Chapter One
GOTHIC FICTION

The central premise of this study is to ascertain and establish the resemblances between Gothic fiction and the canon of Romantic poetry. For this purpose it is essential to have a thorough knowledge of and about Gothic Fiction.

In Gothic fiction the reader passes from the reasoned order of the everyday world into a dark region governed by supernatural beings, a region that inspires dread and horror, where decay abounds and death is always at hand. Also called Gothic romance and Gothic novel, Gothic fiction emerged late in the eighteenth century as part of the Romantic Movement in arts. It marked a departure from the classical order in the literature of eighteenth century towards imagination and feeling. This movement represented a reaction against the 'age of reason', or the Enlightenment, that had dominated the thought of the time. Commenting on the early Gothic novel, D.P. Varma says:

These Gothic novels aimed at a medieval atmosphere by the use of medieval background – haunted castles, dungeons and lonely towers, knights in armour and magic – but to an average reader the outstanding feature of these tales was not the Gothic setting but supernatural incidents.¹

Various manifestations of the supernatural and of witchcraft in the Gothic novels recall those as found in the ancient classics and in the Icelandic sagas. The Iliad has ghosts; the Icelandic sagas of the thirteenth century contain many supernatural elements; the medieval romances, Dante, and Thomas Malory's Morte d'Arthur (1485) also exerted a powerful influence. But the immediate sources for the supernatural content, elements and machinery of the Gothic novel are to be found in Elizabethan literature, from Edmund Spenser's fairyland to the portentous visitations depicted in Shakespeare.
In order to replace the rationalism of the eighteenth century with a sense of wonder, awe, mystery and fear, the Gothic novel plundered the Middle Ages for its settings, content and machinery. Gothic architecture was a part of most settings – in the form of a half-ruined castle or abbey. It was used to create 'Gothic gloom' and sublimity, attributes that evoked awe. Such buildings displayed all the paraphernalia of fear: dark corridors, secret underground passages, huge clanging doors, dungeons with grilled windows, evil-doings in the vaults, terrified fugitives stumbling through passages with candles, weird white-clothed figures glimpsed in a beam of moonlight etc.

The last quarter of the eighteenth century was the golden period of Gothic Fiction. It was shaped and enriched by three major writers: Horace Walpole, Ann Radcliffe, and Matthew Lewis. They developed the paraphernalia of the Gothic novel and gave it a distinct status.

The term 'Gothic' means 'medieval', and by implication barbaric. In the late eighteenth century it was applied loosely to the centuries preceding the enlightened Protestant era that began with the Glorious Revolution of 1689. Radcliffe, Lewis, and Maturin set their novels in the Catholic countries of Southern Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, alarming their readers with tales of the Spanish Inquisition and of villainous, hypocritical monks and nuns. While drawing upon the imaginative liberties of greater English writers – principally Shakespeare's use of ghosts and omens, and Milton's portrait of Satan – the Gothic novelists deplored the cruelty and arbitrary power of barons and monks, and mocked the superstitious credulity of the peasants. In this skeptical protestant attitude to the past, they differed slightly from the genuinely nostalgic medievalism of Pugin and other advocates of the later Gothic Revival in architecture. Radcliffe in particular was careful to distance herself from vulgar belief in ghosts or supernatural marvels, by providing rational explanations for the apparitions and nocturnal groans that frighten her heroines.
Some of Radcliffe’s contemporaries and immediate successors managed to achieve comparable effects of apprehension and claustrophobia in novels with more modern settings: William Godwin in *the Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794), his daughter Mary Shelley in *Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus* (1818), and the Scottish writer James Hogg in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1924), all evoked powerful unease without employing medieval trappings. Although each of these three novels includes prominent prison scenes, the principal strength is the evocation of psychological torment, guilt, self-delusion, and paranoid delusion. There are some grounds for excluding these works from the strictest definitions of Gothic fiction, but they are nonetheless commonly grouped with the work of Radcliffe, Lewis, and Maturin.

Jerrold E. Hogle writes:

[...] a Gothic tale usually takes place (at least some of the time) in an antiquated space – be it a castle, a foreign palace, an abbey, a vast prison, a subterranean crypt, a graveyard, a primeval frontier or island, a large old house or theatre, an aging city or urban underworld, a decaying storehouse, factory, laboratory, public building, or some new recreation of an older venue, such as an office with old filing cabinets, an overworked spaceship, or a computer memory. Within this space, or a combination of such spaces, are hidden some secrets from the past (sometimes the recent past) that haunt the characters, psychologically, or otherwise at the main time of the story.²

In Gothic novels the characters are mostly either endowed with sombre, diabolical villainy or pure, angelic virtue. Interfering fathers, brutal in threats, oppress the hero or heroine into a loathed marriage, officials or the Inquisitions or the characters of abbots and abbess are imbued with fiendish cruelty, often gloating in Gothic diabolism over their tortures. The pages of these works are crimsoned with gore and turn with a ‘ghostly flutter’.

The most important theme is that of good versus evil. Authors use their characters ‘like little stock figures’ in their war between good and evil, pitting
the characters against the other side, as well as against their own potentially frail and corruptible souls. Colour plays a large role in determining which side is good and which is evil. Typically, white and other light colours represent virtue, while black and dark shades represent immorality. Thus, the blond characters (whose visages are described as pale, ivory, marble, pure, clear, etc.) are usually good, and the darker ones (murky, gloomy, stormy, dusky, swarthy) are usually bad. By putting the protagonists through intense suffering first and then allowing them to defeat the foe, the author shows that the darkness of the human soul is formidable but is ultimately defeated by virtue, which is reinforced by religion and society.

A supernatural effect is built up by the accumulation of successive details: desolate scenery, tempests, screeching owls, and hovering bats, exciting events in burial vaults or on dark; melancholy birds circle portentously over dilapidated battlements. The ‘Gothic’ scenes are set in sober twilight or under the soft radiance of the moon in some ruined abbey, or half-demolished tomb, or a vaulted arch wreathed with ivy; we listen to the uncanny murmur of trees in some lonely romantic glen, while a broken streamlet dashes down in the distance.

The effective romantic setting, the continuous spell of horror, the colour of melancholy, awe, and superstition: all these impulses of the Gothic spirit first converged in Walpole, who gave them form, coherence, and the language of the ‘Gothic Novel’, and his deeply implanted ‘Gothic’ instincts flowered in *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), the parent of all goblin tales.

Horace Walpole is the father of the novel of terror. *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and *The Mysterious Mother* (1768) are two of his terror novels. *The Castle of Otranto* started the trend of the Gothic novel. All familiar components of the Gothic novel – the ominous darkness and the howling winds, the dire portents and the ineluctable prophecy – originate in this tale of unnatural passions and unacknowledged guilt. D.P. Varma states:
It [The Castle of Otranto] anticipates the genteel shuddering of Clara Reeve and Ann Radcliffe, and sets the scene for the crazy phantasmagoria of Vathek and the prurient nightmares of 'Monk' Lewis, while its properties were to receive artistic touches of genius at the hands of Scott and Byron, Coleridge and Poe.

The great vogue for Gothic novels in Britain and Ireland in the three decades after 1790, culminated in the appearance of C.R. Maturin's Melmoth the Wanderer (1820). During this period, the leading practitioner of the new genre was Ann Radcliffe, whose major works The Romance of the Forest (1791), The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794), and The Italian (1797) were decorous in their exhibitions of refined sensibility and of virtue in distress. Udolpho in particular established the genre's central figure: that of the apprehensive heroine exploring a sinister building in which she is trapped by the aristocratic villain. Radcliffe's formula inspired Matthew G. Lewis, whose novel The Monk cast aside Radcliffe's decorum in its sensational depictions of diabolism and incestuous rape.

**Horace Walpole's The Castle of Otranto**

The Castle of Otranto was first published in 1764; its plot unfolds in Italy of the twelfth century.

Manfred, the usurping prince of Otranto, haunted by a mysterious prophecy, hastens to secure Isabella, the only daughter of the real heir of Otranto, as bride for his only son Conrad. On the very eve of marriage, Conrad is crushed to death by the mysterious fall of an enormous helmet shaded with black plumes. Theodore, a peasant boy, who discovers that the miraculous helmet is identical with the one now missing from the black marble statue of Alfonso the Good, is imprisoned as a sorcerer. Frantic with rage and fear, Manfred declares his intention of marrying Isabella himself, on which some prodigies appear: the sable plumes of the helmet wave backward and forward in a tempestuous manner; the portrait of his grandfather utters a deep sigh, quits its panel, descends on the floor and vanishes into a chamber.
Isabella meanwhile escapes through a subterraneous passage to the church of St. Nicholas. On her way she encounters Theodore who has been accidentally released, and their sympathy very soon ripens into love. Manfred, in pursuit of Isabella, orders Father Jerome to deliver Isabella from the sanctuary. He also orders Theodore to be beheaded, but the execution is set aside as Father Jerome, by means of a birthmark, discovers in Theodore his long-lost child.

Frederic, Marquis of Vicenza, father of Isabella and the real claimant of Otranto arrives, and his arrival is followed by further prodigies: a brazen trumpet miraculously salutes him at the gate of the castle; the plumes of the enchanted helmet nod vigorously. Manfred tries to quell animosities by a matrimonial alliance by which each is to marry the daughter of the other. Frederic agrees. On the mere proposal three drops of blood fall from the nose of Alfonso’s statue. The bleeding statue was an omen that the proposed marriages were doomed. The story ends with the tragic death, by mistake, of Matilda at the hands of her father – Manfred. As she expires, a clap of thunder shakes the castle to its foundations, and the form of Alfonso dilated to an immense magnitude, appears in the centre of the ruins, exclaiming “Behold in Theodore the true heir of Alfonso!”

Manfred confesses that he had taken Otranto from Theodore and then he and Hippolita (his wife) enter the neighbouring convents. Theodore marries Isabella and they live in Otranto as the Prince and Princess.

D.P. Varma writes:

*The Castle of Otranto* is an expression of Walpole’s repressed, romantic, visionary nature. From a thousand circumstances of his environment, from antiquarian interests and the abundant impressions of the past which they invoked, from Gothic castles and abbeys, from pictures by Claude, Poussin, and Salvator Rosa, from landscape gardens modelled upon their works, and from the poetry of Shakespeare and Spenser and Milton, he fashioned dreams of a world in which the beauty of antiquity, of wonder and terror and awe were supreme.
In the preface to the second edition, the title of which was merely *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story*, Walpole not only admits the impostures of the first preface, but he goes on explaining his purpose in writing it by the oft-quoted statement that “it was an attempt to blend two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern”⁶, to create a blending of imagination and probability, of mystery and nature. The remainder of the preface defends his use of comic scenes within the work.

