she views such a marriage as incestuous. Several times in the book, Isabella refers to Manfred and Hippolita as her parents, and now she finds herself threatened by the very father-figure who should be protecting her. This protector/tyrant relationship is common in the Gothic genre and appears elsewhere in Otronto, as well as in many other works I will discuss in later chapters. Here, Walpole presents a father/rapist relationship. Isabella, because of her sensiblity--her innocence and naivete--does not suspect ill of her protector.

Thus, when Manfred grasps "the cold hand of Isabella," she flees in terror. Her escape is assisted by the supernatural, for

Manfred is distracted by the plumes of the giant helmet which waved "backwards and forwards in a tempestuous manner," and the sight of his grandfather's portrait, which he saw "quit its panel and descend on the floor" (35). Walpole frequently introduces the supernatural at critical moments such as this. Whenever a situation appears desperate, we can expect a supernatural event to occur that will distract the villain, assisting the hero or heroine.

While Manfred is pursuing the ghost of his grandfather, Isabella flees to the lower vaults of the castle seeking an underground passage that leads to the church of St. Nicholas. Before she locates this secret tunnel, however, she encounters Theodore, a peasant from a neighboring village, who has been unjustly imprisoned by Manfred. Theodore helps Isabella find the door to the tunnel, yet he is unable to escape with her, for Manfred and his search party burst into the chamber. With the introduction of Theodore, the Oedipal conflict is reversed again, for the boy, as we learn later, is the rightful heir of Otranto. Manfred's position is threatened by a youth who will eventually take his place.

When Manfred learns that Theodore assisted Isabella in her escape, he orders him to be executed. Father Jerome is called in to hear the youth's confession, but upon seeing the boy's exposed neck on the execution block, discover's a birth mark that identifies Theodore as his own son. This scene introduces another element common to many Gothic works--the discovery of royal birth. Although secondary in Otranto, the rise from a low station in life to a high one is picked up and made central in

many of the works by women authors. Here, however, the discovery of the birthmark seems to do little more than confuse Manfred and save Theodore from execution.

At this point, Isabella's father, Frederic Marquis of Vicenza, arrives at Otranto to rescue his daughter and denounce Manfred as a usurper. He is accompanied by a hundred knights "bearing an enormous sword" that bursts from their hands, "falling to the ground next to the helmet" (69). Frederic, however, is charmed by Matilda and soon forgets his original purpose of rescuing his daughter. Instead, he actually delivers her into the hands of the man from whom he was going to rescue her. He consents to a double marriage--Manfred will marry Isabella, and Frederic will marry Matilda. Again, we see the father figure abusing his position by turning it incestuous. Both men want to marry daughter figures.

These plans are foiled when Frederic encounters an apparition of a "skeleton, wrapt in a hermit's cowl," who tells the prince "to forget Matilda!" (104). Furthermore, Manfred, who is convinced of a love affair between Isabella and Theodore, believes the couple has rendezvoused in the church of St. Nicholas. Incensed by jealousy, he goes to the church, sneaks up behind the woman, "drawing his dagger, and plunging it over the shoulder into the bosom of the person that spoke" (106). To his horror, he finds that he has killed not Isabella, but his own daughter, Matilda. Isabella and Matilda have been mistaken for each other several times throughout the story, and in this final, horrible act, Matilda actually replaces her friend and is killed by her father. The father, rather than protecting his daughter,

actually murders her. Furthermore, the incest plot is fulfilled, for this final "penetration" victimizes Manfred's actual daughter, not Isabella.

As Matilda expires, "the walls of the castle behind Manfred were thrown down with a mighty force, and the form of Alfonso, dilated to an immense magnitude, appeared in the centre of the ruins" (109). This giant proclaims Theodore a direct descendant of Alfonso the Good, and thus, the rightful prince of Otranto. The imagery associated with this "immense" and "dilated" form is obviously phallic, as are many of the supernatural events, and on a symbolic level we can view the driving force of Manfred's destruction as his "supernatural" desire for Isabella. In his desperation to marry Isabella and break the Oedipal pattern, he destroys his family and himself. The story ends with Manfred and Hippolita retiring to neighboring convents, and Theodore marrying Isabella, "with whom he could for ever indulge the melancholy that had taken possession of his soul" (112).

The story's conclusion is striking, for it does not end happily for any of the characters. Matilda is murdered by her father. Manfred is destroyed by the fulfillment of the ancient prophecy and forced to retire to a convent. Hippolita, also, must retire to a convent. Even the main hero and heroine, Isabella and Theodore, do not appear to have a happy marriage, for it is centered on talk about Theodore's dead love, Matilda. The obvious question to ask, then, is why does Walpole do this? Why so dismal an outcome? The answer, I believe, is also obvious. Given the types of characters in this work, no happy ending is possible.

The women in the book, Matilda, Hippolita, and Isabella, may be viewed as sentimental heroines. The two younger women are both obedient to their parents, and both have difficulty concealling their jealousy over Theodore. Matilda's feelings often over-power her, causing her to faint. Isabella is innocent and concerned about upholding virtuous propriety. Even when in extreme danger, she is wary of being alone with Theodore: "Though all your actions are noble, though your sentiments speak the purity of your soul, is it fitting that I should accompany you alone into these perplexed retreats" (78). Hippolita is religious: "mortals must receive its divine behests with lowliness and submission" (83). She is also charitable: she both employed Father Jerome (53) and founded a hospital for the reception of pilgrims (69). She, like Matilda, is obedient to the wishes of Manfred and is often seen fainting in stressful situations. All three women embody the sentimental virtues of a character such as Richardson's Harriet Byron, although they are not as fully developed.

Similarly, Theodore can be viewed as a simplified version of a sentimental hero. Like Sir Charles Grandison, he is steadfast in his duty as a protector: "I fear no man's displeasure," said Theodore, "when a woman in distress puts herself under my protection" (59). He is humble and has great faith in goodness, as we see when he volunteers to explore the castle's haunted chamber "'Will your highness,' said he, 'permit me to try this adventure? my life is of consequence to nobody: I fear no bad angel, and have offended no good one'" (43). Throughout the novel, he exhibits unnatural calmness in the face of danger,

extreme bravery in the defense of goodness and virtue, and unfaltering devotion to his love, Matilda. He is quick to forgive wrongdoers as we see when he forgives Manfred, who is about to have him executed. In fact, Walpole has stereotyped Theodore's characterization as a sentimental hero to such an extent, that it often becomes ridiculous, trivialized: standing before the executioner's block, Theodore looked around and "was touched with the sorrow which he saw he had infused into all the spectators" (62). A similar exaggeration of sentimentality occurs at the end of the novel, when Matilda is dying and Theodore, who can love no other woman, asks the friar to marry them: "'Since she cannot live mine,' cried he, 'at least she shall be mine in death! Father! Jerome! will you not join our hands!'" (108).

In Richardson's work, however, such sentimental attributes are a source of power. Sir Charles can overcome any foe with his benevolence, and Harriet wins the hand of this man through her patience and propriety. Here the sentimental ideology is portrayed at its best, with power deriving from goodness and virtue. Walpole, with The Castle of Otranto, puts a new twist on this ideology. With Manfred, he introduces a character who is in the position of a protector, yet is not benevolent. When the giant helmet crushes his son Conrad, this ill-natured man, faced with desperation, quickly turns into a tyrant. There are indeed tyrants in Sir Charles Grandison, such as Sir Hargrave, yet such characters are secondary and function primarily to reveal the strength of goodness. In Walpole's work, however, the tyrant takes the center stage. He is the main character, and through

his tyranny we can see the weakness, the defenselessness of the sentimental characters--the very characters who would flourish in the world set up by Richardson.

Numerous times in Walpole's work the "sensible" characters fail when confronted by Manfred's tyranny. In fact, Manfred knows that they will fail, that their sensibilities will cause them to bend under his will. For example, he depends on his wife to agree to a divorce: "he flattered himself that she would not only acquiesce with patience to a divorce, but would obey, if it was his pleasure, in endeavouring to persuade Isabella to give him her hand" (45). Quite predictably, because sensibility does not empower women to cross men, Hippolita does exactly as he wishes. She suggests the double marriage to Matilda and Isabella, and she submits to a divorce: "'Yes,' continued she in a firmer tone, 'perhaps the sacrifice of myself may atone for all--I will go and offer myself to this divorce--it boots not what becomes of me" (91).

We see similar submissions elsewhere in the work. When Hippolita suggests Matilda's marriage to Frederic, the daughter replies: "Oh! doubt not my obedience, my dreadful obedience to him and to you!" (91). At the beginning of the book, Isabella was on the brink of marrying Conrad, a person for whom "she had conceived little affection" (28). She would have married him simply because her position as a woman did not allow her to speak out against the arrangement. Even the male character, Theodore, is defenseless against Manfred. The youth is frequently being imprisoned and endangered by the tyrant. He is locked in the tower and imprisoned under the helmet, yet never attempts

resistance. Even before his scheduled execution, he resigns to his fate because he has acted properly, as a sentimental hero should: "'The injustice of which thou art guilty towards me,' said Theodore, 'convinces me that I have done a good deed, in delivering the princess from thy tyranny. May she be happy, whatever becomes of me'" (60).

Thus, Walpole appears to be showing the weakness of the ideology presented by Richardson and other sentimentalists. The ideal of sentimentality does not allow for the empowerment of an "evil" person--a person with uncontrolled passions and a violent temper. Walpole, however, obviously believes in the power of evil when embodied in an intelligent character such as Manfred. He shows the ridiculousness of sentimentality by inserting this "foreign" element into a sentimental world. The one-dimensional "good" characters appear foolish in this situation. They are victimized constantly by Manfred's tyranny, for they can do nothing but act as his pawns.

This apparent critique of sensibility, however, extends beyond the relationships between Manfred and his victims. Nearly every character in Otranto who should be a protector figure, ends up endangering, threatening, or tyrannizing the very person under "protection." Frederic, for example, arrives at Otranto and "demands the Lady Isabella . . . whom [Manfred] hast basely, and traitorously got into [his] power, by bribing her false guardians during his absence" (65). Yet instead of attempting this rescue, he consents to the double marriage proposed by Manfred--his desire for Matilda outweighs his desire to rescue his daughter

from the man he, a moment before, considered a traitor and usurper.

Father Jerome also abuses his position as a protector. When Isabella took refuge in the church of St. Nicholas, and Manfred asked the friar whether she and Theodore were lovers, Jerome, rather than telling the truth--that he knew absolutely nothing about Theodore--answers with a lie: he "conceived that it might not be amiss to sow the seeds of jealousy in his mind: they might be turned to some use hereafter" (58). Thus, the friar confirmed that the two youths were lovers. He told this lie with good intentions, hoping to "prejudice the prince against Isabella" (58), yet it backfires severely. Manfred, enraged by this news, orders the execution of Theodore. Jerome, instead of protecting Isabella, nearly murders his own son. Furthermore, the jealousy his lie creates is the cause of Matilda's murder. The friar, the religious figure who should be the protector of the virtuous and innocent, instead becomes their destroyer.

In Walpole's work, sentimental characters are constantly in danger of being victimized. Parents, husbands, guardians, and even friars are likely to abuse the defenselessness of these characters. Under these circumstances, Walpole presents only two possible outcomes for these characters: they must either enter unhappy marriages, or they must retreat to the church. Walpole voices this idea through the garrulous maid, Bianca:

> 'Oh! madam,' said Bianca, 'all men use their wives so, when they are weary of them.' 'And yet you congratulated me but now,' said Matilda, 'when you fancied my father intended to dispose of me!' 'I would have you a great lady,' replied Bianca, 'come what will. I do not wish to see you moped in a convent . .

> . and my lady . . . knows that a bad husband is better than no husband at all' (47)

Bianca's words prove true. Every marriage or proposed marriage in this work is a failure. Manfred and Hippolita are on the brink of divorce. Isabella and Theodore are doomed to a life of melancholy. Isabella's proposed marriage to Conrad was against her will, and her proposed marriage to Manfred was incestuous. Matilda's proposed marriage to Frederic would also have been a failure, for she loved Theodore. In each case we see marriage associated with tyranny. Quite different from the string of happy marriages presented in Sir Charles Grandison, Otranto portrays marriage as an opportunity for a man to take advantage of his wife's powerless position. He presents a weakness in sentimental ideology not emphasized by Richardson or other sentimentalists.