The background of Walpole’s story is a Gothic castle, and it happens to be the focal point of Walpole’s romance. The haunted castle forms the stage-setting; while its accessory properties powerfully seize the imagination. The castle brought in its train other architectural associations to evoke an atmosphere of Gothic gloom. The bewildering vaults and secret panels, the subterranean passages, the broken winding spiral staircases, the trap-door creaking on rusty hinges, the decayed apartments and mouldering floors – objects trivial and insignificant in Walpole’s hands became fraught with terrible possibilities.

Walpole successfully creates an atmosphere of mystery, gloom, and terror, through his specialized settings, machinery, character types, theme, plot, or technique. They are so selected and combined so as to throw out dark suggestions and intensify the mystery. The gloom of abbeys and cathedrals spreads over the atmosphere, the tolling of the midnight bell, and the clank of chains break the silence of the night. Walpole’s subterranean passage connecting the castle with the church of St. Nicholas became very popular with the later romance writers of the Gothic school. The heroine Isabella’s flight through this silent subterranean region is described thus:

> The lower part of the castle was hollowed into several intricate cloisters [...]. An awful silence reigned throughout those subterraneous regions, except now and then some blasts of wind that shook the doors she had passed, and which grating on the rusty hinges were re-echoed through that long labyrinth of darkness. Every murmur struck her
with new terror [...]. In one of those moments she thought she heard a sigh. She shuddered and recoiled a few paces. In a moment she thought she heard the step of some person. Her blood curdled [...]. Every suggestion that horror could inspire rushed into her mind.

A sudden gust of wind extinguishes her lamp, leaving her in total darkness and then a “ray of clouded moonshine” comes to her aid. “Words cannot paint the horror of the princess’s situation.”

Walpole was remarkably inventive as a writer and the innovations made by him were to attain a conventionality, to become the hallmark of future Gothic writings. There were three significant innovations in his novel. First there was the use of the Gothic castle of romance with all its appurtenances as the pivot for the work. The entire Gothic machinery is there: vaults, passages, dungeons, convent, gusts of wind, moonlight, groans, and clanking of chains – and Walpole in his matter-of-fact way demonstrated its potential. He showed how it could be used in combination with old romance elements, and how ghosts could be given a definite function in the plot. The device of the portrait coming to life is found in many subsequent Gothic novels, notably Maturin’s Melmoth the Wanderer. So are the devices of feigning translation from old romance as prophecies, dreams, and Theodore’s birthmark by which his father recognizes him. Ann Radcliffe and others favoured the restoring of the hereditary rights of their protagonists after they had been cheated, as they were restored to Theodore; and Walpole’s use of Italy as a setting was later copied by many Gothic writers.

Second, Walpole was innovative in the way he used the forces of nature to produce an atmosphere, to indicate the mystery of life, the possibility of evil forces shaping man’s fate. As Isabella hurries through the underground passage, her lamp is blown out by a gust of wind, and the same wind will relentlessly blow out heroines’ candles and lamps for many years to come. Moonlight is supposed to add to the awesomeness of the giant Alfonso’s appearance, and it will more effectively accompany future ghosts.
Third, Theodore in his appearance provides one of the sources of the famed Byronic hero: dark-haired, handsome, melancholy, and mysterious. Here is the progenitor of melancholy Lara, or the wild Corsair, or the handsome Giaour. The Gothic heroine or damsel in distress had always been a beautiful shadow, ever since Walpole pictured Isabella. The other characters became the stock characters of Gothic fiction, and once again Walpole pointed to the way they would generally develop, though he did not provide more than sketches: the tyrant, the heroine, the challenger, the monk (there were to be both saintly and evil varieties), and the peasant who turns out to be noble.

Thus the Gothic elements that dominate *The Castle of Otranto* are as follows: a castle built according to Gothic motifs, an atmosphere of mystery and suspense, a threatening feeling – a fear enhanced by the unknown. The plot itself is built around a mystery, such as to who is the true heir of Otranto. Another Gothic element is an ancient prophecy: which stated 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”\(^\text{10}\). The people of the town, thus attribute the marriage of Conrad at such a young age to Manfred’s fear of the ancient prophecy. Another Gothic element is that of women in distress, threatened by a powerful, impulsive, tyrannical male. All these characteristics of a woman and a man are represented in the characters of Isabella, and Manfred respectively. *The Castle of Otranto* contains many supernatural events (already discussed in detail), for example, the huge helmet which fell upon Conrad and crushed him to death on the day of his wedding. The all pervading atmosphere of mystery and suspense is maintained throughout the novel, so much so, that it concludes with an inexplicable event of supernatural dimension:

A clap of thunder at that instant shook the castle to its foundations; the earth rocked, and the clank of more than mortal armour was heard behind. Frederic and Jerome thought the last day was at hand. The latter, forcing Theodore along with them, rushed into the court. The moment Theodore appeared, 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. Behold in Theodore, the true heir of Alfonso! Said the vision: and having pronounced those words, accompanied by a clap of thunder, it ascended solemnly towards heaven, where the clouds parting asunder, the form of saint Nicholas was seen; and receiving Alfonso’s shade, they were soon wrapped from mortal eyes in a blaze of glory.

Walpole writes as if by formula. The standard Gothic devices and motifs are all in place, but he was the inventor of the formula, and his influence – on Beckford, Radcliffe, and Lewis and then, along with them, on subsequent English Fiction (and on literature and films more generally) – is incalculable.

**Clara Reeve’s *The Old English Baron***

Walpole’s excessive use of supernatural and irrational impulses, however, was tempered in subsequent Gothic works. In 1777 *The Champion of Virtue, A Gothic Story* was published anonymously in the guise of a translated old manuscript. In 1778, Clara Reeve declared her authorship and changed the title to *The Old English Baron*. The setting of the novel is Lovel’s Castle in the reigns of Henry V and VI, and the manners are supposed to indicate chivalrous times. The plot is simple and well connected. It turns upon the discovery of a murder and the consequent restoration of an heir to his title and estate. Sir Philip Harclay, returning to England after thirty years’ absence abroad in France and crusade wars, finds his own family extinct and himself a stranger in the castle of his dearest friend, now long dead. He is warned by the ghost of this friend in a dream that, it rests with him to restore the hopes of the latter’s house. In this dream he accompanies the apparition to his castle, hears dismal groans, and seems to sink down into a dark and frightful cave where he beholds the bloody armour of his friend. The scene then changes to a wild heath where preparations are being made for a combat. Next he is transported to his own house where he meets his friend “living, and in all the bloom of youth, as when he first knew him.”
This dream is fully clarified later. Sir Philip’s friend had been basely murdered by his next of kin, and buried in a chest under the floor of a closet in the Eastern apartment. His wife terrified into quitting the castle was given out for dead and a false funeral held. She died unrecognized in the fields near the castle, leaving a newborn child who was brought up as Edmund Twyford – son of the peasants who had found him and buried his mother’s body. Since then:

It was reported that the castle was haunted, and that the ghosts of Lord and Lady Lovel had been seen by several of the servants. Whoever went into this apartment were terrified by uncommon noises, and strange appearances; at length this apartment was wholly shut up, and the servants were forbid to enter it.  

Thus being haunted every night, the murderer at last sold the castle to his brother-in-law - the Lord Fitz-Owen, and left the country. The latter, the good lord of the story, attracted by the virtues and graces of young Edmund, brought him up with his own sons. Edmund’s talents excite rivalries in the Baron’s family. He is obliged to sleep for two nights in the Eastern wing, to testify whether it is haunted or not.

As Edmund explores the chamber he finds the whole atmosphere a mournful reminder of the past. Suddenly Edmund’s lamp is blown out, leaving him in utter darkness; as he listens to a hollow rustling noise, the door claps with a great violence, only to reveal the advent of Joseph, his old faithful friend. The same night he dreams:

that he heard people coming up the staircase that he had a glimpse of that the door opened, and there entered a warrior, leading a lady by the hand, who was young and beautiful, but pale and wan, the man was dressed in complete armour, and his helmet down. They approached the bed; they undrew the curtains. He thought the man said, “is this our child?” The woman replied, “It is; and the hour approaches that he shall be known for such,” they then separated, and one stood on each side of the bed, their hands met over his head, and they gave him a solemn benediction.
The next night, as old Joseph and father Oswald are relating to Edmund all they know of the late Lord and Lady, not forgetting to mention Edmund’s resemblance to the former, all three are startled by a violent noise in the rooms underneath them. Together they descend, and find in a closet the bloodstained suit of armour, which belonged to the late Lord Lovel.

Edmund having interviewed the peasants and obtained certain proof of his lineage from the crested ornaments found with him, speedily departs and takes refuge with Sir Philip. The latter challenges the wicked lord, defeats him, extorts confession, and then takes the necessary steps to reinstate Edmund. As Edmund arrives at his ancestral castle, the gates open by themselves accompanied by a sudden rising gust of wind, to receive the lawful master. The story ends in the triumph of virtue and in the righting of injured innocence and punishment of wrong; the defeated murderer is given a choice between banishment and the monastery; the bones of Edmund’s parents are interred with pomp, and he receives Emma as his bride.

Clara Reeve’s Gothic tale *The Old English Baron* was acknowledged by the author as, “the literary offspring of *The Castle of Otranto.*” The novel like Walpole’s, aims at a medieval background; haunted castles, knights in armour and magic but they differ in their treatment of the supernatural. Reeve’s main concern was bringing supernatural incidents into the realm of probability. For this reason she renounces such improbabilities. In her preface to the second edition of *The Old English Baron*, Clara Reeve states:

> We can conceive, and allow of, the appearance of a ghost, we can even dispense with an enchanted sword and helmet; but then they must keep within certain limits of credibility. A sword so large as to require an hundred men to lift it; a helmet that by its own weight forces a passage through a court-yard into an arched vault, big enough for a man to go through; a picture that walks out of its frame; a skeleton ghost in a hermit’s cowl. When your expectation is wound up to the highest pitch, these circumstances take it down with a witness, destroy the work of imagination, and, instead of attention, excite laughter.
Walpole, as might be expected, was particularly severe in criticizing *The Old English Baron*. In his letter to Jephson he declared:

I cannot compliment [...] *The Old English Baron* [...] It was totally void of imagination and interest; had scarce any incidents; and though it condemned the marvelous, admitted a ghost. I suppose the author thought a tame ghost might come within the laws of probability.\(^1\)

In another letter to Reverend William Mason (April 1778), he wrote: “Have you seen *The Old English Baron: a Gothic story*, professedly written in imitation of *Otranto*, but reduced to reason and probability. It is so probable, that any trial for murder at the Old Bailey would make a more interesting story.”\(^2\) For Walpole, Reeve’s text elided the excitements of a very different past by framing it in the terms of a neoclassical present.

What is interesting about *The Old English Baron* is the way in which it differs in intention and tone from *The Castle of Otranto*.

Summers, a great admirer of Walpole, is extremely severe on Reeve, and the reasons are not difficult to see: For Summers, Gothic is, as we have said, an ‘aristocratic’ genre, and it looks to him as though Reeve is deliberately trying to take it outside this category. Her greatest fault in Summers’s eyes is revealed by Varma when he says that she was a ‘disciple of Richardson, and a friend of his daughter.\(^3\)

Reeve merely takes the conventional behaviour and motivation of her contemporaries and dresses them in knightly costumes. Tompkins comments on Reeve’s *The Old English Baron*:

Miss Reeve has a good story to tell, and tells it competently in a series of brief, circumstantial little scenes; she has one fine romantic invention – that discussed tragic suite of rooms, with its rusty locks and rain-soaked furniture, which was to become a regular feature of a Gothic residence – a rather unusual villain, who neither repents nor expires in agonies, and a well sustained mystery; but her keenest interest is in behaviour, and she is most herself in describing the Baron’s handling of his refractory sons and the scene where he and Sir Philip Harclay discuss in a spirit of gentlemanly accommodation the terms on which the new-found heir shall receive his estate.\(^4\)
Varma states:

Miss Reeve adopted Walpole’s basic idea of a story conducted to its climax by means of an agent of terror, but she invested the Gothic ghost with superstitious legends familiar to every village rustic and confined him to an Eastern apartment. Her ghost comes from the same family as that in *Otranto*, it is still a messenger of fate, and also a deeply interested spectator of the progress of events, waiting for destiny to be accomplished and sustaining an undiminished atmosphere of terror.\(^{21}\)

*The Castle of Otranto* and *The Old English Baron* share many similar features and events, for example, both the novels are framed narratives; that is to say, both writers present their texts as manuscripts which they have discovered, and of which they are, so to speak, the ‘editors’. The most obvious reason for this is defensiveness. It was not until the second edition of *The Castle Otranto* that Walpole acknowledged it to his authorship; Reeve was similarly and conventionally modest about her efforts.

In both the novels, the ghosts represent the original, rightful owner from whom property has been usurped. In *The Castle of Otranto*, the supernatural presence of Alfonso, the original, rightful owner - is a ghostly giant whose presence disturbs Manfred the descendent of the property’s usurper. In *The Old English Baron*, the ghosts of the displaced and murdered Lord and Lady Lovel appear to their son in a dream. When Wenlock and Markham, the enemies of Edmund attempt to sleep in the same haunted room, the ghost of Lord Lovel appears in full armour. “He stood with one hand extended, pointing to the outward door, they took the hint, and crawled away as fast as fear would let them; they staggered along the gallery.”\(^{22}\)

This pattern of usurpation and restoration is central to the Gothic master plot. The pattern is well represented in both *The Castle of Otranto* and *The Old English Baron*, in which an aristocratic owner is displaced by a just owner. And it is a ghost in both the novels that operates as an agent of normalization to restore usurped property. When the novel begins, the castle as well as the entire
province of *Otranto*, is securely held by Manfred, who heads a dynasty and occupies property inherited from his usurping grandfather. The novel employs a variety of sensational plot devices - ghostly manifestation, threatened maidens, quasi-incest - to help reveal the original theft and murder which has brought the property into Manfred's hands. Manfred, the aristocratic owner, is revealed to be the grandson of Ricardo, Alfonso's Chamberlain. Theodore thought to be a peasant, is revealed as the grandson of Alfonso, the last rightful owner whose likeness he bears.

*The Old English Baron* also obsesses over the proper possession of property. The narrative traces the trials of Edmund, believed to be a cottager's son, who discovers through a series of dreams, that he is the son of Lord and Lady Lovel, the rightful (though murdered) owners of the usurped castle. As in *The Castle of Otranto*, the story involves the restoration of property, title, and identity to the rightful heir. Again an analogy can be drawn between *Otranto* and *The Old English Baron* as Theodore is brought to trial for what, in effect, is the disruption of Manfred's descent, so Edmund is brought to trial because Fitz Owen's sons and their coterie, jealous of the favour bestowed on him, see him as a potential threat to the propagation of the line.

In *The Old English Baron*, Reeve introduces various Gothic motifs such as, presaging dreams, groans, clanking chains, rusty locks, the suddenly extinguished lamp, and such Gothic machinery as she thinks comes within the range of probability. Miss Reeve introduces another Gothic motif of identifying the hero: "a fine necklace with a Golden locket and a pair of ear-rings." by which Edmund is discovered to be the heir of Lovel's Castle. In the hands of Miss Reeve, the noble peasant type of hero acquires definite traits:

Edmund 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 distress of his fellow creatures in general; humble, but not servile, to his patrons and superiors.
The idea of withdrawing to a monastery after leading a sinful life seems to resolve the moral dilemma of the novelist. In *The Castle of Otranto*, after Manfred kills his daughter, his wife and he decide to spend the rest of their lives in monasteries. In *The Old English Baron*, Walter, the murderer is given the option of banishment or a life in a monastery. Sir Philip then bespoke him:

> You shall banish yourself from England forever, and go in pilgrimage to the Holy Land, with such companions as we shall appoint; or, secondly, you shall enter directly into a monastery, and there be shut up for life; or, thirdly, if you refuse both these offers, I will go directly to court, throw myself at the feet of my sovereign, relate the whole story of your wicked life and actions, and demand vengeance on your head.\(^5\)

In both the novels we find the belief in providence or destiny. For example, in *The Castle of Otranto*, the sword in the stone legend reflects the medieval idea of providence. Only the young Arthur is able to pull the sword out of the stone even though many had tried. This idea of providence is echoed in Reeve’s novel in the incident of the locked closet. Both Joseph the servant and Father Oswald attempted to unlock the hidden closet but fail. However, the lock is released on Edmund’s first try. Clearly indicating that this is Edmund’s adventure and destiny.

The relationship between the supernatural and religion is shown in the figure of Father Oswald. Although Father Oswald does not actually possess the solution to the mystery of the haunted apartment, he plays a key role in assisting Edmund to uncover the truth. By physically accompanying Edmund into the haunted apartment, Father Oswald who represents religion helps Edmund discover the truth about the supernatural incidents of the haunted apartment. Therefore, the connection between religion, the supernatural and providence is made.

**Sophia Lee’s *The Recess, or A Tale of Other Times***

In Sophia Lee’s novel *The Recess* (1783) the interweaving of history and Gothic romance is complicated further. The novel situates its fictional heroines
in a world populated by real figures and events from the Elizabethan age; Sir Philip Sidney, Sir Francis Drake, and the Earls of Leicester and Essex as well as Elizabeth I. Gothic elements feature as part of the wider plot of a historical narrative that owes much to the extravagant composition of seventeenth century French romances. Ruins, underground vaults and heroines' terrified flights are blended with romantic adventures ranging over a wide geographical area. Picturesque descriptions of natural scenery and accounts of domestic happiness, sufferings and tensions, however, maintain a thoroughly eighteenth-century perspective.

The use of history in *The Recess* introduced some important new directions for the Gothic model derived from Walpole. Like Reeve, it reduces the incidence of the supernatural and also gives new impetus to the historical romance; a form in which past events are liberally recomposed in fictional narrative. Unlike both Reeve and Walpole, however, the action of the novel centres on the lives of two women, Eleonora and Matilda (daughters of Mary-Queen of Scots) who have to be hidden from society and the court of Elizabeth in order not to suffer the same fate as their mother. They grow up in secret in the subterranean chambers of a ruined abbey. The novel charts their entry into the world under assumed names with their marriages to Lord Leicester and the Earl of Essex. Society and marriage offer only brief moments of happiness until the secret of their identity is disclosed. Powerless against the political intrigues and violent passions of the Elizabethan world, the disclosure leads to the death of one sister and the flight of the other.

Fred Bottling writes:

> The world at large presents the greatest terrors for the young heroines. Rather than the imaginary threats of supernatural powers, it is the accounts of pursuit and persecutions by noblemen, female courtiers and hired bandits that constitute the major instances of fear. In contrast, domesticity, represented by the sentimental attachments of the sisters in their hidden, underground habitation, offers love and security. However, the novel suggests that there is no refuge in secrecy, hidden recesses or domesticity itself the outside
world invades the private, domestic sphere, turning a refuge into a place of dark menace.\textsuperscript{26}

Samuel Badcock writes in the *Monthly Review*, "*The Tale of Other Times* is a romantic title. It awakens curiosity it sets us at once on fairy land — while fancy, equipped for adventure, sallies forth in quest of the castle, the giant, and the dragon"\textsuperscript{27}.

Lee's success with her experiment in Historical Gothic fiction was due to her skill in using the form of the novel, to elicit strong emotional responses in her readers. A skill she had developed through her lifelong association with the theatre. Like Richardson and Rousseau, Lee writes in the epistolary form — but she does so in a way that is unique in the history of the novel. *The Recess* is also one of the first English works of historical fiction, and represents a great advance in sophistication over the few that preceded it. It was extremely important in the evolution of that branch of the literature of sensibility known as the 'Gothic'.

Harriet Lee noted that *The Recess* was "the first English romance that blended interesting fiction with historical events and characters, embellishing both by picturesque description"\textsuperscript{28}. Its use of supernatural machinery is confined to the presentation of an actual ghost in a dream, though on another occasion one of the persecuted heroines appears at the bedside of Queen Elizabeth who takes her to be an avenging spectre. Miss Lee's heightening of terror and anguish for artistic purposes had a marked influence on Historical-Gothic Romance.

**William Beckford's *Vathek***

*Vathek* (1786), the wild fantasy of William Beckford is as the author states (in his preface) a "story so horrid that I tremble while relating it, and have not a nerve in my frame but vibrates like an aspen"\textsuperscript{29}.

This work is included under the category of 'Gothic novel' since its air of mystery arises from supposedly unnatural causes, while a sense of horror is
heightened for artistic effect. A critic has commented that some portions of the
narrative read like a nightmare, or at least the quivering stretches of a bad
dream, while a sombre sense of fatality and mortal tragedy brood over it like
ominous doom. Its gorgeous style and stately descriptions, its exaltation of both
poetic and moral justice, relate it to the Gothic romance. The machinery of
magic, and the horror of the final scene, place it in the School of Horror with
'Monk' Lewis and his followers.