When a woman wants to escape or avoid this world of tyranny and unhappy marriage, her only option is to retire into religion. Isabella, fleeing from Manfred's advances, steals to the church of St. Nicholas "to remain in sanctuary, till she can learn news of her father" (54). The church is the only place she is free from Manfred's attacks (although later in the book even the church proves unsafe from the tyrant). Matilda also views the church as a sanctuary and often speaks of taking up the veil--a reasonable solution considering the neglect she receives from her father and the ill manner in which Manfred treats her mother. Finally, Hippolita plans to "withdraw into the neighboring monastery" (91) should Manfred ask her for a divorce. Just as

all three women are victims of tyranny, they all view the church as an escape from their situations.

But "escape" is no solution to a problem. Walpole has taken the ideal of sentimentality, shot it down, and offered nothing to put in its place. Indeed, on the surface, he presents a story that appears to wrap up all the ends--a peasant boy discovers his royal birth and claims his rightful inheritance, deposing the usurping tyrant. Yet this ending is disturbing. First of all, the hero is content only when indulging the melancholy of his soul with his wife. Secondly, and much more significantly, we must ask how Theodore came into his inheritance when he was so defenseless against the usurper he had to dethrone. The answer is perhaps the most disturbing feature of the entire book. At each critical moment for Theodore, each time his rise to power is endangered, a supernatural event intercedes in his favor. Theodore's "goodness," Isabella's virtuousness, and even Jerome's discovery of his lost son have nothing to do with the boy's rise into his rightful place. The entire defeat of Manfred is caused by the supernatural, something "outside" of the human world.

When Manfred plans to have his son inherit Otranto, the lad is crushed by a giant helmet--the supernatural prevents the passing on of a usurped position. When Manfred attacks Isabella, the plumes of the helmet wave furiously and the portrait of Manfred's grandfather comes to life--the supernatural protects Isabella from an incestuous assault. When Manfred orders Jerome to bring Isabella from the church, the giant sword is carried into the castle--the supernatural prevents the corruption of a holy office. When Frederic hopes to marry Matilda, a fleshless

apparition tells him to abandon his desires--the supernatural prevents a tyrannical union. Several more examples could be sited, but the pattern is clear. Every time a transgression of law is about to occur, Walpole brings in an unworldly power to prevent it. Under Manfred's tyranny, the sentimental characters are unable to maintain law and order. Rape, incest, profanation, and usurpation can only be prevented by forces outside of the world governed by sentimentalism.

There was no book like The Castle of Otranto at the time of its publication. Although we, as modern readers, have been exposed to numerous stories of haunted castles inhabited by evil villains, the English in 1764 had not. Walpole was the first to show his country a new type of fiction, one not limited to sense and reason. To us, much of Otranto seems rather silly, for many of Walpole's followers used his Gothic machinery to better effect. But at the time of its publication, the book had no comparison. Walpole's friend Mr. Gray wrote him after reading the novel in 1764: "I have received the Castle of Otranto, and return you my thanks for it. It engages our attention here,(i.e. at Cambridge,) makes some of us cry a little; and all, in general, afraid to go to bed o'nights."[52] And Otranto is indeed horrifying. Maybe not so much for its giant sword and living portrait, as for Walpole's vision--his vision of the powerlessness of benevolence and the unpreventable tyrannization of the innocent. He creates a pessimistic view of sentimentalism where the characters' only source of power is something that does not exist in the real world--the supernatural.

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52. Ballantyne vol. 5, lxvi.

Chapter 3

Clara Reeve and The Old English Baron

> Have you seen The Old Baron, a Gothic story, professedly written in imitation of Otranto, but reduced to reason and probability? It is so probable, that any trial at the Old Bailey would make a more interesting story . . . This is a caput mortum.[53]
>
> Horace Walpole, 1778.[54]

Despite the success of Walpole's The Castle of Otranto, twelve years passed before the second Gothic novel appeared: Clara Reeve's The Old English Baron. This novel, however, was written "in imitation of Otranto" only insofar as it is Gothic. It has few other similarities to its prototype. The book's tone, style, structure, and emphasis are all different, and as Walpole mentions, the events in Reeve's work are significantly more "probable" and "reasonable" than those found in Otranto. In her preface to the novel, Reeve states that "This story is the literary offspring of The Castle of Otranto" (p. 3), yet she criticizes Walpole for taking his tale far beyond the limits of credibility with his supernatural creations, which, she says "instead of attention, excite laughter" (p. 5).

With The Old English Baron, Reeve set out to amend what she considered Walpole's excesses, and create a romance that would

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53. worthless residue
54. Letter to Rev. William Mason, April 8; Letters, ed. Cunningham, vol. VII, 51.

"first, excite the attention; and, secondly, direct it to some useful, or at least innocent, end" (p. 4). As a woman, Reeve was subject to much stricter censure than the male writers of her time. Because of the great moral worth associated with women in sentimental ideology, they were expected to portray propriety in the behavior and language of their characters.[55] Reeve did not stray from these social limitations. She took her writing very seriously and felt her work must educate, as well as entertain, the reader. In fact, the first edition of her novel was published under the didactic title The Champion of Virtue. Clara Reeve was an admirer of Samuel Richardson,[56] and her novel transplants much of the sentimental morality of Sir Charles Grandison into Gothic times. In fact, her character Sir Philip Harclay appears to be modeled after Sir Charles. He is fearless when confronting evil; he never gives into passion; he is a loyal protector; and he is charitable, for he "maintained twelve old soldiers who had been maimed and disabled in the war and had no provision made for them" (175).

Many literary scholars have criticized Reeve for failing to hold her reader's attention. In his prefatory memoir to The Old English Baron in Ballantyne's Novelists' Library, Sir Walter Scott says that Walpole was a "bolder and a more imaginative writer" (p. lxxxiv) and that Reeve's work is "sometimes tame and tedious, not to say mean and tiresome" (p. lxxxv).[57] A modern Gothic scholar, Montague Summers, claims that The Castle of

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55. Alice Browne, The Eighteenth Century Feminist Mind (Harvester Press, Sussex: 1987) 28.
56. Reeve was a close friend of Richardson's daughter, Mrs. Bridgen, to whom she dedicates the second edition of the novel. Mrs. Bridgen helped with editing and suggested the novel's final title of The Old English Baron.
57. Ballantyne's Novelists' Library, (London, 1821) vol. V.

Otranto "is undeniably the finer piece of work, as it is wilder."[58] Both scholars appear to judge a Gothic novel's quality by its "wildness," and seem to feel that Reeve's conservatism and didacticism interfered with her work's potential for providing entertainment.

Yet if popularity is any measure of the merit of a work, The Old English Baron stands up to, and possibly surpasses, The Castle of Otranto.[59] Both works went through several editions during the eighteenth century, and Reeve's work was received much more favorably by critics than was Walpole's: The Monthly Review stated that "This writer has imitated with tolerable success, the style and manner of ancient romance. The story is enlivened with an agreeable variety of incidents,"[60] and the Critical Review read: "[Reeve] succeeds to captivate the attention of his readers; and the story being well contrived, agreeably told, and not very long, may be ranked among those which afford a tolerable degree of amusement."[61] These comments, although not exuding praise, are at least positive. This cannot be said about the first reviews of Walpole's work, which both Critical Review and Monthly Review called "absurd."[62] Reeve's work was unarguably a very significant contribution to the literature of her time and was even catalogued in volume five of Ballantyne's Novelists' Library with Tristram Shandy, Rasselas, The Castle of Otranto, and a few other works. Today, however, while many of these other

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58. Montegue Summers, The Gothic Quest (Russell & Russell Inc., New York: 1964) 187.
59. James Trainer, in his introduction to the 1967 printing of The Old English Baron states that the book went through thirteen editions by the late nineteenth century, was translated into French in 1787 and 1800, German in 1789, and was dramatized in 1799 (vii).
60. Monthly Review 58, (1778) 85.
61. The reviewers incorrectly assumed the author of The Old English Baron was a man. Critical Review 44 (1777) 154.
62. Critical Review 19 (1765) 51; Monthly Review 32 (1765) 97.

works have survived, The Old English Baron has disappeared from the literary canon. Nevertheless, Reeve is an important figure in the evolution of Gothic fiction and no study of the genre would be complete without including her.

Little is known about Clara Reeve's life. All modern biographies draw the majority of their information about her from Sir Walter Scott's memoir in Ballantyne's.[63] Reeve was born in 1729 to Reverend William Reeve and Hannah Reeve, and was one of eight children. She was educated by her father, who made her read at an early age works such as Rapin's History of England, Plutarch's Lives, and the Greek and Roman histories.[64] She did not begin writing until late in her life, her first publication being a translation of Barclay's Argenis in 1772. Besides this work, Reeve wrote a collection of poems, six romances (including The Old English Baron), and a literary criticism, The Progress of Romance (1785). Her later works are often considered inferior to The Old English Baron because of their moralistic tones. Reeve died in 1807 in Ipswich, the same town where she was born and lived the majority of her life.

Clara Reeve's life appears to be as quiet and retired as Walpole's was public and eventful. Nevertheless, while the sparcity of information available on Reeve makes for a rather short biography, it is both interesting and significant when studying her work. We must keep in mind when reading The Old English Baron that Clara Reeve seems to typify the circumstances facing middle-class women in the eighteenth century. She appears to have

63. For example, all of the following biographies are straight from Ballantyne's: Kunitz and Haycraft, British Authors Before 1800 431-2; Moulton's Library of Literary Criticism; Paul and June Schlueter, British Women Writers 377-8; Janet Todd, Dictionary of British and American Women Writers 266-8.
64. Scott, lxxix.

lived a private life, staying at home, and there is no evidence that she had any other employment than writing. She must have been dependent upon her family for her income, for she never married and her novels brought in almost no money--she sold The Old English Baron to her publisher for only ten pounds.[65] Both of these situations of women, economic dependence and confinement to the domestic sphere, are upheld by sentimental ideology and will appear frequently in my discussion of the Gothic.

The Old English Baron borrows two literary elements from Walpole's prototype--the Gothic setting and the story of Theodore, the peasant boy who comes into an inheritance. The plot of Reeve's story revolves around the discovery of a murder and the restoration of the murdered Lord's heir to his title. The tale begins with Sir Philip Harclay returning from France after a thirty year absence. Once in England, he learns that his family is dead. To further his dismay, he discovers that his dear friend Arthur Lovel has also died and that the Castle Lovel has fallen into the hands of the Lord Fitz-Owen. Living with the Fitz-Owen family is a peasant boy, Edmund Twyford, who Lord Fitz-Owen has adopted because of his "uncommon merit and gentleness of manners" that "distinguish him from those of his own class" (p. 117). Upon meeting Edmund, Sir Philip is so impressed by the boy's behavior and appearance, that he also wants to adopt him. He expresses his interest in the boy to Lord Fitz-Owen:

> 'My lord,' said the knight, 'I will confess to you, that the first thing that touched my heart in his favor is a strong resemblance he bears to a certain dear friend I once had, and his manner resembles him as much as his person; his qualities deserve that he should be

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65. Scott, lxxx.

> placed in a higher rank. I will adopt him as my own son . . . if you will resign him to me' (118).

Edmund is allowed to choose which "father" he wants to live with, and decides to remain with Fitz-Owen, because his "heart is unalterably attached to [his] house and family" (119). Nevertheless, we already can see Reeve setting up Edmund's rise to nobility. All the clues are in place--the peasant resembles the dead lord of the castle; he has qualities superior to his position; and, as we learned earlier in the text, his "real" family, his peasant family, has a strange aversion to his genteel manners. Edmund seems destined to rise above his humble station.

Edmund's superior qualities, however, soon get him in trouble, for they arouse jealousy among one of Lord Fitz-Owen's sons, and two of his nephews. Lord Fitz-Owen is torn between his fondness for Edmund and his duty to his immediate family. Unwillingly, he is pressured into testing Edmund's courage by making him sleep three nights in a supposedly haunted apartment in the castle.

Here we can see a large difference between The Old Englsih Baron and The Castle of Otranto. Reeve's work is much more sensitive to family politics. Sibling rivalries and parental loyalties gain an emphasis not found in the earlier work. Edmund is imprisoned not by a villain, but by a father struggling to maintain order in his family. While Otranto focuses on a father trying to preserve his patriarchal power through tyranny, The Old English Baron presents a judicious father trying his best to overcome his familial problems.

Edmund's imprisonment confirms our suspicions about his royal birth. After entering this suite, his lamp blows out mysteriously, the doors slam shut, and he hears an ominous rustling noise. Later that night a warrior in full armor and a beautiful, pale lady approach Edmund in a dream and declare him their son. The following evening, the youth questions two of the household's loyal domestics about the late Lord and Lady Lovel, and comes to believe that he is their son, the heir of the Castle Lovel.