The opening of the story immediately evokes fantasy and awe. Vathek,
grandson of Haroun Al Rashid, has a Faustian spirit thirsting after infinite
knowledge, to compass "even sciences that did not exist". He builds the
castle of five senses and a lofty tower of fifteen hundred stairs connected by a
subterranean passage. The settings are resplendent with gorgeous arras, and we
are dazzled by a myriad wonders. Here his mother, Carathis, an energetic old
lady, indefatigable in wickedness and obsessed with the darker side of magic,
pursues her occult studies. She instigates her son to abjure Mohammed and,
under her influence, he sets out in quest of the palace of subterranean fire. A
devilish Giaour prophesies that Vathek shall sit on the throne and revel in the
treasures of the pre-Adamite Sultans. But Vathek disobeys the injunction – not
to enter any house; he visits an Emir, and falls in love with his bewitching
daughter Nouronihar. Her father, wishing to separate them, gives a sleeping
potion to Nouronihar and announces that she is dead. But Vathek stumbles on
her hiding-place, and together they elope to the palace of subterranean fire.

The episodes hurry us at a breathless pace into abodes of horror: a
temple adorned with a pyramid of skulls festooned with human hair; a cave
inhabited by reptiles with human faces; and a chamber where carpets of a
thousand kinds and colours hang from the walls, fluttering as if stirred by
human creatures writhing beneath their weight. There Vathek and Nouronihar
find inexhaustible wealth and power for a few days but what follows is an
eternity of torture in the Hall of Eblis.
Beckford seemed to have felt a predilection for the power of certain exotic or unknown objects. The acts of witchcraft performed by Carathis-Vathek’s mother, and the list of the demonic relics gathered by her to equip her infernal ceremonies send a chill down the spine:

By secret stairs, contrived within the thickness of the wall, and known only to herself and her son, she first repaired to the mysterious recesses in which were deposited the mummies that had been wrested from the catacombs of the ancient Pharaohs. Of these she ordered several to be taken. From thence, she resorted to a gallery; where, under the guard of fifty female Negroes mute and blind of the right eye, were preserved the oil of the most venomous serpents; rhinoceros’ horns; and woods of a subtile and penetrating odour, procured from the interior of the India’s, together with a thousand other horrible rarities.

The bordering of the known with the unknown occurs very frequently in Vathek. Backford’s whole narrative strategy produces this effect on more than one occasion. While travelling in pursuit of the wealth promised by the Giaour, the royal procession loses its way in the middle of a storm at night and is threatened by ‘wild beasts’:

[...] the frightful uproar of wild beasts resounded at a distance; and there were soon perceived in the forest they were skirting, the glaring of eyes, which could belong only to devils or tigers. The pioneers, who, as well as they could, had marked out a track; and a part of the advanced guard, were devoured, before they had been the least apprized of their danger. The confusion that prevailed was extreme. Wolves, tigers, and other carnivorous, animals, invited by the howling of their companions, flocked together from every quarter. The crashing of bones was heard on all sides, and a fearful rush of wings overhead; for now vultures also began to be of the party.

In Vathek, traditional Gothic formations such as murder, incest, live burial, mass incendiary, human resurrection, secret passages and subterranean vaults populate the novel as comfortably as they do in the more celebrated Gothic works of Lewis’s The Monk and Radcliffe’s The Italian. Mass murder is seen, when the Caliph throws fifty boys into a black chasm in order to fulfil the
appetite of the Giaour; or Carathis orders the mutes and negresses to hang
themselves and then be burnt as a further offering to Vathek's master; or when
Vathek throws the fifty lovely innocents into Giaour's chasm, "I require the
blood of fifty children. Take them from among the most beautiful sons of thy
vizirs and great men; or, neither can my thirst nor thy curiosity be satisfied."^^

The suspense and shock of the traditional Gothic is also present and is
most notable in the sequence where Nouronihar approaches a mysterious glen
in pursuit of a globe of fire:

At length she arrived at the opening of the glen; [...] she
found herself surrounded by darkness; excepting that, at a
considerable distance, a faint glimmered by fits. She
stopped, a second time: [...] the funereal screams of the
birds from their rifted trunks: all conspired to fill her soul
with terror. [...] She continued ascending, and discovered
large wax torches in full blaze, planted here and there in the
fissures of the rock. This appearance filled her with fear.34

The last few pages of *Vathek*, with its Oriental, exotic, and resplendent
horror, must have inspired the genius of future writers. The atmosphere effects
and colouring of the scene where Vathek and Nouronihar approach the Hall of
Eblis, leave a dark and solemn impression on the mind:

they advanced by moonlight till they came within view of
the two towering rocks that form a kind of portal to the
valley, at the extremity of which rose the vast ruins of
Istakar [...] the horror of which was deepened by the
shadows of night [...] A death-like stillness reigned over the mountain and
through the air; the moon dilated on a vast platform the
shades of the lofty columns which reached from the terrace
almost to the clouds [...] of an architecture unknown in the
records of the earth, served as an asylum for the birds of
night, which, alarmed at the approach of such visitants, fled
away croaking.35

*Vathek* is doomed to a life of perpetual suffering. It is highly significant
that this hell does not come after death; for the central characters do not die.
Carathis, Nouronihar, and Vathek are damned to the suffering of eternal guilt and isolation:

Their hearts immediately took fire, and they, at once, lost the most precious gift of heaven: Hope. These unhappy beings recoiled, with looks of the most furious distraction. Vathek beheld in the eyes of Nouronihar nothing but rage and vengeance; nor could she discern aught in his, but aversion and despair [...] all testified their horror for each other by the most ghostly convulsions, and screams that could not be smothered. All severally plunged themselves into the accursed multitude, there to wander in an eternity of unabating anguish. 36

While Beckford's novel lacks the whole array of Gothic paraphernalia, such as medieval Catholic settings or haunted castles, certain psychological and narrative implications place Vathek within the same tradition of Gothic fiction begun by the novels of Walpole and Reeve. Beckford often uses dark, enclosed and claustrophobic spaces, while his attention to magic and necromancy were soon to become stereotypes of the novel of horror.

The Classic Gothic Novels:

The Gothic novel reached its first peak in terms of quantity and popularity, in the 1790s. The three novels that stand out among this lot are: Ann Radcliffe's two major novels, The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794) and The Italian (1797), and Matthew Lewis's The Monk (1796).

Ann Radcliffe's notions of the Gothic are simple in comparison to her precursors, Walpole and Reeve. The Gothic paraphernalia are all rationalized by her. The world of mystery, terror and horror in her novels is contrived by superstition, imagination, sublimity, and sensibility. In an essay titled On the Supernatural in Poetry written in 1826 and published posthumously, Ann Radcliffe distinguished between the two terms - terror and horror:

Terror and horror are so far opposite, that the first expands the soul, and awakes the faculties to a high degree of life; the other contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them. I apprehend that neither Shakespeare nor Milton by their fictions, nor Mr. Burke by his reasoning, anywhere looked
to positive horror as a source of the sublime, though they all agree that terror is a very high one; and there lies the great difference between horror and terror, but in uncertainty and obscurity, that accompany the first, respecting the dreader evil.\footnote{37}

The first novel of Mrs. Radcliffe *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789) was inspired by Sophia Lee’s *The Recess*, and is the Gothic – historical successor to *The Castle of Otranto*. The story shows the unmistakable stamp of Clara Reeve’s *The Old English Baron* in having a ‘noble peasant’, a usurping villain and his victims, for chief characters. The novelist does not name a specific period as the setting, but endeavours to maintain an atmosphere of feudalism and the Middle Ages.

Although Mrs. Radcliffe did not introduce either the supernatural agency or superstitious terror in this romance, yet she raises terror and anguish to romantic heights by horrors of darkness, silence and loneliness; by the prolonged fear of death; by harrowing descriptions of hairbreadth escapes; and by alternate suffusions of hope and fear.

Rictor Norton writes:

In Radcliffe’s first novel her critical vocabulary and aesthetic techniques are already well in place. The union of the sublime with the beautiful is the goal towards which she strives, by means of careful obscurity. The vocabulary of the Gothic is fixed; ‘the ruins of an abbey, whose broken arches and lonely towers arose in gloomy grandeur through the obscurity of evening.’ The images are fixed: decayed ivy-clad cloisters, violent storms, vivid flashes of lightening, ruffians, assassins, shipwrecked survivors, mysterious figures, candles and torches blown out by gusts of wind, the sounds of breathing close beside one in the pitch darkness, horrible caverns, castles, whose ‘lofty towers still frowned in proud sublimity’, with abandoned apartments, intricate passages, dark galleries, winding flights of stairs, gloomy vaults, trap doors, secret panels, and a subterranean labyrinth in which one-fifth of the action of the novel takes place. The images come from the Graveyard School of poetry, the aesthetic comes from the contemporary debate about the picturesque and the
sublime, and the sensibility of her characters comes from the Novels of Sentiment.  

Her next work, *A Sicilian Romance* (1790) marks a notable advance in exuberance and fertility of imagination. The tale unfolds the life-story of the stern Marquis de Mazzini, who has newly married a second wife, and would force his daughter Julia, who loves the Count de Vereza, to wed the Duke of Luovo. Many of the incidents relate to Julia's flight from her father, only to be captured and brought back to escape once more.

The opening is a fine piece of word painting, impressive and pregnant with mystery. It describes a traveller halting before the sombre and decaying ruins of the castle of Mazzini. He obtains hospitality at a neighbouring monastery, where he is allowed access to the library, and from an ancient manuscript extracts the story of those deserted walls. The story transports us to the latter part of the sixteenth century and is said to be founded on facts recorded in a manuscript preserved in a convent library in Sicily.

Mystery pervades the castle; in the deserted chambers, doors are heard to close at night and an occasional sullen groan to disturb the heavy, ominous silence. These noises proceed from none other than Mazzini's first wife, who is not dead as given out, but secretly imprisoned. Eventually Mazzini's second lady, who has been faithless, poisons him and stabs herself. Julia and her lover are united, and all retire to Naples, leaving the castle to solitude and ruin.

In *The Romance of the Forest* (1792), the story turns upon the machinations of a profligate villain and his agent against an amiable and unprotected girl whose birth and fortunes have been involved in obscurity by crime and perfidy.

There are no hints of the supernatural as yet. The novel is certainly romantic rather than macabre, yet mysterious shadowings are by no means wanting. An incidental allusion to a skeleton in the chest of the vaulted chamber; the dagger spotted with rust; the faded manuscript of the prisoner,
which Adeline reads by the fitful light of the lamp, and which later proves to be
written by her own father, excite in us the apprehension of some secret crime,
and adds to the mystery and terror.

**Ann Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho***

*The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) is one of the classics of Gothic horror. Together with *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story* by Horace Walpole and *The Monk* by Matthew Lewis, it helped to establish the genre. It was later to influence both Matthew Lewis and Mary Shelley.

The mysterious happenings in this novel always have a natural and probable explanation because Ann Radcliffe as its writer was a very rational person and did not believe in the supernatural. Radcliffe’s strengths in writing were in describing scenery as well as creating scenes of suspense and terror. One of the most recurring themes of the novel is the quality of sensibility in her characters.

The cover of the novel reads: “*The Mysteries of Udolpho, Romance: Interspersed with some pieces of poetry.*” The cover also has the following inscription that is assumed to be written by Ann Radcliffe herself. It is considered as the motto of her novel which gives a good depiction of the Gothic form:

Fate sits on these dark battlements, and frowns,
And as the portals open to receive me,
Here voice in sullen echoes through the courts,
Tells of a nameless deed.  

As the most famous and most imitated of Radcliffe’s six novels, its four volumes tell the story of Emily St Aubert. Brought up in a rural chateau in Southern France by a caring father, Emily is educated in the virtues of simplicity and domestic harmony. She is prone however, to overindulge her sensibilities. Her father, before he dies, warns her that all excess is vicious, especially excessive sensibility. Consigned to the care of her aunt Madam Cheron (after her father’s death), Emily meets a youth named Valancourt, and
falls in love with him. While at Tholouse under Cheron's care their courtship (for purely economic reasons) is encouraged. However, Cheron herself marries a sinister Italian nobleman called Montoni, and Emily is whisked away first to Venice, where she is almost married against her wishes to Count Morano, and thence to the castle of Udolpho, in which she is effectually imprisoned during the central and most memorable part of the book.

Montoni is the dark villain of the story who tries – by menacing and murderous means to secure Emily's estates. She flees from his persecution and the imagined terrors of the castle by way of the mouldering vaults of a ruined Gothic chapel. Emily returns to France and to the security of an aristocratic family who live in the region in which she was born. Despite the return to the simplicity of country life, fears of ghostly machinations propel the narrative, until an exhaustive series of explanations unravel both the mysteries of the castle and those disturbing secrets closer home. With the return of Valancourt, domestic happiness is restored. The novel announces its moral: that the power of vice is as temporary as its punishment is certain and that innocence supported by patience always triumphs in the end.

In Emily (after the death of her parents) we find the archetypal Gothic heroine: an unprotected orphan, alone, helpless, and without the power of self-determination, in a foreign land. She becomes obsessed with a series of mysteries: her father's odd behaviour, the disappearance of Lurentini, the strange music heard at La Vallee near the Convent St. Clair, and also at Udolpho. Most significant and horrifying of all is something which Emily sees in a room at Udolpho. Her servant Annette tells her that behind a black veil in the room is a picture of the vanished woman, Laurentini, but when the curious Emily finally succumbs to the impulse to lift the veil, we are only told that what is revealed was "no picture." 

In Udolpho, the possibility that the dead can return to earth to walk over the living can be a source of comfort and defence against complete loss. So St. Aubert, just before his death, muses: "I hope we shall be permitted to look
down on those we have left on the earth. But the return of the dead can be a source of terror, as the superstitious servants indicate when talking of the ghosts of the various chateaux. Emily herself is not immune to such fears, nor to being scared by even a friendly ghost. Fulfilling her father's last request, she thinks she saw her dead father in his study, and the effect is not consoling:

[...] her eyes glancing a second time on the arm-chair, which stood in an obscure part of the closet, the countenance of her dead father appeared there [...] on looking up, there appeared to her alarmed fancy the same countenance in the chair. The illusion, another instance of the unhappy effect, which solitude and grief had gradually produced upon her mind, subdued her spirits; she rushed forward into the chamber, and sunk almost senseless into a chair.

The episode is an example of the dangers of sensibility, and overindulged imagination.

J.M.S. Tompkins writes:

The supernatural continually fascinated her imagination, but in most cases reason and prudence induced her to disown its promptings. In *The Mysteries of Udolpho* she devoted herself to elaborating at Udolpho and at Chateau-le-Blanc an atmosphere of supernatural awe. There is certainly too much of this, seeing that it is all a cheat, that Laurentini di Udolpho is still alive, and that smugglers were responsible for the disappearance of Lorenzo and the shaking of the black pall.

The picture of the castle prepares the mind for the crimes and horrors of which it has been the mute witness. Massive in its austere grandeur, a castle of awe and gloom, "Udolpho is a veritable hall of terrors; its veiled portrait, the ghostly utterances which alarmed Montoni's companions [...] and the visitant of the battlements, make up a medley of horrors which might well daunt the bravest heart."

Emily's first glimpse of Montoni's castle is the centerpiece of any Gothic novel:
Emily gazed with melancholy awe upon the castle, which she understood to be Montoni's; for, though it was now lighted up by the setting sun, the Gothic greatness of its features, and its mouldering walls of dark gray stone, rendered it a gloomy and sublime objects. As she gazed, the light died away on its walls, leaving a melancholy purple tint, which spread deeper and deeper, as the thin vapour crept up the mountain, while the battlements above were still tipped with splendour. From those too, the rays soon faded, and the whole edifice was invested with the solemn duskiness of evening silent, lonely and sublime, it seemed to stand the sovereign of the scene, and to frown defiance on all, who dared to invade its solitary reign. As the twilight deepened, its features became more awful in obscurity, and Emily continued to gaze, till its clustering towers alone were seen, rising over the tops of the woods, beneath whose thick shade the carriages soon after began to ascend.45

D.P. Varma states that in Udolfo:

At every turn something eerie and uncanny heightens our nervous tension; mysterious appearances, lurking shadows, gliding forms, inexplicable groans and mysterious music appal us and convey wonderfully the tricks of feverish imagination. The moaning wind, a rustling robe, a half-heard sigh, the echo of distant footsteps, and a voiced watchword on the platform below, startle us and keep our curiosity at full stretch. Thrilling are the experiences of Emily in her lonely chamber near the haunted room. And even when she escapes from this terrible castle after her aunt's death, she is still pursued by the demons of Mrs. Radcliffe's imagination.46

The key attack on Catholicism in The Mysteries of Udolpho is actually voiced by the character of Blanche. The introduction of Blanche (previously cloistered by her jealous stepmother), allows Radcliffe to expose the duplicity of convents. Blanche tells Emily that there are places where nature and religion are kept out rather than in. Blanche spots the false salvation that Catholicism offers its believers when she wakes up one morning at home and looks out of her window upon a beautiful, early morning panorama of the sea, woods, and mountain sides:

Who could first invent convents!' said she, 'and who could first persuade people to go into them?' and to make religion
a pretence, too, where all that should inspire it, is so carefully shut out! God is best pleased with the homage of a grateful heart, and, when we view his glories, we feel most grateful. I never felt so much devotion; during the many dull years I was in the convent, as I have done in the few hours, that I have been here, where I need only look on all around me - to adore God in my inmost heart! 

Radcliffe’s *The Italian*

*The Italian* (1797) is the culminating work of the career of Ann Radcliffe. *The Italian*, the darkest of Radcliffe’s novels is often thought to be her best work. The scenes of sublime nature, mysterious groans, corrupt ecclesiastics, isolated fortifications, and Inquisitional torture reveal eighteenth century Gothic fiction at its finest.

Unlike the tender and beautiful beginning of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, *The Italian* at once excites anxious curiosity and inspires us with awe. An Englishman on his travels, walking through a church, sees a dark figure stealing along the aisles. He is informed that it is an assassin who seeks ‘sanctuary’, the Englishman stands aghast at the suggestion that the church undermines, rather than supports civil government “of what avail your laws” he asks, “if the most atrocious criminal may thus find shelter from them.” The friar claims that the church violates the law to protect life “if we were to shew no mercy to such unfortunate persons, assassinations are so frequent, that our cities would be half depopulated.” The group asks to hear the tale of the assassin and *The Italian* begins.

Vivaldi, the son of aristocratic parents is in love with the beautiful but socially inferior Ellena. This love is opposed by Vivaldi’s parents, particularly by his mother. She conspires with a monk named Schedoni, to remove the genteel but poor Ellena to the appalling convent of San Stefano, where she undergoes predictable rigours. She is rescued by Vivaldi, who manages to persuade her to a clandestine marriage; but this is again frustrated at the last moment by the machinations of Schedoni. He arranges Vivaldi to be consigned
to the Inquisition while Ellena is sent off to be murdered in a sinister house on the shores of the Adriatic.

Thereafter scenes alternate and develop rapidly: Schedoni, on the point of killing Ellena, finds that she seems to be his long-lost daughter and has to change his plans. He realizes that liaison with the Vivaldi family would now be the best way of fulfilling his inordinate ambition, which he had previously hoped to gratify by putting the Marchesa (Vivaldi's mother) in his debt. But Vivaldi himself has meanwhile encountered in the chambers of the Inquisition an even more bizarre ecclesiastic, Nicola di Zampari, whose often unintelligible behaviour turns out to be designed as a betrayal of Schedoni, his former associate. Schedoni is arrested, and a mass of complicated information about his former life comes to light; including the fact that he is not Ellena's father but her uncle and the murderer of his own brother. He manages to evade punishment by poisoning both himself and Nicola, whereupon Vivaldi and Ellena are able to unite.

In Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian*, ghostly events occur at night, with shapes, shadows and unseen figures passing eerily on their way to create mayhem and disorder for the hero. Radcliffe creates suspense by implying that supernatural forces are at work and then dismisses the danger through rational explanations. Obscurity is necessary to make anything seem terrible; the unknown is always frightening. Schedoni is more terrible when he acts behind the scenes manipulating the Marchesa, while Vivaldi does not know exactly who is the cause of his troubles. In the course of the novel Vivaldi's encounters with the mysterious monk build up suspense. His friend Bonartno is wary of the monk; "Do you really believe that any effort to detain him would be more effectual? He glided past me with a strange facility, it was surely more than human!" The figure lures them along; his behaviour is what one would expect from a spectre, "gliding" and "disappearing into the gloom," moving with "no footstep," only "a rustling, as of garments." The suspense is heightened as Vivaldi gains more information, but is still mostly unknowing "Vivaldi, as he
eyed him [Schedoni] with a penetrating glance, now recoiled with involuntary emotion; and it seemed as if a shuddering presentiment of what this monk was preparing for him, had crossed his mind.\textsuperscript{52}

Vivaldi's suspicions give him some relief, and he becomes determined to reveal the monk "it now occurred to him, and for the first time, that this monk, this mysterious stranger, was no other than Schedoni [...]"\textsuperscript{53}. But the novelist with consummate skill surrounds the identity of the mysterious monk with suspense:

Vivaldi looked onward, and perceived, indistinctly, something as of human form, but motionless and silent. It stood at the dusky extremity of the avenue [...] Its garments, if garments they were, were dark; but its whole figure was so faintly traced to the eye, that it was impossible to ascertain whether this was the monk.\textsuperscript{54}

Radcliffe uses evil monks and hasty nuns in her narrative to create nightmarish horror. The Abbess of the monastery of San Stefano is a Chaucerian figure:

[...] a stately lady, apparently occupied with opinions of her guest with rigour and supercilious haughtiness. This Abbess, who was herself a woman of some distinction, believed that of all possible crimes, next to that of sacrilege, offences against persons of rank were least pardonable.\textsuperscript{55}

Like the Prioress of the \textit{Canterbury Tales}, the Abbess is not a godly person, concerned with serving her faith. The presence of the Abbess and the portrayal of the Inquisition in the novel is a criticism of the Roman Catholic Faith.