The rest of the novel is devoted to Edmund's struggle to prove his noble birth. He first goes to interview his peasant parents. From his mother he learns that he was not actually her child. She tells him that her real baby had been still-born, and that her husband had found Edmund, a new-born infant, abandoned in the woods. Her husband brought the child home for his wife to raise at her breast as her own. Edmund's mother also produces a crested locket, found on the body of a dead women that was presumed to be the abandoned infant's mother. Edmund procures this item to use later when he will need it to legitimate his position as the heir to the Castle Lovel.

Following this interview with his mother, and after further conversation with the domestics, Edmund learns the fate of his real parents: his father was murdered by his evil kinsman Sir Walter Lovel, who wanted to come into possession of the castle; his mother managed to escape into the woods surrounding the castle, but soon after giving birth to Edmund, slipped into a river and drowned. Thus, Sir Walter successfully usurped the Castle Lovel. He does not reside there long, however, for he is

driven out by the ghosts of the deceased couple, leaving Lord Fitz-Owen in charge of the estate.

This set-up is extremely unusual for a Gothic work. Whereas most Gothic novelists advance their plots through conflicts between the protagonist and the villain, Reeve removes her villain to a distant location. Sir Walter Lovel plays a very minor part in the novel. As Kate Ferguson Ellis states, Clara Reeve has taken The Castle of Otranto and "feminized" it.[66] She has taken the villain out of the action and filled his place in the haunted castle with an innocent family, the Fitz-Owens. By doing this, Reeve centers her action on the resolution of familial conflicts.

Despite the domesticity of the book, Reeve does bring Sir Walter to justice. Acting as Edmund's champion, Sir Philip Harclay challenges the villain to a duel, defeats him, and extorts a confession of his usurpation. The remaining third of the novel is devoted to legitimating Edmund's claim and establishing order with the new Lord Lovel. Reeve goes to great length to insure that all virtuous characters properly rewarded, and all evil characters are either punished or converted to good. Edmund has made the flip from the peasant boy to the wealthy lord of a castle. He then marries Lord Fitz-Owen's daughter Emma, with whom he "lived to old age, in peace, honor and happiness; and died in the arms of his children" (235).

The novel's ending illustrates a major difference betwen Reeve's work and The Castle of Otranto. Walpole does not seem to be concerned with happy endings, for none of his characters have

66. Ellis, Chpt. IV.

one. Instead, he focuses on the Oedipal struggle between Manfred and Theodore, and the supernatural frustration Manfred faces in trying to retain his power. The energy of the novel is channeled into Manfred's downfall rather than the hero's ascent. Reeve, on the other hand, places great emphasis on the reward of virtue, the establishment of poor but noble Edmund, and the working out of material logistics. Furthermore, in Walpole's work, the denouement comes at the end of the story, where we would expect it, when the giant statue of Alfonso comes to life, denounces Manfred and declares Theodore the rightful heir of the castle. In The Old English Baron, however, the denouement falls in the middle of the story, when Sir Philip defeats Walter Lovel. The final third of the novel involves a drawn-out legitimization of the hero's claim and the reestablishment of the "good" characters who are displaced by Edmund's inheritance.

There is something unusual about Reeve's obsession with all of these technicalities. After the duel, Sir Philip extorts a confession from Sir Walter, who admits to killing Edmund's parents and recognizes Edmund as the rightful heir to the Castle Lovel. Present at this confession are: Lord Graham with twelve gentlemen and twelve servants; Sir Philip's esquire and page and two servants; John Wyatt; Zadisky and his servant; and Lord Clifford, his esquire, his two pages, his two livery-servants, his eldest son, his nephew, a gentleman, and three servants. Even with all these witnesses, howver, Edmund must still "prove" his claim. Sir Philip, speaking to Sir Walter, says: "I shall appeal to your judgement in regard to the proofs of my ward's birth and family; every circumstance shall be laid before you,

and you shall decide upon them" (203). And indeed, every circumstance is laid before us. Lord Graham and Lord Clifford choose commissioners who will verify all that Edmund has said is true. They will examine the bones of Edmund's slain parents, interview Edmund's foster parents seperately, and scrutinize the necklace and locket found on the dead Lady Lovel. Again, an unnatural number of witnesses seem to be required: Lord Clifford's eldest son, Lord Graham's nephew, a priest, Lord Fitz-Owen's eldest son, William Fitz-Owen, Father Oswald, and numerous servants. Nor is this enough. The legitimation is not considered complete until Sir Philip goes to London to have the king recognize Edmund as the new Lord Lovel.

The amount of evidence and the number of witnesses required to make Edmund's claim official is overwhelming. This emphasis, however, may very well reflect Reeve's concerns as a woman. While women in the eighteenth century were losing economic power and were often confined to the domestic sphere, they were also losing access to their own wealth. Often women lost their inheritances to male relatives, and married women's money and property was often controlled by their husbands. With Edmund's claim in The Old English Baron, Reeve perhaps presents a woman's dream of a property right so well validated that no one can take it away.

But Edmund's legitimization is just one of Reeve's post-denoument emphases. She also puts a lot of energy into ensuring all of the characters are provided with homes. The last thirty pages or so of the novel are devoted almost entirely to property allotment. This is accomplished with acute detail: Edmund and

his wife Emma move into the Castle Lovel with William and Sir Philip; Lord Fitz-Owen moves into Sir Philip's estate until he can fix up his place in Wales; and Sir Robert and his wife move into the estate of the deposed Sir Walter Lovel. The minor characters are also provided with homes: Sir Philip prepares a house on his estate for his old soldiers and dependents and the servants from the Castle Lovel are allowed to decide whether to serve the Baron Fitz-Owen or Edmund. Every "good" character is rewarded with a stable home.

As with her obsession with inheritance logistics, Reeve's emphasis on homes may also reflect her concerns as a woman. The home during the eighteenth century was becoming predominantly the woman's sphere. Thus, an interest in preserving that sphere can be argued to have more relevance to women than to men. Reeve's work seems to project a woman's dream-world, wherein nothing is as important as a stable household, and nothing can take that household away.

One more peculiarity in The Old English Baron should be noted. Both the over-done legitimization of Edmund's birthright and the emphasis on homes appear to be women's concerns. Why then, is the main character a man? A look at Edmund's characterization provides a ready answer:

> The notice and observation of strangers . . . would sometimes kindle the flames of ambition in Edmund's heart; but he checked them presently by reflecting upon his low birth and dependent station. He was modest, yet intrepid; gentle and courteous to all; frank and unreserved to those that loved him, discreet and complaisant to those who hated him; generous and compassionate to the distresses of his fellow-creatures in general. [p. 124]

Nearly all of these virtues are more typical of gentlewomen than gentlemen. Edmund is described as having compassion for people who are suffering; he is philanthropic; and he appears to be quiet, reserved, even passive. All are attributes of sentimental women, not men. Even more persuasive for this argument is the statement that he was "frank and unreserved to those that loved him." The gushing forth of emotion is almost never associated with sentimental men. Finally, if we read into the passage, the "low birth" and "dependent station" mentioned in the passage can also be considered a characterization of a woman, for women in the eighteenth century were indeed born into a low and dependent station.

Thus, Reeve appears to be working out many of the issues facing women through her "male" protagonist. Through him, she illustrates the female fantasy of moving from a station of dependence and powerlessness into one of economic security and social prominence. This "discovery/inheritance plot," as I will call it, can be viewed as a projection of women's wish-fulfillment.[67] That is, the wish of the "disinherited" woman can be viewed as a desire to "inherit" the social and economic power denied her. The discovery/inheritance plot was extremely popular among women writers and can be found in the works of some of the more famous Gothic novelists, including Ann Radcliffe. Not surprisingly, this plot is secondary or non-existent in the works of male authors such as Walpole, Godwin , and Lewis, for the issue of attaining a higher status was not urgent for men.

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67. The connection between this plot type and women's wish-fulfilment was illustrated by Dr. Ruth Perry during a private conference.

Yet the plot of The Old English Baron is not its only wish-fulfillment element. The entire book to some extent presents a woman's fantasy-land wherein feminine virtues can prosper and female dreams can come true. The book contains no uncontrollable outside forces such as Walpole's giant Alphonso, nor does it contain any unleashed tyrants who pose a serious threat to sentimentality. Even the ghosts in Reeve's novel act on the side of virtue, helping Edmund claim his title while scaring away the bad guys. The work is perhaps unique among Gothic novels in presenting an utopian vision of a society in which the virtues of the sentimental ideology are so highly esteemed that good always triumphs, for virtue is the foundation of power.

Chapter 4

Sophia Lee and The Recess

> I bathed my bosom in the blessed crimson which still flowed from his, and called alike on heaven and man to end me. Alas, the only object of my hopes, my fears, my cares, my wishes, was congealing before the eyes of the forlorn wretch condemned to survive him (I. 209).
> -Matilda, holding her dying husband

Whereas Clara Reeve's novel appears to be a projection of women's wish-fulfillment, the third Gothic novel, Sophia Lee's The Recess, explores the other side of the coin and projects woman's nightmare. The Recess does not end happily for any of the characters, of which there are many--the heroes, the heroines, and even the villains are all destroyed, usually both physically and mentally. The novel depicts a society so oppressive that Jane Spencer is quite accurate when she states: "Without the vision of possible liberation the feminist writers of her time added to this analysis, Sophia Lee's truth is certainly one the heart can burst with."[68] The reader of this novel, from page one, is submersed in a relentless string of betrayals, imprisonments, and devastating realizations. Whenever a virtue is presented, it is proven worthless; every hope is turned into disappointment; every fact proves ambiguous. Lee obviously does not believe in Reeve's Utopian vision of happiness

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68. Jane Spencer, The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen (Basil Blackwell, Oxford: 1986) 201.

through virtue, as can be seen by the "virtuous" heroine Matilda, who just a third of the way through the novel is left holding her "congealing" husband--Reeve's conservative Christian outlook would never admit such character, "condemned to survive."

Despite its negative outlook on the world, The Recess is not without appeal. The little modern scholarship written on this work seems to unanimously agree that the work illustrates the powerlessness of women in the eighteenth century.[69] The characterization of the novel's two heroines reveals a psychological depth not found in Reeve's earlier work or even in the later, more famous works of Ann Radcliffe, and thus the book is a valuable piece of writing for feminist study. Even Montague Summers, who tends to favor the wilder Gothic works such as The Monk and Melmonth the Wanderer, notes the importance of Lee's book: "It is difficult to understand how those who have not read at least The Recess and The Canterbury Tales[70] can claim any right to be heard when they discourse upon and trace the history of English fiction."[71] Lee drew upon many of the Gothic elements introduced by Walpole and Reeve, modified them, added some of her own touches, and produced a work that, Summers states, "gave much--more perhaps than has been acknowledged--even to her most distinguished successors."[72] The Recess introduced many literary elements that later appeared in works such as Ann Radcliffe's

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69. See, for example: Ellis, 68-75; Dale Spender, Mothers of the Novel (Pandora Press, London: 1986) 232; Bette Roberts, "Sophia Lee's The Recess (1785): The Ambivalence of Female Gothicism," Massachusetts Studies in English VI (1979): 68-82; and Spencer, 195-201.
70. The Canterbury Tales was published in five volumes between 1797 and 1805. The work was a collaboration between Sophia and her sister Harriet, although Harriet is accredited with the majority of the production. The novel contains twelve stories told by travelers snowbound in a Canterbury inn.
71. Summers, 169.
72. Summers, 169.

Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne (1789), and Sir Walter Scott's Kenilworth (1821), The Monastery (1820), and The Abbot (1820).[73]

Lee's life, as well as her work, was far different from Clara Reeve's. Whereas Reeve's life consisted of a conservative upbringing and a quiet, retired adulthood, Lee was a public figure from early in her life. She was born in 1750 to parents who were both successful actors. Her mother died early, leaving Sophia responsible for the upbringing of her younger brother and four sisters. During her job as a "mother," Lee wrote a three act opera entitled The Chapter of Accidents (1780). This play was favorably received and went through four editions by 1782, and was subsequently reprinted several times.[74] With the profits from her work, Sophia established a school for young ladies at Belvidere House in Bath, where she and her sister Harriet resided. This school ran successfully from 1781 to 1803 and is believed to have been attended by Ann Radcliffe who also resided in Bath at this time.[75] While teaching, Sophia Lee published her great historical Gothic, The Recess. The first volume appeared in 1783, followed in 1785 by volumes two and three. This book was so successful that Lee's publisher gave her fifty pounds in addition to the amount agreed upon for the copyright.[76] She also translated the French romance Varbeck (1786), wrote a tragedy entitled Almeyda, Queen of Granada (1796) which failed in the theater, lasting only four nights, and published an epistolary novel, The Life of a Lover (1804). Lee wrote another play entitled The Assassination, which failed on production in 1807

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73. Frank, 204.
74. Summers, 165.
75. Spender, 233.
76. Dictionary of National Biography XI (Oxford Press: 1917) 821.

and was never printed.[77] With the profits from her works, Lee purchased a house in Clifton, where she died in 1824.

The Recess, Lee's first work of prose fiction, was perhaps the greatest of her productions. This work is a historical novel set in the time of Queen Elizabeth, a time, Lee states in her Advertisement, "of romance." Lee uses "history" to a much different end than does Reeve with The Old English Baron, a novel that, to some extent, is also a historical novel. Reeve's work begins: "In the minority of Henry the Sixth, King of England, when the renowned John Duke of Bedford was Regent in France, and Humphrey the good Duke of Gloucester was Protector of England, a worthy knight..." Following this introduction, Reeve begins the story of Sir Philip Harclay, Edmund, the Fitz-Owens, and other "non-historical" figures. King Henry, the Duke of Bedford, and the Duke of Gloucester, the "real" historical personages of the time, never appear in the work. Reeve appears to have used this specific time in history merely to distance the novel's events from those of her own time, and thus, in keeping with her strict conservatism, distance herself from making any direct statements about her own time.

Lee probably uses a historical setting to distance herself from her work as well, yet she brings the actual historical figures of Elizabeth's reign into her plot. In The Recess, the heroines' lives are directly involved with those of Queen Elizabeth, Lord Leicester, Lord Essex, and King James. The heroines of the story, Matilda and Ellinor, are the offspring of Mary Queen of Scots, born in secret and raised by a governess to

77. Todd Dictionary, 194.

prevent public knowledge of Mary's clandestine marriage with the Duke of Norfolk. Lee has taken history and rewritten it, for she believes "the best and worst actions of princes often proceed from partialities and prejudices, which live in their hearts, and are buried with them" (Advertisement). Lee, like Reeve, has turned history into romance, but as Dale Spender claims, The Recess "shows signs of serious historical research and is not an altogether unlikely fiction of the period."[78]

Lee's rewriting of history can be viewed as an extremely powerful feminist statement. The fates of nearly all the men in The Recess are caused by rivalries between Queen Elizabeth and other women. Lee suggests that recorded history is a lie, for it denies women their rightful place. History, for Lee, is not founded on the actions of great men, but rather on the jealousies of great women.[79] The events presented in this novel are, for the most part, in accord with history books, but the underlying motives have changed. The Recess presents a history in which women are given a prominent position, for romance drives most political actions.

The novel is written in the first person, presented as the actual writings of Matilda and Ellinor. The work consists of two manuscripts, one from each sister, which Matilda puts together on her death bed and addresses to her dear friend, Adelaide Marie de Montmorenci. Matilda, who is separated from her sister early in the novel, receives her sister's manuscript from Lady Arundel, a friend who Ellinor entrusted with the preservation of her life

78. Spender, 232.
79. Spencer, 195.

story. The overall femininity of the novel extends far beyond Lee's use of romance. The actual author of the work was a woman who at the time of the work's publication, was running a school for women. The two fictitious authors of the novel are also women, and Ellinor's manuscript is preserved by a woman. Matilda dedicates the completed book to a Madame Montmorenci, who is addressed in asides throughout the text. Kate Ferguson Ellis, Bette Roberts, and many other literary scholars make the unsupported claim that Gothic novels (or even novels in general) were written for, and read by, predominantly women. No evidence exists to confirm this claim, and it is even contradicted by Henry Tilney in Northanger Abbey. ~~ux~~(The Recess), however, is addressed to a woman and certainly is about women--two facts that should be kept in mind when analyzing the text.

Perhaps the most striking feature of The Recess, as well as its most Gothic feature, is Lee's recurrent use of enclosure. Again and again the two heroines are imprisoned, trapped within enclosed spaces. Lee appears to have used these scenes to subtly represent the actual state of women in eighteenth-century England--that of limitation and persecution. As Jane Spencer states:

> Images of mystery, madness and confinement surround the heroines: the Gothic machinery is used as a means of covertly exploring the female condition. The romance tells of women's exclusion from the 'real world' of power and recorded history. The central image for Sophia Lee is that of the recess itself: an enclosed space, secluded from the world, it represents women's destiny for confinement, and hidden female powers.[80]

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80. Spencer, 198.

But enclosures are more than symbols in The Recess. Lee uses them as literary tools for developing her characters. Every time one of the heroines is imprisoned, she eventually emerges with a greater awareness of herself and the world around her--the imprisonment experience forces her to recognize how little she knew about human nature prior to her confinement.[81] Thus, by the end of the novel, Matilda (the only sister to survive these trials) has gained an acute and painful awareness of her situation within her oppressive society.

The novel begins within the enclosure referred to in the title, the recess, which is a set of underground chambers once used as a hiding place by the Catholics during the reformation. Matilda narrates the story of her childhood: "As soon as capable of reflection, I found myself and a sister of my own age, in an apartment with a lady, and a maid older than herself" (I. 2). The recess is, significantly, filled with women--the sister, governess, and maid. It is also separated from the outside world: "our light proceeded from small casements of painted glass, so infinitely above our reach that we could never seek a world beyond" (I. 2). Lee has immediately, on the first page of the novel, established a female domain that is separated form the public sphere. Soon, however, knowledge of the outside world enters the recess in the figure of a man, Father Anthony, who teaches the sisters of a "terrible large place called the world, where a few haughty individuals commanded miserable millions, whom a few artful ones made so; that Providence had graciously

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81. Leonard Engel develops this argument for other Gothic works in: "The Role of the Enclosure in the English and American Gothic Romance," Essays in Arts and Sciences XI (1982): 59-68.

rescued us from both, nor could we ever be sufficiently grateful" (I. 3).

We learn exactly what was included in Father Anthony's definition of "Providence" when the sister's governess, Mrs. Marlow, is dying and preparing the girls with the information they will need for the outside world. She tells the children of their royal birth and of their secret delivery to the recess to protect their parents from the violence of Queen Elizabeth. They learn that the Duke of Norfolk, their father, had them placed in this confinement until he could establish them as Mary's daughters, and finally, they learn that their mother is currently imprisoned by Elizabeth, and that their father had been unsuccessful in his efforts and was beheaded. In her dying speech, the governess warns the girls: "wait, then my dear children, with patience, when I am in my grave, the destination of Providence, and never claim your parent till she pleases to acknowledge you" (I. 50).

Lee has created a very unusual set-up by beginning in this manner. Unlike Theodore in The Castle of Otranto, Edmund in The Old English Baron, or any of Ann Radcliffe's heroines, Lee's main characters learn their true identities early in the novel. The Recess is not about coming into a higher station, the central action of the women's wish-fulfillment plot, but rather, is about being unable to claim one's proper station. Throughout the entire novel, the two women struggle to have their birth claim publicly acknowledged, yet never succeed. Far removed from the wish-fulfillment novel, The Recess can be seen as representing the true plight of eighteenth-century women--that of being

meritorious of a respectable status within society, but being powerless to enforce that right.

The women's wish-fulfillment plot, after the discovery of true identity, nearly always ends with marriage. Lee maintains this order of events by having her heroines married soon after they learn of their royal birth, but does not present marriage in a positive light. Matilda and Ellinor, after the death of Mrs. Marlow, become bored with the recess. Their days become tedious, so they begin venturing out to the neighboring ruins through a secret passageway. One day, while exploring these ruins, the girls are startled by the appearance of a man, Lord Leicester. Matilda, who quickly develops a fondness for this gentleman, who "art and application had polished to the highest perfection," learns that he is fleeing from assassins, and thus offers him sanctuary in the recess. The girls hide Leicester in Mrs. Marlow's chamber to avoid the scornful eye of Father Anthony. Soon, after a few conversations, Matilda and Leicester fall in love. Father Anthony, entering the recess unexpectedly, discovers a picture of Queen Elizabeth dropped by Leicester in his haste, and consequently discovers the nobleman's presence. Lord Leicester asks Father Anthony for Matilda's hand, and is granted his request. The couple, very early in the book, is secretly married.

The marriage in Lee's work, unlike in nearly all other Gothics, is not the end of all troubles, but the beginning of them. Lord Leicester is a favorite of Queen Elizabeth and cannot tell her of his marriage without losing his advantage. Thus, neither the marriage nor Matilda's birth right can be disclosed.

Instead, Matilda, accompanied by Ellinor, must follow Leicester to his castle at Kentilworth in the guise of hired musicians. Even at the castle, Lord Leicester is careful not to reveal this secret, so he treats Matilda and Ellinor such that neither one will appear a favorite. Matilda has escaped, through marriage, her confinement in the recess, only to find herself in a more frustrating confinement.

The secrecy of the marriage creates many problems for the couple. Elizabeth hears the sisters sing at Kentilworth, and is so impressed by their voices that she has them removed to her court. Leicester, silenced by his secrecy, is unable to stop her. While at court, the ignorant Sir Philip Sidney suits Matilda, and the Queen, who wants a hasty marriage to foil an escape plot of Mary's, proposes to a dumbfounded Lord Leicester. Under this pressure, the couple decides to flee Elizabeth for the recess, Leicester disguised as a painter, Matilda as a servant. They return, however, to find Father Anthony dead and the recess overrun by bandetti. The couple is captured and tied up--imprisoned in the very enclosure that once protected them from the outside world. Lee presents the recess as both an assylum and a prison, a topic I will discuss later.

Matilda, however, is able to break the string restraining her hands and free her husband. Lee has created an interesting role reversal with this scene, revealing the strength of women. The couple is able to escape through the heroine's efforts, not the hero's. They decide to flee to Rouen, in France, where Matilda has a relative. Their flight is urgent, for Matilda has discovered that she is pregnant: "I found but too plainly, that

imprudent love had produced a new misfortune, and that I bore about a living testimony of my marriage, from which the worst consequences might arise" (I. 151). Thus Matilda finds herself endangered by pregnancy, just as her mother once was. The couple flees the country, leaving Ellinor behind, at the mercy of Elizabeth and her court. In Rouen, Matilda finds herself betrayed by the relative with whom she entrusted the information about her birth. The couple is awakened in the middle of the night by a noise, and when Leicester draws aside the bed curtain, they find "many men surrounding the bed with leveled arms" (I. 208). Leicester draws his sword and is instantly murdered. Matilda, who only hours before was imagining her trials over and future happiness to come, finds herself holding the bloody body of her dead husband. Her marriage ends in the gruesome scene presented in the epigraph to this chapter. Matilda faints, and awakens only to find herself imprisoned again, by her relative who is acting under order of the queen.

Sophia Lee has created a marriage that is marked by constraint and imprisonment. Never is Matilda able to be herself--she must always play the role of a lesser person such as a musician or a servant. The novel shows the foolishness of romantic love, for every time Matilda fantasizes about being happily wedded to Leicester, her dream is taken away. Because she is governed by romance, she becomes an easy victim of the real world of ambition and violence that Father Anthony had warned her about. Marriage entered into for romantic motives, the very type of marriage celebrated in most Gothic works, is portrayed in The Recess as a prison within itself. Marriage is

not a reward for Matilda, but a source of pain, and a constraint on her own powers as a woman.

Ellinor's plight, however, is even worse than Matilda's. Left alone at court with Elizabeth, the queen discovers her identity as Mary's daughter. In a fit of anger, the Queen took the proofs of Ellinor's royal birth and "tore the papers into atoms, she never thought small enough" (I. 294). Ellinor is then taken to the recess and imprisoned; the Queen will not release her unless it is as the wife of Lord Arlington. Ellinor, who had fallen in love with Lord Essex while at court, detests this match and refuses to consent. Lord Burleigh, however, soon changes her mind. He tells her that Lord Essex has been imprisoned for attempting to rescue Mary, and that if Matilda does not marry Arlington, Essex will be executed. Ellinor is also informed that her mother will be executed unless she signs a paper that reads: she, and on behalf of Matilda "freely acknowledge, and solemnly affirm, that they do not believe themselves born of the said Mary Queen of Scots, but have reason to know their parents of low degree" (II, 13). Under this pressure, she signs this paper and marries Arlington, only to find that Essex was not in prison and that her mother had already been executed.