Gothic Architecture (with its towers soaring heavenward and its dark foreboding facades) lends itself to depictions of the sublime in its wild and irregular aspects. Ruins, abbeys and monasteries all add to the sense of the mysterious. The place at the beach where Ellena is held captive is a convent of typically Gothic construction. It is also frightening in its wildness and air of dissipation:

The whole building, with its dark windows and soundless avenues, had an air strikingly forlorn and solitary. A high wall surrounded the small court in which it stood, and
probably had once served as a defence to the dwelling; but
the gates, which should have closed against intruders, could
no longer perform their office.\textsuperscript{56}

Eventually we meet the terrific Schedoni imprisoned by the Inquisition
counterplotted and betrayed by an associate who had once enjoyed his
confidence. The presentation of the trials in the halls of the Inquisition is said
to have been written under the influence of Lewis's \textit{The Monk}. Remarking on
the Inquisition scenes that go to make this novel a powerful work, Montague
Summers said:

\begin{quote}
The masterly way in which Mrs. Radcliffe has made use of
the Inquisition, and the restraint which she has exercised in
depicting the scenes in the cells and sombre halls of that
tribunal, are most noticeable. The Inquisition itself has, of
course, been employed in many subsequent novels, but
never with such decorum and effect.\textsuperscript{57}
\end{quote}

The episodes in the vast prisons and dungeons of the Inquisition fraught
with fear of bodily torture are almost eclipsed by an apprehension of the
supernatural. Mrs. Radcliffe deepens the horror of this gloom by a whisper of
things yet more terrible and of the unseen. The Monk, who haunts the ruin of
Paluzz, and who reappears in the prison of the Inquisition, speaks and acts like
a being from the world of spectres.

The story of Mrs. Radcliffe's novel \textit{The Italian} develops in a series of
dramatic, haunting scenes, which stand out in bold relief, the midnight
adventures of Vivaldi and his lively impulsive servant, Paulo, amid the ruined
vaults of Paluzzi; the machinations of Schedoni and the Marchioness for
Ellena's murder, and particularly the scene where the Confessor makes
palpable to the Marchioness, the secret wishes of her heart for Ellena's death;
Ellena's imprisonment in the convent of San Stephano and her escape with
Vivaldi; the melodramatic interruption of the wedding ceremony, and the
meeting of Ellena and Schedoni on the lonely seashore; her terrible sojourn in
Spalatro's cottage by the sea all are admirably described.
Lewis's *The Monk*

Inspired by Radcliffe and influenced by German sensationalist horror tales, Matthew Lewis wrote *The Monk* (1796). Varma writes:

Lewis was especially attracted by Mrs. Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, and his imagination was enkindled by the lone castle amid the far Apennines, those awful halls of dread, and fascinated by Montonio's flashing eyes, dark countenance, and somber nature, Ambrosio inherits some of his qualities from Montoni, and later influences, the creation of Radcliffe's Schedoni.58

The motto from Horace on the title page of *The Monk*, sums up Lewis's peculiar machinery of horror:

Somnia, terrores magicos, miracula, sagas,
Nocturnos lemures portentague,
Dreams, magic terrors, spells of mighty power,
Witches, and ghosts who rove a midnight hour.

Fred Botting comments:

*The Monk* eschews and satirises the sentimentality of Radcliffe's work. It draws instead on the Strum and Drang (storm and stress) of German Romantic writers like Goethe and Schiller. During a visit to Germany, Lewis met Goethe, and later showed his interest in German tales by translating several into English.59

*The Monk* is about Ambrosio an abbot of the Capuchin monastery at Madrid. As a child he had been found on the monastery steps and accepted by the monks as a gift of Heaven. When the story opens he is a young man of about thirty, famed for devoutness and rigid austerity, whose spiritual pride makes him an easy prey to temptation. Rosario, the youngest novice of the monastery is a particular favourite with Ambrosio. One evening when they are together in the gardens, Ambrosio discovers to his horror and amazement that his companion belongs to the fair sex. The lady is Matilda de Villanegas, daughter of a noble house, who dared to penetrate the cloistral walls out of her passionate love for Ambrosio. Her radiant beauty reminds him of Madonna's picture, an object of his adoration ever since its purchase by the monastery.
some two years ago. After a brief but fierce struggle Ambrosio yields to temptation and seeks satisfaction in Matilda’s wanton embraces.

Seduced from the paths of virtue, the lust driven monk moves from one abominable act to another. Soon tired of his first mistress he resolves to enjoy the young and innocent Antonia, a lovely maiden of sixteen. To accomplish this (and inspired by Matilda) he resorts to use black magic - he takes part in impious rites at midnight in the dark vaults of the monastery. He is soon involved in a labyrinth of crime; sorcery, matricide, rape, incest, murder, all follow in quick succession. When his iniquities are accidentally unmasked, he alongside his accomplice is plunged into the vaults of Inquisition. In order to escape a fiery death at the stake, he sells his soul to the devil.

The sub-plot comprises more than one-third of the whole novel, and relates the story of an unhappy nun Agnes and her lover Raymond. The narrative opens with a ‘robber’ episode in a forest between Lunville and Strasbourg. Raymond sheltering in a cottage belonging to a group of bandits frustrates their murderous plans, having received timely warning by the wretched wife of a member of the gang. He skillfully evades the draught of poisoned wine, feigns stupefied slumber, and escapes. During this adventure he also rescues the Baroness Lindenberg from the robbers’ den, and while visiting her castle falls in love with her niece Agnes, who is destined for the cloister in accordance with the vow of her parents.

For more than a century the eastern tower of the castle had been haunted by the spectre of “the bleeding nun”, who had married and murdered an ancestor of the Lindenberg. Every fifth year, on the night of the fifth of May, she could be seen descending the tower stairs, her nun’s habit spattered with blood, with lamp and dagger in her hand, on her way to the gloomy cavern where she had murdered her husband and was herself later murdered. For many years past it had been the custom to leave the gates open between one and two o’clock of this night for her exit and return.
Agnes sees her only chance to escape in personating the bleeding nun. Raymond is ready with a carriage and keeps the appointment. As the clock strikes one, from the portals of that moonlit castle with its ruined towers issues the spectre of the bleeding nun, with dagger and lamp in hand. He flies to meet her, and conducts her to the carriage which sets off with astonishing swiftness. In the midst of a furious tempest, the carriage suddenly overturns, and Raymond falls stunned on the ground. When his consciousness returns he finds himself in the neighbourhood of Ratisbon with no trace of "the bleeding nun".

The following night, scarcely has the stroke of 'one' died away when heavy footsteps sound on the stair, and the spectre presents itself to his horrified gaze, this time with neither lamp nor dagger but with lifted veil disclosing "an empty skull, and a hollow grin", and vanishes after printing an icy kiss upon his lips. Every night at precisely the same hour, invisible to all but Raymond, the horrid visitant repeats her cold embrace and utters words in sepulchral tones, while the afflicted lover fades away into a shadow of himself.

A curious stranger offers to release him; this is the Wandering Jew, who bears the burden of eternal life, and cannot stay at one place for more than a fortnight. With magic books and spells, in Raymond's bed-chamber he awaits the dreaded visitor. Struck by the blazing cross on the magician's forehead, the spectre promises that her visits will cease if Raymond will bury her bones still mouldering in the fatal cavern. Raymond fulfils this condition, recovers his health, and ranges through heaven and earth seeking his lost love Agnes. Agnes had enacted the impersonation of "the bleeding nun" a minute too late, and was captured and immured in St. Clare's convent. Finding her out, he plans for her escape but their correspondence is detected. The cold and virtuous Ambrosio condemns the guilty Agnes to captivity in a frightful dungeon.

This romance is well constructed except for the management of the sub-plot, which touches the main plot at only two vital points: the detection of Agnes's guilt by Ambrosio, and the detection of his guilt on the occasion of her
rescue. Nonetheless, the story of Raymond and Agnes is by itself a complete series of episodes.

In the subplot of Raymond and Agnes, though the young lovers are guilty of no crime other than their desire to be together, they encounter supernatural as well as mundane obstacles of the most gruesome sort. When Raymond arranges to meet his mistress at midnight, he finds himself embracing a vision of death:

*I beheld before me an animated corpse. Her countenance was long and haggard; her cheeks and lips were bloodless, the paleness of death was spread over her features [...] my blood was frozen in my veins [...] my nerves were bound up in impotence, and I remained in the same attitude inanimate as a statue.*

The beautiful Agnes is very nearly turned into a living corpse because of her attempt to run off with her lover. Her family consigns her to a convent where, when it is discovered that she is pregnant, she is locked in the vault under the statue of St. Clare. There her baby dies and she is eventually found by her brother, “a creature stretched upon a bed of straw, so wretched, so emaciated, so pale, that he doubted to think her a woman.” However, Lewis permits Agnes to recover and marry Raymond in the end.