Thus Ellinor is also imprisoned within a marriage. She is forced to marry a man she does not love, and at the same time sign a paper renouncing her right to power. In this situation, she chooses to reside in a dismal, distant tower of Arlington's castle, preferring solitude to her husband's company. She once meets secretly with Essex, only to be discovered by an enraged, armed Arlington. Ellinor started up, "and forcibly flung myself

between their swords: that of my husband pierced my shoulder" (II. 56). Her marriage, like Matilda's, provides nothing but imprisonment, pain, and disempowerment. Even when her husband dies after bursting a blood vessel during a hunting accident, Ellinor is imprisoned by this marriage; in his will, Lord Arlington calls Ellinor an "insane wench" who is to be "confined under the charge of his sisters in St. Vincents Abbey" (II. 68). Ellinor escapes one prison only to be cast into a new one: "I behold myself in the situation of a criminal, whose shackles are struck off only to launch him into the immense ocean in a little boat, without rudder, oars, or sustenance" (II. 68). Arlington, she states, "extended his tyranny beyond the grave" (II. 68).

After Arlington's death, however, Ellinor feigns her own death and manages to escape from the Abbey in a coffin. She then dresses as a man, a disguise she resumes four times during the course of the book, and sets off for Ireland to join Essex, who is fighting a war there. But upon reaching Ireland, Ellinor is captured by the Irish and imprisoned. Only by seducing and poisoning the Irish general is she able to escape and flee for the English camp, dressed in the clothes of an Irish soldier.

Ellinor's entire journey from France to Ireland reveals her powerlessness as a woman. She can escape France only after her captors believe she is dead. She can move through the countryside only when dressed as a man, for as a woman she would be vulnerable, constantly in danger. When trying to escape the Irish camp, she must resort to trickery and murder, two extremely "unfeminine" actions. Every time she acts to preserve herself,

she must discard her identity as a woman and assume a masculine disguise.

Upon approaching Essex's army, however, she is mistaken for an enemy and shot in the side. Her masculine disguise, while it empowers her, also makes her susceptible to the dangers of the male sphere. She recovers, but Essex must leave for England because he is falling out of favor with Queen Elizabeth. After this separation, Ellinor ends up imprisoned in a castle off the coast of Scotland, while Essex is imprisoned by the Queen for treason. Ellinor eventually is brought back to England, but despite her hopes, is never reunited with Essex. He is executed by the Queen, which causes Ellinor to go mad. Ellinor's narration is finished by her friend Lady Pembroke, for although she finally escapes all her physical confinements, Ellinor never regains her sanity. Arlington's false accusation becomes a reality, and Ellinor dies having never recovered from the failure of her romantic love. Matilda finds her corpse prostrate before a picture of Essex: "one hand had convulsively gathered her disordered garments over her thin chest; the other was still expressively extended towards the inanimate image of him so beloved" (II. 192).

Before her insanity, Ellinor reveals that she is aware of the nature of the outside world, and in doing so, presents a third dimension uncommon to most Gothic heroines. She has learned that she and her sister, because they have overwrought sensibilities, have no power within their society, and that they will never be able to claim the position of which they are worthy. In the beginning of her narration, she states that they

were "seen without being known; adored, without being esteemed; punished, without being guilty; applauded, without being meritorious, we were all an illusion" (I. 269). She does not feel that they were "real" people, for although they moved about in the public sphere, they had no power and would never be recognized as significant human beings. In the end of her narration, immediately before her insanity sets in, she has resigned herself to this fact: "Embosomed in the maternal arms of nature; safe in the obscure and solitary situation of this ivied asylum, here my affrighted soul, like a scared bird, faintly folds up its weary wings; delights to be alone, and joys in mere safety" (II. 148). In a sense, she has resigned herself to the very situation she was in when the book opened--the feminine, "maternal" confines of the recess. The "real world" presented her with nothing but persecution and oppression, so she falls back on the protected, isolated sphere she once so much despised.

This brief return to the beginning is what motivated Kate Ferguson Ellis to classify The Recess as a "pessimistic Gothic."[82] Lee does not present confinement as a desirable state, for it is limiting both physically and intellectually, but it is presented as the only option for women. Women have no choice. They are unable to survive in the public sphere, so they are forced to accept the private one.

Ellinor is perhaps lucky that she resigned to this fact early and retreated to the solitude of madness. As Spencer states, "Ellinor's madness is also a kind of protection for her,

82. Ellis, 68.

sheltering her even from the agony romantic love brings."[83] Matilda, on the other hand, is forced to suffer much longer than her sister, for she carries the baby of her murdered husband. The infant's birth is presented as tragic: "As soon as my weakness allowed, they gave into my arms a girl, a dear, a fatherless girl, who seemed at her first entrance into existence, to bewail her unknown calamity" (I. 225). Matilda often comes close to despair, and even contemplates suicide a few times, yet resigns herself to life for the sake of her daughter, Mary.

Matilda's only happiness comes from her daughter. Not even imprisonment affects her morale so long as her daughter is safe and healthy. While confined to a tower in Jamaica, Matilda would hold her daughter up to the prison bars for fresh air: "I held her to the window, morning and evening, and found the winds of Heaven blew not less pure through iron bars than gilded lattices" (I. 249). Once while doing this, a native woman of distinction saw the child and demanded it from Matilda: "I saw the attended slaves bear their mistress away on a covered couch, with my child in her arms. Ah then my prison became a dungeon indeed!" (I. 251).

Matilda puts all her efforts into raising her child properly. At the age of sixteen, the child is described as the perfect sentimental heroine. She is modest and plays the lute beautifully. Her voice is described as sweet in both singing and in speaking, and her sensibility "was rather deep than ardent." "Books were her only extravagance, and musick her only relaxation" (II. 186). Matilda has resigned herself to the fact

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83. Spencer, 199.

that she will never be able to claim her title, yet she still hopes her daughter will be recognized. With Elizabeth dead and King James on the throne, Matilda has new hope, for she lives near James' son, Prince Henry. Matilda plays match-maker and sets up Henry as a suitor for young Mary. She believes the marriage will be an event that will "end the persecutions of my family, by thus blessedly uniting the last sprung branches of it" (II. 205).

These romantic hopes for her daughter, however, end just as devestatingly as the hopes she once had for herself. Henry is poisoned by an old enemy of his, thus shattering Matilda's dreams. The desperate mother then throws herself on the mercy of King James, her half-brother, and presents him with the testimonials of her birth. But James proves no more benevolent than Elizabeth, for he destroys these papers (the last existing proof of the sisters' birth) and imprisons her, using against her the disclaimer Ellinor was forced to sign. To further her disappointment, when finally united with her daughter, Matilda learns that all her efforts in raising the child were in vain. Young Mary tells her mother that she had never loved Henry, and that she had secretly declared her love to Lord Somerset, a married man whom Matilda despises. Mary and Somerset's passion, however, is discovered by Somerset's jealous wife, who poisons Mary. The girl dies in her mother's arms after this confession.

Matilda falls mortally ill after this event, and retires to France where she writes her part of the narration. She addresses Adelaide, the woman to whom the manuscript will be given, at the end of her story: "Suffer it not to damp your hopes, but rather

let it blunt your sense of misfortune: for have I not said already, that consummate misery has a moral use, in teaching the repiner at little evils to be juster to his God and himself" (II. 273). This resignation to God, however, leaves the reader uneasy, for it is undermined by the obvious fact that she must resign herself to God, for the real world will not accept her. The book ends with Matilda instructing Adelaide to visit, under the guidance of her servant,

> ...the nameless grave where he shall have interred my ashes: drop on it a few of those holy tears with which virtue consecrates misfortune; then raise your eyes with those of your venerable conductor, and in a better world look for MATILDA (274).

On earth, even after death, Matilda will be "nameless." Just as Ellinor's only escape from the oppression of the world was madness, Matilda can only escape through ascent to a "better world."

Thus Lee, with the heroines of The Recess, presents two possible ways for women to end their suffering and oppression in the world: madness and death. Nearly all the other female characters in the novel are forced into similar ends because of their romantic tendencies. Rose Cecil, Matilda's dear friend, upon discovering that her love Lord Leicester is married, commits suicide at sea. Queen Mary is eventually executed because of her marriage with the Duke of Norfolk. Young Mary is poisoned out of jealousy. Anana, Matilda's friend in Jamaica, dies of small pox immediately after she is freed and presented with the possibility of a better life. Queen Elizabeth dies, in a state of madness, believing she saw the ghost of Ellinor. The novel has great breadth in its argument on the state of women, for it does not

simply follow the fate of a single heroine, but shows many women, women of different personalities and dispositions, all doomed for the same end.

There is, however, a possibility other than death and madness suggested by Lee: seclusion. Three women in the novel, Lady Pembroke, Lady Arundel, and Mrs. Marlow, are not destroyed by the public world, for they withdraw from it. For Lady Pembroke and Lady Arundel, this withdrawal is merely implied. Never do we see them outside of their respective homes. Mrs. Marlow, on the other hand, narrates the story of her life and her decision to reside in the recess. She had been on the brink of marriage when she received a letter informing her that she and her fiance were born of the same mother. The horror of her romantic delusion causes her to retreat to the recess: "This solitude, so suitable to the sadness of my soul, was inexpressibly agreeable to me; it had all the advantages of a nunnery, without the tie to continue in it."

But there is a "tie to continue" in the recess, for were she to leave, as we have seen with other female characters, she would be destroyed. She is not physically forced into seclusion, yet she is trapped by a society that does not allow a place for women. Lee presents the enclosures of <u>The Recess</u> with ambivalent feelings. They are restricting, yet they are also shelters from the outside world. Even the two sisters view the recess differently:

> Ellinor, whose lively imagination readily imbibed the romantic and extravagant, conjectured we were in the power of some giant; nay, such was her disgust to Father Anthony . . . I had a very different idea, and fancied our retreat a hallowed circle to seclude us

> from the wicked, while Father Anthony was our guardian genius" (I. 4-5).

Yet later Matilda begins to feel imprisoned in the recess as well. The places of seclusion in the novel appear alternately as sanctuaries and prisons. With her imprisoned female characters, Lee presents a situation similar to that of many women in the eighteenth century: they are safe from harm, yet denied their powers.

This ambiguous view of the recess extends to the surrounding world as well. Nothing Lee presents in the novel is clear-cut. Matilda describes Ellinor as one who "readily imbibed the romantic and extravagant," yet when we read Ellinor's manuscript, we see her describe Matilda in a similar fashion. Lee uses multiple points of view to make the reader realize that there is no "truth" in the world, for facts are founded on romantic biases. Matilda believes that Lord Leicester is the best of men, while Ellinor describes him thus: "His heart, not warm by nature, had been rendered in a great degree callous, from having always passed his life in the chilling atmosphere of a court" (I. 266). Likewise, Matilda and Lady Pembroke do not view Essex as favorably as does Ellinor. There are no perfect Sir Charles Grandison characters in Sophia Lee's world, nor are there any virtuous Harriet Byrons. Each character has flaws that are exposed through the voices of the various narrators. Lee has created characters that are realistic rather than idealized.

Just as she does not present a paradigmatic virtuous heroine in the novel, Lee does not centralize evil in a single character. Elizabeth, and later James, are the major villains, yet they are

often influenced by other tyrannical characters. Leicester's servant Williams, Matilda's relative in Rouen, the Irish general, Arlington, and Somerset all play sinister roles. Even several women are villainous, such as Leicester's first wife who tried to poison him, and Somerset's wife who murdered Mary. Even the so-called "good" characters occasionally act questionably. In The Castle of Otranto evil is represented by Manfred and in The Old English Baron it is localized predominantly in the character of Walter Lovel. Consequently, in these novels, removing the villain puts an end to evil and restores good. Evil in The Recess, however, is dispersed throughout the world. It cannot be extricated.

An overview of Lee's work does indeed reveal the author's strong pessimism. Women are doomed to ruin or seclusion. Evil cannot be defeated. Even the physical evidence of a high station that empowers Walpole's Theodore and Reeve's Edmund proves useless. No birthmarks, pictures, or papers can lift the heroines above their limited positions.

But there is a slight glimmer peaking through the gloom of The Recess, a faint light that Ellis and Spencer overlook in their analyses. Lee very subtly, perhaps not even consciously, presents a source of power for women: the power of writing. Frequently in The Recess we find a self-reflexive authorial presence that seems to equate books and writing with power. A strong suggestion that language and reality are closely related is also present. Matilda and Ellinor grow weary of the recess because Father Anthony "laid and odious restraint on all our expressions" (I. 53, emphasis mine). When preparing to reveal

her birth to King James, Matilda states: "That important moment so often delayed, so eternally dreaded, was at length arrived, and the long treasured secret on the verge of being published" (II. 226). Perhaps the most striking example of this language occurs when Matilda has finished reading Ellinor's story: "I, at last, sunk on my knees, and raising my eyes, with the manuscript, at once toward Heaven.--'Oh, mighty author of universal being!'" (II. 172). The supreme power, God himself, is portrayed as a writer.

The heroines are constantly escaping their confines by delivering notes to the proper people, and frequently being foiled by having their notes intercepted. Without writing, they are powerless. While imprisoned in Jamaica, Matilda expresses the importance of books in her daughter's education: "The total ignorance in which my daughter's mind yet remained, shocked and grieved me. Being wholly without books, I knew not any manner of supplying their place" (I. 253). Books and writing provide a source of education, communication with the "outside" world, and thus, a source of empowerment. Even the evil Elizabeth, in a very different manner, uses books as a source of power. When angry at Ellinor, the Queen "threw at her a large book she had been reading, which striking the sweet Ellinor on the temple, she dropt senseless at once" (I. 201).

The heroines of Sophia Lee's work are destroyed, yet they have the power to pass on their knowledge in their manuscripts. At the end of her section of this work, Matilda writes: "That my decline has been prolonged till this narrative is concluded, I do not regret" (II. 272). Thus, in her characters, we see a little

of Lee herself--a woman living in an oppressive society who has the power of the writer. This power allows Lee to secure her own living, as well as pass on her knowledge of women's place in her society--of their confinement to the recess.

Chapter 5

Ideology, Ambivalence and the Gothic Elements

Within the scope of the three works discussed in the previous chapters--Otranto, The Old English Baron, and The Recess--we see a great diversity in tone, style, content, and literary function. When later works are added to this analysis, the picture becomes even more muddled. Gothic works are often so different from one another that the genre as a whole is extremely difficult to define. Frank, in the introduction to his Gothic bibliography, breaks down the genre into five Gothic "modes" in an effort to attack this problem. He states that Gothic works can be placed in the following categories: "supernatural or inscrutable Gothic," "natural or explained Gothic," "historical Gothic or Gothic mixed with the violent values of a remote and usually imaginary past," "equivocal or ambiguous Gothic in which the degree of horror or terror engendered depends upon the perceptions of a narrator," and finally, "ideological or philosophical Gothic in which the Gothic effects are used to revolutionize or to radicalize the moral and political thinking of the reader."[84] Frank goes on to say that these categories often overlap. In fact, I would go as far as to say that a work

84. Frank, xxiv.

such as Ann Radcliffe's The Italian has elements from all five of these modes. Nearly every Gothic scholar runs into a problem when attempting to define the term "Gothic," and often entire chapters of books are devoted to this task, only to show that the term, in conjunction with literature, is undefinable. Varma's The Gothic Flame and Summers' The Gothic Quest, two of the most ambitious and well known Gothic studies, do not even address the question of definition.

In this chapter, rather than attempting to define and analyze Gothic works, I will focus on Gothic elements and how those elements are used within certain works. By doing this, my discussion will not be restricted to the confines of an exclusive definition. For example, a book such as Charlotte Smith's Emmeline, The Orphan of the Castle (1788) is definitely not a "Gothic" work. The novel takes place in modern England and the majority of the work is much more "sentimental" than it is "Gothic." Yet the book has several distinct Gothic moments--moments that Smith introduces to create effects that a sentimental narrative could not. As Margaret Anne Doody states: "The Gothic elements in Emmeline appear only sporadically; the author is primarily interested in contemporary social problems, and uses all the elements of fiction which will serve her turn, without fully developing any."[85] In other words, Smith found short-comings in a purely sentimental narrative that she had to overcome by introducing Gothic elements. For example, Fitz-Edward's secret approach to Lady Adelina's house is marked by

85. Margaret Anne Doody, "Deserts, Ruins and Troubled Waters: Female Dreams in Fiction and the Development of the Gothic Novel," Genre X (1977) 561.

"faint and uncertain light," "gloominess," and "solemn and melancholy stillness" (490). Fitz-Edward is discribed as a "figure of a man, tall and thin, wrapped in a long horseman's coat." Smith creates a Gothic atmosphere that "suggests the unhappiness caused by oppressive reality."[86] Gothic fragments such as this are just as relevant to my discussion as works that are predominantly Gothic, for both present short-comings of sentimentality.

Of course, now I am faced with the problem of determining which elements are unique to, or at least associated with, the Gothic, and how these elements may have been related to ideology. In Chapter One, I showed that the eighteenth century was a time of ~~h~~ industrialization and agricultural enclosure. This led to a new family structure wherein the man was increasingly the sole wage earner, and the woman was increasingly confined to the home, not employed in wage labor and caring for the children. The wife no longer contributed to the family income, and thus, ~~she became~~ was increasingly constructed as dependant on her husband. At the same time, an ideology was developing that was founded on sentiment--an ideology that condoned the powerless position of women by placing extreme importance on their feelings and ability to uphold virtue. The man's position was justified by assuming that he would gain great happiness through the expression of his innate benevolence, that he would not abuse his position of power because he would gain satisfaction from his generosity and from fulfilling his role as a protector.

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86. Doody, 561

For a large part of the century literature portrayed and supported this ideology. Character's such as Richardson's Sir Charles Grandison showed the power of benevolence over evil. His rational and benevolent behavior was presented as the backbone of society--men and women, the poor and the rich, all benefited from his actions. The Gothic, introduced first in 1765 by Walpole, appears to be a reaction to this ideology. Four Gothic elements in particular seem to be quite distinct from the sentimental genre. First of these is the Gothic setting--the castle, monastery, or mansion. No longer simply a backdrop for the action, in the Gothic the setting comes to life with its secret rooms, hidden stairways, and dark, windy passages. Master of this building is the Gothic villain, a character who is brought to the forefront in this genre, quite unlike in sentimental works. He is violent, passionate, and not always rational, and his presence is a cause of great distress for the "good," sentimental characters. The heroes and heroines are also slightly different than those portrayed in sentimental works, for they often have unknown identities--they are frequently orphans who discover their noble parentage and come into a lost inheritance. Finally, the Gothic is unique for its supernatural elements--the Gothic world has forces that cannot be explained rationally.

Not all four of these elements (tyrant, castle, supernatural, secret identity) are necessary to produce a Gothic work or Gothic moment, but all, I believe, have significant ties to the ideology of the latter eighteenth century. In the discussion below, I have singled out each of these elements and

discussed their functions within several Gothic novels and novels that make use of the Gothic.

5.1 The Gothic Building

> 'There,' said Montoni, speaking for the first time in several hours, 'is Udolpho.'
>
> Emily gazed with melancholy awe upon the castle, which she understood to be Montoni's; for, though it was now lighted up by the setting sun, the gothic greatness of its features, and its mouldering walls of dark grey stone, rendered it a gloomy and sublime object.
>
> -Mysteries of Udolpho, (226-7)

Perhaps the most common feature of the Gothic is the haunted castle, old mansion, or corrupt convent. Some works, such as The Recess, contain numerous such structures. In a sentimental work, the setting is little more than a backdrop for the action. Harriet and Sir Charles move about in the Grandison estate, yet the actual house has little impact on the story. In the Gothic, however, the building becomes integral to the plot. Confined spaces, as I illustrated in my discussion of The Recess, often represent physical and mental limitations. Dark and windy passages frequently indicate danger and vulnerability, such as the subterranean corridors to which Isabella flees in The Castle of Otranto. Once within the gates of the Gothic castle, a character is isolated from the outside world. The castle traps the virtuous heroine and the evil villain in a confined space where cruelty, terror, and superstition can all run unmarked. Often a character's perception is greatly affected by this constant state of darkness, imprisonment, and danger, and the very boundaries of reality fall into question.

In The Castle of Otranto, the function of the castle is straightforward. It is a symbol of Manfred's power. As long as he is in control of Otranto, he is in control of his own life and everyone around him. When things start getting out of hand after his son Conrad dies, Manfred "dismissed his friends and attendants, and retired to his own chamber, after locking the gates of the castle, in which he suffered none but his domestics to remain" (31). Once the gates are locked, the castle has become an enclosed space in which Manfred is the supreme patriarch. Theodore, Isabella, Jerome--all who are within the walls of Otranto--are in Manfred's power. Such a situation here, as in nearly all Gothic works, accents the danger and vulnerability of the sensible characters. Isabella, fleeing from Manfred's advances, knew not "whither to direct her steps, nor how to escape from the impetuosity of the prince. The gates of the castle, she knew, were locked, and guards placed in the court" (35). She and the other sensible characters have been isolated from the outside world, and are forced to confront, unprotected, Manfred's violence.

The castle, however, fails to contain Isabella. She escapes through a secret passageway to the church--a place where Manfred has no power. Just as the castle is not a perfect confinement, Manfred's power is proven to be not absolute. This can be seen further, at the end of the novel, when Manfred is deposed by the giant form of Alfonso, and "the walls of the castle behind Manfred were thrown down with a mighty force" (109). Without the confines of Otranto, Manfred is powerless, unable to exert his

tyranny. His position as the powerful patriarch has come to an end.

A similar argument can be made for Matthew Lewis's The Monk. Ambrosio, the novel's central character and villain, is the supreme ruler within the walls of his convent. His exploits with Matilda do not endanger him, for they occur within the confines of his rule. When he tires of Matilda, however, and seeks his pleasure outside of the convent, Ambrosio becomes vulnerable and he is eventually ruined.

In texts where the central character is the prisoner, as opposed to the villain, the Gothic enclosures become more complicated. We find the same heightened sense of powerlessness and vulnerability of the sensible character as we do in the other texts, yet now we are also presented with the prisoner's mental processes. We are shown not merely the confinement, vulnerability, and victimization of the hero or heroine, but also that character's reaction to the situation.

In many cases where the character is placed in confinement for extended periods of time, the imagination is presented as a form of escape. For example, in Godwin's Caleb Williams, Caleb has been arrested and imprisoned by his employer Falkland. In jail, he comes very close to despair: "Here I had neither books nor pens, nor any thing upon which to engage my attention; all was a sightless blank . . . a thousand times I meditated suicide" (191). After several days in prison, however, Caleb's fortitude is revived:

> I found out the secret of employing my mind. I said, 'I am shut up for half the day in total darkness, without any external source of amusement; the other

> half I spend in the midst of noise, turbulence and confusion. What then? Can I not draw amusement from the stores of my own mind? . . . I amused myself with recollecting the history of my life . . . By degrees I quitted my own story, and employed myself in imaginary adventures (192-3).

In this state, and perhaps the only time in the novel, Caleb is actually happy. He finds liberation from his oppression through his own mind. Alienated from the world, Caleb has no one to rely on but himself, and within the confines of his jail cell, he learns that alone, without the overbearing forces of the public world, he can be happy. The Gothic enclosure, then, not only portrays the oppressiveness of the English government and the horrors of the prison system, it also shows that the only way to escape this oppression is to retreat into the recesses of one's own mind. At no point after this scene is Caleb content, not even when he defeats Falkland in court, for the injustices of the public world are so many and so ambiguous, that happiness is not possible, even at moments of victory.

Ann Radcliffe also portrays the mind as a source of liberation from confinement. With her heroines, however, this mental elation comes not through use of the imagination, but from sublime scenery. Throughout Radcliffe's works we see her heroines imprisoned, yet unconscious of their predicament because of the awe-inspiring scenes about them. One famous example of this occurs in The Italian, when Ellena has been imprisoned in the monastery of San Stefano. She had been locked in a small room in this building, but finds one day that her door has been left ajar. Venturing out, she discovers that she now has access to a narrow stair-case:

> She ascended the winding steps hastily, and found they led only to a door, opening into a small room, where nothing remarkable appeared, till she approached the windows, and beheld thence an horizen, and a landscape spread below, whose grandeur awakened all her heart. The consciousness of her prison was lost, while her eyes ranged over the wide and freely-sublime scene without (90).

Just as in Caleb Williams, we find the main character finding liberation only through the mind. Ellena is not physically free in The Italian until the very end. She moves about from prison to prison, from one source of danger to another, yet when her mind is elevated through sublime contemplation, she appears free. The Gothic enclosure in Radcliffe, then, functions to accentuate the sublimity of these scenes by contrasting it to scenes of imprisonment, darkness, and danger.[87] Furthermore, these elements work dialectically and the juxtaposition of sublime and imprisonment scenes, makes the moments of imprisonment appear even more confining and stifling than they would otherwise.

Thus, both the works of Godwin and Radcliffe present a contrast between the liberating powers of the mind, and the oppressive nature of reality. The Gothic enclosure is used to bring out this contrast. The active imagination and sensitivity to nature are both characteristics of sentimentality, yet these virtues cannot be integrated into the world of oppression. Caleb is constantly running from, fighting with, or being imprisoned by Falkland and the forces of "law," yet when left alone to the resources of his mind, he is content. The source of happiness, however, the imagination, has no power over social injustice. Caleb has an unhappy outcome because he cannot live in the

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87. Daniel Cottom, The Civilized Imagination: A study of Ann Radcliffe, Jane Austen, and Sir Walter Scott (Cambridge U Press, NY: 1985) 44-5.

fictitious world of his mind, but must face reality. Similarly, Radcliffe's heroines are often miserable because they are forced to interact with the oppressive characters around them, rather than being permitted to indulge in the sublimity of their environment.