Earlier Gothic machinery included flickering candles, glimmering and disappearing lights, haunted chambers, mysterious manuscripts, obscure heroes, and other similar properties. But the School of Horror of ‘Monk’ Lewis introduced stalking spectres, devils, evil spirits, sorcerers and demons, magic mirrors, phosphorescent glow, and other paraphernalia associated with black magic. Here Spanish grandees, heroines of dazzling beauty, forest banditti, foolish duennas and gabbling domestic servants, monks, nuns, inquisitors, move in a world of midnight incantations, poisonings, stabbings, and ministrations of sleeping potions; in an atmosphere of thunder, lightning, storm, sulphurous fumes, and miracles.
A passage from the episode of Agnes de Medina, the incarcerated nun, adequately illustrates Lewis's method of charnel-house horrors. Fettered in such a hidden dungeon of the monastery, cut off from light and human society, Agnes lingers through the final chapters of her existence. No one hears her voice, no friendly word replies to her speech; a deep unbroken silence immures her:

Thus did I drag on a miserable existence. [...] The cold seemed more piercing and bitter, the air more thick and pestilential [...] My slumbers were constantly interrupted by some obnoxious insect crawling over me. Sometimes I felt the bloated toad, hideous and pampered with the poisonous vapours of the dungeon, dragging his loathsome length along my bosom. Sometimes the quick cold lizard roused me, leaving his slimy track upon my face, and entangling itself in the tresses of my wild and matted hair. Often have I at waking found my fingers ringed with the long worms, which bred in the corrupted flesh of my infant.62

To the Gothic elements Lewis added unusual and 'real ghosts' (notably a bleeding nun who had appearance in the castle every five years), whose restlessness is often ended when their bones are buried; Wandering Jew of European mythology, who insulted Christ and is compelled to wander the earth until Christ's second coming, and who in this version can stay no longer than fourteen days in the same place; wonderful demons; and sorcery.

The structure of Gothic romance is based on a principle of contrast. Walpole had produced his effects by surrealistic contrast of light and shade; Mrs. Radcliffe evoked sensations through her artistic use of sound and silence; Lewis's world is a macabre juxtaposition of charnel-house horror and lust.

The tragic conclusion to Ambrosio's story (who murders Antonia's mother, rapes and murders Antonia herself and then learns that Antonia is his sister) – is placed at the end of the text, following the romantic resolution of the other plots. This position reinforces his role as the alienated individual, exiled from the restored social community. Moreover, his ending is again long drawn
out. Thrown into prison, the Monk enters into lengthy negotiations with the devil, which only ends when he is tricked into selling his soul at the very moment when hope is possible. Unfortunately, he carelessly forgets to bargain for a deferral of his sentence of damnation. Lucifer throws him off a precipice. In Ambrosio’s death nature takes its revenge upon the master of artifice:

The Sun rose above the horizon; Its scorching beams darted full upon the head of the expiring Sinner. Myriads of insects were called forth by the warmth; they drank the blood which trickled from Ambrosio’s wounds; He had no power to drive them from him, and they fastened upon his sores, darted their stings into his body, covered him with their multitudes, and inflicted on him tortures the most exquisite and insupportable. The Eagles of the rock tore his flesh piecemeal, and dug out his eyeballs with their crooked beaks. A burning thirst tormented him; He heard the river’s murmur as it rolled beside him, but strove in vain to drag himself towards the sound. Blind, maimed, helpless, and despairing, venting his rage in blasphemy and curses, execrating his existence, yet dreading the arrival of death destined to yield him up to greater torments, six miserable days did the villain languish. On the seventh a violent storm arose: The winds in fury rent up rocks and forests: The sky was now black with clouds, now sheeted with flame: The rain fell in torrents; It swelled the stream; The waves overflowed their banks; They reached the spot where Ambrosio lay, and when they abated carried with them into the river the corpse of the despairing Monk.

Through this Gothic fantasy in creating a monk who rapes, kills, and sells his soul to the devil, Lewis is enlightening the reader about the moral depravity which man is capable of when he becomes obsessive. This psychological aspect of the novel appeals to the reader’s mind and self. While Ambrosio has all the qualities of a monk his mind is constantly obsessed with thoughts that a monk is expected to avoid. Without the psychological analysis, which is available today, Lewis attempts to offer symbolic suggestions as to the cause of the irrationality of his characters. For example, Ambrosio’s condition is blamed on fault of his background, for he was brought up by monks who “terrified his young mind, by placing before him all the horror with which superstition could furnish them.”
The publication of *The Monk* firmly established the “School of Horror.” The violent machinery for sensational effects came to be unstintedly used by the future writers of Gothic romance. Many employ ventriloquism or magic; but almost all make use of the actual presence of real ghosts, not explained away, which remains the distinguished feature of the School of Horror.

**Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein***

*Frankenstein, Or The Modern Prometheus* (1818) starts with a series of letters from Robert Walton to his sister Mrs. Saville. Walton, an English explorer on an expedition to the North Pole, through the letters keeps his family informed of his situation and the difficult times on the ship. Once when the ship is completely surrounded by ice, Walton takes aboard, a man named Victor Frankenstein who tells him the story of his life.

Victor grew up in Geneva (Switzerland), the eldest son of a high class family. He did not have many friends, Henry Clerval being the only exception. At the age of nineteen, Frankenstein became interested in natural philosophy, electricity, chemistry and mathematics. He was particularly fascinated with the human frame and the principle of life. This interest led him to learn the secret of “bestowing animation upon lifeless matter.” Collecting bones and human pieces from charnel houses he constructs the resemblance of a human being.

However, when the creature comes to life, the beauty of Frankenstein’s dream vanished. He realizes he has created a monster and thus runs away from his laboratory in disgust and fright. On his return the next day, he finds the monster gone.

The creature endowed with supernatural size and strength but revolting in appearance inspires loathing in whoever sees it. His first encounter with civilization is described by him thus:

> I had hardly placed my foot within the door before the children shrieked, and one of the women fainted. The whole village was roused; some fled, some attacked me, until, grievously bruised by stones and many other kinds of
missile weapons, I escaped to the open country and fearfully took refuge in a low hovel, quite bare, and making a wretched appearance after the palaces I had beheld in the village.  

The monster realized that people were frightened of his appearance and hated him for it. (He had become a victim of a system, which commonly judges a person by his or her appearance). Such continual acts of cruelty and rejection fill the monster with rage for his creator. In revenge he murders William (Frankenstein's younger brother) and incriminates innocent Justine for the crime.

In a chance meeting with his creator, he tries to convince him of the need for a companion. He requests Frankenstein to create a bride for him, with whom he would move away from people and live together in wilderness. Conscious of his guilt, Frankenstein saw justice in the monster's arguments, as well as felt it his moral duty towards his fellow men. However, when his work on the second creation was well advanced, Frankenstein begins to question the very rationale of the project. For it was possible that his creations might hate each other or might produce a whole race of such creatures. Convinced of his logic, he destroys the second creation. Infuriated, the monster swears revenge on his creator. In his fury he first kills Clerval (Frankenstein's friend) and later Elizabeth (his wife). For Frankenstein now there remains only one objective in life - to destroy the monster. He follows the monster everywhere and eventually reaches the Arctic region, where he is taken aboard Walton's ship. However, before Frankenstein can kill the creature, he himself dies of bad health. Just after his death, Walton finds the monster hovering over Victor's body. The monster speaks of his sufferings. Because of all the murders he has committed, he now hates himself. Claiming Frankenstein (his creator) to be his last victim, he decides it is time that he too finds rest in death. After stating that he leaves the ship and disappears on his ice-raft in the darkness.

*Frankenstein*, by Mary Shelley is a complex novel that was written during the age of Romanticism. This Gothic work has enjoyed a wide range of
interest and readership for about two hundred years. Gothic tales have certain elements in common, chief among them being certain universal themes, eerie settings, twisted creatures and a breach in the natural order. Shelley’s *Frankenstein* is a perfect example of a Gothic novel. In this book she explores as her main theme the development of evil in an individual when he is subject to rejection by society. Mary Shelley shows how the creature’s attempts at interaction are met with rejection until finally the creature sees intimidation and extortion as his only recourse. The creature was not born evil, but was forced into evil acts as his only way to claim acknowledgement of his existence. The constant rejection towards Frankenstein’s monster breeds not compassion and understanding but anger and hatred.

The main theme of development of evil is supported by a secondary theme of man’s fear of death. It is this fear of death and decay, which drives Frankenstein to create his monster. He believes that if he can discover the secret of life, then he can cheat death and defeat old age. When Frankenstein abandons his monster, he opens up the theme of the conflict between morality and science. Frankenstein began his experiments with the noblest of intentions, but without thinking about the consequences of his actions. He failed to understand that just because something can be done, doesn’t always mean it should be done, and that the results may not always be desirable. He usurped the power of God by creating life, and then compounded his error by recklessly abandoning his creature. Without love and guidance, the creature was forced to become evil. Frankenstein in following the goals of science lost sight of his moral obligations to the life he had created. Morality and science, man’s fear of death, and whether evil is caused by continuous rejection by society are three of the themes explored in this novel.

The first Gothic characteristic of *Frankenstein* is evident in its grotesque and gory elements. To create life, Victor had to use the bodies of dead humans. Victor would take the body part from the deceased that he needed and would
cut it off. He would then attach the part to his creation, the monster. The
description of the monster at its moment of coming alive is hideous:

His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and
arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and
flowing; his teeth of pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances
only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes,
that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun-white
sockets in which they were set, his shriveled complexion
and straight black lips.\textsuperscript{57}

Another characteristic of the Gothic novel in \textit{Frankenstein} is the element of
mystery. In the book Mary Shelley never tells the reader how the monster was
really created. We know that Victor used the limbs of dead bodies to create the
body of the monster, but we never found out how the monster was brought to
life. It is also a mystery that the monster was able to follow Victor everywhere
he went. How did the monster know that Victor was going back to his home in
England, and how would the monster be able to travel the great distance? These
are elements of mystery that can't be answered. Another characteristic found in
many Gothic novels is the desolate environment. In the beginning of the story,
Walton's ship is surrounded by ice and can't move. The crew is trapped for
many days. Victor is confined to a desolate place when he is trying to carry out
his experiment, he describes his laboratory thus:

In a solitary chamber, or rather cell, at the top of the house,
and separated from all the other apartments by a gallery and
staircase, I kept my workshop of filthy creation: my
eyeballs were starting from their sockets in attending to the
details of my employment. The dissecting room and the
slaughter-house furnished many of my materials; and often
did my human nature turn with loathing from my
occupation whilst, still urged on by an eagerness which
perpetually increased, I brought my work near to a
conclusion.\textsuperscript{68}

At the end of the story Victor dies in the freezing and depressing location of the
Arctic. The monster also is part of a desolate environment. Shunned by society
he lives alone in hiding.
A perpetual atmosphere of gloom and suspense pervades throughout the novel. This is created through the setting. Set in the bleak, glacial fields of the Alps and the Arctic, the novel brings out the isolation of Victor and the creature. Nature and weather foreshadow events of an evil act or confrontation. It was “a dreary night” when the creature was eventually given life. The creature’s murder of William and his meeting with Victor are also foreshadowed through setting. “Vivid flashes of lightning dazzled my eyes, illuminating the lake, making it appear like a vast sheet of fire [...]” This allowed Victor to see his creation in the wilderness. In chapter ten, Victor is to meet the creature again and hear his story, “the abrupt sides of vast mountains were before me [...] a few shattered pines were scattered around; and solemn silence of this glorious presence-chamber of imperial nature was broken only [...] the accumulated ice.” “The pines are not tall or luxuriant, but they are sombre and add an air of severity to the scene.” When preparing for the work of creating the creature’s mate the house is fit for the work to come. “These exhibited all squalidness of the most miserable penury. The thatch had fallen in, the walls were unplastered and the door was off its hinges.” This mode of setting is continued throughout the novel.