Castles and enclosures, however, do much more than heighten the contrast between oppression and mental freedom. In Radcliffe, they also illustrate the heroine's physical confinement and consequent vulnerability and powerlessness. Emily, for example, while imprisoned in Udolpho, is totally powerless. She is nearly forced into a marriage, her remaining estates are almost stolen from her, and she is constantly vulnerable to rape. Her chamber in the castle contains a door that locks on the outside only. Emily is frequently discovering this door unlocked, and is terrified of her vulnerable situation. Often she cannot sleep at night and one evening she awoke and "saw the door move, and then slowly open, and perceived something enter the room, but the extreme duskiness prevented her distinguishing what it was" (261). The figure turns out to be Count Morano, who has come to abduct Emily. The heroine is delivered unscathed from this scene of potential rape, as always in Radcliffe, yet the image of the imprisoned woman with the one-way door is extremely significant. Emily escapes from rape, yet we never forget her horrifying vulnerability. Radcliffe, with scenes such as this, portrays the powerless position of women and the freedom men have of taking advantage of that powerlessness.

Nevertheless, Gothic buildings are not always symbols of oppression and confinement. Radcliffe, in The Italian, for

example, shows an ambivalent attitude towards convents. With the monastery of San Stefano she portrays their horrific and stifling nature, but in the convent of Santa della Pieta she portrays a place of refuge and safety. Charlotte Smith, in Emmeline, reveals a similar ambivalence. After Emmeline has retired to her secluded chamber in Mowbray Castle, Delamere breaks the door down and makes passionate advances towards the innocent teen-ager. When the girl demands him to leave or she will threaten the house, her attacker replies "That is almost impossible" (37). No one would hear her cries. Realizing her extreme vulnerability, she flees from the chamber. Delamere pursues her, yet gets lost in the darkness of the castle. Emmeline, who knows the layout of the castle well, is able to escape.[88] The castle serves both to protect and endanger her.

Even in this short discussion we can see the use of the Gothic enclosure is quite involved. A castle can be a place of danger or of protection. A prison cell can be physically confining yet mentally liberating. For Radcliffe, a prison cell with a good view is not a prison at all, but a place of escape into the sublime. Women in castles are vulnerable to rape. The villains of the castles are often struggling to keep outside forces from disturbing their patriarchal power.

Many of the themes that revolve around the Gothic castle-- confinement, powerlessness because of isolation, vulnerability to ill-natured patriarchs-- also appear when studying the eighteenth-century home. The unemployed housewife was confined within her home and had little access to the public sphere of her

88. This scene is very similar to Isabella's flight from Otranto.

husband. Thus, in the case of an ill-natured or aggressive husband, she was indeed vulnerable to his assaults and could be viewed as his prisoner. As Kate Ferguson Ellis states in her study of this subject, "Any enclosed space seemed to me to present a paradox, which links the "safe" sphere of home inseparably to its dark opposite, the Gothic castle."[89]

5.2 The Gothic Villain

> Ellena's terror began to yield to astonishment, and this emotion increased, when, Schedoni approaching her, she perceived tears swell in his eyes . . . 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!" (236).
>
> -The Italian, after Schedoni nearly murders Ellena

No castle, monastery or prison is complete without its tyrannical lord. Manfred of Otranto, Montoni of Udolpho, Mrs. Lennard of The Old Manor House--nearly every Gothic work introduces a powerful villain pitted against the protagonists. As I discussed in conjunction with The Castle of Otranto, this villain is often presented as a test for sentimentality--a force against which sentiment proves powerless. In The Monk, Antonia, because of her innocence and naivete, places her trust in Ambrosio and is consequently abducted, raped, and murdered. Monimia in The Old Manor House is powerless against her evil house-keeper, Mrs. Lennard. Both Ellinor and Matilda in The Recess are unable to bend the will of Queen Elizabeth. Again and again in the Gothic we see sentimental characters unable to protect themselves from their worldly, evil superiors.

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89. Ellis, x.

Yet in many Gothic works the villain, just like the enclosure, plays an ambivalent role. He is both a source of danger and of protection. The Italian clearly illustrates this, for Schedoni imprisons Ellena in a small isolated house on the ocean and plans to murder her, but when he pulls back her gown to get a clear strike with his dagger, he discovers a locket around her neck containing what he believes to be his own picture. He is instantly transformed from a threatening murderer into a protective father-figure.

Radcliffe portrays another villain/protector figure in The Mysteries of Udolpho: Montoni. He is definitely an evil character--he abducts Emily and imprisons her in Udolpho; he denies her request for a room that she can secure from the inside; and he tries to cash in on her inheritance. Yet in several scenes he also appears as Emily's protector. When Count Morano sneaks into Emily's room at night, Montoni discovers him and prevents the abduction. Later in the story, Barnardine is attempting to abduct the heroine, when several persons flew into the castle among whom Emily "distinguished Montoni and Cavigni, followed by a number of ruffian-faced fellows, to whom she no longer looked with terror, but with hope, for, at this instant, she did not tremble at the thought of any dangers, that might await her within the castle" (349). Montoni, in each of these cases, no longer plays the role of the villain, because he is the lesser of the two dangers. He is a threat to her freedom and her inheritance, but he is not a threat to her chastity.

Charlotte Smith, in Emmeline, shows a similar ambivalence towards her villainous characters. When Emmeline asks Lord

Montreville for protection from the advances of Mr. Maloney, he only encourages the match. Yet when pursued by Delamere, Emmeline flees to Lord Montreville for protection and he readily provides it by reprimanding his son: "How comes it, Sir . . . that you dare thus to insult a person who is under my protection?" (40). Yet Lord Montreville proves to be no protector at all, unless this task involves keeping his son away from Emmeline, whom he feels is of too low a birth to warrant his family's attention.

In Caleb Williams the very definition of a villain falls into question. Caleb, after discovering that Falkland is a murderer, is driven into exile by his knowledge. His efforts to bring the "villain" to justice result in his own long and painful persecution. Once he is successful in convicting Falkland, however, Caleb is not sure he has acted properly. He does not believe Falkland is all evil: "I acknowledge that in various ways Mr. Falkland showed humanity towards me during this period. He would have prevented my going to prison at first; he contributed towards my subsistence during my detention . . . he at length procured my discharge" (333). In fact, Caleb comes to the realization that nothing that he did was necessary, that Falkland is no guiltier than himself or any other human: "Mr. Falkland is of a nobel nature. Yes; in spite of the catastrophe of Tyrrel, of the miserable end of Hawkinses, and of all that I have myself suffered, I affirm that he has qualities of the most admirable kind" (334). typo?

Thus, in many Gothic works we find villains who are not so concretely villainous as Walpole's Manfred, Reeve's Walter Lovel,

or Lewis's Ambrosio. In the case of Godwin's Falkland, this ambivalence appears rather pessimistic--Falkland cannot be condemned for his villainy, because everyone who is a part of society contributes to this villainy. In the works of Radcliffe and to some extent Smith, we see a tug-of-war between the villain's function as a protector and persecutor. The heroines are imprisoned and controlled by these men, yet they must also turn to them for protection on extreme occasions. Again, as with the dual nature of the castle, this situation parallels the failings of the sentimental ideology. The male figure should be the protector, but because of the defenselessness of the sensible female, he can exert his will and abuse his position. The power inherent in the position of protector can very easily be used for tyrannical ends.

5.3 The Supernatural

> The words re-echoed through the vaulted chancel, but no answer was returned: again, and in a yet louder voice, he repeated them, and again listened to hear if any reply was made. A slight and indistinct noise like the shutting of a distant door, and a low murmur which soon died away, left every thing in profound silence (96).
> -The Old Manor House

Supernatural events do not occur in all Gothic works. Whereas Otranto and The Monk make unabashed use of this device, none of the other works discussed in this paper do. Reeve presents a few supernatural occurrences, but very timidly. Lee and Godwin do not use the supernatural at all. Ann Radcliffe and Charlotte Smith use what most scholars call the "explained supernatural"--many events appear to be the result of the supernatural, yet later appear to have natural explanations. For example, in The

Old Manor House Monimia believes a ghost brushed past her, but later finds out it was Jonas Wilkins, the smuggler. Nevertheless, if we were to divide the novels into groupings of "explained" verses "unexplained," such an approach would prove very frustrating, for the boundaries are not actually that clear. In a work such as The Old English Baron, the supernatural is often presented so matter-of-factly, and causes so little reaction in the characters, that it seems almost natural. In The Italian, on the other hand, where all the supernatural occurrences are explained away, we are left feeling that there was something unnatural in the book. Many of Radcliffe's explanations are extremely unconvincing, and the strangeness of the apparently supernatural events is not forgotten--even with rational explanations we still feel the presence of the ghosts. William Day summed this problem up thus: "The supernatural and monstrous are a matter of effect rather than substance. Again, it is the impression of strangeness, the sensation that one is in the presence of that which suspends and calls into doubt the laws of the universe that is essential to the Gothic."[90]

In many of these works, the supernatural is associated with the over-active imaginations of sensible characters. For example, Emily, in The Mysteries of Udolpho, is introduced as having "delicacy of mind, warm affections, and ready benevolence; but with these was observable a degree of susceptibility too exquisite to admit lasting peace" (5). This proves all too true, and even apparently innocuous events are made horrifying by her active imagination. Once at Udolpho, Emily was leaning out the

90. Day, 35.

window contemplating the foolishness of her superstition: "At these recollections she wept again, and continued musing, when suddenly the notes of sweet music passed on the air. A superstitious dread stole over her; she stood listening, for some moments, in trembling expectation" (330). She is constantly paralyzed by her own imagination, and throughout the book she is trying to overcome her unwarranted fears.

Ellis argues that Emily does actually overcome her superstition by the end of the novel: "once Emily has learned to separate reality from illusion, her education is complete and her reward is marriage to the pallid, imperfect, but nonetheless lovable Valancourt."[91] This argument, however, cannot be supported by the text. Every time Emily discovers a natural cause for something that she believed supernatural, she reprimands herself for her folly. Nevertheless, she continually falls into the same trap. Because of her sensitivity, her mind is continually creating illusion. For example, up until the end of the novel, she is always imagining that Valancourt is nearby. She believes he is the source of the mysterious music and she thinks he is imprisoned at Udolpho with her. Frequently when she sees a shadowy figure she believes it is Valancourt. Never, however, are her conclusions grounded in reason. As David Punter states, "sensibility and distorted perception are perhaps always closely linked."[92] In stressful situations, the heroine's finely tuned feelings are overloaded, and her reality is distorted.

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91. Ellis, 127.
92. David Punter, The Literature of Terror (Longman, London: 1980) 78.

Ellis most likely drew her conclusion from the fact that all the supernatural events in the novel are proven the results of natural causes. Yet we cannot help think that Emily, if put in another castle of Udolpho, would imagine new spectres and ghosts. Her sensibility, as Punter says, will always "render her incapable of the gross and rapid responses necessary for active social participation, and sink her more and more dangerously in the world of her over stimulated imagination."[93]

Lewis's The Monk presents us with a more complex picture. Ambrosio resigns his life to religion because of his superstition. When a boy, the monks of the Capuchins "terrified his young mind, by placing before him all the horrors with which superstition could furnish them: they painted to him the torments of the damned in colours the most dark, terrible and fantastic" (238). Thus, his active and sensitive imagination causes him to withdraw from the public world and choose a life of religion. The eruption of his resulting sexual repression, however, destroys him. In this sense, superstition in Lewis is presented as even more dangerous than in Radcliffe, for it actually leads to death.

But Lewis proves ambivalent about this point, for the supernatural is not explained in The Monk. Lewis offers no explanations for his supernatural events. If, however, we look at the exact nature of the fantastic in this book, the events are, to some extent, explainable. Varma's definition of the "fantastic" in literature will help illuminate this point. He defines it as "the surrealistic expression of those historical

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93. Punter, 77.

and social factors which the ordinary chronicles of events in history does not consider significant."[94] Thus, the supernatural in The Monk, rather than being viewed as actual occurrences, should perhaps be viewed as a way of representing something that cannot be explained literally--namely, Ambrosio's sexual desire. After he is seduced by Matilda, Antonio's sexual repression comes to the surface with such great force that it is indeed "unnatural." The power of his lust seems so overbearing that he actually would believe that Satan is pitted against him. The supernatural props, such as the magic mirror in which he watches Antonio undress, can be seen as a reflection of Ambrosio's hidden and unwelcome fantasies.

Thus, Lewis's use of the supernatural may be interpreted on two levels. He is indeed criticizing Ambrosio's sensitivity which allowed the monks to coerce him into a monastic life, yet he also shows the results of that confinement as a realization of the boy's fears. Denied access to society and expression of his sexuality, Ambrosio's repressed feelings explode out with supernatural force.

As far as the supernatural is concerned, Caleb Williams does not appear to be a candidate for discussion. The book contains no ghosts, no imagined ghosts, and no mysterious noises. There is, however, something very "strange" in Falkland's behavior. He is always making "unnatural" entrances--appearing out of the blue for either unexplained or unconvincing reasons. For example, when Emily is about to be raped by Grimes, "By the most extraordinary accident, however, they found a man on horseback in

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94. Varma, 217.

wait at this gait. 'Help, help!' exclaimed the affrighted Emily; 'thieves! murder! help!' The man was Mr. Falkland" (67). At another point, when Caleb's curiosity has gotten the best of him and he starts to open Falkland's chest: "I was in act of lifting the lid when Mr. Falkland entered, wild, breathless, distracted in his looks!" (138). Soon after this incident, Caleb flees from Falkland to ask Mr. Forester for help. During their meeting, "Without the smallest notice, and as if he had dropped upon us from the clouds, Mr. Falkland burst into the room" (155). Caleb calls this incident "the most unaccountable in the world" (156).

Falkland appears to be both omniscient and omnipotent. Caleb cannot escape him, for he will always appear "supernaturally" out of nowhere. Godwin's purpose in writing Caleb Williams was to show how "the spirit and character of the government intrudes itself into every rank of society" ("Preface," 3)and Falkland himself is an embodiment of this principle. He is "supernatural" just as Godwin believed the government was "supernatural." Both represent forces that are beyond the control and understanding of the individual.

In all the books discussed, the supernatural illuminates the inner weakness of the characters. In Radcliffe, it shows the dangers of sensibility because of the paralyzing nature of an over-active imagination. In Lewis's work, the imagination is again shown as dangerous, but the supernatural takes on, as Varma states, a "surrealistic" nature. It comes to represent the bubbling up of sexual impulse that Ambrosio's monastic life has repressed. A life of seclusion from society, once broken, leads

to uncontrollable passions and desires. In Godwin's work, the supernatural is not associated with the individual, but with the structures of government. The individual is thus portrayed as extremely vulnerable to that overpowering force.

Nearly every work uses the supernatural to a different end. In Walpole's Otranto it reveals the inability of sentimental characters to enforce the law. In The Old English Baron, it is used to a similar end, for Edmund can only exert his birth right with supernatural assistance. In Walpole and Lewis, the supernatural is often quite violent. Reeve's ghosts are quite tame. Radcliffe's hauntings are very rarely seen, but are usually psychological creations of the sensible heroines. In every case, the supernatural events express something that the emotions and tears of the characters in sentimental works could not express. It represents a powerful force in the universe that cannot be explained by mere sentimentality.

5.4 Parental Discovery and Inheritance

> 'No, my child!' said Olivia, softening from amazement into tones of ineffable sorrow, while she again pressed Ellena to her heart--'No!--thy father is in the grave!'
>
> Ellena no longer returned her caresses; surprize and doubt suspended every tender emotion; she gazed upon Olivia with an intensenss that partook of wildness. At length she said slowly--'It is my mother, then whom I see! When will these discoveries end!' (378)
>
> -The Italian

The story of Walpole's Theodore, the character of unknown birth who discovers his noble parentage and comes into an inheritance, appears in a large number of Gothic works. I discussed the association of this plot with the projection of

women's wish fulfillment in Chapter 3.[95] Here, I want to reemphasize and expand upon this point by looking at other Gothic works. With the exception of Walpole, the discovery/inheritance plot is ~~limited~~ one male use of almost exclusively to women writers. Clara Reeve's The Old English Baron, Sophia Lee's The Recess, all of Ann Radcliffe's works, and Charlotte Smith's Emmeline all make use of this plot. Lewis's The Monk and Godwin's Caleb Williams do not. The plot synopses in Frank's bibliography of Gothic works seems to indicate that this pattern continues amongst the lesser known novelists of the eighteenth century as well.

Walpole's failure to fit this pattern can be explained by analyzing exactly how he uses this plot. Although Theodore discovers his noble parentage and becomes the rightful heir of Otranto, his story is secondary to Manfred's. The book's energy is channeled into Manfred's struggle to maintain power. Little attention or sympathy is directed towards Theodore. Thus, whereas in The Old English Baron the climax is the protagonist's rise to power, the climax of Otranto is the antagonist's fall from power. The plot is similar, but each author has a different emphasis. Reeve's work projects the female wish of coming into a high station, while Walpole's work projects the male fear of being displaced by the younger generation. The inheritance plot in Otranto has an Oedipal element not found in any of the works written by women.

One A possible explanation for women writers' obsession with the discovery/inheritance plot emerges from an analysis of the situation of women during the eighteenth-century, ~~ideology.~~ Women, during the industrialization

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95. ~~Again,~~ This ~~relationship~~ was ~~explained~~ to me by Dr. Ruth Perry ~~in a~~ explanation suggested

from their place in British culture

of England, were being "disinherited." Their station was becoming more and more associated with the home, and they were losing importance within the political, social, and economic order of England. Thus, when women writers created fictional realities, they projected their desire to regain the station denied them in real life. They wrote romances wherein characters of low station, such as themselves, discover they are actually the offspring of nobility and the heirs of great fortune. Fiction presented their dream of overcoming social and economic impotence. of regaining a status lost through no fault of their own.

Emmeline, like The Old English Baron, is a straight-forward example of projected female wish-fulfillment. Emmeline is an orphan. She is believed to be illegitimate, and is thus kept in a remote castle by her uncle Lord Montreville. She does all the things we would expect a single, sentimental eighteenth-century woman to do. She "delighted to wander among the rocks that formed the bold and magnificent boundary of the ocean" (8). She frequently reads, and by her "unwearied researches, nearly completed several sets of books, in which instruction and amusement were happily blended" (8). And as with most Gothic and sentimental heroines, she occasionally tries her hand at sketching and music. In the first chapter, we see her living a simple, content life. But then her best friend Mrs. Carey, her housekeeper, teacher and protectress, dies. Without a protector, Emmeline is suddenly vulnerable. She is powerless against the advances of Delamere and her other suitors. Her dependent position and her sensibility make her vulnerable to the tyranny of the male antagonists.

Thus, by throwing the unprotected orphan into the world, Smith has projected woman's actual situation of oppression, vulnerability and powerlessness. From here, the novel turns to fantasy. Papers are recovered proving that Emmeline actually was a legitimate child and is the rightful heir to the Mowbray estate. She is suddenly empowered:

> From being an indigent dependent on the bounty of a relation, whose caprice or avarice might leave her entirely destitute, she was at once found to be an heiress to an extensive property. From being bound down to marry if he pleased, a man for whom she felt only sisterly regard . . . she was now at liberty to indulge the affections she had so long vainly resisted" (399).

Emmeline now has all that an eighteenth-century woman could desire. She is wealthy and in control of her own money. Because she is of a high and honorable birth, she can marry the man she loves--she is no longer restricted by class biases. With the discovery of a single piece of paper, Emmeline has gained the social and economic importance previously denied her. Like Edmund in The Old English Baron and Ellena in The Italian, Emmeline has made the flip from the orphan of the castle to the heir of the castle. She is left with money, a home, a husband, and prospects of a free and happy life.

So far, I have dealt mainly with the "inheritance" aspect of the discovery/inheritance plot. The "disinherited" eighteenth-century woman had an obvious attraction to a fictitious world where she could come into possession of that which society denied her. The "discovery," however, presents us with a more difficult picture. There are the obvious points, such as the discovery of noble parentage leads to inheritance and makes marriage to other

nobility socially permissible, but when we look at exactly "who" is discovered, we find an interesting trend. Since both the fictitious Gothic world and the actual eighteenth-century world were patriarchal, we would expect the heroines to gain power through the discovery of fathers. This is not the case--in many of the texts, the heroines discover mothers.

Emmeline is one example. Her father's identity is known throughout the entire text. He is a nobleman named Mr. Mowbray. Thus, there is no "discovery" to be made with respect to him. Emmeline, however, is believed to be an illigitimate child, born to a lower class woman. The great "discovery," then, is that her mother was not an adultress. Once this occurs, she is able to claim her inheritance and gain economic and social power. A similar pattern occurs in The Mysteries of Udolpho. Emily sees her father crying over a miniature of a beautiful woman, and her over-active imagination makes her believe that "there was a mystery in her birth dishonourable to her parents" (650). This woman, however, is discovered to be her father's sister, from whom Emily inherits the castle of Udolpho. Again, the father's identity was known throughout the entire text, and only after the uncertainty surrounding her mother's identity is removed does Emily come into an inheritance. In both texts, the heroines are empowered by the discovery of mothers, not fathers.

The Italian presents an even more interesting sequence of events. Ellena discovers who she believes to be a father in the villain Schedoni. Later, however, she discovers Olivia to be her mother and learns that Schedoni was the murderer of her real father, the Count di Bruno. Ellena's ill-natured, threatening

father-figure is taken away and replaced by a loving, angelic mother. Radcliffe rejects patriarchy and replaces it with matriarchy.

Thus, the discovery/inheritance plot appears to comment on eighteenth-century ideology in two ways. The writers' presentation of an orphan coming into wealth, property, and marriage appears to be a projection of female wish-fulfillment; it dialectically indicates women's dissatisfaction with their actual social and economic position. Furthermore, the importance placed on mothers as opposed to fathers strongly indicates that both Smith and Radcliffe objected to the patriarchical power inherent in sentimental ideology. Both writers offer empowering matriarchal alternatives to patriarchy.

5.5 Conclusion

> 'Aye,' said Schedoni, 'the narrative resembles a delirious dream, more than a reality' (284).
> -The Italian

describe

Schedoni's words encompass The Italian itself. Indeed the book is somewhat of a "delirious dream," portraying a world where a defenseless young woman can pass through a myriad of dangerous and threatening situations, and come out unscathed with an inheritance and a husband. Yet in context, the "delirious dream" of which Schedoni speaks actually occurred. The "narrative" was about an actual murder committed by Schedoni's ruthless acquaintance Spalatro. Thus, the text contains a "dream" of women's safety and happiness in a world where reality is marked by male tyranny.

On the surface, Gothic works appear to be little more than escapist fantasies. Many are like fairy tales where after numerous trials the prince and princess live happily ever after. Others, such as The Monk, appeal to the reader's prurient and sadistic interests. Little in the works is realistic--the villains are too villainous; the heroines are too virtuous and too easily escape villainy; and the castles seem to have been built by maze-makers rather than architects. Indeed, the Gothic could be read simply for its escapist nature--the books are very entertaining with their suspenseful flight and pursuit scenes, Gothic trappings, mysterious figures, and supernatural.

But the emergence of the Gothic genre in the latter half of the eighteenth-century appears to be a response to the material conditions of the time. The time is marked by a restructuring of the roles of men and women--a restructuring that left many women confined to the domestic sphere, economically dependent upon their husbands. Thus, with our knowledge of eighteenth-century material conditions, the ideological implications/meaning of ~~ideology,~~ the Gothic takes on new significance. Every time we encounter a woman imprisoned in a castle, a villain abusing sentimental defenselessness, an "unexplainable" inexplicable event, or a character miraculously discovering new parents, we should remember the changing social and economic situation facing men and women at this time and the consequent appearance of a sentimental ideology that defended this new structure.

Every Gothic work is different and addresses the problems inherent in sentimentality differently. Walpole and Lewis reveal the horrifying ease with which uncontrolled passion can victimize sensible characters. Lee presents a world in which sentimental

characters are powerless, unable to attain their rightful status. Reeve, Radcliffe, and Smith portray similar weaknesses of sensibility, yet their sensible characters prevail in the end. Nevertheless, no Gothic ending is truly "happy," for all are undermined by the unforgettable horror that preceded, the unconvincing manner by which evil is removed, and the extreme difficulty required to procure and legitimate that happiness. The Gothic novelists, whether "pessimistic" or "optimistic," presented the nightmares to which a separation of the domestic and public spheres can lead.

This separation of spheres, of course, is not unique to the eighteenth century--it began on a large scale during the industrialization of the mid to late eighteenth century and has continued through modern times. Even today, despite the slow advances of the feminist movement, men are usually associated with the public sphere and women are associated with the domestic sphere. If literature does indeed reflect reality, we should not be surprised that in modern literature, in nearly every horror, fantasy or romance novel, we still find many elements of the Gothic.

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