*Frankenstein* in its use of dreams and omens also present the typical feature of a Gothic novel. An event occurs to change the current of Victor’s life when he is fifteen. The total destruction of an oak tree by lightning, helps to convince him of the power of electricity and gives him the basis for the creation of the creature. When the creature is eventually created he is repulsed by it and flees to his room where he has a dream about Elizabeth. He embraces her but as he “imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death.” This foreshadows the death of Elizabeth that is caused by Victor’s selfish abandonment of his creature and society’s subsequent rejection of him. The creation of the creature in itself as the inexplicable is related to Gothicism.
The story of Frankenstein also makes use of the emotion- fear. Fear wasn’t really an element of the story though, until the monster murders William. If the monster is brutal enough to murder a child then he is capable of doing anything. Fear as an all absorbing emotion informs the book all through after Williams death.

Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* is a great example of a Gothic novel, written by a writer who is the product of the Romantic era.

**Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer***

*Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) by Maturin is a Gothic novel in the highest tradition of the Romantic period. The novel relates the story of Melmoth - a scholar who traded his soul to internal powers in return for answers to all his questions about the universe. He is given one hundred extra years to live; and in that time, if he could find someone to volunteer to take his place in Hell, he would be free. Otherwise at the end of the hundred years, Melmoth would be damned.

The novel contains scenes which even now have the power to evoke dread. It begins with the scene of a deathbed. An old miser is dying of sheer fright because of something he has seen, coupled with a manuscript he has read and a family portrait, which hangs in an obscure closet of his centuried home in County Wicklow. He has sent for his nephew John (in Trinity College, Dublin). The latter upon arriving notes many uncanny things. The eyes of the portrait in the closet glow horribly; twice a figure strangely resembling the portrait appears momentarily at the door. Dread hangs over that house of the Melmoths. The dying miser declares (at a date slightly before 1800) that ‘J. Melmoth, 1646,’ whom the portrait represents, is still alive. Finally the miser dies, and the nephew is told in the will to destroy both the portrait and a manuscript to be found in a certain drawer.

Reading the manuscript, written in late seventeenth century by an Englishman named Stanton, young John learns of the following happening. In
Spain (1677) the writer explains he had met a fellow-countryman, who (he was told) had stared to death a priest trying to denounce him as one filled with fearsome evil. Later, after meeting the man again in London, Stanton is cast into a madhouse and visited by the stranger, whose approach is heralded by spectral music and whose eyes have a more than mortal glare. Melmoth the Wanderer – for such is the malign visitor – offers the captive freedom if he will take over his bargain with the Devil; but like all others whom Melmoth had approached, Stanton is proof against temptation. Melmoth’s description of the horrors of a life in a madhouse is one of the most potent passages of the book. Stanton is at length liberated, and spends the rest of his life tracking down Melmoth. He discovers the family and ancestral abode of Melmoth and leaves the manuscript with the family. This manuscript is now in possession of young John. He destroys both the portrait and manuscript, but in sleep is visited by his horrible ancestor, who leaves a black and blue mark on his wrist.

Young John soon afterward receives as a visitor a shipwrecked Spaniard, Alonzo de Moncada, who has escaped from compulsory monasticism and from the perils of the Inquisition. Moncada’s narrative to young John takes up the bulk of Maturin’s four-volume book. He has suffered horribly, but had the strength to resist Melmoth the Wanderer when approached at his darkest hour in prison. At the house of a Jew who sheltered him after his escape, he discovers a manuscript relating other exploits of Melmoth, including his wooing of Immalee an Indian island maiden, who later comes into her birthright in Spain and is known as Donna Isidora; of his horrible marriage to her by the corpse of a dead anchorite at midnight in the ruined chapel of a shunned and abhorred monastery.

The colloquies of John and Moncada are interrupted by the entrance of Melmoth the Wanderer himself, his piercing eyes now are losing their power and decrepitude swiftly overtaking him. The term of his bargain has approached its end, and he has come home after a century and a half to meet his fate. Young John and Moncada hear frightful ululations from Melmoth’s
room but do not intrude till silence comes toward morning. They then find the room empty. Clayey footprints lead out of a rear door to a cliff overlooking the sea. Near the edge of the precipice is a track indicating the forcible dragging of some heavy body. The Wanderer’s scarf is found on a crag some distance below, but nothing further is ever seen or heard of him.

Commenting on the novel Fred Botting writes:

*Melmoth’s* extensive and intervened narratives describe terrible and fantastic adventures that traverse Ireland, England, Spain and Indian islands. Horrors are encountered among ruined churches, in stormy and desolate landscapes and in the subterranean passages, burial vaults and prisons of Catholic monasteries. Mob violence, domestic tyranny, seduction and various forms of oppression are documented in Gothic terms.

Varma says that “Maturin has a much deeper, clearer, and more organized vision of the place of evil and horror in the world than his predecessors, and *Melmoth* of all novels of horror comes nearest to artistic greatness.”

In *Melmoth the Wanderer*, states of extreme terror and despair are legion. Melmoth has his own moments of sadism, and they are breathtakingly depicted. About to consummate his demon-marriage to Immalee, he exults in the evil:

> Perish to all the world, perhaps beyond the period of its existence, but live to me in darkness and in corruption! Pressure all the exquisite modulation of your forms! All the indestructible brilliancy of your colouring! – but pressure it for me alone! – me, the single, pulse less, eyeless, heartless embracer of an unfertile bride, - the brooder over the dark and unproductive nest of eternal sterility, - the mountain whose lava of internal fire has stifled, and indurated, and enclosed forever, all that was the joy of earth, the felicity of life, and the hope of futurity!

Moncada’s dream in prison depicts an excess of physical horror:

> The next moment I was chained to my chair again, - the fires were lit, the bells rang out, the litanies were sung; - my feet were scorched to a cinder, - my muscles cracked, my blood and marrow hissed, my flesh consumed like shrinking
leather, - the bones of my legs hung two black withering and move less sticks in the ascending blaze; - it ascended, caught my hair, - I was crowned with fire, - I closed it, the fire was within, [...] and we burned and burned! I was a cinder body and soul in my dream.  

The necromantic Melmoth who has bought with his soul 150 years of youth from the Devil, and in his wanderings through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries attempts to find new victims: people undergoing extreme suffering are offered the chance of exchanging places with Melmoth if they give up their souls. They all refuse. This makes a unifying theme for a collection of different stories, although Maturin scarcely exploits its dramatic possibilities to the full.

In *Melmoth the Wanderer* we mark the culmination of the School of Horror phase. The entire machinery of the Gothic school is here: the mysterious portrait, the decaying parchment, ruins and storms, Inquisition and convent cells, entombed lovers, dead bride and insane bridegroom, idyllic nature in the Indian islands – indeed the apotheosis of the whole cult. The *Edinburgh Review* (July 1821) summed it up:

**To complete this phantasmagoric exhibition, we are presented with sybils and misers, parricides, maniacs in abundance, monks with scourges pursuing a naked youth streaming with blood; subterranean Jews surrounded by the skeletons of their wives and children; lovers blasted by lightning, Irish hags, Spanish grandees, shipwrecks, caverns, Donna Claras and Donna Isidoras – all exposed to each other in violent and gloomy contrast.**

In Gothic fiction the reader passes from the reasoned order of the everyday world into a dark region governed by supernatural beings, a region that inspires dread and horror, where decay abounds and death is always at hand. Gothic fiction emerged late in the eighteenth century as part of the Romantic Movement in the arts. This movement represented a reaction against the “age of reason” or the enlightenment that had dominated the thought of the time.
This type of fiction was called Gothic because much of its inspiration was drawn from medieval buildings and ruins, many of which were Gothic in architectural style. It commonly featured castles and monasteries equipped with subterranean passages, hidden panels, chambers of torture, and dark towers. The great age of the Gothic novel began in 1764 with the publication of Horace Walpole’s successful novel *The Castle of Otranto* and it lasted until about 1820. Afterward, though such fiction continued to appear for decades, the Gothic type diverged into different styles, including the detective, or mystery, and the horror story.

In this chapter an attempt has been made, firstly to trace the development of the Gothic novel as well as to identify the content, the dominant themes, style, setting that characterized such type of fiction. These characteristics eventually (with the passage of time) came to be classified under the nomenclature of Gothic Literature and became a force which did much to influence the writings of the major Romantic poets. This can be evidenced from the detailed analysis in the subsequent chapters.
Notes:


5. Varma, op.cit. p. 45.


7. Ibid. p. 25.


9. Ibid.

10. Ibid. pp. 15-16.

11. Ibid. p. 108.


13. Ibid. p. 18.


15. Ibid. p. 1.

16. Ibid. p. 2.

17. Varma, op.cit. p. 78.


22. Reeve, op.cit. p. 43.


24. Ibid. p. 12.

25. Ibid. p. 75.


28. Harriet Lee’s comment on *The Recess*, in Varma, op.cit. p. 82.


30. Ibid. p. 3.


32. Ibid. pp. 45-46.

33. Ibid. p. 23.

34. Ibid. p. 70.


36. Ibid. pp. 119-120.


40. Radcliffe, op.cit. p. 249.

41. Ibid. p. 67.

42. Ibid. pp. 102-103.

43. Tompkins, op.cit. p. 260.

44. Varma, op.cit. p. 96.


46. Varma, op.cit. p. 96.

47. Radcliffe, op.cit. pp. 475-476.


49. Ibid. pp. 2-3.

50. Ibid. p. 19.

51. Ibid. p. 20.

52. Ibid. p. 35.

53. Ibid. p. 46.

54. Ibid. p. 74.

55. Ibid. p. 76.


59. Botting, op.cit. p. 76.

61. Ibid. p. 205.


63. Ibid. pp. 245-246.

64. Ibid. p. 133.


67. Ibid. p. 55.

68. Ibid. p. 52.

69. Ibid. p. 55.

70. Ibid. p. 73

71. Ibid. 92.

72. Ibid. p. 93.

73. Ibid. p. 158.

74. Ibid. p. 56.

75. Botting, op.cit. 106.

76. Varma, op.cit. p. 166.

77. Ibid. p. 354.

78. Ibid. p. 168.